

Article

Asian Perspectives and Ritual Politics in Recent Popular Film and Television

Patricia J. Sohn 

Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (KU-NCCS), Kathmandu University, P.B. No. 6250, Hatiban, Lalitpur 44700, Nepal; patriciajohn@gmail.com

Abstract

Asian film displays a range of perspectives on ritual and political issues of contest and contestation. Using modified snowball and purposive sampling, film and some television is selected for the presence of ritual politics, political theater, and important Asian cultural, religious, and/or political perspectives. Some perspectives identified are localized, regional, or may have resonance (not representativeness) in many parts of Asia from Kazakhstan, Nepal, India, and eastward; a few preliminary observations are offered in this regard. The current work is an effort in cultural de-coding, and perhaps cultural translation, using qualitative content analysis, coding, and comparative historical-institutional analysis at the intersection of culture and politics. The argument is methodological (qualitative), encouraging political scientists and others with interests in cross-national, comparative, and international religion and politics to delve into thick description using international, foreign-language film as a (relatively unmined) source of cultural data and cultural, values-oriented, and political messaging. Ritual politics is treated herein as formal or informal ritual involving symbolic activities occurring in a religious, semi-religious, or secular context that is used for political purposes, in a political context, or to effect a political message. The current work is preliminary and is part of a larger project; it provides a preliminary spreadsheet of 24 out of over 100 canvassed films seeking to combine conceptual variables with binary coding.

Keywords: religion and politics; culture and politics; ritual politics; perspectival politics; Asian popular film and television; process tracing



Academic Editor: Kenneth L. Waters

Received: 21 August 2025

Revised: 24 October 2025

Accepted: 29 October 2025

Published: 13 November 2025

Citation: Sohn, Patricia J. 2025. Asian Perspectives and Ritual Politics in Recent Popular Film and Television. *Religions* 16: 1449. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16111449>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Asian film displays a range of fascinating perspectives on ritual and political issues of contest and contestation (Tilly and Tarrow [2006] 2015; Tarrow 2011). Using modified snowball and purposive sampling (Guetterman 2015; Yin 2009, p. 56; Ackerly 2008; Gusterson 2008; Reinhartz 1992),¹ film and some television is selected for the presence of ritual politics (Sohn 2023), political theater, and important Asian cultural, religious, and/or political perspectives. The current research seeks to identify symbolic representations, narrative framing, and allocations of meaning (Geertz 1973; see also Mitchell [1988] 1991, 1989), offering attention to dimensions of locality and regional cultures (Geertz [1983] 2000), the sum of which this work defines as *perspective*. It seeks to do so through a study of Asian foreign language and popular or mass market film and television works. Perspectival politics, then, occurs when those elements (symbolic representations, narrative framing, and allocations of meaning) combine with politics in important ways. Relating to political debates, shifts, or occurrences, theoretically, perspectival politics may act as direct cause;

subject or object of policy; causal factor (indirect or mediating); effect (outcome); or it may be non-causal. The perspectives discussed herein in the themes identified from the canvassed films suggest that perspectives are important objects of analysis particularly in cross-national, cross-cultural, and international context; hence, in this case, the focus, limited to film and television, on Asian perspectival politics.

Perspectives and themes emphasized in the film and television may be localized, national, or broadly pan-Asian, as outlined below. Regarding the dubious notion of the “pan-Asian,” a tendency to value (a usually moderate) Asian Romanticism is highlighted as a theme that appears across the Asian film and television works addressed. That Asian Romanticism frequently appears in relation to magical realism. Magical realism softens realism while remaining tethered to the real (in South Asia, see [Bhattacharya 2020](#)). Romanticism may be discussed in terms of romance ([Rappa 2023](#)), although Romanticism is far broader. Romanticism and magical realism are related to realism in a rejection or creative tension ([Tremblet 2021](#); on magical realism and realism, [Bhattacharya 2020](#)). A moderate Romanticism demands such a softening of realism or it may persist in tension with realism, whereas classic late-modern Romanticism rejected hard realism altogether. The Asian film and television works addressed, often (although not always) invoking magical realism, find a middle path between the poles of Romanticism and a hard realism.

This trend of a moderate Asian Romanticism in the film and television works discussed herein includes attention to male and female high heroism in monarchy; in battle and warfare; amongst otherwise human personages in god-like allegories; in grassroots context and amongst exceptional future leaders who are forced into low circumstances as youth; in mythological quests or stories involving mythological figures and beasts; as well as regarding loyalty in marriage and in romance, *per se*. Although the current work is not a normative analysis (on the normative see, for example, [Cover 1983](#)), it may be worth mentioning that the Romanticism in the selected film and television works might even go so far as to suggest a needed correction to an ethos ([Geertz 1957](#)) of the perennial skeptic. In that way, this foray into Asian perspectives as emerge through popular or mass market film provides a fresh reminder of some of the values of heroism, wholesome wonder, Faith, delightful magic, and strength of loyalty. It also suggests some messages of concern to a more realist worldly politics: dangers in warfare; dangers of civil fracture; dangers of (real) paranormal irregularities and trespasses; problems inherent in undoing traditional marriage institutions, and similar (discussed below).

Ritual politics ([Sohn 2023](#)) is treated herein as formal or informal ritual involving symbolic activities occurring in a religious, semi-religious, or secular context that is used for political purposes, in a political context, or to effect a political message. Some ritualized political moments may relate activities of highly symbolic value patterned upon religious ritual in some way but occurring in an entirely secular context; these forms may occur in film and television relating to the modern period, whereas traditional and formal ritual is most common in historical film and television. Open as to sub-theme and historical period, the selection resulted in film and television falling in genres of historical drama, historical fiction, historical-political drama, and/or war drama; historical using some elements of magical realism; paranormal and/or social-psychological dramas; myth, mythic, or mythology often in action; and mafia or gangster film. Cartoons, cartoon fairy tales, anime, and entirely fantasy film reflect a wide body of work that often does fit the selection themes; they are excluded from the current research for issues of space but are discussed briefly below. Several selected film or television works include some fantasy elements without being entirely fantasy film. Most of the selection includes martial arts, some in realistic framing and others in magical or quasi-magical presentation. Some include moral, or even

theological, lessons that appear to be aimed to build or support a given cultural worldview and system of values (defining cultural worldview and systems of values, see [Geertz 1957](#)).

Great men and women leaders; heroism; gender relations; tradition in modernity; and Paradise lost or remaining (often in Nature) are among the themes that appear most significant. The Appendices A–D code the film and television for the year of release; director; original language; location of availability (most are available for streaming in the U.S.); genre; historical markers as significant; mythological markers as significant; cultural markers as significant; appears to have intended teaching value; ritual politics (selection theme), or concern with ritual trespass; political theater (selection theme), and/or performativity; and sub-themes that are present within ritual politics and political theater. The works are analyzed in translation for imagery and narrative with usual drawbacks of non-access to the original languages (as relevant for most potential Western audiences). It is anticipated that the larger project will include further coding and analysis of conceptual variables, themes, narrative framing, and messages (not of language, *per se*); for the current work they are only canvassed and identified (e.g., first level of analysis). An effort to join conceptual variables and themes with binary coding is made in the Appendices A–D. The author has training in French, Hebrew, and Arabic but not in additional Asian languages; she had exposure to several East Asian languages as a child.

The selected film and television works emerge, geographically, from Kazakhstan and East to Mongolia and South Korea; and from India, Nepal, and East to China and the Pacific. Primary film languages of the larger body of discussed works include Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kazakh, Korean, Mandarin, Mongolian, Nepali, Rajasthani, Russian, Tamil, Thai, and Tibetan. Arabic, English, and Persian languages are minor languages in a few of the film or television works. Russia is treated as both European and Asian where Asian themes are emphasized (e.g., the Russian–Mongolian relationship). The current research takes the approach that Asian filmmakers are setting out to educate Asian youth, perhaps their wider societies, and English-speaking audiences, where possible, in much of the selected film and television. That is, regarding certain critical historical moments in specific framing (herein, a range of framings emerge from different vantage points, for example, in relation to China’s warring states period); critical historical figures, ritual acts, or religious concepts in specific framing; and certain cultural values, ethical frameworks, and symbol systems. “Asian” is conceived in East–West terms rather than seeking to erase, mask, or ignore local and regional differences within the parts of Asia from which the film and television works emerge (regarding such intellectual perils and drawbacks, see [Chen 2010](#); [Pinkney et al. 2015](#)). Indeed, the goal is to respect legitimate (e.g., lawful) difference on its own terms without recourse to relativism ([Levinas 1999](#)), and thinking East–West dimensions while accounting for sub-regional variation.

Why do these perspectives on ritual and politics matter? In some cases, such as the conceiving of the figure of Genghis Khan as a villain *versus* an Asian spiritual–political hero, or the presentation of important Asian goddesses who are invoked in questions of *Sati* and *Jauhar*,² insistence on certain differences in approach can lead to real-world political loggerheads. Given tensions between the hemispheres in the past decade, the current research treats knowledge as the best solution to obviate such less-than-ideal ends, or at least to contribute to identifying increasingly correctly when such ends may, or may not, be necessary.

In analyzing the film and television works, the current research follows a conceptual trajectory, theoretical framework, and methods located at the meeting place of the discursive (words and their meanings); hermeneutic (situating context); and phenomenological (major lived experiences, and performativity) (see discussion in [Sohn 2023](#)). These are suggested

by the combined insights of a number of important 20th century scholars in Anthropology, Political Science, the study of Religions, and Sociology.

Following the models of [Smith \(1984\)](#) and [Geertz \(1973\)](#), I adopt a sympathetic approach to the Asian perspectives offered in these film and television works. Benedict and Geertz emphasize the importance of identifying and de-coding cultural patterns ([Benedict \[1934\] 2005](#); [Geertz 1973](#)). Douglas, Durkheim, and Turner, variously, analyze culture through attention to ritual; rules and laws relating to purity concerns, criminality, social status, hierarchies, or power relations; and social boundaries and/or social solidarity ([Douglas \[1966\] 2003](#); [Durkheim \[1893\] 1987](#); [Turner \[1969\] 1995](#); on the relationship between Durkheim and Weber on democracy, see [Prager 1981](#)). Abu-Lughod addresses such cultural explanations of locale and of local societies when conducted as an insider rather than outsider ([Abu-Lughod 2016, 2000](#)). Gramsci's musings from a prison, during an era best described as *Kafkaesque*, tell us that the power to define words, narratives, and meaning has a culturally hegemonic impact on the thinking of the average person (and perhaps also on elites, [Gramsci \[1947\] 1992](#)), particularly when it occurs from an unseen, hidden, or veiled locus. Indeed, it may shape the way that we are able to conceptualize socio-political questions, large and small, unless we are able to break free from (what Bourdieu calls) fields of power that may be constructed in the naming of words and concepts (and the reverse, fields of power may define words, concepts, and their meanings, [Bourdieu 1987](#)).

Bourdieu is sadly skeptical regarding the individual's ability to do so (1987, 1994). Indeed, Bourdieu argues that words, concepts, and meanings intentionally constructed to suppress or dominate—particularly those with the power of the state behind them—may be used as symbolic violence to dominate the dominatable ([Bourdieu 1991](#), pp. 39–42, 51, 140; see also [Bourdieu 1987](#), pp. 838, 849–50; and [Bourdieu 1994](#), pp. 3–4, 17–18).³ Many have noted that the power of naming in religious contexts has been associated with, or seen as identical to, the Divine itself ([Cover 1983](#), pp. 10–11).⁴ That is, naming and defining are not small powers. Likewise, regarding narrative in the context of law, Cover tells us, “The codes that relate our normative system to our social constructions of reality and to our visions of what the world might be are narrative” (p. 10). For Derrida, words have meaning beyond our own authorship, although we may also construct meanings from them or using them ([Derrida \[1967\] 1978](#), pp. 285–93).

[Derrida \(\[1967\] 1978\)](#) addresses meaning, narrative, and myth associated with words as social constructs that change in a bounded way within and across history (e.g., they change, not infinitely; they are bounded by several factors including those structural as well as human—perhaps pernicious—propensity to play, e.g., taking on god-like powers, not unlike tricksters [p. 185]).⁵ For Bourdieu, by contrast, certain persons, disciplines, professions, or other powers may choose the meaning of words and narratives in ways that we might describe, today, more mechanically, as framing ([Tarrow 1992](#): joining symbols, images, and ideology with collective action to make cultural change, see p. 175); that defining, for Bourdieu, is a clear and intentional assertion of power rather than constituting a more innocuous social or cultural process.

In phenomenology, this work is influenced especially by Jewish Studies approaches to paradigmatic Jewish experiences, as well as by the phenomenology of religion (e.g., religion in place, and as experienced by members). It may be worthwhile to approach in other contexts a phenomenology of politics using a similar methodological framework to identify paradigmatic experiences by demographic and other variables, patterns among lived experiences in personal accounts and material sources, and politics as lived and experienced in place and in time, that is, history, over time, in different moments and locales. For a situated example in the late 20th century, see [Dahan-Kalev \(2001\)](#). On paradigmatic Jewish experiences in history, see [Goldberg \(1996\)](#), [Zohar \(1996\)](#), [Mendes-Flohr \(1991\)](#), [Sarna](#)

(1986), and Seltzer (1980). See also on phenomenology and performativity (e.g., theater), Goffman (1959, [1969] 2005; see also MacCannell 1983, and Moran 2000, discussed briefly in Sohn 2023). For the phenomenology of religion more broadly, see Eliade ([1957] 1987) and Berger ([1969] 1990).

Bourdieu reminds us that perspectives come with power (Bourdieu 1987, p. 829; Bourdieu 1986, p. 233). The current work suggests that we can use that impetus to empower ourselves with knowledge. Moreover, if naming may come with long-term implications regarding meaning, narrative framing, and conceptualization, then each scholarly research endeavor could be read as an act of seeking sacred knowledge; or, at the least, seeking to emulate or approach the sacred naming powers above mentioned. This work draws upon these scholars to suggest that we approach such powers self-consciously and with gravity. The remainder of this work is organized into the following sub-sections: (2) rationale, relating comparative historical–institutional analysis with some Asian film and television works; (3) selection methods; (4) perspective and ritual politics in relation to the films addressed; and (5) conclusions.

2. Rationale

Comparative historical–institutionalist analysis on the culturalist side, and qualitative comparative politics, more broadly, have a few not-so-obvious benefits. Non-culturalist yet qualitative historical and institutional analysis is well established in the field of comparative politics (Bellin 2005). Some cultural work identifies, elaborates, and may explain patterns developed from thick description and deep knowledge of a case, or cases, as informed by the ethnographic tradition amongst anthropologists (Geertz 1973, on codes, see p. 9, interpretation and construction, pp. 15, 218). For examples of works informed by this tradition in comparative politics from research in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), see Shahrokni (2020) on women and the political geography of spaces in Iran; Tessler (2019a, 2019b) on area studies and minorities, respectively; Gurses (2018) relating to dynamics of change from civil war, destructive, as well as positive social transformation; Wedeen ([1999] 2015) regarding symbols and police state in Syria; Coleman (2013) regarding women and politics, cross-nationally in MENA and internationally; Schwedler (2006) regarding the inclusion hypothesis for extremist religious parties in Jordan and Yemen; Singerman and Amar (2006) on urban politics in Cairo; Barzilai (2005) relating to communities and law among Jewish orthodox, women feminists, and Palestinians in Israel; Migdal (2001b) relating to people and institutional development in Israel (e.g., state–society relations); Peled (2001) on the development of Muslim religious institutions, policy, and debates in Israel; Sharoni (1995) relating to Jewish and Palestinian women in the Arab–Israeli conflict; and Mitchell ([1988] 1991, 1989) regarding representation and colonial/post-colonial politics in Egypt.

In Asia, see Midlarsky and Lee (2022) regarding violence and non-violence in Buddhist states; Lev ([2000] 2021) on courts, interests, and ideas in Indonesia, an analysis that is at once culturally sensitive and challenging to cultural reifications; Bei (2012) regarding Chinese and Japanese policy on Jewish refugees in World War II; Peerenboom (2010), on judicial independence in China; Radnitz (2010) on elite-driven social protests in Central Asia; Ashiwa and Wank (2009), relating to the presence of religion, religious institutions, religious practices, some attention to informal religion, and religion policy in China; J. C. Scott ([1985] 2008, 1977) relating to the politics, economics, and moral–ethical frameworks in peasant cultures, and exploitation, insubordination, and everyday resistance in South-east Asia; and Galanter ([1989] 1992) regarding legal pluralism in India. Elsewhere, see Migdal (1988, 2001a) regarding state-in-society and strongman politics and state-building,

respectively, and J. C. Scott ([1998] 2020) regarding state-building projects and authoritarian high modernism in Europe and elsewhere.

