

Introduction

Exploring Intersectional Audience Publicness of Korean Theaters

On May 15, 1921, nearly thirty Christian churches in Seoul held a lecture entitled “The Youth and Morals.” The Young Men’s Christian Associations of Korea (YMCA) and the officials of each church aimed to warn the Korean youth who were being “swept away by rapid torrents and erratic waves” from the Western world and “did not know where to go.”¹ The convenors counted theaters (*yŏn’gŭkchang*) as a place of juvenile delinquency together with Seoul’s red-light district, *kisaeng* houses, and pubs. At these places, the youth might “not only lose their family fortune and ruin their reputation by falling into a terrible sin, but also catch a vicious and frightening venereal disease only to lose face forever and even cause trouble to their descendants.”² The urgent issue that called for the churches’ intervention was the rapid spread of syphilis among Koreans. Citing statistical records from a local hospital, the newspaper article, which announced the lecture, explained that 12 percent of patients who sought remedy in 1920 suffered from syphilis. The article states that

Even in France, which is known for syphilis worldwide, the infection rate does not exceed 12 percent. Meanwhile, Koreans, who lag behind others in every way, are the world’s No. 1 only in this vicious and scary disease. What a horrible and nerve-racking disaster is this!³

In popular narratives circulated in Korea during the early twentieth century, theaters often represented the starting point of moral deprivation. While other places mentioned in the article were connected to the direct trade of sex and money, theaters were a locus of so-called “Free Love (*chayu yŏnae*),” or romantic relationships outside marriage and the moral duty of remaining chaste.⁴ Reflecting theater’s popularity and accessibility, the

1 “Ch’ŏngnyŏn Namnyŏ ŭi Wigi [The Crisis of Young Men and Women],” *Dong-A Ilbo* (hereafter *DI*) May 15, 1921, 3.

2 “Crisis of Youth,” *DI*, May 15, 1921, 3.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

narrative that innocent young students run into their seducers at theaters and end up with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) was widely shared by newspaper articles, popular magazines, and fictional stories in the 1920s and 1930s. The public lecture of 1921 is one of the earliest cases that championed this specific narrative to awaken public awareness of the connection between the youth's theatergoing, sexuality, and STD. The warning was aimed at the youth in general, yet this was about to change soon: five years later, the Korean media began to focus on Seoul's female students, who had discovered their preference for romantic movies from the West.⁵ In doing so, the media succeeded the discourse that problematized women's theatergoing and way of watching, which had begun at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Another vivid example of contemporaries' interest in female spectators and the media's perspective is captured by the October 26, 1930 edition of the *Chosun Ilbo* with a caricature titled *Late Autumn Scenery 1* (see figure 1).⁶ In this picture, no one pays attention to what is happening on stage or on screen. Instead, the central focus of the scenery is on two Korean women seated in a corner on the first floor of a theater. They are surrounded by numerous empty seats—and the gaze of men in suits standing behind them as well as looking upon them from downstairs. Both women are sporting short hairs and shortened *hanbok* (traditional dress) that expose their arms and legs matched by high heels, epitomizing the much scorned yet also adored *modan kōls* (modern girls) of that time.⁷ The woman on the left is hunched forward, smiling with her face in her hands. The woman on the right adopts a more assertive and confident posture, with her right arm draped over the bench's backrest and the other seemingly bringing a cigarette towards her lips. She is wearing a watch and sitting cross-legged. All figures wear smiles of satisfaction. This caricature was accompanied by a commentary, noting that due to the recession, many seats in the theater remained empty. However, whenever a female audience member appeared, men insisted upon standing around the separate area reserved for women, even for three to four hours.⁸

In this era, which was marked by Korea's colonization by the Japanese empire, theatrical plays, motion pictures, and audiences were phenomena that warranted explanations on the political, societal, and cultural dimensions. Particularly, the Korean media often treated female audiences as a spectacle, echoing Mary Ann Doane's words that "there is always a certain excessiveness, a difficulty associated with women who appro-

