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ABSTRACT

A study of a chosen set of the extant Korean films produced between 1936 and 1945, my dissertation examines the ways in which Japanese colonialism, gender politics, and Koreans' aspiration for their own filmmaking interweave themselves on screen in the context of the empire's increasing pressure in the drive towards total mobilization. Though I distance myself from the overtly nationalist perspectives, I contend that the films of wartime colonial Korea should be located in the contexts of Korean national cinema, especially as its seminal instances that show the cinema's intimacy with the state.

Central to the dissertation's organization is my observation that the wartime propaganda films produced by Koreans are populated by initially misfit and displaced—and eventually lachrymose—Korean figures, beginning with irresolute young men, bereaved children, and suffering women. These cinematic characters undergo a variety of forms of soul-searching in order to be reborn as proper colonial citizens, a process that involves both the enactment of their personal agency and the necessity of the state apparatus to support it. The figures reformed under the so-called imperial grace serve propagandistically to transform everyday life on the home front into the (pseudo-) military civic zone. Their imperial transformation, however, discloses significant fissures in the narrative logic and consistency of characters of the films. Young Korean males volunteer for the imperial army not so much out of loyalty to the empire as out of a desire for equal rights with the Japanese; and neglected children and women enduring hardship all too realistically—albeit inadvertently in some cases—reveal how Koreans are left unprotected and uncared by the Japanese Empire.

While offering an extratextual account of the Korean film industry's negotiations with the colonial state's measures as well as with the Korean viewing audiences' cultural understandings and expectations, each body chapter provides a close reading of the extant wartime colonial Korean films. The first of these is *Sweet Dream* (1936), a prototype of the state-sponsored enlightenment film, which I claim is a predecessor of wartime propaganda films. The second are the "volunteer films," which were made to celebrate the colonial government's promulgation of Korean volunteer military system. The third is the "children trilogy" by Ch'oe In-gyu, which treats allegorically the colonial adoption of wandering Korean orphans into the imperial family. The last is *Chosŏn Strait* (1943), a wartime woman's film, in which the alliances formed by female characters—traditional and modern, single and maternal, as well as Korean and Japanese—serve as a critique of the traditional patriarchal system and wartime imperilment of Korean women.

The dissertation concludes that, as the Korean filmmakers actively collaborated with the colonial state ostensibly in service to the colonialist/militarist agenda, they not only managed to retain a significant degree of control over production but also put forth films of subtle resistance for the Korean audiences. By cinematcally mobilizing those previously underrepresented groups of Koreans such as low-class men, women in need, and neglected children, the wartime film producers generated ethnonationally distictive communal affects for the Korean audience even though the films' propagandistic transcript of colonial mobilization was often subject to various fissures and contradictions. On the basis of the textual and contextual evidence, my study argues that wartime colonial Korean cinema established itself as the first iteration of Korean national cinema, whose foundation is inseparable from its intimate relationship with state power, a characteristic that permeates the postliberation Korean cinema.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Return of the Past

Between 2005 and 2006, eight feature films made by Koreans in the late 1930s and early 1940s were found in Chinese and Russian film archives and returned to South Korea.[1] These discoveries were followed by the unearthing of three additional colonial films both in South Korea and elsewhere over roughly the next decade.[2] The series of repatriations of these films did not simply mean a material addition to the Korean Film Archive; it was, in fact, an historical event that gave

[1] The returned films are *Sweet Dream: Lullaby of Death* (*Mimong: chugŭm ŭi chajangga*, dir. Yang Chu-nam, 1936); *Military Train* (*Kunyong yŏlch'a*, dir. Sŏ Kwang-je, 1938); *Fisherman's Fire* (*Ŏhwa*, dir. An Ch'ŏl-yŏng, 1939); *Homeless Angel* (KR. *Chip ŏmmŭn ch'ŏnsa*; JP. *Ienaki tenshi*, dir. Ch'oe In-gyu, 1941); *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* (KR. *Pando ŭi pom*; JP. *Hantō no haru*, dir. Yi Pyŏng-il, 1941); *Volunteer* (KR. *Chiwonbyŏng*; JP. *Shiganhei*, dir. An Sŏk-yŏng, 1941); *Chosŏn Strait* (KR. *Chosŏn haehyŏp*; JP. *Chōsen kaikyō*, dir. Pak Ki-ch'ae, 1943); and *Mr. Soldier* (KR. *Pyŏngjŏngnim*; JP. *Heitai san*, dir. Pang Han-jun, 1944). In addition to the eight films listed here, several short documentaries and newsreels were discovered in and repatriated from the same archives. One reel of *Simchŏng* (*Simchŏng*, dir. An Sŏk-yŏng, 1937, thirteen minutes long) was also returned from Russia.

[2] *Crossroads of Youth* (*Ch'ŏngch'un ŭi sipcharo*, dir. An Chong-hwa, 1934), the oldest extant Korean film, was discovered in Korea. *You and I* (KR. *Kŭdae wa na*; JP. *Kimi to boku*, dir. Hŏ Yŏng, 1941; only two reels available), was discovered in Japan, and *Tuition* (KR. *Suŏmnyo*; JP. *Jugyōryō*, dir. Ch'oe In-gyu, 1940), in China, in 2007, 2009, and 2014, respectively.

birth to a totally new subfield in Korean cinema studies, one that was once centered on the "hollow archive" of colonial films.[3]

Surprisingly, the colonial-era (1910–1945) stack in the Korean Film Archive used to contain no films whatsoever. Not until 1992 did the archive add three titles of the Pacific War era, which were provided by Toho and Shochiku Studios in Japan.[4] These were war-mobilization propaganda films produced by colonial Korea's government-run film company, The Chosŏn Film Production Corporation, in collaboration with these Japanese commercial studios. Branded as obviously shameful "[colonial] government-patronized films (*ŏyong yŏnghwa*)," the best that could be said of them was that they were visual materials possessing

[3] "The hollow archive (*t'ŏng pin akaibŭ*)" is Soyoung Kim's appellation for the lost archive of Korean film history. Kim points out that the Korean Film Archive not possessing any colonial-period films prior to the 1990s is "a bit extreme even considering the fact that two-thirds of the silent films [in Asia] for which we have records of existing, have been lost." She quotes Nick Deocampo's declaration of it as being "cultural genocide." See Nick Deocampo, *Lost Films of Asia* (Manila: Anvil Manila, 2006). She argues the hollow colonial archive has long fed Korean film historians' desire to fill the empty stacks of early films with imaginative findings about the 'genesis' of Korean cinema. See Soyoung Kim [Kim So-yŏng], *Kŭndae ŭi wŏnch'ogyŏng: poiji annŭn yŏnghwa rŭl poda* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2010). 24.

[4] *Suicide Troop at the Watchtower* (KR. *Mangnu ŭi kyŏlssadae*; JP. *Bōrō no kesshitai*, dir. Imai Tadashi, 1943); *Figure of Youth* (KR. *Chŏlmŭn chatae*; JP. *Wakaki sugata*, dir. Toyota Shiro, 1943); and *Love and Vow* (KR. *Sarang kwa maengsŏ*; JP. *Ai to chikai*, dir. Ch'oe In-gyu, 1945).

"historical value," specifically in terms of scenes of late-colonial Korean society.[5] Accordingly, the films were given little intellectual attention.

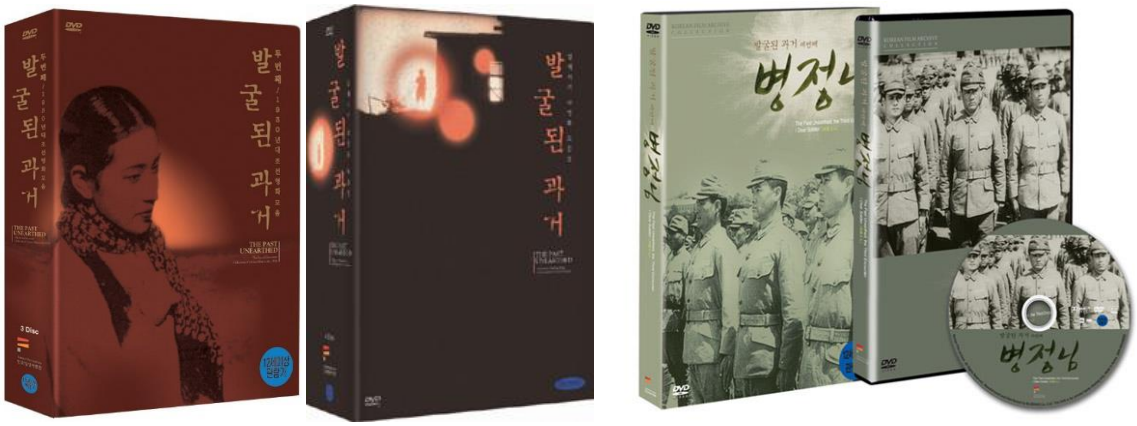


Figure. 1-1. DVDs of The Past Unearthed series released by the Korean Film Archive

The categorical denigration of the three 'collaboration' films as worthless propaganda was consonant with the existing film historiography, which narrated colonial Korean cinema from a nationalistic perspective, epitomized by terms such as 'oppression' and 'resistance.'[6] The main issues of colonial Korean cinema

[5] "40 nyŏndae migonggae yŏnghwa 5 p'yŏn "haetpit": yŏngsang charyowŏn, il sŏ ipsu wŏllae ch'ŏt sangyŏng," *Sŏul sinmun*, November 7, 1992.

[6] Yi Yŏng-il, a leading film historian, argues that one of the main issues of the colonial Korean cinema was the ideological conflict that existed between Korean film producers, who obsessively pursued Korea's 'independence (tongnip)' from Japan while making films, and the Japanese imperialists, who 'oppressed (*t'anap*)' those Koreans. He posits the film director Na Un-gyu as the most prominent film artist of resistance during the

studies were framed by the first-generation scholars according to the themes of realism and censorship—Korean nationalist realism as the method by which Koreans 'resisted' Japanese imperialism, and the severe state censorship as the way colonial rule 'hindered' the development of Korean cinema. However, the films repatriated during the 2000s turned out to be deeply embarrassing for contemporary audiences and scholars, as they challenged some long and dearly held ideas of Korean film scholarship. Far from being evidence of the suffering and struggle of Koreans, they were undeniably pro-Japanese propaganda vehicles made by prominent filmmakers, realities that previous film historians consciously had chosen to gloss over.

This dissertation explores the unexpected return of the forgotten past of Korean film history: the colonial Korean cinema that served the interests of imperial Japan during the Asian-Pacific War. With a larger view to recontextualizing the significance of the wartime colonial Korean cinema (1936–1945) in the broader history of Korean national cinema, my work aims to resituate the wartime films in the continuum of postliberation South Korean cinema. Staking out its historical validity as distinct from the ideological and moralistic charges leveled against the films of the period as pro-Japanese propaganda in the

colonial era. See Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* (Seoul: Sodo, 2004; originally published in 1969), 17, 98-128.

so-called era of darkness, my study views the films of the last decade of the Japanese colonial era as a productive consequence of a reasonably successful negotiation of constraints and practice by Korean filmmakers with regard to political realities. I argue that the wartime urgency generated by the colonial state's total mobilization project provided those filmmakers with an opportune chance to expand their skill set and express their creativity, as they took advantage of the colonial government's help in the form of the most up-to-date technology and financial support.

To be sure, the main goal driving the colonial state's direct intervention in film production was to achieve its colonial agenda, from publicizing the current political situation, imbuing the Korean people with loyalty to the empire, and ultimately mobilizing them for the expanding imperial war. As I show in my textual analyses of the currently available films from the period, however, the films made by the colonial government's propaganda arms as well as their predecessors (films made by private film studios) hold our attention with intriguingly ambiguous moments in which nuanced yet effective criticism of the colonial state's neglect of its people unintentionally prevails over the overall military atmosphere of the film. I argue that the films make implicit anti-imperialist appeals by presenting the Korean subjects' demands for equality and security, and that these appeals unavoidably mark tears on and in the logic of the story and characterization. At the same time, the wartime films, which awkwardly

juxtapose misfit characters with the sunny façade of imperial propaganda, trained audiences to deal astutely with the cinema's militarist intent and the subtle critiques of that very intention. The directors' desire to satisfy Korean spectators with the pleasure that mainly, if not only, cinema produced by ethnic Koreans could provide, using Korean actors and drawing on traditions specific to Korean culture, was another factor crucial to these films being able to deliver their message.

In my examination, however, the films are not merely the forms of mass media mobilized as war propaganda but also textual embodiments of the complex psychological register of *colonial* Koreans, which in turn causes the *imperial* screen to be subjected to the seemingly unintended effects—gaps, cracks, and tears, so to speak. I argue the tears of Korean children and female protagonists in colonial Korean cinema render an ironic effect in the wartime imperial films, ostensibly made with a masculine and militarist propaganda goal in mind. By exploring the ways in which colonialism, gender identities, and melodramatic elements are interwoven in these films, I trace the extent to which the dramas of the displaced characters—orphans, weeping women, and irresolute males—buttress or undermine the order of the empire. Paralleling this line of inquiry, I lay bare how colonial Korean filmmakers, in producing propaganda, navigated between empire-supporting collaboration and providing entertainment for their countrymen and women.

The title of my study invokes *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War: 1931–1945*, Peter B. High's groundbreaking work that revised the understanding of wartime cinema in East Asia. High examines the ramping-up of the implementation of national policy film (*kokusaku eiga*) by the Japanese film industry during the empire's expanding war, offering us comprehensive insights into that country's wartime culture. The point of departure for me is that the national projection upon the imperial screen should not be understood as unilateral and that the films unintentionally introduced multivalent spectacles into the imperial theaters, generating bilateral projections of desire on the part of both the state and viewers. Like the nonmainstream melodrama and comedy films of Japan, colonial Korea's melodramatic propaganda films mark fissures in imperial politics and reveal the discontent just below the surface of cinema as war effort. On that score, the title of my dissertation carries the dual meaning of "tears": tears in the physical sense, that is, particularly ones shed by unfortunate characters, and the tears (or cracks) in a metonymical sense, ones that are caused by difficult situations and thus supposed to mar the intended propagandistic messages. Tracing how the Japanese "national policy films" were conceived of by the colonial authorities in Korea and shaped into final form by Korean filmmakers, my dissertation locates colonial Korean films in the cinema of the Japanese Empire as a double-edged sword in the service of the colonial agenda.

Cultural historians and film scholars in Japan have conducted rigorous scholarship on Japanese films made during the Asian-Pacific War, detailing the profound changes (legal, institutional, and industrial) wrought on the Japanese film industry by the empire's propaganda-driven enforcement measures. Such preeminent Japanese film historians as Katō Atsuko, Iwamoto Kenji, and Satō Tadao have published monographs on the cinema during Japan's so-called "fifteen-year-war" (1931–1945) that deal comprehensively with issues pivotal to understanding films produced in a climate of militarism.[7] Their trenchant inquiries intermingle the political changes within the Japanese empire and across the globe, national discourses surrounding utilization of cinema, and individual films' renderings of such political demands. However, with their focus on the national policy films (as is the case with High's study), these scholars are for the most part concerned with the films made by Japanese filmmakers and their dissemination and reception in the "inland (*naichi*)" and Manchuria, as well as in the Southeast Asian regions, paying only limited attention to colonial Korea, where film production was more active than in any other Asian colony.

[7] See Katō Atsuko, *Sōdōin taisei to eiga* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 2003), Iwamoto Kenji eds., *Eiga to "Dai Tōa kyōeiken"* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2004), and Satō Tadao, *Kinema to hōsei: Nitchū eiga zenshi* (Tokyo: Riburopōto, 1985) and *Kusa no ne no gunkoku shugi* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2007).

In fact, the newly available set of colonial Korean films of the 1930s and 1940s has added a significant number of outstanding examples to the corpus of Japanese cinema in the Total War period (1937–1945), which by and large deliver messages of war support. In my study, I focus on those films made by Korean film crews and actors primarily for local Korean audiences. My premise is that the propaganda films produced in Korea under the banner of the war mobilization and imperialization (*kōminka*) are deeply imbued by Korean cultural expectations about the family and gendered relationships. Equally important—perhaps more intriguing—is Korean audiences' predilection for melodrama, which I claim made a notable impact upon the shaping of the propagandistic film texts. These elements in the colonial cinema create both intended and unintended fissures in the logic of patriotism for the empire that the film texts were designed to promote. At the crux of my pursuit are the explicit and implicit differences between the wartime propaganda films of Japan proper and those of its Korean colony.

The scholarship in Japanese and English on wartime Japanese cinema has tended to ignore the relative autonomy the Korean film industry did in fact enjoy by treating that industry as one of the subordinated locales of production of imperial Japanese cinema. Michael Baskett's *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (2008) investigates "how the Japanese filmmakers producing these films [about the colonized of the empire]

attempted to represent what properly assimilated Asian subjects looked, acted, and spoke like."[8] He views such films as *Homeless Angel* (1942), *You and I* (1943), *Suicide Troops at the Watchtower* (1943), and *Love and Vow* (1945), which were made with varying levels of Korean participation, as products of the Japanese *kōminka* project, thus excising them from Korea's history of independent film production, which had continued up through the late 1930s. Apprehending these films merely from the empire's side, however, denies the complexity of wartime propaganda films made by this particular colonized people. Among the rare studies on the repatriated films in English is a special issue in 2012 of *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, which features articles by Korean, Japanese, and American scholars on the Korean-Japanese film coproductions.[9]

Something that previous scholars have curiously made little mention of is that Korea was one of the very few countries in which the colonized willingly made propaganda films for the colonizers—a phenomenon that cannot be

[8] Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2008), 11.

[9] For the articles on coproduction films in the special issue, see Fujitani Takashi and Nayoung Aimee Kwon, "Introduction to Transcolonial Film Coproductions in the Japanese Empire: Antinomies in the Colonial Archive"; Watanabe Naoki, "The Colonial and Transnational Production of *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower* and *Love and the Vow*"; and Mizuno Naoki, "A Propaganda Film Subverting Ethnic Hierarchy?: *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower* and Colonial Korea," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review E-Journal* 5 (December 2012).

dismissed as merely the product of the desire of individual filmmakers for career advancement or the reflexive activity of the colonized psyche. Rather, it should be understood in light of Korean filmmakers' attempt to secure reliable funding for film production via state sponsorship. This entailed making state propaganda, on the one hand, and appealing to Korean audiences on the other. Paradoxically, success in the first venture meant maintaining Koreanness to a certain degree, local traits that the Japanese project of imperialization was supposed to either erase or channel into proper imperial subjecthood. The creative autonomy exercised by colonized Koreans in the making of Japanese imperial propaganda is thus a distinctive feature of colonial Korean cinema. A full understanding of 'the imperial cinema' made by colonial Koreans is therefore to be attained by dividing one's attention between the historical contexts of colonial Korean cinema, dating back to the 1920s, and that cinema's interaction with the films, policies, and industry of the Japanese imperial metropole.

Wartime Cinema: Propaganda, Gender, and Spectatorship

Placing itself in the broader field of the cinema of East Asia during the first decades of the twentieth century, my study has three goals. First, I offer a historical account of wartime Korean films, a history that is virtually unknown in the English-language scholarship on the cinema of imperial Japan. By focusing

upon wartime Korean propaganda, my study fills in the gap in the history of imperial Japanese propaganda in particular, adding a new layer of complexity to the topic of wartime films in the Japanese empire. Far from treating them as mere propaganda texts, I examine them in the context of the interdependent relationship between the state and cinema, a kind of relationship that will be echoed in postliberation Korea. Yet in Korean film studies the so-called collaborationist films have not been considered worthy of inclusion in Korean national cinema. In this light, my study can be likened to an effort to rescue the films 'orphaned' in postwar Japan and Korea alike. By viewing Korean colonial films as a multivalent case of incipient Korean national cinema, my study sheds light on the continuity between colonial and postliberation Korean cinemas.

My second goal has to do with film spectatorship of colonial Korea. Wartime Korean melodrama, I argue, is not merely a product of the state's coercive policies. Far from it, this subgenre as a whole is a meticulously designed result of a tacit conversation and negotiation between Korean filmmakers and spectators. Given the dearth of records of ticket sales as well as the rarity of extant reviews of individual films, spectatorship in colonial Korea must be approached imaginatively and speculatively, and from a variety of angles. On the one hand, I compare the scenarios and their actual films while closely reading them on their own right. On the other, I analyze the visual and psychological effects generated by cinematic representations, teasing out the subtle traces of various political

negotiations on the surface of the films. Through such close readings, I attempt to reconstruct not only the calibrated deliberations staged by Korean filmmakers with not only the colonial authorities but also their Korean audience in mind.

Third, my study aims to investigate the gender politics specifically embedded in the melodramatic mode of colonial Korean films. Women's roles bear much more importance during the wartime because female characters, who were portrayed primarily as victims of patriarchy or capitalism up through the end of the 1930s in Korean cinema, were transformed under the imperative of the total war politics of World War II. The impossible mission of depicting Korean men as full-fledged Japanese citizens while maintaining the hierarchy of the colonizer and colonized inevitably resulted in awkward and failed results in cinematic representation. Amidst the markedly colonial challenges that beset the filmic reconstruction of Korean masculinity, we find the salient rise of women and children as cinematic figures, who are literally and figuratively mobilized to take the place of emasculated Korean males. Unsurprisingly, the foregrounding of significant females endows the films with a wider appeal than those made with a male-only audience in mind. As will be shown in the body chapters, the rise of formerly unimportant figures in Korean films to the position of central characters is paradigmatic of the overall gender politics in colonial Korean wartime films: women of these films take on agency, both individual and collective, in a rather

unprecedented manner. This feature distinguishes Korean wartime films from both prewar Japan and Korean cinemas.[10]

Underlying the three aforementioned goals of my study are my concerns with national cinema and the genre of propaganda, from a theoretical perspective. To be sure, Andrew Higson's characterization of national cinema as "a hegemonizing, mythologizing process, involving both the production and assignation of a particular set of meanings" applies to the Korean case as well.[11] As evinced by the concepts in Korean cinema studies such as "*Chosŏn yŏnghwa* ([Colonial] Korean cinema)" or "*Han'guk yŏnghwa* (South Korean Cinema)," however, the discourse on national cinema in Korean contexts has been characterized by a resistant nationalism, be it within the frame of a colony against an empire or that of a peripheral film industry against a global one, such as Hollywood. Given these discursive contexts, applying the notion of "Korean national cinema" to wartime colonial Korean cinema poses a problem. The propagandistic messages of the films contradict or betray in the least the resistant

[10] My discussion of the cinematic prominence of previously marginal characters in wartime Korean films resonates with Kyeong-Hee Choi's literary studies of figures such as the man with an impaired body or the woman with an illegitimate son, which she argues emerged under the pressures of Japanese colonial censorship and the policy of total mobilization. See Kyeong-Hee Choi, "Another Layer of the Pro-Japanese Literature: Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi's *The Wild Chrysanthemum*," *Poetica* 52 (1999), and "Impaired Body as Colonial Trope: Kang Kyŏng'ae's 'Underground Village,'" *Public Culture* 13, no. 3 (2001).

[11] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 38.

nationalism one might wish to associate with colonial Korea. And yet, rejecting this notion is equally problematic, for one must reckon with the question of how to deal with a set of films for and by Koreans if they cannot be included in the Korean nation's own discourse on its films. In my analysis, I investigate the ways in which the wartime cinema manifests issues particular to Korea and Koreans, effecting an appeal to the Korean nation as a collective.

The second conceptual question with which this dissertation wrestles concerns propaganda as a concept and practice. It is a historical fact that most Korean films produced before and after 1945 served enlightenment and propaganda purposes to a certain degree, even when they were not produced explicitly at the state's behest. Given this, one should not view propaganda simply as a premediated design or intention; the politics manifested on the film's surface and the representational conveyance of the film's meanings necessitate vigilant examination; the war-effort film productions, allegedly vehicles of ideological agitation, thus fully deserve close readings.

My study shies away from the hitherto dominant orientations in Korean and Japanese scholarships that place priorities exclusively either on wartime politics or on the legal and institutional changes that took place within the film industry under the state's propagandistic measures. Instead, I investigate the collusion and collision of competing desires in the wartime films. Central to my

pursuit is the understanding that the wartime films are at once political propaganda and cinema in their own right; hence they should be interpreted not only in terms of their political agenda, but also in light of the context of the institution of Korean national film and its particular tradition.

From Hollow Archive to Unearthed Films

Soyoung Kim, a leading film scholar, once lamented that "one needs inspiration and imagination" to write about colonial-period films because of the "scarce reference materials and haunting historiography that was built on the empty or hollow epistemic violence."[12] For the roughly five decades of the postliberation era in South Korea, the history of colonial Korean cinema (1910–1945) consisted of simply the memories of the first-generation film historians. An Chong-hwa (1902–1966), Yi Yŏng-il (1931–2001), and Yu Hyŏn-mok (1925–2009) narrate colonial film history using the rhetoric of the 'sufferings/oppression' caused by and the 'resistance' to Japanese imperialism. Adding their voices to the national history-building effort, these South Korean film scholars argue that directors

[12] Soyoung Kim, "Cartography of Catastrophe: Pre-Colonial Surveys, Post-Colonial Vampires, and the Plight of Korean Modernity," ***Journal of Korean Studies*** 16, no. 2 (fall 2011): 287. Kim argues that the hollow colonial archive has long provoked Korean film historians' desire to fill the empty stacks with imaginative findings about the 'genesis' of Korean cinema.

struggled relentlessly to make Korean nationalist films under colonial rule. At the same time, their focus on the prewar films has the side effect of either omitting the collaborationist films entirely or discarding them as unworthy of attention.[13] Their common stance towards the films made during the Asian-Pacific War is to segregate this corpus from 'normal' Korean cinema.

The Comprehensive History of Korean Cinema (*Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa*) (1969) by film historian Yi Yŏng-il was the first in-depth study of this topic. Providing the 'suffering and resistance' frame, Yi allots half the volume to the colonial period, which he characterizes as a time when the lofty spirit of Korean cinema blossomed with "robust criticism" and "resistance consciousness" despite imperial oppression.[14] In search of the untamed Koreanness in the cinema

[13] It should be noted that An, Yi, and Yu were significant figures in the film industry by the so-called 'Golden Age' of the 1960s as a director, screenwriter, and director, respectively. As each had worked closely with the senior filmmakers active during wartime, such as Ch'oe In-gyu and his crew, who still exerted a great influence on the film industry, the views of these early historians were shaped by the limited investigation and criticism of the war-propaganda films.

[14] Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa*, 23. An Chong-hwa was actually the first to advance, albeit somewhat implicitly, the 'suffering and resistance' argument. His memoir, *The Behind-Story History of Korean Cinema* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa ch'ŭngmyŏn pisa*), published in 1962, discusses Korean films and his experiences in the industry during the colonial period. The book provides vivid and detailed behind-the-scenes stories of Korean film production. However, his autobiographical 'testimonies' about the hardships that Koreans encountered in the film industry provide him with a useful excuse for his pro-Japanese activities as the head of the Korean Filmmakers Association (*Chosŏn yŏnghwain hyŏphoe*) during wartime. At the same time, this memoir, despite being marked by personal and political prejudice, has provided others who, like him, were active in the making of propaganda films, with a species of "evidence" that they were 'coerced' into doing so.

of this era, Yi for the most part evaluates individual films in terms of their degree of "nationalist realism (*minjokchuŭi riŏllijŭm*)," i.e., to what extent the adversity faced by Koreans is presented. Yi's main issue, however, is the "principal ideology," not what particular aesthetic choices were made: "what is Korean Cinema, and what does it pursue?"[15] This question supports Yi's ambitious construction of a Korean film history that cannot be questioned concerning its legitimacy and historical lineage in relation to the postliberation nation-state. It is critical for Yi, therefore, to treat the 1940s propaganda films as nothing more than the 'unavoidable' result of Koreans' struggle to survive, and to lavish praise on their effort to create postliberation Korean cinema.[16] Yi boldly asserts that no truly Korean cinema existed from 1943, when all the private film companies were shut down by the Film Law, until the end of the Asian-Pacific War in 1945. By accepting uncritically the testimony of the wartime filmmakers as to how they

[15] Ibid., 20.

[16] Yi argues, "Of course, The Chosŏn Film Production Corporation (CFPC; *Chosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusikhoesa*) made the Japanese government use films as a propaganda institution of war until Japan's defeat, following the Government-General's order.… CFPC hired all the filmmakers in our land.… It is not simply by my own sympathy that I omit the list of people who worked for it; that's because of the fact that many people on the list devoted themselves to early Korean cinema making and contributed a lot to it after the liberation, too. Thus it can be said that the efforts were big and the fault was little, and moreover, it was forced." Ibid., 198–99.

were forced against their will to make propaganda films, Yi casts the filmmakers as victims and justifies his exclusion of those films from Korean film history.[17]

Departing from the monolithic and largely memoir-based historiography of first-generation scholars, such second-generation film historians as Yi Hyo-in and Cho Hŭi-mun utilize empirical evidence gleaned through extensive archival research to produce their colonial film histories. These scholars at least advance the methods of film historiography, but the work on the topic they pursue always

[17] Yu Hyŏn-mok's monograph on colonial Korean films, *The History of Korean Cinema's Development* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa paltalsa*), published in 1980, has the same concern as that of Yi—Korean cinema's relentless fight and development despite imperial restrictions. His book expresses tremendous hostility toward Japanese rule as having hamstrung Korean film production. As a director who experienced harsh censorship and state control of film policy under the Park military regime in the 1960s, Yu's antipathy for the repressive colonial situation is pointedly expressed in his appellations of the period, such as "the time of suffocation" (1938–1942) or "an era of annihilation" (1942–1945). In arguing there were "no Korean" films after 1942, when The Chosŏn Film Production Corporation, the government-controlled film company, was established, he avoids all discussion of the propaganda films, asserting that the Korean directors were hired for those films only for an "exhibition effect."

reaches an impasse, in the sense that the history is written in the absence of the actual texts that were the objects of analysis.[18]

One would think that the film discoveries during the last decade would therefore have been welcomed as filling the empty stacks of the "hollow archive." However, they have been more of an occasion for despair than delight, given that most of the films turned out to have been made to support the war effort, specifically army recruitment. Some scholars, having watched these so-called "pro-Japanese" films (*ch'inil yŏnghwa*), have expressed frustration with and even anger toward the first-generation film historians, who in the 1960s laid out colonial Korean cinema history in terms of such narratives as the Korean filmmakers' nationalist resistance against Japanese militarism and colonialism. *Homeless Angel* (1941), in particular, sparked controversy because it had been praised by earlier film historians as an excellent example of realist cinema: it

[18] Yi Hyo-in's *Lectures on Korean Film History 1* (*Han'guk yŏnghwa yŏksa kangŭi 1*, 1992) grows out of the tracing of the historical genealogy of the Korean "national cinema" (*minjok yŏnghwa*) from the colonial period forward, especially from the viewpoint of the left. He revives the history of KAPF and the left-wing films, which were for the most part skipped over in books of the Cold War era. Yi refers to a great deal of actual material, so that his work is accurate and informative, and avoids expressions of judgmental and emotional antagonism regarding Japanese rule, but the discussion of wartime cinema is lacking in detail. In the section concerning propaganda production, the author's perspective is not very different from that of scholars of the previous period—he views these films as propagandistic and thus of no import for Korean national film history. Cho Hŭi-mun, in his 1992 dissertation, "Ch'och'anggi han'guk yŏnghwasa yŏn'gu: yŏnghwa ŭi chŏllae wa suyong 1896–1923 (A Study on Early Korean Cinema History: Import and Reception of Cinema 1896–1923)," researches colonial cinema, but rarely comments on wartime production.

reveals the cruelty of Japanese colonial rule by showing the poverty and hardship faced by homeless children.[19] The film, however, ends with the children vowing loyalty to the Japanese Emperor—no Korean film history book had ever mentioned this. The sharp disagreement among scholars raises questions not only about Korean cinema historiography but also about how to situate colonial Korean cinema: Is it a national cinema, a colonial cinema, or an imperial cinema? And what is the location of South Korean cinema, in which all of these different elements and intermingled, in global film history?

Recent studies, notably Kim Yŏ-sil's *Projecting Empire Reflecting Colony* (*T'usahanŭn cheguk t'uyŏnghanŭn singminji*) (2006), and Yi Yŏng-jae's *Korean Cinema in the Japanese Empire* (*Cheguk ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa*) (2008), have read the repatriated wartime Korea cinema as local products of an imperial ideology by focusing on how the colonized create themselves in relation to the colonizers. Kim Yŏ-sil is one scholar who has vehemently criticized the pro-Japanese activities of the colonial Korean directors and the first-generation film historians who tried to cover up the collaboration by the former. Kim's book offers, thus far, some of the most thoroughly researched content on Korean films during the colonial era. Her endeavor corrects many factual errors in previous histories, and includes a great deal of Japanese material that had not been studied

[19] Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa*, 202.

previously. She also analyzes in detail the recently repatriated films, benefiting from having been among the first viewers of colonial films in the postliberation era. Her effort, however, fails to advance from pre-existing scholarship in terms of how to approach wartime propaganda films from a frame other than collaborationist accusation. She brings in many factual documents concerning wartime politics, such as the mobilization policy and accounts of historical events regarding the progress of the war, and she places these alongside the film texts, claiming the films reflect the empire's project on the screen. The extensiveness of her research notwithstanding, her arguments raise questions as to what the representational texts do other than serve as historical evidence of how they simply reflect and support the nonfilmic world's politics. Yi Yŏng-jae's book engages in close readings of the extant films with a focus on the psychology of the colonial filmmakers who were being absorbed into the Japanese imperial project. Using such keywords as "melancholy," she analyzes the mentality of the late-colonial filmmakers in detail, and traces how colonial Korea has been reframed as a locale of the empire in those films. Yi does do a good job of teasing out the multilayered desires of the director, the characters, and the war politics embedded in the film texts.

Kim Yŏ-sil and Yi Yŏng-jae's studies contribute to redirecting the understanding of colonial Korea cinema away from the monolithic nationalist

views of first- and second-generation film scholars. Assuming Korean cinema as having been almost totally subsumed into the imperial order in terms of both its content (e.g., themes of the films, psychology of filmmakers) and structure and process (e.g., industry, finance, consumption), however, they miss the dynamics of the autonomy available to Korean filmmakers. Thus the critical problem remains of how to accommodate colonial cinema productively within Korean and/or Japanese national cinema history, without summarily dismissing it as a cinema of 'transnational endeavor' that appeared temporarily during the era of imperialist aggression.

One of the most recent studies on modern Korean cinema, Yi Hwa-jin's *Politics of Sound: Theaters of Colonial Korea and Audiences of the Empire* (*Sori ŭi chŏngch'i: singminji Chosŏn ŭi kŭkchang kwa cheguk ŭi kwan'gaek*) (2016) offers a fresh perspective on colonial film-viewing culture by examining the ways in which sound film production fundamentally changed the industry in Korea. Through an examination of the industrialization efforts, or corporationalization (*kiŏphwa*), of the Korean film industry, which eventually led to its being absorbed into the state propaganda apparatus, she reveals the dynamics working in the landscape of late-colonial Korean cinema. As the local problems of capital acquisition, regulation, and war politics were compounded with the high cost of new technological developments in cinema, the film industry in Korea seemed to

have no choice but to submit to the militarization and mobilization of the state. Her work opens up a new avenue in the scholarship, one that emphasizes the role of technological advancement and departs from the thematic and political, moralistic approaches in the previous scholarship. Her and other recent work on colonial Korean cinema has benefitted immensely from the unprecedented effort made by the Korean Film Archive to publish collections of archival materials on colonial Korean cinema found in both Korean and Japanese journals and newspapers.[20]

Colonial Intervention: From Enlightenment to Propaganda

[20] For the representative Korean Film Archive's series, see Han'guk yŏnghwa yŏn'guso ed., *Sinmun kisa ro pon Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (*Colonial Korean Cinema through Newspaper Articles*), (Seoul: Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn, 2008-14); and *Ilbonŏ chapchi ro pon Chosŏn yŏnghwa 1–6* (*Colonial Korean Cinema through Japanese Journals*) (Seoul: Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn, 2011–16). Before the Korean Film Archive's publications appeared, the following archival collections provided materials on colonial Korean cinema: Chŏng Chae-hyŏng ed., *Han'guk ch'och'anggi ŭi yŏnghwa iron* (*Film Theory of the Early Korean Cinema*) (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1997); Yang Sŭng-guk ed., *Han'guk kŭndae yŏn'gŭk yŏnghwa pip'yŏng charyojip* (*Collection of Criticism on the Modern Korean Theaters and Films*) (Seoul: Yŏn'gŭk kwa in'gan, 2006); Kim Chong-uk ed., *Han'guk yŏnghwa ch'ongsŏ* (*Collection of Materials on the Colonial Korean Films*) (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 2007); Tan'guk taehakkyo pusŏl tongyanghak yŏn'guso eds., *Ilsang saenghwal kwa kŭndae yŏngsang maech'e: yŏnghwa* (*Everyday Life and Modern Media: Cinema*) (Seoul: Minsokwŏn, 2007); Sinema pabel eds., *Chosŏn yŏnghwa wa halliudŭ* (Colonial Korean Cinema and Hollywood) (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2014); and Paek Mun-im, et al., eds., *Chosŏn yŏnghwa ran ha o* (*What is Korean Cinema?*) (Seoul: Ch'angbi, 2016).

In response to the excavation of these films, scholars have taken a variety of fresh approaches to colonial Korean "Chosŏn" cinema. Korean cinema studies, drawing on diverse disciplines, is presently exploring such issues as modernity, spectatorship, theater culture, censorship, the influence of Hollywood, industrialization, and submission to militarism in the investigation of early Korean cinema through 1945. Yet at the same time less attention has been given to how colonial films are related to the state-driven enlightenment program, which I consider to be one of the most significant factors in the development of the Korean film industry.

After being introduced to Korea at the turn of the twentieth century, cinema became the leading popular art in the country, especially through the two decades of "the era of appreciation (*kamsang man ŭi sidae*)," cinema in Korea became the leading popular art.[21] The first instance of Korean filmmaking, or more precisely film 'shooting,' was by Kim To-san, who also held brief film screenings between scenes in his theater. Referred to as "chain drama" (KR. *yŏnsoegŭk*; JP. *rensageki*), this unique mixture of cinema and theater was popular

[21] Exactly when the first film was shown in Korea is still controversial, with scholars making the case for various dates from 1897 to 1903. On the diverse arguments by different scholars, see Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk*, 22. The era from the 1900s through 1919, during which Koreans viewed films from overseas and did not make their own, has been called a period of "film appreciation-only" by the film critic Im Hwa or "an era of foreign films" by Yi Yŏng-il. See Im Hwa, "Chosŏn yŏnghwa ron," *Ch'unch'u* (November 1941): 86., and Yi Yŏng-il, *Yi Yŏng-il ŭi han'guk yŏnghwasa kangŭirok* (Seoul: Sodo, 2002), 24.

enough that it continued to be made until the 1920s, when the first 'complete' film by Koreans was made.[22]

Most—but not all—scholars agree that the "first" Korean-made film was an enlightenment film.[23] Categorized as the "savings film" (*chŏch'uk yŏnghwa*), *Vow under the Moon* (dir. Yun Paek-nam, 1923, lost) was a feature film made by the Postal Service Bureau of the Government-General to encourage the saving of money on the part of private citizens through programs of the Post Office. According to the memoir by An Chong-hwa, the film revolves around a young couple—a man who has lost all his possessions by gambling and a woman whose father pays his soon-to-be son-in-law's debts with his own savings—and their resolution to be more prudent in their financial management to ensure a comfortable future.[24] Films that encouraged the saving of money and the purchase of insurance policies offered by the Postal Office have the longest history among

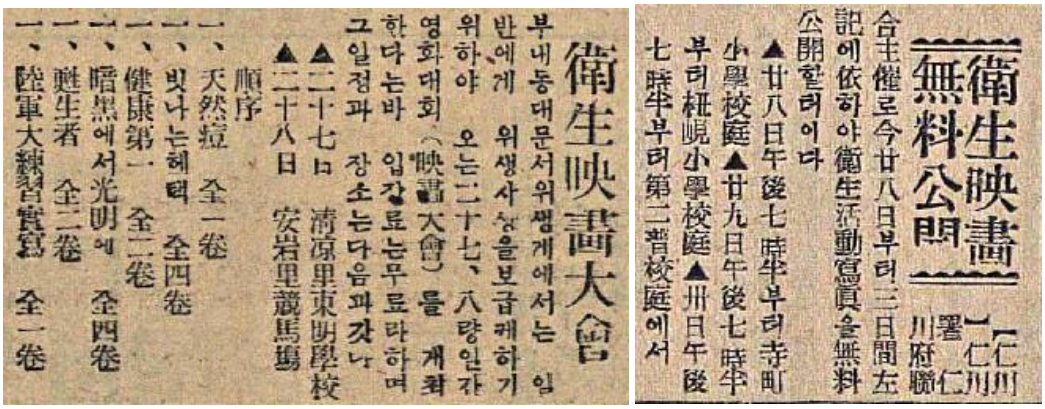
[22] Im Hwa argues the film screening aspect of chain drama made film "an adjunct of theater" and it should not be recognized as a 'complete' cinema as an independent art form. See Im Hwa, "Chosŏn yŏnghwa paltal sosa," *Samch'ŏlli* 13. no. 6 (June 1941): 198.,

[23] Film historians have put forth a large number of films as being the "first" Korean film. See Cho Hŭi-mun for a summary of the diverse opinions.

[24] An Chong-hwa, *Han'guk yŏnghwa*, 22. An also provides an interesting account of how the director Yun honed his filmmaking craft through his direction of another "saving film" in 1921 prior to *Vow under the Moon*.

Korean enlightenment films, 1919 to 1945, and the most extensive record of production and screenings.[25]

Starting in the early 1920s, many government-driven films for popular enlightenment were being made in colonial Korea, up through 1945. Here I briefly trace the history of enlightenment films in colonial Korea—which I consider to be a seminal form of wartime propaganda—in order to articulate the terminology of "*sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa.*" Primarily, but not exclusively translated as "promotion film" or "propaganda film," *sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa* broadly refers to government-produced films of this time.


衛生映畵大會

부내동대문서위생계에서는 임반에게 위생사상을보급케하기위하야 오는二十七、八량일간 영화대회(映畵大會)를 개최한다는바 입장료는무료라하며 그일정과 장소는다음과갓다

▲二十七日 淸凉里東明學校
▲二十八日 安岩里競馬場

順序

一、天然痘 全一卷
一、빗나는혜택 全四卷
一、健康第一 全二卷
一、暗黑에서光明에 全四卷
一、蘇生者 全二卷
一、陸軍大練習實寫 全一卷

衛生映畵 無料公開

仁川署 仁川府廳

合主催로今廿八日부터三日間左記에依하야衛生活動寫眞을無料公開할터이다

▲廿八日午後七時半부터寺町小學校庭▲廿九日午後七時半부터桂峴小學校庭▲卅日午後七時半부터第二普校庭에서

The enlightenment film genre in colonial Korea is typically said to include the "savings encouragement film" (*chŏch'uk changnyŏ yŏnghwa*), the "tax payment film" (*napse yŏnghwa*), and the "hygiene film" (*wisaeng yŏnghwa*), as well as the "traffic film" (*kyot'ong yŏnghwa*), among others.[26] Some scholars, however, consider the first Korean films to be the untitled works simply called "hygiene films" about cholera and smallpox that were made, screened, and enjoyed great popularity from 1920 to 1922, predating *Vow under the Moon* by three years.[27] The impetus for the production and screening of hygiene films in the early 1920s was largely owing to the fact that cholera had just swept the Korean peninsula, spurring the colonial regime to disseminate information on

[26] One silent tax-related education film text has survived but the title, director, and year in which it was made are not known.