In American politics, a few examples of culturalist, political-ethnographic, and/or fieldwork of similar scope and approach include Flemming et al. (2016) and Eisenstein et al. ([1988] 1999) relating to local courts and their communities; Kramer (2016) regarding conservative and rural politics in Wisconsin; and Dahl ([1961] 2005) defining elites, their normative values, their policy-making roles, non-elites, and distributions of power in a democratic city.⁶

For other work and disciplines, see Liang (2022) regarding the remaking of Tibetan Buddhism through Chinese religious revival; Mallick (2022) on *hindutva* in India; Wongsurawat (2022) regarding religion and syncretism in China; Walsh (2020) on religion in China; Mares (2019) relating to food, agricultural, and farmworker politics in the U.S.; Abu-Lughod (1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2016) regarding women in the MENA; Marx ([1867] 2019) regarding factory workers in mid-19th century London (see political-ethnographic approach, chapter 10, or, for example, p. 273); Najmabadi (1998) regarding women, slave trade, and political transition in historical Iran; and Moore (1944) relating to the communist party and the formation of new elites in the USSR. There is a strong tendency in comparative politics to favor explanatory frameworks even related to cultural variables (King et al. [1994] 2021, pp. 33, 73–74; see also L. Anderson [1983] 2006).

Such works seek to provide studies that are based upon archival, cultural, economic, ethnographic, demographic, social, political, and observational data, to name a few types of material data/sources typically used (Khatib 2012; Radnitz 2010; Slater 2009, 2010; Allina-Pisano 2007; Newberg 1995; and institutionalist and culturalist, Huntington 1968). That is, while Geertz (1973) (on patterns, drawing upon Benedict [1934] 2005, and others) enjoins (political) ethnographers to de-code cultures (e.g., to identify and establish a culture's patterns, Geertz 1973, pp. 17, 44, 168, symbols, p. 89, and practices, p. 183), the current work joins that call with the focus in comparative political science on analytical distance, explanation, and, similar to Geertz, on patterns and practices (Migdal 2001a, pp. 18–19, 23, 49, 203, 250, 235). It frequently includes an important historical dimension to the analysis (Pierson and Skocpol 2002; Thelen 1999). Cultural and/or qualitative comparative politics, often based upon regional and area studies research, contribute to the field's overall goal of theory building (Bates 1997; see also Tessler 2019a; Mahoney 2017; Goertz and Mahoney 2012; Bates and Jenkins 2007). That is, such research provides analyses based upon cultural materials; historical accounts from a wide range of archival sources; personal accounts seeking to identify patterns by demographic, ideational (Tarrow 1992; Morris and Mueller 1992), and other variables rather than facts; observed practices and events; qualitative data more broadly; and, on more rare occasion, quantitative sign posts and affirmations. These works provide sometimes completely new information (or new and detailed information within certain pods of knowledge).

Comparative politics seeks to be part of that which is scientific in method and analysis, leaning in more recent years upon statistical research. Culturalist work remains steadfastly qualitative even if it includes economic, demographic, or other quantitative indicators; even if it uses numbers in content analysis; and even if it engages in (original) survey research. It is, nonetheless, asked to justify its existence in methodological terms.

Wherein description? While thick description may be overly discursive for some and not yet fully organized in raw form, and quantitative data may be insufficiently thin if it is asking binary questions, the two can complement one another (Coppedge 1999). Scholars disagree regarding which side of that spectrum leans toward generalizable theory, as culturalists tend to define theory in terms of linking empirical observations with patterns, themes, and concepts in social theory (for example, regarding nationalism as

cultural artifact, both real and imagined, [B. Anderson \[1983\] 2006](#)); state centralization and homogenization programs in late-modern state development ([J. C. Scott \[1998\] 2020](#)); peasant politics ([J. C. Scott \[1985\] 2008, 1977](#)), and ([L. Anderson \[1983\] 2006](#)); the gaze and representation in colonial and post-colonial context ([Mitchell \[1988\] 1991, 1989](#)); genocide as unwillingness to self-restraint (contraction), as well as social and territorial contraction ([Midlarsky 2005](#)); people and institutional development in state building ([Migdal 2001b](#)); judicial power in judicial–executive relations ([Newberg 1995](#)); informal networks and informal economic practices ([Singerman \[1995\] 2020](#)); control of discourse and symbol in police states ([Wedeen \[1999\] 2015](#); in other disciplines, see [Weiss 2022](#)); religion and politics in practice as against modernization theory’s prediction of the death of God, in both the East and West ([Raudino 2022](#); [Raudino and Sohn 2022](#); [Sohn and Raudino 2022](#); [Haynes 2020, 1998](#); [Fox 2015](#); [Kertzer 1988](#); on religion as a causal variable, see [Weber \[1904\] 2011](#)); and religion and modernization theory ([Tessler 2022](#)). Quantitative and behaviorist scholars seem to see their work as deriving from (or proofing) grand theories regarding methods and methodologies themselves ([Coppedge 1999](#)). Thus, they may lean on the deductive end, while we lean to the inductive end of the spectrum in social scientific analysis. And we all engage in both to some degree; it is an old debate ([Perry 1927](#), identifies the scientific method with inductive research, pp. 69–70).

Scientific analysis requires both deductive (e.g., analysis of existing theories and development of hypotheses or argument from that prior work) and inductive (e.g., new information from original research, which may come from field observations, newly developed data sets, lab experiments, and more); or there is no research process, no falsification, no yea or nay to a hypothesis/argument ([Kuhn \[1962\] 2012](#), p. 32, identifies Sir Isaac Newton as an inductive researcher). For culturalists, what counts as data is (completely) new information derived from (often field) research, and other sources relating at least in part to culture. What counts as generalizable theory and what count as data may, each, be different for the two generalized research paradigms as they are usually expressed in comparative politics: qualitative (e.g., culturalist [more often post-structuralist or post-positivist], discursive, historical–sociological, and/or interpretive [more often postmodernist]); and quantitative (e.g., behaviorist [attitudes], behaviorist–rationalist [interests], rational choice modeling [symbolic logic], and/or statistical). That is, the scientific method is not a measure of statistics; it includes vastly descriptive research, qualitative and historical, field observations, lab-related observations, as well as purely quantitative, and more.

Therefore, when Charles Darwin wrote, *The Voyage of the Beagle* ([Darwin \[1939\] 1989](#)), he offered an account well-fitting Geertz’ notion of thick description ([Geertz 1973](#)). It was based upon observations in the field of certain animal species’ observable traits and behaviors on the continents and/or islands of South America, Africa, the South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. It provided new, inductively produced information (often in the form of thick description); taxonomies (the discipline of Biology’s term for analysis into categorizations or typologies); and the foundations of a theory developed by Darwin over the following twenty years: evolution ([Darwin \[1859\] 1998](#); regarding concept formation and typologies in the social sciences, see [Collier et al. 2012](#), p. 224).

Likewise, when comparative political scientist Diane Singerman wrote, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*, [Singerman \(\[1995\] 2020\)](#) reported what she had observed in women and family behaviors in urban Cairo. Many times in the text she wrote of the “informal” arena as critical to women’s participation, social stature, political activities, economic activities, and the like; and, many times she identified “processes” that were important. She, like James Scott, was interested in informal networks and informal economic processes ([J. C. Scott 1977](#), p. 206). What she was identifying were informal processes, a concern of Geertz and others ([Geertz 1973](#)), but less often an object

of analysis in comparative political science at the time (with some exceptions, including [Mitchell \[1988\] 1991](#), on “continuous representational process,” p. 130; [Mitchell 1989](#); [J. C. Scott 1977](#); see also [Lev \[2000\] 2021](#)).

Similarly, [Newberg \(1995\)](#) was able to map the landscape of courts and constitutionalism, across time, in the ebb and flow amongst authoritarianism and constitutional order in Pakistan over the course of several decades of the 20th century (pp. 150–52, 162). Newberg drew upon court documents and national- and regional-level court decisions; archival information, including government documents, private manuscripts, and other documents; extensive treatment of local and regional scholarly studies; and interviews (usually published elsewhere). She explained the courage of justices who stood up to executive branch rulers, as well as the dangers to them (pp. 201–2, 250).

Singerman and Newberg—working in MENA—were each involved in a form of process tracing initiated by scholars such as [Collier and Collier \(\[1991\] 2002\)](#) in their work on critical junctures in comparative historical-institutional analysis, and others (such as [J. C. Scott 1977](#), [\[1985\] 2008](#); [Mitchell \[1988\] 1991](#), [1989](#)). Singerman decidedly included anthropological methods, which, as noted, specifically identify patterns and processes as objects of analysis. For Singerman, the focus was informal social and economic processes in a specific bounded timeframe; in the case of Newberg, the process tracing centered upon identifying causal chains across several decades of historical events. Some of the more political-ethnographic among these works are often not cited in behavioralist and rationalist traditions; the point, herein, is to highlight their place in the historiography of such important concepts, as well as their utility to studies such as the current research. Given the importance of qualitative, cultural, political-ethnographic, and related fieldwork-based research to concept formation, the current writing, while brief and not exhaustive, views their inclusion as significant for substantive conceptual and theoretical reasons.

Scholars such as [Wedeen \(\[1999\] 2015\)](#), also using political ethnography in MENA, have argued that variables including discourse, symbols, and (usually secular) political ritual were crucial in gaining and sustaining authoritarian domination of society through control of the same (pp. 6, 26, 223). Indeed, she suggests that authoritarian power in states such as Syria was maintained to the extent that the regime/state (where they were the same) was able to control these variables across society—at least in public—in the everyday (pp. 126–27, 129, 168). She includes (contest regarding content of) film (p. 112) as part of this process of asserting discursive and symbolic control in the secular context of the Syrian police state (a secularist and secularizing state often misunderstood to be religious because Islam is present in society, p. 47; regarding weakness of secular opposition, p. 167; see also [Ziadeh 2012](#); and in other disciplines, see [Weiss 2022](#)). Scholars in Anthropology such as [Abu-Lughod \(1998a, 2008\)](#) have addressed women and television soap opera watching in the context of feminist longing under postcolonial conditions and in terms of the development of national identities.

By the early 2000s, scholars such as Woods (e.g., Sohn) ([Woods 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, \[2008\] 2017](#)) relating to informal processes and interactions among state and social actors; [Helmke and Levitsky \(2004, 2006\)](#) and [Mahoney and Thelen \(2010\)](#) on informal institutions; and still others expanded research related to informal dynamics and their impact upon socio-political and/or institutional processes ([Mahoney 2017, 2012](#); [Collier 2011](#); [Mahoney and Thelen 2010](#)). Some of these may have been influenced by Migdal, who highlighted the roles of social actors, as well as informal and formal social organizations ([Migdal 2001a](#), p. 49) and explained the importance of processes ([Migdal 2001a](#), pp. 23, 203, 250) and practices ([Migdal 2001a](#), pp. 18–19, 49, 235) for understanding image, myth making, and power in modern states. [Migdal \(2001a, p. 235\)](#) notably emphasized (what today we might call, using Anthropology’s term, micro-level) practices by contrast to systems approaches.

That is, we in Political Science may, yet, remain stuck in the battle over structure versus agency, albeit framed in a new current cloth as one between a level of analysis centered on the more (using Economics' term) macro-level (behavioralist and rationalist approaches grounded in macro-level themes and epistemologies even where queries may be individual and remote) versus one centered upon the more micro-level (cultural and regional analyses grounded in case and observations often conducted in the field, in locale, where queries may be in-person and influenced by ethnographic methods at least to some extent) (see also [Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997](#); and, in Anthropology, [Abu-Lughod 2016](#)).

Thus, in the words of Giddens, "Human beings, in the theory of structuration, are always and everywhere regarded as knowledgeable agents, although acting within historically specific bounds of unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of their acts" ([Giddens 1995](#), p. 165). This project, following Giddens to this extent, adopts an assumption that structures matter and that humans have agency. Humans may, or may not, have the ability to climb the walls of social hierarchies, or the Supernatural, which create the conditions that bound their existences in the Asian film and television addressed herein. Indeed, heroism in the film and television lies in those who achieve both: acknowledge and politely accept structure and hierarchy (which may be referred to as Fate); and defy, decry, and deny it to great effect for self and others even to the extent of heroic deaths, and/or establishing new empires.

Analyses of informal factors and process tracing are now, each, entrenched as major research programs in comparative politics. That is, new, inductively derived knowledge linked with deductive research for the development of theory and theory building; the identification of new concepts, concept formation, concept building; categories (similar to taxonomies or typologies); and the development of new research programs are all important contributions brought to us, in large and small ways, through political–ethnographic and cultural–institutional research (see [Tessler 2019a, 2019b](#); [Mahoney 2017](#); [Collier et al. 2012](#); [Goertz and Mahoney 2012](#); [Bates and Jenkins 2007](#); [Collier and Collier \[1991\] 2002](#); [Bates 1997](#)).⁷

Methodologically, film and television works may be widely available for analysis when the travel usually required for qualitative and culturalist fieldwork becomes less available due to funding, war or conflict situations, and many other factors. Likewise, there is much important messaging, teaching of local or national populations, as well as additional cultural, institutional, religious, moral–ethical, values-related, and other political factors that are present in foreign language film and television works. These may not be analyzed in the same terms by other disciplines or fields. Important information is available that may be significant for basic knowledge (e.g., basic facts or first level of analysis), theory building, cross-cultural analysis, cross-national interactions, international relations at both micro- and macro-levels, and other purposes. The suggestion is that scholars of comparative politics and international studies—especially culturalists who may be able to live abroad less often, and for less time, than they would prefer for research purposes—should not shy from applying themselves to these material–historical–cultural sources (on film as material, cultural, and/or historical text, see [Hodder 1989](#); [Schneider 1987](#); see also [Sohn 2021](#); for a brief discussion of film in political science, see [Sohn 2023](#); for a suggestion that film can explain a country through narrative and other factors, see [Celli 2011](#); regarding film and conceptions of national cinema in South Korea, see [Chung and Diffrient 2015](#); regarding film in bilateral, domestic, or international relations, see [Cohen 2006](#); [Deniar and Effendi 2019](#); on American political culture and film, see [Franklin 2006](#); [I. Scott 2000](#); see also [J. Kim 2018](#); [Nelson 2015](#); [Marinescu and Balica 2013](#); [Panagia 2013](#); and [Linley et al. 2012](#); regarding art more broadly, see [Mitra and König 2013](#); and [Negash 2004](#); and in other disciplines, see [Xiao 2019](#)).

The overall findings include noteworthy and widespread high heroic Asian perspectives on rituals such as *Sati* and *Jauhar*, and historical figures such as Genghis Khan treated in high heroic and spiritualist light. In Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean works, a propensity emerges from the selected film and television to emphasize certain critical moments of war and peace (*Sakra*, Yen and Kam 2023; *Samurai Marathon*, Rose 2019; *Steel Rain*, Yang 2017; *Once Upon a Time in Tibet*, W. Dai 2011), especially the warring states period (*Kingdom II: Far and Away*, Satō 2022; *Kingdom*, Satō 2019; *King's War*, Xixi and Liu 2012); several critical wars in the early modern period (for example, in a serious historical drama, see *The Fortress*, Hwang 2017); and a warlords period in the early 20th century before the establishment of modern China (*Call of Heroes*, B. Chan 2016). These include (at least partially) paranormal treatments of long-standing battles between what is now South Korea and what is now North Korea, as well as dynasties northward in what is now Russia (*Kingdom: Ashin of the North*, S.-h. Kim 2021); and art nouveau as well as mass market treatments of women in wartime periods (*Mulan Legend*, He 2020; *Mulan: Rise of a Warrior*, Ma and Dong 2009).

