

Special Feature

The Historical Drama *Queen Seondeok*:  
Imaginary Memory of an Ancient Heroine

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## Historical Dramas on TV: Encounter of History and Drama

The historical dramas shown on TV in effect bring together the contradictory concepts of history and drama. While history seeks to give form to past facts, historical drama is a form of fiction, or story of what might have happened, that is subjectively created by scriptwriters. These contradictory attributes found in historical dramas, such as the combination of fact and fiction and the mixture of objectivity and subjectivity, have been the cause of many debates.

Three main areas of debate have emerged in conjunction with historical dramas. The first is the debate over the accuracy of historical research on such topics as clothing and ornaments, building structures, and lifestyles. While this debate has focused on the extent to which dramas attempt to authentically reproduce historical facts, studies in individual fields have led to marked improvements in this regard. The second point of contention has been over the degree of authenticity of the historical figures and events found in such historical dramas. For example, Yu Uitae, who is described as Heo Jun's teacher in the TV drama *Heo Jun*,<sup>1</sup> was in fact a figure who lived after Heo Jun (Lee Sang-gon 2009). For his part, Seol Wan-rang, who was introduced as one of the figures who led the forces to victory in the Battle of Sokham Fortress in the drama, *Queen Seondeok*, had already died by the time the battle took place (Kim Jong-seong 2009). Third, much has been made about the distortion of historical facts. More to the point, the distortions and illogicality associated with historical perceptions (Lee Deok-il 2001), and the search for popular entertainment that goes beyond the limitation of literary license (Park Gwang-yong 1989), have been singled out.

The first category refers to attempts in the dramas to reflect faithfully the facts of history. In this regard, it is not uncommon for production teams to emphasize the extent to which they go to reproduce periodic images based on historical evidence, a feature which they regard as one of the yardsticks with which to measure the quality of historical dramas. With regard to the second category, modifications of the facts that happened in the past are regarded as having taken place, but these are for the most part deemed acceptable changes made to foster

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1. The drama *Heo Jun*, or *The Way of Medicine: The Epic Doctor Heo Jun* (1999), which was written by scriptwriter Choi Wan-kyu, was based on the script prepared by Lee Eunsung in 1972 and 1991. The story of female physicians (*uinyeo*) found in the latter part of the drama was, however, newly added.

the development of the drama. However, the third area of debate revolves around more hard-line positions such as the argument that a particular drama has gone beyond the acceptable limit in terms of the modification of history, or the more extreme view that historical dramas are a genre that should be regarded as having no real relation to history. The creativity of the scriptwriters is permitted within the scope of the boundaries linked to the second and third areas.

### *Internal Limitations of Historical Dramas: Between Reality and Fiction*

Attempts made to separate the types of historical dramas have been motivated by the desire to organize the criticisms and debates over the encounter between history and drama. Based on the dichotomy between reality and fiction, Zoh classified historical novels into three categories:<sup>2</sup> documented historical novels, disguised historical novels, and invented historical novels. The realness and impact of the text of documented historical novels stems from an external source, namely clearly established historical facts. Meanwhile, by using figures that may or may not have emerged in history as the main characters and maintaining a sense of historical ambiguity, disguised historical novels create both historical expectations and those customarily associated with novels. Finally, invented historical novels, which are complete works of fiction, create only customary expectations associated with novels (Zoh 2009:525-526). Based on whether they emphasize the historical or fictional aspects of the story, Joo divides historical dramas into four narration types: history-based narration, history-probability narration, imaginative narration, and fictional narration. The above-mentioned disguised historical novels are generally divided into history-probability and imaginative narrations. In terms of the relationship between historical probability and fiction, Joo regards history-probability narration as being focused on probability, and imaginative narration as being focused on fiction (Joo 2004:174-175).

However, the debate up to this point has been focused on the internal limitations of the contacts that take place between reality and fiction. Another criterion that has been focused on is that of how and to what extent the

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2. The classification of historical novels should be approached from the standpoint of the encounter between actuality and fiction.

imagination of a scriptwriter has impeded on historical facts, or the link between historical reality and scriptwriters' imaginative narrations. This criterion has been used to determine how well historical facts have been reproduced in a drama, or the extent to which a drama has modified and distorted historical facts. As such, the above classification of the types of historical dramas and historical novels can be perceived as the classification of internal genres. Joo asserts that as the historical dramas which fall under the category of history-based narration have been incorporated into historical documentaries, it has now become impossible to see this type of historical drama (Joo 2004:181). If one of these four types of historical dramas has in fact been incorporated into documentaries, then should it still be included as a type of historical drama?

Documentaries are aimed at reproducing things as they really are. However, certain liberties have been taken with the genre when the related imagery cannot be found. The drama format can to this end be regarded as one of the most representative examples of this phenomenon. In the case of historical documentaries, the subject which the relevant parties are trying to reproduce is a past of which few if any vestiges remain. A documentary that seeks to reproduce past facts for which the pertinent imagery cannot be secured must inevitably borrow from the drama format. However, we do not refer to the output created through the act of borrowing from the drama format in order to reproduce a historical fact as a historical drama. This form of drama is rather referred to as a 'docudrama' (or 'dramadoc'), with this genre generally included within the documentary category (Paget 2004; Rhodes and Springer 2006). At this juncture, attention needs to be paid to the external limitations of historical dramas.

### *The External Limitations of Historical Dramas*

Generally speaking, historical dramas do not belong to the realm of history but rather that of drama. However, these differ from regular dramas because of their inherent restrictions. Rather than the reproduction of history, historical dramas are conditioned on historical facts. Put differently, while historical dramas lie at the intersection between history and drama, they are more dependent on historical facts. The internal type of the historical drama genre can be broken down based on whether its focus is on historical facts or fictional creativity. However, the development of a better understanding of the characteristics of historical dramas is predicated on an examination of the factual and fictional limitations of historical

dramas. Let us now focus on the external limitations of historical dramas.

Historical dramas are plagued by two major external limitations. While one is the limitation of reality, the other is the limitation of fiction. No matter how much a historical drama may be based on historical facts, it cannot fully convey those facts as they truly unfolded. Any request on our part that a historical drama perfectly reproduce historical facts, or conversely claims on the part of the makers of a historical drama that their work does in fact achieve this feat, should be seen as being beyond the realm of reality.

