

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

Filozofická fakulta

Katedra asijských studií

BAKALÁRSKA DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCA

**JAPANESE COLONIZATION PERIOD OF KOREA IN  
SAGEUK MOVIES  
WITH A FOCUS ON  
THE USAGE OF KOREAN LANGUAGE**

Vyobrazenie obdobia Japonskej okupácie Kórey

*v sageuk filmoch*

so zameraním na jazykovú stránku

OLOMOUC 2022 Anna Kurhajcová

**Vedúci práce: Mag. Andreas Schirmer, Dr.**

Prehlasujem, že som bakalársku prácu vypracovala samostatne a uviedla všetky použité  
pramene a literatúru.

V Olomouci dňa 30.4.2022

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## ABSTRAKT

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Názov práce:</b>             | Vyobrazenie obdobia Japonskej okupácie Kórey<br>v <i>sageuk</i> filmoch so zameraním na jazykovú stránku |
| <b>Autor:</b>                   | Anna Kurhajcová  |
| <b>Vedúci práce:</b>            | Mag. Andreas Schirmer, Dr.   |
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Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá japonskou okupáciou v Kórey v rokoch 1910 – 1945. Zameriava sa na jazykovú stránku a postupné potlačovanie kórejštiny a využívanie japončiny ako v školskom prostredí tak aj mimo neho. Cieľom je porovnať historické pramene s filmom *Malmoe: The Secret Mission* a *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet* a zistiť do akej miery tieto filmy zodpovedajú realite, a či sa takéto filmy dajú použiť ako materiál na výučbu histórie.

## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Japanese colonization period of Korea in *Sageuk* movies with a focus on the usage of Korean language

**Author:** Anna Kurhajcová

**Supervisor:** Mag. Andreas Schirmer, Dr.

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This bachelor's thesis deals with the Japanese occupation in Korea in the years 1910 – 1945. It focuses on the Korean language and its gradual suppression and the use of Japanese both in the school environment and outside of it. The aim of this thesis is to compare historical sources with films *Malmoe: The Secret Mission* and *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet* and to find out to what extent these films correspond to reality and whether such films can be used as teaching material.

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## TRANSCRIPTION

This thesis uses the „McCune – Reischauer“ romanization of the Korean alphabet. The romanization is written in the brackets in italics next to the English translation. Names are written as follows: first is the last name and then it is followed by the given name following the Korean language order.

| Consonants |                                   | Vowels |              |
|------------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------|
| Korean     | Romanization<br>(initial / final) | Korean | Romanization |
| ㄱ          | k/g                               | ㅏ      | a            |
| ㄴ          | n                                 | ㅑ      | ya           |
| ㄷ          | d/t                               | ㅓ      | o            |
| ㄹ          | r/l                               | ㅕ      | yö           |
| ㅁ          | m                                 | ㅗ      | o            |
| ㅂ          | b/p                               | ㅛ      | yo           |
| ㅅ          | s/t                               | ㅜ      | u            |
| ㅇ          | -/ng                              | ㅠ      | yu           |
| ㅈ          | ch/j                              | ㅡ      | ü            |
| ㅊ          | ch'                               | ㅣ      | i            |
| ㅋ          | k'                                | ㅞ      | ae           |
| ㆁ          | t'                                | ㅟ      | yae          |
| ㆁ          | p'                                | ㅠ      | e            |
| ㅎ          | h                                 | ㅢ      | ye           |
| ㄲ          | kk                                | ㅤ      | oe           |
| ㄸ          | tt                                | ㅦ      | wi           |
| ㅃ          | pp                                | ㅧ      | üi           |
| ㅆ          | ss                                | ㅨ      | wa           |
| ㅉ          | tch                               | ㅩ      | wae          |
|            |                                   | ㅪ      | wö           |
|            |                                   | ㅫ      | we           |

## INTRODUCTION

South Korea has been experiencing a huge boom in the Korean (Hallyu) wave this past decade. Korean products, movies and series are gradually penetrating western markets and are becoming more and more accessible and sought after. Korea's market is benefitting from this popularity and is even able to win various international awards and change the industry, such as Pong Chun-Ho's film *Parasite* that won 4 Oscars in 2020.

In the last two years, South Korea has not been open to tourists and the Hallyu wave has not been able to use its potential to 100%. However interest in this country did not cease, on the contrary, it remained the same, thanks to the significant contribution of production of films and series. One of the favorite genres is the *sageuk*, meaning historical movies and television series. Without knowing the history, we cannot understand the development of the country and the way the people living there think. This led to the examination of how close to the truth is *sageuk* as a genre, with the main focus on the usage of language during the Japanese colonial period, which was the reason for writing this work.

The aim of this thesis was based on the analysis of historical events to point out the development of the Korean language, language policies and its impact on Korean society during the Japanese occupation in 1910–1945 and analyze selected *sageuk* films and point out their degree of truth in comparison with historical facts.

The bachelor thesis consists of four chapters. The first part of this work aims to generally characterize and describe the historical development just before the occupation and also the occupation during the years 1910–1945. The second chapter focuses on language policies in education with the focus on selected Education Order Periods. The object of the third chapter is to characterize the impact of language policies on the course of everyday life in Korean society and to analyze the activities of the Korean Language Society, which has played an important role in preserving the Korean language. The last chapter deals with the very characteristics of the *sageuk* genre following with detailed analysis of two selected films: *Malmoe: The Secret Mission* and *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet* about how close they depict reality.

The presented work points out the importance of a true depiction of historical facts in *sageuk* films and their positive contribution not only to the viewers interested in Korean culture but also to the general public, where these types of movies can be perceived as a possible tool not only in the process of teaching history but also as a tool for presenting Korea itself.

# **1 HISTORY OF THE OCCUPATION<sup>1</sup>**

## **1.1 THE YEARS BEFORE THE ANNEXATION**

King Kojong was the last ruling king of Chosŏn before the Japanese occupied Korea for almost half a century, however, true power was in the hands of his father, Yi Ha-ŭng, better known as Taewŏn'gun.

As Korea was a hermit kingdom at that time, no country was able to secure any kind of business relations. Korea was refusing these deals for many years due to the fact that China, the country they were looking up to, had burned itself this way resulting in The Opium Wars in the middle of the 19th century. Only some Western countries such as France or the USA tried but failed partly thanks to the stubbornness of Koreans. The true reason for it lied in not having an actual interest in Korea. Only Japan was prepared for Korea's politics. Their initial reasons for taking an arrogant stand were such as obtaining the market for domestic products, to make it impossible for Russia to intervene into Korea's affairs or simply a desire to spread the imperial glory beyond home boundaries.

Korea's borders finally opened after the abdication of Taewŏn'gun in December 1873. In 1875, Japan incited a clash with Korea and a year later Japan with the help of a few thousand soldiers persuaded Korea's diplomat to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa signed in 1876. This treaty permitted Japan to acquire influence in the future without China's intervention, who was exercising suzerainty over Korea (Caprio, 2009: 66).

Nevertheless, the Treaty of Kanghwa was the first contract which opened Korea to the outside world. In spite of that, China did not want to give up of their influence over Korea their soldiers occupied Seoul and the ruling Min clan in Korea took a pro-Chinese stance. This approach did not last long because new ways of thinking started to find its way to Korea, enlightenment in particular. Advocates wanted to reform politics in line with Japanese Meiji politics and to achieve independence from China. When a dispute between France and China over Vietnam broke out in 1884, it were the "progressives", the advocates of enlightenment, who saw this event as an excuse to eliminate the Chinese presence in Korea. Regardless of the fact that Japan had vowed to borrow their military unit situated in Seoul, the coup was unsuccessful, meaning a failure for Japan's aggressive policies. For this reason, they proposed a simultaneous withdrawal of Chinese and Japanese troops, which was agreed

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<sup>1</sup> The overview is based on Eckert (1957) 2001.

upon on April 18, 1885 in the Convention of Tientsin.

At the same time as the war between China and France happened, a treaty between Russia and Korea was signed where Russia was trying to earn the favor of government officials to be on their side. Not only China, but also England, who occupied a strategically important group of islands nearby Chōlla province, were concerned with this outcome.

Japanese businessmen residing in Korea did not resist the temptation of rapid enrichment at the expense of Korean peasants, who did not like this and later united in the Tonghak Peasant Movement. The movement's primary goal overtime became politicized, and the revolting peasant's primary goals were to overthrow the Min clan and to expel foreigners. The movement was far too successful to the extent that the government asked China for military assistance. However, Japan also sent troops to Korea, which were at that time no longer needed as a truce with the Tonghak Movement was concluded. This resulted in two foreign troops in Korea once again. This led to tense relations between China and Japan, which culminated in July 1894 in the First Sino-Japanese War. The conflict ended in 1895 with the defeat of China, which lost its long-lasting influence on Korea.