[27] The hygiene film genre includes the "cholera film" (*hoyŏlcha yŏnghwa*), the "tuberculosis film" (*kyŏlhaek yebang yŏnghwa*), the "smallpox film" (*ch'ŏn'yŏndu yŏnghwa*), and the "film to prevent diseases in cows" (*so pang'yŏk yŏnghwa*) as subcategories. Most books on Korean cinema deal only sporadically with the existence of these "unknown" films, and it is only very recently that any well-known scholar, such as Kim Kŭm-dong, has paid attention to the importance of hygiene films in Korean film history. See Kim Kŭm-dong, "Togil wisaeng yŏnghwa rŭl t'onghae pon Chosŏn k'ollera wisaeng yŏnghwa (1920) wa ch'ŏnyŏndu wisaeng yŏnghwa (1922) ŭi t'ŭkching kwa han'gye," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 55 (2013): 35–82.

how to deal with that disease.[28] The earliest cholera film in Korea is thought to be one made by the Hamgyŏng-nam Provincial Government in July 1920. While its title and genre (documentary or fiction) are unknown, it is said to show the disastrous situation in Korea after the fierce outbreak of cholera in 1919.[29]

The Korean vernacular term "*sŏnjŏn*" that came from the Japanese term, *senden*, broadly referred to education, promotion, or propaganda intent, suggesting confluence between state and capital. It is important to acknowledge how pervasive and familiar this term was for colonial Koreans, because doing so enables us to understand the extent to which colonial rule influenced the everyday life of people by actively advertising government policies, promoting collaboration, and molding people's minds. While postwar criticism and recent scholarship has attached a negative implication to the genre of *sŏnjŏn* because of

[28] According to the Government-General of Korea's annual report, *Taejŏng 8-yŏn hoyŏlcha pyŏng pangyŏkchi*, 1920, 11,085 people died in 1919 and 24,229 in 1920. Chŏng Kŭn-sik argues, however, that cholera was a significant public health problem in Korea as early as the 1890s, during the Great Korean Empire (*TaeHan Cheguk*) era, when tens of thousands of people died of it. The colonial regime's Hygiene Police (*wisaeng kyŏngch'al*), beginning in 1910, made use of administrative and police powers to handle the epidemics and sanitation issues throughout the colonial era. See Chŏng Kŭn-sik, "Singminji wisaeng kyŏngch'al ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa, kŭrigo yusan: singminji t'ongch'isŏng ŭi sigak esŏ," *Sahoe wa yŏksa* 90 (June 2011): 221–70.

[29] "Wŏnsan wisaeng hwaltong sajin," *Tonga ilbo*, July 14, 1920; "Wisaeng tae hwaltong sajin," *Maeil sinbo*, July 22, 1920; Kim Kŭm-dong suggests this cholera film is a dramatic film in clothed in the appearance of a documentary. See "Chosŏn wisaeng yŏnghwa," 56–57. Evidence of a hygiene film in a dramatic form is first found in *Maeil sinbo* on June 1922. A report in *Chosŏn ilbo* in May 1923 states a hygiene film was made locally in the city of Pusan "Wisaeng sŏnjŏn hwaltong sajin," *Chosŏn ilbo*, May 6, 1923.

its close association with propaganda, the term "*sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa*" (*senden eiga* in Japanese) needs to be redefined in the context of colonial Korean society and the wider Japanese empire. A multivalent term, it denotes films that disseminate information for the purpose of advertising (*kwanggo*), promotion (*sŏnjŏn*), enlightenment (*kyemong*), education (*kyoyuk*), and even political agitation and propaganda, and it retained an elusive nature over multiple phases of colonial rule. The "savings encouragement (*changnyŏ*) film," for instance, of 1927 became the "savings promotion (*sŏnjŏn*) film" in 1934; similarly, the "traffic education (*kyoyuk*) film" of 1931 changed to the "traffic promotion (*sŏnjŏn*) film" in 1934.[30] It is the case that words such as "*changnyŏ* (encouragement)" or "*kyoyuk* (education)" in newspaper articles were commonly consolidated under the umbrella term "*sŏnjŏn*" in the early and mid-1930s. The versatility of the word *sŏnjŏn* is exemplified in a news article in *Maeil sinbo* dated November 5, 1937, which introduces a commercial promotion film made by Selznick International Pictures in Hollywood. The article calls the film "a new phenomenon that attracts our attention" because the medium of film, "a new medium that has been

[30] "Pot'ong hakkyo e chŏch'uk changnyŏ yŏnghwa" (Saving Encouragement Film Screening at Elementary Schools), *Maeil sinbo*, February 19, 1927; "Chŏch'uk sŏnjŏn yŏnghwahoe" (Saving Promotion Film Screening), *Maeil sinbo*, June 19, 1943. Two words in relation to the savings campaign, "encouragement" and "promotion," were used alternatively until the end of the war in 1945: "Chŏnju sŏ kyot'ong kyoyuk yŏnghwahoe" (Traffic Education Film Screening at Chŏnju), *Maeil sinbo*, June 2, 1931; "Sariwŏn sŏ kyot'ong sŏnjŏn yŏnghwahoe" (Traffic Promotional Film Screening in Sariwŏn), *Maeil sinbo*, October 13, 1934.

approved as a useful tool for *propaganda* (*sŏnjŏn*) by the National Policy Film (*kukch'aek yŏnghwa*) in a lot of countries, is now being utilized for the *advertisement* (*sŏnjŏn*) of general commercial [goods such as cars and daily necessities]" (Emphasis mine).[31] Moreover, during the military propaganda era that began in the late 1930s, *sŏnjŏn* in the media meant an "introduction" to general military life and *sŏnjŏn* films were intended to answer the questions of why and how one would volunteer for the army: the "draft promotion film (*chingbyŏng sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa*)" is one example. Therefore, *sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa* or *yŏnghwa sŏnjŏn* did not necessarily possess a moralistically and politically sensitive connotation in its time; it simply denoted a vehicle for the dissemination of information and as such was associated with the modernization of society.

This seemingly beneficial implication of the word *sŏnjŏn*, therefore, paved the way for the involvement in the production of films by government officials, including censors in the Book Department of the Government-General or public servants in provincial offices, from as early as the 1910s through the end of the colonial era. The term *sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa* thus testifies to the adaptable function and position of film in colonial Korea. The currency of *sŏnjŏn* attests the degree to which the governmental use of films was embedded in the medium, and it

[31] "Kŭk yŏnghwa nŭngga hanŭn kyomyohan sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa: kŭ chejak ŭn seljŭnik i chŏnmae" (Skillful Advertisement Film that Surpasses Film Drama: Selznick Monopolized the Production), *Maeil sinbo*, November 5, 1937.

requires us to reconsider the meaning of propaganda films (*sŏnjŏn yŏnghwa*) of the post-1937 era. The attempt to mold Koreans into new patriotic subjects through war-mobilization propaganda films beginning in the late 1930s was far from unprecedented; it was a familiar process for Korean spectators and indeed a typical practice in the Korean film industry.

Chapter Division

With the goal of understanding the ubiquitous dissemination of government policies and its influence over Koreans' psyche in their daily life, my dissertation seeks to reveal the embedded imperial messages in certain films, on the one hand, and the crevice Korean directors were able to open up in other films in between the given political tasks and their careful modification, on the other. The body of this study consists of four chapters: enlightenment film as a predecessor of wartime cinema, 'volunteer' films and Korean male subjects, the director Ch'oe In-gyu's child(ren) trilogy, and colonial Korean woman's film, respectively.

Chapter Two, entitled "Enlightenment and Disenchantment: The New Woman, Colonial Police, and the Rise of New Citizenship in *Sweet Dream* (1936)," shifts the reading of *Sweet Dream* from a gender-based interpretation to an understanding of it as an enlightenment film production by the colonial

government. Seeing this film as a unique example of the traffic film enables a deeper understanding of the relationship colonial Korean cinema had with colonial politics, the enlightenment project, modernity, and women. I argue that the film presents a disenchanted vision of women's advancement and modernity in Korean society by harshly punishing the heroine at the end of the film. Integrating the politics of an impending war, which reaffirms the patriarchal order, the film demonstrates how colonial rule influenced, to the point of dictating content, the film industry and culture of colonial Korea. By interpreting the film as an example of the ongoing colonial endeavor to utilize films as educational tools, I argue that the film showcases a colonial campaign, and should be considered a precursor to the war-mobilization propaganda films of the 1940s.

Chapter Three, "Rejected Sincerity: The False Logic of Becoming Imperial Citizens in the Volunteer Films," explores colonial Korean volunteer films as ironic failures through the textual analysis of two films: *Volunteer* (1940) and *You and I* (1941). For some colonial Korean filmmakers, the volunteer system implemented in 1938 represented an opportunity for the shoestring Korean film industry to ensure its survival. Consequently, they willingly made war-mobilization films that expressed Koreans' earnestness to become legitimate Japanese citizens by enlisting as imperial soldiers. Yet the very desire of Koreans to be equal to the Japanese created problems for the narratives of these films and

hampered their success. Commercial and critical rejection of these films by both the audiences and authorities evince that the sincerity and candor of Korean-made volunteer films, in demonstrating that there was the possibility of Koreans' social mobility in the imperial order, was unconvincing and furthermore unacceptable for both the Koreans and the Japanese.

Chapter Four, "Orphans as Metaphor: Colonial Realism in Ch'oe In-gyu's Children Trilogy," examines the ways in which the colonial reality of Korea is unwittingly revealed in Ch'oe In-gyu's alleged propaganda series—*Tuition* (1940), *Homeless Angel* (1941), and *Love and Vow* (1945)—depicting Korean children in either extreme poverty or orphanhood. Ch'oe, an ambitious and talented film director who was honored as an anti-Japanese realist in postwar Korea, has more recently come in for criticism for his collaboration with Imperial Japan as a result of the trilogy being found and shown to the public. His films and the mishaps surrounding them (such as the cancellation of an award), however, provide instances in which the miserable colonial reality is inadvertently and yet profoundly displayed. Even though the broken narrative is sutured by the imperialist message in the end, the mood of melancholy and depression predominate in these films due to the children's misfortunes, accidents, and tears. Although the director himself cannot be exonerated from being a collaborator, I contend that these films register as colonial realism despite their ostensible

imperial agenda and political intention, revealing fissures in the wartime imperial cinema.

The final chapter, entitled "The Pleasure of Tears: *Chosŏn Strait* (1943), Woman's Film, and Wartime Spectatorship," sheds light on the discourse of Korean discontent working covertly in *Chosŏn Strait*, a war-effort mobilization film made by the unified film company, The Chosŏn Film Production Corporation. I argue the unprecedented popularity of the film was due largely to the film's deft visualization and modification of the original script (with its clear political elements), resulting in a compelling melodrama that targeted the taste of Korean filmgoers. I suggest that the filmmakers bent the propaganda form into an entertaining love story/war melodrama. Moreover, the film features the newly rising womanhood of wartime, displaying both the cooperation between women, which helps the female protagonist overcome wartime hardship, and the social discrimination that derived from traditional family culture. The film thus created a women's space in the public sphere for the first time in Korean cinema and successfully endowed Korean spectators with an active agency in addition to a mobilized subjecthood, as they oscillated between war-spectacle indulgence and subtle resistance.

Chapter 2

Enlightenment and Disenchantment: The New Woman, Colonial Police, and the Rise of New Citizenship in *Sweet Dream* (1936)

"The program of the enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world"
- Horkheimer and Adorno[32]

Return of *Sweet Dream* to Korea

In 2005, a colonial Korean film whose existence had been virtually unknown to Korean film scholars was found in the Chinese Film Archive; it became available in Korea the year after. When *Sweet Dream: A Lullaby of Death* (1936; hereafter *Sweet Dream*; dir. Yang Chu-nam) was first screened in Seoul in 2006 after the seventy-year-long forgetfulness, many of the audience expressed astonishment.[33] The first and foremost reason for surprise was the unconventional female protagonist, Ae-sun, on the one hand, and the actress who played her role, Mun Ye-bong, on the other. Ae-sun struck the audience as an exceedingly atypical female character for the time in which the film is set, and the actress Mun

[32] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, trans., Edmund Jephcott, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University, 2002), 1.

[33] *Sweet Dream* was originally titled *Mimong: chugŭm ŭi chajangga* (*Vain Dream: A Lullaby of Death)*. *Mimong* refers to the state of being lulled in a dream-like state.

caused even more surprise, for this remarkably famous film star had been largely erased in people's memory in the anticommunist South Korea since she had gone to North Korea after the liberation.

The film opens with a tension-ridden domestic dispute between Ae-sun and her husband over her visit to a downtown department store. He condemns her for her failure as a housewife and a mother, pointing specifically to her neglect of housekeeping duties, her frequent absences from home, and her obsessive purchases of clothes for herself instead for her daughter. Claiming her right to go out, Ae-sun asserts that she is not a caged bird. She declares that he should not live with her if what he wants is a dutiful wife who will keep house. Ae-sun's defiance is shown vividly through a meticulously constructed mise-en-scène in which she angrily strikes the dressing glass in front of her that reflects her husband; the overly theatrical vocalization and the aggressive tone of her voice dramatically underscore her disobedience. Their conversation ends with her declaration that she will leave home. After one more dispute following this scene, she leaves home and never returns, evoking a question: what would happen to a Korean Nora who leaves home?

The story after Ae-sun leaves home focuses on showing what the life of a 'Korean Nora' would be like. Upon setting herself free from home duties and her family, Ae-sun goes to stay in a hotel with her boyfriend, a man she met at a department store and whom she took to be a rich modern boy. While she enjoys

her modern life in the city, however, her daughter Chŏng-hŭi weeps day and night, missing her mother, and the agony of Ae-sun's husband deepens. One day Ae-sun accidentally learns the real identity of her boyfriend—he is a thief—and reports him to the police before leaving for Pusan to follow a male modern dancer of whom she is fond. On the way to the train station, the taxi Ae-sun is riding in hits Chŏng-hŭi, and Ae-sun, overwhelmed with remorse at almost having killed her daughter, kills herself in a hospital after donating blood to Chŏng-hŭi. With her indulgence in pleasure being recurrently compared with her daughter's endless tears through montage, Ae-sun after leaving home is judged not only as a woman but more importantly as a mother. As a result, the film was mainly framed as a modern woman's morality play and cautionary tale by critics upon its rediscovery, being contrasted to other colonial-era films because of its apparent lack of concern with colonial or imperial politics.

Sweet Dream's storyline of a housewife leaving home, coupled with frequent birdcage images, allows for an easy comparison to the story of Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), first translated into Korean in 1921. This play presented the theme of woman's liberation and self-emancipation to colonial Korean audiences and inspired numerous Nora-motif literary works and theater performances through the mid-1930s. In fact, the opening of *Sweet Dream* recalls—though this similarity may not have been intentional—that of *A Doll's House*, in which the husband mildly scolds his wife, Nora, over her excessive Christmas spending in light of their tight budget. The emancipated female

character, an emblem of Ibsen's literary monument, however, was never a central figure in colonial Korean cinema before or after *Sweet Dream*—women were often presented as sympathetic victims in early Korean cinema as analogues of a Korea violated by Japan (and thus powerless) rather than in the form of defiant and self-motivated antiheroines like Ae-sun. What made the sudden rise of an overwhelmingly disagreeable housewife possible? To what end did Korean cinema adapt Nora for the screen, when her currency on the stage seemed to have faded?

In this chapter, I view *Sweet Dream* as a film of enlightenment whose purpose was to reconstruct a new, ideal type of colonial citizenship in Korea. At the same time, I key in on its having been produced at the periphery of the Japanese Empire, which was making a systematic endeavor to move from the margin of global imperialism to its center. Arguing that the discourse of seeming New Womanhood was deployed to carry out the colonial state's political and cultural project, which mobilized various ideological discourses available in Korea to deliver the clearest possible lesson about what a Korean woman should be and do in order to be integrated into an imagined Japanese imperial citizenry. By redirecting the focus of discourse surrounding *Sweet Dream* from a reductionist feminist analysis to a complex discursive regime of colonial enlightenment, this paper narrates a hitherto understudied chapter of world cinema, in which a Korean colonial cinema of the mid- and late 1930s made progress to join the global project of enlightenment and modernization. In so

doing, I highlight the Japanese colonial government's rather singular endeavor of ideologically restructuring colonial spectatorship via a spiritual and moral program of reshaping its subjects, crucial to the imminent project of total mobilization for their Sacred War.

Given that *Sweet Dream* is set in colonial Korean society, in which the rigid conservatism of the Neo-Confucianism of the Chosŏn era continued to dictate social norms, it has been easy for present-day viewers to interpret the atypical story of Ae-sun as a commentary on modernity and women's evolving status in colonial Korea, particularly that of the New Woman. A recent study by the Korean film historian Yi Hyo-in focuses on gender politics, arguing that the film was the result of Korean male intellectuals and colonial authorities conspiring to criticize the Korean New Woman so that the privileged gender order would remain stable at a time when the footing of the Korean nation-state was tenuous.[34] Kim, another film historian, highlights the film's commercial ambitions as a popular, vulgar melodrama, labeling *Sweet Dream* as a prototype for *Madame Freedom* (dir. Han Hyŏng-mo, 1956), which also features a housewife's sexually driven downfall. Kim Yŏ-sil points out that the production of *Sweet Dream* had a number of sponsors, including the *Chosŏn-Manchuria Traffic Times* and the

[34] Yi Hyo-in, "*Mimong*, sinyŏnsŏng pip'an ŭl wihan kihoek," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 49 (September 2011): 302–4.

Police Department of Kyŏnggi-do Province, as well as a private hair salon, a theater, and a modern dance troupe. She argues that these financial arrangements reflect the eagerness of the Korean film industry to capitalize on the temporary war boom after the Manchurian Incident. In highlighting the commercial intent of the film, she even asserts that "there is not a single trace of the Spiritist sermon or jingoism that marked the flood of propaganda films that began just two years after *Sweet Dream* was made."[35]

In a comparative article on New Womanhood in East Asia in the early twentieth century, Kim So-young, one of the leading Korean film scholars, explains *Sweet Dream*'s anxiety through the frame of New Woman discourse in the modern period of Korean culture. She takes the film to be a Korean counterpart of the Japanese or Chinese cinematic representations of the New Woman. Underlining the "hysterical" mood of the film, which derives from the unstable female character, Kim suggests that "if the nightmare and lunacy of Yŏng-jin in *Arirang* can be translated as a nationalistic anger, the similar hysteria of *Sweet Dream* erupts and is punished in the mode of consumerism and

[35] Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk t'uyŏnghanŭn singminji* (Seoul: Samin, 2006), 141. "Spiritist sermon" references Peter High's appellation of the trend in wartime Japanese cinema that stresses the "spirit" and the mental strength of Japanese soldiers in Japan's 'sacred war' against the West. See High's *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War, 1931–1945* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 382–422. "After two years" of *Sweet Dream* refers to 1938, when *Military Train* was made.

femininity."[36] In addition, Kim interprets *Sweet Dream* in the context of the widespread discourse on women's confessions in early 1930s Korea. Quoting the commercial advertisement about the film, Kim argues that the "debauched woman (*pangt'angnyŏ*)" was pushed to repeat her confession, previously published in the print media, on screen. The text of the advertisement reads:

> With a Magnificent Cast Unrivaled in Film History, the Gala Opening will be on November 6 in Umigwan Theater. Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio's Special Film, a Korean Talkie with Japanese Subtitles—*Sweet Dream: A Lullaby of Death.* This film is a story that thoroughly portrays the inner side of a debauched woman. Also, it is a record of a confession of a life that has deviated from the right path. A great film that tells its interesting story against a backdrop of luxury. (Emphasis mine) [37]

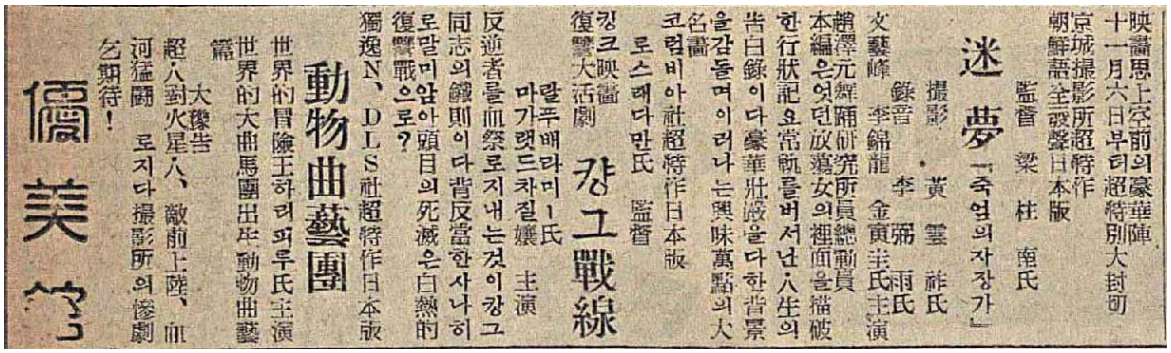


Figure. 2-1. An advertisement for *Sweet Dream* in *Maeil sinbo*, November 6, 1936.

[36] Kim So-yŏng, "Sin yŏsŏng ŭi sigak chŏk chaehyŏn," *Munhak kwa yŏngsang* 7, no. 2 (December 2006): 125.

[37] From an advertisement in *Maeil sinbo*, November 6, 1936. All English translations from Korean and Japanese in my dissertation, unless otherwise stipulated, are mine.

According to Kim, the film targeted Na Hye-sŏk, an icon of the Korean New Woman and feminist novelist and painter who published the scandalous "Confession about My Divorce" in a popular journal in 1934.[38] Born into a wealthy family and an educated and established artist who did not shrink from expressing her radical feminist views on sexuality in public, Na's every move was reported breathlessly by the press, from her western-style wedding ceremony to her eighteen-month-long tour of Europe and America and divorce. In "Confession," Na details the story of her marriage to and divorce from Yi U-yŏng and her infidelity with Ch'oe Rin, a religious leader, in Paris. Na's lawsuit against Ch'oe Rin for "violation of chastity" immediately followed the publication of "Confession" in September 1934, which led to social unrest and Na's downward spiral, in terms of both her private and public life.

To a certain extent, Kim's recognition of *Sweet Dream*'s adaptation of a real-life figure to the fictional world of film is valid, as the main character can be considered a typical "New Woman" from the perspective of the mass viewership. The film, however, is better understood in terms of the sensationalist and vulgar portrayals of a modern woman rather than in the terms of the discourse of confession, because while Na Hye-sŏk's "Confession" directly addresses the

[38] Na Hye-sŏk, "Ihon kobaekchang: ch'ŏnggu ssi ege," *Samch'ŏlli* 6, no. 8 (August 1934): 84–96; "Ihon kobaeksŏ (sok) ch'ŏnggu ssi ege," *Samch'ŏlli* 6, no. 9 (September 1934): 84–94.

conservative Korean society and community as an appeal and a form of protest, *Sweet Dream* does not consciously convey a person's inner life and philosophy.

Common among the reviews at the time of its rediscovery are themes of the New Woman, female sexuality, the modern world's consumerism, the melodramatic form, and the commercial possibility of Korean films. In other words, because of the focus on the problems of gender and consumerism, *Sweet Dream* is regarded by current scholars as one of the most apolitical texts among the significant examples of colonial cinema that are extant. However, one should ask what it means that "not a single sign" of wartime ideology was imprinted in *Sweet Dream*, as Kim Yŏ-sil argues, and whether this statement is actually true. Moreover, one should not presume feminist issues, consumerism, and nationalist gender politics preclude any political intention in the film, nor should one read the film text as showing "a strong contrast" to other propaganda cinemas and their historical context, as Kelly Y. Jeong contends.[39] More importantly, the scholarship on the film has rarely concerned itself with the unavoidable recognition that the New Woman discourse in Korea must be thought of in relation to colonialism, for it was articulated through Korean intellectuals'

[39] Kelly Y. Jeong, "Enlightening the Other: Colonial Korean Cinema and the Question of Audience," *Review of Korean Studies* 18, no. 1 (2015): 14.

aspiration for national reform and mass enlightenment during their frustrating negotiation with colonial reality.

Curious Absence: Now and Then

Apart from the initial response to the film upon its rediscovery in 2006, *Sweet Dream* has received limited scholarly attention during the last decade in terms of its historical significance and place in Korean cinema studies. In comparison to the response to other distinctive propagandist films repatriated at the same time, only a handful of studies since the 2000s have dealt with *Sweet Dream*. Rarely mentioned in the existing cinema historiography, *Sweet Dream* has had little chance of becoming the object of intellectual inquiry, unlike other examples of colonial cinema that needed to be reconsidered textually and politically in the new film history. Yet the more fundamental reason for the lack of critical interest in *Sweet Dream* appears to be the film's formal simplicity, as expressed in its narrative and one-dimensional characters.

The lack of critical interest in the film was, as a matter of fact, not unprecedented; *Sweet Dream* was ignored by intellectuals and the media during its initial run, November 6 – 10, 1936, in the Umigwan Theater in Seoul. There were no reviews of the film in any newspaper or magazine. This silence is noteworthy, for Korean films during the colonial era tended to be heavily

reviewed and sometimes sparked fierce debates that lasted for months, given that Hollywood and Japanese cinema overwhelmed the film market and Korean films rarely appeared. Only two articles, one in *Tonga ilbo* (July 3, 1936) and the other in *Maeil sinbo* (July 4, 1936), report on the shooting of the film, and just two advertisements, one in *Maeil sinbo* (November 6, 1936) and one in *Chosŏn ilbo* (November 7, 1936), placed by the Umigwan Theater, are extant. The routine end-of-year reviews of Korean films in popular journals in their December issues made no mention of the film; neither did the numerous articles about and/or containing interviews with Mun Ye-bong, who played Ae-Sun. As an exception, the film appears in the *Chosŏn ilbo* newspaper's Best Korea Talkie list in eighth place, which I consider to be not meaningless but unimportant because the selection of ten Korean talkies was made from only thirteen sound films made to that point. The complete disregard of a film was quite uncommon in Korean film circles of the time. What, then, is the implication of the contemporary indifference of journalists, critics, and even the cast of *Sweet Dream* to a film that employed the most advanced technicians and featured the best-known stars in Korea? Why did the normally avid Korean film reviewers neglect to comment on this film?

Although opinions on *Sweet Dream* did not appear in the contemporary public media, the film was occasionally discussed later by individuals in interviews and, in one case, a personal daily journal. Thus far I have been able to identify two written pieces on the film among currently extant materials. One is

from the collection of Yi Yŏng-il's interviews with colonial filmmakers, which I will discuss later in this essay, and the other is from the journal of Yun Pong-ch'un, a film director and actor in the colonial and postliberation periods. In his diary, Yun Pong-ch'un does not mention the title of the film, but all other details indicate that he is writing about *Sweet Dream*:

> April 29, 1937 (Thursday)
> Watched a *kyojŏng* ("交正" in the original) film by Kyŏngsŏng Studio in the afternoon at Kaesŏngjwa Theater. Story wasn't ripe and acting wasn't good. Only tried to make the images beautiful. Moreover, the directing was poor. Would be better off without the dancer Cho T'aek-wŏn's performance scene. (Emphasis mine)[40]

Significantly, Yun Pong-ch'un identifies the Korean film he watched in a theater in Kaesŏng city, which he happened to be visiting because his theater troupe was performing there, as a "*kyojŏng* film by Kyŏngsŏng Studio," rather than by its title. It is curious that Yun refers to *Sweet Dream* as a generic *kyojŏng* film, since he gives the full title in most cases when reviewing a film in his journal. Did he think *Sweet Dream*'s being a "*kyojŏng*" film made specific details superfluous? What in fact is "*kyojŏng*" film? In the original Korean "*kyojŏng*" is

[40] "Yun Pong-ch'un ilgi 1935–1937," accessed 2016, https://search.i815.or.kr/Main/Main.jsp. Yun's journal (January 1, 1935 to December 31, 1937) has been digitalized and serviced through the website of The History of Korean Independence Movement Online.

"交正," yet there exists no such word in either Korean or Japanese. Based on the *Maeil sinbo*article on *Sweet Dream*, which provides more clues as to the meaning of this word by introducing a new term, the "Traffic Film," I assume it is a misspelling of "交政 (same pronunciation, *kyojŏng*)," which one can interpret as "traffic policy (交通政策)."

> Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio Presents a Complete Korean Talkie
> *Sweet Dream: A Lullaby of Death*
>
> Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio has announced that it has finished shooting a traffic film, *Sweet Dream*, with support from the Security Section in the Police Department of Kyŏnggi-do Province. The film will be released in Seoul soon. The personnel are: Yang Chu-nam (director); Hwang Un-jo (cinematographer); Kim In-gyu, Na Ung, Mun Ye-bong (cast); Cho T'aek-wŏn Dance Troupe (special appearance)
>
> —*Maeil sinbo*, July 4, 1936 (Emphasis mine)

Traffic films began to be made in the early 1930s, as automobile accidents became a significant social problem associated with urban development and the rapidly growing volume of traffic. While traffic-related films were produced in several countries, among them the U.S. "traffic education films" shot in 1910s Brooklyn, the "traffic film" is unique to colonial Korea among the Japanese imperial regions. In this regard, *Sweet Dream* as traffic film serves as a rare example of an early talkie enlightenment film produced and consumed in an East Asia colony, a region remote from the global film mainstream.

It is, however, very much a matter of debate whether *Sweet Dream* truly serves an educational purpose. Most of the running time is allocated to the depiction of Ae-sun's acts of vice as a negligent housewife and mother, and the film spends only a very short time explaining, rather clumsily and insufficiently, how to avoid a car accident. Is *Sweet Dream* nothing more than an anomaly among traffic films? It is impossible to answer this question, given that no other traffic films are extant. Yet the pivotal question remains of why the Police Department of Kyŏnggi Province, the producer, would make an enlightenment film with this type of storyline (a housewife's debauchery) and form (melodrama). This also leads us to the ultimate question about the film: what is the real purpose of *Sweet Dream* and to whom is it addressed?

By choosing to key in to the fact that the film was, to begin with, a government-sponsored endeavor, I argue the underestimated and unexplored political implication of *Sweet Dream* will be disclosed. The rereading of this film will start with the recognition of the meaning of the responses to the film—that no Korean critic reviewed it and that Yun Pong-ch'un labeled it as a nameless "*kyojŏng* film." This evinces that *Sweet Dream* was viewed primarily as a government-made (*kwanje*) film by Koreans of the time. In contrast to how modern scholars see it, the film was considered to be not an example of Korean

cinema but rather an example of an enlightenment project undertaken by a local government, a product of censors and police officials.[41]

Yet though enlightenment films were shown in free, mass-mobilized events, *Sweet Dream* was also released in commercial film theaters and was somewhat successful in popular terms. The film's being both commercial and educational cinema therefore reveals the peculiarity of government-sponsored enlightenment film in Korea, insinuating a close relationship between the colonial rulers and the Korean film industry, and furthermore providing a clue to explain the willing acquiescence of the Korean filmmakers to the wartime militarist film production system in later years.[42]

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[41] The ways in which the enlightenment films were viewed by Korean intellectuals can be discerned in the work of Im Hwa, a prominent literary and film critic during the colonial era. In an article about the history of Korean cinema, Im mentions educational films such as the cholera prevention films (*wisaeng yŏnghwa*) and savings films (*chŏch'uk yŏnghwa*; one example is *Vow under the Moon*) as being important in the seminal stage of Korean film production. Yet he states that these "cannot be recognized as fully independent film texts," because they should be seen as "just a means of promotion like a government office's pamphlet." See Im Hwa, "Chosŏn yŏnghwa paltal sosa," *Samch'ŏlli* 13, no. 6 (1941): 196–205. Thus Im calls *Tale of Ch'unhyang*, made by the Japanese producer Hayakawa in 1923, a "fully independent film" and therefore the first example of Korean cinema. For Im, the 'genuine' first "Korean film," *Tale of Ch'unhyang* (1923), is not only distinct in terms of form as being a film—not dependent upon or supported by other media such as literature or theater— but also possesses an aesthetic autonomy free of any nonartistic intentionality. Therefore the enlightenment films made by the authorities could not be considered full-fledged artistic endeavors and *Sweet Dream*, in a sense a "pamphlet" made by the colonial rulers, was ignored by critics.

[42] Commercial filmmaking that involved censors and the police was, indeed, not uncommon in colonial Korea: one example is a film written by Ogata, who also was involved in the production of *Sweet Dream*. In 1937, Ogata, a censor in the Book Department of the Government-General, wrote an original scenario, *Counterattack* (*Yŏksŭp*), which was made into a film by An Chong-hwa. In his memoir, An recalls that Ogata helped him with the

In light of the context of the film's production, this article departs from mainstream scholarship in proposing to interpret *Sweet Dream* from a fundamentally different angle—reading it as an enlightenment film made by the government—and to reevaluate it in relation to colonialism, the state, modernity, and women in order to reclaim the film's historical meaning. A distinctive example of the early enlightenment films in the global cinema, the film lets us observe what a certain type of early enlightenment film looks like made in a peripheral colonial state where the enlightenment ethos is unabashedly combined with other colonialist goals. Specifically, it is my goal to view this film of 1936 anew to gain a better understanding of the wartime cinema that would follow and to reframe late-colonial Korean film historiography in relation to transitions, notably those between technologies (silent and sound) and politics (prewar and wartime), that affected the trajectory of colonial cinema. In this way, I interpret *Sweet Dream* as a cultural locus that exhibits multiple imperatives and discourses of colonial Korean society just before it was engulfed by the vortex of wartime politics.

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shooting of crowd-action scenes, mobilizing a hundred real policemen to the shooting site and directing the flow of pedestrians on the boulevard. See An Chong-hwa, *Han'guk yŏnghwa ch'ŭngmyŏn pisa* (Seoul: Hyŏndae Mihaksa, 1998, original publication in 1962), 228–30. As the negotiation of censorship was of the utmost importance for film productions, especially because of the financial risks, the heads of film studios had to maintain a good relationship with the Police Bureau, and *Counterattack* was a product of such rapport between the two parties.

The ultimate goal of this chapter, however, is to foreground a framework for understanding colonial film practice: the collaborative and mutually benefiting mode of production between the colonial state and Korean filmmakers. As the earliest remaining filmic space of negotiation between the colonial regime and Korean filmmakers, the film is a predecessor of wartime cinema and yields new insights about the relationship that Korean cinema had with the state even before the era of full state control. Both the nationalist readings (by first-generation film historians) and the political and moralistic perspective (in recent scholarship) on colonial Korean cinema have overlooked its production base, which to no small degree drew on the resources of the colonial government. Although most film historians acknowledge the role of educational film exhibition in the genesis of colonial Korean cinema, the ways in which the colonial effort of enlightenment were incorporated in the film business have rarely been researched by scholars. The marginalization of studies on the education/enlightenment films and prewar Korean film practice in academia resulted in large part from the valorization of the wartime (1938 – 1945) propaganda films, understood as the product of the political conversion—whether sudden or gradual—of Korean filmmakers. I argue that the film industry's seemingly docile undertaking of the making of war-mobilization propaganda vehicles from 1937 on does not represent a dramatic and abrupt change in colonial film culture, but was a familiar path, both expected and agreed upon—thus a rather smooth adaptation to the changing political landscape.

Through the case of *Sweet Dream*, which traverses the issues of the Korean film industry, colonial enlightenment effort, and feminist discourse associated with modernity, I hope to recast colonial Korean cinema as always having been in a complicated relationship with the state, sometimes closely allied to the authorities and sometimes using that relationship as a site of practicing the craft of filmmaking. Considered in the context of the persistent colonial endeavor to utilize films for educational purposes, *Sweet Dream* must be seen as a precursor to the war mobilization films of the 1940s.

Enlightenment and Education: Traffic Film

The earliest article on a public screening of a traffic film organized by the administrative office of Chŏnju-ŭp in Chŏlla Province dates to June 2, 1931, but it is unknown whether the film screened was actually a traffic film or just a random commercial film. A *Chosŏn ilbo* article, however, on August 12, 1934 identifies a traffic film specifically: *A Man Left Behind* (1934). It is assumed to be a Japanese-titled film, as the title was spelled differently in Korean in the two articles about it —*Namgyŏjin saram* (*Chosŏn ilbo*, 1934) and *Namŏ innŭn cha* (*Maeil sinbo*, 1936). The film was made by Kinoshita Yaoko, a Japanese actress who had starred in the Japanese film *Hototosugi* (dir. Yoshino Jirō, 1915) and who was the head of the Kinoshita Yaoko Ichiza Theater Troupe. According to

the *Chosŏn ilbo* article, Kinoshita produced the film at the behest of the Security Section in Kyŏnggi-do, and her delegation was to do a performance in conjunction with the film screening in Yŏnyegwan Theater in downtown Seoul. Her career in Japan during the 1910s had been marked by many performances of chain dramas, a stage drama that combined theater and film, and thus *A Man Left Behind* was to be screened in tandem with other stage acts, such as lectures and performances regarding the prevention of traffic accidents. The tables below list summaries of articles in *Maeil sinbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo* about traffic film productions and screenings, which mostly testify to the enormous popularity of free enlightenment film-screening events in colonial Korea.

	Report Date	Presenter	Title of the Event	Film(s)	Time and Location	Description
1	June 2, 1931	Chŏnju-ŭp	Traffic Education Film Screening		Square at Paltal-chŏng; 8 p.m., June 1	Great success; several thousand viewers
2 (c)	August 12, 1934	Security Section, Kyŏnggi-do	Traffic Promotion Film Screening	*A Man Left Behind* (*Namgyŏjin saram*)	Yŏnyegwan Theater in Ponjŏng; August 10–30	Police asked Kinoshita Yaoko to make the film; Yaoko and her troupe will perform at theater with film
3	October 13, 1934	Sariwŏn Police Station, Hwanghae-do	Traffic Promotion Film Screening	Traffic and Hygiene films	Square at Ŭp-office; 8 p.m., October 9	Great success; several thousand viewers
4	November 18, 1935	Security Section, Kangwŏn-do	Traffic film Promotion Screening		6 p.m., November 26 (Ch'unch'ŏn), 27 (Kangnŭng), 28 (Wŏnju)	Traffic Safety Week; drivers' roundtable

Table 1. *Maeil sinbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo* (c) articles regarding traffic film screening events

	Report Date	Presenter	Title of the Event	Film(s)	Time and Location	Description
5	July 5, 1936	Kŭmsan Police Station in Chŏlla-pukto	Traffic Promotion Film Screening	Six films, including *A Man Left Behind* (*Namŏ innŭn cha*), a traffic accident prevention film made by the Police Department in Kyŏnggi-do	Downtown community center; 7:30 p.m.–midnight, July 2	Traffic Week; great success, an audience of one thousand consisting of ordinary citizens and students filled the hall to capacity
6	April 29, 1937	Security Section, Kyŏnggi-do	Traffic Promotion Day		Exhibition (photo) at Mitsukoshi Dep. Store	Traffic Safety Week; Memorial service and commendation ceremony for the deceased; film, radio programs, and more; Traffic Promotion Day, Children Protection Day
7	Decem ber 1, 1937	Kŭmsan Police Station in Chŏlla-pukto	Screening of Film for the prevention of traffic accidents		Square inside a public elementary school; November 29	A phenomenal success; several thousand viewers, both men and women
8 (c)	April 5, 1939	Kyŏngsŏng Traffic Safety Association	Screening Event for Traffic Safety		Pumin'gwan Hall; 2 p.m., April 10–12	Focused on first-grade elementary students who were especially at risk
9	April 9, 1939	Security Section in Sŏdaemun Police [in Seoul]		*Stop! Look Around! Go!* (*Sŏja! Poja! Kaja!*)	Theatrical release starting on April 10	Film was made with the help of the Film Department of Tongyang Theater
10 (c)	April 11, 1939	Security Section, Kyŏnggi-do	Traffic Film Convention		Pumin'gwan Hall; April 10–16; Traffic workers 10 a.m.–2 p.m., Elementary students 2–5 p.m., general audience 6 p.m.	Traffic Safety Week; Traffic Promotion Day, Children Protection Day; "Children Traffic Troop"; Memorial service and commendation ceremony; Exhibition at Hwasin Department Store

Table 1, continued

	Report date	Produced by	In cooperation with/supported by	Film Title, Description	Goal of the production
1	July 4, 1936	Security Section, (Police Department), Kyŏnggi-do	Kyŏngsŏng Studio	*Sweet Dream*, Traffic film	Korean Talkie; Will be released soon
2	January 28, 1937	Security Section, (Police Department), Kyŏnggi-do	Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio	Cheerful (*myŏngnang*) and artistic Traffic film (title unknown)	Dissemination of traffic rules and concept
3	February 5, 1940	Ponjŏng Police Station, (Police Department, Kyŏnggi-do)	Kyŏngsŏng Film Science Factory	*Safety Zone* (*Anjŏn chidae*) Traffic Promotion Film Composed (構成) by Sato in Security part (佐藤 保安主任); directed by Higuchi Shoji (樋口章司)	Advocacy of traffic accident prevention
4	April 12, 1942	Police Department, Kyŏnggi-do	Kyŏnggi-do Traffic Safety Association	*Cheerful Paved Road* (KR. *Myŏngnang han p'odo;* JP. *Akarui hodō*), Traffic film	To inform the masses that the cheerfulness (*myŏngnangsŏng*) of the contemporary city depends on the perfect traffic; to inform about the mission and role of the traffic-related institutions and how important they are

Table 2. *Maeil sinbo* articles regarding traffic film production

While traffic films did not constitute a significant part of colonial Korean cinema, an understanding of the general production process and function of this particular genre will help uncover the political and discursive implications of *Sweet Dream*. Traffic films, or traffic education/promotion/accident prevention films, in colonial Korea were, first of all, mainly made at the direction of the Police Department of the Kyŏnggi-do Provincial Government and lent to other

local administrative offices. Traffic film screening events were typically combined with other cultural campaigns held during Traffic Safety Week, which the Police Department sponsored, along with events such as a commemoration ceremony, an exhibition on traffic issues, and a memorial service for traffic officers killed in the line of duty and people who had been killed in automobile accidents. Articles in newspapers from the early 1930s recount that the total number of vehicles in Korea had increased dramatically and deaths and injuries caused by traffic accidents had become a major public safety issue. The traffic film, therefore, came about as a result of the rapid urbanization and increased volume of transportation that followed modernization in colonial Korea, and were indicators of how quickly the colonial government responded.[43]

In light of the police department's sponsorship, it is to be assumed that the content of the films—the scripts or at least the skeletons of the narratives—were composed by the censors or policemen themselves, who took charge of the production, as exemplified in Yi P'il-u's testimony about the officials' story additions during the traffic film shooting. Sato from the Security section, who "composed" *Safety Zone*, and Nishiki Motosada, who wrote the script of *Cheerful*

[43] The popularity of cinema in small cities such as Kŭmsan and Chŏnju in Chŏlla-puk Province or Sariwŏn in Hwanghae Province is noteworthy: there cinema facilities were rare and so the events were held in public spaces (e.g., schools or downtown squares) and crowds ranging from the hundreds to the thousands of both genders and all ages viewed the films, evincing the mobilizing power of the new visual medium.

