

The project's aim is to analyze political myths in North Korean cinema. Film plays a central role in the cultural life of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), and to this day is an artistic tool preferred by the North Korean regime. The project focuses on characters and motifs that have not been studied so far, neither in English nor in Korean literature. I pay particular attention to the cult of Kim Il Sung's family members, his wife, Kim Chŏng-suk, his brother, Kim Ch'ŏl-chu and his father, Kim Hyŏng-jik. Initial research indicates that these characters have undergone a process of idealization, which gives them divine qualities. Another element of the mythical landscape in North Korean cinema is the volcano Pektu with supernatural features, which since the nineteen-eighties has been presented not solely as a symbol of the nation, but a personified agent and oracle, which is even capable of killing the enemies of the motherland. I intend to present the results of this research, combined with my previous studies, in a monograph devoted to the mythological properties of North Korean cinema.

Research on North Korea in recent decades has produced a number of theoretical explanations of the DPRK political system, pointing to one dominant ideology. However, I do not agree with the most popular strategies of reading North Korea through the prism of Stalinism, *juche* ideology, Confucianism or Oriental despotism. My research shows that North Korean ideology is inconsistent, has undergone multiple changes, and is not without contradictions. Especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korean cinema reveals a search for a new identity in the drastically changing political reality. From the cognitive studies of religion point of view, the increasing role of supernatural elements in cinema draws attention.

The North Korean cult of personality has been called "absurd", "crazy" and "pseudo-religious". The common narrations fail to perceive the seriousness of the phenomenon. Neither is the surveillance state alone able to explain the prevalence and consistency of North Korean ideology which continues to be relevant even for those who have left the country. In contrast to common perspectives, I argue that the sacralization of Kim Il Sung helped to create a powerful, emotional system of meaning, which provided advantages in the process of unifying the society, especially in times of instability. The methods developed by cognitive science of religion can help us understand why North Korean mythology is an important part of the regime's survival strategy. As argued by Justin Barrett, the counterintuitive images have evolutionary origins, transmission advantages, and are easily adopted on a cultural level.

Regarding the DPRK, the optimistic perspective of marginalizing or trivializing ideological issues in favor of the economy has dominated the field. I perceive the downplaying of internal narratives as one of the reasons for the failure of the current policy of "disarming North Korea." Despite economic and social changes, the leadership position and domination of the state ideology in North Korea seem intact. This raises several questions: do we understand this regime and its motives? Why is the North Korean government still generating enough support to stay in power? Do we know what constitutes a North Korean worldview? What are its inhabitants learning? In my research, I try to answer these questions by reconstructing the worldview built by state cinema in the DPRK.