South Korean film displays a broad concern with the paranormal, addressed only in part herein (*Asura: The City of Madness*, S. S. Kim 2016; see also Sohn 2023). These include presentations of disturbances caused by cannibalism and vampirism, zombie conditions (medically-induced?), and possible human sacrifice as a wartime or peacetime strategic threat (*Kingdom: Ashin of the North*, S.-h. Kim 2021; *Kingdom*, Kim et al. 2019). Chinese and Southeast Asian film demonstrate interest in (entirely) fantasy, youth-oriented productions with moral-ethical stories, epic wars between the gods, dragons in the Heavens, and martial arts displayed in magical framing; these are not addressed in the current writing, as discussed below (in magical realism, see, for example, *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*, Wuershan 2023; *Legend of Gatotkaca*, Bramantyo and Miftach 2022; *The Yin-Yang Master: Dream of Eternity*, Guo 2020; *Dynasty Warriors*, Chow 2021; *Dragon Master: Dragon Spell*, X. Dai 2020; *Buddha Palm Technique*, Huang 2020; *Investiture of the Gods*, Lu and Yang 2019; *Monkey King Reincarnation*, Liu 2018; and *The Guillotines*, Lau 2012).

Strongly present in India, South Asia, and in film from across Asia, including South Korea, are themes of Paradise retained, Paradise lost, or the natural ideal (*Arthdal Chronicles*, Dong-gun et al. 2019–2023; *The Legend of Tomiris*, Satayev 2019; *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*, Bodrov 2007; *Veer-Zaara*, Chopra 2004; and *Himalaya: l'enfance d'un chef*, Valli 1999); new nations contemplating tradition and (surrealist?) modernity in poignant contexts (*Kalank*, Varman 2019); ultra-modernism or surrealism in developed and less developed contexts, together with its contest against traditionalism (*U Turn*, Khan and Tulsigiri 2023); Asian perspectives on what counts as heroism, male and female (for example, *U Turn*, Khan and Tulsigiri 2023; *Panipat*, Gowardiker 2019; *The Legend of Tomiris*, Satayev 2019; *Padmaavat*, Bhansali 2018; *Call of Heroes*, B. Chan 2016); and the Russian–Mongolian relationship in both Asian–Russian and East Asian contexts, including old world conflict resolution institutions, such as the mutual exchange of indentured servants, and, especially, female (and sometimes male) slavery in marriage (*The Golden Horde [Zolotaya Orda]*, Alpatov 2018 [MA]; *Sofiya*, Adrianov 2016 [MA]; see also *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*, Bodrov 2007).

Messaging from the selected films with intended audiences, initially, in Asia, and later in English-speaking countries, suggests (at least) the following significant concerns: (1) desolation as resulting from mass (civil) warfare even under just war conditions; (2) ritual atrocities or trespass (frequently as tied to civil or international warfare, and as a security threat to Asian communities); (3) the reaffirming and Asian framing of certain male and female heroes, including Genghis Khan and mythic ancient Asian queens and/or goddess figures; (4) the reaffirming and Asian framing of certain traditional religious practices (e.g., often in Nature religions), institutionalized religious rituals, and local or regional

traditional gods as significant; (5) traditional forms of leadership such as monarchy and empire; (6) political marital alliances in monarchy and empire, and love and loyalty in romance as both female and male heroism in these contexts; (7) women's heroism as warrior queen; (8) historical periods of vast, micro-level despotism, suggesting a need for centralized law, order, and governance (see also [Lu 1999](#)); (9) Paradise lost, or still remaining (often as Nature); (10) maintaining tradition (including ritual spiritual order) in modern environments; (11) certain values and/or value systems (local, regional, or broadly Asian); and (12) international encounter in the modern period, alliances, and the end of empire.

3. Selection Methods

The current research addresses two dozen film or television works that were released to English-speaking audiences between 1999 and 2023; in the subsequent pages, several of these film or television works are discussed in brief thematic synopses. Film and several television series were selected using a modified snowball method and purposive sampling ([Guetterman 2015](#); [Yin 2009](#); [Ackerly 2008](#); [Gusterson 2008](#); [Reinharz 1992](#)). Almost all selected film and television is available on Netflix or Amazon for streaming, purchase, or rental (see Appendices A–D). All selected film and television is in Asian languages with English subtitles; only a few offer English dubbing. Film or television in Asian languages made primarily by U.S. production companies, or Asian-themed work from Western sources in which English is a, or the, primary language, is excluded (for example, *Asura*, [Mukôda 2025](#); *Bangkok Dog*, [Supannarat 2024](#); *House of Ninjas*, [Boyle 2024](#); *Shōgun*, [Toye et al. 2024–2026](#); *Tokyo Vice*,⁸ [Rogers 2022–2024](#) [TV-MA]; *Alienoid*, [Choi 2022](#); *Blade of the 47 Ronin*, [Yuan 2022](#); *Kate*, [Nicolas-Troyan 2021](#) [R]; *Mulan*, [Caro 2020](#); *The Great Wall*, [Zhang 2016](#); *The Outsider*, [Zandvliet 2018](#) [TV-MA]; *Into the Sun*, [mink 2005](#) [R]; and *Mulan II*, [Rooney and Southerland 2004](#)).

The selection does not include film or television from 2024 or 2025. That is, Asian film or television since 2023 that fit the selection themes is not included in the current research (for examples, *Harbin*, [Woo 2025](#); *The Prosecutor*, [Yen 2025](#); *Squid Game*, [Dong-hyuk 2021–2025](#) [TV-MA]; *Shambhala*, [Bham 2024](#); *The Whirlwind*, [Yong-wan 2024](#); *Uprising*, [S.-m. Kim 2024](#); *Kingdom 4: Return of the Great General*, [Satô 2024](#); *Bangkok Breaking: Heaven and Hell*, [Khomsiri 2024](#) [TV-MA]). Several film and television works fitting the selection themes and period have not yet been analyzed, will likely be included in the larger project, and may be of interest (for example, *12.12: The Day*, [S. S. Kim 2023](#); *Ever Victorious*, [Mak 2023](#); *The Tai Chi Master*, [Cheng and Lin 2022](#); *Knights of Valour*, [Dai and Cheng 2021](#); *Tomb of the River*, [Young-bin 2021](#); *Vagabond*, [In-sik 2019](#); *Investiture of the Gods*, [Walsh 2020](#); *Designated Survivor: 60 Days*, [Yoo 2019](#); *The Legend of Gobi*, [Tserenchimed 2018](#) [MA]; *God of War*, [G. Chan 2017](#); *The Assassin*, [Hou 2015](#); *Ip Man 3*, [Yip 2015](#); *Golden Cane Warrior*, [Isfansyah 2014](#); *Kingdom of Conquerors*, [Wang 2013](#); *Genghis: The Legend of the Ten*, [Dorj and Shagdarsuren 2012](#); *War of Arrows*, [Han-min 2011](#); *The Warlords*, [Chan and Yip 2007](#); *House of Flying Daggers*, [Zhang 2004](#)).

Five main selection processes were employed: (1) the Netflix and Amazon search engines were used to help in selecting film and television by the primary research themes, initially by country; (2) the Netflix and Amazon editorial recommendations, which appear during and/or after viewing a film, were used to help in selecting film and television by the primary research themes; (3) film and television works were watched with attention to text (e.g., subtitles usually for narrative rather than for language, *per se*), imagery, symbols, and narrative framing patterns to determine if they were a good fit for the project by primary research theme—many films were excluded; (4) selected directors and leading actors were followed to their film histories on the IMDB.com online database, and those film histories

were, in turn, used to select additional films by the primary research themes; and, finally, (5) the IMDB.com search engine (and the Google search engine followed by the IMDB.com search engine) was used to identify film or television from a specific country or region, or on a specific theme in Asian film, and film and television works were selected on the primary research themes from those lists. From selection steps 3 and 4, the selection process repeated step 2, and sometimes steps 3 or 4 as well. And from selection step 5, steps 3 and 4 were repeated until two dozen film or television works were selected. The goal for the larger project is five dozen film and television works for the selection.

Thus, the selection process reflects an effort to be somewhat representative—or as representative as possible within significant limits—on the primary research themes, including a representation of a wide range of sub-themes, time periods, countries, and regions of Asia. There is no claim of full representativeness, nonetheless, within the selection process used, as full representativeness is not considered possible in the current work due at least in part to data availability. Thus, the results are illustrative and preliminary although important. Much of the film and television had joint international production teams located primarily in Asia; some were produced in one Asian country; and some had joint international production teams with some production collaboration from Western countries (see Appendices A–D and reference list). Two television series and one film had primary production in Moscow or St. Petersburg, Russia, and included significant dimensions of Asia-related themes (*The Golden Horde* [Zolotaya Orda], [Alpatov 2018](#) [MA]; *Sofiya*, [Adrianov 2016](#) [MA]; and *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*, [Bodrov 2007](#)).

Cartoons were excluded, although film or television that included art or anime in brief portions, or in the introduction, were not excluded. Anime film and television, an important genre in Asia, were not included. Children’s movies and television were excluded, although youth-oriented histories, mythological tales, magical realism, and at least semi-realist fairy tales were included. Film falling entirely in the fantasy category was excluded (e.g., dragon movies, gods flying through the Heavens, and the like). It is noteworthy that fantasy film constitutes a large genre in some parts of East Asia, and it includes many elements relating to the primary selection themes. This film genre tends to present moral, and even theological, lessons intended to build and maintain certain cultural and moral-ethical systems of values via the literary genre of the fairy tale (for example, *Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kingdoms*, [Hark 2018](#); see also *Detective Dee: Demon Chonchon*, [He 2020](#); and *The Monkey King: Havoc in Heaven’s Palace*, [Cheang 2014](#)). Violence was not excluded and appears in many of the film and television works.

It may be noted that a growing genre of U.S. and Western-based film and television relating to Asian-Americans does fall within the primary topical selection themes; they are not included because they are U.S. or Western-based works. Many of them attempt to consider Asian-American identities, values, and/or relationships with Asia as an historical cultural center (a few examples include *Moana 2*, [Derrick et al. 2024](#); *The Brothers Sun*, [Tancharoen and Nguyen 2024](#) [TV-MA]; *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, [Cretton 2021](#); *Raya and the Last Dragon*, [Hall et al. 2021](#); *Moana*, [Clements et al. 2016](#); *The Warrior’s Way*, [S. Lee 2010](#); *The Forbidden Kingdom*, [Minkoff 2008](#); for related efforts in the United Kingdom see *Giri/Haji*, [Farino and Chessell 2022](#) [TV-MA]). Likewise, Western blockbuster and mass market film informed by or imparting Asian values, working with Asian mythological figures, or relating to East–West relations is not included in the current work (for example, *Karate Kid: Legends*, [Entwistle 2025](#); *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*, [Wingard 2024](#); *Hidden Strike*, [Waugh 2023](#) [TV-14]; *Godzilla vs. Kong*, [Wingard 2021](#) [PG-13]; *Silence*, [Scorsese 2016](#) [R]; *Dragon Blade*, [D. Lee 2015](#); *The Life of Pi*, [A. Lee 2012](#); *Die Another Day*, [Tamahori 2002](#) [PG-13]; *Rush Hour*, [Ratner 1998](#); *Seven Years in Tibet*, [Annaud 1997](#); *Kundun*, [Scorsese 1997](#); *Tomorrow Never Dies*, [Spottiswoode 1997](#) [PG-13]; *The Karate Kid*, [Avildsen 1984](#)).

The project addresses popular, mass market film, and a few television works. Some of these appear to have the express intent of teaching youth (and perhaps older) populations certain narrative framing on political, religious, historical, and moral themes. In thinking about audience, some of the film or television series were released concurrently in the West, while others were released some years after release in a home production country. Thus, a dual teaching or messaging effort may be under way, one aimed at domestic audiences, and one aimed at English-speaking audiences (whether diaspora or non-Asian audiences).

4. Perspective, Ritual Politics, and Film

Turim's (discursive) work on memory and history, and the use of representations of history, in the cinematic form of the "flashback," suggests that film may be consciously used by filmmakers to frame history and debates regarding historical moments (Turim [1989] 2014, pp. 2, 17). It may offer framings meant to be widely representative; it may, "disguise its representation as 'reality'" (Turim [1989] 2014, p. 105); it may be used to present "cultural representations" or government propaganda (Turim [1989] 2014, p. 117); it may be intended to trigger memory; or it may be used in a non-strategic manner (Turim [1989] 2014, pp. 2, 17, 103, 124, 168, 220). She highlights the strong role that ritual plays in the work of a famous 20th century Japanese filmmaker, including attention to ritual abuse; death (or murder) rituals; marriage rituals and family rituals, including funerals; and other issues (Turim 2023, pp. 109, 114, 118). Turim suggests that ritual may, at times, be utilized for the reversing of usual power relationships (Turim 2023, p. 121), a use of ritual also highlighted by Turner ([1969] 1995, p. 167, see also p. 191).

In terms of ritual and politics (for further discussion of "ritual politics," see Sohn 2023), most film and television works selected herein involve symbolic activities occurring in a religious, or semi-religious, context. Some political moments that are highly ritualized may relate activities of highly symbolic value patterned upon religious ritual in some way but occurring in an entirely secular context; these tend to be situated in the modern period. And a few film and television works display formal religious ritual, *per se*, being employed in secular, mundane, or profane political contexts.⁹ These three types emerge as distinct.

In one film, Genghis Khan is treated as a moral and spiritual hero in addition to being a hero in war and politics. He rises to assert predictable and reliable rule over a status quo of chaos and violence across tribes, lost respect for ritual traditions, and trespass into marital unions in Bodrov's (2007) historical epic, *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*. The film is produced by a wide range of Asian and other country contributions with primary production in Russia. This predominantly Asian perspective on Genghis Khan, coming from sources such as Russia and Japan, suggests an approach and narrative on the life and achievements of Genghis Khan that run counter to many conventional accounts of him as a violent and threatening anti-hero, certainly not one of moral, religious, or spiritual character. The burning of villages across Asia—beginning in Mongolia—is presented as a means to achieve an important, laudable, and necessary end: the unity of Mongolian tribes into one nation; and the assertion of a systematic and predictable rule of law that would ensure and enforce peace sufficient that women and children could be out of doors freely without fear for their lives, abduction from their families, enslavement, and other non-rational ends.

The punishments Genghis Khan established are presented in the film as severe; but they are presented as meaning a rational, predictable order of rights and duties, and that loyalties would be enforced in such a way as to avoid the sorts of intrigues, and lack of basic personal security, known in most societies in their lawless times. In a world of chaotic violence, Khan's temporary violence of warfare is presented in the film to be the necessity of an era, not only in Mongolia, but (during and after his life) westward throughout Central

Asia; to the regions that had, close to a thousand years prior, been ruled by Attila and others; southwest-ward as far as Baghdad; and eastward into Manchuria, China, and what is now the Koreas. For different reasons (not elaborated), each of those regions is presumed rife with upheaval and/or unregulated violence and injustice against innocents in various forms. Khan's childhood, as the film depicts it, provided the experiential cause for his dedication—and motivation to action—to institute Justice (spiritually or religiously conceived) across these worlds so that children, women, elders, and men could know a predictable existence (e.g., in the sense of political order). The film repeats supernaturalist depictions of Khan in direct devotion to *Tengri*, the Mongolian Sky God. The film includes attention to the hated Tangut kingdom, providing a moral tale as to its ultimate disappearance rooted in a fundamental lack of justice. Addressing Khan's youth, his development as a person (spiritual, and ultimately charismatic), his love of his wife and family, and other relationships, the film ends on the cusp of the invasions outward.

On the other hand, *Padmaavat* (Bhansali 2018) relates several epic battles between parts of South Asia in which a heroic queen, one who usually stands dutifully and proudly behind her husband in most ways, leads the women of the fort to their deaths in mass self-immolation rather than being taken as slave wives by an invading (and barbaric) force. She and her husband choose one another; they later gain permission of her Father, who grants it willingly. *Padmaavat* engages in this act of *Jauhar* in order to honor her husband, the sanctity of their marriage (even after his death), and the marriages and honor of all of the women in question. The point, as presented in the film, is not to kill one's self because no life is possible after the death of one's husband. Rather it is to protect the sanctity of one's marriage in which the marriage, itself, and the *literal conquest of the woman, man, and kingdom* through the desecration of their marriage, are the main objects of the war in question. It is to deny an invading enemy force the ability to take one as a wife-slave, thereby denying that indignity to one's husband over periods of time that presume reincarnation; it is to make all of the enemy's motive for their endeavors come to naught (see also Fitria 2023). It is to choose death by fire rather than the women allowing themselves to be thrust—by malice of intent and the orchestration of an enemy people—into a life presented as worse than death (e.g., slave marriages). It is an unfortunate act of women's agency in a mass, united rebellion and martyrdom of women against an enemy power in the context of warfare, not unlike that individual act of Bouazizi which sparked the Arab Spring in Tunisia (see Breuer 2016, pp. 121–23). It is a religious ritual act against the ritual transgression of the enemy force, a transgression against a Holy union of marriage in its motivation to war. And it is an act of Faith, belief that the next life will come. There is some debate in India as to whether the story relates to Hindu-Muslim relations, as the invading force is understood to have been Muslim (Fitria 2023, p. 127); it is possible that it may also be an allusion to international conflict more broadly, given the author of the original story, a famous Sufi poet who wrote in Hindu language.