5 The discourse of female students in movie theaters during the 1920s is discussed in chapter 4.

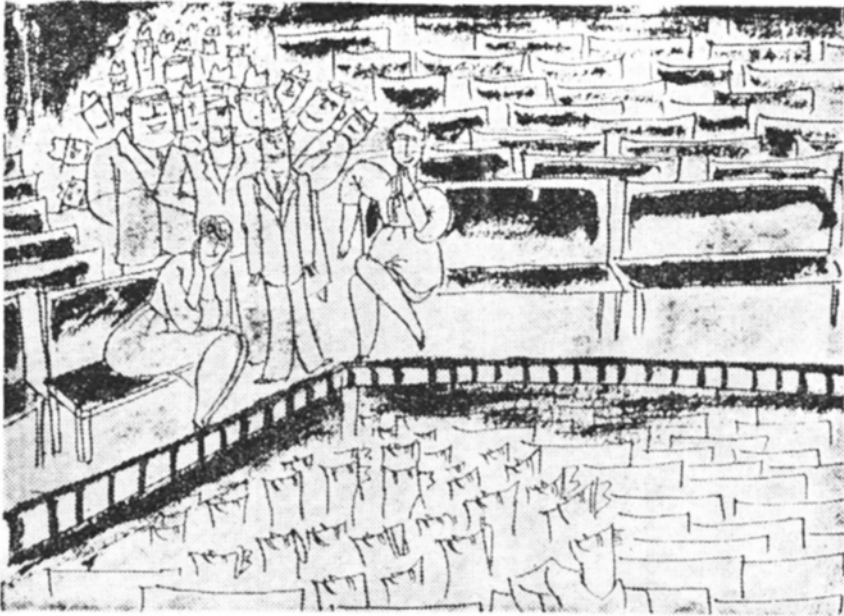
6 A-Saeng, "Manchu P'unggyōng 1 [*Late Autumn Scenery 1*]," *Chosun Ilbo* (hereafter *CI*), October 26, 1930, 5.

7 "Influenced by Japan, China, and the West, the idea of the 'Modern Girl' was circulated in Korea from the mid[-]1920s. [...] in outward appearance, Western-style dress signified a Modern Girl in Japan; however, there were very few Korean women who could afford Western-style dress, even in the late 1930s. Instead, the image of the Korean Modern Girl was related to a seamless one-piece skirt (*t'ong ch'ima*), a variation of the *hanbok*, the traditional dress for Korean women, with western accessories, such as a watch or shoes." Hyaewol Choi, "Introduction: New Women in discursive and historical space," in H. Choi (ed.), *New Women in Colonial Korea: A Sourcebook. Compiled and translated with an introduction by Hyaewol Choi* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 10–11.

8 A-Saeng, "Late Autumn Scenery 1," *CI*, October 26, 1930, 5.

pritate the gaze, who insist upon looking.”⁹ Ever since the late nineteenth century, as playhouses were erected for the first time in the history of the Korean peninsula, female audiences were observed, disciplined, or imagined by the public: because theaters represented a public space that radically deviated from the norm of spatial segregation among people of different strata and sexes. Therefore, female spectators experienced keen public interest in their family background, educational status, financial ability, appearances, behavior, taste, and bodies.

Figure 1: A-Saeng, Late Autumn Scenery 1.



Source: *Chosun Ilbo*, 26. October 1930. Courtesy of Chosun Ilbo.

Meanwhile, Korean newspapers and popular magazines, the new media of that time, circulated narratives and images of female spectators. These publications brought together women's theater- and moviegoing with diverse societal expectations related to the nation's prosperity, colonial assimilation, modernization, or maintenance of hierarchical gender norms. Eventually, accounts discussing female audiences had a considerable share in the publications about plays and motion pictures. Exposed to the public eye while claiming their position as beholders, female spectators became a relevant figure in the discourse of gender, spectatorship, and even the nation's fate under colonial rule.

Starting from these observations, this study explores public discourse on Korean women who began to expand their realm from the domestic to the public sphere under

9 Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator," *Screen* 23, 3–4 (1982), 83.

the burgeoning colonial rule by Japan. Focusing on Korean female audiences during the colonial era, this study engages with scholarly discussions of colonialism, feminism, and spectatorship from a postcolonial perspective. The corpus of sources mainly consists of texts published in Korean newspapers and magazines between the 1890s and the 1930s that discussed Korean female audiences of Seoul's growing theater business. Thereby, this book does not distinguish theater spectatorship from movie spectatorship because theater and cinema in colonial Korea were closely linked—in terms of both space and media practice. Regarding the space, most venues did not only show plays or movies, but presented concerts, dances, plays, and films, sometimes even within a single program. Furthermore, film screenings were often accompanied by an acting performance: Film narrators (*pyŏnsa*), who stood between the screen and the auditorium to retell and act out conversations and plots, remained integral to film screenings, even after their existence became—technically speaking—obsolete with the introduction of talkie movies in the 1930s.¹⁰ In the case of the so-called kino-dramas (*yŏnswaegŭk*), which enjoyed great popularity between the mid-1910s and 1920s, the plot unfolded seamlessly between the screen and stage.¹¹ These historical facts and practices prompt us to reconsider the clear-cut distinction between theater and movie audiences in early twentieth-century and to approach historical audiences from a different angle—that is, to focus on their physical presence in the theater space and on the discourse surrounding them. Adopting the method of historical discourse analysis, this research will address questions including under which circumstances Korean women could go to theaters; how they used theaters as a platform for their societal participation; how colonial politics affected Korean female audiences' spectatorship and in what ways politics of gender and modernization shaped the public discourse on female spectators. Ultimately, this book helps understand the heterogeneity of colonized Koreans including female spectators and the role of popular culture in the transformative process named modernization.