During the preparations for war, Japan requested the Korean government to conduct internal reforms under Japanese supervision. The then Korean, Chinese-oriented government did not agree, but, on the contrary demanded the departure of Japanese troops. Japan therefore decided to take the violent path. They occupied Kyōngbokkung palace and replaced the government with pro-Japanese officials who installed a series of new reforms.

The new Kabo reforms, installed by pro-Japanese officials, aiming to remove the last bits of Chinese influence, which lasted for more than 16 months, up until February 1896. Some of the reforms included the abolition of the Chinese calendar and the adoption of Korean dating system, the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the establishment of embassies, celebration of the Korean Independence Day, uplifting of patriotism through the usage of hangul in important government files, teaching of Korean history or even establishing new schools. While these reforms were taking place, the Chinese-oriented Queen Min (Empress Myōngsōng) restituted her position on a throne for a short time but was later assassinated by the Japanese. The Koreans were disgusted by this development and started to boycott Japan. Therefore, in early February 1896, they took king Kojong and Taewōn'gun from the palace and hid them at the Russian embassy. This move marked a temporary end to Japanese rule as well as to the implementation of the Kabo reforms.

Russia continued to push their influence in Korea. Nor Britain did not like Russia's approach and in 1902 concluded an "Anglo-Japanese Alliance" with Japan. Strengthened

Japan asked Russia to withdraw troops from Manchuria, but Russia occupied Korea's port city Jongampcho. Thus in 1904 a war between Japan and Russia broke out with Russia being defeated a year later, signing the Treaty of Portsmouth. Russia was obliged to not hinder Japan from any activities on the Korean Peninsula. At that time, the US ambassador in Seoul was asking The United States, mediator of this Treaty, to stop the Japanese aggression, but his request was rejected. This way, all the great powers of the time recognized Japan's dominance in Korea and gave a free hand in the growing aggression of having control over the country.

Japan immediately started with preparations for the protectorate. For this purpose, they created the organization Ilchinhoe to make it seem like the protectorate was a Koreans wish. Although Korea rejected this, the Japanese soldiers came in person to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an official seal which they attached to a document on November 17, 1905. The agreement gave Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs full power over all of Korea's foreign relations. For this purpose, the post of Resident-General was created. The Resident-General was a direct subordinate to the Japanese emperor and the authority bestowed in his hands was absolute. He also had both military and civilian police under control, was issuing legislative declarations, had under himself legal system, controlled the budget and could appoint officials. King Kojong disagreed and secretly sent a delegation to the Second Hague Conference in 1907. Unfortunately, this ended up with no success for the Koreans and their petition. When Japan discovered this, they forced king Kojong to abdicate. Subsequently in August 1907 a new agreement was signed under which the Governor-General could intervene in all matters of internal administration. After signing this, Japan immediately disbanded the Korean army and thus Korea has found itself without its own army and without any external form of aid, becoming a country that had no way to defend itself.

## **1.2 KOREA UNDER COLONIAL RULE IN THE YEARS 1910–1919**

In May 1910, Japan appointed Terauchi Masatake as the new Resident-General. Japan has feared the public's reaction and hence announced the agreement after disbanding patriotic organizations and mass arresting of representatives of the Korean independence movement. The annexation formally took place on August 22, 1910 (Caprio, 2009: 82). Even the most common incidents were in the hands of officials, who had ties to the highest circles of Japanese politics. In addition, Koreans were subjected to both Korean and Japanese law. During the first period of Japanese rule (1910–1919), printing permission for Koreans was virtually non-existent. Only a few chosen, scientific, or religious journals had this permission.

Newspapers have stopped publishing. Education during this time was meant to instill a Japanese way of thinking into the Koreans. School's emphasis was placed mainly on teaching basic literacy in "national language" – Japanese.

Japan made an extensive registry of land and those who could not obtain all the necessary documents for its ownership, lost it. Through various confiscations, Japan has become the owner of around 40% of Korea's land. Fortunately, Koreans who owned land as early as 1910, were able to keep it throughout the occupation. In addition, Japan has also been involved in the construction of railways, ports or even in the establishment of telegraph and telephone connections. Among other things, Japan gained control over logging and forestry. During World War II, Japan supplied itself and its allies with raw materials from Korea. In an effort to restrict business, Koreans needed the permission of the Governor-General, which hardly few secured. Harsh measures by the Japanese government have forced a large number of Korean politicians into exile. Various religious organizations were tolerated and therefore often became the place for secret political activities. When the leaders of the antiforeign religious sect Ch'ōndogyo learned about the presence of the exile groups, they decided to carry out a nationwide movement demanding Korea's independence, two days before former Emperor Kojong's funeral, March 1, 1919. This act started a nationwide movement, yet it did not meet with the interest abroad. However, this act managed to unite various nationalist group and form the Korean Provisional Government (*taehan min'guk imsi chōngbu*) on April 1, 1919, in Shanghai. Korea was declared a republic and established connections with organizations at home.

At that time, Saitō Makoto became the new Governor-General. Saitō has decided to replace terror and pressure with milder policies. These reforms known as Cultural Policy (*bunka seiji / munhwa chōngch'i*) meant relaxation of cultural and political life. It promised to expand the network of primary schools or even ease censorship in the press. Cultural Policy allowed for greater freedom in forming various unions and associations that did not question the legitimacy of Japanese rule. Among other things, literature, drama, music and film were also thriving. Special Higher Police (*kōtō keisatsu / kodūng kyōngch'al*) became an instrument ensuring censorship and internal political security. Another important act was the lifting of the ban on establishing new companies, meaning no further permissions were needed.

### 1.3 KOREA UNDER COLONIAL RULE IN THE YEARS 1920–1945

These previously mentioned activities and events prompted linguists and pedagogues who got together in the Korean Language Society. During their active years, they published many books related to the Korean language. Around May 1925, Special Higher Police began to tighten the censorship and a year later, freedom of the press was ended. The worldwide economic crisis (the Great Depression) in 1929 and growing influence of the military in the government brought an end to the Culture Policy. Japan's new advance in Asia required Koreans to participate more and thus Japan began implementing stricter rules again, lasting until 1945. Worsening conditions before the Second Sino-Japanese War attracted those without owning land to work in factories. Koreans were often demoted to the lowest, ethnically defined positions.

This began to change during the war as more and more Japanese were called up for military service. Despite this, cultural life still found its way to thrive, being able to publish in newspapers commentaries on the current situation, to-be continued novels, poetry, and others. Not even language has escaped reforms, such as increasing the number of schools, eliminating the study and use of Korean during teaching or even making Japanese as the official language. After the Pacific War broke out, the assimilation policy reached its peak. All Korean-language newspapers except *Maeil Sinbo* stopped publishing and a year later, in 1941, the Japanese intervened in the last possible sphere, changing names of Koreans. The regulation "allowed" them to change names to Japanese with their own choice of Chinese characters so that their new names would resemble Korean ones. In the end, more than 84% of the population has complied. Although Koreans were reluctant to adapt, they often had no choice in this matter.

The last phase of the occupation began with Japan's declaration of war to the Allies while trying to maintain their position in China and fighting on multiple fronts which required an increased number of people. Therefore in 1943, they began to call up Koreans, especially college students or women who became victims of sexual violence – "comfort women". The occupation ended with Japan's defeat in World War II in August 1945. This ultimately worked in complete refusal of Japanese – both culture and language.

## **2 LANGUAGE POLICIES IN EDUCATION**

Language policy reforms in education can be categorized into several periods according to the years in which individual Rescripts on Education were introduced by Japan before and during the occupation. According to Burton (1994: 27) this period can be differentiated into five stages.

### **2.1 THE SHIFT FROM THE KOREAN TO JAPANESE INITIATIVE IN LANGUAGE PLANNING (1876–1905)**

In 1901, nine Japanese language schools founded by the Japanese (Morifuku, 1901, as cited in Burton, 1994: 21) were established in Korea, where were primarily taught business subjects, Japanese language and other subjects, but all in Japanese (Manabu, 1942, as cited in Burton, 1994: 21). However, as early as 1895, Korea had efforts to establish a school system, but it was not compatible with the national deeds. As a result, traditional *sōdang* schools have remained as the teaching medium. Besides, these efforts of new schools were short lived due to the Japanese annexation in 1910 (Burton, 1994: 23).

### **2.2 “PROTECTORATE” STAGE (1905–1910)**

Language policy during this time was supposed to put an end to indigenous private schools as the Japanese stated that these schools mixed politics and education. For this reason, Japan considered important to create new teaching that would lead Koreans to be more “civilized”. Therefore, they created the “New Education” policies (Burton, 1994: 29), which main point was learning the Japanese language. Korean language was still considered a “national language” while Japanese was thus far referred to as a “foreign language”.