The loss of a community—most of the men die in battle, and many women die in self-immolation—is presented as part of a longer-term narrative-building process over time and history. That time and history is presented, mythologically, as providing lessons for the local communities, hence forward, from which we should all learn and by which we should likely all be advised. That is, it offers a wide, programmatic view of women's and men's rights to choose one another and to their marriage—over time. *Padmaavat* wins in the volumes of history in this presentation. The film is built upon a fictional account in the 16th century Hindu language epic poem of the same name, written by a Muslim man as an act of Sufi poetry, a man considered by some to be the greatest Muslim poet in Hindu language (Millis 1984, pp. 1, 40); it corresponds in some limited ways to the Hindu mythological cycle of the goddess Sati.

Padmaavat's act of group self-immolation (*Jauhar*) is, in this sense, a performative ritual act intentionally conducted in the most dramatic terms. As a queen, she is a politician if we apply modern terms anachronistically. She is absolutely intentional about her own act, and her act of leadership of other women—again, in a religion and world that assumes reincarnation. Her act, leading the women into the fire as though into a battlefield, is intended to remain in the minds of men and women—friend and foe—as a lesson for all of time. The film displays the stately young queen's skin begin to redden and fleck from the burning fire. She continues, holding her husband's shroud made in another ritual context—the joyful moment of Holi—and walks directly into the fire. It is a lesson of will, justice, and a woman's rights to her singular (loving and willing) husband over time. No outside force has the right to come into her marital domicile and to demand her presence, as wife, for another man; that is, particularly while her husband awaits her, whether he be in this life or (having been killed, now presumed to be in) the next. Power plays around marriage, and the free marital choice of individuals, provide the central quandary of the film. While the world stands in horror, Padmaavat has her victory through self-immolation, as time (in a world of reincarnation) is on her side and that of her husband. The women who follow her, too, are presumed to move forward to their next lives with the respective husband of each not having been forced to wed another and thereby desecrate their long-term (in the sense of reincarnation) marriage, nor to sacrifice their (eternal) marriage.

The film, *Asura: The City of Madness* (S. S. Kim 2016, hereafter *Asura*), and the epic TV series human origins tale, *Arthdal Chronicles* (Dong-gun et al. 2019–2023, hereafter *Arthdal*), both South Korean in origin, relate to ritual politics and political theater in varied ways. In *Asura*, named metaphorically for Asia's "demons" (see, for example, Zan 2010; Schmid 2008; Premasiri 2006; Salomon 1993; Russell 1987) the distinctly modern and human powers of chaos have taken over a modern development town in which development monies (local, national, or international is unknown) are up for grabs. The worst-of-the-worst come running for the empowerment accruing to those funds rather than the best-of-the-best. A corrupt mayor uses political and religious ritual, as well as pre-arranged secular violences, for photo opportunities in order to gain power and prestige. Each of these provides the mayor with space to develop well-orchestrated moments of political theater for public consumption. The film is macabre, violent—and also comedic—parallel to the U.S. Gotham parables-in-film regarding political power (Burton 1989; Nolan 2008). A hapless cop, a detective, and his mentee, see their relationship change over access to power in this mafia, or gangster, context. The film fits Gillespie's (2016) account of critiques of neoliberalism to be found in South Korean gangster film.

By contrast to Hobbes ([1651] 2002), and perhaps Golding (1955), for whom the state of nature is sometimes presumed to be violent and instrumental (although sometimes it is non-warring because humans are rational, Hobbes [1651] 2002, p. 542; see also Chung 2014 on rationality and irrationality, pp. 687, 690; and Darwall 1976, pp. 167–68, on tensions between definitions of rationalist interests and ethics)¹⁰—and which may be most prescient for *Asura*—the state of nature in *Arthdal* is something else. In *Arthdal*, the state of nature is a spiritual and material Ideal centered upon flowers, sunlight, spirit rituals, spirit dance, natural foliage gathering, and community solidarity. This early community Paradise steers away from new technologies that would change any of these. Van Mill addresses notions of rationality in Hobbes as non-instrumental; or, at the least, rationality is not inherently self-maximizing to the exclusion of coexistence and rules/laws/political order as means to mutual (personal) security and economic benefit (Van Mill 1994).

Arthdal provides one Asian mythological account of human origins in which warring first human—*hominid*—tribes or communities grapple with options: to eradicate the Other; to unite politically and join forces against the elements; or something else (the discussion

of the Other, here, is influenced by several Jewish and MENA thinkers outlined in [Sohn 2021](#)). One people is called *Neanthal* (not quite, “Neanderthal”), and the other calls itself the Asa People (descendants of a Grandmother). The series begins with an explanation of the time when *hominids* came down from caves or trees, and *Homo sapiens sapiens* had not yet learned agriculture or settled living. One of the peoples is treated as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, that is, humans as we know them; and the other is possibly another *hominid* tribe, or possibly something closer to *hominid* and the Supernatural. Women and men both play important roles of religious or political leadership.

“Arthdal” may be a joining of the two words, Asa and Neanthal. Asa is sometimes pronounced in the series, “*Astja*.” The story is a parable about the resilience of human spirit, knowledge, ability, technology, and the like, in part through inter-*hominid* marriage and family lines. The series also presents severe push-back against persons of mixed lineage between these two sets of beings. A few among the primary characters are mixed-race between the Neanthal and the Asa People; they look human except that, like the Neanthal, they have bright purple blood, bright purple lips, and special (perhaps Supernatural) abilities.

Spirit religions are presented as idyllic, “first moments,” or Paradise unhindered and unarmed in *Arthdal*. They are replaced, instead, historically within the television series, by the (religiously) lawless overturning of the mythological Ideal: an invading, violent political order (a first polity and city-state); and new technologies, practices, and institutions such as steel swords, mountain ascents via ladder pulleys, large plot monocropping, horseback riding for martial purposes, and institutionalized slavery. Here, rather than the state of nature as violent and oppressive, it is the new city-state that carries that role. In *Arthdal*, ritual politics and political theater are employed by politicians and priests—at times in their battles with one another for power and leverage—again, in contrast to the Ideal (and idyllic) state of nature that was found in the pre-city spirit-oriented Paradise. In this juxtaposition, the series grafts most likely disparate time periods into close proximity; that is, it elides vast stretches of time to make points for the contemporary out of a fictional and mythological tale regarding human origins, conflict, and coexistence. That mythological origin in Paradise looks similar to an Asian version of the Amazon rain forest. In this sense, the television series might fall into the category of post-colonial narrative suggested by [An \(2018\)](#), albeit in context of mythological earliest human settlement and (inter-Asian) inter-cultural exchange. It also provides a narrative that is pro-traditionalism, rural life, and (clean) spirit religions. The interaction between *Homo sapiens sapiens* and the creatures who are imbued with some sort of Supernatural ability provides a fascinating account of human–Divine exchange amongst earliest peoples—or some mythological or narrative (remnant) suggestion of the same. That is, the series seems to ask, did humans used to live with the gods? What did that look like? How did we go right? And how did we go wrong?

Situated in ancient Kazakhstan, *The Legend of Tomiris* ([Satayev 2019](#); Tomiris, pronounced, *ToH-Miris* in the film, reflecting a high-ranking heritage or status), is an historical-fictional account of a queen who avenged several family members—her Father, husband, and son—by taking the life of Cyrus the Great (by proxy) in an epic battle of wits. Her early childhood is displayed, again, in a context in which the state of nature is presented as an Ideal world. In this case, it is one of love, family, and community. The family lives in an enclosed, walled, rudimentary stone settlement. The family engages in small, home-based agriculture and animal husbandry. Religious ritual plays an important part in their lives and in the political and social order of the tribe. Tomiris’ Father is Chief, or Khan, of the settlement, and the Shaman is a secondary figure of power. In later years, the Shamans challenge the power of the Chiefs, particularly that of Tomiris. Tomiris has bigger fish to fry as she vows vengeance against Cyrus, who kills her husband and son while they are visiting him on a peace mission. While Cyrus was seen as a uniter of peoples by many

in the West, as the film presents the story, Cyrus is seen as an invader who threatens to overturn the Ideal Paradise, which centers upon an idyllic state of nature and freedom from city-states or empires (albeit one marked by periodic inter-tribal wars).

Film works coming to the late-modern period are equally fascinating as they consider tradition, modernity, and the benefits and drawbacks of each. Still in Kazakhstan, *The Road to Mother* (Satayev 2016) tells the fictional tale of an historically situated Kazakh family who are separated by the Soviet Republic in the 1930s. Forced to sedentarize into a tiny new village with good housing but terrible, arbitrary leadership, the protagonists are ultimately separated. One of them is killed. The film follows the mother and young son as they experience the new age, that is, the breakdown of empire and the consolidation of the Soviet Republic. They each experience these real historical processes from different sides of the Kazakh border. He is subjected to Odysseus-like turns of fate and then schooled in the Soviet Union, and she is forced to work as a factory laborer in Kazakhstan.

The young man's childhood intended moves to live with his mother in Kazakhstan when her mother passes under tough conditions, including insufficient food for them both. The two women have no knowledge of his being alive. He is separated from them for many years. He meets her, his childhood playmate and presumed marital alliance, when, after completing his schooling, he travels to Kazakhstan trying to find his mother. Their meeting is so brief—at a train station with moving trains—that she does not have time to give him any information regarding his mother, nor that they live together and support one another.

Arbitrary rule joined with a bit of intentional despotism places him in a Soviet worker's prison. He is separated from both of the women of his life (mother and intended spouse) for an additional fifteen years, during which time he has little knowledge of them, and vice versa. They meet again only when they are much older. His intended is an established municipal professional and his mother is retired, both living together, now in the original home village in Kazakhstan. What counts as tradition changes over the course of the film. The village comes to represent tradition by the end of the epic story even though tradition, at the beginning of the film, was nomadism. That nomadism was pressured out by the new state as well as by a movement of criminality, banditry,¹¹ and irredentist groups fighting the new state. Together, the new state and the criminal groups ruined the otherwise idyllic and peaceful pastoralism of the Asian Steppe peoples.

Moving back to India, in sweeping self-reflections and self-presentations, *Kalank* (Varman 2019) is an epic tale regarding tradition, modernity, spirit, religion, coexistence, and marital choice set in colonial context of 1945 in which colonial authorities are largely not present. Rather, a daughter must sell herself into marriage to a wealthy man to aid her father, an act of traditionalism that moves against her independent spirit. While she values the man she marries, she cannot tolerate her position, particularly as a second wife. She has an exceptional singing voice and is allowed to take voice lessons with a woman who maintains a home for young women—almost certainly a brothel. The choices before her are presented in silent, yet poignant, form. Another man—a main protagonist—is drawn to the lark-like (siren?) sounds of the women. Religious ritual is displayed in song and dance in best Bollywood form, wherein religion and ritual are presented as uplifting Ideals rather than with the suspicions by which modernism usually approaches them.

The film asks, is the love of one's father sufficient to remain in such a gilded cage? The answer appears to be, no. However, the Ideal (and idyllic) world of traditionalism—with its song, dance, and spirit—is cast into almost-certain disarray in a world moving in an uncertain direction as she considers leaving tradition. On the other hand, *U Turn* (Khan and Tulsigiri 2023), is an ultra-modernist view of the question of unintended consequences presented, nonetheless, in a traditional landscape. What happens to the lives of people—across economic and other dividing lines—when they choose to make a U-turn in an illegal

space created by an individual on an overpass? The space is created for no reason other than the instrumental: to get home faster by moving a dividing barrier on a busy city street. Each person who uses the illegal U-turn space experiences strange occurrences, some extremely violent, and others unusual and uncomfortable. A woman journalist seeks to find out why. She discovers a disrupted spirit at the center of it all, someone who was deeply harmed by the space created for this liberty. The spirit disruption invokes an interjoining of ritual and politics in ways unsettling, paranormal, and macabre.

Heroism takes interesting forms in the Asian perspectives offered through these film and television works. First, it includes men and women in notably co-equal framing. In addition, it includes heroes from high royal and aristocratic contexts—including a high placement of queens and empresses—and everyday man and woman contexts. Heroism is presented in the powerfully quiet, heroic wife and queen who stands behind her emperor; and if he falls, she immediately takes the reins of power and avenges him with force (*Padmaavat*, [Bhansali 2018](#)). It appears in the agile warrior queen and gritty young empress who asserts force by her own hand and on her own steed (*The Legend of Tomiris*, [Satayev 2019](#)). It is seen in the woman journalist who intrepidly uncovers the material-spiritual displacement that is causing harm to a range of people in her large city (*U Turn*, [Khan and Tulsigiri 2023](#)). It appears in the husband who loves his wife and his people to the point of dying for them (*Panipat*, [Gowariker 2019](#); *Padmaavat*, [Bhansali 2018](#)); and the Sheriff who asserts the law on a maniacal lord (*Call of Heroes*, [B. Chan 2016](#)). It is seen in the medieval Shogun who loses but all the while proves the rightness of The Way (*Sakra*, [Yen and Kam 2023](#)). Some women heroes are also presented as losing (*The Last Princess*, [Hur 2016](#)). The boy who watches his Father lose his Khan status, and who nearly dies in a frozen Mongolian wilderness only to rise to assert moral, ethical, and legal order on a continent that has descended into chaos is presented as an ultimate hero (*Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*, [Bodrov 2007](#)). Interestingly, loving spouses are presented as heroic figures in and of themselves simply for maintaining a loving marriage (*Panipat*, [Gowariker 2019](#); *Padmaavat*, [Bhansali 2018](#)).

Models of heroism are visible in genius political thinkers and martial artists effectively able to formulate new ways to navigate contemporary technologies and powers (*Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny*, [Satô 2023](#); *Sakra*, [Yen and Kam 2023](#); *Samurai Marathon* [Rose 2019](#); *The Fortress*, [Hwang 2017](#)); or spirit intrusions into the material world (*Mulan Legend*, [He 2020](#)). It is seen in the young woman who destroys the enemy to avenge her Father, perhaps helps to set the stage for an independent Korean peninsula, and maintains her now undead-zombie family even in current ritual state (possibly through cannibalism, *Kingdom: Ashin of the North*, [S.-h. Kim 2021](#)). In these film and television works, too, ritual trespasses against life, property, and otherwise are treated as measures of despotism (*Call of Heroes*, [B. Chan 2016](#)); and the heroes who thwart those efforts are held in high esteem.

Two television series from Russia (*The Golden Horde*, [Alpatov 2018](#); *Sofia*, [Adrianov 2016](#), noting that a large portion of Russia is in Asia) offer extensive presentations of the relationship between Russia and Mongolian tribes in historical context. These series are made by joint international production teams. Russians at the time called the Mongolians, Tartars, actually a smaller tribe within the Mongolian setting. Divisions and wars are presented as the rule for many years. However, at some point in time, a resolution was achieved by which a cold peace emerged or was attempted. That cold peace is presented in both series as involving the mutual exchange of slaves, female slavery in marriage, and intermarriage among royals. That is, the television series offer a view of peace-making in non-democratic historical context that used quite different means than those acceptable today. It is suggested that (often forced) intermarriage played an important role

in developing a lasting (cold or full) peace between Russia, Mongolia, and other parts of East Asia on the Asian continent.