The Question of Colonial Publicness and Theaters

By focusing on the public discourse on female audiences of metropolitan entertainment venues, this study critically deals with the question of colonial modernity (*shingminji kŭndaesŏng*) in two ways. Firstly, as an integral part of the newly established urban entertainment business and culture, playhouses and movie theaters were the epitome of cultural renewal.¹² The theater business, established under the influence of Chinese and Japanese playhouses in foreign concessions and observations made in other Western countries,

10 Chŏng Ch'ungsil, *Kyŏngsŏng kwa Tokyo esŏ Yŏnghwa rŭl Pondanŭn Kŏt: Kwangaeksŏng Yŏn'gu ro Pon Cheguk kwa Shingminji Munhwasa* [Watching Movies in Seoul and Tokyo. Cultural History of an Empire and a Colony Based on the Study of Spectatorship] (Seoul: Hyŏnshil Munhwa Yŏn'gŭ, 2018), 152–54 and 187.

11 Han Sang'ŏn, *Chosŏn Yŏnghwa ŭi T'ansaeng* [The Birth of Korean Cinema] (Seoul: Pagijŏng, 2018), 253–59.

12 Woo Sujin, *Han'guk Kŭndae Yŏn'gŭk ŭi Hyŏngsŏng: Konggong Kŭkchang kwa Sin'p'agŭk ŭi Taejungjŏk Munhwa Chihyŏng* [The Formation of Modern Korean Theater: The Popular Cultural Topography of Public Theaters and the Shin'p'a Drama] (Seoul: P'urŭn Sasang, 2011), 35–56.

was in line with the reformist zeal during the Korean Empire (1897–1910).¹³ Furthermore, theater historian Woo Sujin points out that Seoul's theater business could emerge from the soil of rapidly developing urban infrastructures, such as electricity and the streetcar system, as well as a new media environment including newspapers and motion picture technology.¹⁴ Secondly, theater audiences are highly relevant to the academic debate surrounding the question of colonial modernity as constituents of colonial publicness (*shingminji konggongsŏng*). As my research focuses on the second aspect, I hope to clarify how my book about Korean colonial audiences can contribute to a new understanding of colonial modernity by summarizing the academic discussion on the issue below.

Depicting the changes in Korean economy and society during the colonial era as modernization (*kūndaehwa*) is a controversial issue. Discussions on modernization and Korea's colonial past has been shaped by two confronting hypotheses of colonial exploitation (*shingminji sut'al ron*) and colonial modernization (*shingminji kūndaehwa ron*). Both hypotheses commonly focus on Japan's role in Korea's economic development during colonial rule when discussing modernization. The former places greater emphasis on the aspect that the aim of the economic development in Korea was to enrich Japan and provide for Japan's warfare; the latter emphasizes the growth of GDP during colonial rule as a positive development for Korean economy. Scholars stressing the economic growth during the colonial period tend to see themselves free from nationalism and anti-Japanese bias.¹⁵ Yet, there are critical engagement with this line of arguments, particularly focusing on the similarities between the hypothesis of colonial modernization and the logic of the Japanese colonialists that justified the colonial rule.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Korean historian Vladimir Tikhonov points out that both hypotheses are inherently nationalist and narrow down the notion of modernization to the successful

