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The Evolution of K- Dramas

THE Evolution OF K-DRAMAS! [PAUSE & Rewind Sound Effect] What is k-drama you ask? Korean drama or k-drama for short refers to televised dramas produced in South Korea. Many of these dramas have become popular throughout Asia, with growing interest in other parts of the world. K-dramas have contributed to the general phenomenon of the Korean wave, known as Hallyu. However, without the evolution from historical k- dramas back then to modern, then the popularity of k-dramas today would have not been known worldwide. Korean dramas tend to make more fresh ways to depict different topics of life that appeal to peoples inner emotions like, if there was a show that was a cliché romantic comedy, k-dramas tend to change it, add twists and cliff hangers that grabs their audience's attention and make them want more.

The Korean Broadcasting Station (KBS) which was the first Korean owned broadcasting channel was started up after a fire broke out in HLKZ-TV station which was destroyed in the fire. The first Korean television film was a 15-minute piece titled *The Gate of Heaven* that appeared on the HLKZ-TV channel. Most starting k-dramas were dramatic historical movies that depicted and illustrated Korean's past history. In the 1970's, Now, k-dramas have made a name for themselves, separating their dramas and other television genres from any other television dramas around the world. Famous Dramas like *Boys Over Flowers*, and *Gu Family Book* (which is modern historical like drama) have evolved from the dramatic historical dramas in the 1960's, into romantic comedies.

[Boys Over Flowers Trailer clip]

[Gu Family Book Trailer clip]

The first known historical film, *The Story of Chun-hyang* was made in 1923, directed by a Japanese filmmaker Hayakawa Matsujiro because Korean dramas were broadcasted under the Japanese rule until the end of World War II.

[Picture of the Film]

Chun-hyang is the daughter of a gisaeng [female artist who worked hard to entertain kings and people of higher class], and Mong-ryong, the son of a nobleman. The love story which overcomes social class based barriers gave thrill to the lower classes of the Joseon period, which had been a strictly hierarchical society. The villain is Byeon Hak-do, the new town official of Namwon who tries to force Chun-hyang to become his mistress and conducts all kinds of brutal misdeeds, and his character is a way of criticizing the corrupt society of the time. Mong-ryong, who comes back from Hanyang as a secret royal inspector, represents the people's desire for a just ruler and administrator.

Later on, they different directors started making their own version of the historical film.
 [Chun-hyang films 1923-2000]

[Chun-hyang version 2000 video clip 29:00-30:00]

Now, watch how they evolved from that romantic story, to this modern version of the romantic story

[*Sassy Girl Chun Hyang* (2005)]

The difference between the two versions of the Story of Chun-hyang has evolved from a historical feel of the film to a more modern film that everyone relates to nowadays. Of course the music, the way the language is portrayed, the setting and the whole appearance is different than what it was back then. In the historical film (Chun-hyang version 2000), the music has more traditional music to make the audience feel like they are in the olden times. In the newer film (*Sassy Girl Chun Hyang* 2005), the music is more modern and appeals more to their audience and young adult age range. The setting and other appearances has also evolved. From the historical times, they used to wear their national outfit called Hanbok. Most people who wear the Hanbok were of higher class than the rest.

Now, historical films back then were also a little but more explicit than films now. Sex scenes and naked body parts were not censored or skipped over. They were portrayed as a regular part of life in the historical period. In modern films, the sex scene was not shown. Instead, they would hint to one another and to the audiences that something was ABOUT TO GO DOWN. The most romance would be their kissing scenes based on the age range.

Although many k-dramas evolved from other k-dramas in the historical period, it made a big impact on the way k-dramas are now seen around the world. If modern k-dramas did not evolve from the historical drama films, then the Korean wave, Hallyu, would not have evolved.

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