Paved Road, support this contention.[44] Accordingly, the script of *Sweet Dream* is also thought to have been written by a Kyŏnggi-do government official—in fact, the credits do not feature the name of the scriptwriter, which is very unusual. It is possible that the genesis of the extraordinarily aberrant female character, Ae-sun, could be a result of this different nationality—Japanese—of the scriptwriter, who remained outside the practice of conventional Korean cinema. Secondly, traffic films seem to have largely targeted children, women, and the elderly, who were particularly vulnerable to automobile-related dangers. As shown in a classroom teaching scene in *Sweet Dream* and also from the synopsis of *Cheerful Paved Road*, which I discuss in the following section, traffic films were more focused on teaching children and seniors how to avoid accidents rather than educating drivers, presumably young male adults, about how to drive safely. In *Sweet Dream*, the elementary students in Ae-sun's daughter's classroom are taught by the teacher how to act on the street when encountering moving cars. The teacher draws streets on the blackboard and tells the student that they should not walk in front of cars, with the warning that their parents would be very sad to see their children injured.

[44] Nishiki Motosada was a significant writer in the late colonial period. While working as a contract employee (*shokutaku*; 囑託) of the censorship section in the Police Bureau, he produced *Tuition* (1940) and wrote scripts for films such as *Homeless Angel* (1941), *Mr. Soldier* (1944), and *Children of the Sun* (1945), among many.

Figure. 2-2. Stills from *Sweet Dream*. Chŏng-hŭi is walking in front of a "Ford" car dealer shop. (left); teacher in Chŏng-hŭi's classroom talks about traffic rules. The film's dialogue is in Korean, and Japanese subtitles are superimposed on the right side of the frame. (right)

Traffic education through films was a ubiquitous phenomenon around the globe as the modern era brought speedy urbanization to many developed regions. These films were practically identical thematically, cautioning people—especially children and women—to be careful about the dangerous cars on the street.[45]A U.S. "traffic education film," *The Cost of Carelessness* (1913), features lessons similar to what the Korean traffic film *Stop! Look Around! Go!* might have presented. Made by Universal Film Manufacturing Company with support from

[45] Cecil M. Hepworth's *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900) is an interesting early example as a kind of traffic film. A black comedy trick film, this one-minute-long film goes black right after a car runs directly over the camera. Six intertitles of "!!! – Oh! – Mother – *Will* – Be – Pleased" that appear on the black screen create a comic/learning moment of the one who was run over, substituting a sarcastic expression of pleasure for the moment of tragedy and pain, probably with the meaning that "I may need to be careful about the car accident so mother will not be angry with me."

the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company and Brooklyn Institute for Safety, the film repeats "Stop, Look, Listen" as the rule for teenagers when they cross roads. It is said to be the first film used in the classroom for an educational purpose in the United States. *The Cost of Carelessness* features a real police officer in the classroom to explain the detailed ways to avoid traffic accidents: how to get on and off the streetcar and in and out of automobiles, how to cross the road, how to read traffic lights, and so on.[46] In fact, the traffic safety film in the United States was quite popular during the 1940s and 1960s and continued to be produced in great numbers until the 1980s, among other educational films. The "highway safety films" from the 1960s and 1970s were notorious, as their documentary-style gruesomeness with vivid real accident scenes was intended to shock student audiences. The graphic visual violence of these films was meant to teach teenagers a lesson about safe driving but the result was that students were traumatized, and they were withdrawn from classrooms. [47]

[46] *The Cost of Carelessness*, which had been missing since the early 1910s, was discovered in 2007 and released as a DVD. There are reports that a few other traffic safety films were produced around the same time as this film, but they are currently regarded as missing. Scott Curtis, "Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film, 1900–1934" brochure (National Film Preservation Foundation, 2007).

[47] See Bret Wood's documentary film *Hell's Highway: The True Story of Highway Safety Films* (2003) on the infamous traffic safety films of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S.

Traffic Film: Teaching Public Ethics

Given the cinema's visual capacity to (re)present the reality of the accident and its psychological impact, the films that foreground "traffic" mediate senses of pleasure and fear, and thrill and horror, by envisioning dramas articulated through the dangerous machines and smashed human bodies. Since they combine the matter of moral ethics of the community in which they were produced with the visual, sensual pleasure of the individuals, the texts of traffic safety films get more complicated as they let the viewer join in the joy and regulate/punish that very enjoyment at the same time.

Sweet Dream, and another traffic film, *Cheerful Paved Road* (1942), test the ambivalence of the genre through the metaphor of family. While a mother's desire breaks the daughter's body in *Sweet Dream*, and the ignorance of an old father risks putting his son's (and his family's) well-being in danger in *Cheerful Paved Road.* In the latter, Ch'ang-sin from Kangwŏn Province visits his son, Kwi-bok, who is a taxi driver in Seoul. [48] Driving his cab, the son shows his father around the city but the crowded urban streets frighten the old man from the country. Kwi-bok's explanation about the danger of his job and general traffic

[48] *Cheerful Paved Road* (1942) is believed to be missing. The synopsis is a summary of a more-detailed narrative of the film as published in a Japanese film magazine: "Geki eiga shōkai, *Akarui hodō* (New Feature Film, Bright Paved Road)," *Eiga junpo* 53 (July 11, 1942): 23–24.

rules further heightens his father's fear. Fatigued by all that he has seen and heard, the father falls asleep. Touring the city with his daughter-in-law, Ch'ang-sin sees something fall off of a moving bicycle into the main street and inadvertently jumps into the road to pick it up. Avoiding the old man, a truck suddenly swerves, only to hit a taxi in the next lane. The bleeding taxi driver in the wrecked car turns out to be Kwi-bok. Ch'ang-sin gets panicked and wails at the hospital, thinking that his own son will be disabled. At that moment, he hears his son's voice and wakes up—it was just a bad dream. Next day, during a "Traffic Safety Day," Ch'ang-sin enjoys a bright and peaceful time in Seoul with his son and daughter-in-law. Ch'ang-sin's story dramatizes the matters of road, traffic, and reorganization of the modern city space in a family melodrama form by showing how the father, an inexperienced pedestrian, could cause an unnecessary accident and put his son's life in danger.

The purported goal of the traffic film, however, is to mold the audience into ethical, responsible citizens who comply with traffic laws and regulations so the safety of the self, others, and society as a whole can be preserved. In particular, accidents can create turmoil in the daily flow of a metropolitan area, blocking the flow of the state's materials/supplies and human resources—pivotal for the empire waging war on the continent—and thus need to be prevented. However, confined within the family melodrama in the dichotomy of problematic parents and victimized children, traffic films in Korea not only created an even

more overtly emotional moment of tragedy but also reinstated the family-state ideology as an embedded condition in the life of the modern citizen. Despite their fundamental goal of protecting human labor, national resources, and commodities, the films deceptively cast the issue of safety in the public space as matters among family members so that all the causes and resolutions of the problems can be attributed to the domestic space.

At the intersection of family melodrama and the public agenda, the following questions arise in the filmic narrative: How will the individual's desire and the conflict that occurs in the private nuclear family in the modern era be controlled and disciplined at the level of the state? And inversely, how will the social order, obligations, and roles that facilitate the construction of the nation be applied to and abided by the disorderly persons of the home? How would the modern, women, speed, and machines, and the disciplined subject and ethics, be translated in the melodramatic form, and what would be the specificity when the political specificity of colonial Korea is articulated in all those factors? This is also what *Sweet Dream* fundamentally attempts: the inquiry into how the desire for and pleasure in speed can be harmonized with responsible citizenship.

According to Judith Butler's argument concerning ethics, one's responsibility to the other should be understood as based on a violently, already

given condition, regardless of one's own will.[49] *Sweet Dream*, however, does not inquire the question of responsibility in a broad context of violent modernity, despite its foregrounding of public safety and the accidents caused by the newly arisen modern machinery. Instead, the film reduces the responsibility of speed born by the mechanized civilization to the mere problem of personal gratification and lust, so that a woman possessed by pleasure seeking would admit all the liabilities of the accident and tragedy through her death. What is the communal ethics that the film pursues? What does the colonial rule present as desirable citizenship and responsible subject in this government-sponsored (*kwanje*) film? How does Ae-sun in the film take responsibility for her infidelity and immorality? Or, what exactly is she responsible for? Finally, what kind of enlightenment and disenchantment does the audience—who enjoy, negotiate, and at the same time punish the protagonist—learn as a lesson when leaving the theater?

After Being Uncaged: A Woman on the Street

[49] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 83–110. She argues we should acknowledge the individual's limited agency due to the limit of one's recognition of the world and incomplete knowledge on the relationship between the self and the other.

Figure. 2-3. Stills from the beginning part of *Sweet Dream*

Sweet Dream begins with the camera tilting up from the front yard of Ae-sun's house to a birdcage hanging on the edge of the roof. The beginning and the following sequences appropriate and foreground the transformed 'Nora' motif of *A Doll's House* and the cultural meaning of "a caged bird (KR. *nong chung cho*; JP. *kago no tori*)" in Korean society. In the quarrel with Ae-sun in the beginning sequence, the husband relentlessly details her faults in multiple roles and as multiple subjects: as a housewife who abandons her housework, a mother lacking the love a parent should feel, and someone who says inappropriate things for a "human being." When Ae-sun says, "I am not a caged bird," he retorts, "How can a human being say something like that?" The scene implies his entire rejection of her declaration that she is not a soulless animal but a free-willed human subject.

Referencing *A Doll's House*, a play that heavily influenced Korean intellectuals during the 1920s with a message of calling for one's awakening, *Sweet Dream* rearticulates the original play's cultural implication by contrasting Nora's leaving with the opposite image: confinement. Nora in *A Doll's House* comes to the realization that her husband has never treated her as a human being, an equal, but considers her just a bird, and decides to leave home. The representation of Nora who leaves a hypocritical home as an individual awakened from a delusion is, however, transformed in *Sweet Dream*, in which Ae-sun leaves her home in pursuing a delusion. There are three occasions where a birdcage appears with conscious intentions: in the first sequence when Ae-sun declares she is not a caged bird; in a house yard scene where Chŏng-hŭi weeps, longing for her mother (the birdcage is located in the upper righthand corner of the frame behind the consoling father); and in the hotel when the thieves are captured by the police (one short cut of the birdcage is bluntly inserted in the middle of the arrest sequence). The series of birdcage inserts doubly signifies a birdcage, relying on the cliché of the fettered, to where a housewife should return and where the criminals should be confined, thus identifying the woman outside the home and the felons as the same sort of people. At the same time, via the cultural stereotype of the caged bird—referencing prostitutes' constrained status—in mass media, Ae-sun, who is a woman in the public space, is also positioned as the same kind

of fallen woman.[50] This series of visual appellation, therefore, supports the husband's determined declaration that she is "not a human."

Since its publication in Korean in the early 1920s, *A Doll's House* had been seen not only as a text for women's liberation but also as speaking for the freedom of human beings in general. Ibsen's play was regarded as the work of a modern thinker rather than that of a mere playwright, and it provided such writers as Yŏm Sang-sŏp, Ch'ae Man-sik, and Kim Tong-in with literary motives.[51] Theater performances of the play were continuous until 1934, and included the final staging of the play by Drama Art Study Group (*Kŭk yesul yŏn'guhoe*), one of the most famous theater troupes of colonial Korea. The fictional Nora, and Nora-type women in real life, who were supposed to be embodying a new self reborn outside fraudulent reality, however, were often subject to criticism in

[50] *Kago no tori* (*A Caged Bird*), directed by Matsumoto Eiichi in 1924 in Japan, was based on the success of the song with the same title, the lyrics of which depicts love between a poor student and a prostitute. The commercial success of the song and the following series of *kago no tori* films led to the Ditty (*kouta*) films, popular during the mid-1920s. For the popularity of the film and *kouta* film genre, see Shuhei Hosokawa, "Sketches of Silent Film Sound in Japan: Theatrical Functions of Ballyhoo, Orchestras, and Kabuki Ensembles" in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, ed. Miyao Daisuke (Oxford University Press, 2014), 288–305. A Korean adaptation of *Kago no tori*, *A Caged Bird* (*Nong chung cho*), was made in 1926 by Yi Kyu-sŏl and starred Pok Hye-suk, Yi Kyu-sŏl, and Na Un-gyu.

[51] On the taking up of Ibsen by colonial Korean intellectuals, see Kim Mi-ji, "Inhyŏng ŭi chip Nora ŭi suyong pangsik kwa sosŏl chŏk pyŏnju yangsang," *Han'guk hyŏndae munhak yŏn'gu* 14 (2003): 174–75. Literary works inspired by *A Doll's House* include: Yŏm Sang-sŏp, *Nŏhŭidŭl ŭn muŏsŭl ŏdŏnnŭnya* (*What Have You Earned*), 1924; Kim Tong-in, *Munŭng cha ŭi anhae* (*Wife of an Incompetent*), 1930; and Ch'ae Man-sik, *Inhyŏng ŭi chip ŭl nawasŏ* (*After Leaving a Doll's House*), 1933.

Japan and Korea at both the discursive level and in their lives as irresponsible women who abandoned the duties of motherhood. For example, the Japanese feminist intellectual Hiratsuka Raichō condemned Nora's leaving as an irresponsible act for a mother in her writing.[52] The two most famous Korean New Women, often referred to as "Korean Noras" by the media, Pak In-dŏk and Na Hye-sŏk, were frequently criticized as inadequate mothers in the early and mid-1930s because, according to the accusations of media, they abandoned their children in pursuit of personal freedom and career advancement, respectively.[53] In

[52] An excerpt from Hiratsuka Raichō's writing reads: "Dear Nora: Japanese women are unable to believe that a woman like you could be the mother of three children—a woman who is not just a fourteen or fifteen year old girl but completely acting out of instinct and blindness....Your slamming the door behind you was truly powerful but once you set foot outside home, you find nothing but darkness....One day you will understand that the husband and children you abandoned are all yourself. Indeed, you will see that all things in this world have been cheated by your own heart." H, "Nora san ni" (Dear Nora), *Seitō* 2, no. 1 (January 1912): 133–41. The second *Seitō* copy includes *A Doll's House* special in the appendix, which takes up 109 pages out of the total of 173. Hiratsuka and other four *Seitō* participants contributed pieces on the novel and a few literary reviews were submitted.

[53] Pak In-dŏk, a female writer and activist, moved to the United States to study in 1925, leaving her daughters with her husband in Seoul. The news about Pak after her return to Korea in 1931 focused largely on her being a divorcée and mother who would not care for her children, rather than reporting on her social acts as a rare female intellectual of the time who had earned a higher-education degree in a Western country. An article in *Chosŏn ilbo* from October 11, 1931 ("Kwiguk han Pak In-dŏk yŏsa kich'ŏng yŏnhaphoe e sunsi") states, "Pak In-dŏk, who just returned, started working at the Christian Youth Association. Why won't she look after her family? Two daughters are waiting for her with tears." Other reports from the print media include "Kajŏng esŏ sahoe ro: Chosŏn i naŭn hyŏndae chŏk nora Pak In-dŏk" (From Home to Society: Modern Nora of Korea, Pak In-dŏk), *Sin tonga* (December 1931); "Tora oji anihanŭn ŏmŏni Pak In-dŏk" (Pak In-dŏk, a Mother Who Would Not Return Home), *Cheilsŏn* (July 1932); and "Chosŏn ŭi Nora ro chip ŭl naon Pak In-dŏk ssi" (Pak In-dŏk, Korean Nora Who Left *A Doll's House*), *Samch'ŏlli* (January 1933). Na Hye-sŏk was even more severely criticized for her allegedly "wrong" behavior as a mother. She had drawn illustrations for the serialization of *A Doll's House* in *Maeil sinbo* (January 25 through April 3, 1921) and had composed lyrics of a song of the same title. After reading Na's "Confession about My Divorce," which detailed her infidelity with Ch'oe Rin, a religious leader, one

light of the influence of *A Doll's House* in Korea, the featuring of a Nora-type character in a Korean film is not outlandish, yet it is curious that the adaptation occurred as late as 1936. It can be seen as the cinematic take on real social figures and events, such as Na Hye-sŏk's "Confession about My Divorce," as Kim Soyoung has pointed out, and other female public figures' nontraditional life choices. However, just as the New Woman discourse was, for Korean male elites, driven by concerns beyond women's issues, the screen character of Ae-sun was deployed by the colonial rulers for purposes beyond the referencing of a real-life celebrity.

Sweet Dream, dealing with a distinctive woman figure whose character is constructed out of the most debased New Woman images, appeared belatedly in the mid-1930s when the fervor of the New Woman discourse was waning in the print media, as symbolized in discontinuation of the two popular magazine that had led the discussion, *Sin yŏsŏng* (*New Woman*; 1923 – 1926, 1931 – 1934) and

female reader wrote an open letter to Na that was published in *Sin kajŏng*. The reader is especially outraged concerning the children of Na: "I cut out your 'Confession' pages and threw it into the fire.... As a mere ordinary housewife, in the unfortunate case that a housewife of a family should have let her children read your 'Confession,' it is my intention to remove the memory of your wrong sentences from their pure brains, if I can ever do it.… A needless revelation is a bad habit and abnormal. Moreover, you are a mother of four children—don't you think that you must halt your exhibitionist, crazy act? While making a self-revelation, you also made our hearts jump as parents, who raise our little kids, by giving an irresponsible account.… You will lose face; but if your four children ever read what you published, their sadness and despair will be deeper than yours because of the fact that they cannot respect their own mother." The excerpt is from "Na Hye-sŏk ssi ege" (To Na Hye-sŏk - From a Woman in P'yŏngyang), *Sin kajŏng* (October 1934).

Pyŏlgŏn'gon (*New World*; 1926 – 1934).[54] The public rhetoric concerning the creation of different Korean women who fit the civilized and enlightened new society had welcomed an autonomous and awakened Nora's determination to leave a feudalistic, hypocritical family institution initially, but that determination soon became a target of ridicule and condemnation due to journalistic sensationalism, renewed conservatism with the onset of war, and the lack of material support for the practice of feminist movement in real life. Although the legacy of the New Woman discourse remained influential in following eras in Korea, with regard to pivotal issues such as women's education, sexuality, love, marriage, and motherhood, the military politics beginning in the early 1930s pushed the issues regarding women's roles in a totally different direction from before.

Sweet Dream malevolently exhibits only the most scandalous aspect of the New Woman phenomenon in colonial Korea: the exaggerated descriptions of nontraditional females in popular media. Although the reconstruction of the

[54] *Sin yŏsŏng* (New Woman; Sept. 1923–Oct. 1926, Jan. 1931–Aug. 1934, 73 volumes in total) and *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* (1926–1934, 73 volumes) were the two most prominent journals dealing with the New Woman issue. *Sin yŏsŏng* became the representative woman's magazine after *Sin yŏja* (New Woman; 1920, total 4 volumes), an early journal run by the most significant and radical female intellectuals in the modern era, such as Kim Wŏn-ju, Na Hye-sŏk, Pak In-dŏk, and Kim Myŏng-sun. *Sin yŏsŏng* functioned as the forum in which New Woman and feminist discourses in Korea were vigorously developed and debated from the 1920s through the mid-1930s. However, as female writers were largely excluded from the discussion in *Sin yŏsŏng* by the mid-1920s, the New Woman issues came to be dominated by male writers and intellectuals, yielding male-centered discourses.

Korean nation and the enlightenment movement were amply debated in the New Woman discourse, the film deliberately deals in what was far from the core of the very discourse. That is, in essence Ae-sun as a character is almost discordant with what the New Woman discourse eagerly had aspired to in the early stages of colonial rule. Ae-sun contrasts sharply with another New Woman-type heroine, Ok-pun, in *Fisherman's Fire* (*Ŏhwa*), a Korean melodrama made in 1938 by An Ch'ŏl-yŏng.[55] A typical country-city story that describes the city as a vicious, dangerous space, especially for women from the countryside, *Fisherman's Fire* not only features a rural girl victimized by a scheming city villain but also presents a smart and independent modern girl, Ok-pun, who adapts well to the urban environment and takes advantage of the given opportunities for women in the modern era. Appearing in either a modern outfit or a shortened skirt of *hanbok*, traditional Korean clothing, Ok-pun works as a bus conductor, makes a living on her own, and is smart enough to reject the ill-purposed attempt at seduction by a rich man. Compared to the characterization of Ok-pun as a sound

[55] *Fisherman's Fire* (*Ŏhwa*; dir. An Ch'ŏl-yŏng, 1938) depicts an innocent country girl's ordeals and downfall in the capital, Seoul. When her fisherman father never comes back from the sea after a stormy night, In-sun is faced with the prospect of becoming a concubine of the town's greedy old man due to her father's debt. She moves to Seoul to make money with the help of Ch'ŏl-su, the wealthy man's son, but soon finds out she has just become a sexual toy for him. Escaping from him, In-sun tries to make a living after moving in with Ok-pun, a friend from her hometown, who has settled down as a working woman, but she does not find a job. Finally In-sun becomes a *kisaeng*, a courtesan (or prostitute), and tries to commit suicide out of shame. Fortunately she is rescued by her old lover and returns safely to her home village.)

and savvy modern woman, the extremity in the depiction of Ae-sun implies that it was based on a certain populist agenda that depicted the Korean New Woman very negatively.

Ae-sun in *Sweet Dream* is an exact cinematic embodiment of the image of Modern Girl (*modŏn kŏl*) in colonial Korean popular media, which Hyaeweol Choi summarizes as "frivolous, vainglorious and promiscuous."[56] The protagonist carelessly abandons her duty, indulges in sexual freedom, and is prodigal with money, luxuriating in expensive goods and dressing up. The idea of the Modern Girl in Korea, the definition of which indicates nontraditional and westernized women in appearance and behavior and which oftentimes was used interchangeably with the term New Woman, was not, however, founded on substantial examples in reality, as many scholars have pointed out. The material conditions of colonial Korea never allowed a significant group of financially independent and sexually autonomous group of females to emerge significantly, as happened in Western countries.[57] Both the New Woman and the Modern Girl, according to the sociologist Kim Su-jin, were constituted more along imagined

[56] Hyaeweol Choi, *New Women in Colonial Korea: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10.

[57] See Choi, *New Women*, 6, and Kim Su-jin, *Sin yŏsŏng, kŭndae ŭi kwaing: singminji chosŏn ŭi sin yŏsŏng tamnon kwa chendŏ chŏngch'i 1920–1934* (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2009), 450–51.

notions concerning enlightened female subjects through which colonial male intellectuals' anxiety about and aspiration of the modernized and civilized nation were negotiated. As was the case in British India and semicolonial China, the imagery of the New Woman in Korea was a site of debate not on the conspicuous phenomena of modern women's lives and their social and political condition, but instead on the questions of oldness and newness, premodern and modern, and the uncivilized and enlightened.[58] Therefore, the New Woman discourse in colonial Korea functioned as a sphere in which the national enlightenment project was fervently debated, projected, and negotiated. "Questions about New Woman discourse [in Korea] were beyond just the roles and norms of women," according to Kim; yet "the discourse was a space for the enlightenment of people—represented as women—in the underdeveloped Korea, and also a place through which the identity of the colonial Korean society and the direction of its change were estimated in relation to the experiences of 'modernity.'"[59]

In adapting Nora, *Sweet Dream* displays her rather than explores her. Is Ae-sun an autonomous subject who is self-motivated and pursuing desire? Sadly,

[58] See Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Questions," *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 237, and Shu-Mei Shih, "Gender, Race, and Semicolonialism: Liu Na'ou's Urban Shanghai Landscape," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 935.

[59] Kim Su-jin, *Sin yŏsŏng,* 455–56.

she is nothing but a soulless object; the audience observes her in a specific place doing something, but there is no attempt to generate an internal picture of her. Until the very last sequence, when she becomes distressed at nearly having caused her daughter's death and expresses regret for her actions, the audience is never invited to witness moments that lay bare her flow of thoughts, feelings, or motivations. It is evident, even though most of the running time depicts Ae-sun on screen, that virtually no montage (i.e., shot/reverse shot), close-ups, or shot from her point of view exists that can explain her inner world, which is contrasted with instances when the inward anxiety of other characters (e.g., her husband, daughter, and even the thief) is easily detected through such cinematic language. Therefore, the display of Ae-sun's whereabouts and behavior as the acts of a kind of mindless machine is by the director's meticulously intended choice; the film is not interested in exploring the soul of a modern woman, because it is not a film about what it means to be an independent, self-determined female in Korean society.

Regulating Senses and Pleasure

The protagonist Ae-sun, who might be perceived as an active subject on the surface of the film's synopsis, is, in fact, not a subject who possesses a dominating perspective and vision in the actual film. Ae-sun floats around every

corner of the city exploring the various public spaces, yet she does not observe and participate in the city from her own position and subjectivity—she is just seen. She, instead of walking through the city as if she were a detective as the flâneuse does, is confined to the spaces of a department store, hair salon, hotel, and theater only to become a spectacle. Her belonging to those public spots consists of being targeted by a pickpocket in the store, witnessed by her husband's colleague in the hotel, displayed in the theater to several male audience members surrounding her, and revealed to the national reading public by being reported on in a newspaper as a "lady of luxury." As Deborah Nord points out, "for women observers of the urban scene, ... femaleness itself constitutes an object of curiosity and subverts her ability to act either as the all-seeing eye or the investigator of public life." Ae-sun's position exemplifies a modern woman's position in which "to see without being seen, or to be seen without becoming a spectacle is rendered impossible."[60]

[60] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 240.

Figure. 2-4. Change of Ae-sun in *Sweet Dream* at a hair salon (left); in the hospital (right)

The absence of her vision and perspective is significant for Ae-sun in multiple layers as the instant symptom of Ae-sun's punishment—the taking of poison—is deprivation of her vision in the final sequence at the hospital. She, who had been able to adorn herself so as to look perfectly beautiful, quickly loses the ability to manage her appearance and goes blind. In a grotesque look, she repeatedly calls for Chŏng-hŭi; this scene of distress lasts for a long time, consisting of multiple overlaps of close-ups of her face to carefully express her agony and tragic regret. The visual blockage of Ae-sun can be, on the one hand, a punishment for her inability to see what is truly important in her life—her daughter's happiness and safety—and the destruction of the sight with which she indulged in the pleasures of the modern world, on the other. The suspension of vision in particular is a sign of denial and warning concerning the modernity that

she has fallen for. Among her fantasies of a luxurious life, sexual autonomy, and indulgence in individualistic freedom, her main delusion is related to visual enchantment with modernity: the splendors of the modern city, enjoying the performance of a male dancer, the viewing of fast-moving scenery from a moving car, and her loss of sight as redemption. These would not have come into her life if she were blind.

The metaphor of sight and spectatorship is especially clear in the traffic safety education scene in Chŏng-hŭi's classroom. The teacher's account includes the simple message that all should be careful around moving cars so that their parents will not be hurt by their children's accident and injuries. After the teacher speaks, a student asks if anyone in her family is blind and says that the other day she saw a blind man standing still by the big street. The teacher responds that each of the students in the classroom has two good eyes, and so they have no excuse for not being as careful as the blind man. At first glimpse, the relationship of a man with a visual disability to traffic safety education is not clear—however, through the irony that the blind man is better at avoiding being hit by a car when crossing the road in a big city, the film asserts that visual disability is never a handicap in dealing with modernity. Instead, the blocked sight is a safety device that checks the harmful modernity that has caused Ae-sun's downfall, Chong-hui's near-fatal injury, and the subsequent destruction of a family. It is temerity,

which the blind man does not have, that has killed Ae-sun by preventing her from being cautious.

Arguing that the film tries to teach that being blind is sometimes safer than being able to see, for disability requires vigilance, runs the risk of ignoring the pleasure of audiences—in particular, of female viewers—who ambivalently participate in Ae-sun's thrill. However, the montage and camera work of *Sweet Dream* is what makes the (female) audience member's position ambiguous because it is uninterested in exploring the protagonist's flow of consciousness and interferes rather completely with the viewer's possible identification with her. Moreover, Ae-sun is not a completely unethical villainess; she is at one point transformed into a model citizen when she learns of her boyfriend's true identity—he is a thief—and reports him to police with no hesitation. Her being witness to a crime reminds us of what Tom Gunning via Benjamin explains is the function of the flâneuse of modern cities (who in many cases was a hooker): a detective. Ben Singer also identifies the role of metropolitan New Woman writers, born during the process of the American public sphere's transformation into a space for women at the turn of the twentieth century, as being new detective-like figures.[61] Can we thus understand Ae-sun, with her keen sense for identifying

[61] Tom Gunning, "From Kaleidoscope to the X-ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and *Traffic in Souls* (1913)," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 4 (1997): 25–61. Ben Singer,

criminals, as the Korean version of those modern female detectives? Maybe not. It is more plausible that the police authorities, the producer of the film, asked *Sweet Dream*'s director to insert a public message that "when people see a thief, they should report it to police."[62] By transfiguring her ability as a detective who possesses secret knowledge of a city into that of a citizen who cooperates with the colonial rulers, Ae-sun experiences an ephemeral status change to a good citizen. The logical fissure of the character occurs during the process, but this might be the fate of many propaganda *kwanje* films, in which the colonial agenda was awkwardly inserted into the narrative of private individual nationals.

Train Leaves On Time: Traffic Accident and Punishment

Sweet Dream conveys dual opposing images about the modern, and Ae-sun's performance embodies the essential ambiguousness to which they testify. Ae-sun is, on the one hand, enchanted by the nontraditional and allegedly decadent values

"Female Power in the Serial Queen Melodrama: An Etiology of an Anomaly," in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 163–93.

[62] Yi P'il-u, a technician at Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio, receives an order from the police officials to "include a scene of playing with fire, too" in a title-unknown traffic film he was making before *Sweet Dream*'s production in the same film studio. It was "to underscore that both fire and automobiles are dangerous," according to the policeman Yi was dealing with. For Yi's accounts about the intervention of police in the traffic film productions, Han'guk yesul yŏn'guso, *Yi Yŏng-il ŭi Han'guk yonghwasa rŭl wihan chŭngŏnnok 3: Yu Chang-san, Yi Kyŏng-sun, Yi P'il-u, Yi Ch'ang-gŭn p'yŏn* (Seoul: Sodo, 2003), 253–63.

of the West such as consumerism, vanity, and women's mobility and advance into public space that modernity has brought (or been argued to have brought) to Korea. On the other, she is described as a failed modern subject who is unable to react in a timely fashion to the standardization of daily life that the modern capitalist system requires. After reporting the thieves to the police, she heads to Seoul Station by taxi to catch up with the train her favorite dancer has boarded. Upon realizing that the train has already departed Seoul Station, she asks the taxi driver to speed up to go to the train's next stop, Yongsan Station. Made reckless by her desire, she orders the driver to go even faster, violating the speed limit, only to hit Chŏng-hŭi, who was carelessly crossing the boulevard.

Mary Ann Doane argues time standardization was promoted during the modern era to enable the expansion of capitalism and industrialization. The new technology of representation, such as the cinema, was a tool to help organize and control contingency so that it could help train people to accept the violent process of rationalization that is an inevitable step in the development of capitalist society as bearable.[63] Yet, the women with a faulty sense of temporality in cinema cannot keep to the scheduled timetable and ignore traffic rules, thereby hindering the rationalization of capitalist time management. The women in melodrama films

[63] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 11.

frequently cannot conform to the rigid demands of standard time, with the result being tremendous tragedy, as exemplified not only in *Sweet Dream* but also in *Chosŏn Strait* (1942), in which the female protagonist, played by the same actress Mun, misses the train of her lover so that he leaves for the battlefield without knowing his son has been born. Ae-sun, therefore, is a nonmodern subject in reality who, even though she knows how to indulge in modernity, cannot keep pace with the modern, public time that is pivotal to the social order and the organic circulation of capital. A series of tragic events—her daughter's accident and her own death—is the result of such inability.

Sweet Dream, in this way, reaches its most rational conclusion: the necessary removal of Ae-sun from the modern world. The film suggests this in order to achieve the modern sense of an organized timeline and contingency and to avoid the failure to follow standards, which would be contrary to the public interest. This outcome blocks smooth traffic and distribution and disturbs the proper circulation of the state. It is especially unacceptable for a nation that has just launched a long-term war that a traffic accident should check societal mobility and bring about material and human labor damage. In particular, the traffic film is supposed to demonstrate that "the good cheer (*myŏngnangsŏng*) of [the] modern city depends on perfect traffic" and "the mission and role of the

traffic institution is huge under the current [political] situation."[64] The punishment of Ae-sun, whose personality is even more tainted by her lack of motherly instinct and morality, becomes therefore a very reasonable end as a conclusion. The perfectness of it, the end of a traffic film sponsored by the police, contrasts sharply with *Military Train* (1938), made by Koreans, in which a spy redeems his sin by throwing himself in front of a military train. Considering that the spy's act causes the train to stop and disturbs the war mobilization as a result, *Military Train* can never be logically rationalized as war propaganda.

Regarding Ae-sun's death, it also should be underscored that it is a death Ae-sun chooses, as a newly awakened subject. The accident "reveals something important that we would not otherwise be able to perceive," and Ae-sun grasps an important fact of her life she would not otherwise without the accident.[65] Here the moment of accident functions as a time to re-create a new subject—a person who fits wartime society. Paul Virilio explains the traffic accident as a moment of "fleeting insurrection" in which one, who was a kind of "zombie" in a seatbelt after losing his subjectivity, having submitted himself to the ideology of safety,

[64] "Kyot'ong yŏnghwa Pak Ki-ch'ae kamdok *Myŏngnang han p'odo* kŭm 12-il ch'waryŏng kaeshi," *Maeil sinbo*, April 12, 1942.

[65] Sylvere Lotringer and Paul Virilio, *The Accident of Art*, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotext[e], 2005), 63.

realizes how dangerous it has been to be in a vehicle that runs at a violent speed.[66] Virilio's revelation of the fraudulence of safety ideology, which conceals the danger of speed, is violently adapted to *Sweet Dream*'s logic that Ae-sun, a "zombie" of delusion and desire outside the home space, is reborn by the enlightening moment through her daughter's accident and regains her correct consciousness. She decides to drink poison to take responsibility for her daughter's fatal injury. She is about to be killed by her husband, who brings a gun to the hospital to murder her—yet it is she who voluntarily ends her life. Although the husband's revenge could serve as a rightful and logical punishment of her in the film narrative, she has to take away her breathe on her own because this is the more proper way to take responsibility for her misconduct. The grassroots voluntarism of death for social purification and spiritual rearmament is clearly promoted in the film at the birth of a fascist state.

Through the form of the traffic film, which deploys an accident as its dramatic climax, *Sweet Dream* suggests the new imperial citizenship that fully extinguishes such social evils as sexual license, extravagance, and vanity, and orders Koreans to be reborn as responsible subjects. The moment of accident that destroys everything is the very moment of rebirth of all. As such, at the moment

[66] Paul Virilio, *Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy* (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), trans. Michael Degener, 107-8, 167.

of her daughter's near death, Ae-sun is reborn as a new citizen who fits perfectly with fascist wartime politics.

Film Policy, Spiritual Rearmament, and the Imperial Zeitgeist of 1936

Again, it should be asked why *Sweet Dream* relates the narrative of the deviant life of "a debauched woman" and what it attempted to teach. We have observed that colonial rule, which created the traffic film, in fact envisioned a different theme from the original enlightenment goal through the elaboration of narrative strategies such as the appropriation of cultural clichés and the otherization of the main character by cinematically preventing viewers from being absorbed into it. The traffic film is not interested in rendering a teaching function in the way that *Cost of Carelessness* does. The traffic accident in Sweet Dream is just a device to make a tragedy of melodramatic contingency. The ideology of people's safety that the traffic film is supposed to present serves as the foundation of fascist society that is about to arrive.

The Motion Picture Film Regulation Rule demonstrates the colonial government's effort to restrict representation of Western modernity in its cultural sector. The Japanese empire, in its preparation for the long-term war necessary for the unceasing expansion in the continent, implemented policies to check the

influx of Western culture, with the regulation rule being one component. Shimizu Shigeo, the chair of the Book Department in the Government-General in Korea from 1931 to 1935, enacted the rule after coming back from his trip to Europe in the early 1930s. He was greatly impressed by the film quota system of European countries, which was said to have been put in place to "resist ~~the~~ American culture" and decided to establish a similar legal framework in Korea, which included the first screen quota in the empire.[67] The rule, promulgated in August 1934, aimed to gradually reduce the ratio of foreign films shown in Korean theaters. Because most of the foreign films were from Hollywood, the reduction meant the control of American cinema. The rule limited the total length of foreign cinema shows in a theater to three-fourths of the total screening film length by the end of 1935, two-thirds by 1936, and a half by 1937. According to his memoir, Shimizu feared the harm that the Korean film market could engender with its overwhelming infatuation with Hollywood cinema. He speculated that it was the "nationalistic sentiments" of Koreans that brought about the extreme ignorance of and hostility toward Japanese films among Korean filmgoers.[68] He writes that the foreign, Western, or more specifically, Hollywood films are "opposite to our

[67] Naiseishi kenkyūkai, *Naiseishi kenkyū shiryō dai 74, 75 shū - Shimizu Shigeo-shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo: Naiseishi kenkyūkai, 1968-69), 9.

[68] Shimizu Shigeo, "Chōsen ni okeru eiga seisaku ni tsuite," *Keisatsu kenkyū* 6, no. 5 (May 1935): 24.

national character" and "incompatible with [the] Japanese spirit." He asserts with hostility toward Hollywood that "educators and social workers [had] lamented [that] American films [had] ruined the national education and its low-quality and vulgar custom[s] [had] permeated into British society and damaged our traditional code of a gentleman."[69]

In its essence, a regulation of American cinema, the Regulation Rule provides a broader context of how and why a film like *Sweet Dream* was produced by a local colonial government. The transformation of the film law, from Motion Picture Film Censorship Rule (1926) to the Regulation Rule (1934), meant, as Yi Hwa-jin has pointed out, the redirection of the empire's basic principle of film control, from censoring "a film that should not be shown" to promoting "a film that should be shown" to the public.[70] *Sweet Dream*, from the perspective of a colonial official like Shimizu, had to be made as a warning about the spiritual corruption and decadence of Korean society that would result from exposure to Western customs and its base mind, a mindset that was irreconcilable with Japaneseness, in particular as represented by Hollywood movies. Therefore,

[69] Ibid, 27–28.

[70] Yi Hwa-jin, "Tu cheguk sai p'illŭm chŏnjaeng ŭi chŏnya," *Sai* 15 (2013): 49.

a traffic film like *Sweet Dream* should be read as bespeaking the anxiousness of a colony in an empire that was about to embark on total war.

Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* speculate that the ostensible goal of the enlightenment project of the modern era was to liberate human beings from myth and fear of nature with knowledge and reason, but it instead fomented the domination of one group of people by another in the end. Cinema was the most influential medium of modern times among those in the "culture industry," a term coined by the authors and with which they critically engage as being a mechanism similar to the factory system. A "traffic film," *Sweet Dream*, was planned as such an "enlightenment" (*kyemong*) project to urge Koreans to become aware of the "delusion" (*mimong*) of Western modernity through a portrayal of a woman, the new and modern subject of the changing society. The enlightenment program, which endeavored to restore human beings to the position of masters of the world by resorting to reason, conspired with other political designs right at the moment of the "disenchantment of the world" to dominate others. *Sweet Dream* is an example of the phenomenon in which colonialism and wartime fascism appropriate the goal of the enlightenment movement to give birth to spiritual disenchantment. The film, therefore, should be comprehended as a political text in the wider ideological scheme of Japanese colonial power that attempted to break with Western and capitalist values, consumerism, and modernity and to reinstill

Japanese spiritism, or spiritual rearmament, in citizens, in the preliminary phase of prolonged war.

Chapter 3

Rejected Sincerity: The False Logic of Becoming Imperial Citizens in Volunteer Films

Confronting the Problems of Capital and the Market

> Kim Tong-hwan: Do you think Korean cinema can be internationally circulated? I mean, can it be accepted by the foreign markets?
>
> Yi Myŏng-u: I definitely think so.… To make a profit, Korean cinema firstly should seek markets where Koreans live, such as Tokyo, Osaka, [and] Nagoya in Japan, and Xinjing, … Beijing, [and] Shanghai in China. Advancing on to North America would pave the way for the future of Korean cinema …
>
> Na Un-gyu: Targeting Tokyo, Osaka, Xingjing, and Shanghai is good, but I think we could target and penetrate the totally new foreign markets in such countries as England, America, Germany, and France, etc. To make this happen, we need to make a big technical leap in filmmaking. If we make films, based on the Korean character and atmosphere, playing up the common human feelings that can appeal to everybody in the world, I think we definitely can enter the global market.[71]

[71] "Myŏng paeu myŏng kamdok i moyŏ Chosŏn yŏnghwa rŭl malham," *Samch'ŏlli* (November 1936): 97–98.

By 1936, a strange prospect dominated the Korean film industry—that it would finally shake off its malaise and commence to grow, based on its newfound technical capacity. The above roundtable discussion of filmmakers held in November 1936 shows the buoyant atmosphere of the film business of the time. Where Yi Myŏng-u, an outstanding cameraman, expresses his confidence that at the very least Korean films can be exported to Japan and China, the imagination of Na Un-gyu, who was the most influential director and actor of the era prior to his death in 1937, has the film markets of European countries in its sights. Far from the reality that Korean cinema at that point had not even won over the Japanese, their impossible and frothy dream only exemplifies to what extent an insubstantial optimism pervaded the film industry. Sin Kyŏng-gyun, a film director, also marveled at the remarkable optimism among his colleagues, saying "[I]t is true that the current Korean film world is extraordinarily vibrant. I am truly glad about it. Compared to three years ago, when I had just returned from Japan, tremendous progress is being made."[72] The film critic Ch'oe Chang, on the other hand, tried to view the state of things more objectively. In an article that examined the current global film markets, he noted the size of the film industries of America and Japan, industries that were able to generate much, much higher frequencies of theater visits in their home countries in comparison than the

[72] Sin Kyŏng-gyun, "Hyŏndae yŏnghwa e issŏsŏ ŭi sentimentallijŭm ŭi sŭngni," *Chosŏn yŏnghwa* 1 (1936): 120–21.

