Cultural Co-creation by Filmmaking Sojourners: Transnational Film Co-production in East Asia

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Transnational film co-production in East Asia exemplifies cultural globalization, with cultural ideas and practices interacting across national borders and influencing people's beliefs, values, and behaviors. This article examines the role played by East Asian filmmaking sojourners as practitioners in transnational film co-production. In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 film filmmaking sojourners in Japan and South Korea to answer two research questions: (1) What kind of cultural contact and learning do filmmaking sojourners experience in the practice of transnational film co-production; and (2) what impact do their experiences have on their respective national film industries after they finish their sojourn? The results reveal several challenges that sojourners face as cultural others working to produce films in unfamiliar environments with fellow creators from different filmmaking cultures, as well as the effects that the transnational co-production experience has had at the individual and industry levels, including the improvement of working conditions.

Keywords: sojourner, cultural globalization, transnational film co-production, film industry, cultural industries, East Asian film industries

Introduction

> "With globalization and with a lot of power evaporating from the nation-states, the late-19th century established hierarchies of importance, or 'pecking orders' of cultures, presenting assimilation as an advancement or promotion, dissolved."[1]

The commencement of the twenty-first century witnessed the onset of a major global renaissance underpinned by the internet and advances in digital technology. Within East Asia, this period has been marked by precipitous sociocultural transformations. Zygmunt Bauman, in discussing the changing dynamics of the relationships among ethnic groups, nations, and globalization, suggests that the once-prevalent issue of identity has lost relevance. He argues that humans are gradually, if sometimes reluctantly, learning the skill of accepting cultural differences. He points out that the question of whether or not one should assimilate into a dominant culture is no longer a pressing concern for individuals living in modern cities; today, people need not abandon the uniqueness of their own culture or ethnic traditions when entering another cultural sphere.[2]

Bauman describes contemporary society, in which people come into contact with and learn from different cultures through various technologies and platforms, as one of "liquid modernity," marked by constant change in relationships and identities. This stands in contrast to "solid modernity," where differences were only temporarily tolerated, and an expectation existed that foreigners should become "like us" in order to minimize discomfort. In the past, "living with strangers" did not need to persist for long, and there was little need to develop skills for co-existing with people culturally different from oneself. The current world is diasporic, however, with people living scattered across regions that are separate from their geographic places of origin. Thus, this is an era in which it is necessary to learn "how to live with strangers" every day. "You are a stranger, I am a stranger, we all remain strangers,

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[1] Zygmunt Bauman, "Interview with Zygmunt Bauman," by Joint Distribution Committee-International Centre for Community Development (Marcelo Dimentstein, Alberto Senderey, Andy Spokoiny and Shira Shnitzer), February 2009. https://www.jdc-iccd.org/publications/interview-with-zigmunt-bauman-2009/

[2] Ibid.

and nevertheless we can like or even love each other."[3]

The dramatic increase in transnational mobility that has occurred over the past half century has been accompanied by what can be called "cultural globalization": the process by which cultural ideas, practices, and products spread and interact across national borders, driven by advancements in communications technology, international travel, and economic integration. As the name indicates, cultural globalization differs conventional economic globalization, which is driven by the FDI, knowledge transfer, and trade activities of multinational enterprises (Kleinert 2021), in that it is *cultural*, not economic, ideas, practices, and products that spread and interact. "Cultural globalization affects people's beliefs, values, and behaviors" (Organista et al. 2010, p. 34), and leaves few monocultural societies unaffected by other cultures (Van Oudenhoven and Ward 2013).

One of many arenas in which the process of cultural globalization can be observed is the East Asian film industry. Since the early 2000s, transnational film co-creation has become more prominent in East Asia, with filmmakers from different cultural backgrounds coming together to jointly create films (DeBoer 2014).

International film co-production, long seen and financially supported in Europe, expanded to East Asia in the wake of increasing import and export of media content among East Asian cultural industries. This production mode is characterized by the direct interaction of human resources from different cultures in a single film project. In international film co-production, a central role is played by "sojourners," filmmakers who traverse the film industries of different countries creating movies through transnational encounters (Bochner 2012; Siu 1988; Ward and Rana-Deuba 1999). Sojourners are temporary residents in a place that is not their usual or permanent home. Within the cultural industries, filmmaking sojourners serve as primary conveyors of culture, as they provide initial exposure to various cultural elements that subsequently influence consumers' engagement with cultural products. As such, they can be regarded as a tangible representation of cultural globalization and "liquid modernity." In addition to playing a direct role in the creation of cultural content, they are also agents who experience cross-cultural contact within different national film industries.

The study described in this paper aims to answer two specific research questions: What kind of cultural contact and cultural learning do filmmaking sojourners experience in the practice of transnational film co-production,

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[3] Ibid.

and what impact do their experiences have on their respective national film industries after they finish their sojourn? In order to answer these questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with filmmaking sojourners who with experience in international film co-production in the 2000s in East Asia. In addressing these questions, the study also aims to shed light on the broader process of cultural globalization.

Previous Research

Globalization and Cultural Industries in East Asia

The spread of transnational media culture is an emerging phenomenon in the globalized world (Straubhaar 2008). Transnational production of cultural content has spread rapidly in East Asia with the increase in television satellite channels, the development of internet platforms, and expansion of film production since the 1990s. The once-predominant idea of cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976), as exemplified by the unilateral flow of Hollywood films to the rest of the world, has been tempered by a quantitative expansion of media content elsewhere, including multi-directional flows of culture in East Asia (Jin 2017). Even as the products of Hollywood continue to fill theatre and television screens worldwide, South American viewers prefer to watch telenovelas, whose content is more culturally proximate to their lives; Korean TV dramas and K-pop music are distributed worldwide through various platforms (Jin 2019); and Japanese anime is winning the hearts of global viewers (Iwabuchi 2002).