Japanese language at this time was supposed to serve mainly as a tool for modernization and opening up the country to the world. Emphasis was placed mainly on conversational Japanese with the goal to teach students Japanese needed for daily life as quickly as possible (Burton, 1994: 79). Korean and literary Chinese were preserved only in the Korean language classes while the rest was taught solemnly in Japanese (see Pieper, 2015: 394).

### **2.3 THE FIRST KOREAN EDUCATION ORDER PERIOD (1911–1921)**

The First Rescript on Education was implemented in Japan back in 1890 but enforced in Korean in 1911 (Toby, 1974: 58). The Government-General of Korea (GGK) released Regulations for Common Schools just shortly after the First Rescript. They were pedagogical guidelines explaining the use of Japanese as a national language (*kokugo* in Japanese) before it really became one. Kokugo education became the main priority and Korean (*chosŏnŏ*) was to serve only as a tool to increase literacy for the purpose of Japanese language (Pieper, 2019: 70). The *kokugo* education served to raise literacy in speaking, reading, writing and listening comprehension. In contrast, education in Korean was done only in relation to the understanding of kokugo (Pieper, 2015: 407–408).

However the most important point of this period was the declaration of Japanese as the national language, in which the spirit of the nation resides (Burton, 1994: 59) and Korean being a mere necessity for exercising daily activities.

After the March First Movement, various Korean reformers wanted to strengthen the teaching of Korean at an early age in order to build on the good language basics with Japanese, which would lead to a more effective way of learning Japanese, which could be taught at a more advanced level. However, the GGK was opposed to such bilingual learning (Pieper, 2019: 79). That meant, that after Korea's annexation in August 1910, all of the previous reforms in education had been abolished by the GGK (Pieper, 2015: 394).

### **2.4 SECOND KOREAN EDUCATION ORDER PERIOD (1922–1937)**

During this period, ethnic discrimination was suppressed by the so-called “*Isshī Dōjin*” – two people are to be seen the same. Despite this, it was replaced by linguistic discrimination, which favored those who spoke the national language. This, of course, included the Japanese and those Korean, who spoke Japanese fluently (Burton, 1994: 40).

Japanese has been encouraged to be used also for other subjects in addition to language classes. Just a small percentage of kids who could study were in schools. To tackle this problem, a new system of simplified schools (*kanigakkō*) has been established. This system was designed to teach students to read, write and speak in the national language. Korean during this time was still a compulsory subject. However, the growing influence of the Japanese was beginning to show, because Korean was only to serve in relation to the national language (Burton, 1994: 39–45).

The Second Rescript on Korean Education from 1922 authorized the dominant position of the Japanese language as a language of higher education, in which textbooks are

published and instructions are given. One of the points of the Rescript was a proposal stating that “In the common-school curriculum, all textbooks with the exception of the Kokugo Tokuhon shall be produced in Chosŏnŏ. Moreover, with the exception of the kokugo class, the language of instruction throughout the curriculum shall be Chosŏnŏ” (*Maeil Sinbo*, May 5, 1921, as cited in Pieper, 2019: 80). The Second Rescript, despite overall relaxation of the rules in the early 1920s, tightened its rules. For the Korean language, this meant establishing a position as a “foreign first language”. Thus, Koreans who wanted to study in their mother tongue had to attend sŏdang schools.

## **2.5 THIRD KOREAN EDUCATION ORDER PERIOD (1938–1945)**

The main point of this stage was educating only in Japanese. This meant combining both Japanese and Korean-speaking students under the Japanese language system, making Japanese the “school language”, in which all order and instructions were issued. Subsequently, Korean became an optional subject. After the revision of the Third Order in 1943, Korean language was completely dropped from the curriculum (Pieper, 2015: 411). Hence “mastering “pure” and “proper” Japanese meant becoming a good Japanese citizen” (Burton, 1994: 64).

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

From the point of view of the GGK, we can see that during the years 1913–1943, the percentage of the population that understood spoken Japanese rose from about 0.6% to 22.1% (Burton, 1994: 86).

The government statistics about literacy shows that in 1930 about 7% of the total Korean population was able to read and write in Japanese as well in hangul. It is also worth mentioning that the ability to speak the Japanese language was dominated by more men than women in a ratio 6:1 whilst in hangul it was 4:1. These numbers display mainly primary education – young people (Burton, 1994: 86–88).

|  | <b>Total Number</b> | <b>Males</b> | <b>Females</b> |
|--|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Total Number   | 20,438,108          | 10,398,889   | 10,039,219     |
| Capable of reading and writing both in Japanese and Korean | 1,387,276           | 1,195,461    | 191,815        |
| Capable of reading and writing only in Japanese            | 6,297               | 5,070        | 1,227          |
| Capable of writing and reading only in Korean              | 3,156,408           | 2,551,077    | 605,331        |
| Illiterate   | 15,888,127          | 6,647,281    | 9,240,846      |

Table 1 – Literacy of Korean people in 1930

Source: Simplified version by this author (A.K.) of a table created by Morita (1987: 129) on the basis of statistical data collected by the Government-General of Korea, cf. Burton (1994: 88)

Many young Koreans have been able to communicate in Japanese, albeit to a limited extent. He further agrees with the Korean academics, claiming “that if the efforts continued for another few decades, the entire population would have been speaking Japanese and the Korean language would have been in danger of dying out” (Burton, 1994, p. iii). In spite of that, this effort was interrupted by the defeat of Japan in WWII.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Numbers understanding basic Japanese</b> | <b>Numbers having no difficulty with daily conversation</b> |
|-------------|---|---|
| <b>1913</b> | 63,092                                      | 29,171  |
| <b>1919</b> | 200,195                                     | 102,712   |
| <b>1921</b> | 290,707                                     | 150,517   |
| <b>1922</b> | 386,158                                     | 178,871   |
| <b>1929</b> | 900,157                                     | 540,446   |
| <b>1937</b> | 1,201,048                                   | 1,196,350   |
| <b>1938</b> | 1,326,269                                   | 1,391,538   |
| <b>1942</b> | 2,353,843                                   | 2,735,371   |

Table 2 – Numbers of Koreans Understanding Spoken Japanese in years 1913–1942

Source: Simplified version by this author (A.K.) of a table created by Morita (1987: 128) on the basis of statistical data collected by the contemporary Japanese authorities, cf. Burton (1994: 87)

As we can see in Table 2, each new Korean Education Order Period bring a big change in numbers in terms of Korean understanding Japanese. Numbers were each year on a steady rise with the ratio of Koreans being able to understand Japanese and having no difficulty with daily conversation totaled around 200 people per 1,000.

In short, the most important point of this transformation was the declaration of Japanese as a national language – kokugo, and the demotion of the Korean language to “local language” (Pieper, 2015: 394).

Despite everything, it is impossible to not give Japan recognition for introducing Korea to its first universal schooling system. It is safe to say that language policy in schools has been successful when talking about acquiring language skills. Many Koreans have learned to read and write in Japanese at a very good level (Burton, 1994: 86).

### **3 LANGUAGE POLICIES IN KOREAN SOCIETY**

#### **3.1 KOREAN LANGUAGE SOCIETY**

The Korean Language Society is an academic organization, with the purpose to preserve, study and develop the Korean language and writing (Han'gŭl Hakhoe, 2016). It was founded on August 31, 1908, by Chu Si-gyŏng, Im Kyŏng-jae, Ch'oe Tu-sŏn, I Sŏng-gyu, Chang Chi-yŏng, Kwŏn Tŏk-kyu, I Kyu-bang, Ch'oe Hyŏn-bae (Pucek, 2000: 94–97).

Chu Sigiŏng died suddenly in 1914 and the society was not operating for a while. However, after the easing of some of the measures after the March First Movement, around the end of 1921, the society resumed activities, being led by above mentioned scholars who were influenced by Chu Sigiŏng.

The Society has changed its name a few times during its existence. It is worth mentioning the 1931 change to the Korean Language Society (*chosŏnŏ hakhoe*) and the 1949 change to its current name The Korean Language Society (*han'gŭl hakhoe*).

Specifically, during the Japanese occupation, the Society sought to stimulate the rise of national awareness through the preservation, study, and dissemination of the Korean language.

##### **3.1.1 ACTIVITIES DURING THE OCCUPATION**

Korean Language Society was engaged in many areas of the Korean language during and after the occupation. Some of them are the dictionary development, making of united orthography or just promoting the language in general.