The drama *Heo Jun* includes many scenes in which Heo Jun is depicted as filling out prescriptions or curing patients who suffer from various diseases. The use of subtitles in these scenes helped to create the impression that what was being conveyed was common knowledge as far as Korean traditional medicine is concerned. The drama *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace*) included scenes depicting royal dishes that were subsequently accepted as actual recipes. Here, Japanese apricots (*maesil*) can be regarded as the perfect example of this phenomenon. *Maesil* was described in *Heo Jun* as having medicinal properties that helped to ward off epidemics. The combination of such descriptions with the scene in which pickled Japanese apricots (*maesil jangajji*) were made in *Dae Jang Geum* caused a rapid spike in the sale of Japanese apricots.<sup>3</sup> This can be interpreted as proof that a drama is not simply consumed as fiction, but rather involves a reality whose reach extends beyond the limitations of dramas. The phenomenon in which Heo Jun's prescription in the drama is actually conveyed to the viewers goes beyond the mere mindset of, "I would like to follow the main character because her accessories look good." Here, the stir caused by the drama *Dancing Gayageum* (1990) can be introduced as another example. When this drama aired on TV, the students from a particular university's Korean Music Department

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3. The social influence of the drama *Heo Jun* is evidenced by the following quote taken from an interview with a producer of Japanese apricots that appeared in a blog released by the Rural Development Administration (March 28, 2011). "In the past, I wound up throwing most of the Japanese apricots I produced away because there was very little commercial interest in that particular product. However, the demand has steadily increased since their medicinal efficacy was highlighted in the drama *Heo Jun*." Meanwhile, the Samsung Economic Research Institute released a report in which it stated that beverages that contain Japanese apricots constituted one of the hit products of the first decade of the 2000s (Digital Times, January 26, 2011). The *Paldo Dae Jang Geum Yori* (*Dae Jang Geum's Dishes from the Eight Provinces*) introduced in the drama *Dae Jang Geum* was actually served at the inter-Korean Summit (Yonhap News, October 7, 2007).

initiated a protest in front of the broadcasting company. Their protest was motivated by their misguided belief that the music department professor in the drama was in fact meant to denote one of their own (Sohn 2007:29). This can also be regarded as having originated from a perception that lies outside of the limitation of the intersection with reality of this drama. The realistic nature of a drama does not mean that a certain figure or event that actually existed must be depicted. Although fundamentally fiction, a drama's structural similarities with reality can lead it to be regarded as a discursive reality. As evidenced by the stir caused by the drama *Dancing Gayageum*, such opposition to the drama based on the belief that a real figure or event was being depicted rather than objections to the thematic depiction of Korean music in the drama stands as proof positive that these individuals have already deviated from the drama's limitation of reality.

The limitation of fiction faced by dramas is as important as the limitation of reality. While a historical drama does not fully reflect history and includes a fabricated rendering thereof, it cannot allow the imagination of the scriptwriter to run wild either. For example, it is difficult to accept the premise that Silla and Goguryeo were overrun by Baekje because such a denouement goes beyond the limitation of fiction.

There are three methods to incorporate fiction in historical dramas. The first is what can be referred to as 'filling in spaces.' Historical documents generally include only basic descriptions of important events. A scriptwriter can craft a story by filling in the inherent empty spaces in such historical documents with stories from his imagination. The second method is that of 'omitting the truth.' There are certain facts (events and figures) found in historical records which are excluded from or not highlighted in historical dramas. The third method is that of 'modifying historical facts,' or changing the chronological order, roles played by figures, or relationship between facts found in historical records. The task of 'filling in spaces' is in essence one that revolves around complimenting the contents of historical records. However, this should not be regarded as mere supplementation. For instance, particular personalities can be grafted onto historical characters by bestowing certain linguistic and behavioral patterns to them. It is also possible to incorporate a standpoint with which to better understand the background to an event by creating subplots within an episode. The 'omission of truth' is an optional task that is left up to the scriptwriter. The omission of parts can be used to overcome obstacles to the smooth development of the story the scriptwriter wishes to tell, or as a tool to highlight specific subjects. The task of 'modifying

historical facts' falls within the scope of the scriptwriter's creative freedom in terms of what elements of the story structure he/she chooses to focus on. As it involves taking the risk of being suspected of distorting historical facts, any creative liberty taken based on the limitation of fiction, such as changes in the order in which events or characters appear and unfold, changes in the roles played by characters, and changes in the relationship between facts, can be regarded as actively exposing the scriptwriter's intentions.

Although these notions of filling in, omitting, and modifying are devices used to create fiction, they are actually needed to create reality from an emotional standpoint. As Lowenthal (1985) states, the past is a foreign country. Why is it that the past feels as if it were a foreign country? Williams argues that this is the result of what he refers to as a 'felt sense.'

*"It is only in our time and place that we can expect to know, in any substantial way, the general organization.... The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period, is this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time..."* (Williams, 1961:63)

The fictionalization, or so-called tasks of filling in, omitting, and modifying conducted to dramatize history, creates a sense of foreignness amongst viewers as far as the past is concerned. The felt sense experienced in conjunction with historical dramas is created in accordance with the path taken by the scriptwriter and his/her imagination, and is experienced through images aired on the TV screen. In other words, historical dramas are the result of a combination of the writer's and the viewer's imaginations. Therefore, based on these fictionalization methods used to analyze the imaginary aspects of historical dramas, we can develop a method to interpret the meaning of historical dramas. Similar to the way the dramatization of history can differ depending on the scriptwriter, the felt sense of the viewers (the audience) can also differ. These differences can, in turn, be interpreted in terms of these three fictionalization methods.

### **Dramatization of History: *Queen Seondeok***

The rewriting of history into a TV drama can be likened to the bringing to life of a scriptwriter's imagination. In the sense that TV dramas seek to attract viewers,

such dramas can also be regarded as the fruit of viewers' imaginations. Broadcast in 2009, the drama *Queen Seondeok* proved to be immensely popular, cornering an average 35% of the viewers in its time slot, a figure that for some episodes rose as high as 45%. The presence of such high ratings clearly shows that the imagined images of Korean ancient history displayed in this drama also created an emotional consensus amongst Koreans. In addition, *Queen Seondeok* has many internal textual elements related to the dramatization of history. It contains images which spur people to experience a felt sense with regards to situations that occurred in the foreignness of an ancient era. Furthermore, while rooted in the contents recorded in historical documents, the empty spaces that exist within these historical documents make it possible for this particular drama to resort to bold and unrestrained imagination. It also features a well-organized plot that seeks to interpret the actions and relations between characters based on the three layers of individual, group, and era. This study intends to analyze the drama *Queen Seondeok* in two stages. The first revolves around the examination of the dramatization method. Based on this analysis, the issue of how the tasks of filling in, omission, and modification were carried out in the drama will be discussed, as will the impact of these tasks. The second stage involves the analysis of the drama's plot. An in-depth examination of the plot and various layers of *Queen Seondeok* will make it possible to conduct a review of how the items analyzed above are organically structured in the drama.

### *Filling in Spaces between Historical Records*

The lack of historical materials creates a complex situation for the scriptwriters of historical TV dramas. More to the point, while a dearth of historical records ensures that the spaces between historical records become wider when historical periods that occurred prior to the Joseon dynasty are employed as subject matter; this also means that there is a shortage of the materials needed to accurately reproduce images from that time. Unlike novels, dramas must visually display for their viewers such elements as clothes and ornaments, architectural styles, everyday tools, the formal relationship that exists between the king and subjects, the carrying out of official duties, and everyday customs. It becomes very difficult to arouse a felt sense amongst the viewers when such items are not properly depicted. However, a lack of historical materials is not always a weakness when it comes to producing a historical drama. Historical documents should be seen

as stimulating the imagination of the writer and providing him/her with the basic framework for the story. An abundance of historical materials means that the writer must go through a plethora of materials before he/she can organize the story structure and let loose his/her imagination. In many ways, such a denouement can have the effect of acting as a yoke on the writer's imagination. A lack of historical materials translates into a near boundless imaginative space and a great reduction in the onus which the writer must carry with regards to the script he/she produces. As such, in the case of dramas such as *Queen Seondeok* that are based on the Silla period, active use can be made of historical materials whose authenticity has been called into question such as the *Hwarang segi* (花郎世記, Annals of Hwarang).