Research on East Asian cultural globalization notably begins with the work of Koichi Iwabuchi in *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002). Iwabuchi describes the influence of Japanese animation, pop music, and fashion and dissects how Japan's cultural sector has established a foothold in global markets. Researching the growth of China's cultural industries, Michael Keane, in *Created in China: The Great New Leap Forward* (2007), elucidates the relationship between the Chinese government and expansion of the nation's cultural sector. Both of these studies offer a comprehensive overview of cultural industries and their scalability from a national perspective. However, they do little in terms of elucidating the relationship between cultural industries and their practitioners within the context of interactions with other East Asian nations.

While some scholars define globalization in terms of imagery, strategies,

and political mobility (Urry 2000, p. 12), Arjun Appadurai offers a perspective that regards transnational flows as the foundation of cultural globalization. As he puts it, the "new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" (Appadurai 1996, p. 32). Appadurai addresses the complexity of globalization by describing "scapes": social and cultural flows that move around the world in multiple directions, affecting nations and people in diverse ways. His five scapes are ethnoscape (movement of people), financescape (movement of money), technoscape (movement of technologies), mediascape (movement of media), and ideoscape (movement of ideas). Film production falls into the category of mediascape, which Appadurai defines as "the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios)" (2004, p. 53) as well as the images of the world produced by such media.

Yiu Fai Chow presents a study of cultural industry laborers in East Asia in "Hong Kong Creative Workers in Mainland China: The Aspirational, the Precarious, and the Ethical" (2016). Chow interviewed 12 creative workers who moved from Hong Kong to China, asking them about their transcultural experiences in the Chinese film industry. While this study includes an analysis of cultural differences between Hong Kong and Chinese film industry workers, its primary focus is on the internal conflicts of those who are subjected to China's film censorship, as well as uncertainty and economic precarity caused by shifting national policies. As the Chinese film industry is inseparable from the government's cultural policies, Chow's research offers little in terms of analysis of cultural globalization.

The above studies focus primarily on issues related to the expansion of cultural industries and domestic recognition within a single nation. They do not explore cultural exchange or address the precarity experienced by transnational film workers. The present study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing the labor experiences of film industry practitioners engaged in international co-production and elucidating the specific mechanisms by which cultural co-creation occurs in the transnational labor landscape of the East Asian film industries.

Sojourners in Globalization

Research on migration and immigrants holds a significant place within the field of sociology, but studies on globalization and sojourners are few. National statistics about sojourners are scarce, and those that exist are mainly

education-related. Research on sojourners within societies undergoing sluggish globalization has failed to transcend the confines of diaspora studies, even as those societies confront rapid cultural globalization.

Sojourners are people who travel through an area or move to a new location for a limited period of time, such as students studying abroad or expatriates. The term can also be employed to describe a person who lives away from their usual place of residence for a limited period. Unlike immigrants or refugees, sojourners intend to return to their country of origin after completing their assignment, and therefore have "a finite perspective [which] influences how they acculturate to their host society" (Bochner 2012). Siu describes sojourners as individuals who have a clear purpose for residing for an extended period in a foreign country and maintain the intention of eventually returning to their home country (Siu 1988, p. 39). According to Uriely (1994, pp. 431-432), sojourners are individuals who perceive their stay in a host society as temporary, even if they have no definite plan for returning to their home country. In contrast to immigrants who have a clear intention to reside permanently in the host country, sojourners view their stay as provisional.

Terminology similar to "sojourners" can be found in various research literatures. Sociologist Georg Simmel describes "strangers" in cultural contact situations, contrasting them with "wanderers" who arrive today and depart tomorrow. Simmel's notion of the stranger suggests that they might stay beyond tomorrow, yet they still potentially retain a wandering characteristic. Simmel's exploration of Jewish mobility resonates with Robert E. Park's concept of the "marginal man" and Siu's definition of sojourners in the sense of not holding full membership status in the host society. A key distinction between the marginal man and the stranger is that the former hopes for assimilation into the host society but is not fully accepted, while the latter does not necessarily desire to assimilate. This perspective provides a lens through which to view the experiences of South Korean filmmaking sojourners who continue to work on filmmaking in China despite their isolation within Chinese society, while at the same time feeling little solidarity with other members of their own ethnic group, that is, other Koreans around them.

Filmmaking sojourners in East Asia are both cultural creators and agents of cultural globalization. These individuals include actors, directors, producers, cinematographers, technicians, and other professionals who travel to other countries to collaborate on film projects with other filmmakers. In doing so, they encounter new norms. These encounters may lead to changes

in thinking and/or practice at the individual, organizational, or national level.

Methodology and Participants

The foremost characteristic of the cultural industries, including filmmaking, lies in the significant variability in consumer response and the resulting market uncertainty. Successful products may be highly profitable, but these are outnumbered by products that are less successful, or outright failures. Consequently, the labor market within the cultural industries is characterized by externalization of the labor force—i.e., outsourcing—and the use of social or professional networks and referrals to facilitate employment and job placement (Kim 2005; Jung 2005; Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015). East Asian film industries are no exception. This situation further complicates the gathering of statistical data on filmmaking sojourners participating in cross-border co-productions.

As a result, no statistical data are available on the numbers of filmmaking sojourners in South Korea, Japan, or East Asia as a whole. However, it is possible to make a rough estimate of the annual number of sojourners from South Korea engaged in filmmaking in other East Asian countries by combining statistics on the number of co-productions per year involving South Korea, Japan, and China (Figure 1) with an estimate of the average number of sojourners per co-production. The number of sojourners crossing borders to work on a film co-production can range from around 50, for a large-scale production such as *Genome Hazard* (2013), to around 30, for an intermediate-sized project such as *Boy Meets Busan* (2006), to as few as two or three, for a low-budget production such as *Butterfly Sleep* (2017). Assuming an average of 20 sojourners per co-produced film, the estimated annual number of sojourners from South Korea engaged in filmmaking in other East Asian countries can be calculated. The result is shown in the bottom row of Tables 1 and 2; it ranges from 60 sojourners (in 2012) to 280 (in 2009).