- 13 Sung Un Gang, "From Streets to Theaters: The Emergence of the Korean Entertainment Business in the Early 20th Century," *Ostasien im Blick: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Reinhard Zöllner*, eds. Harald Meyer, Shiro Yukawa and Nadeschda Bachem (Großheirath: Ostasien Verlag, 2021), 145–66.
- 14 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 17.
- 15 See Yi Yŏnghun et al., *Panil Chongjok Chu'i: Taehan Min'guk Wigi ūi Kūnwŏn [Anti-Japanese Tribalism: The Origin of the Crisis of Korea]* (Seoul: Miraesa, 2019).
- 16 Some of them call their self-proclaimed objectivity into question by asserting, against the established historical facts, that Korean "comfort women (K: *wianbu*, J: *ianfu*)," a euphemism for girls and women forced into sex labor for the Japanese army during the Pacific War, were legally contracted prostituting women, and, therefore, not victims of a war crime. See Andrew Gordon and Carter Eckert's critical intervention into a recent debate: "Statement by Andrew Gordon and Carter Eckert concerning J. Mark Ramseyer, 'Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,'" February 17, 2021. URL: <https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37366904>. For criticisms of the hypothesis of colonial modernization see Shin Yonhap, *Ilche Shingminji Chŏngch'aek kwa Shingminji Kūndaehwa Ron Pip'an [Japanese Colonial Politics and the Critique of the Hypothesis of Colonial Modernization]* (Seoul: Munhwa kwa Chisŏngsa, 2006); Hŏ Suyŏl, *Kaebal Ōmnŭn Kaebal: Ilche ha Chosŏn Kyŏngje Kaebal ūi Hyŏnsang kwa Ponjil [Development Without Development: Phenomena and the Essence of the Korean Economic Development under the Japanese Colonial Rule]* (Seoul: Ŭnhaeng Namu, [2005]2019); Toriumi Yutaka, *Ilbon Hakja ka Pon Shingminji Kūndaehwa ron: Ilche Kangjŏmgi Ilbonin Tomok Chŏngbu Őpja ūi Pudang lik ūl Chungsim iro [The Hypothesis of Colonial Modernization through the Eyes of a Japanese Scholar: Focusing on Japanese Construction Contractors' Ill-Gotten Profits]* (P'aju: Chisik Sanŏpsa, 2019).

implementation of capitalism despite heated discussions and seemingly oppositional stances toward the matter of colonial modernity. Tikhonov elaborates on the point that

While the former narrative [of colonial exploitation] took shape under the “neo-mercantilist” regime of Park Chung Hee (1961–1979) and the atmosphere of intense state-centered nationalism, the latter [hypothesis of colonial modernization] became prominent in [the] 2000s in the predominantly neoliberal environment, in which South Korea’s integration into the world capitalist economy, despite the conditions of colonial rule, was naturally viewed as inherently positive. However, the latter narrative in its essence is just as deeply nationalist as the former one [hypothesis of colonial exploitation], its point of departure being the vision of the South Korean nation state as a capitalist success and the need to explain why such success was possible and why the South Korean capitalist class, with its colonial roots, should be seen as a legitimate hegemonic force in South Korean society. The underlying ideological agenda did change [from colonialism to neoliberalism], but not the nationalist mode of articulating it by projecting it onto history.¹⁷

Likewise, historian Yun Hae-dong stated that the hypotheses of colonial exploitation and colonial modernization are commonly absorbed into nationalist and developmentalist narratives of modernization.¹⁸ As an alternative approach, Yun draws attention to the “grey zone (*hoesaek chidae*)”¹⁹ of colonial Korea, claiming that a significant number of people during the colonial period were neither fully anti-colonialist nor pro-colonialist. As a “suitable interpretative paradigm”²⁰ to understand the colonial grey zone and defy nationalist historiography, Yun coined the concept of colonial publicness. Thereby, Yun differentiates colonial publicness from Jürgen Habermas’s civic public sphere (*zivile Öffentlichkeit*), the homogenous and exclusive space of the Western bourgeoisie which gave birth to the idea of democracy.²¹ Yun draws a line between colonial publicness and Habermasian civic public sphere based on political and historical differences: Habermas’s arguments over the civic public sphere “presuppose the existence of a modern state with the rule of law,” which is “inadequate to describe colonial states or mass dictatorships in general.”²²

According to Yun, colonial publicness is rather a “metaphor for ‘the political’ during Korea’s colonial period” that “emerges [...] precisely in places that lack an official confirmation of the public’s existence.”²³ He explains that colonial publicness cannot exist

17 Vladimir Tikhonov, “Doing Korean History Research Outside of Korea: An Advantage of Looking from Outside?,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 15, no. 1, 154. Original in English.

18 Yun Hae-dong, *Shingminji ūi Hoesaek Chidae: Han’guk ūi Kūndaesōng kwa Shingmin Chu’i Pip’an* [The Grey Zone of the Colony] (Seoul: Yōksa Pip’yōngsa, 2003), 25.