The task of filling in spaces in the historical drama *Queen Seondeok* serves four functions.

### **Establishment of the narrative structure**

*Queen Seondeok* adopts two overarching structures as its basic axis. The first is the confrontation between the characters of Queen Seondeok and Misil. Although Queen Seondeok is an actual historical figure, Misil is an individual that only appears in the *Hwarang segi*. The second is what can be referred to as the event structure. The prophecy “*eoehul ssangsaeng seonggol namjin* (御出雙生 聖骨男盡)” constitutes the basic structure of the events that unfold in the drama *Queen Seondeok*. This prophecy, which had been conveyed by the founder of Silla, Pak Hyeokgeose, stated that the birth of twins into the royal family would signal that the seeds from which male heirs were produced had dried up. The *Samguk yusa* (三國遺事, Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) states that all male members of the hallowed bone rank disappeared during the reign of King Jinpyeong of Silla. This situation, which served as the periodic background for *Queen Seondeok*, paved the way for the ascension of a queen (Kim Jong-seong 2009; Kim Seon-ju 2009:315). However, there are no records which support the story in the drama that Deokman (name of Queen Seondeok) was born a twin, a situation that is depicted in the drama as the main obstacle to her becoming queen. As such, one can see that the act of filling in spaces was employed in this drama to create a crisis and subplot that help drive the overall narrative structure.

The boldest use of creative license found in *Queen Seondeok* is the subplot in which the prophecy leads to the newborn baby Deokman being abandoned by the royal family and growing up in a tavern located in the Taklimakan Desert.

This can be regarded as a plot element designed to build up the confrontational structure of Deokman versus Misil. Misil is characterized as a political strategist and influential heavyweight. Deokman is as such set up to play the role of Misil's rival. Deokman's childhood in the Taklimakan Desert serves as the period in which Deokman learns the essential elements she will need to become Misil's rival. Deokman grows up to become a person who is fluent in Chinese and Latin, who is well acquainted with economic matters because of her contacts with traders, who majestically embraces others, and who has the determination to return to Silla by herself. Here, by granting certain characteristics to a figure, the act of filling in spaces serves to establish the confrontational structure between characters.

### **Devices to create a felt sense**

Historical dramas can refer to historical documents, tangible remains, and relics. TV dramas must transform written historical materials into audio and visual texts. Moreover, they must also make the viewers experience a felt sense with regards to the situations depicted as having occurred in ancient history. Three types of devices are used to create a felt sense in historical dramas.

The first device is the use of spectacular scenes. If it is recorded in a historical document that a fierce battle took place, then the relevant historical drama should inevitably include spectacular scenes in which this fierce battle is depicted.

The second device is that of showing images that depict everyday life at the time. This device allows people to witness lifestyles associated with a past that is foreign to them. Since the 1990s, Korean TV dramas have routinely used special occupation groups as subjects for their stories. Examples include *Hotelier* (hotel managers), *Taereung National Village* (members of the national athletes), and *Sign* (forensic doctors). These dramas offered viewers the pleasure of seeing glimpses of the everyday life of those engaged in specialized fields. This trend has also been reflected in historical dramas. For instance, *Ilchulbong*, *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*, *Dae Jang Geum*, *Heo Jun*, and *Painter of the Wind* presented detailed descriptions of the lives of students in the Sungkyunkwan, female physicians, court physicians, and court painters. For its part, *Queen Seondeok* describes elements of the life of the *Hwarangdo* (Flower Knighthood), such as their organization and hierarchal structure, method of electing *Pungwolju*, or leader of the *Hwarang* (Flower Knights), and the special custom of *nangjang gyeolui*, in which the *Hwarang* applied makeup to their faces to show their resoluteness in the face of situations in

which their lives were in jeopardy.

The third device is that of grafting a personality onto characters by giving them a unique talking style or mannerisms. While historical materials shed light on important persons' appearances, personalities, and achievements, talking style or mannerisms fall within the realm of empty spaces. Such intangible elements should be reproduced based on the imagination of the scriptwriter.

### **Creating a felt sense of ancient history**

In addition to reproducing objective history, the dramatization of periods prior to the Joseon dynasty is brought about through the creation of a felt sense with regards to a story that happened long ago.

To this end, heroic myths and legends are often introduced. The heroes of ancient history have their own birth stories. Therefore, the majority of the dramas that feature the ancient era as their background make active use of these birth fables. Examples include Gungye's escape and the story of how he became a one-eyed person (in the drama *Taejo Wang Geon*), and the appearance of the image of a three-legged raven (*samjoko*) on the screen when Yuhwa gives birth to Jumong (in the drama *Jumong*); meanwhile, the drama *Tae Wang Sa Shin Gi (The Story of the First King's Four Gods)* is presented as a fantasy. On the other hand, although no legend related to her birth or childhood can be found in historical documents, the drama *Queen Seondeok* introduces a heroic legend plot, or what we can refer to as a departure and return plot, in conjunction with Queen Seondeok.<sup>4</sup> While Deokman is abandoned by the royal family because of the prophecy regarding the birth of twin babies, she later returns to ascend to the throne in accordance with the prophecy regarding the Big Dipper.

Mythical symbols are also used to create a felt sense of ancient history. *Queen Seondeok* introduces mythical symbols such as the 'egg of Hyeokgeose' and 'soyeopdo (a small hunting dagger).' Symbols are identification marks originally made up of two halves of a coin or a medal (Eco 1984:130). While the 'egg of Hyeokgeose,' which appears during the enthronement ceremony of King Jinji, represents the royal authority, the 'soyeopdo' is used as a tool to prove that Deokman is a princess.

Exaggerated talking styles and gestures are also used to create differences

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4. The departure and return plot has been repetitively used since the Oedipus Myth in the majority of heroic legends such as those of Moses and King Arthur.

from the modern era. While the gestures and talking styles found in dramas are usually exaggerations of what is found in reality, the degree of exaggeration is higher in historical dramas than those set in the present. In this regard, the greatest hyperbole is generally found in ancient historical dramas. Actors' use of strong intonation and exaggerated gestures are designed to denote a drama's desire to create an atmosphere akin to what it would have been like in the ancient era. For example, while modern Korean is used in the drama *King Geunchogo*, the actors pronounce the word "abeonim (father)" as "abanim" and "orabeoni (older brother)" as "orabani." As the use of such words serves as an index to indicate the drama's setting in an ancient era, it can be considered as an attempt to create a felt sense of ancient history.

