

= On the Art of the Cinema =

On the Art of the Cinema (Korean : ????? , lit . ' Film Art Theory ') is a 1973 treatise by the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il . It is considered the most authoritative work on North Korean filmmaking .

The book sets forth several original theories , which can be applied to the practices of filmmaking , the arts , and beyond . Of these the theory of literature as " humanics " and the " seed theory " are the most important ones . Humanics centers on the question of a good and worthy life . In art , it emphasizes truly independent individuals who are capable of transforming society . The seed theory has become essential to North Korean film theory . It seeks to direct all artistic creation through a single ideological foundation , or " seed " . In an individual work , the seed is the synthesis of its subject matter and idea and the basis of its propaganda message . These ideas complement the themes of nationalistic form and socialist content of films . Many ideas presented in the book are justifications for the creation of propaganda supporting the Workers ' Party of Korea 's policies .

On the Art of the Cinema had major political implications on Kim Jong Il 's succession of Kim Il Sung . Kim Jong Il gained political and cultural influence in North Korean society and government by authoring the book .

The impact of On the Art of the Cinema on North Korean filmmaking is disputed . Films from before and after the publication of the treatise are similar in style and many contemporary films breach various rules laid out in the treatise .

= = Background = =

After graduating from Kim Il Sung University in 1964 , Kim Jong Il devoted himself to cultural , ideological and propaganda work at the Department of Organization and Guidance of the Central Committee of the party . Although Kim is known to have been privately interested in Hollywood films , he forbade discussion on foreign film concepts at the Aesthetic Review Meeting , an important annual film conference . After he had ordered the entire conference archive to be destroyed , Kim urged participants to be exclusively concerned with the teachings of Kim Il Sung and the party in creative work . Since then , Kim Jong Il 's influence in film and literary administration grew , and he resisted liberal artistic influence from the de Stalinizing Soviet Union . From 1968 , Kim began to work on film adaptations of guerilla plays originating from the 1930s . Kim had personally guided the production of films , such as Sea of Blood , (parts one and two , 1969) , The Fate of a Self Defence Corps Man (Chosŏn 'gŭl : ?????? ?? ; MR : Han chawi tanwŏn ?i unmyŏng , 1970) and The Flower Girl (1972) . Afterwards , Kim Jong Il began producing revolutionary operas . Kim had worked in the government arts administration for almost ten years by this time . He then wrote a series of essays based on speeches he had given to directors and screenwriters over the preceding five years , and published it as On the Art of the Cinema on April 11 , 1973 . It was his first major work . Through the rest of the 1970s , Kim continued to oversee cultural activities .

= = Ideas = =

In the treatise , Kim Jong Il seeks to apply the principles of the North Korean Juche ideology to questions of film , literature and art . According to Kim , " revolutionizing " cinema is a means of revolutionizing the whole of art and literature and exposing society to the Workers ' Party 's " monolithic ideology " and Juche . Building upon socialist realist literary theory and Kim Il Sung 's thought , Kim Jong Il constructs what has been described as a " Juche realism " . A key aim of Kim is to employ heroic film fiction to transform man into a socialist man : " Juche Il type man " .

The book deals comprehensively with aspects of cinema , including film and literary theory , acting , performance , score music , the screen , camerawork , costumes , make up , and props . Of particular importance are themes of directing and producing as the driving forces of filmmaking .

Ideas in the book are elucidated by drawing examples from North Korean films , of which Sea of Blood is the most referred one . On the Art of the Cinema presents two major theories : the theory of literature as " humanics " and the " seed theory " . Both are considered justifications for the party 's control over artistic creation . Other ideas developed by the treatise are the so @-@ called " modeling theory " and " speed campaign " . Compliance with these principles earns an artwork the title of " collective work " .