5. Conclusions

The current research has outlined an approach to the identification of patterns in symbolic representations, narrative framing, and allocations of meaning (Geertz 1973; see also Mitchell [1988] 1991, 1989), offering attention to dimensions of locality and regional cultures (Geertz [1983] 2000), the sum of which this work defines as *perspective*. The Appendices A–D, below, addresses Asian foreign language film that is available in the U.S. with English subtitles, released in English-language contexts between 1999 and 2023. Film and some television series are selected for the presence of (A) ritual politics; (B) political theater; and/or (C) important Asian cultural, religious, and/or political perspectives. Primary film languages include Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kazakh, Korean, Mandarin, Mongolian, Nepali, Rajasthani, Russian, Tamil, Thai, and Tibetan. Film and television works are analyzed in preliminary coding for imagery, narrative, and messaging as comprehended through English-language subtitles; that is, they are not analyzed for language, *per se*, since the subtitles are in translation.

Genres emerging from this selection emphasize historical, martial arts, paranormal, mythological, and gangster film. Cartoons, cartoon fairy tales, anime, and entirely fantasy film reflect a wide body of work that often does fit the selection themes but are excluded from the current selection, although several with limited fantasy elements are included. Moral–ethical messaging is often significant; that is, some include moral, or even theological, lessons that appear to be aimed to build or support a given cultural worldview and system of values (defining cultural worldview and systems of values, see Geertz 1957). Some fantasy film and some Western productions—excluded from the primary discussion—which center upon Asian themes, Asian-American themes, Asian-American identities, values, Asian mythological figures, and some additional film and television works were mentioned briefly and are included in the reference list.

Process tracing and attention to practices in comparative historical–institutional research on the culturalist and/or qualitative side of comparative politics are outlined in an effort to trace the development of these concepts in comparative politics. Thick description (inductive) is defended as a first step to having something to de-code, analyze, and turn into systematized or thematized information. That information, or qualitative data, can contribute to concept formation and development in social theory (deductive). It is suggested that culturalists, internationalists, qualitative comparative political scientists, and others should consider including foreign language film and television works for analysis. Under certain conditions, that is, following normal methodological constraints (e.g., treating normative materials as normative rather than fact, and the like), these may be good and feasibly available material–historical–cultural sources (Hodder 1989; Schneider 1987; see also Sohn 2021; for a limited discussion of film in political science, see Sohn 2023) regarding popular and/or political culture with large amounts of unmined content. The particular skills of qualitative and cultural comparative politics—but also causal or material political science more broadly—may find important new information regarding perspective, ideology, localized or regionalized concerns, developments in political culture *in situ*, values and related orientations, and the like. Film is treated to some degree in political theory and in theoretical international relations. Identification, knowledge, and theorizing of these cultural dynamics may have important implications or utility for cross-cultural relations, cross-national dynamics, and international relations at both the micro- and macro-levels.

A widespread narrative framing present across many of the film and television works in which the state of nature is presented as Ideal (and idyllic) is to be found in natural envi-

ronments and constitutes Paradise. Even the surrealist works, while they may not mention Nature specifically, imply that the city is neither the Ideal, nor Paradise. This aspect of perspective, as it emerges from these film and television works, may provide insights on urban–rural differences in narrative approach to political questions as found in Western contexts as well. Concern with ritual trespass is presented in a range of permutations, including vampirism, cannibalism, and war; it also includes spirit displacement caused by the vagaries of modernization, concerns with spirit displacement in premature death in historical or modern context, and the like. Both the paranormal and the material are presented as potential security concerns in civil, cross-cultural, and cross-border warfare contexts.

The theme of Paradise comes into contrast with ritual trespass. The theme of Paradise as associated with Nature and spirit—and Nature as Ideal and idyllic—together provide a view of Nature as, precisely, not brutal and violent. Nature and things rural are presented, here, as related to Paradise. It is the modernist city that is most often presented as the source of intrigues, non-rational intrusions, irrationalities more broadly, and a lack of security or properly enforced social contract. Notable are ritual issues ranging from spirit and Nature religion practices, presented as upholding the peaceful existence of small rural communities, to paranormal disturbances from trespasses against the same in traditional contexts and in modernist (developed or developing) cities. That is, the “modern” is not inherently associated with highly developed contexts; and, while not always treated as hostile, the “modern,” in disturbing the peace of traditional or established social norms and practices (including religion), provides opportunities for disruptions both paranormal and normal. In film and television highlighting tradition-valuing narratives, modernism is treated as, in some cases, surreal, while tradition and Nature may be related to comfort and being one with spirit (or godliness). In that way, these works offer a narrative that is roughly opposite of a conventional modernist narrative in which the city is the source of strength, security, social contract, and, indeed, (high) culture. These tradition-oriented perspectives matter as they appear in film and television works from across vast territories of Asia, reflecting popular traditional wisdom and at least a significantly present set of concerns and preferences.

An emphasis on the value of tradition in these Asian films is useful to read through the lens of [Geertz \(1957, 1973\)](#) regarding the de-coding of cultures, patterns, and practices, as well as explaining ethos and world view, and [Benedict \(\[1934\] 2005\)](#) regarding the de-coding of cultural patterns. This culturalist “read” of film and television reflects such an effort at the de-coding of factors significant to comparative and international politics relating to matters such as, what cultural values mobilize and unite peoples in the region? [Abu-Lughod \(1998a\)](#) addresses similar issues with regard to women and television in Egypt, where soap operas take a form of feminist longing.

War stories regarding both separation and uniting in the encounter between Asian locales or peoples, the U.S., Europe, or the end of empire are highlighted in a few of the film and television works. Paranormal and semi-magical elements appear in both traditional and modernist contexts. Concerns with local gods and traditional practices are highlighted in several works. Historical figures such as Genghis Khan, as well as mythological goddess figures through allegory or metaphor, are re-framed and vaunted in heroic—and spiritualist—light. Ritual practices such as *Sati* and *Jauhar* are highlighted as assertions of women’s agency, activism, martyrdom, and soldier-like heroism in warfare. Moreover, religion as a uniting force—something that is uplifting, tied to nature, and which offers (positive) magic to the lives of people—appears in many of the works. The sets of Asian perspectives highlighted herein, as presented in popular and mass market film, may shed light on a continent so vast as Asia.

Bourdieu reminds us that perspectives come with power (Bourdieu 1986, p. 233; 1987, p. 829). Perhaps we may allow for many perspectives today in a sort of democratization of (as expressed herein, clean, or lawful and legitimate) perspectives. Given that perspectives differ sometimes so much, must they always lead to conflict? What can we *gain* from them? A concluding suggestion is that knowledge of perspectives may provide us with potential avenues of coexistence, as well as more specified *verstehen*,¹² to undergird and inform those areas or moments wherein conflict is, or is not, necessary.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This work contains no human subjects research.

Informed Consent Statement: This work contains no human subjects research.

Data Availability Statement: The spreadsheet of twenty-four selected film and television works, as well as genres, themes, and combined binary and conceptual coding is available in the Appendices A–D of this article.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank the Editors and anonymous reviewers at *Religions* for their constructive, detailed, and incisive feedback regarding the article manuscript. The author is grateful to Uddhab Pyakurel, Sumitra Khadka, the School of Arts, and the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (KU-NCCS), Kathmandu University, for their support during the completion of this article; and the Editors and anonymous reviewers at De Gruyter Press regarding an earlier draft book prospectus (unpublished) from which the current article is developed.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no known conflict of interest. The author may have cousins or extended cousins in some of the Asian film and television works discussed but does not have direct knowledge of it (due to a context of adoption).

Appendix A

Availability of Data (Film and Television), Themes, and Conceptual Variables

Notes. All films have subtitles in English. Film and television are listed in order by director last name (**in bold**). Genres, selection themes, and sub-themes are coded by theme or concept, or using binary coding (presence or not, they are not scaled). ** Information collected from IMDB.com, Amazon, or Netflix as of October 2025.

Title **	Director Name (Alphabetical) **	First Release in U.S. Unless Otherwise Stated **	Available in U.S. **	Original Language **	Primary Genre
1. Sofiya (Sophia, TV Series)	Adrianov, Aleksei	2016 Russia	Amazon, Roku Channel, and Others	Russian	Historical Drama
2. The Golden Horde (TV Series)	Alpatov, Timur	2018 Russia	Amazon, and Others	Russian	Historical Drama
3. Padmaavat	Bhansali, Sunjay Leela	2018	Amazon	Hindi, Tamil, and Rajasthani Historical	Historical, Myth, Dance Epic, Exceptional Love
4. Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan	Bodrov, Sergei	2007	Amazon	Mongolian and Mandarin	Historical Drama, War Saga
5. Call of Heroes	Chan, Benny	2016	Amazon, and Others	Chinese and Mandarin	Historical Drama, Detective, Martial Arts, Action
6. Arthdal Chronicles (TV Series)	Dong-gun, Jang; Kim Ok-bin; and Yoon Sa-bong	2019	Netflix	Korean	Myth, Epic
7. Panipat	Gowariker, Ashutosh	2019	Netflix	Hindi	Myth, Dance Epic, Exceptional Love, War Saga
8. Mulan Legend	He, Jianan	2020 China	Amazon, and Others	Mandarin	Art Nouveau, Martial Arts, Action

Title **	Director Name (Alphabetical) **	First Release in U.S. Unless Otherwise Stated **	Available in U.S. **	Original Language **	Primary Genre
9. The Last Princess	Hur, Jin-ho	2016	Roku Channel and Netflix	Korean and Japanese	Historical Drama
10. The Fortress	Hwang, Dong-hyuk	2017	Amazon and Netflix	Korean	Historical Drama, War Saga
11. U Turn	Kumar, Pawan	2023 India	Netflix	Hindi	Action, Detective
12. Kingdom (TV Series)	Kim, Eun-hee, Kim Seong-hun, and Park In-je	2019	Netflix	Korean	Paranormal Thriller, Martial Arts, Action
13. Kingdom: Ashin of the North	Kim, Seong-hun	2021	Netflix	Korean and Japanese	Myth, Paranormal, Martial Arts, Action
14. Asura: The City of Madness	Kim, Sung Soo	2016	Amazon	Korean	Political Drama, Gangster Film
15. Samurai Marathon	Rose, Bernard	2019	Amazon, and Others	Japanese	Historical Drama, Action
16. The Legend of Tomiris	Satayev, Akan	2019 Kazakhstan, 2020 U.S.	Amazon, and Others	Kazakh, Russian, Arabic, and Persian	Historical Drama, War Saga
17. Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny	Satô, Shinsuke	2023 Japan	Netflix	Japanese	Art Nouveau, Martial Arts, Action
18. Kingdom II: Far and Away	Satô, Shinsuke	2022 Japan	Amazon and Netflix	Japanese	Art Nouveau, Martial Arts, Action
19. Kingdom	Satô, Shinsuke	2019	Netflix	Japanese	Art Nouveau, Martial Arts, Action
20. Himalaya: l’enfance d’un chef	Valli, Eric	1999 France, 2001 U.S.	Amazon	Tibetan	Historical Drama
21. Kalank	Varman, Abhishek	2019	Amazon	Hindi	Dance Epic, Romance
22. King’s War (The Legend of Chu and Han, TV Series)	Xixi, Gao and Haibo Liu	2012 China	Netflix	Mandarin	Historical Drama, Martial Art, Action
23. Steel Rain	Yang, Woo-seok	2017 South Korea	Netflix	Korean, Mandarin, and English	Historical Drama, War Saga, Action
24. Sakra	Yen, Donnie and Ka-Wai Kam	2023	Amazon, and Others	Mandarin and Chinese	Historical Drama, Martial Arts, Action, Medieval China

Appendix B

Title **	Director Name	Primary Cinematic Theme	Secondary Theme	Third Major Theme	Empirical Historical Markers Significant (Binary, Present or Not)	Mythic or Mythological Markers Significant (e.g., Myth, Magic, or Magical Realism; Binary, Present or Not)
1. Sofiya (TV Series)	Adrianov	First United Russia	Diplomatic Marriage	Church and Monarchy	1	0
2. The Golden Horde (TV Series)	Alpatov	Russian–Mongolian Relations	Exchange of Slaves for Diplomatic Peace	Women and Slaves, Diplomatic Marriages	1	0
3. Padmaavat	Bhansali	Rama and Sita Allegory	Great Women Leaders	Women Refuse Invading Power, Marital Choice	1	1
4. Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan	Bodrov	Exceptional Childhood to Great Leader	Overcoming Adversity	Nature, Pastoral	1	1
5. Call of Heroes	Chan	Warlord Period	Emancipation	Justice	1	0
6. Arthdal Chronicles (TV Series)	Bong-gun, Ok-bin, and Sa-bong	Nature, Pastoral	Early Human Political Systems	Tradition versus City	0	1
7. Panipat	Gowariker	Rama and Sita Allegory	Great Women Leaders	Self-Sacrifice	1	1

Title **	Director Name	Primary Cinematic Theme	Secondary Theme	Third Major Theme	Empirical Historical Markers Significant (Binary, Present or Not)	Mythic or Mythological Markers Significant (e.g., Myth, Magic, or Magical Realism; Binary, Present or Not)
8. Mulan Legend	He	Myth	Magic	Correct Order	0	1
9. The Last Princess	Hur	End of Empire	Korean Heritage	Royal vs. Non-Royal, Cultural Misunderstanding	1	0
10. The Fortress	Hwang	Critical Battles (War)	War Strategies, Medieval Technologies	Chinese-Korean Critical Moments	1	0
11. U Turn	Kumar	Paranormal	Psychological Drama	Old World, High Modernism	0	1
12. Kingdom (TV Series)	Kim, Seong-hun, and In-je	Myth, Paranormal, Epic, Historical	Ritual Trespass	Zombies, Cannibalism, Vampirism, Human Sacrifice (?)	1	1
13. Kingdom: Ashin of the North	Kim	Great Women Leaders	Revenge	Zombies, Cannibalism, Vampirism, Human Sacrifice (?)	1	1
14. Asura: The City of Madness	Kim	Development	Mafia Politics	Corruption and Evil	0	1
15. Samurai Marathon	Rose	Sport Saga, War Preparation	Breaking Social Hierarchies	Preparing for Invasion	1	0
16. The Legend of Tomiris	Satayev	Exceptional Childhood to Great Leader	Great Women Leaders	Revenge	1	1
17. Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny	Satô	Myth, Epic, Historical	Warring States Period, War	Youth-Initiated Political Order	1	1
18. Kingdom II: Far and Away	Satô	Myth, Epic, Historical	Warring States Period, War	Youth-Initiated Political Order	1	1
19. Kingdom	Satô	Myth, Epic, Historical	Warring States Period (China), War	Youth-Initiated Political Order	1	1
20. Himalaya: l'enfance d'un chef	Valli	Nature, Pastoral	Community Cultural Study	Tradition	0	1
21. Kalank	Varman	Historical	Gender	Tradition and Modernity	1	1
22. King's War (The Legend of Chu and Han, TV Series)	Xixi and Liu	Warring States Period	Qin Emperor Leaves Power Vacuum	Memory	1	0
23. Steel Rain	Yang	North Korea, South Korea, and China Relations	Border Crossing (Political, International)	Nuclear Threat, War Drama	1	0
24. Sakra	Yen and Kam	Ethnic Relations	Temple-State-Militia Relations	Gender Roles (Female and Male), and Love	1	1

Appendix C

Title **	Director Name	Cultural Markers Are Significant	Appears to Have Intended Teaching Value	Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics (Selection Theme)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (A)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (B)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (C)
1. Sofiya (TV Series)	Adrianov	1	1	1	Orthodox versus Roman Influence	0	0
2. The Golden Horde (TV Series)	Alpatov	1	1	1	Russian Culture versus Mongolian Culture	Adultery	Accusations of Magic or Witchcraft