##### **3.1.2 DICTIONARY DEVELOPMENT**

In 1928, the Society founded the Korean Dictionary Committee with around 108 prominent people from the Korean society (Han'gŭl Hakhoe, n.d.), serving as sponsors and began compiling a Korean dictionary to unify the language of the Korean people. A first result of this process was the Unified Korean Orthography (*han'gŭl match'umbŏp t'ongiran*), created in 1933 on the Hangeul Day after approximately three year of work and it became the basis of the Korean Unified Orthography.

Three years later (Han'gŭl Hakhoe, n.d.), the Society published a book called the Collection of Assessed Standard Korean Words (*sajŏngan chosŏnŏ p'yojunmal moŭm*) in which were collected all hitherto standardized words. Later, in 1941, the Society published the Unified Loanword Notation (*oeraeŏ p'yogibŏp t'ongil*). Thanks to this and other similar

processes, the creation of the dictionary was sped up and, in the spring of 1942, the first half was typesetted.

However, unfortunately, in the fall of 1942, Japanese authorities arrested or charged all of the Society's representatives along with its supporters, in total around 30 people. Thirteen of them were sentenced to prison where some died. The pretext was an effort to publish the first part of the Korean dictionary. The sad fact is that as a consequence of this incident, the Society had to suspend all its activities, including the compilation of the dictionary, for another three years, until the liberation of Korea in 1945 (Han'gŭl Hakhoe, n.d.)

Despite the persecutions by the Japanese, the Han'gŭl Hakhoe (n.d.) reports that the Society published 6 volumes of the Grand Dictionary of Korean (*k'ŭn sajŏn*) in the years 1947–1957. After 28 years, the project was completed and thus the first large Korean dictionary for Koreans was created. It became the basis of all of today's Korean dictionaries in the world.

### **3.1.3 UNIFIED KOREAN ORTHOGRAPHY**

It was determined that the standard speech would be the dialect around Seoul (the so-called "central Korean" dialect), the capital of today's South Korea. Another principle worth mentioning is that the individual words in sentences are written separately, which made the comprehension of the text easier. Lexical-grammatical morphemes such as affixes, or particles are written together with the previous word (Pucek, 2000: 98–99).

### **3.1.4 OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE OCCUPATION**

In addition to the correct spelling methods and dictionary compilation, the Society was also dealing with eradicating illiteracy and other linguistic activities such as academic journal Hangeul. It was published from February 1927 but soon its publication had to be suspended until May 1932 and has not stopped since. During 1932–1934, the Hangeul focused on standardizing of Korean spelling. Over the years 1935–1942, the journal included talks about issues related to the Korean language, public education or even collected various words. Nevertheless, the journal was popular among common people (Han'gŭl Hakhoe n.d.).

### **3.1.5 AFTER THE LIBERATION**

Activities resumed immediately after the liberation of Korea. The Society has published

many works that have served as the basis for teaching the Korean language or periodicals (Han'gŭl Hakhoe n.d.) such as Hangeul. In addition, they trained Korean language teachers in their institutes. It is thanks to the lobbying of the Society, that October 9 is set as a Hangeul Day.

### **3.1.6 IMPORTANT SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES**

Many of them were imprisoned by the Japanese (some of them died) or worked in exile. After the liberation, they participated in the language policy making in both South and North Korea.<sup>2</sup>

Ch'oe Hyŏn-bae (1894–1970) participated in the making of the Unified Korean Orthography and the dictionary. Despite being arrested by the Japanese, he returned from prison. He is the most famous follower of Chu Si-gyŏng.

I Kŭng-no's (1893–1978) focus was mainly on lexicography, but he also collaborated on the Unified Korean Orthography of 1933. After the liberation, in the 60s, he participated on the codification of the “cultural language” (*munhwaŏ*) – standard language of the North Korea.

Kim Tu-Bong (1889–1961?) was a student of Chu Si-gyŏng with whom he worked together with. After Chu Si-gyŏng's death, he published a book on the Korean grammar (*chosŏn malbon*).

I Yun-jae (1888–1943) was working on the Dictionary, Unified Korean Orthography and was also editor of the Hangeul magazine.

## **3.2 LANGUAGE POLICIES IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

In addition to education, other areas of ordinary life of Korean people have been affected by language policies as well. From contacting the authorities, through culture to linguistic changes in their daily lives.

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<sup>2</sup> This overview is based on Pucek, 2000: 87–109.

### 3.2.1 NAME POLICY

One of the things that struck Koreans was the change of names (*sōshi kaimei*) in 1939 – in the last few years of the occupation. The policy “allowed” Koreans to change their last and first name into the Japanese style. Matsutani Motokazu (2014: 241) argues that this policy was not made for the sake of changing names as much as for the weakening of the Korean lineage system.

Koreans were obliged to have, except their “clan name” (*sei*) a “family name” (*shi*). However, only the head of the household had to make this change and report it to the mayor or the town or village magistrate. If they did not, the “clan name” became the family name. If the head of the household was a woman, the family name of the previous male household head became the clan name. Although both terms *sei* and *shi* have in Chinese characters the meaning of a person's surname, their actual meanings were in fact different. The Japanese term *shi* referred to household, to which one currently belongs while the latter was connected to a person's patrilineage (Motokazu, n.d.: 241–243).

One of the many views regarding the name-changing policy was that Koreans were forced to change their first names to the Japanese style. However, Matsutani Motokazu (n.d.: 245) states, that the Order 222 says that “a person who wants to change... their personal name should submit an application to the local court... and receive approval” and “pay the application fee of 50 sen.” If the application was rejected, Koreans had no right to turn to a higher court. While the choice of changing first name was voluntary the change or creation of *shi* was mandatory. In the end around 84 percent of Koreans changed their names, as people who did not make this change were, as Blakemore (2018) says, were not recognized by the colonial bureaucracy and were excluded from every aspect of daily lives from mail delivery to ration cards.

Furthermore, Motozaku (n.d.: 245) claims that the literal meaning in Japanese meant “creating family name, changing personal name” and not a “name-changing policy” as is often incorrectly translated in English. Thus, the author concludes that the translation to English causes misinterpretation of the policy.

### 3.2.2 MEDIA

Even media, important for the spread of Japanese propaganda, could not avoid the language policy. Following the annexation of Korea by Japan, the publication of many newspapers was canceled due to the spread of anti-Japanese views. The first decade of occupation can

be also called a dark age for the press, as there were not allowed any private, nationalistic newspapers. Nevertheless, there were few newspapers that, however, presented the views of the other side. The *Maeil Sinbo*, a government-general newspaper was one of them. This newspaper was significant and special in being published half in Korean and half in English (Yöm, 1992: 147). Their publication continued up until 1945. The *Maeil Sinbo* dealt with various topics but their main task was to instruct Koreans in areas that the Japanese considered as uncivilized (Caprio, 2009: 101–104).

For this reason, people started to turn to Korean-language newspapers published abroad, which became a valuable source of information. Nonetheless, Japan did not wait long and under the Newspaper Law of 1908 started to confiscate such newspapers (Yöm, 1992: 154).

After the March First Movement in 1919, policies in daily life relaxed slightly and with it the freedom of the press as well. As a result, there were up to seven Korean language newspapers in 1930. Among them were newspapers such as *Chosŏn Ilbo* and *Tonga Ilbo*, private, Korean-owned enterprises. However with the Second Sino-Japanese War approaching in the late 1930s, various policies were tightening again and the publication of these and all other private Korean newspapers was banned again, thus another dark age for the Korean press has begun. One of the reasons stated by the GGK for ending the publication was the alleged creation of an environment in which Korean can learn Japanese (Yöm, 1992: 148–157).

Radio broadcasting, which started their air time in 1927, was also affected by these policies. Broadcasting schedule included Japanese music as well as lessons on ethics, agriculture, improvement or women's education. Ten years later, from 1937, the air time for Japanese-language broadcasting has increased and the numbers of broadcasts in Korean language decreased (Caprio, 2009: 157). Later there were only two broadcasting stations, one purely in Japanese and the other in Korean, but all the names of people and places had to be in Japanese and most of the content consisted of Japanese folk songs, classical Chinese poems in Japanese reading (*shigin*) and finally Korean disappeared from radio broadcasting in 1944 (Burton, 1994: 56).

### **3.2.3 ENTERING THE ARMY**

In order for the Koreans to join the Korean Volunteer Military Corps (*shinganhei*), they had to speak Japanese. For this reason, education was important, because the completion of elementary school presupposed language fluency (Caprio, 2009: 145).

This policy further deepened in 1938 when the GGK planned to introduce within ten years compulsory elementary education, expecting around 90 percent of men and only about 50 percent of women to attend. Plan eventually moved up two years to 1946, when, among other things, Japan planned to introduce an universal military conscription (Caprio, 2009: 155).