### **Use of the knowledge gap**

The task of filling in spaces in historical dramas is carried out from the modern standpoint. To this end, active use is made of the knowledge gap between the past and present in these episodes. For instance, while the knowledge related to market-oriented economic concepts and science and engineering was in fact limited at the time, active use of such knowledge is made in historical dramas. Let us begin by looking at an example pertaining to economic policy. It is written in historical documents that Queen Seondeok implemented policies to improve the people's lives during the early part of her reign (Chung 2009:87). The drama *Queen Seondeok* describes these actions as having consisted of the royal family's intervention to stop aristocrats from cornering the market. Concerned about the spike in the price of grain and desiring to bring stability to such prices and ensure the financial expansion of the royal family, Deokman lowers the price of grain by temporarily releasing relief grain and military provisions, and then proceeds to repurchase the grain sold by the worried aristocrats on the market. In addition, both Misil and Queen Seondeok are able to use an engineering principle that is now regarded as common sense by modern people to produce a mysterious phenomenon. A monument suddenly arises from the ground as Misil conducts a ritual ceremony to the heavens. This is depicted as the work of her brother Misaeng, who had previously placed the monument on top of a pot of watered beans that he had buried in the ground. The viewers, who already know about modern price policies and scientific logic, can enjoy watching the development and results of this event from an omniscient point of view.

The contents used as a substitute for actual political situations or practices

in dramas serve a similar function. Deokman, Misil and Chunchu, who later becomes king, express their intention to inherit the throne in a manner that is reminiscent of how modern politicians announce their desire to run in a presidential election. As such, the act of filling in spaces from the present standpoint creates the effect of making historical dramas comparable to reality.

### *Omission of Recorded Facts*

Just because they are based on recorded contents does not mean that historical dramas deal with such historical events in their entirety. Rather, they exclude contents that are deemed to be unnecessary for the crafting of a clear narrative structure. Therefore, it is the items excluded from the process of dramatizing history that can best be regarded as clearly exposing the intentions of a historical drama.

### **Omission of female characters**

The drama *Queen Seondeok* excludes three female characters found in the history textbooks: Manho Taehu (Empress Dowager), Princess Seonhwa, and Seungman Wanghu.

Manho Taehu was King Jinheung's sister and the mother of King Jinpyeong. King Jinpyeong ascended to the throne at the age of 13 following the removal of King Jinji a mere three years after he had been named king. Politics during the early period of King Jinpyeong's reign is widely believed to have been controlled by Manho Taehu, and men such as Noribu, Sueulbu, and Kim Hujik who were appointed as *Sangdaedeung* (Extraordinary Rank One, Prime Minister) and *Byeongburyeong* (Minister of Defense) for the leading role they played in the overthrow of King Jinji (Kim Byeong-gon 2009; Lee Jeong-suk 2005:49-53). However, in the drama, King Jinpyeong is described as being beholden to Misil and her entourage for his power. The exclusion of Manho Taehu from the drama is intended to highlight the political influence of Misil by establishing the premise that royal authority during the reign of King Jinpyeong was very weak; furthermore, Deokman is also portrayed as the only central figure capable of restoring the royal authority.

King Jinpyeong had several daughters, the most famous of which was Princess Seonhwa. However, Princess Seonhwa is excluded from the drama, with only Deokman and Cheonmyeong appearing. Princess Seonhwa is not only

recorded in the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), but is also known to have been romantically linked to Prince Seodong of Baekje, the man who would eventually become King Mu. The Battle of Sokham Fortress, which is depicted in *Queen Seondeok* as an important battle, in reality occurred as a result of King Mu of Baekje's attempt to invade Silla. However, it is Deokman and Cheonmyeong's status as twins that is established as one of the main elements that lead to the core crisis found in *Queen Seondeok's* dramatic narrative. Thus, the inclusion of Princess Seonhwa in the narrative would not only require an independent episode, but also an explanation of the marriage relationship that existed between Silla and Baekje and of King Mu's invasion of Silla. As such, it becomes difficult to establish the chain of events in a simple and clear manner. This is the reason why Princess Seonhwa was omitted in the drama.

Historically, King Jinpyeong married Seungman Wanghu after the death of his wife Maya, the mother of Deokman and Cheonmyeong. After the son delivered by Seungman Wanghu dies a nebulous death, Deokman's husband Kim Yongchun is demoted. Kim Jong-Seong has stressed that this incident represented the most serious crisis which Deokman faced prior to her enthronement (Kim Jong-seong 2009). However, no mention is made of Seungman Wanghu in the drama *Queen Seondeok*. At the core of *Queen Seondeok* is the conflict between Deokman, who represents the royal family, and Misil, who stands as the symbol of the aristocracy. The competition and struggle for political power between Deokman and Misil reaches its zenith with Misil's revolt. To this end, the creators of the drama felt that the ability to highlight the conflict structure between the characters as well as the related chain of events was predicated on the exclusion of Seungman Wanghu.

Here, attention should be paid to the fact that all the historical figures which were excluded from the drama *Queen Seondeok* are women. This drama focuses on a situation in which women exercise leadership within the political arena. This has been interpreted as one of the main causes for the popularity of this drama and comparisons have been drawn with actual politicians.<sup>5</sup> The women excluded from this drama share certain common characteristics. While

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5. In addition to the appearance of many newspaper articles on the subject, MBC-TV aired a program entitled, "Does the Former Representative of the Grand National Party Dream of Queen Seondeok?" in which it introduced three key similarities between Pak Künhye (Park Geun-hye) and Queen Seondeok (*Live Today Morning*, June 23, 2009).

Manho Taehu shares commonalities with Misil in that she led politics during the early reign of King Jinpyeong, she also is similar to Deokman in that she served as the main representative of royal authority at the time. Seungman Wanghu shares the commonality with Misil that she sought to block Deokman's ascension to the throne. For her part, the fact that Princess Seonhwa's narrative requires independent episodes runs the risk of drawing attention away from the drama's basic structure. In this regard, the makers of the drama *Queen Seondeok* can be understood to have excluded these three women who appear in historical documents in order to highlight the basic structure of conflict that exists between Deokman and Misil and the personalities of these two characters.

### **Omission of famous legends**

The most famous legends relating to Queen Seondeok include the story of the peony and that of Okmunji. Nevertheless, both of these stories are omitted from the drama *Queen Seondeok*. The story of the peony revolves around how Queen Seondeok comes across a painting of peonies sent by Emperor Taijong of the Tang Dynasty that does not have any bees or butterflies in it and immediately concludes that the flower depicted in the painting must not have any scent. Meanwhile, the story of Okmunji tells how Queen Seondeok found out that the Baekje forces were lying in wait in Yeogeungok Valley by listening to the sounds of frogs at Okmunji Pond and subsequently dispatched Alcheon to lead Silla to victory.