19 Yun, *Grey Zone*, 25.

20 Yun Hae-dong, “Colonial Publicness as Metaphor,” trans. Michael Kim, in *Mass Dictatorship and Modernity*, ed. Michael Kim, Michael Schoenhals, and Kim Yong-Woo (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 159–77. Published in English.

21 See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, [1962]1989).

22 Yun, “Colonial Publicness,” 172.

23 *Ibid.*, 161.

as a stable, firmly grounded, physical reality due to the lack of civil rights in colonies. Rather, it is “flexible and ephemeral,”²⁴ and thus can be discovered in various situations. For instance, a protest against a local colonial bureau’s relocation in Ch’ungch’öngnam-do province in the early 1930s reveals that the colonized Korean inhabitants shared a moment of colonial publicness with Japanese settlers in defense of their common commercial interests.²⁵ Likewise, Yun interprets Koreans who spread political rumors mocking Japan’s military zeal during the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937 as members of a “community of rumours,” who established an “informal public sphere.”²⁶ In other words, there was a “publicness on the periphery” that is not far from the space of political resistance.²⁷

Drawing upon theater historian Yu Sönyöng’s study of colonial Korean spectatorship, Yun asserts that movie audiences during the colonial era, too, constituted colonial publicness. Yu explains that in the colonial era, film screenings were accompanied by other elements such as Korean folk dances, performances, narrators, and colonial police investigators that surveilled theaters.²⁸ In this environment, Korean audiences could have shared a feeling of belonging on the common ground of traditional plays and performances on the one hand and experiences of surveillance and discipline enacted by the colonial police on the other.²⁹ Following Yu’s view, Yun regards Korean theaters, separated from Japanese theaters during the colonial era, as “a kind of ethnic space beneath the colonial racism.”³⁰ Yun states that

In this way, we can see the plausibility of the argument for an ‘audience publicness’ where the masses formed their own autonomous publicness by appropriating media such as radio and cinema, the propaganda tools of imperialism. The audiences under Japanese colonialism modified the dominant discourse of publicness slightly to make it their own. Through audience publicness, we can see that the dominant discourse of the colonial state’s public sphere did not function only as a phantom public sphere. These arguments for audience publicness allow the realm of the public sphere to extend to everyday life.³¹

Yun initially suggested colonial publicness to explore the colonial grey zone, which facilitates multiple meanings and practices of the political, which cannot be reduced to anti-Japanese movement. By pointing out that the colonial public sphere “did not function only as a phantom public sphere,” Yun hints at the possibility that the colonized Korean people appropriated the public domain for their own politics as well. Nevertheless, his depiction of “audience publicness” seems to lean toward the nationalist narrative when

24 Ibid., 171.

25 Ibid., 167.

26 Ibid., 170–71.

27 Ibid. 171.

28 Yu Sönyöng, “Ch’ogi Yöngghwa üi Munhwajöök Suyong kwa Kwan’gaeksöng: Kündaejök Shigak Munhwa üi Pyönjo wa Chae Paech’i [The Cultural Reception and Spectatorship of Early Movies: Improvisation and Rearrangement of Modern Visual Culture],” *Öllon kwa Sahoe* 12, no. 1, 9–55; refer to 25–32.

29 Yu, “Cultural Reception,” 36–40.

30 Yun, “Colonial Publicness,” 169.

31 Ibid.

he assumes that Korean audiences were a monolith sharing the same cultural identity and political experiences of oppression—a notion that I question in this study.

Indeed, Korean theaters were sometimes a locus of anti-colonial actions. For instance, as a part of the nationwide protest against Japanese colonial rule in March 1919, Korean audiences in P'yŏng'yang cried for independence and waved the Korean national flag.³² In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Korean activists disseminated leaflets criticizing Japan's colonial rule in Seoul's theaters.³³ However, there were also different moments of political actions in Korean theaters that were not countable as colonial or anti-colonial activism, which constitutes the core focus of this study.