When the Pacific War broke out in 1942, the Japanese military did not plan to separate Koreans from Japanese people. Therefore, a large number of Koreans had to learn the national language. *Kokumin gakkō* certificates, which showed the level of fluency in the Japanese language, were used for this purpose. Those who did not have *Kokumin gakkō* certificates underwent a one-year long language course, aiming to learn Japanese equivalent to three to four years of schooling (Burton, 1994: 55).

### **3.2.4 COMMUNICATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

From about the mid-1920s, the GGK lowered incentives for Japanese studying Korean and from 1940 it eliminated this entirely (Yamada, n.d., as cited in Burton, 2009: 141). This meant that Koreans had to learn Japanese whether they wanted to or not, otherwise they would have no means of communicating in everyday life. In addition, GGK planned to increase the number of schools, especially in higher education (Caprio, 2009: 145).

Many words have been integrated into Korean due to the fact that Japanese became the official language in Korea during the occupation. After the liberation a movement called “Get Back Korean Words” began, aiming to replace frequently used Japanese words with Korean ones. Jung (2017: 134) states that this desire to get rid of Japanese words is strong to this day.

In August 1944, the Korean League for the Mobilization of the National Might launched a language uprising aimed to promote Japanese language seminars and reward those who knew the Japanese language through government officials, teachers and police. This movement went hand in hand with a program focused on culture, where Korean artists, writers and filmmakers produced work in the Japanese language (Burton, 1994: 55–56).

### **3.3 LANGUAGE ASSIMILATION IN CINEMA**

After the Governor-General, who ruled Korea from 1936 until 1942, came to power, he established a number of new rules related to assimilation. One of these was the assimilation of Korea through films, whether it was production, content or just the language used in the

films.

As a consequence of the tightened policy, Korean producers had no choice but to make films that were to attract Koreans to the Japanese way of thinking. Although after the March First Movement control had loosened over Korean culture and other artistic activities, which gave various artists an opportunity to express themselves, in 1940, under the Korean Film Law, all films made in Korea were under strict censorship. As a result, Korean producers and films were completely subordinate to Japan. In order for many of them to continue to work and survive, they changed their names to Japanese and began using the national language to at least outwardly agree with the nationalistic ideas (Howson and Yecies, 2013: 1–5).

As for the Korean language, its usage was completely eradicated in films produced after 1942. Kim (2017: 5) quotes Lee Young-il's words that "speaking accurately there was no 'Korean' cinema in the 1940s." Films were often banned and remade because they either showed too much cruelty of the Japanese or were made in the Korean language.

Chǒng (2019) refers to the films produced during the Japanese occupation (1919–1948) as "Joseon film" (*chǒson yǒngwa*). However it is crucial to determine what is considered to be a Korean film. Authors refers to the definition according to the current Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act based on the Motion Picture Law from 1962 (Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act, 2018, as cited in Chǒng, 2019: 18) defining "the legal criterion to becoming a Korean film is based on the territorial principle; a Korean film should be produced by an individual or a corporation of which the major place of business is in the Korean domestic area" (Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act, 2018 as cited in Chǒng, 2019: 18).

Since 1989, the Korean Film Archive has managed to find only sixteen lost Chǒson films in archives in Japan, Russia and China (Chǒng, 2019: 24).

| <b>Original Release Date</b> | <b>Title</b>               | <b>Language</b>                     | <b>Note</b>              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Sept. 1934</b>            | Crossroads of Youth        | Silent Film (Korean Subtitles Lost) | -                        |
| <b>Oct. 1936</b>             | Sweet Dream                | Korean with Japanese Subtitles      | -                        |
| <b>March 1941</b>            | Angels on the Street       | Korean with Japanese Subtitles      | Partly Japanese Language |
| <b>Nov. 1941</b>             | Spring of Korean Peninsula | Korean with Japanese Subtitles      | Party Japanese Language  |
| <b>Nov. 1941</b>             | You and Me                 | Japanese                            | -                        |

Table 3 – “Joseon Films made during the Japanese Colonial Period”, 1934–1945  
Simplified version by this author (A.K.) of a table created by Chōng (2019: 30)

As we can see in Table 3, even Korean films made during the last 10 years of colonial rule were subject to the language change. Up until the end of 1941 films were made in Korean language along with Japanese subtitles, with some of them having some parts in Japanese. However, around november 1941 a change was made and films from that month up until the end of the occupation were made solely in Japanese.

One of the films, *Angels on the Streets*, was made in Korean with Japanese subtitles with some parts in Japanese. It was made in Korean to mainly ensure that even people, who did not know Japanese on a proficient level were able to see it. The reason was that the women in the film were portrayed as subordinates and followers of men and their values. Meanwhile men showed a moral superiority, which can be seen as a strength of Japanese domination and allegiance to the Emperor. Other films at the time were in a similar spirit, showing Japanese power and superiority (Howson and Yecies, 2013: 7).

Thus movies became an important tool for spreading assimilation policies in all its directions. In 1940 alone, the local Korean audience exceeded 20 million views. This was a huge number considering at that time just over 24 million people lived in Korea (Howson and Yecies, 2013: 13). Assimilating Korean cinema was an important step not only in disseminating the Japanese way of thinking but to also further incorporate Japanese language in every aspect of life.

## 4 SAGEUK MOVIE

Hwang (2011: 4) derives the definition of *sageuk* from the Korean word consisting of two Chinese characters. The first, ‘sa’ (史) means history and ‘geuk’ (劇) means simply any drama, play or film. Naver Dictionary describes this word as a play based on historical fact, while in English we can find works about *sageuk* under the word historical drama. Mitchell in his work (2018: 24) simply states that *sageuk* “...refers generally to work of fiction wherein the narrative and characters are based in Korea’s past.”

However, the problem arises when we are trying to define the word past, as opinions differ. Hwang (2011: 4) addresses this issue with two contradictory statements of I Söng-gil, who is of the opinion that the term *sageuk* does not usually apply to films depicting the period of the Japanese occupation and I Pyöng-un who counts in his research about television *sageuk* also years until the end of the occupation, circa 1945. Hwang adds her opinions, in which she claims that “...‘historical drama’, by nature, is always in transition as the notion of the past changes over time.” McMahon (2018: 25) contributes to the debate while agreeing with Peacock (1991: 11) who argues that “...the distinction between films with or without historical value depends on the preference of the theorist, and as a result, the definition of the genre continues to be vague.” Overall, we can say that what is considered as *sageuk* and what is not is left only to the opinion of the reader.

### 4.1 HISTORY OF SAGEUK<sup>3</sup>

History can be divided according to the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, starting with the years prior to 1945. Around the 1920s, *sageuk* played an important role in the creation of domestic production. The first films include *The Story of Chunhyang* (1923), which retold a classic Chosön story. It became so popular that it was an inspiration for other films at that time such as *The Story of Janghwa and Hongryeon* or *The Story of Shim Cheong*. This marks the beginning of Korea’s *sageuk*, as they were looking to Joseon for inspiration.

The first film with a sound was made in 1935, *The Tale of Chunhyang*, which was also inspired by the *Chunhyangjeon* folktale. Despite the fact that Koreans enjoyed the sounds of their own language on the big screen, Japan saw this as an act of resistance and in 1938 banned the use of the Korean language in the whole country and by 1942, Korean films were no longer produced at all.

Post-war era was blooming in production of *sageuk* films, with owning around 50

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<sup>3</sup> This overview is based on Mitchell (2018: 24–32).

percent of released films in total. This period is marking the beginning of the Golden Age of cinema. During this decade, three main motifs prevailed: based on classical Korean fairy tales and literature (*Chunhyang Story*), based on historical events (*The Tragic Prince*) and as well as those depicting renowned historical figures and national heroes (*Hwang Jin I*).

During the 1960s, *sageuk* flourished and became the dominant genre of the decade, for which the largest budget was set. Notable films from this period are those made by Sin Sang-ok: *Seong Chun Hyang*, *Prince Yeonsan* or *Eunuch*. Films also benefited from the new widescreen and color technology, which allowed the creation of more monumental and detailed films. Films with a strong erotic and violent undertones began to be made.

The 1970s saw the decline of the *sageuk* genre due to television ownership. However, *sageuk* found its new place in television drama, which was often at that time full of government propaganda that did not interest people. Memorable films from this period are *A War Diary* or *King Sejong the Great*.

It was not until the 1980s that the genre of erotica experienced a boom, which served as a stepping stone for attracting people back to the cinema as television could not offer this. Movies like *Eo Wu Dong*, *Byeong Gang Soe* or *Sa Bang Ji* were proof of that. At the same time, another branch of *sageuk* films, targeted for international festivals was born. Films like *Spinning the Tales of Cruelty towards Women* and *The Surrogate Woman* won an international award and contributed to the spread of Korean films abroad.