These two legends emphasize the brightness and competency of Queen Seondeok. While they reflect the image of Deokman established in the drama *Queen Seondeok*, these two episodes were excluded because they did not fit with the drama's basic structure or story development. While Misil has already seized power over the administration, military, and the council of nobles, Deokman's challenge to Misil stems from the mere fact that she is a member of the royal family. The drama is focused on how Deokman, who was abandoned by the royal family, is able to come back and eventually become queen after having overcome the obstacle posed by Misil. Even after her enthronement, Deokman finds herself continuously faced with crises caused by Misil's challenges to her royal authority. However, the story of Okmunji is said to have unfolded during the stable period of Queen Seondeok's reign (Kim Seon-ju 2009:322-324). The use of a term that also refers to a woman's womb in this legend (*okmunji* (玉門池), *yeogeungok* (女根谷)) is designed to showcase the legitimacy and competency of

the queen (Lee Do-heum 2000:50-60). The establishment of a story that revolves around consistent crisis sequences created by her conflicts with Misil ensures that Queen Seondeok does not enjoy any period of stability in the drama. In addition, this legend does not reflect the objectives of this drama which is focused not on the superiority of the queen, but rather the difficulties that Deokman experiences in becoming and remaining queen. The story of the peony is rooted in the diplomatic relationship with the Tang dynasty of China. Although the drama *Queen Seondeok* hints at the formation of the big dream of *Samhan iltong* (Unification of Three Kingdoms), it does not showcase the political relations between the three kingdoms. Although two battle sequences with Baekje appear in the drama, these are used as episodes designed to highlight the competencies of Seolwon and Kim Yusin in the context of the power struggles that existed within the Silla kingdom.

Although the story of the peony was excluded from the drama, Tang's belittling attitude towards Queen Seondeok mentioned in historical documents comes through loud and clear. Emperor Taijong of the Tang dynasty explained his reason for his refusal to accommodate Silla's request for military assistance to ward off the attack launched by Goguryeo and Baekje with the following reply, "Silla is being scorned by neighboring kingdoms because it has a queen (女主不能善理)" (Ju Bo-don 2010:54; Kim Seon-ju 2009:324; Chung 2009:110). This content, which clearly exhibits the conditions that powerful female figures had to overcome, is described in a detailed manner in the drama. Queen Seondeok's ability to overcome this crisis by showcasing her diplomatic acumen represents one of the essential episodes that make up the structure of this drama.

The fact that famous legends which could have served as good materials with which to draw the public's interest were excluded from the drama *Queen Seondeok* helps to highlight the two functions of such exclusions, namely the establishment of the chain of events and the creation of characters' personalities. Although this study has focused on the exclusion of female characters and legends, the exclusion of other historical records should be viewed in the same light. The military action undertaken by King Jinpyeong against Goguryeo (603) and the military mistake committed by Queen Seondeok (645) are also excluded from this drama. These omissions should be seen as being motivated by the fact that such events are inconsistent with the strong and wise personality attributed to Queen Seondeok and the weak personality associated with King Jinpyeong in the drama. Furthermore, the episode in which Kim Yusin brings about the marriage

between his sister Munhui and Kim Chunchu is also a well-known one (Lee Do-heum 2000:46; Chung 2009:88). However, the exclusion of this story from the drama can also be interpreted as being the result of the fact that it is inconsistent with the character traits such as a pure patriotic heart and faith in human relations associated with Kim Yusin in the drama.

### *Modification of Historical Facts*

The aspect which historians most keenly observe in conjunction with historical dramas is the modification of historical facts. While not evident in the tasks of filling in spaces and omissions, it is such modifications that lend themselves to the distortion of historical facts. This is also the element that more often than not viewers recall when thinking about a historical drama. As elements such as the order in which characters and events occur, changes in the roles played by characters, and switching of historical facts are all created at the edge of the limitation of fiction, they can be regarded as most actively incorporating the scriptwriter's intentions.

### **Modification of characters' personalities**

The character whose personality has undergone the most modifications in the drama *Queen Seondeok* is that of King Jinpyeong. In the drama, King Jinpyeong is described as a weak king who cannot exercise his royal authority vis-à-vis Misil and her coterie. However, the majority of studies have concluded that royal authority during the Silla era was in fact strengthened during the reigns of King Beopheung and Jinheung, a denouement that allowed King Jinpyeong to wield strong royal authority during his 54-year reign (Ju Bo-don 2010; Kim Byeong-gon 2009; Kim Seon-ju 2009; Lee Jeong-suk 2005). Moreover, these studies have maintained that Princess Deokman's ascension to the throne was in fact made possible by King Jinpyeong's strong royal authority. However, describing King Jinpyeong as a weak and powerless king makes it possible to establish Deokman and Misil as the main characters in the drama. In other words, while the task of establishing the royal authority is given to Deokman, Misil is established as the one who wields actual political power.

The depiction of Queen Seondeok as an unmarried woman constitutes another important modification. According to historical records, Queen Seondeok was married to a man named Eumgalmunwang (Kim Seon-ju 2009:

315). Based on the contents of the *Hwarang segi*, Kim Jong-seong has estimated that Queen Seondeok had three husbands (Kim Jong-seong 2009). However, Queen Seondeok is depicted in the drama as having remained unmarried throughout her entire life. As a result of this modification, the drama *Queen Seondeok* is able to showcase two scenarios: First, it is able to display the features of a heroine who pursued the establishment of royal authority and paved the way for the unification of the three kingdoms. Second, this also allows the drama to create the romantic relationship with Bidam. However, one of the tragic plots of the story is that this romance is never consummated because Deokman chooses to remain unwed. The noble mind of this heroine who foregoes individual happiness becomes the tragically beautiful background to the latter part of the drama. On the contrary, Misil is established as a character that has been married to influential figures such as King Jinheung, King Jinji, Sangdaedeung (Prime Minister) Sejong, and Byeongburyeong (Defense Minister) Seolwon. Thus, we are shown Misil's willingness to take any measures to accomplish her purposes as well as her capability to manage personal relations as she maintains her polygamous situation. Queen Seondeok's unmarried status and Misil's multiple marriages are therefore designed to establish a clear contrast between these two characters.

### **Modification of the relationship between historical figures**

The relationships between the characters found in the drama *Queen Seondeok* develop around the conflicts between Deokman and Misil and their respective helpers. While Deokman's helpers consist of those with 'value-based motivations' that pursue moral justification and ideals, Misil's helpers are composed of those with realistic 'interest-based motivations.' Here, special attention needs to be paid to the changes made to the characters of Deokman's helpers, Munno and Princess Cheonmyeong, because of the narrative structure of the drama.

The *Hwarang segi* states that while Seolwon always assisted Misil, Munno always assisted Sejong (Kim Jong-seong 2009). In other words, Munno is described in historical documents as one of Misil's helpers. However, the role of Munno is altered in the drama *Queen Seondeok*. Although Munno is mentioned in one scene as having participated in Misil's plot to overthrow King Jinji, he subsequently plays an important role as a helper for Deokman's camp. In keeping with the subplot revolving around the mission that King Jinheung assigned to him, Munno is the one who takes in Deokman after she was abandoned by the royal family. This in turn creates the reason for Deokman's subsequent return

to Silla. During the latter part of the drama, Munno also sows the seeds for Deokman's grand cause known as the Unification of the Three Kingdoms (Oh 2010:28). As such, Munno is firmly entrenched in the main intersections of the drama, namely the abandonment and return of Deokman and the growth of Deokman's power. The important role assigned to Munno in the drama, an aspect that involved the alteration of the contents of historical records, can be traced back to the historical fact that Munno was not only the son-in-law of the King Jinheung-era politician Geochilbu, but also held the status of *Gukseon* (國仙, State Immortal), or leader of the *Hwarang*. Geochilbu is the one who has been credited with compiling the *Guksa* (國史, National History) that effectively cemented the awareness of the state within Silla. To this end, his son-in-law Munno becomes the right person to bestow the awareness of the mission known as the Unification of the Three Kingdoms upon Deokman. After Munno disappears with Deokman on the day of the twins' birth, the position of *Gukseon* is depicted in the drama as remaining vacant. This 'vacant seat' is meant to represent the lack of a decisive helper. The moment that Munno comes back and sits on the seat can be regarded as marking the culmination of the composition of Deokman's helpers, a situation that unfolds as a dramatic catharsis.