Korean film industry could in Korea. Yet, Ch'oe, too, is positive in picturing Korean cinema's future: he sees the possibility of the film market's growth as well as of an increase in the number of Korean film productions, if for no other reason than the Korean film market at that time was so underdeveloped.[73]

The main reason for this unprecedented confidence on the part of these Korean film professionals about their future was the implementation of the domestic film quota system by the Government-General in 1934, which limited the proportion of non-Japanese films shown in Korean theaters to half of the total annual screening film length by 1937. While the film quota met with strong opposition from distributors of Western cinema, the popularity of which dwarfed that of domestic films in Korea, the Korean film industry, operating with little margin for error, saw it as a great chance to expand their business. Reflecting the heady atmosphere, the era saw the establishment of one big film company, Chosŏn Film Company, and the expansion of another, the Koryŏ Film Association. The entry into foreign film markets was, actually, the most significant matter to resolve, as the cost of talkie productions was high. What the directors in the roundtable were debating was a dream with little chance of

[73] Citing multiple sources that reported in the mid-1930s about popularity of American films, Ch'oe laments that a Korean visits a film theater only 0.3 time a year while Americans saw 40–50 films a year and the Japanese 3–4. The limited number of film-viewing venues was, in his opinion, the main reason for this. See Ch'oe Chang, "Yŏnghwa kiŏp ŭi changnae," *Chosŏn ilbo*, June 19, 1936.

coming true; it appears to have expressed their desperation to find new markets so that Korean cinema could survive. Their dream, however, was undermined by the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, which pushed Korean cinema in a totally different direction. The major directors and producers, most of whom had gained experience in filmmaking in Japanese film studios, quickly came to the conclusion that patriotic films celebrating volunteers, would prove Koreans' loyalty to the empire and thus be embraced by the colonial regime.

This chapter explores the so-called 'volunteer' films—*Volunteer* (1940) and *You and I* (1941)—in the early phase of wartime in which Korean filmmakers sought new markets for their output via a collaboration with the colonial rulers. I examine the dubious 'sincerity' of Korean directors in their image making of devoted imperial Korean youth. The evidence for this sincerity consists of the cinematic characterization via diegesis and the public statement by major figures in the Korean film industry. Whether or not their patriotism was genuine, it is undeniable that Koreans came forward to make war-mobilization films that expressed their eagerness to become legitimate Japanese citizens by serving alongside imperial soldiers. The very desire of Koreans to be equal to the Japanese in this fashion, however, created problems for the narratives of these films and, as a result, compromised their ability to draw well in both box-office record and criticism. Both *Volunteer* (1940) and *You and I* (1941) met with very disappointing responses. Depicting a gloomy lower-class Korean man's

frustration and his miraculous breakthrough after enlisting in the army, *Volunteer* was given an ambitious release in Japan in the hopes that it could establish a foothold for Korean cinema in Japan, only to be criticized harshly and fail at the box office. A more upbeat volunteer film sponsored by the army, *You and I*, details the ideals of the "*naisen ittai* (Japan and Korea are one)" campaign through interracial marriages between Korean soldiers and Japanese women, but it, too, met with an unfavorable response. Korean-made volunteer films in general, as exemplified by these films, were candid concerning Korean social mobility in the imperial order being out of the question from the point of view of Japanese society.

From the first showing of Western sound films in the Umigwan and Tansŏngsa Theaters in January 1930, how to make the switch from silent to talkie, which would necessitate changes in the film production system as well as the renovation of screening facilities, became the main issue faced by the industry.[74] The staggeringly high production cost of sound film compared to that of silent film caused the technological transition to the former to lag in Korea. The film

[74] During the colonial era until the early 1940s, film theaters in Korea were clearly demarcated into two groups: those mainly for Korean viewers, in which Hollywood and Korean films were the primary fare—the so-called "Korean-theater (*Chosŏnin sangsŏlgwan*)"— and those for Japanese residents, the "Japanese-theater (*Ilbonin sangsŏlgwan*)," which screened Japanese films for the most part along with some Western films.

scholar Yi Hwa-jin asserts that the emergence of the talkie defined the character of colonial Korean cinema from 1930 and onwards, as the sound films disturbed the theaters' function as a common space for Koreans and propelled Korean cinema's submission to the imperial propagandist project.[75] The difficulty of industrial retooling, which was due to a lack of capital, led not only to a delay in the making of talkies—in other words, technological synchronization with world cinema—but also to the capitulation to the colonialist agenda.

The two chief concerns within the Korean film industry in the mid-1930s were the export of films (*such'ul*)—more precisely, the shipment (*ich'ul*) to other parts of the Japanese empire, as Korea legally belonged to Japan—and the so-called corporationalization (*kiŏphwa*), through which the shoestring film production business gained working capital and decent infrastructure. The change arose as a result of the implementation of the Motion Picture Film Regulation Rule (*hwaltong sajin yŏnghwa ch'wich'e kyuch'ik*). It was enacted to reduce Hollywood domination of the Korean film market by cutting the total annual screening time of foreign films in theaters by half over the following three years. The film quota, restrictions regarding films of a particular national origin, impacted the Korean-theaters firstly, which screened Western films almost

[75] Yi Hwa-jin, *Sori ŭi chŏngch'i: singminji Chosŏn ŭi kŭkchang kwa cheguk ŭi kwan'gaek* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa, 2016).

exclusively and never showed Japanese films. In 1932, for example, foreign films accounted for 62.6% of total screening time with Japanese cinema accounting for 32.9% and Korean 4.4%.[76] As the rule went in effect, the distinction, in terms of the national origin of films shown, between Korean and Japanese theaters began to break down; moreover, the former saw their box-office receipts drop as they lost Korean viewers, who clearly preferred Western films to Japanese.

In the new climate, Korean directors and producers sought a new path for film productions: a few directors, such as Yun Pong-ch'un, decide to downsize their production costs and adopt an "entrepreneur" mind-set to survive. In his diary entry of December 31, 1937, Yun writes about his plans for continuing to direct films:

> The government banned imports of foreign films and promoted viewership of domestic films after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. Thus, more domestic films should definitely have been made, but the number of films produced here was only four to five. Moreover, our filmmakers in this shoestring industry try to make big-budget movies and hope they can produce art films... So I decided to adopt the following outlook for a while. I need to think not only as an actor but also as an investor, a theater operator, and a director in order to make films and keep the budgets reasonable… I will shorten the period of shooting and use cheaper film stock and make a film that can easily make money… If this continues and a healthy amount of capital (lit. "full capital (*wanjŏn*

[76] *Kokusai eiga nenkan* (Tokyo: Kokusai eiga tsūshinsha, 1934). From Reprint: *Eiga nenkan - shōwa hen I*, ed. Iwamoto Kenji and Makino Mamoru (Tokyo: Nihon tosho senta, 1994).

> *han chabon*)") is accumulated, we'll be able to keep producing films. In other words, after we have achieved a level of financial stability and provided opportunities for growth for those in the film industry, I will turn wholeheartedly (*wanjŏn han t'aedo*) [to make films that I want] when the perfect opportunity (*wanjŏn han kihoe*) arises. (Emphasis mine) [77]

Yun Pong-ch'un here is charting a path for filmmaking to cope with the skyrocketing budgets of sound cinema. He intends to shrink the magnitude of his

[77] "Yun Pong-ch'un Ilgi 1935-1937," accessed 2017, https://search.i815.or.kr/Main/Main.jsp. Yun's journal (from January 1, 1935 to December 31, 1937) has been digitalized and is archived on the website of The History of Korean Independence Movement Online. The longer journal accounts of this particular date read: "It has been more than a decade since the Korean film industry was established ... but nothing has changed.... The government banned imports of foreign films and promoted viewership of domestic films after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. Thus, more domestic films should definitely have been made, but the number of films produced here was only four to five. Moreover, our filmmakers in this shoestring industry try to make big-budget movies and hope they can produce art films. *Route of Life* (*Insaeng hangno*; dir. An Chong-hwa, 1937), a silent film, cost more than six thousand won, and a talkie *Simchŏng* (dir. An Sŏk-yŏng, 1937) cost fifteen thousand. A postsynchronization talkie, *Drifter* (*Nagŭne*; dir. Yi Kyu-hwan, 1937), cost more than ten thousand, and *Han River* (*Han'gang*; dir. Pang Han-jun, 1938) will cost sixteen thousand when finished. It is a given that these films will not make money here in Korea, where there are only about sixty film theaters. Filmmakers should adopt an entrepreneurial mind-set... We need special plans. The film business will cease to be viable if we do not make plans. So I decided to adopt the following outlook for a while. I need to think not only as an actor but also as an investor, a theater operator, and a director in order to make films and keep the budgets reasonable. I will ignore about what people say about me. I will shorten the period of shooting and use cheaper film stock and make a film that can easily make money. *Youth Troops* (*Ch'ŏngch'un pudae*; dir. Hong Kae-myŏng, 1938) was made that way; it cost us only two thousand won, and so to make money it would need to be shown in just three or four theaters. By turning a profit, the directors and actors will be able to make a living and at the same time, the actors will improve their skills and directors maintain their reputations. If this continues and a healthy amount of capital (lit. "full capital (*wanjŏn han chabon*)") is accumulated, we'll be able to keep producing films. In other words, after we have achieved a level of financial stability and provided opportunities for growth for those in the film industry, I will turn wholeheartedly (*wanjŏn han t'aedo*) [to make films that I want] when the perfect opportunity (*wanjŏn han kihoe*) arises. "An inchworm bends to spread." "Politics bends an inch to grow to a foot." I repeat these sentences and look down the long road that our film industry must travel. (emphasis mine)

film productions, guarantee steady, well-paying employment for his film crew members, and continue to produce films until the arrival of the "full capital" and "perfect opportunity" to make the films that he really wants to. What he planned unfortunately never happened; after *Record of Making a Living* (1938), Yun was not given another opportunity to direct a film in the colonial era. In 1942, by which time all those desiring to work in the film industry should have registered with the Korean Filmmakers Association (*Chosŏn yŏnghwain hyŏphoe*), Yun chose to move to a rural area to build and run a school and did not return to film production until the war ended. His withdrawal from filmmaking has often been narrated in post-liberation Korean national film history as an anti-Japanese action. However, it could have been an unavoidable choice for him, as he was no longer in demand within an industry that was experiencing a revival, thanks to the new generation of directors who had learnt filmmaking in the major Japanese film studios and who had just returned to Korea. In other words, from the perspective of mainstream directors, Yun was incapable of reading the changes in the political and cultural currents of the late 1930s when the increased production cost of sound films ultimately resulted in a drastic change in the type of films made: from the typical tragic melodrama, the "film that can easily make money," which had been a mainstay of Korean cinema for decades, to the pro-imperial film that could appeal to the much wider foreign imperial audience.

The younger Korean filmmakers took a different path—they saw that the law about Korean men's voluntary military service implemented in 1938 could provide a salient subject for Korean cinema and help it gain entry into the market of mainland Japan. *Volunteer* was the first of a series of war-supporting films that continued until the end of the war, and *You and I* was the most acclaimed example. Initiating their stories from the first Korean volunteer's death during the war in 1939, both films perform the cinematic patriotism of colonial Korea to present the heartfelt enthusiasm of imperial Korean subjects to participate in the national project. While *You and I* functioned as a site of manifestation about the extent to which young colonial subjects have been, or have to be, imperialized or reshaped as Japanese in their bodies and souls, *Volunteer* was an open declaration of ideological conversion by the former leaders of the Korean communists.

Gloomy Youths and A Broken Hometown

Volunteer (1940) was the first feature film made by a private Korean studio to promote the state's war-mobilization effort and was intended, from its inception, to be released in Japan prior to its release in Korea. Following the launch of the Korean Volunteer System in early 1938, the film's production began in the summer of 1939 and lasted through the early spring of 1940. After its completion, Ch'oe Sŭng-il, the producer, visited Japan to sell the film license, which was

followed by a preview of the film on June 10 and its opening at the Teikokukan Theater in Tokyo on August 1, 1940. The film, however, was roundly criticized, and the Korean release was delayed. The film could not be shown to the Korean public until March 1941, when it opened at the Toho Yakch'o (or Tōhō Wakakusa) Theater in Seoul.[78]

Figure. 3-1. Advertisement of *Volunteer*, March 18, 19, 1941 in *Keijō Nippō* (left) and *Maeil sinbo* (right)

[78] *Chosŏn ilbo* on June 14, 1940 reported the film would open in June at the Kyŏngsŏng Pojong (Kyŏngsŏng Takarazuka) Theater—but it did not.

Volunteer depicts a Korean man's enlistment in the army in a melodramatic form. Ch'un-ho, the protagonist, is a hardworking and ambitious tenant farmer who supports his mother and younger sister after the death of his father. Despite Ch'un-ho's dedication, his landlord Ch'ang-gi, a rich urban modern boy, tries to fire Ch'un-ho as farm manager and replace him with Tŏk-sam, a mean and guileful old man from the town. Ch'un-ho, a guy with a 'huge' dream, actually wishes to fight for his country instead of working for himself, but his Korean ethnicity prevents him from enlisting. When the Special Volunteer Draft for Korean males is finally launched, he boards a military train, leaving his family matters in the hands of others.

Volunteer makes explicit the Korean film industry's turn to collaboration with the colonial state's policy. At the beginning, the film features an intertitle that reads "Honoring the shining Imperial Era (*kōki*) 2600, we Korean filmmakers dedicate this film to Governor Minami." According to *The Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon Shoki*), the second-oldest history book of Japan, the year 1940 was the 2600th anniversary of the enthronement of Emperor Jinmu, Japan's first emperor. To commemorate it, a variety of events were prepared for years throughout the territories of the Japanese Empire. Yet, it is notable the film was dedicated not to the emperor or imperial Japan but to the governor of Korea, Minami, specifically by those working in the film business, not generic "Koreans." For this same year was to be celebrated as the thirtieth year of Japan's colonization of Korea,

Minami, the symbol of the colonizer, was designated as the object of loyalty for the colonized. The film thus addresses the colonial status of Korea not from a panoptic imperial perspective, but rather from a 'local' colonial one and affirms the cooperation of a certain interest group who seeks a special bond with the local representative of imperial rule by promising to become proper imperial subjects who properly "honor" the Imperial year.

In fact, *Volunteer* was made by former left-wing intellectuals who had been Korea Artista Proleta Federacio (Korea Proletarian Artist Federation—KAPF) members and who later came to support the Japanese idea of the imperialization of Korea. The original scenario was written by Pak Yŏng-hŭi (1901—?), one of the core leftist writers who is famous for his public conversion from socialism to imperialism in 1931. In the early 1920s, Pak, a poet inclined toward romanticism, had joined the proletarian literary movement through KAPF, which was formally organized in 1926. He came to assume a central role in the organization through his theorization of class literature, New Tendency Literature, and his avid discursive disputes about the movement's path. Yet, a series of legal measures aimed at suppressing the communists brought about the disintegration of the Korean left-wing groups beginning in the late 1920s. Pak was imprisoned during the first violent crackdown by the police on KAPF in 1931, and as conflict within the group became heightened, he left the movement in December 1933. In his statement of conversion, "New Phase of Recent Literary Theory and Its

Tendency," published in January 1934, which contains his famous line, "Earned is an ideology, lost is art itself," Pak criticized politicized literature and called on writers to return to literature itself. His vow to turn from ideological art to literature without a political bias led the way for other intellectuals to make this switch.[79] The director An Sŏk-yŏng (1901 – 1950), an illustrator, painter, and screenwriter, also belonged to KAPF at one point, as did the producer Ch'oe Sŭng-il (1901 – ?), a playwright, radio producer, and brother of the famous modern dancer, Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi.

Created chiefly by the leftist artists, the story of *Volunteer* features a structure familiar from proletarian literature, yet in an oblique, insinuating version. The early portion of the film foregrounds the archetypal setting of the Korean cinema tradition and proletarian literary works—the class opposition between the landowner and the peasantry. The film begins with a train station scene, in which a military train departs with the town's adults and children crowded onto the platform to celebrate the soldiers' advance to war, waving Japanese flags to the accompaniment of a military song. While cheerful and vibrant feelings flow at the station, the protagonists Ch'un-ho, Ch'ang-sik, and Pun-ok exude low spirits. Both Ch'un-ho and Ch'ang-sik do not know what they

[79] Sunyoung Park, *The Proletarian Wave: Literature and Leftist Culture in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 237.

can do and where to go while Pun-ok blames herself for being an incapable woman in the changing world. Although their source of depression is not clearly delineated, the perennial poverty and unemployment—the oft–appearing motif in proletarian literature—suffered by young people in rural Korea seems to be the cause of their dreariness. That their lives are assumed to lack a hopeful future is reinforced by self-deprecatory remarks, such as "What could a person like me do even if I had a dream?" and "What would a thing like me be worth?" by Ch'ang-sik and Pun-ok, respectively. Unlike his friends whose laments testify to the sense of despair and resignation that pervades the town, optimistic and diligent Ch'un-ho wants to develop the mountain slope into agricultural land through his own efforts. However, the owner of the farm he manages comes from Seoul to inform him that he is being fired. The young landlord, Ch'ang-gi, is the late owner's idle son, who "went to Tokyo to study but just wasted a decade playing around," according to Ch'un-ho's mother. The contrast between the debauched wealthy capitalist and the upstanding lower-class man thus revives a proletarian literary tradition in a propaganda setting.

Along with a lack of hope, their destroyed community and loss of faith are additional factors that cause these Korean youths to yearn for a breakthrough in their lives. Ch'un-ho is eager to dedicate his free time to the cultivation of mountain land, for his and Ch'ang-gi's father agreed to do so when they were alive. In contrast to him, who tries to honor the relationship between the two

families, regardless of their class difference, the unintelligent young landowner has no regard for the value of a loyal employee or for the possibility of an increase in the value of property and the village development that can be realized by improving uncultivated land. Foolishly taking a very narrow view of business, the young capitalist selects the mean Tŏk-sam to be his new local manager. Embittered by his sense of betrayal and skeptical about the town's future, with its dim chances for prosperity, Ch'un-ho decides to just keep working and wait for another opportunity to appear. And it does, offering the chance to realize a greater dream than earning a petty livelihood—he can volunteer for the army.

Setting forth the nature of Ch'un-ho's depression, and that of the other two characters as well, is a complicated matter as the cause of it is posed ambiguously. The depression of Korean males/volunteers was one of the significant issues discussed in contemporary reviews, and persists as a topic in present-day colonial Korean cinema studies. The following review of the film by a Japanese critic of the time seems to point to this issue by way of interpreting Korean melancholia, the sense that it is an insoluble issue, and maybe driven by national traits:

> This film [*Volunteer*] is, in short, a *sinpa* drama of a love triangle, and a heroic element consisting of the protagonist's entry into the military volunteer system, the long-cherished and finally realized wish in Korea, is mingled with it incoherently. The actors are in general impassive, except for the few occasions they use very subtle facial expressions to show some sadness or joy. Every shot

> is so loose that even in the scenes of moving the tempo is very slow. Because of my ignorance about Korea, I was not able to tell to what extent this kind of emotionless tediousness was rooted in its national character or whether it was a matter of technical clumsiness. (Emphasis mine) [80]

In her analysis of *Volunteer*, the film scholar Yi Yŏng-jae argues one should first explore the inner side of the colonial man because his depression is in place before the film starts. "The emotionless-ness of the film is," Yi asserts, "based on a sort of 'feeling' that cannot be fully explained, or does not have to be explained, in the narrative." Therefore, the depression of Ch'un-ho itself is, regardless of its relation to the narrative, a prominent premise for the film.[81] Referring to Zizek on Freud's discourse about melancholy—a feeling of sadness, the object or root of which is, unlike mourning, never clear—Yi argues the depressed male protagonist's lethargy is based on the melancholic status of the colonized, who longs for his lost nation so that paradoxically he can keep possessing the absent country in his unending grief. As he boards a military train for the battlefield, Yi asserts, Ch'un-ho transmits his melancholy to his lover, who will be left behind in the countryside, and thereby acquires the chance for

[80] Shimizu Akira, "Shiganhei," *Eiga hyōron* 22 (August 1940): 123.

[81] Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk lbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa, 2008), 62–63.

remasculinization. In other words, the depression that all along had been the premise of the existence of colonial Korean men can finally be shaken off, so that they can move forward to become revitalized, imperial subjects.[82]

Yi's observation about the difficulty of bringing to light the root of the depression in the story drives her to ponder the historical context that affected the psychology of Koreans under colonization and other literary endeavors by elites in another part of her book. Yet the source might lie rather in the Korean filmmakers' compliant psychology used to nearly constant restrictions of their creativity—the ordinary colonial constraints such as strict censorship and frequent interactions with the police. In his memoir, An Chong-hwa argues that An Sŏk-yŏng had no choice but to direct the movie because he was being pressured by the police.[83] Although An's testimony, since it dates to the postcolonial era, cannot be fully trusted, the portrait of discouraged youth, unemployed and hopeless, arising from the long-lasting economic depression in colonial Korea, had in fact rarely been successfully conveyed to that point in Korean cinema. The emotionless face of a Korean man thus can be the expression of habitual withdrawal into oneself, the true suggestion of a person's seriousness and sincerity, or even the strategic

[82] Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk Ilbon*, 48–93.

[83] An Chong-hwa, *Han'guk yŏnghwa ch'ŭngmyŏn pisa* (Seoul: Hyŏndae mihaksa, 1998, originally published in 1964), 284-86.

concealment of the colonial male's inner anxiety. While the protagonist Yŏng-jin's suppressed chagrin in *Arirang* (1926), the most popular and influential example of colonial cinema, have exploded through the mask of insanity, Ch'un-ho, living under the war era's climate of harsh state regulation and punishment, chooses to retreat calmly into his dreary mind.

Naesŏn Ilch'e/Naisen ittai: False Promise, Uncertain Belief, Oblique Compliance

The circumscribed world of Ch'un-ho becomes illuminated with an unprecedented hope as he contemplates a broader realm, a world radically different from his backward rural hometown, but one that is unfortunately closed to him due to a clear, but unspeakable, reason: his Korean identity. On the way home after meeting with the landlord, Ch'un-ho walks down a big avenue in Seoul, where various placards of state campaigns cover the facades of buildings. The banners proclaim the necessary attitude and tasks of citizens for the 'country in crisis': "One Heart of One Hundred Million People," "Patriotism through Diligence," "Save One Hundred Million Wŏn," "Cultivate Japanese Spirit," and so on. Passing by these with grave heart, while unstable nondiegetic music plays in the background, Ch'un-ho comes to the realization that the most urgent issue in his world is these 'national matters,' not his personal business relationship with

the petty Ch'ang-gi. Later, his desperation is heightened when he returns to his village and sees a group of children playing soldiers. Unrealistically clothed in army uniforms and hats with Japanese flags, the little soldiers stage a battle and shout victory in Japanese. Watching them for a while, Ch'un-ho at first smiles but soon the smile withers as he realizes he is no better than the children, who can at least pretend to be soldiers. Conscious of his impossible identification with them, he walks home listlessly, and the troop of children marches behind him, loudly singing a military song. Arriving home, where he is surrounded by his female supporters (mother, sister, and girlfriend), he finally speaks up about what he wants (what viewers are already expecting because of the film's title): to be an army "volunteer," asking, "Would you like it if I became a soldier?" At this point Koreans were not allowed to join the Japanese army.

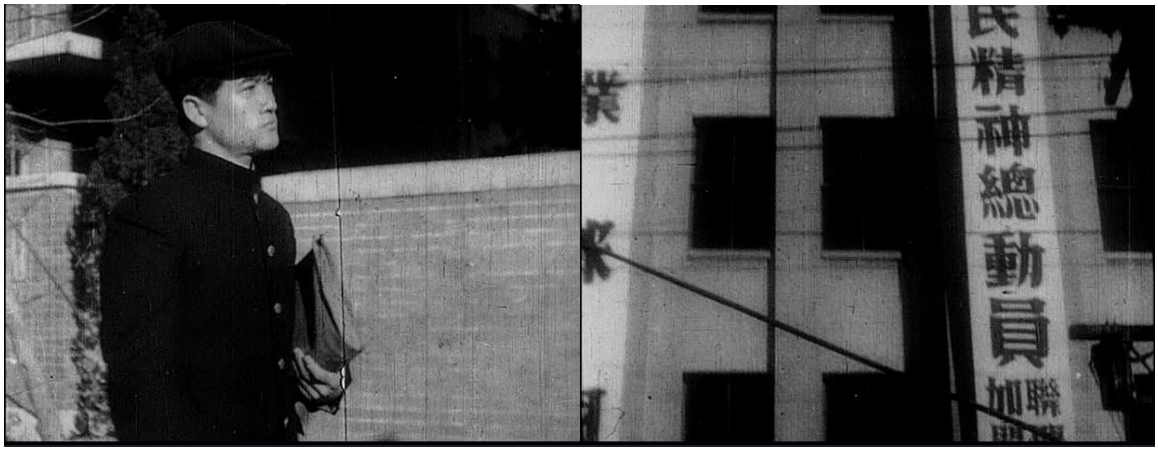

Figure. 3-2. Ch'un-ho walking in the city and seeing the banner ("Total Mobilization of People…")

The military volunteer system in Korea was coordinated with the state-run "*naesŏn ilch'e* (JP. *naisen ittai*)" ideology propagation—literally "Japan and Korea are One Body"—declared by Governor Minami right after the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The recruitment of Koreans was first considered in 1932 after the First Sino-Japanese War. However, the idea was dismissed, according to the Japanese historian Miyata Setsuko, because of Japanese distrust of Koreans. The arming of "Koreans who have a strong nationalist attitude" would create "[the] huge anxiety and fear" that they might turn their weapons on the Japanese soldiers instead of the enemy.[84] *Naisen ittai* was widely understood among Koreans as a means of attaining full Japanese citizenship, at least in its early phase, since it instituted sameness, or equality, between Korea and Japan as nations on multiple levels, such as ethnicity, rights, obligations, and opportunities. Minami Jiro, the seventh Governor-General of Korea (August 1936 – May 1942), established *naisen ittai* as one of the core policies in the governance of Korea, replacing naisen "*yūwa*" ("harmony") with naisen "*ittai*" ("one body") as early as July 1937. In his speech to the local governors explaining the 'significance' of the war, he ordered the governors "to make sure the Koreans who are in *naisen ittai*

[84] Miyata Setsuko, *Chōsen minshū to "kōminka" seisaku* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1985), 50, 54.

know the leading role of the Japanese empire as East Asia's true stable power today[,] which shoulders [the burden of] the security of the region."[85]

The ambiguity of the term led to misunderstandings, in particular in terms of solutions to colonial inequality and discrimination. Minami's statement on *naisen ittai* in July was followed by the Japanese cabinet's passage of the bill establishing the Korean Special Volunteer System in December, and the promulgation of the Army Special Volunteer Order in February 1938, with the first group 'admitted' entering a training camp in June, but it was also misinterpreted by the colonized, who had long wished for rectification of the colonial situation. Pak Hŭi-do's op-ed piece in a pro-Japanese journal *Tongyang chi kwang* (JP. *Tōyō no hikari*) reflects this kind of 'misunderstanding' from the Korean side:

> Now, the '*naisen ittai*' slogan declared by Governor Minami is enough to imbue new hopes.… There is no doubt that the core of *naisen ittai* must mean the perfect unification between Japanese and Koreans in terms of obligations and rights as citizens. Therefore, it is the catchphrase of a great historical movement that intends to elevate the lives of Koreans up to the level of that of the Japanese by solving the problems at a single stroke—all the problems that Koreans have been trying to resolve for a long

[85] Minami Jiro, "Kunji," *Chōsen sōtokufu kanpō*, July 16, 1937.

time, such as ethnic discrimination or colonial matters. (Emphasis mine)[86]

Dashing the hope of Koreans that they would enjoy the same rights and be bound by the same duties as the Japanese, as Pak discusses above, the ideal of *naisen ittai* was abandoned as Japan prepared to implement compulsory recruitment in colonial Korea in the 1940s when the war was expanding on the continent. At first, Minami Jiro said, *naisen ittai* meant "the making of Koreans into loyal and honest subjects of the Japanese empire (*kōkoku shinmin*)."[87] At one point he even claimed it was "the attainment of perfect equality (*musabetsu byōdō*) between Japan and Korea."[88] But Minami reversed his earlier stance after returning to Japan, saying that Korea is "a completely different nation from Japan."[89] A more radical reorientation of the policy was undertaken by Koiso Kuniaki, the eighth governor. An article setting forth the new governor's ideas stated "the ideology of *naisen ittai* that the previous governor claimed never

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[86] Pak Hŭi-do, "Kibō to shinnen wo motte," *Tongyang chi kwang* (March 1939): 1.

[87] "Dōchiji kaigi ni okeru sōtoku kunji (May 29, 1939)," in *Yukoku kunji enjutsu sōran*, ed. Chōsen sōtokufu kanbō bunshoka (Keijo: Chōsen gyōsei gakkai), 196.

[88] "Kokumin seishin sōdōin chōsen renmei sōkai sekijou aisatsu," May 30, 1939. Miyata Setsuko explains this encapsulation gained the most currency among Koreans of the theories on naisen ittai. See Miyata, *Chōsen minshū,* 155.

[89] "Gyŏsei kansoka jissi no tameni suru naikaku shozoku bukyoku nao shokuin kansei kaisei no ken," *Sūmitsuin kaigi hikki*, October 28, 1942, No. 38 Minami Jirō hakken.

meant the equality or spiritual affiliation between the two but that Koreans [were] to be raised as imperial subjects (*kōkoku shinmin*)." Therefore, it was declared that the new regime's duty would be "to take the step of 'making imperial subjects' moving away from '*naisen ittai*.'"[90] The 'misunderstanding' by Koreans was faulted as "[harmful], as some of the people were confused and mistook the ideology of *naisen ittai* for the concept of Japan-Korea equality."[91] *Volunteer* and *You and I*, written and shot in 1939 and 1940, respectively, when the promotion of *naisen ittai* ideology reached its apex in the political discourse, reflect the misplaced faith in its full realization.

Differing from *You and I*, which foregrounds a rather excessive confidence in Korea's achieving equality in the near future, *Volunteer* is marked by a more cautious outlook that one cannot openly express. After attending a public lecture titled "Our Tasks in the Home Front," Ch'un-ho and Ch'ang-sik share their opinions. Their conversation lays bare the complicated situation of Korean men, as the two reluctantly admit the effect of naesŏn ilch'e:

> Ch'un-ho: *Naisen ittai* is what is already realized; yet (*naesŏn ilch'e nŭn imi silhyŏn toenŭn kŏt ijiman*), when fighting for the country, we young people should also take part. Now, we cannot

[90] Jōhōka hen, "Kokutai hongi no tōtetsu," *Tongyang chi kwang* (October 1942): 39.

[91] "Chōsen sōri to kōminka no shinten," *Chōsen sōtokufu naibu shiryō*, 1943. Cited in Miyata, *Chōsen minshū,* 177.

> participate even if we have the will to do so. We don't qualify (*chagyŏk i ŏmne*). So we cannot put in the same effort.
>
> Ch'ang-sik: However, if the time comes, will you in fact participate?
>
> Ch'un-ho: Don't you know me yet? We promised to go the same way when we grew up. If you become a car driver, go to the battlefield to serve. We are obliged (*ŭimu*) to do it.

Ch'un-ho's statements are full of grammatical inconsistencies leading to ambiguity of meaning, so that the viewer cannot make sense of what he is saying. In the first sentence, "already (*imi*)" and "what is ... realized (*silhyŏn toenŭn kŏt*)" do not match in tense, confusing the reader as to whether *naisen ittai had been already* realized or it *will be* (*soon* or *one day*) realized. Another possible interpretation of the line would be "*naisen ittai* was already declared and it seems it will be in effect (but I am not fully confident about it)" but a firm meaning cannot be established based on the original Korean wording. In addition, the second part of the sentence should start with 'therefore (*imŭro* or *ini*)" rather than "yet (*ijiman*)" because the cause-and-effect logic of his speech necessitates the former. The strangeness of the second part is compounded by "we young people also (*to*)" does not make sense—when the state is at war, it is always the young people who are drafted into the army—thus "also" is unnecessary. Ch'un-ho's first and second sentences include many important key words of the state-run war support campaigns of the time, such as the realization of *naisen ittai*, fighting for

the country, and the young people's active participation in the war, but the nonsensical expression of these in Ch'un-ho's accounts calls their validity into question. What was supposed to be said in the conversation would be, if written from the perspective of a postcolonial scholar: "*Naisen ittai* has been already realized; therefore, when the country is at war, we *Korean* young people should also participate in it."

In fact, the original script by Pak Yŏng-hŭi, printed in *Kungmin Sinbo* (JP. *Kokumin Shinpo*), a weekly Japanese newspaper for Korean adolescents published in Seoul, differs from the actual script and expresses a consistent and conclusive theme:

> Ch'un-ho: But if *naisen ittai* is completely realized, Koreans should also fight the same [as the Japanese] given the national crisis. Well, it doesn't matter, because my thoughts for now wouldn't help anything. We are not even qualified for it. So, even though we are the same citizens (*kokumin*), we cannot fulfill the same duties.[92]

The comparison of Pak's original with the actual exposes the conundrum that the filmmakers of the time faced. The original scenario delivers perfectly

[92] "Shijō eiga: *Shiganhei*," *Kungmin sinbo* (June 2, 1940): 12.

clear messages: *naisen ittai* is not attained yet; Koreans want to join the army but cannot for now; Koreans should be granted the same perquisite to perform the same tasks—that is, equal citizenship. The modification of Pak's script reveals the thorniness of issues such as the likelihood of the ideology being actualized and thus that of prospect of achieving equality, and Koreans' rights and obligations. In terms of details, the significant changes include: (1) S (script): *Naisen ittai* is not fully realized yet → F (film): it is already realized; (2) S: Koreans should also fight for the country → F: We young people should also fight for the country; (3) S: Koreans are the same [Japanese] citizens → F: (omitted); (4) S: We cannot do the same tasks (*immu*; 任務) → F: We have an obligation (*ŭimu*; 義務). While Pak uses a rather critical tone concerning the delayed realization of the ideal and argues forcefully that Koreans should be able to fight just like Japanese nationals, the film's director, An, who revised Pak's version into a shooting script, remains evasive by showing neither confidence nor a lack of confidence in what will happen. Carefully choosing the terms, An highlights Koreans' obligations without requesting rights; instead he just laments the "lack of qualification." The slight but significant modifications of words and expressions reveal the core problems of the colonial regime's *naisen ittai* propaganda: its content could be expressed only inconclusively because it was, from the first, just a slogan for mobilization.

Complicated Representation of Korean Male Subject

The literary scholar Kwŏn Myŏng-a interprets *Volunteer* as an "example par excellence of [non-elite] youth discourse" of early 1940s colonial Korea. Claiming itself to be "a project of liberation of the pariah," fascism is a mechanism to produce aspiration for a renovated subject through provocation of the marginalized people's hatred of and grudges against society. Kwŏn argues that a lower-class Korean man's voluntary submission to the emperor resulted in the former's renewal as a fascist youth at the vanguard, the leader of the new era. The film suggests voluntary enlistment is a way for nonprivileged youth to escape a hopeless reality from which human interaction and communal caring have disappeared; by entering into a new world filled with fascist fever the chance for a successful life opens up for them. Yet, she makes the keen observation that the protagonist's lack of energy and vibrancy can cause his choice to be acknowledged not as a result of enthusiasm or the shrewd art of living but as just an enforced option for someone at a dead end.[93]

Kwŏn's interpretation of *Volunteer* as reflecting the reality that volunteering for army service was an unavoidable choice for nonelite youth is

[93] Kwŏn Myŏng-a, *Yŏksajŏk p'asijŭm: cheguk ŭi p'ant'aji wa chendŏ chŏngch'i* (Seoul: Chaek sesang, 2005), 333, 340–42. One Japanese critic did in fact complain that the hero of the film was "weak-willed." See Mizui Reiko, "Chōsen eiga seisakukei wo kaeri mite," *Shin eiga* (November 1942): 90.

borne out by the fact that 90% of the applications in the first year of recruitment (1938) came from the peasantry in remote areas. Poor rural youths with a bleak future wanted to become soldiers so as to set the trajectory of their lives on an upward path.[94] However, a close reading of Ch'un-ho's character reveals that he cannot be equated with a desperate man who is forced to go to war. He is not only an ideal candidate by his patriotism and sense of responsibility for an empire facing a crisis, but also perceptive enough to seize the opportunity to get a 'decent job' as a colonial Korean, that of "professional soldier," which guarantees a stable economic benefit. Namely, while the film underscores the 'excellence' of Korean candidates for the imperial army, the soldiering is presented as a shrewd and advantageous choice for the 'smart' Korean male.

Interestingly, while Kwŏn acknowledges that Ch'un-ho is nonelite, Yi Yŏng-jae refers to him as a "local [proletarian] elite youth." Is Ch'un-ho an elite or not? And what is the importance of this question? It is notable Ch'un-ho is marked by two conflicting conditions: being lower class, but educated and intelligent, he is thus simultaneously elite and nonelite. He is a reflection of the complex of Korean males who regarded themselves as an intelligent, competent

[94] Those taken in the first wave of recruitment were generally from the lower class—80–90% of them were tenant farmers in rural areas. They were told that they would be hired as public servants or policemen after being discharged from the army. See Miyata, *Chōsen minshū,* 42–47.

people who had not yet been given a proper chance. Therefore, the film functions in a way as a mild critique of an unjust colonial system, which refuses to recognize qualified people. Yet, at the same time, it is still unclear whether the criticism is valid because the details of the job that those competent group of people wish to acquire in the film ironically entails their potential death on the battlefield.

Although Ch'un-ho in the film is contrasted with the landlord in the city as a property-less peasant, he is not the typical proletarian male in Korean cinema whose experience of extreme poverty causes him to commit crimes such as robbery or murder. Even after losing his job as farm manager, his family can, as his mother says, "manage to live on what father left for them"; he does not face severe impoverishment as do other men in Korean cinema, or in the proletarian fictions. That proves he is not an entirely impotent Korean man, in the traditional sense, whose household has been shattered economically. He is also a sensible and attractive male who provides what the females (his family and his girlfriend) want—on the way home from Seoul he buys medicine for his mother, a schoolbag for his sister, and a mirror for his girlfriend. Having a keen sense as to how to please others with their exact needs—medicine, education, and feminine charm—Ch'un-ho is presented as a model Korean young man, an upstanding, diligent, and appealing figure. In this sense, the film is far from depicting a typical lower-class

man's life who has no choice but to enlist in order to rise above his current status, as Kwŏn implies.

The valorization of Ch'un-ho's quality is partly accomplished by Korean females who praise him and the Japanese males whom Ch'un-ho himself praises. Pun-ok in *Volunteer* is a prototype of the women in Korean cinema during the Second World War, whose role exemplifies the critical female role in the colonial Korean cinema of the 1940s—she is needed to remasculinize the demasculinized Korean male through affection and approval, filling the space of a father who usually is absent. She cares about him, is supportive of his military ambition and the steps he takes to fulfill it, and will endure the hardship of him leaving. It is these females who are free from the prejudices that privileged males—representatively the rich and debauched high-class Korean men—commonly possess and who thus can acknowledge his intelligence and capability. Especially their support is expressed through their straightforward verbal remarks. For instance, when Ch'un-ho laments "What can a farmer's son [like me] become other than just another farmer?," Pun-ok replies with confidence that he is "a man who will become great." Yŏng-ok's utterance is even bolder; learning that he has been accepted as a volunteer recruit, she marvels at him, saying, "See! He is such a smart man!".

In contrast to the supportive females, the old father figures in town such as Pun-ok's father and the voracious Tŏk-sam never function as Ch'un-ho's supporters—they are either penniless and incompetent or morally debased and premodern. Looking for a substitute in place of his absent father, Ch'un-ho approaches the imaginative imperial father-figures for guidance: the town mayor (*kuchō*), Itō Hirobumi, and Governor Minami. After learning about the opportunity to volunteer from the *kuchō*, he comes home and dreams about a future in the army. In a scene in Ch'un-ho's room, the camera tilts down from a picture close-up, hanging on the wall above a desk, of Itō Hirobumi (1841 – 1909), the former prime minister of Japan and the first Resident-General in Korea (1905 – 1909). After showing the full room interior and a big map of East Asian territory of Imperial Japan beneath the Itō portrait, the camera tracks in to Ch'un-ho's face, who imagines a training scene in the army camp. In his dream-like imagination, he proudly marches as a member of army and see Governor Minami drilling the soldiers. Ch'un-ho even sheds tears, seemingly moved by what he experiences in his long-lasting dream. Ito's appearance, however, is curious at this late a date (1939)—he had been assassinated by An Chung-gŭn, a Korean dissident and independent movement activist who objected the colonization, in 1909, a year before the colonial rule officially began to operate. Moreover, Governor Minami's appearance is so short that he is hardly recognizable unless the viewer is very familiar with his face. Despite their awkwardness in terms of

time and place, the appearances of Itō and Minami should be understood as inserted into the diegesis to represent the empire, or an emperor figure, and the local colonial ruler, respectively. Itō, as a substitute for the Japanese Emperor whom a colonial cinema did not dare to depict, was a crucial figure in the making of modern Japan and the drawing up of the Meiji constitution, while Minami promised to elevate Koreans' civil status to that of 'complete' Japanese through *naisen ittai* ideology. These two ideal fathers replace the disabled or missing Korean patriarchs, highlighting the Japanese guardianship of Koreans.

Ch'un-ho's political utterances in the film are surprisingly treated as unimportant, despite the seriousness of the content, deepening the film's puzzling attitude toward the recruitment of Koreans. When Yŏng-ae, the sister of Ch'ang-gi and who is fond of Ch'un-ho, visits his village to apologize for what her brother did to him, Ch'un-ho says he does not care about it because there are more urgent matters concerning him, asserting, "This isn't the time for us to think about just our own business. Look. The attitude Koreans on the home front should take is this. This is the time we young people should dedicate our all as imperial subjects." His resolute but out-of-context accounts of the overall tenor of their dialogues, however, do not resonate, as they are hastily followed in the film by another disconnected conversation. When Ch'un-ho informs his lover Pun-ok of his plan to enlist, in one of the story's key scenes, the mood is rendered surprisingly melancholic with sorrowful music and feminine sentiment. He

expresses his will to become “a career soldier,” and she in turn calmly urges him to be “a great soldier for the country”—yet the full shot of the two near a village well does not convey a sense of joyful expectation.

By muting the expressions of resolve regarding enlisting through the use of a melancholic tone, *Volunteer* renders its propaganda goal of recruitment virtually ineffective. Instead, what is conveyed is a narcissism that underscores the worthiness of Korean men and their potential as imperial citizens—why Koreans should enlist or how beneficial the volunteer program would be is barely touched upon. This too hesitant characterization, which lacks an apt dramatization of how a colonial man bereft of hope comes to see volunteering as a great opportunity to improve his life, results in a tedious and implausible narrative. The film in this way further complicates the conundrum of a colonized male, a Korean who wants to remonstrate with the colonial rulers for their discriminatory measures against Koreans and at the same time promises to cooperate with them fully. To be sure, the making of *Volunteer* and the portrait of a dejected yet noble Korean man was, for the group of intellectuals who participated in it—the former elite KAPF members—a conflicted struggle for recognition, a fight for respect and equality. Their ambiguous ‘sincerity’ toward Imperial Japan could not unfold a persuasive drama for either Korean spectators or the colonial authorities.