Title **	Director Name	Cultural Markers Are Significant	Appears to Have Intended Teaching Value	Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics (Selection Theme)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (A)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (B)	Primary Theme of Ritual Trespass, Ritual Politics, Type (C)
3. Padmaavat	Bhansali	1	1	1	Marriage	Love	Marital Choice
4. Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan	Bodrov	1	1	1	Tengri (Sky God)	Old Traditions	Law and Justice (Abduction of wives, children, and men)
5. Call of Heroes	Chan	1	1	1	Murder	Correct Order	Insanity
6. Arthdal Chronicles (TV Series)	Bong-gun, Ok-bin, and Sa-bong	1	1	1	Old Traditions	Nature	Spirit Gods
7. Panipat	Gowariker	1	1	1	Women's Roles	Women's Leadership	Marital Roles
8. Mulan Legend	He	1	1	1	Paranormal	Underworld	Correct Order
9. The Last Princess	Hur	1	1	1	Secular Revolution	Displacement of Royals	Mistreatment of Royal Persons
10. The Fortress	Hwang	1	1	1	Feeding Soldiers	Clothing Soldiers in Ice Conditions	Battle Conduct
11. U Turn	Kumar	1	1	1	Self-Interest	Moving Divider	Spirit Revenge
12. Kingdom (TV Series)	Kim, Seong-hun, and In-je	1	1	1	Medical or Spiritual	Vampirism	Cannibalism
13. Kingdom: Ashin of the North	Kim	1	1	1	Zombies	Medical or Spiritual	Woman's Revenge
14. Asura: The City of Madness	Kim	1	1	1	Funeral Setting	Ritual Curse	Possible Evil Incarnate, Demons, Modernist Setting
15. Samurai Marathon	Rose	1	1	1	Social Norms	Social Hierarchies	0
16. The Legend of Tomiris	Satayev	1	1	1	Nature, Rural, Traditional Life	Nomad versus City	Woman's Revenge
17. Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny	Satô	1	1	1	Evil Leaders	Martial Arts as Magic	Paranormal, Symbolic Figures
18. Kingdom II: Far and Away	Satô	1	1	1	Evil Leaders	Martial Arts as Magic	Paranormal, Symbolic Figures
19. Kingdom	Satô	1	1	1	Evil Leaders	Martial Arts as Magic	Paranormal, Symbolic Figures
20. Himalaya: l'enfance d'un chef	Valli	1	1	1	Leadership Transitions	Religious Pilgrimage	Traditional Practices
21. Kalank	Varman	1	1	1	Marital Choice	Plural Marriage	Gender Roles
22. King's War (The Legend of Chu and Han, TV Series)	Xixi and Liu	1	1	1	Death of Loved Ones	Infidelity	Social and Gender Roles; Excesses and Devastation
23. Steel Rain	Yang	1	1	1	Crossing Forbidden International Border	Separation	Abduction
24. Sakra	Yen and Kam	1	1	1	Monastery Overcome	Ignoring The Way	Deaths in Monastery (Sacred Ground)

Appendix D

Title **	Director Name	Performativity, Political Theater, Related to the State or Governance Is Significant (Selection Theme)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (A)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (B)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (C)
1. Sofiya (TV Series)	Adrianov	1	Hide Royal Family Differences Before Public	Council and Throne Room Discussions	Church versus State
2. The Golden Horde (TV Series)	Alpatov	1	Leaders Masking Adversity from Close Persons, Family, or Intended Family	Masking Strategy from Elders, Masking Ill Health from Public	Performance of Loyalties (Rulers and Public)
3. Padmaavat	Bhansali	1	Life as a Beautiful Theater for Spouse and Community (Upholds Legitimacy of Authority)	Grand Religious Ritual (for Spouse, Community, and International Reputation)	War, Battle Conduct
4. Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan	Bodrov	1	Performance of the Law	Performance of Marriage	Performance of Loyalties
5. Call of Heroes	Chan	1	Violent Overstep of Law (Displays of Power)	Performance of Charity	Performance of the Law
6. Arthdal Chronicles (TV Series)	Bong-gun, Ok-bin, and Sa-bong	1	City Displays Greatness to Poor Outsiders (Taken as Slaves)	City Speeches to Community	Grand Spirit Rituals (Displays of Might, “Rightness”)
7. Panipat	Gowariker	1	Religious Ritual	Diplomatic Discussions	Military, War, Battle Conduct
8. Mulan Legend	He	1	Council, Judicature (Publicly Passing Judgment)	Performance of Power (Secret Information, Lives)	Market Exchange, Underworld, Black Market, Performing Legitimacy
9. The Last Princess	Hur	1	Council, Judicature, Throne Room Discussions	Masking Pain of Loss of Kingdom	Performance of Loyalties
10. The Fortress	Hwang	1	Military Council	Masking War Strategy and Conditions from Soldiers	Performance of Loyalties
11. U Turn	Kumar	1	Meeting with Police	Performance of Duty	0
12. Kingdom (TV Series)	Kim, Seong-hun, and In-je	1	Performance of Loyalties, Public Political Ritual	Masking Extent of Health, Zombie Scare	Masking King’s Death
13. Kingdom: Ashin of the North	Kim	1	Disguising Enemy Status	Council Room Discussions	War, Battle Conduct
14. Asura: The City of Madness	Kim	1	Photo Opportunities for Public	Before Colleagues (Assertions of Power)	Before Spouse (Masking)
15. Samurai Marathon	Rose	1	Submission to Authority	Performance of Loyalties	State versus Social Powers or Norms
16. The Legend of Tomiris	Satayev	1	Diplomatic, Community Dinners	Diplomatic Discussions	Military, War, Battle Conduct
17. Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny	Satô	1	Council, Judicature, Throne Room Discussions	War, Battle Conduct	Performance of Loyalties, Public Political Ritual
18. Kingdom II: Far and Away	Satô	1	Council, Judicature, Throne Room Discussions	War, Battle Conduct	Performance of Loyalties, Public Political Ritual
19. Kingdom	Satô	1	Council, Judicature, Throne Room Discussions	War, Battle Conduct	Performance of Loyalties, Public Political Ritual
20. Himalaya: l’enfance d’un chef	Valli	1	Council and Village Discussions	Generational Shift	Saving Face for Elder
21. Kalank	Varman	1	Responding to Police or Soldiers	0	0

Title **	Director Name	Performativity, Political Theater, Related to the State or Governance Is Significant (Selection Theme)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (A)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (B)	Primary Theme of Performativity, Political Theater, Type (C)
22. King's War (The Legend of Chu and Han, TV Series)	Xixi and Liu	1	Performance of Loyalties, Public Political Ritual	Dress, Costume	War, Battle Conduct
23. Steel Rain	Yang	1	Posturing, National Officials, Potential Cross-Border War	Posturing, Commander and (Protagonist) Adversary	Masking Loss of Number One
24. Sakra	Yen and Kam	1	Council, Social Movement Discussions	Masking Extent of Upheaval	War, Battle Conduct

Notes

- ¹ As discussed in the Selection Methods Section, film and television are selected by editorial recommendations, film recommendations attached to films viewed, and other factors and sources. There is an effort not to be unrepresentative, or to be somewhat representative within the limits of available data. However, it is not possible to be fully representative since full data is not available and changes nearly daily. Thus, full representativeness is not claimed herein. Nonetheless, it is claimed that the thematic and related findings (e.g., “messaging”) have significance for inter-cultural, cross-cultural, and international political relations and contexts.
- ² *Sati* is ritual self-immolation of a woman for her deceased spouse in Hinduism; *Jauhar* is women's mass ritual self-immolation. They are treated in the film, *Padmaavat* (Bhansali 2018), as heroic acts of defending marriage in times of war by contrast to forced marriage, which, it is suggested, is always a form of slavery. For a discussion of the problematics of *Sati* and *Jauhar* as practices, as well as East–West dynamics in the critique of them, see Narayan (2009); see also Fitria (2023, p. 135).
- ³ Bourdieu (1987, 1994) is a critic of the state. He argues that words and their meanings are constructed, contested, and used to dominate or be dominated; and he suggests that religion asserts symbolic violence against non-elite economic classes (Bourdieu 1991, pp. 39–42). Regarding the establishment, through words, and assigned definitions and meanings, of ethnic or regional identities, “What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 221, see also p. 222). And, without adopting Bourdieu's critique of the state, on the power of naming (Bourdieu 1987, p. 838, see also pp. 849–50; 1994, pp. 3–4, 17–18).
- ⁴ Cover is primarily discussing *nomos* as a “normative universe” (p. 4) in the context of secular law. He also contextualizes it in religious terms of the Christian and Hebrew Bibles, noting that the Greek word, *nomos*, has been roughly translated into English as, “the Law” (p. 11). The Latin word, *nomos*, means, “names.” I am suggesting that it is not coincidental that in the main Western religions each of these terms—the Name, the Law, and the Universe—have been variously associated with conceptualizations of the Divine (the Name is a word for God in Hebrew; the Law is a name for God in Hebrew and in Arabic; likewise, in Arabic the Law also means the Religion, another word for the Divine; in Arabic the word for Universe also means being, existence, and the Creation; and in Hebrew the words for the Universe, which can also mean the world, the sky, or the Heavens, can be used to refer to the Creation or the Divine).
- ⁵ Derrida ([1967] 1978) notes, in discussing Lévi-Strauss, that there is a lack of center (Derrida [1967] 1978, p. 289) to both myth and the meanings behind words. In relation to myth, this lack of source or center means, “Everything begins with structure, configuration, or relationship” (p. 286). That is, there is a lack of both subject and author (p. 287) in a real sense. Words and their meanings, like myth, are governed by several factors (pp. 285–93): structure; language; syntax; lexicon; sign; history (p. 291); and humans' perhaps over-propensity to play with words and meanings over time. It indicates both that (A) meanings of words are “constructed” (Derrida uses the word “construct,” p. 285, although he uses the word “constructed” elsewhere in the text) not unlike a (mythical) architect or engineer for a building (e.g., Derrida uses Lévi-Strauss' term from the French, *bricoleur*, who he tells us Lévi-Strauss contrasts with the engineer, but which gives the overall sense that, for Derrida, every person is a handy man or brick layer of language and meaning in an ongoing historical process (Derrida [1967] 1978, pp. 285, 291); and (B) it strongly suggests that words and their meanings are not fixed over time (e.g., they are indeterminate rather than something that can be approached in a “totalizing” way [p. 288], but their indeterminacy is not infinite—it is bounded by the aforementioned constraints).
- ⁶ Dahl defines elites, for example, as the patricians (usually old political families); the entrepreneurs (new capitalists and/or industrialists, who he says created the ex-plebes, a new and empowered working class); oligarchs (usually big and relatively old money, but not as old as the patricians); and later specialized (expert) sub-leaders (Dahl [1961] 2005, pp. 169–72). “The defeat

of the patricians by the new men of business and these in turn by the ex-plebes who commanded the fealty of the immigrants reduced the prestige of politics among people of standing" (p. 179). Dahl is concerned with tracing power at the micro-level to the details of even family lines within a specific city, as well as mapping a relationship between ethnic identity, religious identity, and economic or social classes present at the time (see, for example, pp. 15–18, 32–33, 40, 53, 174–79).

⁷ Collier et al. (2012) note that some political scientists seek to quantify qualitatively-derived concepts and typologies, removing multidimensionality for statistical application and usefulness—a laudable and needed part of the social sciences. These efforts raise concerns with establishing correct measures by such concepts and typologies (p. 224). Indeed, they suggest that a concept can be a dimension (e.g., Dahl's inclusiveness), and each concept can also have multidimensionality (they account for two or three dimensions, but some concepts may have more than that, pp. 223, 225–26, 228). By contrast, qualitative and culturalist work, which can be rigorous in logical and analytical terms not defined by statistical methods, may bridge the social sciences and humanities in the way that social theory is applied and/or newly developed. The assumption is that there is so much of the world that we still need to know in observational terms; that such work will generate identification and definition of new concepts, taxonomies or typologies, and frameworks; and, thus, that this work remains critical to our ability to engage in knowledge and theory building.

⁸ At least one scene includes graphic male homosexual content. The television series is not suitable for children. Please see a viewer guide.

⁹ On the sacred (and the profane), see Eliade ([1957] 1987, pp. 12, 31, 35–43, 88); relating the profane to the mundane (K. Thompson 1991, p. 285); also discussing sacred spaces with some reference to the profane (Turner [1969] 1995).

¹⁰ Chung states, "...for Hobbes, the roles that reason and rationality play are not confined to the two activities of preventing the formation of false beliefs and revealing the most effective means to a given end. This is because Hobbes thought that any preferences the satisfaction of which are inconsistent with the achievement of one's long-term self-preservation are irrational." (Chung 2014, p. 690). Since few humans have a perfect (or high) capacity for prediction, explanation of causality, or even correct identification of one's own long-term self-interest, many people must then be irrational in Hobbes' terms. But that is not the most typical instrumental view of rationality, by which humans are assumed to be all-knowing in terms of prediction and causality; and we simply choose non-instrumental (irrational) or instrumental (rational) ends for ourselves. For example, McLean (1981) assumes that submission to a Sovereign for the purposes of the security of a society-wide social contract is against the rational interests of every member of society, instead offering a super game (a sort of eternal rat-race) in which the best will rise and suppress the less-best on a continually rotating basis. Hobbes, on the other hand, sees the social contract as rational self-interest of all members of society in the long-term in order to rise above constant physical struggle or insecurity (Hobbes [1651] 2002, p. 542). If the premise is incorrect that social contract is against the long-term self-interest of every individual; and social contract (e.g., eventually a national state), instead, reflects a correct identification of long-term self-interests of individuals (and, by extension, society at large); then the super game begins to look increasingly like *Squid Game* (Dong-hyuk 2021–2025), or a form of Russian roulette. See also Darwall (1976, pp. 167–68), on tensions between definitions of rationalist interests and ethics. That is, it is simply not a form of civilized society. Social contract and civil society appear better estimations of the long-term interests of all individuals (barring gains by criminality); it makes impossible mafia or syndicate social systems. It, thus, cuts out the large, short-term gains that fewer (despotic or criminal) individuals can achieve through those systems, notably at the expense of all other individuals in society save a few favorites of the overlords. On overlap between state and civil society in the sense of both being at the direction of power elites in Gramsci, see Koch (2022, pp. 2–3, 6); see also Gramsci ([1947] 1992, pp. 214–15). Koch (2022, p. 3) argues that Bourdieu views his concept of fields of power as replacing the space where civil society may once have been conceived, and, indeed, rejects the idea of civil society, although he accounts for the emergence of social movements or "political activists" (p. 7). I would add the suggestion that Bourdieu's work on discourse and narrative implies a notion of civil society as located in public social discourse, albeit potentially controlled by the fields of power embodied by the state (see Bourdieu 1991, pp. 131–32, in which discourse in the political field of the state and in the social world are juxtaposed).

¹¹ Regarding banditry in other contexts, see Brown (1990) and E. P. Thompson (1975).

¹² Hesitating to make reference to Heidegger, as no claim of expertise in regard to his work is made; nonetheless, the understanding of *verstehen* adopted here comes from Heidegger ([1927] 2008, p. 39). I would suggest a definition not unrelated to the phenomenological, that is, understanding (most likely sympathetic, comprehensive, and felt) as coming through lived experience presumed to be *in situ*, or being in that experience in time. In the easiest sense, one might associate this type of understanding as achieved with political ethnography. Under the correct conditions, film and television works allow that sort of entry—and more speedy exit than travel—into another ethos and world view (Geertz 1957).