In spite of this, *sageuk* films almost disappeared in the 1990s but luckily with the beginning of the new century another boom of this genre has occurred again. *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* and *Gladiator* helped Korea to grasp this genre in a big style that had been unprecedent on the domestic scene before.

## 4.2 GENRES OF SAGEUK<sup>4</sup>

Today's *sageuk* can be divided into several subgenres. The most known are authentic *sageuk*, fusion *sageuk* and faction *sageuk*.

The first one, authentic *sageuk*, is also called "docudrama". This kind of *sageuk* is using as many historical facts as it can but with a partial dramatization, which makes the whole movie much more interesting. Films are subjected to in-depth historical research before the shooting and try to use as many of them as possible with the utmost precision. Despite a period of decline in the interest in this subgenre in the mid 2000s, the

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<sup>4</sup> This overview is based on bibimgirl (2015).

interest rose again with the historical series called *Jeong Do-jeon* made in 2014 by the KBS.

Another subgenre is fusion *sageuk*. Films made in this subgenre are all fiction and use history only as a background setting. All the characters featured in these films are fictional too.

The last popular subgenre is called faction *sageuk*, which was created by the combination of words fact and fiction. Such films are true to the reality to some extent, for example by focusing on real historical figures or events, but authors of these works have a free hand in artistic liberties, where they can insert fictional elements as they like. Films are focusing on well documented events with some gaps, which authors use to unleash their imagination to their liking. This type has become popular since the mid 2000's until now, enjoying great popularity.

### **4.3 MALMOE: THE SECRET MISSION**

The film was released in South Korea on January 9, 2019, just about two months before the 100th anniversary of the March First Movement. Just in the first four days after premiering in the cinema, *Malmoe: The Secret Mission* attracted over one million moviegoers, earning the title of a Korean box office hit in the first week of its release. (Naver, 2019)

Despite the existence of many films on the subject of the Japanese occupation, this film is unique in that it deals with the ban of the use of the Korean language during the occupation, precisely in the last four to five years of this difficult period. *Malmoe* focused on the Korean Language Society and their efforts and determination to preserve the Korean language by creating the first Korean dictionary of a codified language by choosing the words that will become the standard.

#### **4.3.1 SYNOPSIS**

The movie begins around spring 1941, just when Kim P'an-su lost his job at the Seoul Korea Theater. On the same day, his son, Kim Tök-chin receives punishment at a Seoul Middle School with his other classmates for not having paid the tuition. Thus later P'an-su, in an effort to secure at list some money, robs an unknown, well-dressed gentleman at the main train station in Seoul and hence a chase between him, trying to get his things back and P'an-su.

As it turns out, in the stolen bag, there was nothing valuable except for some papers, where was a one-of-many drafts for the planned Korean dictionary made by the Korean Language Society, which the previously unknown gentleman, now Yu Chöng-wan, was

a head of. This event marks the beginning of the alliance between P'an-su and Chŏng-wan, who is not very enthusiastic about it. P'an-su becomes a handyman, in order to earn some living, at the Korean Language Society headquarters, a small, hanok-type building bookstore.

The Society's main goal is to try to collect various dialect words from Korean language teachers all around Korea, so they can hold the forum to decide on the standard words in Korean. However, this process is very slow, as being a teacher of the Korean language at that time was a very risky job. At the same time, Japanese are aware of the Society's to an extent and are constantly checking up on them through various ways, whether by visiting the bookstore, putting pressure on Chŏng-wan's father, Yu Wan-t'aek, the principal of the Seoul Middle School, the most successful middle school in Seoul, or attacking the weaknesses of individual Society's members.

Over time, the relationship between Chŏng-wan and P'an-su improves and in addition to taking care of the bookstore he begins to learn the Korean language. Studying Korean language while working at the Society, P'an-su begins to realize that the Korean language gradually disappears from everyday life and how important it is for the nation.

As time went on, Japan started to tighten its rules and due to the pressure on Min U-ch'ŏl, one of the Society's representatives, through having his wife in the Sŏdaemun prison, the Japanese were able to find out where the Society was hiding its documents needed for the making of the dictionary and during an unexpected raid confiscated them all. Despite trying to defend their most valuable possession, they failed and as a consequence of this fight, Cho Kab-yun, another representative of the Society, dies shortly after.

But in spite of that, as it turns out later, Kab-yun (also called as teacher Cho by P'an-su) made a copy of all the documents and therefore the Society was able to continue making the dictionary despite the gradually tightening policies. However, they had to comply according to the rules and were forced to join the Korea-Japan Alliance to show their obedience with Japan, at least externally. Thanks to this act, Society was able to secretly hold the forum, where together with other Korean language teachers from all over the country chose words, which made it to the dictionary as a standard word.

Japan was not far behind Society this time either and was able to reveal the true intentions of the Society and even the actual venue of the forum. Korean teachers were trying to prevent the Japanese enter the cinema, giving Chŏng-wan and P'an-su time to escape with the final draft of the dictionary. Thus, another chase begins, this time between them and the Japanese police. When they had to split due to Chŏng-wan being shot, P'an-su dies after

another brief chase.

The film ends shortly after August 8, 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japanese rule. Thanks to P'an-su, who managed to hide the final version of the dictionary before the Japanese caught him, the Society was able to complete and publish the first Korean dictionary with standardized words ever.

#### **4.3.2 ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL FACTS**

As we can see through various examples, films do a good job of portraying the reality either by details, gradual changes in the sceneries, dialogues, that would be by a regular watcher left unnoticed or historical facts that complete the movie and help us guide through the timeline easily. With the combination of above-mentioned examples, *Malmoe* draws the viewer into the almost authentic story about the survival of the Korean language.

Details that completed the overall atmosphere throughout the film can be seen for example in the various inscriptions on the buildings or streets. At the beginning of the film, we are still able to see a large number of signs in Korean but they are starting to be mixed with Japanese, who are, for now, written in a much smaller size, as if to just accompany the Korean original with additional translation for the Japanese living in Korea at that time. Some of the writings only in Japanese can be spotted for example at the train station. The Seoul Korea Theater had a sign in the hangul written only on the side of the building, as if a sign of intensifying Japanization, and when it was later renamed, the sign on the side of the theater was removed and only the Japanese name remained.

On top of that, we can see that Pak Pong-du was working as a live version of an advertisement for the cinema. He is seen wearing a poster for the first two movies mentioned. During the promotion of the first one, the advertisement is entirely in Korean with a small inscription in Japanese. In addition, this poster also contains a short slogan in Korean and below it is written in Japanese in a much smaller lettering. However, when advertising the second one, the situation is completely different. The poster is written entirely in Japanese and the Korean translation is written in very small letters and in such a color that it is almost invisible to the naked eye.

In addition, the film also subtly depicts the Japanese oppressing Koreans with fear, physical punishment and psychological coercion. This is shown in a scene in a Seoul Middle School at the beginning of the movies, where a few Korean students are beaten by their Japanese teacher for not paying tuition. During this battle, one of the beaten boys said the Korean word for mother (*omōni*) and because of that he was slapped with the words that no

Korean is allowed in school and that “Seoul Middle School Student must behave like great citizens of Japan!” This way, in addition to physical punishment, they were humiliated in front of the whole class. For this reason, Tök-chin explains to his father that he should teach Su-hŭi Japanese and not Korean, because if she goes to school and speaks Korean, she can be beaten for this fact.

Psychological pressure also affected the older generation, which, like the younger one, was willing to resign and submit to the Japanese to ensure a comfortable life to some extent. We can see this in Yu Wan-t’aek, Chŏng-wan’s father, who was the principal of Seoul Middle School. When he had to meet Ueda, high-ranking person in society who held an enormous power, (probably the Governor-General due to his position), he always tried to curry favour with words like “All by the grace of the Emperor!” or just simply to comply with the wishes of Ueda. It is important to realize that the older generation (during the time period of our film) endured this oppression and gradually deteriorating conditions for over 30 years, so resignation was only a natural phenomenon. This can be heard when Wan-t’aek says to never giving up Chŏng-wan “Korea is lost as a country!” Therefore, Wan-t’aek’s character may seem like the personification of an entire older generation that no longer had the strength to endure this oppression, while Tök-chin can be seen as a representative of the younger generation.

This is connected with the attempts to impregnate the Japanese way of thinking into young Koreans, to let them know that they should behave like good citizens of Japan. Scenes such as when Seoul Middle School students went to the cinema to watch a film that was aimed at the morale and good behavior of the people of Japan, and how they are willing to sacrifice for the country, can be used as a great example. In the last years of the occupation, young Koreans were drafted as soldiers, so films like this were supposed to strengthen the “I want to sacrifice for the country” thinking.