This estimate of the number of filmmaking staff sojourners in the South Korean film industry is based solely on data from South Korea. However, it is important to note that the number of host-country filmmaking staff that Korean sojourners interact with is much higher. It should also be noted that South Korean and Japanese filmmakers have relatively free mobility as they are subject to few visa restrictions; this makes it easy for them to move to other countries to participate in film production. In this sense, South Korean

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE SOUTH KOREAN FILM INDUSTRY AND ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SOJOURNERS FROM SOUTH KOREA ENGAGED IN FILMMAKING IN OTHER EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, 2006-2010

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total number of employees in the industry	25,769	23,935	19,908	28,041	30,561
Number of regular employees of film production companies	1,693	2,219	1,847	2,221	2,810
Percentage of regular employees in film production	6.56%	9.26%	9.27%	7.92%	9.2%
Number of freelance staff employees	798	1,062	1,176	1,717	1,822
Percentage of freelance staff	3.09%	4.43%	5.90%	6.12%	6.0%
Total number of employees film production	2,491	3,281	3,023	3,938	4,632
Estimated number of sojourners (20 per film)	120	180	140	280	200

Source: Korean Film Council, *Survey on the Current State of the South Korean Film Industry 2006-2010*[4]

filmmaking sojourners can be considered representative of sojourners from other countries whose citizens are able to move internationally relatively freely.

Given the limited availability of statistics on filmmaking sojourners and related co-productions in East Asia, for this study I relied primarily on in-depth interviews, supplemented by participant observation. To gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances of filmmaking sojourners, I conducted interviews with 18 filmmakers from Japan and South Korea

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[4] "Co-Production Companies," Co-production, Korean Film Council, http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/eng/coProduction/co-companyList.jsp

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE SOUTH KOREAN FILM INDUSTRY AND ESTIMATED
NUMBER OF SOJOURNERS FROM SOUTH KOREA ENGAGED IN FILMMAKING IN
OTHER EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, 2011-2019

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of employees in the industry	29,569	30,857	30,238	29,646	30,100	28,974	29,546	30,878	32,566
Number of regular employees of film production companies	3,013	3,420	3,250	3,609	4,133	3,888	3,913	3,537	3,617
Percentage of regular employees in film production	10.20%	11.10%	10.70%	12.20%	13.70%	13.40%	13.20%	11.50%	11.10%
Number of freelance staff employees	1,704	1,959	2,951	1,558	2,034	1,934	2,360	2,584	2,694
Percentage of freelance staff	5.80%	6.30%	9.80%	5.30%	6.80%	6.70%	8%	8.40%	8.30%
Total number of employees film production	4,717	5,379	6,201	5,167	6,167	5,822	6,273	6,121	6,311
Estimated number of sojourners (20 per film)	80	60	140	80	160	80	160	90	90

Source: Korean Film Council, *Survey on the Current State of the South Korean Film Industry 2011-2019*[5]

representing various positions within the film industry, from "above-the-line" positions responsible for creative development of the film to "below-the-line" positions such as assistant crew members, gaffers, prop managers, production team members, script managers, art directing team members, and hair and

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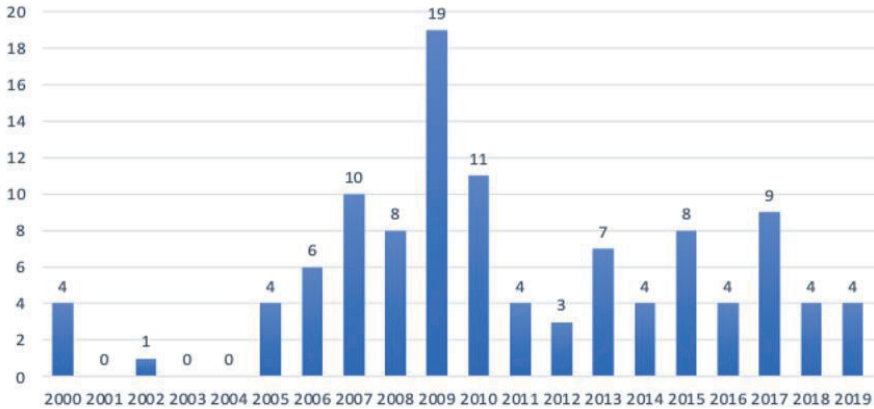[5] Ibid.

Fig. 1.—Number of Co-Production Films Involving South Korea, Japan, and China, 2000-2019

Sources: Constructed by the author based on data from the Korean Film Council, China Film Co-Production Corporation, Reality of International Co-Production (Kakeo 2010), and other media.

makeup designers. I chose experienced professionals rather than newcomers, as they would be able to provide richer narratives incorporating their past experiences. To assemble the participant pool, I initially approached professionals within my personal network and then utilized snowball sampling to expand the pool. This method allowed me to access a diverse group of individuals who could offer insights into the complex world of filmmaking sojourners in the process of cultural globalization. The specific data-gathering process was as follows.

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited film producers who received support for South Korean-Chinese co-productions from the Korean Film Council.[6] I also conducted interviews with the staff members of the Korean-Chinese co-production film *The Third Way of Love*, on which I was working as an associate producer. (This position allowed me to include participant observation as part of the research methodology.)

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[6] Beginning in 2014, the Korean Film Council supported selected Korean producers planning co-production projects between South Korea and China by covering their office expenses, living expenses, and translation costs in China.

The criteria for selecting the 18 main participants (interviewees) were, first, experience in international co-production of one or more films, and second, experience in film co-production in East Asia after 2000. Some Japanese participants, including a gaffer and a stylist, were recruited through Cinema Planners, a website used by film production companies to recruit staff.[7] The transnational experiences of some of my interviewees included locations outside East Asia. East Asian filmmaking sojourners are involved in transnational co-productions with various countries, including China, the United States, France, Portugal, and the Philippines, as well as Japan and South Korea.

The Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured. Prior to the interviews, participants were sent a questionnaire by email so that they would be familiar with the topics to be covered in the interview. In the interviews, I first asked about what parts of the production process participants were involved in—pre-production to production to post-production—and what their positions where and what jobs they were responsible for. I then asked a series of open-ended questions about differences from the filmmaking system in their home country, how they dealt with cultural and systemic differences during the co-production process, and what kind of changes they tried to make in their home country as a result of their co-production experience. In terms of cultural identity, the participants were "cultural others" (Leung 2020, p. 60) working in a novel production environment.

The interviews were conducted between October 2018 and June 2023, with each interview session lasting approximately two to three hours per person. Most were conducted in person, but some were done via Zoom video call because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted in Korean for Korean participants and in Japanese for Japanese participants. (Japanese and Korean answers were translated into English for this article.) With the participants' consent, all interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

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[7] "Those with experience in international co-production – Interview," Recruitment, Cinema Planners, posted October 13, 2022. (In Japanese) https://cinepu.com/staff/N3SFQCpr3k_/

Participants

The participants were 18 film workers, including directors and producers, who participated in co-productions involving Japan, South Korea, and China. In total, 20 interviews were conducted in South Korea and Japan; assistant director N and producer A were interviewed twice each. All of the participants were professional film workers with several years of experience.

Tables 3 and 4 present the sociodemographic profiles and career data of the participants, respectively. Table 5 presents the interview timeline, mode, and language used.

TABLE 3
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

	Participant	Age	Gender	Position	Nationality	Career length
1	A	50s	Male	Producer	Korean	8 years
2	Jang	40s	Male	Director	Korean	22 years
3	C	50s	Male	Director	Japanese	20 years
4	D	50s	Female	Producer	Korean	17 years
5	E	60s	Male	Director	Korean	35 years
6	F	40s	Female	Producer	Korean	23 years
7	G	60s	Male	Producer	Japanese	25 years
8	Fukuma	40s	Female	Producer	Japanese	18 years
9	I	40s	Male	Producer	Japanese	8 years
10	J	50s	Female	Producer	Korean (Korean Japanese)	26 years
11	K	40s	Male	Production team, Line producer	Korean	15 years
12	L	40s	Female	Stylist	Japanese	18 years
13	M	30s	Male	Production staff	Korean	8 years
14	N	40s	Male	Assistant director	Korean	15 years
15	O	40s	Male	Sound operator	Korean	20 years
16	P	40s	Male	Chief lighting technician	Japanese	15 years
17	Q	40s	Male	Assistant director	Japanese	20 years
18	R	40s	Female	Production coordinator	Korean	23 years

Note: Jang and Fukuma agreed to allow their real names to be used.

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TABLE 4
CAREER DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

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	Participant	Position	Career length	Working based in	No. of Int'l Co-productions	Co-produced with
1	A	Producer	8 years	Korea (head of a production company)	1 film	China
2	Jang	Director	22 years	Korea (head of a production company)	1 film	Japan
3	C	Director	20 years	Japan (head of a production company)	3 films	The US and Portugal
4	D	Producer	17 years	Korea (head of a production company)	7 films, 1 OTT series	Japan, South Korea
5	E	Director	35 years	Korea (head of a production company)	4 films	Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, China
6	F	Producer	23 years	Korea (head of a production company)	4 films	Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, China
7	G	Producer	25 years	Japan	1 film	Korea
8	Fukuma	Producer	18 years	Japan (head of a production company)	2 films	France, South Korea
9	I	Producer	8 years	Japan (head of a distribution company)	1 film	Korea
10	J	Producer	26 years	Japan (head of a production company)	2 films	Korea, Japan
11	K	Production team, Line producer	15 years	Japan	4 films, 1 OTT series	Korea, the US, China
12	L	Stylist	18 years	Japan	1 film	China
13	M	Production staff	8 years	Japan	3 films	Korea, Japan, China
14	N	Assistant director	15 years	Korea	2 films	Japan, China
15	O	Sound operator	20 years	Korea	3 films	China, Japan
16	P	Chief lighting technician	15 years	Japan	2 films	The Philippines
17	Q	Assistant director, translator	20 years	Korea	8 films	Korea, Japan

| 18 | R | Production coordinator, translator | 23 years | Japan | 5 films | Korea, Japan |

TABLE 5
TIMELINE, INTERVIEW MODE, AND LANGUAGE USED

	Participant	Position	Nationality	Language	Interview mode	Interview timeline
1	A	Producer	Korean	Korean	In person	2018, 2022
2	Jang	Director	Korean	Korean	Zoom	2022
3	C	Director	Japanese	Japanese, English	In person	2022
4	D	Producer	Korean	Korean	In person	2022
5	E	Director	Korean	Korean	In person	2022
6	F	Producer	Korean	Korean	In person	2022
7	G	Producer	Japanese	Japanese	In person	2022
8	Fukuma	Producer	Japanese	Japanese	In person	June 2023
9	I	Producer	Japanese	Japanese	Zoom	2022
10	J	Producer	Korean (Korean Japanese)	Korean	Zoom	Dec. 2022
11	K	Production team, Line producer	Korean	Korean	In person, Zoom	Oct. 2022
12	L	Stylist	Japanese	Japanese	In person	July 2018
13	M	Production staff	Korean	Korean	In person	Nov. 2022
14	N	Assistant director	Korean	Korean	In person, Zoom	Dec. 2022
15	O	Sound operator	Korean	Korean	In person	2018
16	P	Chief lighting technician	Japanese	Japanese	In person	Oct. 2022
17	Q	Assistant director	Japanese	Japanese	Zoom	Dec. 2022
18	R	Production coordinator	Korean	Korean	In person	Jan. 2023

Participants J, K, M, and R are of South Korean nationality but have a good understanding of the Japanese film production system because they have been working in Japanese film companies since graduating from college

Fig. 2.—Mobility of Filmmaking Sojourners in Asia

in Japan. Inversely, participant Q is a Japanese worker based in South Korea. These participants were able to provide much information and many insights about the culture and working environments of film co-production sites in South Korea, Japan, and China.