References

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1998a. Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions. In *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Edited by Lila Abu-Lughod. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila, ed. 1998b. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2000. Locating Ethnography. *Ethnography* 1: 261–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2008. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2016. The Cross-Publics of Ethnography: The Case of ‘the Muslimwoman’. *American Ethnologist* 43: 595–608. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ackerly, Brooke. 2008. Feminist Methodological Reflection. In *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*. Edited by Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Adrianov, Aleksei, dir. 2016. *Sofiya*. (Russian Language with English Subtitles). Moscow: Kinokompaniya Moskino.
- Allina-Pisano, Jessica. 2007. *The Post-Soviet Potemkin Village: Politics and Property Rights in the Black Earth*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Alpatov, Timur, dir. 2018. *The Golden Horde*. (Russian Language with English Subtitles). Moscow: Amedia.
- An, Jinsoo. 2018. *Parameters of Disavowal: Colonial Representation in South Korean Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso. First published 1983.
- Anderson, Leslie. 2006. *The Political Ecology of the Modern Peasant: Calculation and Community*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. First published 1983.
- Annaud, Jean-Jacques, dir. 1997. *Seven Years in Tibet*. (English, German, Mandarin, Tibetan, and Hindi with English Subtitles). Los Angeles: Mandalay Entertainment.
- Ashiwa, Yoshiko, and David L. Wank, eds. 2009. *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Avildsen, John G., dir. 1984. *The Karate Kid*. (English and Japanese with English Subtitles). Culver City: Columbia Pictures.
- Barzilai, Gad. 2005. *Communities and Law: Politics and Cultures of Legal Identities*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bates, Robert H. 1997. Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy? *PS: Political Science & Politics* 30: 166–69.
- Bates, Stephen R., and Laura Jenkins. 2007. Teaching and Learning Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science. *Politics* 27: 55–63. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bei, Gao. 2012. *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy Toward European Jewish Refugees During World War II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bellin, Eva. 2005. *Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders*. In *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*. Edited by Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Benedict, Ruth. 2005. *Patterns of Culture*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. First published 1934.
- Berger, Peter. 1990. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books. First published 1969.
- Bham, Min Bahadur, dir. 2024. *Shambhala*. (Unrated, Mature Themes; Nepali with English Subtitles). Oslo: Ape & Bjorn. Kathmandu: Shooney Films.
- Bhansali, Sanjay Leela, dir. 2018. *Padmaavat*. (Hindi, Tamil, and Rajasthani Languages with English Subtitles). Mumbai: Bhansali Productions.
- Bhattacharya, Sourit. 2020. Magic and Realism in South Asia. In *Magical Realism and Literature*. Edited by Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bodrov, Sergei, dir. 2007. *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*. (Mongolian and Mandarin Languages with English Subtitles). St. Petersburg: CTB Productions.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. *Distinction*. Abingdon and Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1987. The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field. *Hastings Law Journal* 38: 814–53.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Oxford and Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field. *Sociological Theory* 12: 1–18. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Boyle, Dave, dir. 2024. *House of Ninjas*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Albuquerque: Netflix Studios. Tokyo: Toho Studios.
- Bramantyo, Hanung, and Ragi Miftach, dirs. 2022. *Legend of Gatotkaca; Originally, Satria Dewa: Gatotkaca*. (Indonesian with English Subtitles). Tangerang: Satria Dewa Studio.
- Breuer, Anita. 2016. The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Political Protest: Evidence from the Tunisian Revolution. In *Young Generation Awakening: Economics, Society, and Policy on the Eve of the Arab Spring*. Edited by Edward Sayer and Tarik Yousef. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Nathan. 1990. Brigands and State Building: The Invention of Banditry in Modern Egypt. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32: 258–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Burton, Tim, dir. 1989. *Batman*. (English). Burbank: Warner Bros.
- Caro, Nikki, dir. 2020. *Mulan*. (English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures.
- Celli, Carlo. 2011. *National Identity in Global Cinema: How Movies Explain the World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chan, Benny, dir. 2016. *Call of Heroes*. (Cantonese and Mandarin Languages with English Subtitles). Hengdian: Zhejiang Guanjian Films.
- Chan, Gordon, dir. 2017. *God of War*. (Mandarin and Japanese with English Subtitles). Beijing and Hong Kong: Bona Film Group.

- Chan, Peter Ho-Sun, and Wai-Man Yip, dirs. 2007. *The Warlords*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: Media Asia Films.
- Cheang, Soi, dir. 2014. *The Monkey King: Havoc in Heaven's Palace*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles; Origin China and Hong Kong). Hong Kong: Film Workshop, Beijing Wen Hua Dong Run, Global Star Productions.
- Chen, Kuan-hsing. 2010. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cheng, Siyu, and Zhenzhao Lin, dirs. 2022. *The Tai Chi Master*. (Chinese with English Subtitles). Beijing: iQIYI.
- Choi, Dong-hoon, dir. 2022. *Alienoid [Film]*. Caper Film. Seoul: CJ Entertainment.
- Chopra, Yash, dir. 2004. *Veer-Zaara*. (Hindi with English Subtitles). Mumbai: Yash Raj Films.
- Chow, Roy Hin Yeung, dir. 2021. *Dynasty Warriors*. (Cantonese and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: HMV Digital China Group Limited. Yokohama: Tecmo Koei.
- Chung, Hun. 2014. Understanding Rationality in Hobbes and Hume. *Filozofia* 69: 687–96.
- Chung, Hye Seung, and David Diffrient. 2015. *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema*. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press.
- Clements, Ron, John Musker, and Don Hall, dirs. 2016. *Moana*. (English and French with English Subtitles). Burbank: Walt Disney Animation Studios.
- Cohen, Yaacov. 2006. The Improvement in Israel-South Korean Relations. *Jewish Political Science Review* 18: 105–18.
- Coleman, Isobel. 2013. *Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women Are Transforming the Middle East*. New York: Random House.
- Collier, David. 2011. Understanding Process Tracing. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44: 823–30. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. 2012. Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor. *Political Research Quarterly* 65: 217–32. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Collier, Ruth Berins, and David Collier. 2002. *Shaping The Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. First published 1991.
- Coppedge, Michael. 1999. Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics. *Comparative Politics* 31: 465–76. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cover, Robert. 1983. Forward: Nomos and Narrative. *Harvard Law Review* 97: 4–68.
- Cretton, Destin Daniel, dir. 2021. *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*. (English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Burbank: Marvel Studios.
- Dahan-Kalev, Henriette. 2001. You're So Pretty—You Don't Look Moroccan. *Israel Studies* 6: 1–14. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Dahl, Robert A. 2005. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven: Yale University Press. First published 1961.
- Dai, Wei, dir. 2011. *Once Upon a Time in Tibet*. (Mandarin, English, and Tibetan with English Subtitles). Beijing and Taipei: Beijing Purple Clove Film Co.
- Dai, Xifan, dir. 2020. *Dragon Master: Dragon Spell*. (Chinese with English Subtitles; Origin China). Fullerton: 815 Pictures.
- Dai, Yi Lin, and Si Ming Cheng, dirs. 2021. *Knights of Valour*. (Chinese with English Subtitles; Origin China). Plano: Well Go USA Entertainment.
- Darwall, Stephen. 1976. A Defense of the Kantian Interpretation. *Ethics* 86: 164–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Darwin, Charles. 1989. *The Voyage of the Beagle*. New York: Penguin Books. First published 1939.
- Darwin, Charles. 1998. *The Origin of Species*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. First published 1859.
- Deniar, Shannaz, and Tonny Effendi. 2019. Halal Food Diplomacy in Japan and South Korea. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* 2: 805–13. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Derrick, David G., Jr., Jason Hand, and Dana Ledoux Miller, dirs. 2024. *Moana 2*. (English and Samoan with English Subtitles). Burbank: Walt Disney Animation Studios.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. First published 1967.
- Dong-gun, Jang, Kim Ok-bin, and Yoon Sa-bong, dirs. 2019–2023. *Arthdal Chronicles*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles, Television Series). Seoul: KPJ.
- Dong-hyuk, Hwang, dir. 2021–2025. *Squid Game*. ([TV-MA], Korean, English, and Urdu with English Subtitles). Seoul: Firstman Studio. Los Angeles: Siren Productions.
- Dorj, Zolbayar, and U. Shagdarsuren, dirs. 2012. *Genghis: The Legend of the Ten*. (Mongolian with English Subtitles). Ulaanbaatar: Mongol Film Group.
- Douglas, Mary. 2003. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London and New York: Routledge. First published 1966.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1987. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: The Free Press. First published 1893.
- Eisenstein, James, Roy B. Flemming, and Peter F. Nardulli. 1999. *The Contours of Justice: Communities and Their Courts*. Lanham and Oxford: University Press of America. First published 1988.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1987. *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. First published 1957.

- Entwistle, Jonathan. 2025. *Karate Kid: Legends*. (English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Culver City: Columbia Pictures. Los Angeles: Sunswapt Entertainment. Burbank: Jerry Weintraub Productions.
- Farino, Julian, and Ben Chessell, dirs. 2022. *Giri/Haji*. (TV-MA, English and Japanese with English Subtitles). London: Sister Pictures.
- Fitria, Tira Nur. 2023. Jauhar as A Representation of Love, Sacrifice, and Loyalty of The Main Character in The Padmavaat Movie. *Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics* 9: 125–38.
- Flemming, Roy B., Peter F. Nardulli, and James Eisenstein. 2016. *The Craft of Justice: Politics and Work in Criminal Court Communities*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fox, Jonathan. 2015. *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Franklin, Daniel. 2006. *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States*. Landham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Galanter, Marc. 1992. *Law and Society in Modern India*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. First published 1989.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1957. Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols. *The Antioch Review* 17: 421–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2000. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books. First published 1983.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1995. *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory: Encounters with Classical and Contemporary Social Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gillespie, Graham Neil. 2016. Reading the ‘New World’: Neoliberalism in the South Korean Gangster Film. *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 8: 59–72. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2012. Concepts and Measurement: Ontology and Epistemology. *Social Science Information* 51: 205–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of the Self in the Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, Erving. 2005. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Interactions*. New York: Routledge. First published 1969.
- Goldberg, Harvey E., ed. 1996. *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary.
- Golding, William. 1955. *Lord of the Flies*. New York: Coward-McCann.
- Gowariker, Ashutosh, dir. 2019. *Panipat*. (Hindi Language with English Subtitles). Mumbai: Ashutosh Gowariker Productions.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1992. *Prison Notebooks, Volume 1*. New York: Columbia University Press. First published 1947.
- Guetterman, Timothy C. 2015. Descriptions of Sampling Practices Within Five Approaches to Qualitative Research in Education and the Health Sciences. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16: 25.
- Guo, Jingming, dir. 2020. *The Yin-Yang Master: Dream of Eternity*. (Chinese with English Subtitles). Shanghai: Hehe Pictures and Shanghai Film Group.
- Gurses, Mehmet. 2018. *Anatomy of a Civil War: Sociopolitical Impacts of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gusterson, Hugh. 2008. Ethnographic Research. In *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*. Edited by Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, Don, Carlos López Estrada, and Paul Briggs, dirs. 2021. *Raya and the Last Dragon*. (English). Burbank: Walt Disney Animation Studios and Walt Disney Pictures.
- Han-min, Kim, dir. 2011. *War of Arrows*. (Korean, English, and Chinese with English Subtitles). Seoul: Dasepo Club.
- Hark, Tsui, dir. 2018. *Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kingdoms*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Ningbo: CFK Pictures.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 1998. *Religion in Global Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. 2020. *Religion, Conflict and Post-Secular Politics*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- He, Jianan, dir. 2020. *Mulan Legend*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Beijing: iQIYI.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2008. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper Perennial. First published 1927.
- Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky, eds. 2004. Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A research Agenda. *Perspectives on Politics* 2: 725–40.
- Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky, eds. 2006. *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 2002. *Leviathan*. Edited by A. P. Martinich. Peterborough: Broadview Press. First published 1651.
- Hodder, Ian. 1989. This is Not an Article about Material Culture as Text. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 8: 250–69. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hou, Hsiao-Hsien, dir. 2015. *The Assassin*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Hangzhou: Zhejiang Huace Film & TV.
- Huang, Yi, dir. 2020. *Buddha Palm Technique*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles; Origin China). Fullerton: 815 Pictures.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hur, Jin-ho, dir. 2016. *The Last Princess*. (Korean and Japanese languages with English Subtitles). Seoul: HO Film.
- Hwang, Dong-hyuk, dir. 2017. *The Fortress*. (Korean language with English subtitles). Seoul: CJ Entertainment.

- In-sik, Yu, dir. 2019. *Vagabond*. (Korean, Spanish, Arabic, and English with English Subtitles). Seoul: Celltrion Entertainment. Culver City: Sony Pictures Television. Marrakech: Zak Productions.
- Isfansyah, Ifa, dir. 2014. *Golden Cane Warrior*. (Indonesian with English Subtitles). Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia and Miles Films.
- Kertzer, David. 1988. *Ritual, Politics, and Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Khan, Arif, and Goswami Mahesh Gari Tulsigiri, dirs. 2023. *U Turn*. (Hindi Language with English Subtitles). Mumbai: Balaji Motion Pictures.
- Khatib, Lina. 2012. *Image Politics in the Middle East: The Role of the Visual in Political Struggle*. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Khomsiri, Khom, dir. 2024. *Kongkiat. Bangkok Breaking: Heaven and Hell*. (TV-MA, Thai with English Subtitles). Bangkok: Kongkiat Production.
- Kim, Eun-hee, Kim Seong-hun, and Park In-je, creators. 2019. *Kingdom*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles, Television Series). Seoul: AStory.
- Kim, Jinsook. 2018. After the Disclosures: A Year of #Sexual_Violence_in_The_Film_Industry in South Korea. *Feminist Media Studies* 18: 505–8.
- Kim, Sang-man, dir. 2024. *Uprising*. (Korean and Japanese with English Subtitles). Seoul: CJ ENM Studios.
- Kim, Seong-hun, dir. 2021. *Kingdom: Ashin of the North*. (Korean and Japanese with English Subtitles). Seoul: AStory.
- Kim, Sung Soo, dir. 2016. *Asura: The City of Madness*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles). Seoul: Sanai Pictures.
- Kim, Sung Soo, dir. 2023. *12.12: The Day*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles). Seoul: Hive Media.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Koehane, and Sidney Verba. 2021. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, New Edition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. First published 1994.
- Koch, Max. 2022. State-Civil Society Relations in Gramsci, Poulantzas and Bourdieu: Strategic Implications for the Degrowth Movement. *Ecological Economics* 193: 1–9. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. 2012. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. First published 1962.
- Lau, Wai Keung, dir. 2012. *The Guillotines*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: Media Asia Films.
- Lee, Ang, dir. 2012. *The Life of Pi*. (English, Hindi, Japanese and French with English Subtitles). Los Angeles: Fox 2000 Pictures.
- Lee, Daniel, dir. 2015. *Dragon Blade*. (Mandarin, English, and Latin with English Subtitles). Beijing: Huayi Brothers Media Corporation.
- Lee, Sngmoo, dir. 2010. *The Warrior's Way*. (English). Toledo: Rogue. Seoul: Boram Entertainment. Seoul: Wellmade Entertainment.
- Lev, Daniel. 2021. *Legal Evolution and Political Authority in Indonesia: Selected Essays*. Cambridge and The Hague: Brill. First published 2000.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1999. *Alterity and Transcendence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Liang, Jue. 2022. "Trading Western Suits for Monastic Robes": Remaking Tibetan Buddhism in the Chinese Religious Revival. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lichbach, Mark Irving, and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds. 1997. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Linley, Matthew, James Reilly, and Benjamin Goldsmith. 2012. Who's Afraid of the Dragon? Asian Mass Publics' Perceptions of China's Influence. *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 13: 501–23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Liu, Hongzhi, dir. 2018. *Monkey King Reincarnation*. (Chinese with English Subtitles; Origin China). Plano: Well Go USA Entertainment.
- Lu, Xiaobo. 1999. From Rank-Seeking to Rent-Seeking: Changing Administrative Ethos and Corruption in Reform China. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 32: 347–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lu, Xing, and Xiaoming Yang, dirs. 2019. *Investiture of the Gods*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Changshahsien: Mango Studio, Cathay Media. Beijing: CCTV Creative Media.
- Ma, Jingle, and Wei Dong, dirs. 2009. *Mulan: Rise of a Warrior*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Beijing: Starlight International Media Group.
- MacCannell, Dean. 1983. Commemorative Essay. Erving Goffman (1922–1982). *Semiotica* 45: 1–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mahoney, James. 2012. The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences. *Sociological Methods & Research* 41: 570–97. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mahoney, James. 2017. Shift Happens: The Historical Institutionalism of Kathleen Thelen. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50: 1115–19.
- Mahoney, James, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. 2010. *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mak, Gary Wing-Lun, dir. 2023. *Ever Victorious*. (Chinese with English Subtitles). Hefei: Anhui Yike Film.
- Mallick, Pratick. 2022. Diaspora Hinduism and Hindutva: A Historiography of Modern Indian Politics. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Mares, Teresa. 2019. *Life on the Other Border: Farmworkers and Food Justice in Vermont*. Oakland: University of California Press.