Films should be realistic , which is possible only when the filmmakers have lived with the popular masses , much like the ideal of the revolutionaries of the Korean resistance . However , this " realism " entails unadulterated worship for the leader and Juche , making it incomparable to conventional types of realism in film , like Italian neorealism . Kim builds on the idea that contemporary North Korea has transcended class conflict and no real conflicts exist to be portrayed in cinema , bar historical and external ones . This can be seen as a reassertion of the Stalinist Zhdanov Doctrine . No " negative people " who would disagree with the party 's policies can exist . Depicting conflicts within North Korean society in film could be considered being critical of the regime . When historical themes are depicted , traditions should be portrayed selectively to support present ideological needs , purged of " feudal ideologies " of traditional tales and legends .

= = = Literature as humanics = = =

The theory of literature as " humanics " (MR : inganhak) developed by Kim Jong @-@ il establishes that literature exists within the human domain . A key theme of humanics is the question of good and worthy life , allowing for propagandist and moralistic art . The idea of Chajus?ng (Korean for " independent spirit ") is also prominent in the theory of humanics . Chajus?ng is the metaphysical essence of humans struggling against oppression . Philosophically , it depends on the indeterministic view on free will in Juche . The hero of the story , in particular , embodies Chajus?ng . According to Kim , " humanics literature " gives emphasis to the development of truly independent individuals as called for by the Juche era . This brings about a transformation of the society as a whole . In North Korean literature , Chajus?ng is used as a justification of state control on literary creation and a nationalistic policy of socialism in one country .

= = = Seed theory = = =

The " seed theory " (Chos?n 'g?l : ??? ; MR : chongjaron) forms the essence of On the Art of the Cinema and , consequently , North Korean film theory in general . It has been called a " strange concept " , a method of coercing artists to follow the party line , and a means of canceling out individual creativity . Kim Jong @-@ il equates a film with a living organism , noting that in this analogy the seed is its kernel . The idea is that , if all artistic interpretation is done through a single ideological foundation , or " seed " , the resulting cinema is whole . This makes all members of a creative teamwork for a single goal , in spite of differences in personalities . The director 's task is to prevent anything foreign to the seed from entering cinema . The seed is the fundamental consciousness underlying artistic creativity .

In more concrete terms , the seed is the basis of the propaganda message of the film : " a strong , convincing idea of what to tell " . The seed synthesizes the subject matter and the idea of a work , thus providing both the form and content . In this capacity , it fuses together the Marxist ? Leninist literary theory concepts of " material " , " theme " and " thought " . The film should contribute to the ruling ideology and employ aesthetics and storytelling that support the propaganda message . For example , the seed of film The Fate of a Self @-@ Defence Corps Man revolves around the choice facing the main character , Gap Ryong : to perish under oppression or sacrificing one 's self for the revolution . Its seed could be summarized as " whether or not Gap Ryong participates in the revolutionary movement , he dies " . Surplus value , Kim argues , is the seed of Marx 's Capital .

The seed theory became influential in the literary circles of North Korea and writers sought to backtrack the seeds in classics preceding Kim 's treatise . In addition to questions of art , the seed theory was adopted to a wider range of industrial and economic activities .

= = Modeling theory and speed campaign = = =

According to the " modeling theory " , liberation struggles should be portrayed so as to combine national and class struggle . This is achieved through idolizing portrayal of the North Korean people and by producing role @-@ models .

The " speed campaign " (MR : sokto @-@ jon) calls for rapid production of films . According to Kim Jong @-@ il , by producing films as fast as possible , the overall revolutionary process is expedited . The origins of the speed campaign are in the shooting of The Fate of a Self @-@ Defence Corps Man in just 40 days when it was anticipated to take a full year . The practice was carried out after publication of On the Art of the Cinema , too . For instance , the eight @-@ part film series Unsung Heroes (1979 ? 1981) was produced by following the speed campaign principle . Each film took just 45 days to produce . Subsequently speed campaigns have been carried out not only in art , but also economic matters . It was thought of as equally important with Kim Il @-@ sung 's Chollima Movement , and remains an influential concept associated with Kim Jong @-@ il 's leadership .