Figure 2 shows the East Asian region where the participants have participated in co-productions. Their episodic sojourns have contributed to the flow of filmmaking concepts, ideas, and practices, and exemplify the dynamics of East Asian cultural globalization.

Findings

In this section, I report and discuss the findings from the in-depth interviews.

Everyone is a Novice

Some studies in the realm of cultural and creative industries and creative labor introduce fanciful conceptual approaches such as "happiness at work," "passionate work," and "the shift of culture from a way of life to a means of livelihood" (McRobbie 2002). Such positive perspectives, however, often fail

to address the fears, uncertainty, and precarity associated with situations where "everyone is a novice." In the early 2000s, few filmmaking practitioners had prior experience in international co-productions. As a result, virtually everyone was a novice in this domain.

The 18 participants I interviewed for the present study all had one thing in common: none of them had any prior experience in filmmaking abroad before participating in their first international co-production. None had undergone any pre-training in overseas living, language education, or the production systems of other countries. This is very different from the situation of expatriates dispatched by corporations to work overseas, who receive training before they are sent abroad. While the filmmaking sojourners I interviewed had a sound general understanding of film production systems, they all confessed to a complete lack of comprehension regarding the production systems and cultures of their co-production partners. Their education in co-production amounted to informal on-the-job training. This was a low-cost labor strategy for the film production companies but made the work of sojourners quite challenging. Participant R, the production coordinator for *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary* (2004), stated: "There was no one who had any experience in co-production. And few of us had ever worked on a big-budget film before." She also mentioned that the Korean staff members were hired to work in Japan because their wages were low, and that they had no training in the Japanese production system.

The phenomenon of filmmaking sojourners having to learn about the production systems and cultures of their co-production partners "on the job" provides an illustration of one way that cultural globalization works. Cultural globalization is defined above as "the process by which cultural ideas, practices, and products spread and interact across national borders driven by advancements in communications technology, international travel, and economic integration." In traveling internationally for the purpose of filmmaking, filmmaking sojourners come face-to-face with cultures and cultural practices that are different from those they are familiar with, and which they must learn about and deal with in order to successfully carry out their jobs. Through this process of learning and adjusting, cultural ideas and practices spread and interact across borders.

Bauman may argue that people no longer need to abandon the uniqueness of their own culture or traditions when entering another cultural sphere, but if they enter a cultural sphere they are unfamiliar with, in which they are "novices," their own culture or traditions may be the only thing they have to go by in trying to make sense of the new cultural sphere, at least

initially. Cultural globalization is a process, not a fixed state, and the filmmaking sojourners I interviewed were going through the initial stage of that process. In directly experiencing, learning from, and potentially influencing a cultural sphere they previously knew little about, they were pioneers in the East Asian film industries, and agents of cultural globalization.

Sojourners as Middlemen

When participants were asked to compare filmmaking in different countries, their responses rarely touched on ethnicity or national identity. Instead, they sought to explain differences in terms of job roles and film production systems. These filmmaking sojourners had a clear goal: to create films for a broad, international audience. Ethnicity appeared to be beside the point.

A key role played by filmmaking sojourners was often that of an intermediary providing coordination and interpretation/translation services. Among the participants were some individuals who were proficient in the languages of both countries involved in a co-production. Participant J, a producer, co-produced the Japanese-Korean political drama *KT* (2002); she helped with coordination, including casting, before on-location shooting in Japan and South Korea because she could speak both Japanese and Korean. Participant Q also worked as an interpreter for co-produced films involving South Korea and Japan. Participant R, a Korean production coordinator based in Japan, was able to participate in the co-production of *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary* because she had graduated from a Japanese film school. Participant P, a Japanese chief lighting technician who went to the Philippines for two co-productions, was able to join the co-production team (whose only other Japanese members were a director and an art director) because he could speak English.

While these bicultural filmmaking sojourners possessed a national identity, they were not confined by it. Their task as connectors between cultures was to step into the world of the "other," leaving behind their own traditions. This makes them different from sojourners in the traditional sense, for whom the bond to their country of origin remains central to their identity and dominates their actions and thinking (Siu et al. 1988).

In the sense that the filmmaking sojourners I interviewed were not confined by their ethnic or national identity, they can be said to illustrate Bauman's notion that the once-prevalent issue of identity has lost relevance, that it has been (or is being) replaced by "liquid modernity," a state in which

people's beliefs and identities, rather than being assigned by the communities they come from, are fluid and can be changed at will.

Same Positions, Different Jobs

The reason that international film co-production is possible in East Asia is that job-specific systems have been universally established within the film industry. The job classifications shown in Figure 3 are similar across almost all national film industries with established production systems. When production companies recruit staff members through a production services company for a transnational co-production, it is assumed that the job positions are the same as those shown in Figure 3. These job positions are divided into pre-production, production, and post-production.

In the case of Japan, whose film industry has a 120-year history, this system is very well-established, and film staff receive education and training accordingly. The Japanese film industry operates with an "apprenticeship" system, which has often been framed as an ideological commitment to creativity and artistry. Whether they are training in a professional school or within a film production team, apprentices get paid not for working but for learning skills. Japan's apprentice system can be seen as a low-wage production model.