The film also depicts the importance of language as something in which the spirit of the nation resides. This sentence is borne throughout the film, whether it is heard from the words of the Japanese or the Koreans - ordinary people P’an-su, in whom we can see his gradual change towards his mother tongue, as he begins to realize the importance of preserving the Korean language. P’an-su as a member of the lower class of society can’t read, and when he joins the Korean Language Society, he asks Ku Cha-yŏng why they collect words and not money. She explains that it is because they are creating a dictionary and gives an example that people these days instead of “tosirak” say “bento”, or that in eastern countries, they tend to say *uri* (our) and not “we” as in western countries.

P'an-su is gradually starting to realize this problem. One of the first time he is aware of it is when he takes a drive with Chŏng-wan and Sun-hŭi and catches himself saying *uri* a lot and also corrects himself when he said the Japanese term for car - *kuruma* and then repeated it in Korean – *ch'a*. Another moment when he became aware of the need to preserve the language was when he was able to read his first book in Korean and when he was walking down the street and reading various inscriptions - he was genuinely excited about it. All this awareness culminated the moment he went on the tram and sang a song in Korean with Pong-du, which when a Japanese stranger heard it, he shouted at them that they should be quiet. This was the last straw for P'an-su, who suddenly started to fight with the Japanese and shouted various synonyms of the word “hit” in Korean along with the words “I can speak Korean if I want!”

P'an-su showed that the lowest class, the uneducated, is just as important for vocabulary and language preservation as the higher, intellectual one, as he made during his times in prison many friends from different parts of Korea who helped the Society when collecting the dialects. Historically, folklore and language have been translated only orally for many years, and now it was time to write it down somewhere.

Besides, at the beginning of the film the only language heard by Koreans from every age group was Korean. As language policy intensified, people were forced to speak more and more Japanese such as Pong-du advertising Japanese films in Japanese only. It was also interesting to follow the development of Tŏk-chin, the son of P'an-su. At the beginning of the film, he speaks Japanese only at school and with his father he uses solely Korean, but over time, Tŏk-chin asks his father why he doesn't teach little Japanese Sun-hŭi, his sister and P'an-su's daughter, but Korean instead and spoke to her only in Japanese. As we will learn in the film, Sun-hŭi was taught a little bit of Japanese at home by her brother, who taught her a few words and songs.

The Society, in order to continue to exist, because any publication of the Korean newspaper was banned, as stated by the sentence “Except for magazines published by Korea-Japan Alliance affiliates, everything in Korean will be discontinued. Likewise, all Korean bookstores...” The Korean Language Society had to involuntarily join the Korea-Japan Alliance in order to continue its activities. In fact, this ban on any Korean newspaper happened in real life around august 1940 however it seems like in the film it was pushed a bit later in the timeline. Society was portrayed in the film as very important to the morale of the Korean people, thus working with Japanese can be seen as a sign that even the last one standing was broken by the Japanese. Oppression is also portrayed through manipulation -

such as when U-chöl's wife was in prison and he decided to reveal to the Japanese where the Society's documents are to save her, but as we find out later, she was already dead, and the Japanese just took advantage of this ignorance in their favor.

It was interesting to watch the effort of the Society to capture as many words as possible for the compilation of the dictionary as well, such as in scene where Cha-yöng asks P'an-su the difference between two words that have similar meaning in and he is trying to portray it with his actions.

On top of that, *Malmoe* is trying to stay close to reality with the help of a series of historical facts as truthfully as possible. The Seoul Korea Theater (Kyöngsöng chosön kükchang), later renamed as the Greater East Asia Theater (Taedonga kükchang), where we can meet P'an-su for the first time and which later became the meeting place of the Society's forum, did not actually exist, but there is a possibility that the theater was modeled after *Kyöngsöng kükchang* or after *Chosön kükchang*, which were real cinemas build during the occupation.

During the film, we can accurately identify several times the time period in which we are currently. For example, details that correspond exactly with history are the two films shown in the cinema. The first one, shown at the beginning during a shot showing us the whole cinema with a big poster about the movie that is currently shown, is *Sarange sokko tone ulgo*, which was a real melodrama that was shown in cinemas in 1939. The second film, *Chosön haehyöp*, is shown during the second half of the film, when language policy has been already tightened. The film was released in the cinemas in 1943. An interesting detail is that when Pak Pong-du, one of P'an-su's friends, was advertising this movie on the street, the names of the actors he mentions are real actors who played main roles in the movie – Mun Ye-bong and Nam Söng-min. This film can be found on Youtube under its Korean name.

In addition, there is a third movie, whose title we cannot see, but according to the Pong-du's words, who says that "All the movies are in Japanese these days", we can determine that the time when this scene is set is somewhere after November 1941, as during this month the production of films in Korean ceased completely and films were released only in Japanese.

Another historical fact shown in the film is the change of names. At the beginning of the film, Ueda asks Wan-t'aek why, despite being a director, he still has a Korean name when "Koreans have been ordered to change their names", or during a scene when students from Seoul Middle School went to the cinema to watch a film, P'an-su heard a teacher call Tök-chin's name in Japanese, which he later at evening explains by saying that "They said

us to change names at school. You were busy, so I just changed it.”

The Society mentioned its magazine a few times throughout the film. They were talking about the Hangul magazine that really did exist and was published regularly. The film also mentions the Government-General a few times. This government really existed under the same name during the occupation.

At the end of the film, we find ourselves on August 15, 1945. This is the actual date of the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule. At the same time, this scene showed Seodaemun Prison prisoners. By the looks of it, it is safe to say, it was either filmed in the actual Seodaemun Prison History Hall or a true replica to the original.

In addition, the dictionary manuscript shown in the movie looks like a true copy of the real one. The Korean term *malmoi*, meaning “collecting words”, which was often used in the film, was a term used in real life for this purpose. Even the fact that a dictionary manuscript was found after the occupation ended thanks to a miraculous coincidence is true to the history. However, in real life we do not know who hid the final manuscripts in the Chosun Transportation warehouse at Gyeongseong Station (today’s Seoul Station) as opposed to the movie, where P’an-su smashed a window into the post office and in his last act, he threw the bag inside.

#### 4.4 DONGJU: THE PORTRAIT OF A POET

The film was published in February 2016 as a low-cost film without much publicity or promotion, with a budget 500 million won. Due to low publicity, only about 24,000 people watched the film on the first day. However after receiving favorable reviews from a small audience, in a few days the number of viewers reached over 200,000. About 2 weeks after its premiere, the film achieved sales of more than 8.8 billion won (Kim, 2019).

Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet, is a black and white, biographical *sageuk* film that depicts the life of Yun Tong-ju, and Song Mong-gyu. Tong-Ju was a poet who died a few months before the end of the occupation, in February 1945, at the age of 27. His work portrays his feelings as a young man living during this difficult period. On the contrary, his cousin and friend, the novelist Song Mong-gyu, chose the path of direct resistance to Japan and therefore found himself under surveillance by the Government General. Both ended up being arrested in Kyoto on charges of independence movement. The film focuses more on Tong-Ju's life, but the character of Mong-gyu is just as important for the development of the story (Google Arts & Culture, nd).

##### 4.4.1 SYNOPSIS

The film is divided into two parts: the present, year 1943, where an unnamed detective interrogates Tong-ju, and a retrospective showing the lives of Tong-ju and Mong-gyu up to 10 years ago, still at a time when they were in high school and had the whole future ahead of them. The film gradually alternates between the present and the retrospective, but the film clearly distinguishes between these two time periods.

The film begins in 1943, with the beginning of the interrogation process with Tong-Ju. Subsequently, we move to about 1935, where Mong-gyu gives Tong-ju a poetry book by master Chŏng Chi-yong, whom Tong-ju loves. Both Tong-Ju and Mong-gyu have to decide where they want to go to study their undergraduate degree. Tong-ju would like to study liberal arts, but his father disagrees with this and wants him to be a doctor. Despite that Tong-ju goes together with Mong-gyu to Yonhi College. Tong-ju chose to study liberal arts, specifically English literature. Even so, his father is proud of him when he sees him in a Yonhi College school uniform. Upon arrival at Yonhi College, Tong-ju and Mong-gyu meet their roommate and new friend, Kang Ch'ŏ-jung. Over time, they are joined by a girl, I Yŏ-jin from Ehwa Womans University, who eventually introduces Tong-ju to his role model, poet Chŏng Chi-yong, who even though likes Dong-ju's poems but tells him to stop writing

in Korean. In addition, Tong-ju expresses concern about whether to stay in Korea or go to Japan to study but at the cost of a change of name. During the winter holidays, Mong-gyu decides to not continue his studies for a while in order to help the Provisional Government, which in the end sends him to prison. However, he is able to go back home, where he proposes to Tong-ju to go together to Japan to continue their graduate studies. Eventually, they both did not get to the same university, but ended up studying for a master's degree in Japan, Mong-jyu in the Western history department at Kyoto Imperial University, and Tong-ju in the English literature department at Rikkyo University in Tokyo. Amid his studies, Tong-ju gets to know professor Takamatsu, who introduces him to Hukada Kumi. She admires his poems and wants to help him publish a collection of poems. However, due to strengthening the rules and Mong-gyu's secret illegal activities, which put him under the surveillance of Japan a long time ago, both Tong-ju and Mong-gyu were captured by Japanese police and taken to Fukuoka Prison, where they both died as a result of various practices.