The Director Hŏ Yŏng's Nation: Sincerity, Devotion, and Fallacy

In contrast to the ambivalent character of the Korean subject in *Volunteer*, the Korean soldiers in *You and I* written and directed by Hŏ Yŏng (or Hinatsu Eitaro in his Japanese name) not only assume a 'fully' imperialized colonial mindset but act as real Japanese, which can be read as remarkably "radical and even subversive" for the colonizers.[95] The Korean males in this film would never agonize, as Hŏ does, over the Koreans' uncertain positionality in the imperial army, thanks to the perfectly actualized diegesis of *naisen ittai*. Hŏ made the film in order to introduce 'Koreans' patriotism and ardor for the country' to the Japanese public who were not aware of it and to heighten mutual understanding between the two nations. The director's candid ambition, however, did not deliver what the empire wanted to see: a colonial Korea that would simultaneously support the empire's war effort and acknowledge the superiority of the Japanese. Hŏ had been working in the Japanese film industry for about fifteen years when he made *You and I*, so that his presentation of colonial Korean reality was understandably more 'idealized' than accurate. Whatever the director's intention was, it is clear that this boisterous film project came out of his experience of living as a 'Japanese' in mainland Japan.

[95] Yi Hwa-jin, *Sori ŭi chŏngch'i: singminji Chosŏn ŭi kŭkchang kwa cheguk ŭi kwan'gaek* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa, 2016), 250.

Hŏ Yŏng was born in 1907 and raised in Hamhŭng, a city in northern Korea.[96] Having illegally immigrated into Japan in 1925 at the age of eighteen, he succeeded in hiding his Korean ethnicity until 1937. Skilled at learning languages, he quickly became fluent in Japanese and found work in the film industry in Kyoto at Makino Production and the Shochiku Kyoto Studio as if he were Japanese. His ethnicity was revealed in the trial concerning an accident that occurred during the shooting of *Summer Battle in Osaka* (dir. Kinugasa Teinosuke) in March 1937. An explosion had damaged a nationally historic site, Himeji Castle in Hyōgo Prefecture, killing one and severely injuring some crew members, and Hŏ, who was in charge of the shooting as an assistant director, was arrested and jailed in Osaka. During the investigation for the trial, it was revealed publicly that Hŏ was an ethnic Korean, of which even his Japanese wife was unaware, but his reputation as a talented young filmmaker did not suffer significantly. After being released on bail after seven months' confinement and later sentenced to four months in prison with two years of probation, Hŏ moved to

[96] There are a number of studies on Hŏ Yŏng's extraordinary film career and dramatic life story, which mainly focus on his transnational trajectory of living as a film director, among them: Utsumi Aiko and Murai Yoshinori, *Shineasuto Kyo Ei no "Shōwa"* (Tokyo: Geifūsha, 1987); Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2008); and Peter B. High. In addition, Hinatsu Moeko, Hŏ Yŏng's daughter by Hinatsu Hanako, published a Japanese-language biography of her father *Ekkyō no eiga kantoku Hinatsu Eitarō* (Tokyo: Bungeisha, 2011). Also, *A Man with Three Names* (*Se kae ŭi irum ŭl kajin yŏnghwain*), a documentary film about Hŏ, was made in 1997 in Korea by Kim Chae-bŏm.

Shinkō Kinema's Kyoto Studio to write screenplays. However, the political atmosphere had changed since the Sino-Japanese War and the film industry had no choice but take direction from state policy. Sensing the rapidly changing outlook in Japanese society, Hŏ, now a Korean, seemed to feel pressured to find a breakthrough to be able to continue to work in film production.

At that very moment, he ran across the story of the Korean soldier Yi In-sŏk, the first Korean to be killed (in a battle in Chinese territory in June 1939) after being one of the first to enlist in 1938, and wrote a film script based on Yi. Yi was widely praised as a Korean "Military God (KR. *kunsin*; JP. *gunshin*)," a propagandist appellation of those who were killed in wars, and became an icon of the model Korean soldier through a posthumous military promotion and the endowment of a medal. Having written a screenplay in order to advertise "the idea that Japanese ("You": KR. *kŭdae*; JP. *kimi*) and Koreans ("I": KR. *na*; JP. *boku*) should firmly clasp each other's hands in order to become the foundation of the Great East Asian Prosperity Sphere," Hŏ visited the Education Bureau of the Government-General of Korea where his project was, as he expected, received with delight.[97] Moved by the young rookie director's patriotism and passion, the authorities promised sponsorship that would include financial backing for the

[97] This explanation of the film's intent was offered by Hŏ Yŏng in a roundtable talk. See "Kimi to boku rŭl malhanŭn chwadamhoe," *Samch'ŏlli* (September 1941): 113.

production from the Japanese Korean Army (Chosŏn'gun) and support (*kōen*) from the Government-General in Korea and the Department of the Army (rikugunshō) in Japan.

With this military and institutional patronage, Hŏ was able to recruit an A-list crew and cast, including a prominent Japanese director, film critic, and popular actors and celebrities of the empire. Tasaka Tomotaka, the director of *Five Scouts* (*Gonin no sekkōhei*, 1938), took the position of directorial advisor, and Iijima Tadashi, a leading Japanese film critic, helped with the revision of the screenplay. Though their involvement was limited, the fact that two acclaimed Japanese public figures 'participated in' a Korean film gave a substantial boost to the making of *You and I*.[98] Lending even more credibility to the film as a transnational project of Great East Asia were such renowned Japanese actors as Ōhinata Den, Kosugi Isamu, and Kawazu Kiyosaburō, as well as Ri Kōran, the star actress from Manchurian cinema, who was hugely popular throughout East Asia.

The whole process of the film's making from the inception of the project to the follow-up events after release was itself a grandiose "show," as Yi Hwa-jin

[98] In a roundtable talk, Tasaka and Iijima implied they did not serve important roles. See "Chōsengun hōdōbu sakuhin kimi to boku zadankai," *Eiga junpo* 30 (November 1, 1941).

and Paek Mun-im have both pointed out.[99] Making *You and I* was "a performance in which everyone involved in the production attempts to prove himself a subject of the empire, and what they needed was the empire's gaze that would acknowledge those gestures."[100] As an additional form of support, the film was shown immediately upon its release to a large number of different audiences mobilized by multiple authorities through "recommended film" selections: the film was chosen as a "Film For Children and Students" by the Education Bureau, "Recommendation Film" by the Government-General, and as the "Cultural Recommendation Film" by the Korean Federation for the Complete National Effort (*kungmin ch'ongnyŏk Chosŏn yŏnmaeng*).[101] The response to the film, however, was supremely disappointing, in that the 'original goal' for making it was more praised than the actual film itself. Even Tasaka Tomosada mentioned

[99] The original term for the "show" in Yi and Paek's works is "*p'ŏp'omŏnsŭ* (performance)." See Yi Hwa-jin, *Sori ŭi chŏngch'i,* 249; Paek Mun-im, "Kunin i toeseyo: singminji malgi sŏnjŏn kŭk yŏnghwa ŭi Chosŏn yŏsŏngdŭl," *Tongbanghakchi* 147 (2009): 222.

[100] Yi Hwa-jin, *Sori ŭi chŏngch'i*, 248.

[101] In the rare reviews or memoirs of wartime cinema, several people do write about having seen *You and I* at a mobilized screening event as young students. For example, Ho Hyŏn-ch'an, a film historian in the postwar era, writes, "*You and I* was the film of bitter memory for me that I watched in 1941, by the time I entered middle school, at the compulsory screening in school." Ho Hyŏn-ch'an, *Han'guk yŏnghwa 100-yŏn* (Seoul: Munhak sasangsa, 2000), 75. Im Yŏng, a film critic, writes that "those who were in either middle or elementary school at that time, who now are in their late 50s or older, would be able to remember *You and I*, which we saw at a group-mobilization (*tanch'e tongwŏn*) screening" See Im Yŏng, "Ch'inil kukch'aek yŏnghwa nŏ wa na chejak," *Chungang ilbo*, July 22, 1990.

with reservation that "[i]t was a film that I must work on whether or not the script was fine because the intention itself was great" and he signed on because of the "sincere attitude and passion of the military officials of Korea and the film staff."[102] Despite the unprecedented extent of its advertising campaign and release with support from the military and colonial governments, the film did not succeed in conveying content that could satisfy both the authorities and Korean filmgoers. Perhaps the most favorable review was by Pak Ki-ch'ae, a Korean director, who said, "An excellent national cinema (*kungmin yŏnghwa*; JP. *kokumin eiga*) means an excellent entertainment film," so that "if one enjoyed it [*You and I*], that's good enough."[103]


映畵君と僕의鑑賞
各界人士의讀辯
「君と僕」와는하나다
一億國民이皆是할映畵
香山光郎
內鮮文化交流의藝術
映畵人熱意와協助에感謝
安夕影
果敢한半島精神이
全山에흘러있다
白山青樹
健全娛樂의國民映畵
半島映畵界에조흔影響
朴基采

Figure. 3-3. Special film review section ("Appraisal by Eminent People") of *You and I* in *Maeil sinbo*. Reviewers include Yi Kwang-su (writer), An Sŏk-yŏng, and Pak Ki-ch'ae (directors)

[102] "Chōsengun hōdōbu sakuhin "Kimi to boku" zadankai," *Eiga junpo* 30 (November 1, 1941).

[103] Pak Ki-ch'ae, "Nŏ wa na kŏnjŏn orak ŭi kungmin yŏnghwa pando yŏnhwagye e choŭn yŏnghyang," *Maeil sinbo*, November 22, 1941.

After making *You and I*, Hŏ moved to Java, Indonesia to make *Calling Australia* (JP. *Gōshū no yobigoe,* 1944), a fake documentary propaganda film about the humane treatment by imperial Japan authorities of Western soldiers in a POW camp, only to see Japan be defeated the following year. Afraid to return to either Korea or Japan, he decided to stay in Indonesia. Taking the name of Dr. Huyung, he directed *Frieda* (1951), a film about the Indonesian fight for independence. Upon the film's huge success, he became revered as the father of postwar Indonesian cinema, a reputation which lasted until his death in 1952. Hŏ Yŏng's transformation of his role, identity, and faith across colonial Korea, Imperial Japan, and postwar Indonesia can be understood the borderless life journey of a brilliant yet naive youth fascinated by a new technological art. He was a transnational and transpolitical filmmaker of wartime Asia.

In a section entitled "The Bizarre Case of *You and Me*," High expresses his feeling of confusion as to how a Korean could make "a film that portrays his people as worshipful, servile subjects of a nation that had conquered them, brutalized them, enslaved large numbers of them for forced labor in the homeland, and that relentlessly now pursued a policy of extinguishing their language and culture."[104] High offers two possible reasons for the director Hŏ's motivation:

[104] Peter B. High, Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War, 1931-1945 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 308.

career advancement and a completely "colonized" psychology. However, High fails to recognize how deliberately Hŏ tries to present his own people as the equals of the Japanese—he never depicts Koreans as "worshipful, servile" subjects but as proactive participants and supporters of a country facing a crisis. For him, nation was something to be chosen subjectively. Hŏ Yŏng's pro-Japanese activities and choice of nationality—Japanese—during the colonial period, and later his identification as Indonesian, exemplifies how, according to Ernest Renan, an individual's "daily plebiscite" decides "a large-scale solidarity" that is a nation. For Renan, "[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" that shares "common glories in the past." It is a community "to have a common will in the present, to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more." At the same time, a nation is "constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life."[105] Japan was the nation to which Hŏ wanted to devote himself, so that both Koreans and Japanese could create a common history and a shared community, even though his frank affection for it could never reach that nation.

[105] Ernest Renan, trans., Martin Thom, "What is a Nation?," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 19.

Figure. 3-4. Hŏ Yŏng's gravestone located in Jakarta, Indonesia

A Utopia Built on Misbelief: *You and I* (1941)

You and I revolves around stories full of a "sort of too-good-to-be-true sentiment," of several young Korean and Japanese males and females who reside in Korea.[106] Through the portrayal of their friendships, mutual respect, patriotism, and potential loves and interracial marriages, the film presents a completely harmonious world in which the *naisen ittai* campaign—Japan and Korea as One Body—is seamlessly realized. Kaneko Eisuke, a Korean enlistee, is a fervent patriot who has come to be in a personal relationship with Kubo Ryōhei and his family. Kubo, a zealous believer in *naisen ittai* and the director of the Puyŏ Museum, had moved to Korea due to his great love for Korea. Ryōhei's sister-in-law, Mitsue, and her friend, Paek-hŭi (or *Hakki* in Japanese) visit Puyŏ and

[106] High, *Imperial Screen*, 309.

become close to Eisuke and the other Korean volunteers. Moved by each other's sincere loyalty to the nation and virtuous sacrifice, and with the implication of a possibility of interracial marriages after a touching exploration of the historical city, Puyŏ, the four characters—Eisuke, Mitsue, Paek-hŭi, and Genjō, Mitsue's brother—confirm their love for the country, Japanese empire, and promise their future.

The currently available film rolls of *You and I*, which lasts about twenty-six minutes, shows three disconnected scenes that should be regarded as the film's key scenes. The film begins with a typical battle scene that features the aerial point-of-view shots from a jet fighter and a series of bombings. As the long-lasting hard-edged battle scene, which ends with a soldier's heroic death, cuts to a peaceful and bright training camp set in contemporary Korea, the film shows a group of volunteer soldiers who are marching fervently, expressing their patriotic willingness to give their lives to save their country. The overtly artificial tone of the anecdotes they tell about how each desperately tried to be taken into the army, are mirrored by the unnatural portrayal of Korean ladies in the camp town, who insist on giving food to the soldiers and pay respect to a military officer by bowing all the way down to the ground in the street. What has developed into an oddly warm opening scene wraps up with two short inserts of humorous Korean seesaw play between the soldiers and the women, and the Korean traditional swing, which are clearly selected to represent local color.

The highlighting of the excellence of *naisen ittai* through the ancient historical relation between the Japanese and Koreans involves the symbol of Puyŏ. Puyŏ, a city located in the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula, was a 'sacred' place during the colonial era that signified *naisen ittai* through alleged historical evidence. The capital of an ancient kingdom, Paekche (B.C. 18 – A.D. 660), Puyŏ was characterized as a historical site where Koreans had had a significant relation with ancient Japan, as some of the Paekche people moved to Japan when the state fell to the forces of another kingdom, Silla. After semigovernmental institutions excavated historical sites of the old kingdom such as castle remnants in Puyŏ in the 1920s, the city was developed as a tourist attraction and promoted throughout the empire. When Japan looked for a location to make *Jingū Shrine* outside the island of Japan to celebrate the 2600th year since Emperor Jinmu's enthronement, Puyŏ with its significant historical interchange was selected as the perfect symbol of *naisen ittai*. When Mitsue, Eisuke, and Paek-hŭi are sightseeing at the Paengma River near Puyŏ in the film, the historical meaning of Puyŏ is combined with its natural beauty. Through their dialogue about the well-known suicides at this beautiful river by the female servants of Paekche's last king, out of shame at the surrender of their country, the film highlights how loyal the Korean people have been to their kings and at the same time insinuates they will be to the emperor as well. With the scene providing a kind of tourist perspective, with the traditional Korean folk songs

being performed by Eisuke and an unexpected passenger, Ri Koran, who appears as a guest star, the beauty and historical significance of Puyŏ function to praise the unity of Korea and Japan.

The enthusiastic participation, not only by the Korean volunteers but also by the too-harmonious Korean communities, in the imperialist war effort and *naisen ittai* movement that *You and I* presents could be understood by a present-day audience as what the colonial power most desired to observe in Korean cinema. Nevertheless, neither *Volunteer* nor *You and I* successfully appealed to either ordinary Japanese or the colonial authorities, mainly because of the films' failure to present a cogent logic of spiritual process through which the colonized man finds his dedication to the nation urgent and rewarding. High mentions that the critics in Tokyo remained silent after the premiere of the film, knowing it was dangerous to criticize a government-sponsored work. He quotes Hazumi Tsuneo's carefully written review that states "in such films, artistic merit is a bonus. The central criterion for evaluating it should focus on how effectively it presents its message. Thus, to say that it is indeed effective is the highest form of praise."[107] The film was a total failure both at the box office and with critics in Japan, while in Korea, at least, a great number of mobilized students did fill the theaters. It may

[107] Hazumi Tsuneo, "Eigakai jigen," *Nihon eiga* (December 1941): 63, referred from High, *Imperial Screen*, 312.

have been the film's depiction of society that resulted in the unsatisfactory response in Japan—for full-fledged imperial citizens, the portrayal of colonial people as citizens on a par with the Japanese would be viewed dimly. In the following remarks, Hŏ expresses the overly idealistic and potentially dangerous idea that Koreans and Japanese could as equals form the leaders of the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere:

> We made this film in Korea with the intention of furthering the nation's initiative [of war] on the foundation of the overflowing patriotism and imperialized sincerity [of Koreans].... If this film can successfully deliver a picture of the true state of Korea, I believe it can not only elevate and ameliorate the general Japanese recognition about Korea but also deepen that of people in Manchuria and China regarding the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.… The film's title—*You and I*—suggests our resolution that you, the Japanese, and I, the Koreans, should firmly clasp each other's hands and serve as the cornerstone of the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. [108]

However, Imperial Japan never intended to construct an East Asian sphere that precluded discriminatory measures against non-Japanese ethnic groups and to co-prosper with them. *Naisen ittai* ideology was not invented to bring about the treatment of Koreans as Japanese; Hŏ's Korean-centered view on how the empire

[108] Hŏ Yŏng, "*Kimi to boku* rŭl malhanŭn chwadamhoe," *Samch'ŏlli* (September 1941), 114-15.

would flourish based on harmony among multiple Asian nations would have created a huge problem for a Japan intent on maintaining the imperial hierarchy. The sincerity of the patriotism felt on the Korean side in the film industry was destined to be rejected, as it was grounded in a deep misunderstanding. The reception of *Volunteer* and *You and I* show that the naivete of Korean-made volunteer films concerning Korean ambition for social mobility in the imperial order as being out of the question from the point of view of Japanese society.

Chapter 4

Orphans as Metaphor: Colonial Realism in Ch'oe In-gyu's Children Trilogy

> Yŏng-dal: Grandma, do not worry.... I am not the only one who cannot pay the tuition—there must be mo[re]. (bursts into tears)
>
> Grandmother: (weeping) It's all because of my ill-luck.… Do not cry.
>
> Yŏng-dal: I am okay. I just feel sorry for you that you even have to worry about me. (crying more loudly)

In *Tuition* (*Suŏmnyo*, 1940), written by the prestigious Japanese scriptwrite Yagi Yasutarō and directed by Ch'oe In-gyu, Yŏng-dal, the boy protagonist, becomes tearful multiple times. A smart and selfless elementary schooler, he has to take care of his ill grandmother because his parents have moved away to make money. The burden of coming up with the money for his schooling, the rent for their home, and the food they eat exhausts him physically and mentally. In the dialogue above, from one of the frequent lachrymose scenes of the film, the helpless grandmother blames herself for her 'ill luck,' which has caused the grandson's suffering and sorrow, and the warmhearted boy for his part feels guilty for his grandmother's self-accusation. As their pain deepens, a mood of depression and

sadness prevails in the film—however, the boy never loses his naivete and cheerful demeanor.

Oftentimes a child-focused film falls into the trap of treating the child as an emotional vehicle of adults—as the being through which grown-ups reflect on their lost innocence and purity, or whom the world should protect because she or he cannot fend for her or himself. *Tuition*, however, does not operate on either premise; it narrates a series of tasks so overwhelming for the child protagonist that tears are the only response he can offer. In this regard, *Tuition* might remind the present-day audience of the films by Abbas Kiarostami (1940 – 2016), the prestigious Iranian director, which present a child's life as a world of suffering of 'his or her own' kind due to irresponsible adults and an insensitive society. Within the 'child cinema' tradition of postrevolution Iranian cinema, Kiarostami frequently turns to child-centered stories as a means of avoiding strict censorship and revealing the problems of contemporary Iranian society in an oblique way.[109] Unlike his peers, however, who use children as vehicles for the critique of society, Kiarostami depicts the world of children as self-contained in which the kids are

[109] According to Hamid Naficy, the humanist Iranian cinema that has been internationally acclaimed is "intimately tied to children and women—traditional subordinates." Those films that feature child characters are usually categorized as "[f]ilms *for* children, films *about* children, films in which children are *substitutes* for adults or a *pretext* for dealing with adult issues, and films *with* children acting in them." Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema 4: The Globalizing Era, 1984-2010* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 208, 209.

agents with regard to the given task no matter how trivial it might look to the audiences. *Where Is the Friend's Home?* (1987), for example, shows how hard a little boy tries to make amends for his mistake, which could result in his friend being expelled from school through the narrative of his attempt to return a notebook the friend needs to do the homework due the following day. He gets lost in the neighboring town, as the residents there offer very little assistance; nevertheless, the issue is resolved at the end of the film when he finally finishes his mission. Through the successful completion of the child-driven task, with all the hardships overcome, the film establishes the world of children as having its own integral causes, reasons, and adversity and as such the judgment or intervention of adults is precluded.

When viewed in light of Kiarostami's oeuvre, *Tuition* can be understood as dealing with the pervasive neglect and dereliction of duty on the part of the public, societal power, to one's surprise, in a very strikingly direct way. While Iranian cinema imposes tasks appropriate to its child characters, the boy protagonist of *Tuition* is overwhelmed with responsibilities he cannot fulfill: to support his ill grandmother and himself financially, and to enroll himself in school in order to, in essence, grow into a qualified imperial citizen. In other words, Yŏng-dal in *Tuition* struggles with the problems that the state is supposed to take care of—education and the alleviation of poverty—without questioning why he, a ten-year-old boy, must be the one who handles them. What should be

noted is that the film never indicts anyone for the boy's hardship, thus obscuring the harsh reality marked by the absence of proper social protections for a marginalized class. For instance, neither the landlord nor Yŏng-dal's schoolteacher, who inadvertently shame him by questioning why he cannot pay the rent or tuition, is singled out for blame; nor are his parents condemned for not sending money home, since they are facing terrible problems themselves. In this unbelievably ideal world peopled by nice folks with good hearts, Yŏng-dal and his grandmother nevertheless have to suffer. The spontaneous solution of the film, which has the boy borrowing money from a relative, seems to conveniently put an end to the boy's troubles, but still the question remains: are the hardships the boy faces due to either the grandmother's or the boy's 'ill luck' or 'fate'?

While there is no clear identification of the cause of an innocent child's suffering, the tears function as a social critique and a means for visual realism in the film that represents the inexpressible sadness and desperation of the people at the bottom rung of society. Even though the boy's burdens derive from national and governmental failures, the social and political structure that gives rise to them is totally invisible in *Tuition*. The victims here are thus not able to address the perpetrators, for there is no identifiable individual, and the bigger structure that causes poverty is imperceptible to them. The tears of the boy and grandmother, therefore, must be shed in those frustrating moments: an emotional solution is the only possible way that the powerless can choose to confront the invisible

perpetrator—the uncaring state—as one cannot assign blame verbally, particularly in the climate of authoritarian wartime colonial politics. Even when crying, they are unable to articulate the degree to which poverty is endemic in Korea in such a way that they can be interpreted as revealing social truth, as exemplified in the boy's statement, "I am not the only one who cannot pay the tuition—there must be mo[re]…" In the original Korean line "*Suŏmnyo mot naenŭn ae ka ŏdi na hana ppun i…*," the boy suddenly stops before saying "mo[re children]." He is, in other words, not allowed to 'speak up' about the reality; instead, the words that would underscore the pathetic poverty and inhumane condition of children in Korea are replaced by his sudden crying, transmuting the meaning of the words into an emotional representation. The audience is left to 'hear' the words by 'seeing' his tears.

This chapter analyzes what I call the child trilogy—*Tuition* (1940), *Homeless Angel* (1941), and *Love and Vow* (1945)—written by Japanese writers and officials and directed by Ch'oe In-gyu in order to interrogate the ways in which the realism of the colonial Korean cinema was unwittingly revealed through the representation of children as (pseudo-)orphans.[110] The orphan

[110] Ch'oe In-gyu's children trilogy originally seems to have included *Tuition*, *Homeless Angel*, and *Children of the Sun* (1944), all of which center on children's stories, although he never intended to make them a 'trilogy.' This chapter, however, deals with the first two films and *Love and Vow*, instead of *Children of the Sun*, which is believed to be missing and about which there is very little information. Although *Love and Vow* features an adolescent boy, it shares common elements and themes with other films of Ch'oe, such as

metaphor is linked to the motif of adoption in the narrative of a helpless colonial child's being taken in by a Japanese family and ultimately, the acquisition of legitimate citizenship in the imperial home. These themes became more obvious in the later period as the war dragged on and the effort to recruit more colonial manpower intensified. The presentation of tears shed by uncared-for children is one of the most dramatic and effective practices for the successful concealing of the war-mobilization agenda. Through an analysis of how the trilogy valorizes the orphan-adoptive parent relationship between young Koreans and 'fatherly' Japan, this chapter probes the ways in which the Korean male subject was reconfigured by Japanese intellectuals—from the homeless being to the model colonial subject—during the Asian-Pacific War, and how spontaneously colonial realism was constructed in that procedure as a result.

This chapter examines the trilogy within two contexts: the exploration of orphan relief in the world cinema of the time, on the one hand, and the Japanese imperial discourse on Korean "little citizens (KR. *sogungmin*; JP. *shōkokumin*)" on the other. Orphan relief work was a common topic in global cinema during the 1930s and 1940s as witnessed in films made in Russia, Europe, America, and Japan. The subject of orphans and homeless children had emerged as a significant

orphanhood, the suffering of street kids, the metaphor of adoption, and the effort to rehabilitate homeless children under the umbrella of the state.

problem in many societies as a result of the Great Depression, wars, global industrialization, and rapid urbanization. Foreign films that engaged with child and teenage issues were released in Japan and Korea mostly in 1939 and 1940, after which point the number of imported foreign films drastically diminished by the implementation of a law setting film quotas, providing a context in which *Homeless Angel* and *Tuition* were made and favorably viewed by the movie-going public. Orphan relief as a theme in Korean filmic culture was bound up with the "little citizens" discourse, which endorsed the metaphor of adoption in the trilogy as well as in Ch'oe's postcolonial works, the so-called "liberation films (*haebang yŏnghwa*)." In anticipation of a long and involved war, the colonial state sought to mold the younger generation of Koreans into reliable military human resources by fortifying the imperialization project in multiple directions. In order to be reborn with imperial subjecthood, the "little citizens" in Korean cinema were characterized as those neglected by their Korean parents, who would grow by learning Japanese language and history. Fluent in Japanese and armed with patriotism, the "little citizens" of Korea were called to the 'sacred war' waged by their 'fatherland' Japan in late-colonial cinema.

Ch'oe In-gyu and the Controversy over Realism

Ch'oe In-gyu (1911 – 1950?) is regarded as the most significant Korean director during the last years of the colonial era. With a career spanning the era of colonial rule to the postcolonial era under the United States Army Military Government in Korea (1945 – 1948) and the regime of the first South Korean President Rhee Syng Man, Ch'oe made a number of fiction films and documentaries for three different powers—imperial Japan, the postwar American occupation force, and the newly established South Korean government. Just like most of those who participated in the making of imperialist, war propaganda films, he was not punished for his antinational activities after the colonial era. In fact, until recent years, Ch'oe was revered as "an excellent realist auteur" of Korean cinema, who resisted colonialism through realist filmmaking to reveal the violence of Japanese rule, even compared to the Italian neorealist film auteurs. He taught film technology and directing to the next generation of directors, including Sin Sang-ok, Chŏng Ch'ang-hwa and Hong Sŏng-gi, all of whom later became central figures in the so-called 'golden age' of Korean cinema, until he went missing in 1950 amidst the Korean War. Because his legacy, rooted in pro-Japanese film production, was ironically pivotal to the founding of postwar South Korean cinema in the 1950s and 1960s, the false evaluation of Ch'oe's colonial films as 'anti-Japanese' was silently acknowledged among film historians and was considered a significant chapter in national cultural history. Therefore, given his proactive choice to collaborate with state power—whether Japanese or Korean—

in the different phases of national history, looking at Ch'oe's colonial cinema will give clues on how to understand the relationship between Korean cinema and the nation.

As a native-born and self-trained film technician, Ch'oe In-gyu became the most significant Korean director of total mobilization-era Korea (1938 – 1945). Unlike most of the directors of his time, he did not have any kind of film training in Japan. Ch'oe was born and raised in Yŏngbyŏn, P'yŏngan-pukto where his father, Ch'oe T'ae-gyŏng, worked as a high-level police officer, and studied in P'yŏngyang, one of the biggest cities in northern Korea. Well-known as a machine enthusiast, Ch'oe held various jobs that involved mechanical operations, including taxi driver, film projectionist, and recording specialist, before committing to film directing. He became interested in cinema while watching Western films in the local theater in Sinŭiju where he worked as a projectionist and taught himself cinematic languages through those repetitive viewings. Together with his older brother, Ch'oe Wan-gyu, he founded the Koryŏ Film Company in 1935 in Sinŭiju, a city near the border with China, but soon moved to Seoul to learn film production as a crew member under Yi P'il-u, the most advanced Korean technician of the era. As he started his career in Seoul, Ch'oe let her wife, Kim Sin-jae, debuted as a film actress in 1937 and she became one of the most active and popular stars during wartime. He made his first film, *Borderline* (*Kukkyŏng*; missing), in 1939, which is known as a romance action

genre film set in a town near the border with China. With his second, *Tuition* (1940), and third films, *Homeless Angel* (1941), receiving positive reviews not only in Korea but also in Japan, Ch'oe became the most well-known and influential Korean director in both countries, which resulted in his, as well as his wife's, active participation in the so-called "national policy films (*kokusaku eiga*)" during the Total War era. He directed two more films at the end of the Pacific War, *Children of the Sun* (KR. *T'aeyang ŭi adŭldŭl*; JP. *Taiyō no kodomotachi*, 1944) and *Love and Vow* (KR. *Sarang kwa maengse*; JP. *Ai to chikai*, 1945).[111]

As mentioned earlier, Ch'oe In-gyu was characterized by postliberation Korean critics as a proponent of realism who revealed the harsh reality of colonial Korea during the war. The most well-known treatment of Ch'oe is by Yi Yŏng-il, a film historian of the 1960s, who compares his films with Italian neorealist cinema:

[111] Ch'oe's other works during the late-colonial period include: *Record of Life* (*Tosaengnok*, 1938) and *Song for a Rich Year* (*P'ungnyŏn'ga*; 1942) as a producer; *Suicide Troops in Watchtower* (*Bōrō no kesshitai*; dir. Imai Tadashi, 1943) as an assistant director; and a few other unrealized projects. *Mountain of Evil*, written by the scriptwriter Nishiki Motosada (who had written *Homeless Angel*) around 1943, was set in an American-owned mine in Korea and recounted the Koreans' fight against the enemy, the United States, but was not made into a film. One more film, an untitled work set in Manchuria, was planned but never made.

> The director Ch'oe In-gyu, who made *Tuition* and *Homeless Angel*, was an excellent realist auteur.… I remember scenes from the film [*Tuition*] when I watched it in China. While foreign films were bright and interesting, Korean cinema was so sad and pathetic that I used to get angry and shed tears. … It [*Tuition*] did a good job of describing the poverty of 1930s Korea through the innocence of childhood. *Homeless Angel* reminds us of neorealism [in Italy]. Images of poor homeless children's lives remind us of the children in the postwar Italian cinema. (Emphasis mine) [112]

Yi's evaluation was roundly criticized by present-day scholars when the film became unexpectedly available in 2005 in Korea, about sixty years after its initial release. After being returned to South Korea in 2005, *Homeless Angel*, along with other recently unearthed films, have been at the center of a fierce debate on colonial Korean cinema historiography. Where the film was championed by first-generation film historians as an exemplary film that 'resisted' Japanese rule through its depiction of the brutal reality of colonial Korea, audiences of 2000s Korea found the last sequence of the film, in which a group of Korean children loudly memorize "Oath of the Imperial Subject (KR. *hwangguk sinmin sŏsa*; JP. *kōkoku shinmin no seishi*)" in front of the Japanese flag, perplexing. The film as a whole, in fact, was full of wartime iconography and cinematic practices that highlight the attempt to restructure ordinary people's everyday life into a kind of

[112] Yi Yŏng-il, *Yi Yŏng-il ŭi Han'guk yŏnghwasa kangŭirok* (Seoul: Sodo, 2002) 148–49.

military one, as many scholars have already pointed out.[113] What the children experience in the orphanage resembles army trainees' daily routine in a barrack, as they must keep to a rigid schedule of waking up, eating, working, and sleeping, and in the military-style scenes of marching and performing tasks. In other words, *Homeless Angel* is, regardless of the content of its ending sequence, a text that most definitely reflects and embraces the political tenor of the era, given the militarist elements that permeate the rehabilitation of homeless children. The following accounts by various figures from different periods epitomize the changing discourses surrounding Ch'oe's *Homeless Angel* and *Tuition*:

> The film was never made to target the Korean laborer audiences living in the interior of Japan. Our true aim was to depict the current scene in Seoul as it was and to suggest that vagrant children could become good imperial citizens if they received good care."
> (Producer Yi Ch'ang-yong on *Homeless Angel*, 1941; Emphasis mine)[114]

> It went to a lot of trouble to make a film [*Tuition*] with the purpose of appealing to some sensible (*ttŭt innŭn*) people in Japan; I wanted let them know about the tough measurement of tyrannical Japanese Imperialism like, for example, charging our young and innocent little citizens school fees.… No record of which exists in Japan!… Why should only streets in Korea be flooded with

[113] See Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk t'uyŏnghanŭn singminji* (Seoul: Samin, 2006), 206-42.

[114] "Chōsen eiga shin taisei juritsu no tameni (zadankai)," *Eiga junpo* 30 (November 1941): 16.

homeless people? My true intention was to protest against the Japanese politicians concerning this matter through the film." (Director Ch'oe In-gyu on *Tuition*, 1948; Emphasis mine)[115]

"Ch'oe In-gyu made films using the techniques of Neo Realism even before the latter arrived in Korea… It should be noted that cinema in the form of realism is a film auteur's final line of resistance in the era of such brutal militarism.… Ch'oe continued the shining tradition of realism even under the extremely destitute environment of the suffocating late-colonial era and the chaos of the post-liberation time."
(Film historian Yi Yŏng-il on *Tuition* and *Homeless Angel*, 1968; Emphasis mine)[116]

"I was confused, watching this film, which has long been celebrated, prior to its recovery [in 2005], as a film that revealed the suffering of Koreans under colonial rule, [when] it actually includes scenes of Japanese flags and the Oath of Japanese Imperial Subject. It was not because of the fact that it was proved to be a pro-Japanese film ... but because of our own madness in which we praised it as a film of realism, enlightenment, or something like that.... Now, what we have believed to be history is revealed as just an 'institutional memory'—what a Korean film historian should do is to objectively evaluate the academic paradigm that fabricated the memory and reconstitute the history that has been concealed and forgotten because of that forgery.
(Film scholar Kim Yŏ-sil on *Homeless Angel*, 2006; Emphasis mine)[117]

[115] Ch'oe In-gyu, "Kukkyŏng es tongnip chŏnya e - sip yŏ nyŏn ŭi na ŭi yŏnghwa chasŏ," *Samch'ŏlli* 5 (September 1948): 18.

[116] Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* (Seoul: Sodo, 2004), 202.

[117] Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk*, 12.

The contentions about the colonial films of Ch'oe in the production statements and the perceptions of them by later-generation scholars reveal how a history is established through diverse actors and the long, complicated process of interpretation. The quotes here show the historical moments in which various political interpretations of a film are deployed. In the above quotes, the intentions were explained differently by different subjects according to the political atmosphere of their time, just as the initial scholarly interpretation was exposed as being inconsistent, depending on the changed material conditions and varied cultural-political needs.

Curiously, however, recent scholarship has failed to address the question of realism, the topic that has dominated Korean film historiography since the 1960s, when it comes to Ch'oe's repatriated films. While the obvious collaborationist accounts and brazen excuses of Producer Yi Ch'ang-yong and Director Ch'oe, respectively, have been often taken by recent scholars as proof of the films' pro-Japanese intentions, the reason why Yi Yŏng-il considered the films to be examples of colonial cinema's realism have never been seriously questioned. Kim Yŏ-sil, notably among the younger generation of film scholars, did attribute film historians' remembrance of *Homeless Angel* as a realist film to "madness." Yet there exists one truth permeating all the explained 'purposes' of the filmmakers and the academic interpretations of them in later years: the reality of children suffering from poverty, abuse, or homelessness. Even if the films

focus on, as the producer implied, how to bring forth 'loyal imperial citizens' in colonial Korea, the undeniable fact is that the dimensions of the tormented experience by Korean children are deployed throughout the films through the depiction of the "current scenery of Seoul as it is" (Yi) and a big street that is "flooded with homeless people" (Ch'oe), and also through revelation of the colonial government's policy of "charging [poor students] school fees." As long as the agonies of young Koreans are taken as the main subject, the films cannot help but disclose the cruel fate of these marginalized subjects in colonial Korean society.

The perplexing responses to 'realism' in *Tuition* and *Homeless Angel*—presented both intentionally and unintentionally—have rendered double-sided readings of the film. In their studies of Ch'oe In-gyu's films, emergent researchers of the 2000s use such terms to interpret the complicatedness as "hybridity," "ambivalence," "double-consciousness," or "non-homogeneity."[118] Differing with Kim Yŏ-sil or Kang Sŏng-nyul, who strongly condemned the films in labeling them as indubitably "pro-Japanese films (*ch'inil yŏnghwa*)," the group of scholars

[118] Chang Su-gyŏng, "Ilche malgi han'guk yŏnghwa e nat'anan honjongsŏng: *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa* wa *Chiwŏnbyŏng* ŭl chungsim ŭro," *Munhak kwa yŏngsang* 9, no. 2 (August 2008): 409; Sŏ Tong-su, "Adong yŏnghwa *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa* wa hyŏngisanghakchŏk sinch'e ŭi kihoek," *Tonghwa wa pŏnyŏk* 18 (December 2009): 148; Chu Ch'ang-gyu, "'Ihaengjŏk ch'inil yŏnghwa (1940-1943)' rosŏ *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa* ŭi ijung ŭisik e taehan yŏn'gu: singminji p'asijŭm ŭi sigaksŏng kwa kyunyŏl ŭl chungsim ŭro," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 43 (March 2010): 355; Chang U-jin, "Ch'oe in-gyu yŏnghwa ŭi pul kyunjilsŏng: yŏnghwasachŏk ŭimi rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 44 (June 2010): 281.

commonly point out the multilayered political and aesthetic meanings in Ch'oe's colonial and postcolonial cinema that cannot be completely attributed to either full collaboration nor savvy resistance. Even while critiquing the imperialist project that is practiced visually through the images and characterizations, the scholars also recognize the cracks in this project that the film inevitably reveals. My interpretation echoes their interpretations in terms of the text's indeterminacy and elusiveness; yet this chapter is more concerned with the purpose-bending strategy of the realism and the melodramatic moments of the shedding of tears.

A Japanese Writer, a Korean Director, and a Global Trend

> "*Tuition* is the first Korean children's film. This film is the Korean version of *Composition Class, The Redhead*."[119]
>
> "Would you please watch this film [*Tuition*] in comparison with *Composition Class*?"[120]
>
> "*Homeless Angel*—the unprecedented masterpiece of Korean cinema that surpasses *Road to Life* from the Soviet Union, *Dead End* from the U.S., and *Introspection Tower*."[121]

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[119] From an advertisement for *Tuition* in *Tōkyō eiga shinbun* 276 (August 1940). The French film *The Redhead* (*Poil de Carotte*) was released as *Ninjin* (carrot) in Japan in 1932. It, directed by Julien Duvivier, deals with the suffering of unloved children.

[120] From an advertisement in *Kinema junpo* 714 (May 1, 1940).

[121] *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe wa yŏnghwa sin ch'eje 1936-1941*, edited by Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn (Seoul: Han'guk yŏngsang charyowŏn, 2007), 119.

> "Same theme as *Introspection Tower*, *Boys Town*, and *Road to Life*. Simple but strong expression!"[122]

Tuition and *Homeless Angel* were promoted upon their release in Japan in comparison with Japanese and Western films that featured stories of children, as the quotes above demonstrate. These magazine advertisements showcase the contextualization of the two films in relation to well-regarded examples of foreign cinema. The Japanese film, *Composition Class* (*Tsuzurikata kyōshitsu*; dir. Yamamoto Kajiro, 1938) is cited here because it, too, takes up the subject of a child in a poor family and for being an adaptation of a famous piece of nonfiction. *Homeless Angel*, a film about orphans and a pastor/social worker, was likened to *Introspection Tower* (*Mikaeri no tō*; dir. Shimizu Hiroshi, 1941) because of its story of a reform school and teacher-student relations. American, Soviet, and European films were also mentioned by way introducing, such as *Dead End*, *Boys Town*, *Road to Life*, and *The Redhead*, all of which center on children's lives under conditions of abandonment and poverty. In this way, Ch'oe's two films treating the hardships faced by children were promoted as Korean cinema's achievement of contemporaneity with the global cinema.

[122] *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe*, 127.

The characterization of Ch'oe's films as counterparts to Japanese or Western cinema was a shrewd strategy of the film distributor, but the films' successful entry into the Japanese film market was possible because of the new system founded by a perceptive film executive, Yi Ch'ang-yong. A review of *Homeless Angel* by the film critic Paek Hwang points out two important changes in filmmaking practice in Korea that were manifested in the production of *Homeless Angel*: the adoption of a theme with global currency (relief efforts for homeless/troubled children) and the advent of the executive producer in the film industry.

> Koryŏ Film Company's *Homeless Angel* is based on an original screenplay by Nishiki Motosada[,] who produced *Tuition*. The story is based on the efforts of Hyangninwŏn, an institution for homeless children located in Hongjeoe-ri in Seoul that is run by Mr. Pang Su-wŏn. It attracted public attention when its story was introduced in *Kyŏngsŏng ilbo*. This kind of theme is not at all rare[,] because we still remember some fine foreign films on this topic. For example, there were an American film, *Boys Town,* and a French film, *Prison without Bars*. The only way *Homeless Angel* differs from these movies is that it is made in a different location and reality—Korea. It can be said that the range of subjects in Korean cinema has been broadened.… I think the film provided a stimulus to the world of Korean film production[, which] was progressing under the Film Directive. That is because this film was based on the firm foundation of the executive producer system ["planning"; KR. *kihoek*; JP. *kikaku*][, which] is different from the

> conventional way of film production that relied only on the film crews' passion and efforts. (Emphasis mine) [123]

The former, as will be explained in the next section, allowed for the promotion of *Homeless Angel* as a Korean counterpart of the internationally claimed cinemas. It was made possible by the latter, the executive producer system, which was called either as a system of "planning" (*kihoek*) or "producer's" (*pŭrodyusŏ*) system. The methodical and thorough planning of a film, from the choice of scriptwriter to the distribution schedule (which minimized production time and cost) has long been argued by many filmmakers and critics to have been pivotal to Korean cinema's industrialization and production rationalization. The first successful executive producer, who rose to prominence in the late 1930s was a Korean national, Yi Ch'ang-yong. It should be mentioned that Nishiki Motosada, a Japanese official with a gift for script writing, functioned as a kind of supporter of Yi and a mediator between Yi's efforts and the colonial government's vision.