In South Korea, the film industry was restructured beginning in the late 1990s so that it could compete more directly with Hollywood. Ironically, this restructuring aligned it more closely with the Hollywood system (Yoon 2008, p. 170). In this way, the job categories and professions within the industry

Pre-production

Above-the-line players: Director, producer, writer

Below-the-line players: assistant director, directing staff, continuity, art director, location director, casting director, lawyer

Production

Above-the-line players: Director, producer, assistant director, actors (managers),

Below-the-line players: directing staff, production staff, art directing team, cinematographer team, gaffer team, sound team, props, stylist, makeup, composer, production team (accountant, contract handling)

Post-Production

Above-the-line players: Director, producer

Below-the-line players: editor, sound, CG & VFX, music director, promotion & marketing, distributor
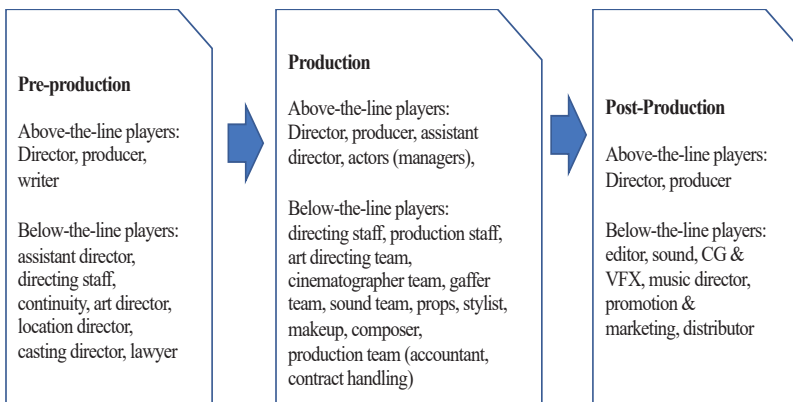
FIG. 3.—THE THREE STAGES OF FILM PRODUCTION AND ASSOCIATED PLAYERS

have been influenced by the Hollywood system, adapting to the scale and needs of the industry. A similar alignment can be seen in other East Asian film industries as well.

However, when working with staff from different countries, filmmaking sojourners often find that positions with the same name as those in their home country are different in substance elsewhere.

One of the major differences observed in job positions in Japanese film production is the absence of a data management specialist on the set. With the recent shift to producing films digitally, it has become common to have a staff member on set who is responsible for handling large amounts of digital data. This is the case in South Korea, where the importance of data management has increased since the shift was made to shooting all films with digital equipment. In Japan, however, data management specialists are still not found on the set.

Another difference is that in South Korean film production, a storyboard artist typically draws all the storyboard images in advance and works out the mise-en-scène for each day's shooting during the pre-production stage. It is even common in Korea to draw storyboards during on-set editing. In Japan, however, few film production sets have a storyboard artist. Participant R explained as follows:

> During the production of *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary*, the Korean team engaged in on-site editing and sketched out storyboards for filming. In Japan, however, this practice is not common, even today. As a result, the Japanese team requires more time to set up camera angles before shooting.

Another difference is that Japanese stylists typically do not handle props, whereas in the Chinese system stylists are often responsible for props (such as hats). Because of this, when Chinese films are shot in Tokyo, there are occasions when the Japanese stylist must prepare props. In such cases, the greater power lies with the filmmaking sojourner staff, whose side is providing the budget for the film, and host country staff (such as the Japanese stylist) must follow the sojourners' practices.

International co-productions often begin with the assumption that filmmaking practices will be the same in every country, but when the actual work begins, differences from country to country are revealed. This is due to the fact that the film industries in different countries have developed in accordance with the unique cultural contexts and histories of those countries. Through participating in international co-productions, filmmaking sojourners

come to realize that the production cultures in Japan, Korea, and China are distinct from one another.

These differences illustrate the limits to cultural globalization. Because they are deeply rooted in the cultures and histories of different countries, filmmaking traditions and practices resist change. Filmmaking sojourners may in some cases act as agents of change—see the section on "different labor conditions" below—but they are far outnumbered by filmmakers in their home countries who have little or no contact with filmmakers in other countries, even in today's "globalized" world.

Responsibility and Negotiation in Co-Creation

Producer Fukuma's first experience with international co-production was with the French-Japanese film *The Truth* (2019), directed by Hirokazu Koreeda. Her next co-produced film was *Broker* (2022), with South Korea. In the case of film co-productions, negotiations regarding creative responsibilities typically take place during the contract drafting process. This aspect can vary somewhat depending on the film industry: in Hollywood and Europe, editing authority is often granted to the production company, whereas in Japan and South Korea, editing authority is primarily held by the director, because of the prevailing notion that directors should naturally hold the final editing rights. Fukuma elaborated in the following way:

> The biggest point of contention in film production is who holds the final editing right, known as the final cut. This right normally rests with the producer in the United States. In Europe, including France, it is also common for the producer to have the final editing right. Among French directors, there are some who are particularly involved in the editing process and consider it important. In such cases, the director may hold the final editing right.

When Fukuda was drafting the contract with the French production company for *The Truth*, Koreeda expressed a desire to have the final cut right. They negotiated to ensure that somehow the director's side would have it. In the end, the French production side cooperated, and the Koreeda ultimately was granted this right. During the editing stage of post-production, there were differences of opinion between the French producer and the Japanese director. However, in the end, the director's final editing had to be accepted. In this way, the conditions specified in the contract were applied as written.

Participant K, a Korean staff member of the production team of a Japanese production company, noted, "Following the rules is deeply ingrained in the minds of Japanese film workers." He elaborated as follows:

> According to my experience, in Japan, it is taboo to come up with new ideas at the location. If you were to say, "I think it will be more fun to film this way," you would be treated like a fool. There is this atmosphere that "we are here to film it; to do new things we would have to change the rules, we would have to get permission." It's hard to change something even if you have a better idea. But Japanese crews work very quickly and thoroughly when it comes to what they have prepared.

This difference is a reflects a deeper difference between the Japanese film industry, which has developed and used the production committee system for a long time, and the Korean film industry, which is more director-centered. In Japan, the production committee must approve changes on location, while in South Korea the director has the authority to make decisions on the spot if the budget allows. Even though these practices are not stipulated in rules, they are followed.

The episodes described above show that cultural globalization is often not an easy or smoothly occurring process. The Japanese director of the French *The Truth* was able to secure final cut authority, even though this went against standard practice in Europe; as a Japanese cultural practice being applied in France, this can be seen as an example of cultural globalization. But this outcome required negotiation in the drafting of the contract, and the invoking of a clause in the contract to settle a disagreement over editing between the French producer and the Japanese director. Korean participant K's comment about it being taboo to come up with new ideas on a Japanese movie set similarly hints at the barriers that cultural ideas face when crossing national borders, although K also acknowledges that the Japanese way has its own benefits.