= = Reception and influence = =

While official biographies of Kim Jong @-@ il describe On the Art of the Cinema as comprehensive , original and " supported by impeccable logic " , Whitney Mallett calls it boring and repetitive . Anna Broinowski calls On the Art of the Cinema " turgid , whimsical and clunky " . David @-@ West , however , points out that the work shows " some understanding of the constructive elements of the literary text " .

The work is considered the most authoritative guide on filmmaking in North Korea . However , the real extent of its influence is doubted . According to Johannes Schönherr , the work offers little new to North Korean cinema , and many of the ideas presented are unoriginal and obvious , particularly to the specialist audience of professional filmmakers Kim is writing for . Films from before and after the publication of the treatise are remarkably similar , suggesting that it had little impact on North Korean film industry in practice . Many traits of contemporary North Korean cinema , such as repetitiveness , slow editing style and old theatrical acting , go against the teachings of On the Art of the Cinema . Whatever change there was in North Korean cinema , can be attributed to political and economic pressures . Instead of contributing anything new , the work reformulates Kim Il @-@ sung 's ideas about the importance of film to art and as a propaganda tool . Rather than the theoretical breakthrough it is taught as , it is an account of Kim Jong @-@ il 's personal experiences in the film industry and an attempt to thwart the " sloppiness and thoughtlessness " he had encountered .

Kim himself considered his treatise a failure . Films it had contributed to were enjoyed at home , but abroad they were ridiculed . North Korean cinema could not compete with the quality of foreign , and in particular South Korean , films . This directly prompted him to kidnap Shin Sang @-@ ok , South Korea 's most famous film director , in 1978 . Shin and his wife , actress Choi Eun @-@ hee , were kept in North Korea for eight years under cruel conditions . Nevertheless , Shin studied On the Art of the Cinema to please Kim with the kaij? film Pulgasari , which credits Kim as the executive producer . Kim was delighted with the film and allowed Shin and Choi to travel to Vienna , where they were supposed to negotiate a deal for a sequel . The couple used the opportunity to escape , and ended up in America .

Politically , the treatise was a success . At the time of writing On the Art of the Cinema , Kim 's father Kim Il @-@ sung was systematically rallying support for the younger Kim to prepare for his succession . By authoring the work , Kim Jong @-@ il gained social and political power . He secured his father 's confidence , thus making succession possible . Kim Jong @-@ il continued to write on the arts until the 1990s and published treatises On the Art of Opera (1974) , On the Art of the Drama (1988) , On the Art of Dance (1990) , On the Art of Music (1991) , On Fine Art (1991) , On Architecture (1991) , On Juche Literature (1992) , and On Acrobatics .

On the Art of the Cinema is mandatory reading for North Korean students of literature . North

Korean filmmakers must also study the work , or even memorize it . On the Art of the Cinema also influenced South Korea 's minjung @-@ oriented People 's Cinema (MR : minjung y?nghwa) movement that was born out of the Gwangju Democratization Movement . The work 's influence goes beyond Korea , too . Australian Anna Broinowski directed Aim High in Creation ! , a movie about making a propaganda film abiding by Kim 's instructions . Danish documentarist Mads Brügger in his The Red Chapel is shown continuously consulting the treatise for artistic guidance .

= = Release details = =

The work is included in Selected Works of Kim Jong Il Vol . 5 . (enlarged edition) . The first three chapters of On the Art of the Cinema are also published as Life and Literature , The Cinema and Directing and The Character and the Actor , respectively . A reprint of the English edition of On the Art of the Cinema has been issued by University Press of the Pacific . Three speeches that were not included in the English editions ? " Some Problems Arising in the Creation of Masterpieces " (1968) , " Let Us Create More Revolutionary Films Based on Socialist Life " (1970) , and " On the Ideological and Artistic Characteristics of the Masterpiece , The Fate of a Self @-@ Defence Corps Man " (1970) ? are included in the Korean edition from 1977 .

Translations of On the Art of the Cinema include Arabic , Chinese , English , French , German , Russian and Spanish .