Ch'oe In-gyu's late-colonial career is closely connected to the career advancements of Yi Ch'ang-yong and Nishiki Motodada. Yi, or Japanese name Hirokawa Sōyō, was a leading entrepreneur who possessed a good sense of how the film business worked in colonial Korea. He was born in 1907 in Hoeryŏng,

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[123] Paek Hwang, "Yŏnghwa sip'yŏng *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa*," *Yinmun p'yŏngnon* (April 1941): 50.

Hamgyŏng-puk Province in northern Korea. After moving to Seoul and meeting Na Un-gyu and Yun Pong-ch'un, both of whom were also from Hoeryŏng, Yi worked as a cameraman on a few films by Na during the 1920s before moving to Kyoto, Japan, and joining Shinkō Kinema. After coming back to Korea in the early 1930s, Yi started a new career as a film distributor, which, according to Yi's accounts, was very important to the development of the Korean film industry and not surprisingly was consistently profitable. His dream was, just like many others in his field at the time, to become a successful film entrepreneur (*kiŏpka*) and bring about the industrialization (*kiŏphwa*) of the Korean film business. Nishiki Motosada first appeared on the scene in Korea when he was hired by the Book Department of the Government-General in Korea as a contract employee (*shokutaku* in Japanese). While Nishiki's career prior to becoming a *shokutaku* is unknown, it is assumed he entered employment with the colonial government because of the Book Department (JP. *toshoka*)'s special role as a maker of cultural products after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out—a scriptwriter sent from the government side to participate in civilian film productions.[124]

[124] After being the 'planner (*kihoek*)' of *Tuition*, Nishiki wrote the scripts for Ch'oe's *Homeless Angel* and *Children of Sun*, as well as other films including *Yard of Victory* (dir. Pang Han-jun, 1940, missing), *Look Up the Sky* (dir. Kim Yŏng-hwa, 1943, missing), and *Mr. Soldiers* (dir. Pang Han-jun, 1944).

Koryŏ Film Association (*Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe*) established by Yi Ch'ang-yong in 1936 broke new ground in film production in Korea by differentiating itself from other studios whose output remained largely local color cinema. Starting with the successful theatrical release of *Wanderer* (KR. *Nagŭne*; title of Japan release, *Tabiji*) in Japan in 1937, a series of films were made that highlighted the unique rural landscape of Korea and the traditional, if sometimes backward, iconographies of Korean clothes and customs, targeting a broader Japanese market. These appealed to the desire for the exotic on the part of Japanese audiences, yet the inner-orientalizing curiosity of Japanese for the anachronistic images of an underdeveloped Korea's scenery soon evaporated as the cinematic value of the films were acknowledged to be unsatisfactory. Chang U-jin points out that *Homeless Angel* responded to the interest of Japanese audiences in contemporary Korea's dynamic modern urban culture. It was a refreshing change from the vast majority of Korean films of the 1930s that depicted the country's local color, such as *Han'gang* (*Han River*) and *Sŏnghwangdang* (*Village Shrine*).[125] Yi, who possessed an advanced sense of what audiences, especially those in the colonial government and the Japanese metropole, wanted to see from Korean cinema, took their preferences into account in his production of *Tuition* in 1938. Upon receiving favorable reactions, Yi made

[125] Chang U-jin, "Ch'oe In-gyu yŏnghwa ŭi pul kyunjilsŏng: yŏnghwasachŏk ŭimi rŭl chungsim ŭro," *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* 44 (June 2010): 292–95.

another child-centered story, *Homeless Angel*, set in contemporary Korea and conveying the current of political needs in the wartime.

The outpouring of portrayals of local color by 1930s Korean cinema is understood as results of an attempt by the local film industry in the talkie era to expand its market by appealing to foreign filmgoers' interest in the exotic, ultimately in order to make enough profit to support the high production cost of sound films.[126] The desire to cultivate foreign markets was aligned with the filmmakers' long-held dream of establishing a film company with sufficient infrastructure, capital, and human talent to sustain itself. Koryŏ Film Association came the closest to realizing this hope: it boasted the best studio of the time in Korea (although it was far behind those of mainland Japan), the best personnel (well-trained technicians and the top executive), and a modest amount of capital. However, the company's endeavor to appeal to the colonial authorities by making films imbued with so-called 'pro-Japanese' sentiment never quite gained the approval of the imperial regime, and later its film production was subsumed under the government-controlled film enterprise, Chosŏn Film Corporation, in 1942 within the context of the total war system. Therefore, viewing Koryŏ Film Association's efforts as a 'successful failure' in terms of adapting to the new film

[126] For a discussion of cinema trends in Korea in the sound era such as 'local color' films, see Yi Hwa-jin, *Chosŏn yŏnghwa: sori ŭi toip esŏ ch'inil yŏnghwa kkaji* (Seoul: Ch'aek sesang, 2005), 71-92.

environment, this chapter probes the ways in which the films by Ch'oe In-gyu juggled a newer, contemporary, and political filmmaking and the endeavor to address colonial audiences with 'Korean' matters.

Tuition: Training a New 'Little Citizen'

Based on an award-winning essay by U Su-yŏng, a Korean schoolboy, Koryŏ Film Association's *Tuition* was an outgrowth of collaboration between Japanese and Korean filmmakers, one that was facilitated by a government official. [127] A fourth-grade elementary school student, U Su-yŏng wrote an essay about his poor family and the difficulty they had paying the school tuition, for which he won an award from the 'Director of the Education Bureau of the Government-General' in a contest held by the Kyŏngil Elementary School Students Newspaper (*Kyŏngil sohaksaeng sinmun*) in 1939. Nishiki Motosada, who found the boy's essay appealing, requested that Yagi Yasutarō, a Japanese scriptwriter renowned for his work on literary films (*bungei eiga*) such as *Spring on a Small Island* (*Kojima no haru*), produce a script for a film adaptation.

[127] A portion of *Tuition* was directed by Pang Han-jun due to Ch'oe's illness.

Figure. 4-1. An advertisement of *Tuition* in *Maeil sinbo* on April 30, 1940

Figure. 4-2. An advertisement of *Tuition* on *Maeil sinbo* on May 1, 1940

The film adaptation of U Su-yŏng's essay in Korea was regarded as timely, as a similar Japanese film, *Composition Class* (*Tsuzurikata kyōsitsu*), had galvanized Japanese society just a few years earlier. Upon the publication of U

Su-yŏng's essay in *Kyŏngsŏng ilbo* (JP. *Keijō nippo*) on March 19, 1939, his story became the national phenomenon of the year , being reprinted in the Japanese literary journal *Literary Arts* (*Bungei*) in June and the Korean film magazine *Cinema Theater* (*Yŏnghwa yŏn'gŭk*) in November, and made into a film and plays by both Koreans and Japanese, testifying to the "strangely exaggerated fervor" regarding U's story in both countries.[128] The societal interest in U's essay in both Korea and Japan should be understood not as random but as comparable to the enthusiasm that greeted *Composition Class*, a collection of essays published in Japan a couple of years before. Written by Toyoda Masako, a fourteen-year-old factory girl in an impoverished area in Japan who found her talent through a composition class in school, *Composition Class* became a best seller in 1937. It spurred a booming interest in children's writings among general readers that went beyond the limited readership of children's literature, represented by magazines such as *Red Bird* (*Akai tori*; 1918 – 1936), through its depictions of poverty-stricken family life. Toyoda's prose writings can be located in the final phase of the Life Writing Movement of the working class that had dominated prewar Japanese children's literature.[129] Toyoda's story was adapted into a film with the

[128] Yi Tŏk-ki, "Yŏnghwa *Suŏmnyo* wa Chosŏn yŏnghwa ŭi chwap'yo," *Han'guk kŭk yesul yŏn'gu* 29 (April 2009): 127.

[129] On children's writing in 1920s and 1930s Japan, see Mika Endo, *Pedagogical Experiments with Working Class Children in Prewar Japan* (PhD diss, University of Chicago, 2011).

same title in 1938 by Yamamoto Kajiro, one of the most prestigious filmmakers of the 1930s and 1940s Japan, starring Takamine Hideko who later became a legendary film star throughout the wartime and postwar era.

The project of making a film that centers on a children's story can be also understood as an effort to support the discourse about the "little (national) citizen" (KR. *sogungmin*; JP. *shōkokumin*) that had become significant. After the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, changes in colonial Korean schooling were instituted to strengthen the imperialization effort. The discourse on the state's responsibility to raise good imperial "little citizens," fluent in Japanese and loyal to the empire, called on society to pay more attention to children, not only those of economically comfortable families but also those who were abandoned or in a dismal condition. In particular, those who were not receiving proper care from either their families or institutions were regarded as a potential danger to society.[130] In this context, *Tuition*, which addressed a child living in poverty and how he overcame hardships, received a great deal of attention, with there being a series of advance screenings—a first in the history of Korean cinema.[131]

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[130] For the orphan discourse in Korea during the colonial era, see So Hyŏn-suk, "Kyŏnggye e sŏn koadŭl – koa munje rŭl t'onghae pon ilche sigi sahoe saŏp," *Sahoe wa yŏksa* 73 (2007): 107-141.

[131] Officials in education as well as other intellectuals attended an advance screening two weeks prior to its opening, and other screenings were held in different theaters before its official release. *Maeil sinbo*, April 12, 1940.

The story of *Tuition* centers on the financial difficulties of U Yŏng-dal, the boy protagonist, who is a typical child, naïve and jovial. The film begins with a scene of U Yŏng-dal at school. While playing with balls in the school yard during recess, Yŏng-dal and An Chŏng-hŭi (whose name is pronounced An Teiki according to Sino-Japanese reading) quarrel about something trivial. The two boys are the smartest students in class, rivals, and both from poor families who cannot pay their children's school fees. After being requested by the teacher to stand up and explain why they did not bring their tuition, both do not go to school and spend the day near the river playing, quarreling, and consoling each other. Even though they were not treated badly by the teacher as had been the case in the original essay, which describes the teacher's condemnation as insulting, the two are nonetheless humiliated and hurt and decide to stop going to school and instead read books and study together by the river by themselves.

In the meantime, Yŏng-dal's grandmother strives to make money for the rent and the boy's tuition. However, she gets ill, and the little boy does the cooking and takes care of her. Curious about why the boy has not come to school for days, Yŏng-dal's teacher pays a visit to his home. The teacher kindly gives some money to the grandmother for tuition, but it is soon taken by the landlord. The grandmother finally tells Yŏng-dal to go to his aunt's in P'yŏngt'aek to borrow some money. During his day-long journey on foot to get to his aunt's place, lasting from early morning till sunset, the boy meets kind folks in a town

on the way, sees a passing bus (and envies the people on it), eats lunch by the side of the road, sings a military song he learned at school, and weeps as it gets dark and he is exhausted. After arriving safely in P'yŏngt'aek and being treated to a great dinner by his aunt, the boy returns home happy the next day by bus with money and rice. As he gets home, Yŏng-dal finds gifts from his parents and a letter that says they will be back by *Ch'usŏk,* Korean Thanksgiving Day. The film ends with the parents coming back during the thanksgiving holidays and being reunited with Yŏng-dal, and it seems Yŏng-dal's suffering will end soon.

Figure. 4-3. A still from *Tuition*. A map of Korea and the Japanese archipelago

Yŏng-dal's story of courage and responsibility must be contextualized within the changing political climate of Korea of the early 1940s. While foregrounding the story of a little boy's financial hardship, *Tuition* features the geographical imagery of colonial Korea experiencing a significant shift in

educational policy and the escalation of the war. It maps Korea in the context of the Japanese Empire and underscores locality and mobility, providing geopolitical imagination about Korea in the imperial landscape. Throughout the film, both Japanese and Korean are spoken by the children—the former in the classroom and the latter mostly outside of it. The use of the Japanese language in education followed the revision of Education Decree in 1938, which practically eradicated the Korean language from school and mandated Japanese-only classes to raise Koreans as Japanese-speakers. The linguistic transformation in school, the scenes of geography class, and Yŏng-dal's self-study of Japanese history reveal that the basis of the education the new generation of Koreans are receiving is an imperial one. The imperial understanding of the map of Korean peninsula drawn by the teacher on the chalkboard, in paralleled with the Japanese archipelago, emerges in greater detail through Yŏng-dal's study of the Japanese land. This starts from, as he reads out loud from the textbook, "the 'inland' Japan—the center of Asia—that passes the Korean Peninsula and includes the areas of Manchuria and the Kwantung Leased Territory (on the Liaodong Peninsula)." Evoking the progression of the empire's current war on the Chinese mainland, the 'national' history he learns tells of how fiercely the Japanese army fought against the Mongolian attack in the 13th century. By weaving imperial Japan's historical victory together with the current geographical expansion in the scenes of education—education for both the students via diegesis and the audience—the

film addresses the meaning of the imperial nation for the new young Korean citizens and accentuates the legitimacy of colonial power over the Korean peninsula.

However, the film's rendering of Korea's locality in the panorama of the Great Empire explicitly confronts the contradictory images that testify to the pathetic provincial condition of that proud country. As the teacher's drawing of the vast areas of Japanese territory on the blackboard provides the positional sense of Korea within it, the little boy's domestic road trip from home to P'yŏngt'aek is contextualized, in comparison, in that spatial imagination about Korea. Yŏng-dal's journey is filled with surprise, courage, sadness, and anxiety. To overcome his loneliness and fear in a wooded area, he starts singing a military song about a soldier's advance into the enemy's land and resolution prior to a decisive battle the following day. With images of the warring horses and of troops moving forward, the lyrics of the song serve as an additional example of the recurring motives in the film of mobility and expansion. By end of the song, as well as of his journey, however, Yŏng-dal has burst into tears, reminding the viewers that what he is attempting is very difficult for a child, and consequently he is now discouraged and suffering.

In *Tuition*, wartime Korean cinema (re)constitutes its spectators as courageous and enduring enactors of the national project through its literally

'new' characters, children. Yŏng-dal's suffering is a pitiable yet necessary form of training of a newly rising imperial subject, on the one hand, yet the film inevitably exposes the harsh reality that the empire would not protect marginalized Koreans, on the other. Ch'oe In-gyu's argument that he intended to reveal the "tough measurement of tyrannical Japanese Imperialism," which charges the "young and innocent little citizens tuition," through *Tuition*, in this regard, does possess its own truth although it is generally thought to be a sly excuse for his pro-Japanese activity. With two discordant goals, the film unwittingly or not provides realistic glimpses of the Korea of the time. Yet, I do not agree with the assessment of Yi Yŏng-il, who saw the film "represent[ing] the tendency of realism in the 1930s" Korean cinema, because Yi's nationalist understanding during the postliberation nation-building era implies that Ch'oe's cinema deliberately resisted colonial rule through realist cinema.[132] My perspective acknowledges that film production practice in colonial Korea was tightly controlled by film censors, the police, and government authorities, which in turn gives rise to my reading out and interpretation of the logical fissures.

[132] Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa*, 201. After directing *Tuition,* Ch'oe In-gyu wrote an essay in which he laments the low production standards of Korean cinema and how much he valued the ideas a film conveyed over the form. By "form," he did not mean the aesthetic and formalistic aspect of a film but rather film technology. He writes: "What determines a film is its content[, not the form].… In other words, what I mean by 'content' is what a filmmaker has thought about [during his life] and how he has observed the world as well as human beings." See Ch'oe In-gyu, "Yŏnghwa kamdok ŭi ch'angjak ŭiyok "*Suŏmnyo*" e ŭi ch'ohon," *Chogwang* (September 1939): 184.

Nevertheless, the realistic setting of the story itself, based on a true event, sustains the didactic effect of a story of a boy overcoming adversity set in the difficult time of the country's wartime 'crisis.'

By way of contrast to the Korean audience's interpretation of the film, Yokomitsu Riichi, a representative modernist writer of Japanese New Sensationalism, commented on how the film was viewed by a privileged Japanese intellectual:

> [*Tuition*], Korean Composition *Class* (*Tsuzurikata kyōsitsu*) is tranquil. It features equanimity despite the depiction of the boy's poverty, which makes people think anew about their happiness and unhappiness.[133]

Curiously, *Tuition* was never officially released in Japan in spite of the positive reviews by prominent Japanese media figures after the advance screenings and the film distributor's effort. The reason remains unknown: it is possible that the setting of poverty and "serene" sufferings of a child that Yokomitsu witnessed from the colonial scene would have astonished and dismayed Japanese audiences.

Teaching the proper attitude to Koreans and raising them to become model subjects in an increasingly regimented climate became the central theme of

[133] "Towa sangsa yŏnghwabu t'ongsin—mundan ŭi taegadŭl i moyŏ suŏmnyo rŭl kyŏkch'an," *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe*, 83. The original source of this text is unknown.

wartime Korean cinema. Korean cinema uniquely combined the global contemporary current of children/teens/school films with an educational purpose that was deeply conflated with the process of reconfiguring colonial identities into imperial and militarist subjects. *Homeless Angel* exemplifies the undertaking of duties by Korean orphans in their pseudomilitarist everyday lives as they are molded to fit the new imperial society at war.

Raising Model Citizens: The Cases of America and Japan

Homeless Angel, produced one year after *Tuition*, presents a story of a philanthropist Mr. Pang's dedication to saving street kids and giving orphans' a fresh start in life in Hyangningwŏn. The film begins with a montage of a vibrant, modern city, with images of stylish building facades, neon signs, bustling cars and trollies, and drunken adults stumbling out of bars in the dark back alley of Chongno Street. Inside one bar, Myŏng-ja and Yong-gil, two young siblings, are selling flowers to the depressed and drunken Doctor An, who is separated from his German wife and missing her. Abused psychologically and physically by a group of gangsters, the brother and sister live a pathetic life. Yong-gil, tired of the hunger and abuse, runs away from the gang's den and joins a group of homeless children living under a bridge. Meanwhile, Mr. Pang tries to build an orphanage in the suburb and asks for financial help from Doctor An, his rich brother-in-law.

Once the new home is ready, Mr. Pang gathers and brings street kids, including Yong-gil, to the place to begin a new way of living. He divides the kids into several groups and teaches them how to cook, farm, clean, etc. Some kids, however, get into trouble because of adult scams or run away out of boredom while Mr. Pang tries hard to keep them on the straight and narrow. Yong-gil, one of those who return to street life, is chased by the gangsters, and in an unfortunate accident gets hurt. Myŏng-ja, who has come to live under Doctor An's supervision, reunites with her brother when An visits Hyangninwŏn to cure the boy. In the end, Doctor An is moved by the orphans' efforts, and gives a lecture to the children. Under the Japanese flag, the children recite the "Oath to the Flag" and resolve to be good people. Continuing *Tuition*'s strategy of presenting children as allegorized figures, vulnerable yet potentially loyal and enduring colonial subjects, *Homeless Angel* addresses how to negotiate the realist depiction of Korean social problems—in however limited a fashion—to meet the expectations of colonial government's officials.

Films about children's problems and teenage criminals formed a popular subgenre of the Hollywood gangster movie during the late 1930s and were internationally distributed, including in Japan and Korea. With the popularity of *Dead End*, released in 1937, a number of films dealing with orphanages and reform schools were produced in Hollywood. This genre wove together the gangster movie's typical trope and iconography with a didactic reform melodrama

of juvenile troublemakers.[134] The messages of the reform school and orphanage films were, however, rather complex as most of them strongly criticized the state-run reformatories—as well as American society itself for having given rise to teen gangs. In these films, schools are the places where, ironically, the youth are transformed into criminals by the inhumane treatment and corruption by the school runners, driving the former to escape. In *Dead End*, capitalism, which renders and deepens class divisions and social inequality, is presented as the fundamental issue that causes children to become orphans and criminals. It shows the vicious cycle of American society in which a lower-class community becomes an underworld, literally, due to be placed in the shadow of the high-rise buildings constructed next to it; families are broken up due to financial pressure, putting kids on the street; and abandoned teenagers prey upon the rich. The newspapers in the movies, in addition, portray the juvenile criminals as charismatic gangster heroes, making it all the more likely children will be drawn to a life of crime. A series of the kids-on-the-street films, as a result, accused both the authorities and the media of being irresponsible.

[134] These films often featured the main actors of *Dead End*—the so-called "Dead End Kids" and Humphrey Bogart—to ensure the popularity of such films as *Crime School* (1938), *Boys Town* (1938), *The Angels Wash their Faces* (1939), *Hell's Kitchen* (1939), *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939), and *Men of Boys Town* (1941).

Boys Town, in particular, bears striking resemblance to *Homeless Angel* in terms of storyline and characters. A Catholic priest who has long wished to save street children builds an orphanage in the suburbs with the backing of a wealthy philanthropist. The institution, however, cannot sustain itself financially and the disappointed children are constantly trying to escape. Yet the priest manages through devotion and sacrifice to save the kids from abuse by a group of gangsters, and the children thrive in the orphanage, which is bolstered by donations from all over the country. *Boys Town* was based on a true story, that of Father Flanagan, just as *Homeless Angel* was based on the story of Minister Pang. Despite the similarities between the two films, however, the different political and ideological backgrounds of Korea and America—where the question of ethnicity and nationality remained unresolved in the colonial situation and where a multiracial social structure and ideal were solid, respectively—created a gap between them in terms of the objectives of institutional care about homeless kids.

In *Boys Town*, learning and practicing democracy to produce "good American citizen[s]" is presented as the highest goal of the orphanage and the social work. Father Flanagan builds a house and a small community named 'Boys Town' for boys who have lost their families or have been abandoned "regardless of race, religion, or skin color" with his ideal that "there is no such thing as a bad boy." In *Boys Town*, contrary to *Homeless Angel*, *Introspection Tower*, and *Route to Life*, the children become good citizens through the adoption and practice of a

democratic system in their everyday lives. The town had multiracial residents, the disabled are encouraged to join the town government, and the boys experience democratic society through fair elections and a fare and functioning judiciary system. Beyond the building of Boys Town by Father Flanagan and a number of children and teenagers at the early part of the film, there is no further depiction of the town members' physical work, even though the town is said to depend on the income generated by "children's farming and other production." In other words, in this film the experience of participating in democratic society is regarded a way of producing new model citizens in 1930s America superior to the manual labor that produces goods and immediately brings money to the boys. The homeless children are rehabilitated not through physical discipline but through mental, in the form of psychological training that reveals to the boys the "high ideals" that Father Flanagan keeps underscoring. The huge amount of giving from all over the continent that floods Boys Town creates a magical solution for the community, teaching the audience that the good American citizens of the future can be only made by the help of all the Americans who care for the orphans.

In the Japanese film, *Introspection Tower* (1941), on the other hand, the children are the objects of a 'correction' that is necessary for them to become more suitable imperial subjects for the totalitarian Japanese society. The opening scene of the film, which lasts more than eight minutes, introduces the reform school to both the parents, who are touring it, and to the audience. The teacher,

played by the famous actor Ryū Chishū, explains that the school is intended to benefit the "children who have such habits as kleptomania, vagrancy, spendthrift, or arson, and who are pathological liar, violent, or lazy." Filled with the troubled kids whom even their parents had given up on, the school is where the students learn "the trinity of home, school, and society," according to the teacher's introduction, so that it can produce citizens who willingly submit themselves to their parents as good members of the family-state, and develop themselves mentally and physically so that they do not cause trouble for the nation. Here, the method of enlightening the students is mainly the control of their bodies through physical labor and a strictly scheduled daily life. The scenes of hardworking young people that occupy the majority of the later part of the film recalls forced labor, which cannot but be viewed as punishment insofar as it makes unreasonable demands on the workers. The core of the ideal suggested in *Introspection Tower* is, in short, to raise a good member of family-state of Japan, one properly equipped with a sense of morality and responsibility to the community.

In the context of these foreign "children" films, what kinds of social ideals are expressed via the orphanage Hyangninwŏn in *Homeless Angel*? Hyangninwŏn's goal is to produce neither democratic model citizens nor rehabilitated submissive subjects. Rather, the film seems to suggest that providing a haven for the homeless children is the ultimate goal of the orphanage. This

difference comes from two points: first, being an example of colonial cinema, it could not openly criticize the regime in power or the malfunction of social administration work. Second, troubled and delinquent kids cannot be depicted, nor can crimes committed by juveniles, so the orphans of the film are mostly children up to their early teens who are completely helpless by themselves. Although the barrack-like lifestyle inside the orphanage and the "oath" scene in the ending part seem to imbue the film's message with an imperialist façade and ideology, the overall tone of melodrama and tearful orphan figures accentuate the need for communal effort to rescue young people forced onto the streets by the difficult economic times.

The Empire's "Recommending" and Undoing It

No matter what the goals of the producer Yi or director Ch'oe were, their 'sincerity,' as expressed by their willing participation in the state's project—the bringing up of imperial subjects— was never accepted as such. The controversy surrounding the designation of *Homeless Angel* as a "Recommendation Film" exemplifies the logical discordance of collaboration that Korean cinema discloses. The film was first released in Korea in February 1941 and the Press Section in the Japanese Army in Korea selected the film as its "Recommendation Film" in the same month. With the release of favorable reviews, Tōwa Trading Company

decided to import the film for release in Japan and the film, a total of eight reels (2,326 meters) long, passed the censors of Japan's Home Ministry (Naimushō) in July. Following this, in September the Ministry of Education (Monbushō) selected it as its "Recommended Film Number Fourteen," which Tōwa Trading Company seized upon as a basis for promoting the film. However, without a clear reason provided by the censor's office, it was requested that it submit to another round of evaluation in October, this time in a truncated version of seven reels (2,108 meters), right before its opening to the public. The first version of the film retained the designation of a Recommended Film, but the shortened one did not. So, while the original film, which could not be shown to the people of 'inland' Japan, was recommended by the Ministry of Education, the new version of the theatrical release did not get a recommendation. Thus the advertisement reads: "Ministry of Education Recommended Film Number Fourteen—The Revised Version is Now Showing" with another line below in a small font stating, "(The Revised Version is not a Recommended Film)."[135]

[135] Advertisement published in *Eiga junpo* 29 (October 21, 1941). In his explanation of the process of the revision of the film, Peter High wrongfully assumes that "[t]he official fiction went as follows: [the] Ministry [of Education] had seen and approved a film in Japanese, but subsequently, some unknown party had replaced it with an all-Korean language 'revised' version, and this unauthorized version was now being distributed in Japan." High is mistaken in imaging a "replaced" Korean language version caused a problem for the Ministry of Education. *Homeless Angel* was imported to Japan as a Korean version (though partially in Japanese).

The Home Ministry never explained why the shorter version of *Homeless Angel* did not merit the "Recommended" designation. Its complete silence was in fact a very effective practice of control, for it would more likely ensure cooperation from Korean filmmakers in the making of pro-Japanese Korean cinema. The more ambiguous the reasons were, should they be provided, the more voluntary Koreans would consider their collaboration with the empire's invisible order. Strictly speaking, what happened was actually not a "cancellation" of recommendation although it is regarded such; it was just that the recommended original version, which was able to be shown in Korea, was denied the chance of theatrical release in Japan while the revised text was not. One can assume that for the government it was a shrewder to permit the revised film to be normally distributed than having to withdraw the recommendation (and thus be perceived as indecisive, anathema for an imperial regime). A roundtable discussion (*zadankai*) in *Eiga junpo* from 1941 made this clear:

> Hazumi Tsuneo: From what I hear, it is not a problem to screen the film [*Homeless Angel*] in Korea. But it could be problematic to show it in ~~inland~~ Japan. The Korean film industry, therefore, should fully change its policy to target the inland Japan film market from now on. It needs to keep pace with not only the Korean Government-General but also the Home Ministry in Japan to get permission here.…
>
> Iijima Tadashi: What is the real reason for the additional censorship? Is it because of the Korean language and clothes?

> Hirokawa Sōyō: Why the additional censorship by the Home Ministry? I have no idea.… If the censors cut out the film despite our attempts [to produce an acceptable film], that would be the whole Korean film industry's problem.
>
> Hazumi Tsuneo: Although there are multiple reasons for the additional censorship on this film having to do with state security, the content itself cannot be bad as long as it is recommended by the Home Ministry. It is as if to say, "[I]t cannot be accepted for it is a Korean film (*chōsen eiga dakara yappari ikenai to iu rashii*)" from the fundamental point of view, though.
>
> Moderator: What does it mean "for it is a Korean film"? Is it that the technical values are poor?
>
> Hazumi: No, I don't mean that. The Korean language film is not welcomed by some people. It would have been fine if the dialogue were in Japanese despite it being a Korean movie, among many other reasons. (Emphasis mine)[136]

Here the primary topic of discussion is the uproar surrounding the Japanese distribution of *Homeless Angel*. Although we cannot take his words as enunciating the government's official stance, Hazumi Tsuneo, an active liberal film critic who was involved with the effort to get *Homeless Angel* released in inland Japan, is regarded the figure who knew the most about the matter because of his personal connections in the field. Echoing Hazumi's point about the

[136] "Chōsen eiga shin taisei juritsu no tame ni (zadankai)," *Eiga junpo* 30 (November 1, 1941), 15-22.

Japanese not welcoming a Korean-language film, the Korean dialogue is the most frequently mentioned barrier to the film's being shown in Japan.[137]

A number of scholars commonly sum up the reasons for the decision not to award the recommendation for the revised version of *Homeless Angel* as being the dialogue in a different language than the national language (*kokugo*), Christianity taking precedence over loyalty to the emperor, and the description of the dismal condition of Korean orphans. For instance, Sakuramoto Tomio, an expert in wartime Japanese popular culture, argues the Korean language and clothes and depiction of Christianity in the film must have the main problems from the authorities' view.[138] Recent scholarship, however, sheds light on a different factor by examining the film in the context of Korean subjectivity as

[137] An op-ed piece in *Eiga junpo* lays bare the problems by way of making two points, one about using Korean language and the other about portraying Christianity. See "Jiji rokuon - katoki no eiga gyōkai: hanto eiga wo meguru futatsu no mondai," *Eiga junpo* 29 (October 21, 1941), 6. Actually, one cannot tell what Mr. Pang's occupation is from the currently available film print because it is the second, shortened version. Yet, a film review drawn from the following roundtable by an Osaka-based group called "Koryojin eiga bunka kenkyūkai (The Korean People Film Culture Study Group)" indicates the previous version includes a scene in which Mr. Pang prays. See "Mŏnjŏ Ilbonin i toeŏra, pando yŏnghwa: *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa*," *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe,* 161. The source of these quotations is a scrapbook provided by the Kawakita Film Culture Foundation (*Kawakita kinen eiga bunka saidan*). The articles, posters, and other materials here are from Japanese journals and magazines. It is assumed that employees of Tōwa Trading Company worked on it. Unfortunately, the original sources of the individual articles are not indicated in the scrapbook. These excerpts are from the Korean translation of the scrapbook, edited by the Korean Film Archive.

[138] Sakuramoto Tomio, *Dai tōa sensō to Nihon eiga* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1993), 70–71.

'leaders.' Kim Hŭi-yun contends that the hierarchy presented in *Homeless Angel*, with Korean intellectuals being imagined as the 'leaders' of the community, was valid only within the Korean peninsula, but was not considered appropriate for viewers of 'inland' Japan. The film did not therefore meet the approval of imperial authorities for it did not fit with the presumed place of Korean cinema ("*Chōsen*" *eiga*) in the imperialist mapping of the Great East-Asia.[139] Similarly, Yi Yŏng-jae argues the "enlightened subject (the subject who speaks in the national language, *kokugo*)" being [a] Korean male in the film could not be accepted: in the relationship between 'inland' Japan and colonial Korea, according to the imperial order, the colonized could not occupy any position of leadership.[140]

Unlike Kim and Yi, I argue that the film deliberately makes the Korean leader's identity ambiguous. *Homeless Angel* reveals the conundrum the colonial Korean cinema faced in the expression of its collaboration: the discordant identities of Koreans that result from the rupture between the sincerity that Koreans wanted to show and its rejection by the empire. Given that the producer Yi hoped the film would appeal to the Government-General and extend the

[139] Kim Hŭi-yun, "*Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa* ŭi Ilbon kaebong kwa Chosŏn yŏnghwa ŭi wich'i," *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe,* 237.

[140] Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk Ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa, 2008), 181.

audience for Korean films to include the broader imperial regions, it was supposed to feature Koreans succeeding in becoming loyal and productive members of the great empire. Except for the last "oath" scene, however, the national allegiance and potential as imperial citizens of the majority of the characters are treated with hesitance by the director because of their undetermined, or undeterminable, problems. For instance, when Doctor An refers to "our country (*uri nara*)," does he mean Korea or Japan? The script surely points to the latter—yet this interpretation becomes slippery given that he speaks in Korean to a group of Korean children. Equally problematic are the portrayals of Mr. Pang and his family. In Hyangninwŏn, where the parent figures are supposed to be imagined for the little orphans, Mr. Pang, the quasi-father of the children, is incapable of doing anything without financial help from Doctor An. Moreover, Maria, the wife of Mr. Pang and supposedly a mother figure, actually hates orphans, is never called a mother by any orphaned child, and stays in the separate Western-style building next to the orphans' house. With an absent mother and an incompetent father, the children of Hyangninwŏn are miraculously saved only thanks to their 'angelic' nature.

Doctor An's identity is the most questionable. As the benefactor, he is the incarnation of benevolent colonial power, making it possible for the Korean orphans to live better and safer lives. An's character recalls that of Yamato Teruo as played by Kosugi Isamu in *The New Earth* (JP. *Atarashiki tsuchi*; German. *Die*

Tochter des Samurai; dir. Itami Mansaku and Arnold Fanck), a Japanese-German coproduction in 1937 that drew a huge amount of attention nationally. In the film, Yamato wishes to marry a German woman after coming back from study in Europe.[141] Doctor An is a Korean who has studied medicine in Germany and was at one time married to a German woman; he is a fairly unfamiliar figure in conventional Korean cinema whose inclusion was likely due to the Japanese scriptwriter, Nishiki Motosada. In addition, he is a different kind of well-off Korean from the greedy and debased landlord of typical Korean cinema in the previous era. He is a wealthy intellectual able to pay for the education of a poor girl, Myŏng-ja, and support the children at risk with no other motive than raising them to become great citizens. Finding an opportunity to bring an end to his own melancholia from the orphans' efforts to thrive and by aiding the orphans, he is a representative of the indolent and mentally weak upper-class people who need to shake off their depression. They, as the leading strata of society, are charged with protecting the vulnerable of the colony. All in all, An's character reflects the perspective of the scriptwriter Nishiki, an employee at the Book Department in the Government-General: he is the local embodiment of the good will of the

[141] *The New Earth* was released in two different versions, one by Itami and the other by Fanck. While Fanck's version was a hit in both Germany and Japan, Itami's version was regarded as "a dismal failure" probably because of its excessive orientalist and exoticizing approach to the Japanese landscape and nation. High, 162.

empire. Doctor An, therefore, points to the inevitability of Japanese rule, given the inability of Korean institutions to solve the problems of their society.

The Metaphor of Adoption

While the global cinema dealing with orphans and abandoned juveniles raises questions about the ability of the broader socioeconomic system to nurture exemplary citizens, this Korean orphanage film seeks an answer to that question on a more private and individual level. Surprisingly, in a film that centers on social work involving abandoned children, presumably a national issue, virtually no authority figure representing public power or institutional efforts is presented, except for one police officer who briefly appears at the door of Doctor An's house.

The metaphor of adoption is a frequent theme in Ch'oe In-gyu's trilogy, as well as in his postcolonial films, the so-called "Liberation Films (*haebang yŏnghwa*)." While the teenagers in *Boys Town* are directly adopted into the nation through their trust in Father Flanagan's love and devotion, and through their faith in the state and its democratic system, the adoption of Korean homeless youths includes different types and layers of adoptive relations. Initially, Myŏng-ja and Yong-gil in *Homeless Angel* are in a quasifamilial relationship with a group of

gangsters, being called "offspring (*chasik*)" by the latter. The siblings had been sold to the gang, presumably through human trafficking, and in the beginning are forced to make money by selling flowers as an obligation to their 'parents.' Myŏng-ja is pressured by the adoptive mother, the female head of the group, to work as a bar girl, or more precisely, as a prostitute. Her suffering reminds us of the typical Korean films of prior decades, in which the daughters are sold to brothels or become concubines of the rich to save their families from extreme poverty. In *Homeless Angel*, Myŏng-ja's body is rescued at that very moment of her being 'sold' into prostitution by Doctor An, who graciously offers to pay for her to be educated as a doctor. The film marks a change in Korean cinema: young women are finally able to avoid sexual abuse, at least on screen, partly thanks to the conservative political air of the era, which checked unwholesome visual representations and tropes regarding the sex trade. The second type of adoption—An's adopting of Myŏng-ja as a successor in the field of medicine and as a daughter figure—exemplifies the social sponsorship that guarantees a happy future for a woman, insinuating it as the opposite of the first type of adoption. The former involves the trade in human life, the sale of the body, and the diminishing of social status, while the latter is performed at no cost, related to curing the body, and improves the social standing of a girl to that of a professional woman. An imperial adoption, in this way, opens up a totally new trajectory for Korean females. The third form of adoption consists of Yong-gil's co-habiting with Mr.

Pang, whom the orphans, including him, call “father.” By being with Mr. Pang, Yong-gil is able to be reunited with his lost sister. That is, adoption to the ideal community, Hyangninwŏn, a metaphor for the social family registration, is a way for Yong-gil to find his lost birth family as well.

Adoption is a prominent metaphor working in *Love and Vow* (1945), powerfully on the surface of narrative yet artificially and deceptively in the actual representation. Eiryū, a seventeen-year-old Korean orphan, suffers from ignorance as to his identity—literally who he is and where his family is, not in terms of his nationality as Korean or Japanese. With the main theme of becoming a volunteer soldier, there are two important storylines: Eiryū’s journey to find out his identity, and his rebirth to follow in the footsteps of his imagined ‘big brother,’ Shinichirō, a kamikaze hero. While wandering down Chongno Street in Seoul, Eiryū is ‘picked up’ and taken care of by Shirai, played by Tanaka Minoru, a renowned Japanese actor, who is the head of Keijō Shinpō Newspaper Company. It is implied that Shirai himself had been an orphan. Before departing for the battlefield, Shinichirō, the son of Shirai’s childhood teacher, Murai, visits Shirai’s company and Eiryū unexpectedly gets to take a photo with him. After Shinichirō’s ‘heroic’ death as a suicide attacker, the picture becomes a precious and honorable souvenir for Eiryū and is shown multiple times to the audience throughout the film. The picture functions, on the one hand, as an important

mediator between the "Military God (*gunshin*)" Shinichirō and Eiryū, and a device of return of the dead on the other.

Eiryū does not adapt very well to living with Shirai and most of the time is gone from the house. To teach him a lesson about becoming an upright person, Shirai sends Eiryū to Shinichirō's family in a rural area. Pretending to be a reporter, Eiryū stays with the hero's family and investigates the way in which Shinichirō lived. He visits the elementary school where Shinichirō studied, locates the desk and swing that Shinichirō used when he was little, (that are now the precious memorials to a hero), reads Shinichirō's diary and letters and listens to the hero's last words, which were recorded on a disk the day before the attack. While Eiryū's journey is to write a hero's biography, his nostalgic visiting of the sites associated with the deceased instead underscores melancholic defeatism in the worsening war phase.

Eiko, Shinichirō's widow, plays a more important role in Eiryū's soul-searching and decision to join the military. After having conversations with him, Eiko seems to believe that Eiryū is actually Eiju, the brother from whom she was separated in Shanghai about twelve years earlier. The drama escalates with the suggestion that they are actually siblings; however, the film does not explain any further and cuts off this possibility at that point. It is expected that they would be turn out to be family and the film would end happily, if this were a typical

domestic melodrama. Yet this conclusion is foreclosed due to the total wartime politics, according to which his shelter must be found in the state, not in kinship. Nevertheless, Eiko's influence is decisive in the forming of Eiryū's new identity. When he confesses to the mistake he made—emptying the fuel of the town's bus that departs tomorrow, so he could stay here longer—an act that prevented a volunteer of that village from leaving on time, Eiko scolds him for his unworthiness to be considered her brother. Eiryū's decision to become a soldier, which is displayed through his ostensible becoming of "an honorable younger brother of Shinichirō," after all, is to please Eiko and to be a proper (step-)brother to/for her. Strangely enough, Eiryū never mentions the greatness of Shinichirō in the film; he only praises what a great family the hero had. What Eiryū truly joins is the family of his seemingly true sister in the traditional Korean community, not the family of the departed "Military God."

In his argument on how the allegorized imperial adoption became possible beyond the realm of nation and blood-relations in *Love and Vow,* Fujitani Takashi relies on Frantz Fanon's use of the concept of the "abandonment neurosis" to explain Eiryū's psychology.[142] By insisting that Eiryū aspires to attain the foster parent's love and constant affirmation out of an "abandonment

[142] On the "abandonment neurosis," see Frantz Fanon, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 63–82.

neurosis," however, Fujitani performs the typical and inaccurate analysis of the Korean orphan's psyche, one that views it within the frame of the imperial-colonial relationship in the film.[143] Eiryū in the cinematic representation, through his bodily gestures, facial expressions, and speeches, does not clearly manifest any 'fears' of abandonment by his new parents. Instead, his uncomfortable and unhappy mood in Shirai's home is portrayed through his gloomy face, avoidance of direct eye contact, and continuous attempts to leave, which contrast with his vitality in Eiko's house. This kind of unconventional characterization is mysterious, as it undercuts the effectiveness of the film as war propaganda, intended to encourage Koreans to volunteer for military service so as to earn a perfect imperial family's membership. The question here is not concerning the ways in which the colonial mind yearns to be acknowledged by the imperial adoptive father, as Fujitani argues for Eiryū, but what kind of effect the more realistic, or 'natural,' response of the Korean boy—rejecting the embrace of a Japanese family—would have. The director's realism draws a dubious conclusion: on the one hand, the fact that the Korean teen orphan feels more warmly accepted by rural Koreans than by his adoptive Japanese parents potentially subverts the imperial state's campaign as it precludes the boy's malleable adaptation to the imperial family-state. On the other, that this outcome was much more likely in

[143] Fujitani Takashi, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 319–20.

real life could have meant that Korean moviegoers would more comfortably identify with the protagonist, thus heightening the possibility of their enjoyment of this particular film as a vehicle for war mobilization.

With its coming-of-age trope, *Love and Vow* epitomizes the significance of female roles, in particular that of a sister, as a brother's spiritual guide in the wartime Korean cinema. The female characters who were frequently subject to victimization in traditional Korean cinema—most representatively as rape victims by powerful men—saw a new path in the heightened martial atmosphere as the keepers of the home front, laborers for the national projects, and the siblings/lovers who persuade the indecisive Korean males to sacrifice themselves for the greater ideal in the country's 'holy' war. The sister's role as victim, which had been a catalyst for the exasperation and madness of the impotent Korean male in the earlier periods, was now developed as pivotal to the bolstering of the Korean male character in the war-effort filmmaking, becoming the counterpart of the mother characters of the Japanese films in the same era. Unlike Japanese men, who inherit their patriotic souls from their strong-minded military mothers, Korean males, being presented as orphans, have sister figures who fill in for the absent parents. Played by Kim Sin-jae, one of the colonial era's most popular actresses, who also played the role of the sister of Yong-gil in *Homeless Angel*, Eiko in *Love and Vow* translates the unstable Korean male subjectivity of Eiryū into a kamikaze hero, thereby enabling Eiryū to, in a sense, become 'Japanese.'