Different Labor Conditions

> *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary* provides us with insights into the film production environment in Japan, which has the world's second-largest film market. This suggests that in the future, the Korean film industry will gain the know-how and infrastructure to create Japanese films in Japan. Even if the enthusiasm for Korean cinema fades in Japan, we can still create films

targeting the Japanese market with the outstanding creativity of Korean cinema.[8]

The production plan for the 2004 film *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary* says much about how Korean film production companies viewed the Japanese market in the early 2000s. Korean film producers aimed to learn from Japan's production system, driven by a firm goal to expand the Korean film market. However, understanding a different culture goes beyond merely recognizing the differences between that culture and one's own. Gaining awareness of other cultures can alter a person's perspective on his or her own culture.

Both the Japanese and the South Korean film industries have historically been built on an industrial structure of low wages and long working hours. In the early 2000s, when co-productions were just beginning, labor conditions in both Korea and Japan were challenging. According to participant R, "At that time, Korean staff received really low wages, whether they were working in Korea or abroad." Therefore, when over 50 Koreans went to Japan for the filming of *Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary*, they had to work in harsh labor conditions. The working hours averaged over 12 hours a day, the number of shooting days was extended, and as the budget was exceeded, producers often found themselves raising their voices.

In the 2010s, filmmakers in East Asia who participated in international co-productions found major differences from country to country in terms of working conditions. Participant C, a Japanese director who worked on the co-production of *Lovers on Borders* in Portugal in 2017, described the three-week filming period in Portugal as a paradise:

> In Portugal, we filmed according to the legal working hours. We were not allowed to shoot more than 10 hours a day and had to observe breaks and lunch time. We shot for 21 days, and then for two additional days there. But after coming back to Japan, we were given only six days to film. It was completely insane. We finished all the shooting within six days, but the conditions were barbaric. I filmed 18 to 20 hours per day and slept only four hours a day.[9]

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[8] Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary production plan, Exhibits/Performances/Films, Gulnara, accessed June 30, 2023. http://old.gulnara.net/main.php?pcd=64.72.&_vpg=view&_vuid=53&v_no=2#

[9] Interview conducted on August 4, 2022.

Lovers on Borders was completed in 2017 as a Japanese-Portuguese-American co-production. It was 122 minutes long; half shot in Portugal and half in Japan. The production period was shorter in Japan because the Japanese partner had invested less in the project. Therefore, actors from both countries and approximately 20 staff members had to go through a murderous six-day filming schedule in Japan.

Such working conditions are not uncommon in Japan's film industry. Japanese film director Yasushi Furuichi states, "We use the term 29:00 (5:00 am the next day) without hesitation in the filming schedule."[10] This is because the wages for most of the staff and actors involved in a film production are calculated on a daily, not hourly, basis. Participant C appreciated the working environment he encountered when filming in Portugal but was unable to apply it to Japan. However, his experience of co-production in Portugal increased his awareness of labor problems in Japan, which has led to his efforts at the organization action4cinema to improve working conditions in the Japanese film industry.[11]

When the Chinese-Korean co-production *The Third Way of Love* was being filmed in Shanghai in 2014, under a Korean director, the working hours exceeded the maximum hours prescribed by Chinese law. At that time, it was normal for filming to be conducted for more than 16 hours a day in South Korea, but in China such long hours were illegal. It was the job of the assistant director, participant N, also Korean, to carry out the director's instructions regardless of how many working hours that meant, and this caused conflict with Chinese staff members. Reflecting on the difference in working conditions between Korean and Chinese filmmaking, N told me, "Many Korean film workers experienced the Chinese working environment in the 2010s, and when they came back to South Korea, they were highly critical of Korean working conditions and contracts. That is how the labor conditions in Korea started to improve, eventually resulting in the establishment of a 52-hour work week."[12] N participated in organizing the Federation of Korea Movie Workers' Union after he returned from China.

The above is a good example of how filmmaking sojourners are not only cultural creators, but also agents of cultural globalization. As stated above at the end of the second section, their encounters with practices and norms that

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[10] Yasushi Furuichi, "Thinking about Reforming the Way Someone Works to Create Film Talents," *ProNews*, September 17, 2019. https://www.pronews.jp/column/201909171100134905.html

[11] https://www.action4cinema.org/

[12] Interview with K, October 22, 2022, over Zoom.

differ from those of their home countries can lead to changes in thinking and/or practice at the individual, organizational, or national level. Korean sojourners who worked on films in China were able to bring about positive change in filmmaking labor conditions in Korea. The Japanese director (participant C) who described the working environment he encountered when filming in Portugal as a paradise has been less successful in improving labor conditions in Japan, though he continues to make efforts through an organization formed for that purpose.

Conflict and Learning on Location

In international film co-productions, conflict among staff members can arise from various sources. First, staff members from diverse cultural backgrounds live and work together for a long period of time, often spanning two or three months. Second, the majority of tasks entail teamwork, with filmmaking sojourners being thrust into foreign cultures with little prior training or preparation. Third, when staff members from two or more different film production systems collaborate, misunderstandings can lead to conflicts. Participant K, a production team member, had the following to say about the filming of the Japanese-Chinese co-production *Detective Chinatown 3* in Tokyo:

> There were many conflicts and even physical altercations at the filming site. Whenever X [a Korean trained in Japan] went to the set, there was always an explosion. One time X even threw a walkie-talkie and walked out of the shooting. I had to stop his fights and even mediate disputes. X is someone who fundamentally follows the manual of the Japanese production system. He wanted to do the work accurately and disliked deviating from the established rules. At that time, the Chinese team was proceeding with the work while breaking the rules that we [the Japanese film team] had set as guidelines.