Princess Cheonmyeong, who serves as the main foil to Misil until Deokman's return, suffers a tragic death. However, the *Hwarang segi* states that Princess Cheonmyeong married Yongchun, with whom she enjoyed a happy and peaceful life (Kim Jong-seong 2009). These changes wrought to the character of Princess Cheonmyeong in the drama were motivated by the need to complete Deokman's helpers prior to her return (Oh 2010:20), and by the desire to create a turning point in the drama. Princess Cheonmyeong's death forces Misil to be confronted by a political crisis and creates the motivation Deokman needs to commit herself to confronting Misil. The natural changes wrought to the characters of Deokman and Chunchu can be viewed as a consequence of the 'tragic beauty' occasioned by Princess Cheonmyeong's death.

### **Modification of the timeframe**

The drama *Queen Seondeok* deals with a 70-year timeframe spanning from the late reign of King Jinheung to the reign of Queen Seondeok (or from about 576 to 647). In this regard, the strangest element in this drama is the fact that Misil's physical appearance remains unchanged throughout its duration. Misil should have been in her 80s when Deokman ascended to the throne in 632. Moreover,

she would have been in her 60s during the period in which the struggle between Deokman and Misil was taking place. The drama's ability to maintain a sense of reality despite the fact that Misil's appearance throughout the drama is that of a woman in her 40s can be explained by the fact that Misil's function within the drama is to serve as a representative of a power group and their values rather than as a reproduction of a specific person. The drama is as such focused on highlighting the differences between the royal family and aristocrats in terms of their perceptions of politics and styles as well as the conflicts between these two groups rather than on the personal conflict between Deokman and Misil.

The same holds true for the Battle of Sokham Fortress. In the drama, *Byeongburyeong* Seolwon is depicted as being on the verge of departing on a mission to recover Sokham Fortress from Baekje. However, this event in fact occurred after Seolwon's death (Kim Jong-seong 2009). Rather than reproducing the historical fact known as the Battle of Sokham Fortress, this episode is introduced to show how Seolwon's strategy entraps both the enemy (Baekje forces) and his political opponents (Deokman's helper Kim Seohyeon). As the Battle of Sokham Fortress is introduced to highlight the outstanding nature of Seolwon's military achievements and political strategy, the scriptwriter could in fact have created other fictional situations to serve his purpose. However, the writer chose to introduce this historical event, albeit with a changed timeframe, in order to heighten the drama's overall sense of reality.

### *The Plot of Queen Seondeok*

The fictionalization tasks employed in historical dramas have been analyzed based on the concepts of filling in, omission, and modification. Such fictionalization is designed to bring about a general reorganization of the contents of historical documents. However, the significance of historical dramas differs greatly depending on how historical materials are reorganized into a plot. The basic plot, or story structure, of the drama *Queen Seondeok* is that of the departure and return of an epic heroine. The process in which this epic heroine tale unfolds is as follows.

Beginning (abandonment of Deokman) → development (return of Deokman) → climax (conflicts with Misil) → conclusion (establishment of the royal authority by Queen Seondeok)

In addition to the subplots established under the main story structure, the characteristics of TV dramas dictate that a crisis situation should be introduced into every episode.

The plot of *Queen Seondeok* is based on a complicated structure. Unlike dramas set in the modern era, historical dramas, especially those set against the backdrop of ancient history, tend to focus on exaggerated emotions and a comparatively simple event structure. Historical dramas feature an 'and then' style chronological sequence structure. This can be regarded as the result of the limitations created by historical records, legends and the temporal order. In other words, it is difficult to sustain suspense or mystery plots in a historical drama because the viewers are already aware of the events that unfold therein. As such, the personalities of the characters are fixed and their behavioral patterns become monolinear. However, as analyzed above, *Queen Seondeok* omits well-known legends and historical records and actively sets out to fill in the spaces. As a result, a more complex historical drama structure is produced.

### **Formation of complex characters**

The complexity of *Queen Seondeok* lies in the personalities of its characters. This complexity can in turn be analyzed according to the changes to their external nature and their internal anguish.

The changes to the external nature of Deokman make clear the contrast that exists between her and Misil. Deokman consistently shows signs of external changes as time passes. Deokman's childhood in Taklimakan Desert is composed of a learning period, her life as a commoner, and her growing interest in her true identity. In particular, the doubts surrounding her identity created by the absence of a father are intricately connected to her future shortcomings as an unmarried queen. Deokman's adolescence following her return to Silla is composed of her incorporation into the institutional system and her achievement of an organizational infrastructure. The rapid changes in her identity, the agony caused by what she perceives as unfavorable conditions, and the absolute trust relationship she establishes with her helpers, result in a certain sense of perturbation imbuing the character of Deokman during the period in which her status of princess is restored. Following her enthronement, Deokman becomes a being who resolutely decides to sacrifice her own personal life and assume the onus of history and the state. She begins to pursue more dignified values. Thereafter, she begins to grow suspicious of everyone, including her helpers. As such, Deokman continuously

grows and matures. On the contrary, Misil maintains the same external nature throughout. Misil's position and status is already established at the start of this drama, and this external appearance remains the same throughout. Although this may not have been the production team's intention, Misil's consistent appearance even in the face of father time becomes the aspect that symbolizes her character. Therefore, we can see that while Deokman is the protagonist within the drama *Queen Seondeok's* basic plot, Misil serves as the antagonist.

Contrary to the obvious contrasts when it comes to changes in their external nature, Deokman and Misil share the commonality of both continuously wracked by worry and being internally conflicted. These two characters can be viewed as very modern types of characters as far as historical dramas are concerned. This is because man only started to be aware of the concept of mental anguish after Rene Descartes' formulation of the concept of *Cogito*. On the surface, the conflict between Deokman and Misil revolves around the issue of who should ascend to the throne. However, this conflict is rooted at a much more fundamental level than that of private interests. Rather, this conflict also incorporates differences in their respective power bases and in their perception of how politics should respond to the ongoing changes of the day.