Always wearing traditional Korean garments, she functions as a kind of psychological buffer through which a Korean young man can reduce his anxiety, remasculinize himself, and eventually adapt to his new identity as an imperial citizen, making the transition more agreeable and imperative. Ironically, the adoption of the Korean male to the empire in the film is achieved largely via the agency of the Korean female.

By portraying the suffering, anxieties, and tears of the abandoned and vulnerable children and adolescents of wartime Korea, Ch'oe In-gyu engaged with the salient Korean social and political issues on screen with elements tailored to Korean spectatorship. By evaluating his directorial ambition in relation to the imperialist agenda, I revise Yi Yŏng-il's assertion that Ch'oe In-gyu made films as a form of 'resistance' to the war politics. Rather, his strategy of 'being more true to' the colonial reality was surely more for the talented and passionate director's cinematic reasons, for Koreans filmgoers were not fully compliant with the mobilization effort, certainly not to the extent that many other war movies claimed. In this deceptive diegesis of propaganda in which the artificial patriotic feeling of the Koreans for the Japanese empire was described as natural and ardent, Ch'oe did his best, using what room existed for a director outside the rigid controls of scriptwriting and censorship, to reflect how colonial Koreans would have reacted in such situations in real life. His first priority was to entertain his Korean audience, who would visit the film theaters anyway to watch movies with

the intention of enjoying the actors, stories, and landscapes of Korea. By making films like *Love and Vow*, which would make sense to Koreans when it came to the boy's psychology, Ch'oe was in fact continuing to make a 'Korean cinema' that firmly addressed the issues he and his countrymen were facing during the late-colonial era, a period when it was impossible for a truly independent national Korean cinema to exist. In the deliberate negotiation between the surveilling state and the target viewers in his mind, Ch'oe as a director leaves room for different interpretations in his seemingly seamless propaganda films.

Chapter 5

The Pleasure of Tears: *Chosŏn Strait* (1943), Woman's Film, and Wartime Spectatorship

The Film Directive (1940) and Korean Cinema as Propaganda Arm

Scholars of Korean film history have marked 1942 as the beginning of the "death" of Korean cinema, an "era of darkness" that lasted until Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945.[144] After all the other Korean film companies were shut down by the colonial government following the promulgation of the Film Directive, a new film production called Chosŏn Film Production Corporation (C*hosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusikhoesa*) was established in 1942. The purpose of this company was turn Korean filmmaking capability into a propaganda arm of the Japanese Empire and the war.

[144] Yu Hyŏn-mok defines the years of 1942 to 1945 as the "age of annihilation (*malsalgi*)." See *Han'guk yŏnghwa paltalsa* (Seoul: Hanjin, 1980), 243-78. Yi Yŏng-il argues "it can be said that practically no Korean cinema existed in this [1942-1945] period" in this "era of darkness (*amhŭkki*)" in *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* (Seoul: Sodo, 2004; first edition published in 1969), 208. See also Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk t'uyŏnghanŭn singminji* (Seoul: Samin, 2006) and Kang Sŏng-nyul, *Ch'inil yŏnghwa ŭi haebuhak* (Seoul: Sallimtŏ, 2012). For a detailed review of colonial Korean film scholarship, see chapter 1.

Following the Film Law implemented in Manchuria in 1937 and Japan in 1939, the Chosŏn Film Directive was launched in colonial Korea in 1940.[145] This was basically identical to the Film Law in Japan, except for Article Nine, which discussed the formation of a film commission in Korea. The directive set forth a licensing system for film production and distribution enterprises, that permission for production was required, limitations on the screening of foreign films (film quota), limitations on the type and quantity of film showings, mandatory screening of "cultural films (KR. *munhwa yŏnghwa*; JP. *bunka eiga*)," ban on minority theater visits, strengthened preproduction censorship, selection of "excellent films," and a new registration system of filmmakers.

Film-related law was introduced proudly as the first measure in the Japanese empire for the 'promotion of culture (*bunka rippō*)' in Japanese history. According to Okada Junichi, a film censor with the Government-General of Korea, its intent was to "contribute to the advancement of national culture by promoting the sound development of the film industry and improving its quality." Its goal was to raise up the status of film from cheap entertainment to a "cultural

[145] As Manchuria was the frontier where Imperial Japan's methodology and practice of control were tested, the enactment of the Film Law there included a probationary period of the Law prior to its institution in mainland Japan. The launch of the law in Manchuria was an indicator that the same was to follow in colonial Korea. The production of the film *Military Train* in 1938, widely considered the first prominent collaborationist film made by a Korean film director during the war, was a harbinger of the coming age of active propaganda making by the colonial Korean film industry before the state-sponsored film company was established.

asset," so that film would aid the "advancement of national culture."[146] Although the directive did not take into consideration the specific aspects of the Korean film industry, being based entirely on the Film Law in Japan, the initiative to enhance the quality of film set forth in the directive caused Korean filmmakers to look forward to the nation's film industry coming out of the doldrums.

The directive, which went into effect in August 1940, granted a one-year postponement before enforcement to give existing film enterprise owners time to register their productions. It was expected that this period, ending in July 1941, would see the autonomous adjustment and negotiation of mergers among the companies. What resulted, however, was that a few companies registered for film production and various rumors and unrealizable plans circulated inside the film

[146] Okada was forthright about the rationalization for the Film Directive: "The goal of the enactment of the Chosŏn Film Directive is to contribute to the advancement of national culture by promoting the sound development of the film industry and improving its quality. Regrettably, the country lacked any agency [for the regulation] and promotion of film; it only exerted film censorship from the perspective of more control of public safety and customs by a police-administrative, passive attitude.… On the one hand, the film [serves] as a [form of] entertainment that cannot be done without in contemporary people's lives, boasting forty-one million audience members in mainland Japan a year and two million in Chosŏn; on the other, it shows off its huge power as a medium for report[ing], propaganda, enlightenment, and education, as well as being one kind of art.… Finally, we see the launch of the Film Directive as being in accordance with our recognition that films are extremely influential and absolutely useful, their fundamental use is widely acknowledged, and they need to be controlled because of current [political] issues.… It is no more than an ideal that we want to nationalize the Korean people's life as Japanese before it is absorbed by material civilization. At its core, the Film Directive is one way to create a national policy for culture to uplift the national sprit and the integrity of people's lives, and to bring about the prosperity of the honest Japanese nation by [supporting] film as a cultural asset." Okada Junichi, "Chōsen eiga rei gaisetsu," *Munjang* (March 1941): 115-16.

world. The actual implementation occurred during the following year, when the Government-General openly intervened to lead the modification of the film industry. The Book Department of the Government-General in Korea had directed the establishment of a unified film company, paralleling inland Japan's consolidation of its film industry.[147] The Chosŏn Film Production Corporation was formed quickly and registered by permission of the Governor-General on September 2nd, and the remaining ten film companies, including Koryŏ Film and Chosŏn Film Company, lost their licenses when their permits were cancelled on September 10th, 1942.

Along with the Film Directive, which led to heightened expectations for the development of Korean film, people in the film industry believed they would also benefit from the Government-General's legal and administrative involvement in the industry through the Chosŏn Film Production Corporation. They were optimistic about the new company's role, which they saw as bringing about the corporationalization (*kiŏphwa*) of the outdated film production system.

Chosŏn Strait was the new corporation's first film and unexpectedly was a huge success at the box office. The film, made with the intention of 'celebrating'

[147] Takashima Kinji's *Chōsen eiga tōseishi* (*The History of Korean Cinema Regulation*) in 1943 details the main figures, procedure, and examples of adjusting the entrepreneurs' interests. See *Nihon eigaron gensetsu taikei dai 1-ki: senjika no eiga tōseiki 9. Chōsen eiga tōseishi* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2003. Original publication in 1943.

the draft system in colonial Korea that was to be instituted in 1943, was entirely in Japanese as stipulated by the directive. How did a Japanese-language film come to be a huge hit in colonial Korea where only a small portion of the population could speak Japanese fluently? Why did this film celebrating conscription appeal to colonial Korean audiences and how can we understand its spectatorship? More importantly, was Korean cinema dead during the time of Chosŏn Film Production Corporation, as many film historians have contended?

As a way to redefine the meaning of late-colonial-period Korean cinema, this chapter explores the *Chosŏn Strait* as a multifaceted text—at once a propaganda text, a star-vehicle entertainment form, and a woman's film. The chapter reveals the ideological rupture hidden under the text's propagandistic surface by examining the implication of melodramatic tears shed by the heroine multiple times throughout the film. I argue wartime Korean melodramatic-propaganda was not just the product of state policy; it was also a meticulously designed product of a secretive, intimate conversation and negotiation between Korean filmmakers and the film's contemporary audience. I demonstrate that the film uses melodramatic tactics familiar to Korean spectators of the time to create (and also hide) the political cracks in this obviously political text.

This chapter also investigates the emergence of a woman's film in wartime colonial Korea. Films produced during that period are known for having

frequently used female agency as a mechanism to incite nationalist resistance to Japanese rule. *Chosŏn Strait* is an example of such a strategy to counter Japanese imperial messages. Executing this strategy, I argue, the film unfolds as a contingent 'woman's film,' which portrays women's alliances among many different generations, classes, and ethnicities. Finally, the chapter explores the new types of Korean womanhood that emerged on screen during wartime, and how these images supported or undercut contemporary political intentions.

"An Unprecedented Box-Office Hit among Korean Films"

The success of *Chosŏn Strait* is all the more remarkable, when considered in light of the failure of *Figure of Youth* (dir. Toyota Shiro, 1943), a film made by Japanese filmmakers who had moved to Korea in conjunction with the same production company. According to the *Korean Year Book* (*Chōsen nenkan*) published by the Government-General in 1944, the shooting of *Figure of Youth*, which began at the same time as that of *Chosŏn Strait*, was more carefully planned. It states, "[W]hat should be noted is the significance of the support that *Figure of Youth* has received from the three big studios in Japan to achieve perfection for its significance. This film is intended to introduce a phenomenon of

Korea that celebrates the launching of the Korean Draft System."[148] *Chosŏn Strait* did not receive as much attention from the corporation as *Figure of Youth* because the former was supposed to be released as the corporation's second film and the crew members were mainly Koreans. More importantly, it was not intended for a Japanese audience, unlike *Figure of Youth*, which clearly aimed to demonstrate a colony's loyalty to the imperial citizens of Japan.

The filming of *Figure of Youth* was delayed, due to its importance as the first attempt at propaganda by the new Korean film company. The corporation even had to create the Film Project Review Committee (*eiga kikaku shingi kai*) so that the film project could be discussed in-depth beginning with the preproduction stage. The film was extensively discussed by the committee, which consisted of several experts and commentators, in order to provide deliberate "guidance (*shidō*)" for the film's narrative. The committee invited socially prominent persons from different backgrounds as sources for that "guidance," such as Mr. Umasugi, a member of the military cadre; Mr. Iwamoto, the Kyŏnggi middle school principal; the Korean writer Yu Ch'i-jin, the screenwriter Hatta Naoyuki, and several members of quasigovernmental organizations.[149] Takashima Kinji, in

[148] *Chōsen nenkan Shōwa 19-nendo* (Seoul: Keijō nippō sha, 1944), 528.

[149] The full names of Mr. Umasugi and Mr. Iwamoto remain unknown; Takashima Kinji introduces the surnames only in his book, *Chōsen eiga tōseishi*.

his *The History of Korean Cinema Regulation* (*Chōsen eiga tōseishi*; 1943), writes, "What the production company realized thanks to this committee is that, first, the project of a military film should make a deliberate study of the army's discipline. Moreover, when the Japanese scriptwriter works on the Korean film, he should have strong determination and needs thorough and detailed research on Korea. Mr. Hatta, the script writer of this film, also learned much from this meeting." Yet the narrative of the actual film ended up resembling that of a typical Japanese propaganda film of the time. It deals with an army trainee's bildungsroman-style story recounting how he encounters hardships, overcomes his physical and spiritual limitations, and finally goes courageously into battle. Only local scenes, needed to indicate the ethnic problems of Korean youths, were added as superficial touches.

Figure of Youth received a tremendous attention from the Corporation, first and foremost because it was intended to be shown in both Korea and Japan as an exemplary war-effort film from Korea. In addition, it was directed by Toyoda Shiro, a Japanese director known since the mid-1930s as a literary picture, or arts film (*bungei eiga*), auteur associated with Toho Studio.[150] It is not known why Toyoda was chosen to direct the film, but it is assumed that he moved to Toho

[150] *The Youth* (*Wakai hito*, 1936) and *Spring on a Small Island* (*Kojima no haru*, 1940) were also commended for their commercial success and artistic achievement.

Studio when the Japanese film industry was consolidated into three major film production companies and that he was given little choice in choosing which film to direct.[151]

Chosŏn Strait is the only film that achieved an exceptional box-office success in colonial Korean film history.[152] The *Korean Year Book 1944* reports:

> "*Chosŏn Strait* was produced in Korea purely for Korean spectators. The total revenue earned was eighty thousand won, and the film, the first product of the Chosŏn Film Production Corporation, was an unprecedented box-office hit among Korean films."[153]

One of the reasons for the film's success is the fact that it was originally made with Korean audiences in mind, and thus did not need to cater to the taste of the viewing public of 'inland (*naichi*)' Japan. Whereas the Japanese-dominated *Figure of Youth* commanded a great deal of attention (which resulted in the film's

[151] Toyoda Shiro, one of the leading literary filmmakers of the1960s, made two films during World War II, *Record of My Love* (*Waga ai no ki*, 1941) and *Figure of Youth* (1943). Toyoda's interviews or postwar Japanese film historiography devoted to him, however, rarely mention these works. That *Figure of Youth* was made in colonial Korea has been largely unnoticed in his filmography.

[152] Na Un-gyu's legendary film *Arirang* (1926) is widely recognized as the most-viewed film in colonial Korea; however, no official box-office records for it exist.

[153] *Chōsen nenkan Shōwa 19-nendo*, 528.

shooting taking more than a year), *Chosŏn Strait* was left to the Koreans—they had a limited budget, yet intervention was also restricted.[154] As a result, the crew was free to exercise their creativity in making the film and allowed to adjust the level of the film's propaganda material. As the officer Takai Kunihiko points out with satisfaction in the following passage, the film turned out to be "bright" in its tone and proved that there was good reason to develop Korea's own film production system independent from that of 'inland' Japan:

> "There are three significant points about *Chosŏn Strait*. First, this first film by the Chosŏn Film Production Corporation proved that the new company started well. Second, *Chosŏn Strait* portrayed the bright side of life unlike *Tuition, Homeless Angel*, and other films made during the free production era which depicted the dark side of life. This optimism in film is an indication of future trends in Korean cinema. Third, this film highlights the necessity of Korea's own unique film studio. *Figure of Youth* denies the ontological value of the Chosŏn Film Production Corporation, and the new film company should impress with its value in and out of Korea through its own autonomous productions." [155]

[154] Until the Review Commission held a third meeting to talk about the Corporation's third and fourth films (*Story of Big Whales*, dir. Pang Han-jun, 1944, and *Mountain of the Devil*, which was never produced) *Chosŏn Strait* was not put on the table for discussion.

[155] Takai Kunihiko, "Yŏnghwa *Chosŏn haehyŏp*: rassyu sisa rŭl pogo," *Maeil sinbo*, July 24, 1943.

Chosŏn Strait's success was made possible by a composite of factors, ranging from the creative freedom enjoyed by the filmmakers in term of narrative and character construction, through good directing and Mun Ye-bong and Kim Sin-jae's star power, to the high level of support for its release at theaters. The Chosŏn Film Distribution Corporation, the company that controlled all of the country's film theaters during the war phase, adopted Japan's system of releasing films. In accordance with the so-called Red Line and White Line system, the Corporation divided all the theaters into two groups so that two new films could be shown every week, one for each theater line. *Chosŏn Strait* was exceptional because it was shown in both lines and, importantly, on five screens of first-rank theaters such as Yakch'o, Sŏngbo, Kyŏngsŏng, Tongbo Chung'ang, and Myŏngchijwa in Seoul from July 29 to August 4, 1943, which was comparable to a 'wide release' in current exhibition parlance.[156] This was comparable to a 'wide release' in current exhibition parlance. Testifying to its enduring popularity, the film was shown in multiple runs until 1945. One newspaper article reports that the

[156] According to the *Korean Year Book*, the revenue earned by the abovementioned theaters was 80,000 won; the combined revenue from P'yŏngyang, Seoul, and Pusan reached 81,341 won, according to Sakuramoto Tomio. It is not clear exactly how many people saw the film, because this figure may include ticket sales from second- and third-rank theaters. Sakuramoto Tomio, "15-nen sensōjiki no chōsen eiga," *Kikan Sanzenri* 34 (May 1983):190. However, the source of the statistics is not specified in the article.

film "moved a million Kyŏngsŏng people to tears."[157] While this must be an exaggeration, there is no denying the film was a sensation.[158]

What, then, explains this 'unprecedented' popularity of *Chosŏn Strait*? It is instructive to examine the following account of Yu Chang-san, who worked as an assistant cameraman for the film:

> If we [the crew of *Chosŏn Strait*] were given one hundred won for the production budget, they [the crew of *Figure of Youth*] got one thousand.... When filming *Chosŏn Strait*, the crew, such as the director, engineers, and actors, were all Koreans, while they were all Japanese [except for] one Korean, Han Hyŏng-mo, … an assistant, on the shoot of *Figure of Youth*.... We finished shooting *Chosŏn Strait* within one month, but *Figure of Youth* failed in shooting because the cameraman, Miura Mitsuo, was so confused about the weather conditions of Japan and Korea that the scenes shot at the beach turned out all foggy. Tanaka Haruyasu [the studio chief] viewed our film and could tell that it had turned out very well, so he decided to show it at Tansŏng Theater. It was a big hit

[157] Kim Ki-jin, "Chosŏn haehyŏp ŭl chungsim ŭro," *Maeil sinbo*, August 8, 1943.

[158] The box-office success of *Chosŏn Strait* is even more striking when compared with the big-budget Japanese film, *Hawaii Malaya Sea War* (dir. Yamamoto Kajiro, 1942), that was a big hit not only in the Japan proper but also in most of its colonies. According to an article in *Eiga junpo* dated July 11, 1943, critics expected that *Hawaii Malaya Sea War* would gross 53,000 won in its first year. Even though the gross earnings from showings at official theaters is not more than the total income from *Chosŏn Strait, Hawaii Malaya Sea War* was expected to attract a larger audience than *Chosŏn Strait* because it was shown in numerous free mobile screenings. The chart in *Eiga junpo* for July 1943 shows the anticipated number of 'free' audience members for *Hawaii Malaya* to be 'a million' by September 1943, while the paid portion of the theater count was 500,000. The huge success of *Chosŏn Strait* over *Hawaii Malaya Sea War* was an unforeseeable event, given that the industry's development and the quality of films in colonial Korea were in no way comparable to those of Japan.

> when released. But *Figure of Youth* failed in the box-office, even though it took more than a year to shoot....
>
> Back then, [where] the staff of *Figure of Youth* got paid twenty won a day, we received only eleven won. There was discrimination like that. However, when *Chosŏn Strait* turned out to be successful, the Japanese thought this [making films in Korea] wouldn't work and everyone, including Toyoda Shiro, returned home, leaving film production solely to Koreans. Then, we launched the next film, *Mr. Soldier*, which had an all-Korean crew and cast. (Emphasis mine)[159]

Yu Chang-san's words reveal two paradoxes of Imperial Japan's localization strategy for filming: first, the colonial government's much lower level of support of the Korean crew rendered a better outcome; second, the colonized could make a satisfactory propaganda vehicle for the colonizer. The interpretation of these paradoxcial points, however, warrants a complicated understanding of the workings of colonial relationship. In terms of pay and material support in preproduction, one cannot gloss over discrimination against the Korean crew and film. The discriminatory work condition, however, ironically serve to yield an unexpected result: being led to focus on themes secondary to the film's main concern, which was the volunteer and conscription system, the Korean filmmakers produced a well-made military propaganda film—even more

[159] Han'guk yesul yŏn'guso eds., *Yi Yŏng-il ŭi Han'guk yŏnghwasa rŭl wihan chŭngŏnnok 3* (Seoul: Sodo, 2003), 120-21.

successfully than their Japanese counterpart--in the way that gave the audience a melodramatic pleasure of tears. This line of complexity impels us to pay attention to the film's not just political façade but also its characterization and multiple meanings presented via an allegedly propagandistic narrative.

Chosŏn Strait as Problematic Propaganda

A series of montage images in the opening scene of *Chosŏn Strait* creates a rather peaceful and archaic tone. The film begins with a track shot of a decaying, high stone wall of a fortress. The title of the movie and the list of cast members are displayed as the camera tracks down the castle and into a circular entrance in the middle of the wall. A white horse is observed grazing inside the gateway; this vignette dissolves into a close-up shot of the broken wheel of a coach and a steel army helmet carelessly abandoned on the flowery grass field. While the opening scenes evoke a calm and secluded ambiance, the viewer eventually recognizes the objects on screen as the remains of a dead soldier at a battle scene, as the next cuts to a gravestone and then to a funeral portrait of the deceased on an altar. A man is sitting silently in front of the photo: Seiki, the main character of the film, is finally brought to the screen, as well as to his home, with his older brother having died in battle in war.

Figure. 5-1. Beginning of *Chosŏn Strait*

It is notable that at its opening, the film brings a sense of oldness and remoteness to the contemporary colonial screen, rather than the expected feelings of 'celebration' and joy of serving in the army in the phase of total war. Instead of providing an urgent reminder of an impending war, the film opens with an impression of reminiscences and ancient history. The notion of dilapidation coincides with Seiki's family's stubbornness in upholding tradition, while the sense of distance evokes both the geological remoteness of the battlefield in relation to the home on the Korean peninsula and the time that has elapsed between the brother's death and Seiki's returning. The sense of oldness is clear and powerful, whereas the feeling of distance in terms of time and location is obscured and confused in the rest of the film. The vague and easily prolonged remoteness of location effectively connects the frontline and the home front, and

also even connects Korean and Japanese territories via an implied crossing of the ocean in the last scene where Seiki and Kinshuku, the female protagonist, talk on the phone. The out-of-date customs of the Seiki family exert an intimidating influence on most of the film's characters, especially after it is transformed into a patriotic family from one of the traditional Korean *yangban* literary class.

The story revolves around a young couple, Seiki and Kinshuku. Upon returning home after his brother has died in combat, Seiki decides to enlist in the army to fulfill his duty as a man and to satisfy his father; he leaves his lover Kinshuku behind. Not knowing why Seiki has disappeared, Kinshuku gives birth to their son and raises him by herself, struggling with deepening poverty. Seiki's sister, Kiyoko, learns about the existence of Kinshuku and the baby and tries to persuade her father, Rinoie, to take them into their family.[160] The upper-class Rinoie patriarch refuses because of Kinshuku's low social status. After missing a few chances to reunite with Seiki, Kinshuku starts working at a factory while waiting for Seiki's return, but is hospitalized due to overwork. Seiki, who has been wounded and transported to a rear hospital in Japan, makes a telephone call to Kinshuku from across the Chosŏn Strait. They speak to each other about their

[160] Seiki's family name is shown as "Rinoie (李家)" in the film, so we can assume that the original Korean family name before the Name Change order was "Yi (李)."

future and reunion. Seiki's father, Rinoie, finally accepts the baby as his grandson and wishes Kinshuku a good recovery.

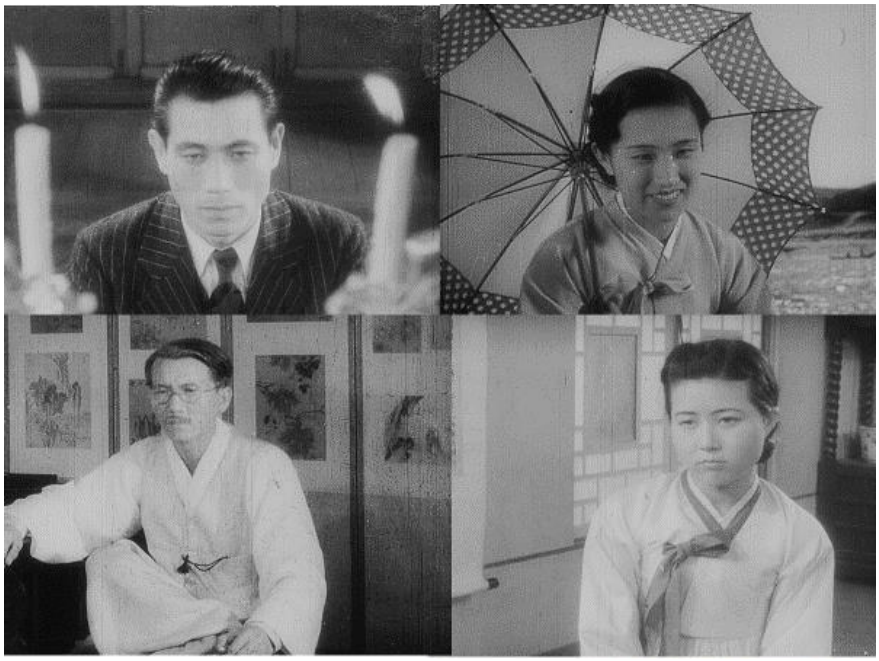

Figure. 5-2. From upper left, Seiki, Kinshuku, Seiki's sister (Kiyoko), and Seiki's Father (Mr. Rinoie)

In the beginning, Seiki and Kinshuku live together, relying on the financial help of Seiki's uncle, but cannot get married because his family disapproves of Kinshuku's seemingly poor and unstable identity. Seiki's uncle calls her "a woman who doesn't even know her roots"; it is possible that she was an orphan. Unfortunately, her baby son is also in danger of becoming an orphan, with his father leaving for war, his mother ill from hard work, and his father's

family refusing to accept him. How to save the baby, as well as the mother Kinshuku, from this danger is the main problem that will hold the audience's interest as the narrative progresses. Ironically, the danger that the two face is created by those who should be their guardians, the baby's father Seiki and the grandfather Rinoie. The strange logic and flow of sadistic family relations constitute the whole drama. What this chapter probes is how these two different impulses, the imperative to save the baby and mother and the sadomasochistic pleasure that the film creates by making them suffer at the hands of the father's side of the family, are conveyed by the actions of two different groups, a women's alliance and the patriarchs, and how this dynamic locates this film in a peculiar position among late colonial Korean propaganda films.

South Korean cinema scholarship has paid relatively less attention to *Chosŏn Strait* among colonial Korean films. Presumably, some of the reasons it does not attract scholars' interest would be that, first, the film is too obviously pro-Japanese—the dialogue is in Japanese and the narrative serves mobilization politics—and, second, the film's overly melodramatic form renders it unworthy of serious analysis. I challenge these assessments: *Chosŏn Strait* is a multidimensional text in which different desires and messages of both the Japanese war effort and Korean filmmakers are deployed and the superfluous melodramatic mode is complicated by the inconsistency of the narrative.

Moreover, it accidentally opened a cinematic sphere for Korean females, paralleling their entry into the public sphere in real life as wartime workers.

Chosŏn Strait is a cultural mixture of two cinematic strands in tension: a mode of publicity and an entertainment art form. These two elements did not necessarily contradict each other when the film appeared in wartime; however, the first group of scholars of the 2000s to study *Chosŏn Strait* mainly focused on the pro-Japanese perspective.[161] Attempts to reveal the collaborationist perspective in wartime films came as a backlash against previous scholarship. In the narrative of the first-generation film historians, Korean films went extinct after the Film Directive and the Korean directors were victims forced to direct propaganda films. A new wave of scholars, notably Kang Sŏng-nyul and Kim Yŏ-sil, highlighted the collaborationist aspects of these "pro-Japanese (*ch'inil*)" films. However, their obsession with unearthing imperial politics from the films sometimes yields totally insupportable observations.[162] These interpretations are

[161] Kim Yŏ-sil wrote that she was one of those Koreans who are downhearted when watching these films not because simply they are pro-Japanese but because she was disillusioned to realize that the lunacy of our time and historiography has deluded people that the wartime films are masterpieces of realism or enlightenment. See Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk*, 5. Kang Sŏng-nyul argues that the history of collaborators in the film industry should be revealed, in order to write the correct history of colonial Korean cinema. See Kang Sŏng-nyul, *Ch'in'il yŏnghwa ŭi haebuhak*.

[162] Both Kim and Kang make factual errors based on unfair assumptions: for instance, the opening credit scene pans a castle wall, not a wall of a *yangban* house; Seiki has already made up his mind to volunteer before visiting his uncle; Kinshuku does not work in the Patriotic Neighborhood Association but in a clothing factory; and it is difficult to argue that Kinshuku's acceptance by the Rinoie family is because she was a diligent wife on the

more reflective of contemporary scholars' aspirations and their need to degrade the film as a mere piece of agitprop rather being cogent conclusions based on actual facts and information one can simply get from watching the film.

To determine the underlying message of this film it is crucial to tease out the details presented in a blurry and unclear manner in the film text, particularly where the film diverges from the scenario written by Tsukuda Jun, the Japanese script writer. For instance, who is Kinshuku? What is her identity? Why does Seiki's father refuse to accept his own grandson into his family? When exactly does Kinshuku learn of Seiki's enlistment? When and how does Seiki learn of his son's existence and what are his feelings about that? These questions do not figure prominently in the overall progress of the story but are important in explaining this film's strategy for slyly undercutting pro-Japanese ideas. These questions can and should be reframed to address more fundamental problems of the film: is the enlistment a resolution of the predicament Seiki faces or still another life challenge? Will the draft make Korean males and the patriarchal system stronger? Do Kinshuku's circumstances make her an exemplary woman on the home front or a suffering single mother abandoned by her husband? Will Korean women benefit from their husbands being sent out to serve the country?

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home front. See Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk*, 311–313, and Kang Sŏng-nyul, *Ch'inil yŏnghwa ŭi haebuhak*, 202–208.

It is crucial, when viewing *Chosŏn Strait*, to be aware of the subtle excision or erasure of the codes of Japanese imperialism and war propaganda. In a film review, Takai Kunihiko compliments the film's strategy of mingling the propagandist message with a 'soft' story as follows:

> At a glance, the film might appear to be lacking the elements of a so-called military film because the theme of a human touch is the main point and the volunteer itself is the second. However, for spectators to grasp the purpose of the film easily, I think this method of taking the medicine called 'volunteering' in the wrap of an 'oblato' [sugarcoating] of 'compassion' is okay.[163]

As Takai points out, the makers of *Chosŏn Strait* chose to make a familiar *shinpa*, or melodramatic story, in order to meet Korean audiences' taste. Yet the film's obvious 'sugarcoating' made the text too deviant to be propaganda, and it drew excoriating criticism:

> The content of the film is, I must say, just another piece of *shinpa* tragedy. It never shows any development from the series of *shinpa* films produced by the Kamata Studio and the Teikoku Studio. I have to call it a movie unworthy of and distressing to the people who must continue to fight a great battle.… A tragedy must represent what is tragic in its own times. This kind of film, that

[163] Takai Kunihiko, "Yŏnghwa *Chosŏn haehyŏp*: rasshu sisa rŭl pogosŏ 1," *Maeil sinbo*, July 23, 1943.

> only caters to people's emotions superficially, should absolutely be rejected in the current situation. (Emphasis mine) [164]
>
> The film is so embarrassing that it shouldn't be shown in mainland Japan; moreover, it seems it would not have more meaning than having a poster value for the low class of Chosŏn.… Where on earth is the theme of the movie? If it wanted to depict a debauched youth's rehabilitation process by becoming a volunteer, why does the personal affair push out the main theme? The film seems to be dealing with an aspect of the Korean family system, but the filmmaker gives up that element please the box office. (Emphasis mine) [165]

Under the guise of a film categorized as "military" in its subject, form, and stated intent, many attempts are made to refuse the message inconspicuously or slow down the directives by emphasizing inconsequential stories witnessed by the characters, recounted in their words, and or expressed as their incomprehensible choices. Before moving on to the hidden meanings of the text, I want to draw attention to a few conspicuous points observable on the surface of the film.

First of all, the character of Seiki raises the serious question of whether this man is capable of being the propaganda film's hero. Throughout the film, Seiki's facial expressions reflect his gloominess and agony rather than the joy of

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[164] Sushida Masao, "Chōsen eiga no genjō," *Kungmin munhak* 2, no. 9 (September 1943): 47.

[165] Yi Ch'un-in, "Kakpon, yŏnch'ul, yŏn'gi: *Chosŏn haehyŏp*," *Chogwang* 9, no. 9 (September 1943): 33.

being an imperial soldier. The absence of any positive elements in Seiki's demeanor contrasts with the happiness his uncle and parents express upon hearing of Seiki's decision to volunteer. Surprisingly, the protagonist of the film, who is supposed to encourage voluntary military service, never says he is truly honored to be in the army or that he is going to war to give his life for the state; he simply says "yes" in answer to his family members' enthusiastic patriotic questions.

The rather sad tone of emptiness that permeates the patriotic discourse by the volunteer in *Chosŏn Strait* is extraordinary when compared to the stressing of the honor felt by the Korean protagonists at being part of the Japanese military in similar films, such as *Volunteer* (1941) and *Figure of Youth* (1943). It is understandable that the film reviewers criticized the acting of Nam Sŭng-min, who plays Seiki, as "lacking in humanity" (Takai Kunihiko) or "miscast because he possesses no cheerful energy" (Yi Ch'un-in).[166] Moreover, Seiki goes into the army, saying, "I have learned the right way to live as a man for the first time (*otoko to shite, tadashii ikikata wo hajimete shirimashita*)." The phrasing of the line from the scene is significant, because he does not say he "decided to do his duty as a Japanese man" as written in the scenario. By omitting "Japanese" and changing "duty" to "way," the dialogue conveys subtly deviant meaning that

[166] Takai Kunihiko, "Yŏnghwa *Chosŏn haehyŏp*: rassyu sisa rŭl pogo," *Maeil sinbo*, July 24, 1943. Yi Ch'un-in, "Kakpon, yŏnch'ul, yŏn'gi: *Chosŏn haehyŏp* ŭl pogo." But, as Takai also rightly points out, it should be a matter of directing, not the problem of the actor.

Seiki's enlistment is not necessarily for a demonstration of his loyalty to Japan as an imperial citizen but as a way to redeem his debauched past as a fallen son.[167]

Secondly, Seiki's enlistment, far from removing a burden, creates an additional one for him as well as for all the other family members. In *Volunteer* (1939), enlistment is the ultimate solution for all the problems faced by the protagonist Ch'un-ho. Ch'un-ho's biggest concern about his absence during military duty is his family's livelihood, but when he decides to volunteer, the landlord offers full financial support for his family so he can focus entirely on his patriotic duty. By contrast, in *Chosŏn Strait* Seiki fails to persuade his parents to take care of his girlfriend/wife in exchange for his entering military service. Far from solving a problem, the army creates a new, and even bigger and more complicated, obstacle for him. In other words, the fact that a volunteer's agony is deepened by the volunteer system itself inadvertently offers a critique of the national policy. This vicious cycle is set in motion by Seiki's stubborn patriarchal father Rinoie, who continues to deny responsibility for taking care of Kinshuku and her son. If Rinoie's patriotism was sincere, one would expect he would relieve his son's one and only worry, acceptance of his wife in the Rinoie family;

[167] I want to note that the word "Japanese" could have been cut by the censors or deleted by one of the higher-ups of the production company because of sensitivity about referring to a colonized Korean man as Japanese. Whatever the reason, the omission of the word results in the fortification of Seiki's reasoning for volunteering as not having a patriotic basis.

but his intractable character blocks all possibility of negotiation, thereby causing all the problems faced by Seiki, Kinshuku, and their baby and Seiki's mother and sister. Far from delivering the message that being a soldier makes everyone's lives easier, as shown in *Volunteer, Chosŏn Strait* narrates Seiki's carrying of an unresolved burden with him into battle and beyond.

Thirdly, many factual details are presented hazily, thus undermining seemingly pivotal elements of the propaganda aspects of the film. Seiki leaves Kinsuku not knowing of her pregnancy; learning of the existence of his own son will later have a huge impact on Seiki. The importance of Seiki's son to the drama as a whole cannot be emphasized enough—Kinshuku's redemption is possible mainly because she is the mother of a baby son who will contribute to imperial army stock in the near future. Seiki, however, apparently learns about his son just before he leaves for the station to take the military train.[168] Seiki's odd response to this knowledge is to ask the owner of the boardinghouse where Kinshuku and their son are staying to tell her to raise the boy well, with his face expressionless. In other words, he appears to be more about worried about her than about their boy. Why do the two patriarchs, Seiki and Seiki's father, not care about their heir, so that it falls to females—the baby's mother, grandmother, and aunt—to protect

[168] Seiki might have learned about the child from reading a letter from his sister, Kiyoko, when he was in training camp, but strangely enough, Kiyoko does not tell him of the birth of his son.

and nurture the boy? The drama must, therefore, be understood as a story of a community of women's cooperation to save a baby by their compassion rather than putting too much emphasis on primogeniture or national reproduction discourse. The logic of Kinshuku's redemption as a wartime reproductive woman is weakened by the fact that the patriarchs do not protect her on the basis of her being the mother of a little imperial citizen.

Another unclear detail is the moment when Kinshuku learns of Seiki's enlistment, which is in relation to Kinshuku's extreme reticence. It is assumed that she notices Seiki among the troops marching, thereby finding out that he has joined the army; yet, it is also perplexing why Kiyoko and Kinshuku never talk about Seiki's whereabouts when they first meet, even though that is the biggest mystery for Kinshuku. Her continuous and somewhat intentional ignorance of what is going on indicates her character is actually in need of tormenting situations in order to better serve as a tragic heroine of a heart-breaking melodrama. What she does present is the message of a woman on the home front—in the scene where she sees Seiki marching, Kinshuku swears to be as strong as her husband, knowing of his 'great' ideal as a soldier, but the actual film never provides proof of any inner change in her, only emphasizing her ineffable feeling through a painful expression held for a long time.

Chosŏn Strait as a Woman's Film

> Seiki: "I have been waiting for my father's permission. Hurry up and get better. Understand? Our life begins now. Our life begins now."

The quoted speech by Seiki, which appears towards the close of the film, marks a notable moment in his characterization. The film's male protagonist, whose facial expressions persistenly points to his gloomy and spiritless emotional state throughout the film, finally shows some vigor and passion as he speaks to his wife on the other side of the Strait. His phone conversation with his wife once and for all leads the audience to see that the main reason for all his and his wife's hardship and sufferings have to do with one and the same purpose: to get his father to accept Kinshuku and her son as family. The audience learns that Seiki volunteers for the army to satisfy his father, and Kinshuku endeavors to make a living with her newborn baby because Seiki left her. Therefore it can be said Seiki's father, Rinoie, is the driving force behind the characters' hardships—Kinshuku's ordeal, Seiki's enlisting and expected death, and the baby's imminent destiny of living a hard life—and thus the entire story of *Chosŏn Strait*. Only Rinoie's change of mind magically solves all the problems facing these characters and the Rinoie family.

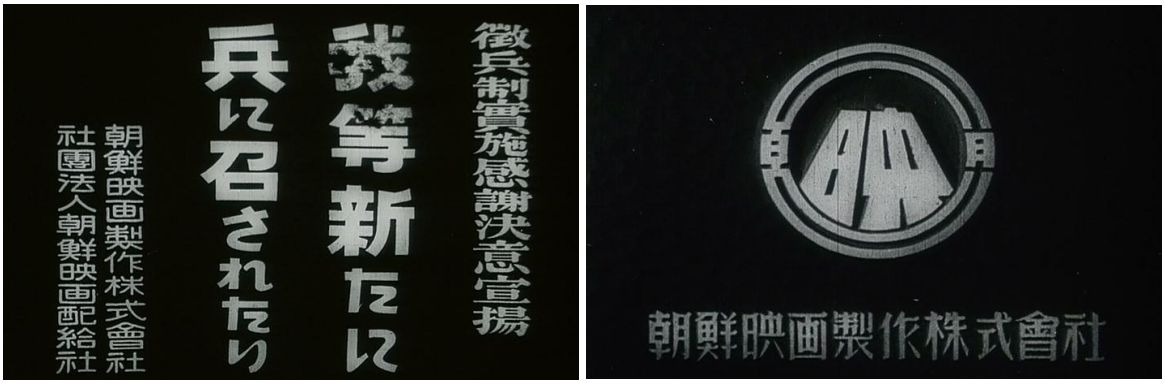

Figure. 5-3. Intertitle at the beginning of *Chosŏn Strait* that reads, "In Order to Exalt Appreciation About the Resolution on Conscription Implementation: *We Have Been Newly Summoned to Become Soldiers*" (left); The logo of Chosŏn Film Production Corporation (right)

One should remember that this film was produced to promote Korean enthusiasm for the recently launched conscription system, which "summoned" (*nuretari*) them as soldiers of Japan as the subtitles inserted at the beginning of the film indicate: "In Order to Exalt Appreciation About the Resolution on Conscription Implementation: *We Have Been Newly Summoned to Become Soldiers.*" Driven by the patriarch's sadistic and irrational choices, however, *Chosŏn Strait* exhibits the antinomy of Rinoie's being both an unmerciful patriarch and a fervent patriot. Now, how will the contradictions of a patriot be resolved, he who willingly gives up his two sons to the service for their country but who will not help the little child of the empire? What magic is needed to

change the patriarch's mind in order that there be a suitable ending to this war mobilization film?

In the progress of its story, what is obviously dominant in *Chosŏn Strait* is iconography that indicates femininity—tears, handkerchiefs, flowers, and a community of women and their inner emotional space—accompanied by a sentimental score and songs that play up the sorrow of the waiting wife. By presenting an emotional woman's story, one that easily overwhelms an inconsistent propagandistic narrative and structure, the film explores a women's world that is both denied and given access to happiness by political exigencies.