#### **4.4.2 ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL FACTS**

The film is an almost true copy of history. Writer Sin Yŏn-sik in an interview for ScreenAnarchy (Vélez, 2016) said that most of the research needed for the film came from a biography about Yun Tong-ju, written by a cousin of Song Mong-gyu, who was actually Yun Tong-ju's cousin. He adds that the story, except for the two women who appeared in the film as Yun Tong-ju's love interests, everything is real. However, even these women appear to some extent in his, as in the Yun Tong-ju's biography are some mentions about woman similar to clues about I Yŏ-jin, but nothing that could be specified.

The film has been holding on to reality since the beginning, when the detective opens the entire film by questioning Tong-ju with the words "Born in Myungdong Village, Jilin Province, literature student at Doshisha University, Hiranuma Doju." Historical facts confirm that Yun Tong-ju was born in this village, which was part of Gando, the northeastern part of the People's Republic of China directly adjacent to Korea. This region still inhabits the largest number of Koreans living in China.

In addition, the names of the schools where Dong-Ju studied are also a fact. At first it was Yonhi College, today's Yonsei University, where he actually spent his undergraduate studies in film with Mong-gyu. The room where Tong-ju stayed is now a memorable place. His studies further led him to film at Rikkyo University, majoring in English literature at the Department of Literature, where he only woke up some time before transferring to Doshisha

University, again to a similar department - the Department of English Literature, where he studied until his and Mong-gyu arrests. These studies correspond to history both in time and in the content of his studies. (Google Arts & Culture, nd.)

Among other things, the mentioned and visited schools are also one with history. For example, today's Yonsei University was known in the past as Yonhi College. Both Tong-ju and Mong-gyu spent their undergraduate studies here. In addition, the other mentioned schools such as Kyoto Imperial University (now Kyoto University), Rikkyo University and Doshisha University are schools that both of them attended. The period of their studies as well as their fields of study at these universities are credibly portrayed in the film. Among other places that were mentioned in the film is Ewha Womans University, which I Yō-jin was attending. As this school and Yonhi College (Yonsei University) are in fact only a few kilometers apart, a friendly relationship between these people may have existed, but as there are no facts supporting the existence of Yō-jin, only indications about similar person in Tong-ju's biography.

The film reflects reality as the poems that appear during the film are actual poems made by Tong-ju. Excerpts from the poems *White Shadow (Hoen kŭrimja)*, *New Path (Saeroun kil)*, *Night of Counting Stars (Pyŏl henŭn pam)*, *A Picture of My Junior (Au ũi insang hwa)*, *The Wind Blows (Parami purŏ)*, *Confession (Ch'amhoerok)* and others are read by the actor portraying Tong-Ju himself and complete the current events of the film. In addition, the name of poetry book is real, as Tong-Ju himself named it at the end of the film *Sky, Wind, Stars and Poem (Hanŭlgwa paramgwa pyŏlgwa si)* (Namuwiki, nd.). Unfortunately, after this scene, Tong-ju is arrested and some time later dies in Fukuoka Prison, so his poems were not published during his life, but a few months after.

The film also manages to portray the characters of cousin Mong-gyu, friends or teachers who influenced Tong-ju's life with relative accuracy. Mong-gyu accompanied Tong-Ju throughout the whole film. Both in the film and in reality, Mong-gyu won the yearly literary contest in 1935 organized by Tonga Ilbo. The film also shows a shot of the newspaper in which his work was published. Even this section of the newspaper is an exact copy of the real magazine page. In addition, the film captures the truth about Mong-gyu's life, who from the very beginning of the film had a more nationalistic approach in his actions, whether talking in front of the village, talking to a high school teacher, or acts like going to the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, joining the resistance led by Kim Ku. Thanks to these activities, he was under the surveillance of Japan, which is also mentioned directly in the film.

Both of the cousins had to officially change their names to Korean due to going to Japan to study. Their Japanese names, which are repeated several times in the film, are the same names as they used in real life.

The deaths of Tong-ju and Mong-gyu were also authentic. In the film, they died as a result of injections of unknown contents, which they received during their imprisonment at Fukuoka Prison. Their deaths take place just before the end of the occupation. Consequently, both were not able to stay alive to see their country's dream freedom.

However, it is not possible to accurately determine whether the characters of professor Takamatsu or poet Chŏng Chi-yong actually met with Tong-ju, but due to the accuracy of the other facts, we can assume that these meetings actually took place or he met with similar characters. Even with the briefly mentioned characters Chiang Kai-shek, I Kwang-su and Yun Ch'i-ho, we can be sure that they appeared in Tong-ju's and Mong-gyu's lives in some way.

The film *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet* is full of real historical events, according to which we can determine where we are on the timeline between the years 1935 and 1945. From the first moment we know that we are in 1943 with subsequent retrospectives beginning in 1935, because in this year Mong-gyu won a literary competition and his text was published in the newspaper *Tonga Ilbo*.

Despite the fact that the film contains a few mentions about the draft of Korean students to the army before Tong-ju's and Mong-gyu's arrest in 1943, the Japanese did not actually start drafting Koreans until the end of 1944, when both of them were already in the prison. Tong-ju and Mong-gyu studied at Yonhi College from about April 1938 until the end of 1941 or early 1942. During their studies here, the film contains a sentence about ordering a change of name to the Japanese. Since the order to change the names was issued in 1939, we can assume that this scene took place sometime between these years, probably sometime at the end of their studies, as it is impossible to find information about Mong-gyu's first arrest during this period, which is shown in the film. We can closely determine the time by following scenes that take place in hometown and the following scene with the graduation ceremony. This event is also linked to a later scene where Tong-ju and professor Takamatsu at Rikkyo University listen to the radio announcing that Japan has announced a draft system for Koreans.

Among other things, Tong-Ju began studying at Rikkyo University in February 1942 and then transferred to Doshisha University in October 1942. Another historical event that can help us to pinpoint the timeline is during Tong-ju's monologue about the worsening

situation in school after the war has started. The war is the Pacific War, the last war that Japan participated in during the occupation of Korea, and which ultimately meant its defeat.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis was aiming to point out the degree of truth of history in *sageuk* films focused on portraying the development and usage of the Korean language during the Japanese occupation of Korea in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and whether these films can be used to gain knowledge about this period of time.

*Sageuk* movies have been gaining in popularity lately, whether it's authentic, fusion or fiction *sageuk*. With the boom of the Hallyu wave in recent years, we can see more and more films and series dealing with various topics from history, which try to present it to the audience in an interesting way. But in spite of this popularity, the problem may arise when this interest in films grows into an interest in history itself, as not all *sageuk* movies reflect history truthfully.

The aim of this thesis was based on the analysis of historical events to point out the development of the Korean language, language policies and its impact on Korean society during the Japanese occupation in 1910–1945 and analyze selected *sageuk* films and point out their degree of truth in comparison with historical facts and the possible use of this type of films in the educational process.

Based on my personal experience with using *sageuk* films in relation to teaching Korean history, I would like to point out the importance of displaying true historical facts in these films. They are important not only in explaining history to students interested in Korea but also to the general public, whether domestic or foreign.

In this work we discussed two films in detail: *Malmoe: The Secret Mission* and *Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet*. Film *Malmoe* was staying close to the truth despite the fact that all of the characters were created, in real life only people similar to them existed. But the overall story and events described in the film are directly consistent with history. In addition, this movie also makes a very good use of the background and small details which complement the overall atmosphere of the film and often helps to complete the mood needed for a particular scene, such as creating tension or relieving it.

On the contrary, film *Dongju* is a biography film that is a faithful depiction of the lives of both Tong-ju and Mong-gyu. Since the film was based on a biography about Tong-ju itself, it does not leave much room for the author of the film to use his imagination like in the film *Malmoe*. On top of that, *Dongju* does not have a spectacular scenery as in the previously mentioned film, instead it focuses on introducing us with the history almost as it happened in real life except for minor differences.

Thus we can conclude that these two films are a great example of material suitable for learning about Korean history during the occupation. However, each coin has two sides, so it is advised to check either before or after watching how close the movie is to history and how much of that was fiction.

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