As far as the power base is concerned, the Gaya group emerges as the third party in the conflicts between Deokman's royalists and the aristocrats of Misil. While Deokman attempts to incorporate the Gaya group into her main power base, Misil intends to frustrate Deokman's attempts. It is amidst such circumstances that Kim Yusin demonstrates that he is a complex character. While he exhibits loyalty towards Silla, Kim Yusin of Gaya, a land annexed by Silla, anguishes over how he can bring his people into mainstream Silla culture. In the end, Kim Yusin tries to walk a fine line by marrying Misil's granddaughter but remaining loyal to Deokman. The process through which Deokman incorporates the Gaya group is also not described in a simple manner. Rather, Deokman's complex response, namely that of suppressing them by force while easing their suspicions and fears, can be regarded as a manifestation of the philosophy of the main political power group. To this end, the sequences featuring Kim Yusin can be viewed as functioning within Deokman's plot.

The differences in the perception of politics become even more concrete during the process in which Deokman wages a counterattack against Misil. Misil regards the public as subjects who should be ruled, seeks to manipulate public opinion by monopolizing the information related to astronomical phenomena,

and consoles the public by initiating various relief measures. Meanwhile, Deokman changes her policy to create conditions which make it possible for the public to increase productivity. This is achieved through such means as the release of information pertaining to astronomical phenomena and the distribution of farmland. These policies represent more than an additional episode in which differing perceptions of politics are exposed. Rather, these policies, which Deokman determined after endless worry, were needed to address the periodic changes and were rooted in a higher aspiration than simply damaging the power base of Misil.

As such, the internal conflicts afflicting the main characters in *Queen Seondeok* are laden with the existential conditions faced by modern individuals expected to make judgments and final decisions.

### **Multilayered plots**

The plot of *Queen Seondeok* has a complex multilayered structure that encompasses a ‘discovery plot,’ an ‘episode-based plot,’ and a ‘tragic plot.’

The ‘discovery plot’ is often employed in stories that have limited scopes. This can be regarded as the inherent fate of TV dramas, which have to end every episode with a cliffhanger. By moving the middle sequences of chronologically-ordered narratives to a part of the story that unfolds later on, the discovery plot makes it possible for viewers to become truly aware of what is going on at a ‘later’ point in time. The switching of sequences causes the plot to change (Riessman 1993:17-18); in this regard, *Queen Seondeok* makes frequent use of this discovery plot. For example, a scene ends with Deokman turning her head after arguing with Misil. The next scene is one in which we see a conversation between Misil and Seolwon. Here, what has been left out of the previous scene is revealed using an indirect visual discourse.

(Misil to Seolwon) “Princess Deokman said.”

(Insertion of part deleted from the previous scene, Deokman to Misil)

“I hope that Saeju will enjoy a long life.”

The switching of sequences helps to induce the curiosity of viewers and increase the implications of the dialogue. Another example of the use of a discovery plot occurs in the sequence in which Bidam realizes Munno’s true intention. Believing that the man who raised him, Munno, is about to betray him, Bidam

chases after his master to take the book consisting of maps of the three kingdoms entitled *Samhan jise* away from him. During his last conversation with Munno, who lies dying after having been targeted by assassins, Bidam realizes that he has misunderstood his master. This discovery plot allows the characters to go through complicated internal agony characterized by the following chain of emotions: *suspicion* → *discovery* → *lamentation* → *self introspection*. The use of such devices makes possible the production of complex characters.

The 'episode-based plot' is used to create implications that reflect the intentions of the drama without being restricted by the temporality of historical facts. Good examples of the use of such episode-based plots include Misil's and Chilsuk's revolts. Misil's revolt is motivated by Princess Deokman's reform proposals. These include the reform of the taxation system so as to isolate the aristocrats, and the replacement of the practice of requiring unanimous approval within the *Hwabaek hoewi* (Council of Nobles) with the need for a mere majority. In response to these reforms, Misil mobilizes private forces made up of aristocrats to incapacitate the *Hwabaek hoewi* and proclaims martial law. However, the local power groups that once served as a key element of Misil's power base flock to Princess Deokman and Misil's revolt is crushed. In other words, Misil's revolt is the climax sequence of the conflict between Deokman and Misil that has served as this drama's basic structure. Chilsuk's revolt occurs because of opposition to the enthronement of Princess Deokman. Viewed from a chronological standpoint, Misil's death and the enthronement of Queen Seondeok occurred some ten years apart (Kim Jong-seong 2009). However, these two episodes are depicted as having occurred in a successive manner in the drama. As such, Chilsuk's revolt is logically established as an extension of Misil's revolt that is carried out by groups who have lost their master following Misil's suicide. The drama thus includes Chilsuk's revolt as the sub-sequence of Misil's revolt. By reorganizing individual episodes into a plot that is based on time compression, the drama is able to sustain the conflict structure between Deokman and Misil. Based on the context in which these conflicts unfold, the audience comes to understand that the enthronement process of Queen Seondeok was not a smooth one.

The main plot of the drama *Queen Seondeok*, which is composed of the above-mentioned subplots, is a tragic one. The elements which make *Queen Seondeok* a tragic drama can be traced back to the contradictions between what Deokman has and what she pursues. While Deokman possesses a pure nature, she pursues a great cause. This highlights the contrasts between the individual

and the collective, and drives a wedge between her romance with Bidam and her duties as a heroine (establishment of royal authority and the unification of the three kingdoms). The subplot revolving around the romance with Bidam can be regarded as a reversal plot of the wider tragic plot. The use of a narrative structure in which although things start off well, a misunderstanding in the middle causes a climax that runs contrary to the intentions of the main protagonists can be regarded as a reversal plot. The narrative structure of such reversal plots can be summarized as follows.

(Beginning: romance)

Deokman and Bidam share the fate of being placed under the protective care of Munno.

→ During their adolescence, Bidam plays the role of guardian angel to Deokman.

→ Bidam plays an important role as a helper to Deokman in her confrontation with Misil and engages in a romantic affair with Deokman

(Middle: misunderstanding)

→ Deokman opts to pursue a great cause rather than individual love.

→ Misunderstanding emerges and Bidam's complicated past is introduced as a subplot.

(End: death)

→ Bidam raises a revolt against Queen Seondeok.

→ Still in love with Deokman, Bidam dies in front of his beloved.

The complex character created by the combination of these two contradictory natures results in Deokman's life being marked by tragedy in the background, a denouement that contrasts with her ascension and achievements visible in the foreground. While tragedy involves notions such as penance and spiritual purification within a descending plot, comedy involves such concepts as vitality and delight within an ascending plot (Scholles and Kellogg 1966:290). The sequences in which Deokman is able to overcome Misil and ascend to the throne are laden with elements found in comedic plots. However, in her individual life, Deokman goes through, at her own volition, successive bouts of penance. Emotional purification is clearly on display in the last scene in which Deokman's dream that she had on the first day she came back to Silla is revealed. Deokman,

who has by now become ill and weak, tells Yusin about her dream. Deokman thinks she knows who the woman embracing her at the market on the first day she came back to Silla was. The woman was none other than adult Deokman. Adult Deokman tells young Deokman that hers will be a lonely life in the future, but that she must endure it. Superficially, this last scene appears to depict young Deokman meeting her future self. However, in actuality, it describes Deokman, who has now reached the end of her life, recalling her start in Silla. This can be seen as the repentance of an individual whose life has been marked by the conflict between what she has and what she pursues, or as a process that revolves around the emotional purification of an embedded sense of loss.