According to K, X became angry about changes being made to the location and told the Chinese team members not to change anything. However, his instructions were ignored, and the Chinese team made changes and filmed the way they wanted. But looking back, K said:

> In the end I realized that they were not breaking the rules; it was simply their way of doing things. As a result, the movie turned out well. The

Chinese staff were not totally ignoring the guidelines, they were just adapting to circumstances to make a better film. The Chinese side believed that since they were paying money in order to use the filming site, they should be able to change things they wanted to change. The Japanese, on the other hand, felt that it was improper to make any changes to a place one was renting.

Making adjustments to accommodate differences, such as K's acceptance of the idea that Chinese team members were not breaking rules but simply doing things as they knew how to do them, is critical for the work of film co-production to be carried out successfully. Japanese sojourners shooting a film in the Philippines found themselves in a situation where they had to use local staff provided by the production services provider. The chief lighting technician (participant P) requested a gaffer from the local provider, but a young assistant-level staff member was sent who "couldn't work as a gaffer [because] he had no lighting skills," and P ended up having to handle everything himself. Learning from this experience, P was more effective in his second Philippines sojourn, not just because he made sure to secure a capable gaffer, but also because he had learned that Filipinos operate on a different sense of time than Japanese.

> I came to realize that if I expressed my opinion in the Japanese way, the message wouldn't be delivered. So, I learned to adjust the way I expressed my opinion so that it would be more effective in the context of the Philippines. There are differences in filmmaking systems, but also cultural differences. Since there are many local crew members in the Philippines, it works better if I match my style to Filipino way of communicating and working.

By planning the schedule according to the Filipino sense of time, he and his crew reduced stress for everybody. He also learned to adjust his way of communicating in the practice of co-production.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study began with the aim of answering two questions: What kind of cultural contact and learning do filmmaking sojourners experience in the practice of transnational film co-production, and what impact do their

experiences have on their home-country film industries after they finish their sojourn?

Culture is a complex and ever-evolving system influenced by interactions and encounters between various elements. When one element meets another, various changes occur through this contact. Sojourners are examples of such elements; when they interact with other filmmakers in the cultural milieu of filmmaking, learning and change can occur. One kind of learning occurs at the individual level, which relates to the first research question.

The primary goal of filmmaking sojourners is to create films that will appeal to a broad international audience. In order to do this, they must be able to successfully collaborate with partners from different countries and cultures. This requires navigating unfamiliar situations as "cultural others," and dealing with differences in film production systems. Co-production of films inevitably produces conflict and may require compromise. From the interviews conducted for this research, we see that filmmaking sojourners are all novices, at least when they first participate in an international co-production. They encounter, for the first time, various differences from what they are accustomed to in the film production practices and systems of their home countries: differences in the work content of positions with the same title; differences in working conditions; differences in staff skill levels; differences in who has decision-making authority; and differences in the scope for deviating from rules or previously made plans. Filmmaking sojourners must figure out how to deal with these differences in order to be effective in their work.

A second kind of change can take place at the industry or country level, which relates to the second research question, about the impact of sojourners' experiences on the film industries of their home countries. One area of potential change that is prominent in the testimonies of the participants in the present study has to do with differing working conditions in the film industries of different countries. Korean filmmakers working in China and a Japanese director filming in Portugal encountered working conditions and filming schedules that were far less brutal than those in their home countries. In the case of the Korean sojourners, awareness of differing labor standards in China led to the enactment of laws in Korea that mandated labor contracts and better working conditions for film industry workers.

Beyond the two specific research questions that this study sought to answer, the present research also sheds light on the process of cultural globalization more generally.

Of the five "scapes" that Appadurai describes to capture the complexity

of globalization, transnational film co-production appears on the surface to fall most neatly into the category of mediascape—movement of media. But the experiences of filmmaking sojourners described in this paper clearly reveal that the boundaries between Appadurai's categories are porous, as those experiences also encompass movement of people (ethnoscape), movement of money (financescape), movement of technologies (technoscape), and movement of ideas (ideoscape). As Appadurai states, the "new global cultural economy" is indeed complex and overlapping. The process of cultural globalization is complex as well.

Perhaps the strongest picture to emerge from the testimonies of filmmaking sojourners is that of cultural globalization as a process—a process driven by interactions among various actors that proceeds in fits and starts, at times smoothly and at other times not at all. Bauman argues that humans are gradually, if sometimes reluctantly, learning the skill of accepting cultural differences; the evidence presented in this paper suggests that the words gradually and *sometimes reluctantly* should be emphasized. Cultural globalization clearly does not mean that cultural differences have disappeared, or that they ever will. Cultural ideas, practices, and products do spread and interact across national borders, and agents such as filmmaking sojourners serve to facilitate this process, but the degree to which they replace local ideas, practices, and products is very much up for grabs.

Apart from the specific experiences of the sojourners interviewed, the present study also highlights broader trends affecting cultural industries. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, cultural imperialism—criticized as representing oppressive power over and ignorance towards other cultures (Said 1994)—has increasingly been eclipsed by cultural globalization. The ability of powerful nations to flood the media space with their ideas and cultural content, thereby limiting the ability of other countries and communities to compete and expose people to locally created content, has been weakened as new generators of popular cultural content have emerged and as capital flows have diversified, financing the creation of cultural content in a broader variety of nations. This trend has not only propelled film co-production, but it has also created what might be called a new type of hegemony, in which the financers of films, who exert considerable power over content and the production process, are increasingly diverse and the power dynamics are more complex.

In sum, transnational film co-production influences the thinking and practices of its practitioners, while also extending beyond individual experiences to encompass and influence working conditions in different countries, the

sharing of creative practices and experience, and diversity of film content. It promotes growth of the film industry, and both exemplifies and contributes to cultural globalization. In this dynamic landscape, filmmaking sojourners play a crucial role in bridging cultural divides and challenging established norms. Their experiences serve as a testament to the transformative power of globalization on the personal, industry, and national levels.

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