I therefore propose to read *Chosŏn Strait* as a woman's film that appeared in wartime and unwittingly provided an on-screen imaginative sphere for women at a most unusual moment—an "era of darkness"—in colonial Korean film history. In film studies terms, woman's film, a subgenre of melodrama, initially referred to a group of Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s that told stories of women's lives, targeting the sizeable female film audience. Feminist film scholar Mary Ann Doane who has explored female spectatorship of Hollywood melodrama by theorizing woman-centered films using psychoanalytical, feministic, and genre studies methods, assesses the woman's film as "a privileged site for the analysis of the given terms of female spectatorship and the inscription of subjectivity," given that "its address to a female viewer is particularly strongly

marked." She defines the genre as a woman-centered drama that deals with the problems a heroine faces because she is "female," such as "problems revolving around domestic life, the family, children, self-sacrifice, and the relationship between women and production vs. that between women and reproduction." Such figures as "the unwed mother, the waiting wife, the abandoned mistress, the frightened newlywed or the anguished mother" reappear repeatedly in the woman's film genre.[169]

However, the 1940s Hollywood concept of the woman's film must undergo some modification before it can shed light on the elements of *Chŏson Strait* that make it a colonial Korean woman's film. First, in contrast to the U.S. and other countries, the majority of filmgoers in Korea were male, though to be fair, most of the evidence for this claim is anecdotal. No official statistics exist as to the gender distribution of film audiences in Korea, though one newspaper article provides a statistical snapshot. The Film Studying Group of Kyŏngsŏng Commercial High School surveyed Seoul's main film theaters to determine the gender ratio of filmgoers in July 1941, and found an obvious male predominance: 83.25% male (younger than 18 years old 11.13%; 18 – 25 40.5%; older than 25

[169] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

31.61%), vs. 16.75% female (2.5%; 7.75%; 6.5%).[170] Moreover, women were discouraged from theatergoing during the colonial period because, as was pointed out in Chapter 2 with regard to *Sweet Dream*, the theater was regarded as a dark, delinquent, and sexual (thus immoral) place where a female audience member could not avoid becoming an object of the gaze of the males surrounding her. The high Japanese illiteracy rate among Korean women was also an obstacle to their viewing of Japanese-language movies, given that most films shown in cities were either scripted or subtitled in Japanese. Therefore an industrial concept of film production and marketing for women never existed during the colonial period in Korea as it did in Hollywood, and accordingly, such themes as the subjectivity, independence, and social status of Korean female characters were rarely the subject of serious investigation in most films. Secondly, although *Chosŏn Strait* depicts Kinshuku as a heroine who is also an unwed mother and waiting lover, the women possessing agency are mainly those surrounding her, namely Kiyoko and Eiko, the sister-in-law and an old friend, while she remains quite passive, at least when it comes to handling the problem. When Kinshuku becomes a burden for Seiki upon his enlistment, although this is against her will, the drama could be

[170] The survey encompassed a total of 30,000 theater admissions. *Maeil sinbo*, July 13, 1941.

seen as having become a "male melodrama," viewed from the angle of a man's duty to keep his lover.

Nevertheless, one can easily verify that *Chosŏn Strait* intentionally and eagerly addresses female audiences in diverse ways, from the insertions into the film of cosmetics ads, to its frequent use of floral imagery, to its portrayal of the distinctiveness of modern womanhood. One interesting point is the two diegetic insertions into the film of an advertisement for women's facial cream "*Riyababa Kurimu*" (Riyababa Facial Cream), indicating the film company, run by Government-General personnel and ostensibly a state propaganda agency, never gave up on profiting from the film business during the war era. Floral imagery most frequently appears to create feminine associations: petals and flowers fill the screen to indicate women's spaces and sometimes to emphasize Kinshuku's tragedy.[171] Kinshuku's tears are a most powerful image, one with which many female audience members could identify, for they address the hardships confronted by many women in daily life, including social and economic inequality. The frequent tears and weeping constitute what Doane calls "a

[171] Cherry trees in bloom in the background emphasize the tragic image of Kinshuku when she is lost in pleasant memories of times with Seiki and when she chats with Eiko at the park; a song that plays as Kinshuku wanders sadly outside Seiki's house concerns a woman in a flower garden. Even the masculine space is bedecked with flowers—the field where Seiki's brother died is covered with small flowers, Seiki's training camp is situated under cherry trees in full bloom, and Seiki's military train is shot from a low angle showing wildflowers waving beside the railway.

ritualized mourning of the woman's losses in a patriarchal society."[172] The wording of advertisements for the film also positions the film as a woman's and young person's film:

Figure. 5-4. An advertisement of *Chosŏn Strait*

> It is a beautiful <u>woman's film</u>, overflowing with the sentiment of youth. Great competition of ten flowery Chosŏn actresses.
> (Figure. 5-4, Emphasis mine; From an advertisement in *Chogwang*, June 1943)
>
> Splendid! Totally mobilized film of the Chosŏn Film Production Corporation finally completed! The dream of love and pain of life pick the fruits of the new age in the deep blue "strait," painting the flowers of grief and delight! This is a heroic youth film of modern times.
> (From an advertisement in *Chogwang*, July 1943)
>
> The ultimately high standard of Chosŏn cinema finally achieved! Wounds of sadness and distress of life! And the holy heart of a woman who fights against the severity of fate and waits for her

[172] Mary Ann Doane, "The Moving Image: Pathos and the Maternal," *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press,1991), 290.

only love! Thorough direction of Pak Ki-ch'ae! Passionate acting by a luxurious cast.
(From an advertisement in *Maeil sinbo*, July 16, 1943)

It is uncertain whether such expressions as "woman's film" were chosen deliberately to address women spectators, given that such a concept was almost entirely unknown in Korea; rather it could simply mean that the film features many actresses. Nevertheless, one may easily detect that *Chosŏn Strait* was marketed for its femininity and thus differentiated from most other films of the same time, which were strict, straightforward, masculine, and military.

More importantly, *Chosŏn Strait* veers slightly from the general understanding of a woman's film in suggesting the possibility of a woman's film that encompasses women's solidarity and the ideals it pursues. The film is an exception among contemporary Korean films in that it succeeds in formally embracing the woman's perspective through shot/reverse shot montages of Kinshuku and in thematically teasing out the contradictions and injustices of the patriarchal system under which the female protagonist suffers. Most representatively, the troop marching scene presents the dynamics of a cinematic point-of-view exchange using shot/reverse shots. The montage of Kinshuku's expression and the object of her gaze, Seiki, is a highly emotional portrayal of

Kinshuku's disconnectedness and pitifulness, and of her despair that she may not see her husband again.

Figure. 5-5. Various female helpers appearing in *Chosŏn Strait* to support Kinshuku

The film meticulously delineates various layers of the female community encompassing Kinshuku—an abandoned, poor, and finally ill single mother—and presents women's solidarity winning out over such premodern customs and ideas of patriarchy as family tradition, class discrimination, and repression of individualism. The film's unprecedented female alliance spans boundaries of ethnicity (Japanese/Korean), profession (nurse/factory worker/midwife/nanny/ housewife), social class (a rich *yangban* family/commoners), marital status (married/unmarried/in-between), and generation (mother/daughter), and helps

Kinshuku overcome the restrictions of the Confucian family by reframing the central question in terms of a humanistic idea—that is, compassion (*ninjō*).

A point that scholars and critics seldom acknowledge and yet I believe urges our attention is the final resolution of the drama in *Chosŏn Strait*. Kinshuku and her son's position and social mobility relative to the Rinoie family has generally been interpreted in terms of the endogamous family tradition of Neo-Confucianism and the woman whom it cannot accept as a legitimate daughter-in-law due to her different class. For instance, Kim Yŏ-sil argues that the mission of *Chosŏn Strait* and its production corporation was to propagate the newly promulgated Conscription Law as an opportunity to honor the family by mingling Korean family tradition with a story of the Japanese national military effort. She asserts that the film is eager to stress that there is no conflict between the primogeniture of the Korean family institution and the draft system, especially targeting the cooperation of upper-class Koreans who had a strong antipathy to the idea of the imperial army.[173] Paek Mun-im also reads the film as the story of an underprivileged lower-class woman's being accepted into an upper-class family as a daughter-in-law only upon the sacrifice of her husband in the war. Paek claims that, from the perspective of the patriarchy, the authority of Seiki's father is buttressed by both the Empire and Confucianism first by sacrificing his

[173] Kim Yŏ-sil, *T'usahanŭn cheguk*, 310–16.

son for the country and second by accepting his grandson, who will continue the Rinoie clan.[174] This line of resolution transcends what is possible according to the institution of the Korean family or state propaganda initiatives.

Kinshuku's path to becoming a legitimate member of the Rinoie clan, however, follows neither the usual customs of Confucian Chosŏn tradition nor the logic of patriotism, which rewards a woman's contribution to the country. Because Chosŏn is a deeply Neo-Confucian society in which continuation of the clan is the most important duty of the descendants, Seiki's father should accept his grandson as the clan's heir even if he refuses to allow Kinshuku to assume the position of daughter-in-law in his noble family. Given that his first son has died without giving him a grandson and the second is at war, it would have been commonsensical to contemporary Korean audiences for Rinoie to willingly accept the baby as his first grandson. Moreover, the supposedly enthusiastic patriot Rinoie should have helped Kinshuku, since she has given birth to and single-handedly raised a son, a little subject of the Emperor, and has worked hard in a factory as a woman on the home front. But the film text tells a different story: what saves Kinshuku is human empathy.

[174] Paek Mun-im, "Kun'in yi toeseyo," *Tongbanghakchi* 147 (September 2009): 230–31.

The word *ninjō,* meaning compassion, empathy, or humanity, is first used by Kinshuku's friend Eiko when she tells Kiyoko that *ninjō* should be considered before family tradition for Kinshuku's sake. The need for compassion is reiterated by Kiyoko in such expressions as "[Y]ou two [her parents] are too inconsiderate of others. You adore only your own children without caring about others. For us this matter is only about the family lineage (*iegara*) or social respectability (*sekentei*), but it is a matter of life and death for two people." Kiyoko's condemnation implies that parents must consider universal and humanitarian solutions that transcend family pedigree and social position for those whose survival is at stake. In the somewhat comically rendered scene in which Rinoie decides to accept the baby son, he helplessly holds the crying baby because he does not know how else to stop it from crying. This miraculous resolution of the question of whether Rinoie will accept the baby relies on the wife and daughter's relentless pressure and accusations that he is selfishly valuing his family and ancestors only and not embracing more humanistic thinking. In this rather subversive way, given the ultraconservative wartime politics, the ideal of humanism replaces the discourses of patriotism and familial responsibility in *Chosŏn Strait*.

The possibility of *Chosŏn Strait* being a woman's film is derived not only from its story of a woman's ordeal, typical of Hollywood woman's films, but also

from its modern, enlightened depiction of female solidarity, which reaches even beyond the episodes of the sole protagonist. It emerges as a reproach of the state's irrational militarism and the premodern backwardness of patriarchal Korean society, delivered by a cooperative group of women who sometimes speak up concerning the necessity of humanitarianism and who back up their words with deeds.

"New" Womanhood in Search of a Korean National Heroine

Chosŏn Strait was an arena in which a new mode of representing Korean womanhood was explored—a wartime ideal female image appropriated from the New Woman phenomenon of the previous era and then modified. The exploitative image of the New Woman (*Sin yŏsŏng*) was created, exaggerated, and finally disappeared from the popular media and discourse of the 1920s and 1930s. The sociologist Kim Su-jin, whose book *The New Woman: An Excess of the Modern* (*Sin yŏsŏng, kŭndae ŭi kwaing*) extensively explores the New Woman discourse presented in colonial Korean enlightenment popular magazines, argues that the New Woman portrayed in popular media was an exaggeration of real women. She asserts that the New Woman discourse, advanced by the monthly magazine *Sin yŏsong* (New Woman) put out by the publisher *Kaebyŏksa* from 1920 to 1934, saw the Korean woman as a vehicle for enlightenment. The discourse was

conceived of as a platform from which male intellectuals could educate premodern Koreans, represented by the word "woman," and influence the direction of colonial Korean progress and social change in relation to the experience of modernity. Kim argues that the New Woman of this discourse was not regarded as a threat to masculinity or male power; rather, it brought "an ardent discussion surrounding barbarism and civilization, tradition and the foreign (the West/Japan), and the national essence and difference."[175] From this viewpoint, the Korean woman was characterized as the privileged possessor of Korean cultural integrity, a victim of social backwardness, and/or a vessel for the foreign.[176] The discussion of these three distinct projections of "woman," according to Kim Su-jin, led to three additional iterations of the New Woman: new woman (*sin yŏja*), modern girl (*modŏn kŏl*), and good wife (*yangchŏ*). The "new woman" was presented as a symbol of self-denial and of aspiration for renewal, the "modern girl" as a negative imitation of the foreign that is subject either unwanted attention or criticism, and the "good wife" as a positive imitation that highlights the tactic of differentiation.[177]

[175] Kim Su-jin, *Sin yŏsŏng, kŭndae ŭi kwaing* (Seoul: Somyŏng, 2009), 455.

[176] Ibid., 460–61.

[177] Ibid., 467.

Kinshuku and Kiyoko, the two main female characters in *Chosŏn Strait*, appropriate the exaggerated image of the New Woman that had circulated in the Korean public sphere in the 1920s and 1930s.[178] Kinshuku, played by film star Mun Ye-bong, is a layering of multiple themes of the Korean New Woman, from being a privileged keeper of Korean tradition to being a wartime home front good wife. Kinshuku's overall aura is that of a traditional woman, passive, modest, and enduring, or, even at a glance, the Old Woman, a figure proposed as the negative image of the New Woman. When she sheds tears, sitting demurely in her room in traditional clothing and coiffure, one can easily identify her with the out-of-date yet sympathetic traditional woman. A hint of a contradictory history, however, emerges along with the details of her identity. Her background is not revealed in depth, but it comes to light through a picture of her past briefly shown at the beginning of the film that she had been a nurse. After quitting her nursing job, she lived with Seiki and gave birth to a son, but without being legally married to him. Her having had a "professional" job and her current "cohabitation" with her lover

[178] My engagement with New Woman discourse here is limited to its sensational and stereotypical expression in popular journals, and does not touch upon the sense that emerged in works produced by serious female intellectuals and woman leaders. Such women intellectuals as Na Hye-sŏk and Kim Wŏn-ju were excluded from the New Woman discourse sphere of the mid-1920s, as Kim Su-jin has pointed out, with the result that the discussion was dominated by male authors who "otherized" those feminist leaders. The popular image of the New Woman, especially in Korean cinema, as represented in *Crossroad of Youth* and *Sweet Dream*, mirrors the excessively stereotyped figures of the modern girl found in such magazines as *Sin yŏsŏng* (*New Woman*).

without being married, thus pursuing "free love," are ways in which her character borrows from popular depictions of the New Woman. Her firm faith in her lover, even though she receives no support for her independence from Seiki's family, speaks to her inner strength, a purported quality of the New Woman. In other words, Kinshuku is marked by determination, unlimited trust in her lover, and the virtues of chastity and modesty essential for the Korean woman.

The mixture in Kinshuku of the traditional woman's goodness and the modern woman's self-determination is reminiscent of Ch'unhyang, the female protagonist of the most beloved Korean novel of the premodern era, *Ch'unhyang chŏn* (*Tale of Ch'unhyang*).[179] Created in a tumultuous time of social change in the late Chosŏn dynasty, Ch'unhyang symbolizes both the chaste and virtuous Korean woman and a subject who rebels against the oppression of feudalism and social class-based traditions of love and marriage. Kinshuku's story in *Chosŏn Strait* can be regarded as a kind of sequel to the Ch'unhyang narrative. What will happen after the husband's upper-class family learns about his secret marriage to a courtesan's daughter, Ch'unhyang? Will the noble clan accept her as a

[179] In the traditional tale, Ch'unhyang, a retired courtesan's daughter, falls in love with the governor's son, Mongnyong, and they get married on their own. However, Mongnyong soon moves to Seoul, promising Ch'unhyang that he will return. While Ch'unhyang waits for Mongnyong, a vicious new governor, Pyŏn Hakto, arrives in the village and orders her to serve him. Ch'unhyang refuses, claiming she is a married woman, thus putting her life in danger. Mongnyong secretly visits the town as an inspector and punishes Pyŏn. The couple reunites.

legitimate daughter-in-law? These two questions are precisely those which Kinshuku faces in the film.

The seamless overlap between Ch'unhyang and Kinshuku occurs in many ways: first, Kinshuku's character as a chaste, modest, and enduring wife, as well as her strong inner determination, faith, and belief in romantic love, are qualities she shares with Ch'unhyang. Moreover, the Korean audiences' collective memory of the first Korean talkie *Story of Ch'unhyang* (dir. Yi Myŏng-u, 1935), also starring Mun Ye-bong, would have made clear the resemblance between the two. Mun Ye-bong's star power provides an additional correspondence, as Kinshuku is imbued with Mun's personal image as the Wise Mother Good Wife. Nicknamed "the lover of thirty million Korean people (*samchŏnman ŭi yŏnin*)," Mun was praised for her modest demeanor and chaste reserve, in contrast with the supposed vanity of other actresses. Belying her modern beauty, she was well-known for being a poor but good wife who took care of her baby and ill husband, Yim Sŏn-gyu, a famous playwright. She typically portrayed an innocent daughter or a poor and long-suffering wife in numerous films that resonated with Korean spectators, and was the most highly regarded of the many film stars of the late colonial era. Played by this model actress, the character of Kinshuku enjoys a full appropriation of Mun's stardom, even to the point of Kinshuku's becoming a persona of the actress herself.

With her contemporary clothing and her lack of hesitation to express an opinion, Kiyoko makes a sharp contrast to the reserved Kinshuku. The former embodies the modification of the "old" New Woman stereotype—in her, the new wartime modern girl is deployed as someone who has shunned vanity and decadence, opened herself to modernity, and sees the need for such virtues of the traditional woman as restraint and decency. The public persona of the actress Kim Sin-jae also fortifies the identity of the Kiyoko character as clever, noble, and active. Where Mun Ye-bong was mainly known as an icon of the Wise Mother Good Wife, Kim Sin-jae's image was that of the "wise and virtuous housewife" (*hyŏnsuk han chubu*) in her private life. Highly educated and fluent in Japanese, Kim Sin-jae was famous for her cute, smart girl roles, with her baby face and her ability to communicate freely and collaborate with Japanese filmmakers on an equal footing. But she was also well-known for having dealt wisely with troubles, including the many affairs of her troublesome husband Ch'oe In-gyu, director of *Homeless Angels*, with celebrity women, throughout which she positioned herself as a decent, legitimate wife who responsibly governed the housework of their extended family home. In the phase of war politics in which the film emerged, Kinshuku and Kiyoko's different and "new" womanhood merits emphasis for how it simultaneously accommodated nationalist desires of Koreans and for the ideals it projected, which had been frequently aspired to but had never been achieved on the Korean screen. The characters are modern and civilized, but

remain traditionally virtuous, and more importantly, essentially Korean. Kinshuku's traditionality and Korean essence are preserved in the film through the concealment of anything that represents Japanese influence, rather than by underlining aspects of her Korean identity. Kinshuku never does or says anything related to the film's propagandistic message except for making "*senninbari*" and saying the following lines at the hospital to Seiki over the phone: "Please be well soon, and serve the country again. Our son will, our son will be a great soldier, too. I am very proud. I am very happy."[180] These surprising words, spoken out of the blue, however, come as she is laboring to breathe, on the verge of fainting. Given that the words "proud" and "happy" are being spoken by an ill woman who is painfully losing consciousness, it is doubtful whether what she says is really what she means—and there is the question of why her only patriotic words are spoken in this late moment, when she is sick to the point of collapse. Moreover, her distinctive "poor" Japanese pronunciation constantly stands out in comparison with the native pronunciation of Eiko (played by Japanese actress Tsubaki Sumie) and the very fluent Japanese of Kiyoko (Kim Sin-jae), so that Kinshuku's non-Japaneseness is driven home. Kinshuku is continuously retreating and falling behind all that is (genuinely) Japanese, and so she must remain within the sphere

[180] Japanese women used to make embroidered handkerchiefs called "*senninbari*" for those leaving for war as an expression of the wish for safe return. The literal meaning of it is a thousand women's stitches with red thread.

of the identify of Korean actress Mun Ye-bong herself.[181] Ultimately, two of the five *Chosŏn Strait* film prints were dubbed in Korean for audiences who did not speak Japanese—so that where the Japanese dialogue was replaced by Korean, almost nothing remains that represents anything Japanese about Kinshuku.[182]

Figure. 5-6. Mun Ye-bong (right) and Na Un-gyu (left) in *Boat without an Owner* (1932)

It is paradoxical that a film industry expected to produce state propaganda films ending up making a film like *Chosŏn Strait*, a most evasive film at its core and one whose strong appeal to its Korean audience was based on its emphasis on the 'Koreanness' of characters. The film does not fail to satisfy that target

[181] One film reviewer actually complained about Mun Ye-bong's poor Japanese pronunciation and argued that the producer should have had Kinshuku's dialogue dubbed.

[182] Kim Ki-jin, "Chosŏn haehyŏp ŭl chungsim ŭro 2, *Maeil sinbo*, August 9, 1943.

audience's tastes and hopes by offering in Kinshuku a legitimate Korean national film heroine who is untainted by militarism or Japanese imperialism. The nature of the film as a star vehicle was one of the most important methods by which the filmmakers realized their desire to make an entertaining film for Korean spectators. Mun Ye-bong, daughter of the famous theater actor Mun Su-il, had debuted in Yi Kyu-hwan's film *Boat without an Owner* (1932) in a part that earned her the nickname "daughter of Na Un-gyu," the most highly renowned film director and actor throughout the colonial period. She later became a major star upon her performance in the first Korean talkie, *Tale of Ch'unhyang* in 1935, and maintained her fame through the end of the colonial era, and even after her death in North Korea.[183] Mun Ye-bong embodied the most beloved Korean female personae—innocent daughter, enduring lover, and poor but good wife—on and off screen. Thus, Mun Ye-bong's embodiment of the Korean national essence led to the very unusual moment of Korean national cinema being expressed under the guise of propaganda.

War and Tears: A Different Kind of Collaboration

[183] She was the heroine of the first North Korean film, *My Hometown* (1949), and was later dubbed "the People's Actress." She died in 1998 and was buried in the Mausoleum for Patriotic Martyrs.

Feeling awkward about the reaction of an old couple he observed at a special screening of *Chosŏn Strait* at the Korean Film Archive in 2006, Kang Sŏng-ryul recalls that "[w]hile watching a drama that openly expressed the policies of Japanese Imperialism, they were absorbed by the melodramatic code of the film rather than showing any repulsion for it."[184] This observation raises the question of whether wartime audiences also found the film as overly "imperialist" and its political ideology as so obvious and repulsive as Kang anticipated. For Koreans exposed to a constant war campaign and propaganda in their everyday lives, it would have been more natural to find the melodrama of *Chosŏn Strait* well-thought-out, masterfully presented, and even touching as a means of escape from the boredom and stress of war agitation. As Kinshuku's ordeal is highlighted, one cannot help but focus on her sufferings rather than on following the film's propagandistic message. For example, even if the original intent of Kinshuku's working at the factory is to underline the duty of Korean women to work hard on the home front, one cannot help but also recognize it as a representation of a poor single mother's descent from housewife with a housekeeper to unskilled needlework laborer, and finally to factory worker; she labors not for the state but for her own survival. A number of details—her having to let the housekeeper go, being pressed for her unpaid rent by the landlord, and moving into a small

[184] Kang Sŏng-nyul, *Ch'inil yŏnghwa*, 154.

boardinghouse—show that Kinshuku has to find better-paying work to pay the rent and survive as a single parent. Similarly, her collapse at the factory speaks to her being overcome by all the hardship she faces, instead of attesting to any sort of heroic patriotism of a woman on the home front.

The unprecedented success of *Chosŏn Strait* in Korean cinema implies that the details of its Japanese imperialist message were intentionally calibrated so that Korean moviegoers were able to enjoy the film without being overwhelmed by its registers of propagandistic intent. In addition, its heavy reliance on such melodramatic conventions as excessive tears, badly timed arrivals, and the heroine's deepening ordeal made the film enjoyable as an entertaining melodrama. The weaving in of a beloved actress's persona into a major character was another reason the film was so appealing. In other words, *Chosŏn Strait* cleverly employs a variety of tactics of the melodrama genre, including familiar story lines and the star system, quenching the thirst of Korean audiences for "interesting" Korean films, on the one hand, and arguably bending the propaganda form into an entertainment, on the other. *Chosŏn Strait*, which could have defined 'collaborationist' propaganda, is, in fact, the result of a collaboration between the Korean audiences and the filmmakers who utilized the stable conditions of production provided by the empire during the total war.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

A study of a chosen set of the extant Korean films produced between 1936 and 1945, my dissertation examines the ways in which Japanese colonialism, gender politics, and Koreans' aspiration for their own filmmaking interweave themselves on screen in the context of the empire's increasing pressure in the drive towards total mobilization. Though I distance myself from the overtly nationalist perspectives, I do contend that the films of wartime colonial Korea should be located in the contexts of Korean national cinema, especially its seminal instances that show the cinema's intimacy with the state.

Central to the dissertation's organization is my observation that the wartime propaganda films produced by Koreans are populated by initially misfit and displaced—and eventually lachrymose—Korean figures, such as irresolute young men, bereaved children, and suffering women. These cinematic characters undergo a variety of forms of soul searching in order to be reborn as proper colonial citizens, a process that involves both the enactment of their personal agency and the necessity of the state apparatus to support this. The figures reformed under imperial grace serve propagandistically to transform everyday life

on the home front into the (pseudo) military civic zone. Their imperial transformation, however, discloses significant fissures in the narrative logic and consistency of characters of the films of this genre. Young Korean males volunteer for the imperial army not as much out of loyalty to the empire as out of a desire for equal rights with the Japanese; and neglected children and women enduring hardship all too realistically—albeit inadvertently in some cases—reveal how Koreans are left unprotected and uncared by the Japanese Empire.

Figure. 6-1. Stills from *Arirang* (1926). In *Arirang*, Sin Il-sŏn, who stars in *Crossroads of Youth*, plays the sister of the male protagonist played by the director Na Un-gyu himself.

In my study, I analyze the colonial Korean films that share profoundly melodramatic elements that are derived from Korea's earlier cinematic tradition, supposed to have been established through the nationwide popularity of such

films as *Arirang* (dir. Na Un-gyu, 1926, lost).[185] While reading out the imperialist messages embedded in the obvious melodramas and asking how the melodramas of socially marginalized characters creates unexpected critiques, I lay out the ways in which children and women, left troubled and insecure, function allegorically to accuse the state of negligence or to substitute for absent Korean parents. Focusing on the as-ever melodramatic setting of the films promoting the newly launched army draft system, I have examined how the conundrum of the colonized male subject, who can never fully acquire Japanese citizenship, renders

[185] The predilection of Koreans for melodrama is not restricted to Korean films; Hollywood silent films by D.W. Griffith—e.g., *Broken Blossoms* (1919) and *Way Down East* (1920)—were immensely popular among filmgoers throughout the 1920s just like in Japan, and it is assumed they had great deal of influence on the formation of Korean spectatorship during a time when no Korean movies were being made. *Crossroads of Youth* (dir. An Chong-hwa, 1934), the oldest extant Korean film that I claim as a reiteration of *Arirang*'s themes and storyline, is a stereotypical Korean melodrama about a young couple. It weaves the motives of class conflict, contrasts between city and country and between traditional and modern, the separated family and reunion, struggles surrounding a woman's body and sexuality, and revenge for injustice into its narrative. However, while *Arirang* concludes with the hero committing murder to avenge his violated sister and being arrested for imprisonment, causing him to plunge into a deeply frustrating despair, *Crossroads of Youth* ends, after a deliberately prolonged 'revenge' scene, with the newly established family feeling optimistic and happy as if nothing bad had ever happened. Even if the film does not carry an explicit political message, the abrupt happy ending of *Crossroads of Youth* implies the changed demeanor of Korean society in the mid-1930s, that is, the wartime would not allow tragedy to be presented in Korean movies. Unlike in the 1920s, when a dark story of violent crime, tragedy, and defeatism could be told in the popular media, *Crossroads of Youth* bespeaks the colonial authorities' campaigns to encourage the Korean people to be wholesome, bright, and moral. And, the state's strengthened regulation of everyday life of Koreans is even more evident in *Sweet Dream*, made two years later. A police-sponsored film, the film argues for the active elimination of such social evils as extravagance and immorality, shown as pervasive in Korea, through the portrayal of a self-punishment of a modern woman who repents her sins.

changing gender dynamics and subsequently an ambiguously coded representation of the designated militarist politics.

Figure. 6-2. Stills from *Crossroads of Youth.* The male protagonist taking a revenge (left) and the family's comical happy ending (right)

While investigating these wartime propaganda films made by colonial Koreans, I have essayed a recuperative reading of the films from the most tragic—and consequently forgotten—era in Korean film history until very recently. Through close readings of selected film texts categorized as state-run enlightenment films, "volunteer" films, the children trilogy by the director Ch'oe In-gyu, and the wartime "woman's film," I have shifted the focal point of current colonial Korean film historiography from a moralistic and political frame to that of a more complicated and nuanced textual interpretation. Characterizing colonial

Korean cinema as a field of contestation between the desires of the colonial state, Korean filmmakers, and the filmgoing public, I have looked into the ways in which the directors communicate with Korean viewers through a close film analysis. The analysis of the Korean public's ambivalent attitude towards the war propaganda films reveals their convoluted psychology: this audience rejected and at the same time enjoyed the war spectacle and militarism. As a result, my work addresses the complex conjunction of diverse desires of different agents in the consumption of imperialist cinema in a colonial context.

The Colonial Legacy in Postliberation South Korea

Continuing to project multiple desires onto itself, just like it did during the colonial period, Korean cinema now served another state power of the postliberation era: the South Korean government of President Rhee Syng Man (1948 – 1960). *The Night Before Independence* (*Tongnip chŏnya*, 1948) is the earliest example of it. The film was directed by Ch'oe In-gyu and starred by his wife, Kim Sin-jae, both of whom were the most active director and actress in late-colonial Korean cinema, respectively. Emplyoing a variation of such familiar motives in Korean cinema as family reunion and taking of revenge, *The Night before Independence*, a quasipropaganda film produced by a private studio, presents the story of the independent nation's future, a future that would be led by

young and righteous Koreans who put an end to injustice and rehabilitate those who perpetuated it.

In this noir-style film, Ong-nan, played by Kim Sin-jae, with her helper Song, searches for Mr. Min, a pawnshop owner, in order to take revenge for her father's death. Separated from her younger brother because of Min's scheming, Ong-nan has spent five years trying to locate Min's whereabouts. Meanwhile, Min's daughter, who had been wandering around Shanghai with her mother, the abandoned wife of Min, comes back to Korea after the liberation. When she is about to be raped by Mr. Min, who fails to recognize his own daughter, Ong-nan's lost brother miraculously appears to save her. After all, Min meets his end at the hands of a group of gangsters in the area, on the point of death repenting his past and asking for Ong-nan's forgiveness. The next day the new South Korean government is established. The four young people—Ong-nan, her brother Kyŏng-il, Song, and Min's daughter—climb a mountain in the city at dawn and look down on the cityscape and toward a bright future.

Set in the postliberation time and space before the South Korean government officially takes power, the film vividly depicts the chaotic state of Korean society in which gamblers, drunkards, drug addicts, con men, and smugglers dominate the night in the back alleys of Seoul. Yet, as symbolized by the death of Min, the film asserts the old evils from the previous era will all

disappear upon the formation of the government and the young new citizens will construct a just country. What is significant about the film, however, is the ways in which it inherits and modifies prewar-era colonial-Korean cinema's conventions, dispensed with during the war, in relation to characters and narrative. The main theme of the story reiterates that of typical colonial Korean films from the 1920s, which feature class division and sexual violence resulting from the imbalance created by capitalism—a poor girl's sexual victimization by a wealthy and morally corrupt capitalist/landlord. In the war era, when the authorities promoted the "wholesomeness" of society, this type of 'raped woman (Korea/low class as the powerless) versus evil rich man (Japan/high class as the perpetrator)' story pattern was not permitted, testifying as well to the state's increased control over representations of sexuality in the popular media. In *The Night before Independence*, however, as a liberated Korea starts envisioning a bright future, the girl is saved from assault. Departing from what the nation used to portray in its cinema through the sexual violation of a Korean woman's body—Korea's looming future as an exploited colony—this 'liberation' film expresses the hope that not only will the newly established country flourish but also Korean cinema will reinvigorate its forsaken traditions.

Ong-nan's brother Kyŏng-il's reunion with his sister and his vengeance on the perpetrator or sexual violence is another change from the tropes of colonial

cinema: the Korean boy, once alienated from his family, finally finds his own roots. Where in colonial cinema boy characters such as Yong-gil in *Homeless Angel* and Eiryū in *Love and Vow* remain separated from their sisters even after family reunions, Kyŏng-il in this liberation film ultimately ends his 'orphanhood' and joins his reconvened family relation. Played by the director Ch'oe himself, Kyŏng-il represents the Korean male who has finally reclaimed his identity and is ready to be remasculinized so that he can join in the building of a new nation, taking the place vacated by Mr. Min, the 'bad father' of old Korea.

The resurrection of the prewar conventions of Korean cinema in the postliberation period might be taken as evidence supporting the claim that the wartime films are nothing more than aberration in Korean cinema's historiography—that they are the films of the period when "no Korean cinema" in fact existed.[186] To construct a legitimate Korean national cinema history, the two contradictory modes—acknowledgement and disapproval of certain films—have been selectively pursued. This tendency persists in colonial film studies, even among young scholars:

> When imperial Japan … asked Korean cinema to be subsumed in it, these films were undeniably 'Japanese cinema' in terms of international law and practice. It means that cinema was directly

[186] Yi Yŏng-il, *Han'guk yŏnghwa chŏnsa* (Seoul: Sodo, 2004; originally published in 1969), 208.

> connected to the (colonial) state without any agency in-between. Colonial cinema, until then, was never able to be connected to the nation directly.… But what would have happened… when the concept of 'Korean' cinema disappears or provincialized? The 'Japanese cinema' constituted by national policy will replace Korean cinema, making the latter 'a cinema of a colony.'[187]

Thus even recent scholars continue to dismiss the wartime films made by Koreans as local products of the greater Japanese empire, and thus not worthy of being taken up in the discourse of Korean national cinema. I have attempted to dispel the prevailing prejudice concerning the definition of national cinema and have pointed out the academic irresponsibility of such thinking in colonial Korean cinema studies. Most of the films that I have analyzed in this dissertation do not disseminate a hegemonizing ideology that pertains to the Korean nation's unique set of meanings. Yet, at the same time, as my close textual readings have revealed, they never fail to try to address Korean issues through a certain type of sentimentality, most often marked by gloominess—which was often stigmatized as a "Korean characteristic" by Japanese critics—and to appeal to the taste of the Korean audiences, despite the tight censorship and production control by the authorities. As the film historian Siegfried Kracauer points out, the moment of revelation of logical fissures in political cinema offers the audience a chance to be

[187] Yi Yŏng-jae, *Cheguk Ilbon ŭi Chosŏn yŏnghwa* (Seoul: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2008), 32.

awakened from manipulated representation. In his study of the well-manipulated cinematic reality of Nazi propaganda, Kracauer asserts that the "pauses" as "brief breathing-spaces for the audiences" present the danger that the viewer will become "aware of the void around him."[188] To be sure, the colonial Koreans must have been given more chances of noticing "the void" around them in the maneuvered diegesis of propaganda filled with the false promise of Korea enjoying a prosperity equal to that of Japan, if for no other reason than because the colonial era ended before the empire's ambitious campaign of 'imperialization' was fully realized. The films made by Koreans for Korean filmgoers who were not yet completely subordinated to the imperial order should not be 'orphaned' again as being either 'nationless' ("no Korean film existed" by Yi Yŏng-il) or 'Japanese' ("when Korean cinema disappeared" by Yi Yŏng-jae). The concept of national cinema, in other words, should address the questions of spectatorship and the cultural and industrial arena of certain films' production, circulation, and consumption, regardless of whether national self-determination is available.

Another reason wartime colonial film should be rigorously researched within Korean national cinema studies is that filmmaking in that country was

[188] Siegfried Kracauer, *Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Eduardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 292.

taken over by the authoritarian regimes of South Korea, beginning in the 1960s under the Park Chung Hee dictatorship and continuing through the next several decades. Park enthusiastically tried to employ the similar film-regulation/promotion system instituted under colonial rule, primarily by implementing a film law virtually identical to that promulgated by the Japanese empire. He made film censorship much harsher, exerted strong control over the film industry through administrative measures, and encouraged the civil studios to support the nation's modernization project (*choguk kŭndaehwa saŏp*) through the production of a number of enlightenment films and government-backing propaganda. Some of the masterpieces of the time by, for instance, Sin Sang-ok and Yu Hyŏn-mok, the two most prominent Korean cinema auteurs, are undeniably propaganda films—Sin's *Rice* (*Ssal*, 1963) delivers a message that individuals should willingly sacrifice themselves to support Park regime's national development plan, while Yu's *School Excursion* (*Suhak yŏhaeng*, 1969) shows how the country's landscape had been changed for the better by the state-driven development plan. Using a variant of the carrot and the stick, including financial support and awards systems, the Park government, having come to power via a military coup, utilized the film companies' cooperation in propaganda productions to the fullest extent to earn the approval of citizens for its political measures and legitimacy. Well aware of the power of cinema as the most popular art form among his people, Park, who himself was the embodiment of model

colonial subjecthood having been a Manchurian army officer in the late-colonial era, knew how to use the medium to shape the thinking of the masses via national campaigns promoting diverse spiritual movements and anticommunism ideology. As a result, Korean cinema, which had been born during a climate of strong state regulation, bloomed during the Park era, ushering in the so-called "Golden Age." The general controlling tendencies of the Park regime, with regard to film, lasted until the early 1990s when Korea was finally democratized. Rooted in the colonial setting, in other words, Korean cinema has at all times been in a close, negotiated relationship with state power, whether it be Japanese colonial rule or domestic dictators. Understanding the wartime colonial Korean films within the context of the development of Korean national cinema is, therefore, of great importance, for it provides us with an overarching perspective on the pervasive nationalistic and propagandistic trend in Korean cinema, a trend that has persisted into the very recent past.

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Samch'ŏlli (1929 – 1943)

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***Crossroads of Youth* (1934)**

KR. Title: *Ch'ŏngch'un ŭi sipcharo* 청춘의 십자로

Kŭmgang kinema (Kŭmgang Kinema), 73min., Silent

Dir: An Chong-hwa

Cast: Yi Wŏn-yong, Sin Il-sŏn, Kim Yŏn-sil

***Sweet Dreams: Lullaby of Death* (1936)**

KR. Title: *Mimong: chugŭm ŭi chajangga* 미몽: 죽음의 자장가

Kyŏngsŏng ch'waryŏngso (Kyŏngsŏng Film Studio), 48min., in Korean

Dir: Yang Chu-nam

Cast: Mun Ye-bong, Yi Kŭm-nyong, Ch'oe Un-bong

***Military Train* (1938)**

KR. Title: *Kunyong yŏlch'a* 군용열차

JP. Title: *Kunyō ressha* 軍用列車

Sŏngbong yŏnghwasa & *Tōhō eigasha* (Coproduction between Sŏngbong Studio & Toho Film Company), 67min., in Korean

Dir: Sŏ Kwang-je

Cast: Mun Ye-bong, Wang Pyŏng, Tok Ŭn-ki, Sasaki Nobuko

***Fisherman's Fire* (1939)**

KR. Title: *Ŏhwa* 어화

Kŭkkwang yŏngwha (Kŭkkwang Film Production), 52min., in Korean

Dir: An Ch'ŏl-yŏng

Cast: Yun Bok-yang, Kye Sŏng-no, Pak Ro-kyŏng

***Tuition* (1940)**

KR. Title: *Suŏmnyo* 수업료

JP. Title: *Jugyōryō* 授業料

Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe (Koryŏ Film Association), 80min., in Korean & Japanese

Dir: Ch'oe In-gyu, Pang Han-jun

Scr: Yagi Yasutarō

Cast: Susukida Genji, Chŏng Ch'an-jo, Pok Hye-suk, Kim Sin-jae

***You and I* (1941)**

KR. Title: *Kŭdae wa na* 그대와 나

JP. Title: *Kimi to boku* 君と僕

Chōsen'gun hōdōbu (Chosŏn Army Press Section), 24 min. (two rolls available), in Japanese

Dir: Hŏ Yŏng (a.k.a. Hinatsu Eitarō)

Cast: Kosugi Isamu, Kurajima Hanako, Nagata Genjiro, Ri Koran, Mun Ye-bong

***Homeless Angel* (1941)**

KR. Title: *Chip ŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa* 집없는 천사

JP. Title: *Ienaki tenshi* 家なき天使

Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe (Koryŏ Film Association), 73min., in Korean & Japanese

Dir: Ch'oe In-gyu

Scr: Nishikim Motosada

Cast: Kim Il-hae, Mun Ye-bong, Kim Sin-jae

***Spring on the Korean Peninsula* (1941)**

KR. Title: *Pando ŭi pom* 반도의 봄

JP. Title: *Hantō no haru* 半島の春

Myŏngbo yŏnghwasa (Myŏngbo Film Company), 84min., in Korean & Japanese

Dir: Yi Pyŏng-il

Cast: Kim Il-hae, Sŏ Wŏl-yŏng, Kim So-yŏng, Paek Ran

***Volunteer* (1941)**

KR. Title: *Chiwonbyŏng* 지원병

JP. Title: *Shiganhei* 志願兵

Tonga yŏnghwasa (Tonga Film Company), 56min., in Korean & Japanese

Dir: An Sŏk-yŏng

Cast: Ch'oe Un-bong, Mun Ye-bong, Yi Kŭm-nyong, Kim Il-hae, Pak Yŏng-ae

***Suicide Troop at Watchtower* (1943)**

KR. Title: *Mangnu ŭi kyŏlsadae* 망루의 결사대

JP. Title: *Bōrō no kesshitai* 望楼の決死隊

Chosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusik hoesa & *Tōhō eigasha* (Chosŏn Film Production Corporation & Toho Film Company), 85min., in Japanese & Korean

Dir: Imai Tadashi

Cast: Tanaka Minoru, Hara Setsuko, Kim Sin-jae, Tok Ŭn-gi

***Chosŏn Strait* (1943)**

KR. Title: *Chosŏn haehyŏp* 조선해협

JP. Title: *Chōsen kaikyō* 朝鮮海峡

Chosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusik hoesa (Chosŏn Film Production Corporation), 75min., in Japanese

Dir: Pak Ki-ch'ae

Cast: Mun Ye-bong, Nam Sŭng-min, Kim Sin-jae, Kim Il-hae, Tok Ŭn-gi

***Figure of Youth* (1943)**

KR. Title: *Chŏlmŭn chat'ae* 젊은 자태

JP. Title: *Wakaki sugata* 若き姿

Chosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusik hoesa (Chosŏn Film Production Corporation), 72min., in Japanese

Dir: Toyota Shirō

Cast: Hwang Ch'ol, Mun Ye-bong, Yi Kŭm-nyong

***Mr. Soldier* (1944)**

KR. Title: *Pyŏngjŏng nim* 병정님

JP. Title: *Heitai san* 兵隊さん

Chōsen'gun hōdōbu (Chosŏn Army Press Section), 100min., in Japanese

Dir: Pang Han-jun

Cast: Nam Sŭng-min, Tok Ŭn-gi, Ch'oe Un-bong, Kim Il-hae

***Love and Vow* (1945)**

K. Title: *Sarang kwa maengse* 사랑과 맹세

J. Title: *Ai to chikai* 愛と誓い

Chosŏn yŏnghwa chusik hoesa (Chosŏn Film Production Corporation), 75min., in Japanese

Dir: Ch'oe In-gyu

Cast: Takada Minoru, Kim Sin-jae, Kim Yu-ho