### **Imaginary Memory of TV**

Historical dramas create plots that transform the contents found in historical documents into complete stories. Such plots are composed in historical dramas based on such tasks as the filling in the spaces between historical documents, omission of recorded historical facts, and the modification of such facts. Through such means, historical dramas are able to attach added significance to a particular period. Historical dramas have to some extent allowed the people of today to claim that they are better informed about a certain period than those who had actually lived through it (Lowenthal 1985:435). The composition of a plot is based on the standpoint from which it is interpreted. In turn, the standpoint from which a plot is interpreted is based on “interests and emotional satisfaction” (Lowenthal 1985:480). Therefore, the reproduction of the past is carried out in accord with the necessities of the present. There are many occasions in which the present requires the past. These include when one intends to obtain lessons through comparison, when one intends to justify or glorify the present, when one intends to overcome the anxiety occasioned by the uncertainties of the present (Sohn 2007) and when one intends to establish a communal identity (Kim Eung-Jong 2011; Kim Yeong-mok 2003). There are many ways in which the past can be evoked in the present. These include history textbooks, museums, historical novels, and historical dramas. While textbooks are the most potent structure with which to convey standpoints and knowledge, TV constitutes the widest venue through which to reach the public. The historical dramas aired on TV create a felt sense of the past through images, and use attractive characters and events to coax

viewers into watching the drama.<sup>6</sup>

On TV, more often than not, desires are actively incorporated in the process of reproducing the past. In the drama *Queen Seondeok*, this incorporation process involved three layers. The first was the establishment of a narrative structure based on the selection (omission) of characters from amongst the key figures of the day, the bestowing of specific personalities, and the establishment of the conflict and friendly relations between the characters. Furthermore, the story develops based on the actions and reactions of characters within this basic narrative structure, while continuously offering up a mixture of recorded and fictional events. At this juncture, the temporality of historical documents can freely be altered in accordance with the basic narrative structure.

The second is the provision of entertainment in order to draw viewers' attention. Here, visual and other forms of enjoyment are used to mobilize rational thinking. Visual enjoyment includes the display of spectacular scenes and images that help to create a felt sense toward the past. The use of episodes that employ the gap in knowledge between the past and present make the viewers feel a sense of superiority that emanates from being one of 'those who already know.' This strengthens the notion that the present is further developed than the ancient era as well as the belief that human history has continuously progressed. As a result, the existence of 'me' in the present is also justified. The events are reorganized based on a multilayered plot in order to evoke a strong emotional reaction from viewers that includes surprise, grief, and catharsis. This enjoyment can be secured by ensuring that viewers exercise their rational thinking skills.

The third is the actualization of the image of the hero or heroine. All structures and elements are focused on one hero or heroine in historical dramas. The significance of the hero or heroine is based on two premises: the notion of a past which is connected to the present, and memories of values that need to be restored because they no longer exist in the present. As such, the nature of heroes

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6. Park Min-ja's study (2010) includes several interesting points in this regard. As part of her investigation of the perceptions of high school students, she divided the episodes of the drama *Queen Seondeok* into historical and fictional episodes. The students exhibited a tendency to remember the contents that were not found in their textbooks, that is which were created by the drama, and also remembered the contents of their textbooks in cases where such contents differed from what was depicted in the drama. A follow-up survey conducted six months later found that the students had forgotten the general contents of the drama but still remembered the images of the characters.

or heroines in dramas constitutes a criterion upon which lessons, solace, and identity can be established. The image of the heroine bestowed upon Deokman in the drama *Queen Seondeok* is one that is based on a combination of contradictory elements. These paradigmatic elements make up the contrast between ‘what she has’ and ‘what she pursues.’ These elements include the individual versus the collective, romance versus historical duty, love for Bidam versus Bidam’s revolt and the suppression of the revolt, and a story based on an ascending plot versus a story based on a descending plot. These paradigmatic elements can be regarded as the contradictory combination of reality and ideals.

What Deokman Has	What Deokman Pursues
Pure personality	Great cause
Individual	Collective
Romance	Historical duty
Love for Bidam	Bidam’s revolt and suppression of the revolt
Story based on an ascending plot	Story based on a descending plot
<b>Reality</b>	<b>Ideal</b>

In the episode entitled “Misil’s Revolt,” Deokman clearly takes on the appearance of a heroine who combines reality and the ideal. Deokman not only shows the realistic desire to suppress Misil’s revolt with military force, but eventually makes the idealistic decision not to call for the forces that were at the front line. At one point, Misil also takes the same ideal attitude, thus showing that she is in fact the mirror image of Deokman. The conflicts between Deokman and Misil, which form the basic structure of the drama *Queen Seondeok*, can as such be regarded as her own internal conflict. Deokman, a combination of reality and the ideal, can be viewed as an amalgamation of the small anguished modern ego and of the ancient hero who is capable of dreaming a great dream. The historical drama *Queen Seondeok* is a fictional work that seeks to strike a chord with the viewers by using an appropriate metaphor of reality, and to fulfill viewers’ desires through the pursuit of ideals which do not exist in reality. To this end, *Queen Seondeok* is the story of an ancient hero which modern people yearn for. The formulation of the past found in the historical drama *Queen Seondeok* can be regarded as an imaginary memory that reflects the desires of modern people.

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## Abstract

Because they combine the two contradictory spheres called history and drama, the potential for debate is inherent in the historical dramas aired on TV. This study divides the fictionalization process through which a historical fact is rewritten as a drama into three tasks: 'filling in spaces,' 'omission of historical facts,' and the 'modification of historical facts.' The task of 'filling in the spaces' refers to the filling in of the empty spaces inherent in historical records with stories created based on the imagination of the writer. The 'omission of historical facts' refers to the act of omitting events and characters recorded in historical documents from a drama. The 'modification of historical facts' revolves around the changing of the temporal order, roles of characters, and relationship between facts in a manner that departs from what is found in the historical records. The plot is then used to comprehensively reorganize these three fictionalization methods. The analysis of *Queen Seondeok* based on these four factors revealed that this drama in fact incorporates complex and conflicting elements. Various events occur within the basic narrative structure that revolves around the conflict between Deokman, who represents the royal authority, and Misil, who stands as the symbol of the aristocracy. The drama exhibits a combination of two different plots: comedy and tragedy. The story of how Deokman is abandoned by the royal family only to return to Silla and ascend to the throne after having overcome Misil constitutes the ascending plot (of comedy). However, Deokman's choice of the great causes of establishing the royal authority and unifying the three kingdoms actually pushes her to pursue austere discipline in her personal life. This helps to create the atmosphere of anguish and loss found in descending (tragic) plots. In turn, paradigmatic elements are established through a combination of reality and the ideal. As a result, the drama *Queen Seondeok* features the amalgamation of the small anguished modern ego and the ancient hero who pursues a big dream. To this end, the formulation of the past found in the historical drama *Queen Seondeok* can be regarded as an imaginary memory that reflects the desires of modern people.

**Keywords:** historical drama, *Queen Seondeok*, narrative, plot, imaginary memory