- Marinescu, Valentina, and Ecaterina Balica. 2013. Korean Cultural Products in Eastern Europe: A Case Study of the K-Pop Impact in Romania. *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 2: 113–35. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Marx, Karl. 2019. *Capital, Volume One: A Critique of Political Economy*. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc. First published 1867.
- McLean, Iain. 1981. The social contract in *Leviathan* and the prisoner's dilemma supergame. *Political Studies* 29: 339–51. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul. 1991. *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Midlarsky, Manus. 2005. *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Midlarsky, Manus, and Sumin Lee. 2022. Distancing the Other: Religious Violence and Its Absence in South Korea. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Migdal, Joel S. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Migdal, Joel S. 2001a. *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Migdal, Joel S. 2001b. *Through the Lens of Israel: Explorations in State and Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Millis, John Irvin. 1984. *Malik Muhammad Jayasi: Allegory and Religious Symbolism in his Padmaavat*. Chicago: The University of Chicago ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- mink, dir. 2005. *Into the Sun*. ([R], English and Japanese with English Subtitles). Mumbai: Aries. Los Angeles: Franchise Pictures. Los Angeles: Kundali Entertainment.
- Minkoff, Rob, dir. 2008. *The Forbidden Kingdom*. (English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Santa Monica: Casey Silver Productions. Beijing: China Film Co-Production Corporation, and Huayi Brothers Media.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1989. The World as Exhibition. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31: 217–36. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press. First published 1988.
- Mitra, Subrata, and Lion König. 2013. Icon-ising National Identity: France and India in Comparative Perspective. *National Identities* 15: 357–77. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Moore, B. (Barrington). 1944. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union: 1928–1944: A Study in Elite Formation and Function. *American Sociological Review* 9: 267–78. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Moran, Dermot. 2000. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Routledge.
- Morris, Aldon D., and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds. 1992. *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Mukôda, Kuniko, dir. 2025. *Asura*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Tokyo: Bunbuku.
- Najmabadi, Afsaneh. 1998. *The Story of the Daughters of Quchan: Gender and National Memory in Iranian History*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Narayan, Uma. 2009. Restoring History and Politics to “Third World Traditions”. In *New Critical Writings in Political Sociology, Volume Two: Conventional and Contentious Politics*. Edited by Kate Nash, Alan Scott and Anna Maria Smith. London and New York: Routledge.
- Negash, Girma. 2004. Art Invoked: A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political. *International Political Science Review* 25: 185–201. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Nelson, John. 2015. *Politics in Popular Movies: Rhetorical Takes on Horror, War, Thriller, and SciFi Films*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Newberg, Paula. 1995. *Judging the State: Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nicolas-Troyan, Cedric, dir. 2021. *Kate*. (R, English and Japanese with English Subtitles). Los Angeles: 87 North.
- Nolan, Christopher, dir. 2008. *The Dark Knight*. (PG-13, English). Burbank: Warner Bros.
- Panagia, Davide. 2013. Why Film Matters to Political Theory. *Contemporary Political Theory* 12: 2–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Peerenboom, Randall P., ed. 2010. *Judicial Independence in China: Lessons for Global Rule of Law Promotion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peled, Alisa Rubin. 2001. *Debating Islam in the Jewish State: The Development of Policy Toward Islamic Institutions in Israel*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Perry, Charner M. 1927. Inductive vs. Deductive Method in Social Science Research. *The Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly* 8: 66–74.
- Pierson, Paul, and Theda Skocpol. 2002. Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science. In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. Edited by Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Pinkney, Andrea Marion, John Whalen-Bridge, and Robbie B. H. Goh. 2015. De-Orienting Religious Studies: Four Genealogies of the Study of Religions in Modern Asia. *Numen* 62: 1–6. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Prager, Jeffrey. 1981. Moral Integration and Political Inclusion: A Comparison of Durkheim's and Weber's Theories of Democracy. *Social Forces* 59: 918–50. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Premasiri, P. D. 2006. A 'Righteous War' in Buddhism? In *Buddhism, Conflict, and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*. Edited by Mahinda Deegalle. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.
- Radnitz, Scott. 2010. *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Rappa, Antonio L. 2023. Magical Realism and Romance in Asia: Avenues for Understanding? *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 2: 13–23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Ratner, Brett, dir. 1998. *Rush Hour*. (English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, and Chinese with English Subtitles). Burbank: New Line Cinema.
- Raudino, Simone. 2022. Religion and Conflict: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Evidence. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Raudino, Simone, and Patricia Sohn, eds. 2022. *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Reinharz, Shulamit. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rogers, J. T., dir. 2022–2024. *Tokyo Vice*. (TV-MA, English and Japanese with English Subtitles). Singapore: Boku Films. Beverly Hills: Fifth Season. Los Angeles: Forward Pass.
- Rooney, Darrell, and Lynne Southerland, dirs. 2004. *Mulan II*. (English). Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures.
- Rose, Bernard, dir. 2019. *Samurai Marathon*. (Japanese language with English Subtitles). Tsuruoka City: Sedic International.
- Russell, Jeffrey. 1987. *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Salomon, Richard. 1993. Addenda to 'Epigraphic Remains of Indian Traders in Egypt'. *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113: 593–99. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sarna, Jonathan D. 1986. *The American Jewish Experience*. Brookline: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc.
- Satayev, Akan, dir. 2016. *The Road to Mother*. (Kazakh, Russian, and Turkish with English Subtitles). Minsk: Demarsh-Film. Almaty: Kazakhfilm Studios, and Sataifilm.
- Satayev, Akan, dir. 2019. *The Legend of Tomiris*. (Kazakh, Russian, Arabic, and Persian with English Subtitles). Santa Monica: Hollywood Film Academy. Almaty: Khazakhfilm Studios.
- Satô, Shinsuke, dir. 2019. *Kingdom*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Nagoya: Chukyo TV Broadcasting Company.
- Satô, Shinsuke, dir. 2022. *Kingdom II: Far and Away*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Tokyo: Sony Pictures International Broadcasting.
- Satô, Shinsuke, dir. 2023. *Kingdom III: The Flame of Destiny*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Nagoya: Chukyo TV Broadcasting Company.
- Satô, Shinsuke, dir. 2024. *Kingdom 4: Return of the Great General*. (Japanese with English Subtitles). Tokyo: Toho, Sony Pictures International Productions, and Credeus.
- Schmid, David. 2008. Revisioning the Buddhist Cosmos: Shifting Paths of Rebirth in Medieval Chinese Buddhism. *Studies in Chinese Art History* 17: 293–325. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Schneider, Mark. 1987. Culture-as-Text in the Work of Clifford Geertz. *Theory and Society* 16: 809–39. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Schwedler, Jillian. 2006. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Scorsese, Martin, dir. 1997. *Kundun*. (English, Tibetan, and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Burbank: Touchstone Pictures.
- Scorsese, Martin, dir. 2016. *Silence*. ([R], English, Japanese, and Latin with English Subtitles). Midland: SharpSword Films.
- Scott, Ian. 2000. *American Politics in Hollywood Film*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- Scott, James C. 1977. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 2008. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Existence*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. First published 1985.
- Scott, James C. 2020. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press. First published 1998.
- Seltzer, Robert M. 1980. *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*. New York: Macmillan.
- Shahrokni, Nazanin. 2020. *Women in Place: The Politics of Gender Segregation in Iran*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Sharoni, Simona. 1995. *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Politics of Women's Resistance*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Singerman, Diane. 2020. *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. First published 1995.
- Singerman, Diane, and Paul Amar, eds. 2006. *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press.
- Slater, Dan. 2009. Revolutions, Crackdowns, and Quiescence: Communal Elites and Democratic Mobilization in Southeast Asia. *American Journal of Sociology* 115: 203–54. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Slater, Dan. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1984. American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting 1983: The Presidential Address. The Modern West in the History of Religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52: 3–18. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Sohn, Patricia. 2021. Theatres of Difference: The Film 'Hair,' Otherness, Alterity, Subjectivity and Lessons for Identity Politics. *E-International Relations*, September 28. Available online: <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/28/theatres-of-difference-the-film-hair-otherness-alterity-subjectivity-and-lessons-for-identity-politics/> (accessed on 23 October 2025).
- Sohn, Patricia. 2023. The Neo-Positive Value of Symbolic Representations and Ritual Politics: Reconsidering the South Korean Allegory in Popular Film, Asura: The City of Madness. *Religions* 14: 1362. [CrossRef]
- Sohn, Patricia, and Simone Raudino. 2022. Editor's Introduction: Religion and Politics. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Spottiswoode, Roger, dir. 1997. *Tomorrow Never Dies*. (PG-13, English, German, Danish, Mandarin, and Cantonese with English Subtitles). London: Eon Productions. Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Culver City: United Artists.
- Supannarat, Chaya, dir. 2024. *Bangkok Dog*. (MA, English). Beverly Hills: Bleiberg Entertainment. Las Vegas: Rock Solid Productions.
- Tamahori, Lee, dir. 2002. *Die Another Day*. (PG-13, English). Los Angeles: Eon Productions. Santa Monica: Danjaq. Beverly Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Hollywood: United Artists.
- Tancharoen, Kevin, and Viet Nguyen, dirs. 2024. *The Brothers Sun*. (TV-MA, English and Chinese with English Subtitles). Los Angeles: Brad Falchuk Teley-Vision.
- Tarrow, Sydney G. 1992. Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frames: Constructing Meaning through Action. In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. Edited by Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Tarrow, Sydney G. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tessler, Mark. 2019a. Introduction: Reflections on Scholarship and Fieldwork in the Middle East and North Africa. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52: 481–84.
- Tessler, Mark. 2019b. *Religious Minorities in Non-Secular Middle Eastern and North African States*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.
- Tessler, Mark. 2022. Commentary: Modernization, Comparison, and Religion. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Thelen, Kathleen. 1999. Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics. *American Review of Political Science* 2: 369–404. [CrossRef]
- Thompson, Edward Palmer. 1975. *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act*. London: Penguin Books.
- Thompson, Kenneth. 1991. Transgressing the Boundary between the Sacred and the Secular/Profane: A Durkheimian Perspective on a Public Controversy. *Sociological Analysis, International Studies in the Sociology of Religion* 52: 277–91. [CrossRef]
- Tilly, Charles, and Sydney Tarrow. 2015. *Contentious Politics*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. First published 2006.
- Toye, Frederick E. O., Jonathan van Tukkeken, Charlotte Brändström, Takeshi Fukunaga, Hiromi Kamata, and Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour, dirs. 2024–2026. *Shōgun*. London: DNA Films and FX Production. Los Angeles: Gate 34 Productions. West Hollywood: Michael de Luca Productions.
- Tremblet, Aurélie. 2021. Between Classicism, Realism and Romanticism: Austen's Ambivalent Attention to Details. *Représentations dans le monde anglophone* 22: 150–73. [CrossRef]
- Tserenchimed, Davaajargal, dir. 2018. *The Legend of Gobi*. (MA, Mongolian with English Subtitles). Ulaanbaatar: UBS TV.
- Turim, Maureen. 2014. *Flashbacks in Film: Memory & History*. London: Routledge. First published 1989.
- Turim, Maureen. 2023. *The Films of Oshima Nagisa: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Turner, Victor. 1995. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Berlin: Aldine de Gruyter. First published 1969.
- Valli, Eric, dir. 1999. *Himalaya: L'enfance du'un Chef*. (Tibetan with English Subtitles). Paris: Galatée Films.
- Van Mill, David. 1994. Rationality, Action, and Autonomy in Hobbes's Leviathan. *Polity* 27: 285–306. [CrossRef]
- Varman, Abhishek, dir. 2019. *Kalank*. Mumbai: Dharma Productions.
- Walsh, Michael. 2020. *Stating the Sacred: Religion, China, and the Formation of the Nation-State*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Ping, dir. 2013. *Kingdom of Conquerors*. (English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Seoul: Boram Entertainment. Beijing: China Film Group Corporation. Jinan: Shandong Film & TV Group Co.
- Wang, Likun, Jin Luo, and Allen Deng, dirs. 2019. *Investiture of the Gods*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Changshahsien: Mando Studio.
- Wagh, Scott, dir. 2023. *Hidden Strike*. (TV-14, English and Mandarin with English Subtitles). Changchun: Changchun Film Studio. Los Angeles: Epitome. Toronto: Flame Pictures Company.
- Weber, Max. 2011. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. First published 1904.
- Wedeer, Lisa. 2015. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. First published 1999.
- Weiss, Max. 2022. *Revolutions Aesthetic: A Cultural History of Ba'thist Syria*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Wingard, Adam, dir. 2021. *Godzilla vs. Kong*. (PG-13, English). Burbank: Warner Brothers. Burbank: Legendary Entertainment. Sydney: Village Roadshow.

- Wingard, Adam, dir. 2024. *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*. (English). Berbenk: Legendary Entertainment. Brisbane: Screen Queensland. Berbenk: Warner Brothers.
- Wongsurawat, Wasana. 2022. Multiculturalism and Revolution: An Analytical History of the Chinese Communist Party's Relationship with Syncretic Religious Movements. In *Beyond the Death of God: Religion in 21st Century International Politics*. Edited by Simone Raudino and Patricia Sohn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Woo, Min-ho, dir. 2025. *Harbin*. (Korean and Japanese with English Subtitles). Seoul: CJ ENM Co. Studios.
- Woods, Patricia J. 2001. Courting the Court: Social Visions, State Authority, and the Religious Law Conflict in Israel. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA.
- Woods, Patricia J. 2003. Normes juridiques et changement politique en Israël. *Droit et Société* 55: 605–26. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Woods, Patricia J. 2004. Gender and the Reproduction and Maintenance of Group Boundaries: Why the 'Secular' State Matters to Religious Authorities in Israel. In *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*. Edited by Joel S. Migdal. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Woods, Patricia J. 2005. Cause Lawyers and Judicial Community in Israel: Legal Change in a Diffuse, Normative Community. In *The Worlds Cause Lawyers Make: Structure and Agency in Legal Practice*. Edited by Austin Sarat and Stuart Scheingold. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Woods, Patricia J. 2017. *Judicial Power and National Politics: Courts and Gender in the Religious-Secular Conflict in Israel*, 2nd ed. Albany: State University of New York Press. First published 2008.
- Wuershan, dir. 2023. *Creation of the Gods I: Kingdom of Storms*. (Mandarin and Chinese with English Subtitles). Shanghai: Tencent Pictures.
- Xiao, Ying, dir. 2019. *China in the Mix: Cinema, Sound, and Popular Culture in the Age of Globalization*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- Xixi, Gao, and Haibo Liu, dirs. 2012. *King's War*. (e.g., *The Legend of Chu and Han*, Mandarin with English Subtitles). Beijing: Beijing Xishiji Film and Culture Development.
- Yang, Woo-seok, dir. 2017. *Steel Rain*. (Korean, Mandarin, and English with English Subtitles). Seoul: YWorks Entertainment.
- Yen, Donnie, dir. 2025. *The Prosecutor*. (Cantonese and English with English Subtitles). Hangzhou: Huace Pictures. Hong Kong: Mandarin Motion Pictures. Beijing: Super Bullet Pictures. Tianjin: Tianjin Maoyan Film.
- Yen, Donnie, and Ka-Wai Kam, dirs. 2023. *Sakra*. (Mandarin and Chinese languages with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: Plus Entertainment.
- Yin, Robert K. 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Yip, Wilson, dir. 2015. *Ip Man 3*. (Cantonese and English with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: Golden Harvest Company.
- Yong-wan, Kim, dir. 2024. *The Whirlwind*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles). Seoul: Pan Entertainment and Studio Dragon.
- Yoo, Jong Sun, dir. 2019. *Designated Survivor: 60 Days*. (Korean Language with English Subtitles). Seoul: EOne and Studio Dragon.
- Young-bin, Yoon, dir. 2021. *Tomb of the River*. (Korean with English Subtitles; Origin South Korea). Plano: Well Go USA Entertainment.
- Yuan, Ron, dir. 2022. *Blade of the 47 Ronin*. (English). Universal City: Universal 1440 Entertainment.
- Zan, Myint. 2010. Analysis on Aspects of Traditional ('Indigenous') and Western-Based Thinking in the Classical and Modern Burmese Elites' Discourse Concerning Madness. *Akademia: Journal of Southeast Asia Social Sciences and Humanities* 78: 15–35.
- Zandvliet, Martin, dir. 2018. *The Outsider*. (TV-MA, English and Japanese with English Subtitles). Malibu: Linson Entertainment.
- Zhang, Yimou, dir. 2004. *House of Flying Daggers*. (Mandarin with English Subtitles). Beijing: China Film Co-Production Corporation.
- Zhang, Yimou, dir. 2016. *The Great Wall*. (English, Mandarin, and Spanish with English Subtitles). Hong Kong: Legendary East. Los Angeles: Atlas Entertainment. Beijing: China Film Co., Ltd.
- Ziadeh, Radwan. 2012. *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Zohar, Zvi. 1996. Traditional Flexibility and Modern Strictness: Two Halakhic Positions on Women's Suffrage. In *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Edited by Harvey E. Goldberg. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.