The notion of colonial publicness has been a fruitful conceptual framework for numerous studies dealing with conflicts of interest, everyday histories, and cooperation between different groups in colonial Korea.³⁴ For instance, Todd A. Henry analyzes how colonial authorities tried to launch spiritual, material, and civic assimilation projects using city planning, forced visits to *shintō* shrines, industrial exhibitions, and hygienic measures targeting Korean residential areas of Seoul during the colonial era.³⁵ Thereby, Henry convincingly argues that the Government-General was far from being an omnipotent and ubiquitous power; instead, the assimilation politics of the Government-General often collided with Japanese settlers and subaltern Korean residents who pursued their own interests while sabotaging or appropriating the urban infrastructure projects and campaigns. Scholars investigating publishing projects³⁶ and school education³⁷ as well as urban conflicts surrounding infrastructures including streetcar lanes,³⁸ dwellings,³⁹

32 "Yŏng'gukchang esŏ to Manse: P'yŏng'yang esŏ to irŏn II [Hurray for Korea's Independence Also in Playhouses: In P'yŏng'yang as Well]," *Maeil Shinbo* (hereafter *MS*), March 29, 1919, 3.

33 Yi Sŭnghŭi, "Chosŏn Kŭkchang ūi S'ŭk'aendŭl kwa Kŭkchang ūi Chŏngch'i Kyŏngjehak [Scandals Surrounding the Chosŏn Movie Theater and the Political Economy of Theaters]," *Taedong Munhwa Yŏngu* 72 (2010), 117–58.

34 See Yun Hae-dong and Hwang Pyŏngju (eds.), *Shingminji Kŭndaesŏng, Silche wa Ŭnyu ūi Kŏri [Colonial Publicness: The Distance Between Substance and Metaphor]* (Seoul: Yŏksa wa Hamkke, 2010); Kyu Hyun Kim, "The Politics of Language and Wartime Mobilisation of Everyday Life in Late Colonial Korea, 1937–1945," *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship: Collusion and Evasion*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 112–25.

35 Todd A. Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

36 Chang Munsŏk, "Shingminji Ch'ulp'an kwa Yangban: 1930-nyŏndae Shin Chosŏnsa ūi Komunhŏn Ch'ulp'an Hwaltong kwa Chŏnt'ong Chisik ūi Shingminji Konggongsŏng [Colonial Publication and yangban: The Shin Chosŏnsa's Publication of Korean Classics and the Colonial Publicness of Traditional Knowledge in the 1930s]," in *Minjok Munhaksŏ Yŏngu* 55 (2014), 351–407.

37 Yi Kihun, "1920-30-nyŏndae Pot'ong Hakkyo wa Chiyŏk Sahoe [Elementary Schools and Local Communities in the 1920s and 1930s]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 289–321.

38 Kim Chejŏng, "Ilche Shingminjigi Kyŏngsŏngbu Kyooe Chiyŏk ūi Chŏnch'a Munje wa Chiyŏk Undong [The Streetcar Problem of Seoul's Suburbs and Local Movements in the Colonial Period]," Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 189–222.

39 Yŏm Pokgyu, "1920-30-nyŏndae Ch'aji Ch'again Undong ūl t'onghae Pon Chŏhang kwa Chŏgŭng ūi Kyoch'a Chijŏm [An Intersect Between the Resistance and Adaptation Seen through the Tenant Movement in the 1920s and 1930s]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 223–54.

water pipes,⁴⁰ broadcast system,⁴¹ orphanages,⁴² and cemeteries⁴³ have also adopted this concept to elucidate the complexity of colonial Korean society.

Meanwhile, scholarly engagement with audience publicness still represents a gap in research despite its centrality to Yun's concept of colonial publicness.⁴⁴ There has been growing interest in historical audiences of the colonial period, but colonial Korean audiences' multilateral conflict, co-creation, agency, difference, and complexity have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Considering that the concept of audience publicness facilitates such a nuanced approach, it is even more surprising that prior studies of Korean history and theaters have overlooked colonial Korean audiences' sociopolitical diversity. Even if studies adopt the concept of audience publicness, solely focusing on the ethnic identity of Korean audiences and their experiences of colonial racism can erase the "grey zone" in Korean theaters, which will eventually reinforce nationalist history writing.

By analyzing the discourse about female audiences and their moments of conflict as well as the alliances between various groups of audience members in Korean theaters, this book aims to reveal the heterogeneity of Korean audiences and identify various shades of grey within the auditorium. This study closes the research gap of audience publicness and, by critically engaging with this concept, contributes to the critical discourse on colonial modernity that has significantly shaped the Koreanist academic landscape and studies of East Asian histories in recent years. The reasons for my focus on female audiences, as well as the resulting theoretical challenges and opportunities this presents, are elaborated in the next subsection.

Intersectional Spectatorship of Colonial Korean Women

This book investigates the intersectionality of Korean female audiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 to refer to the multiple layers of marginalization that Black women in the United States experienced, and it has developed into one of the key concepts in contemporary feminist thought that pays attention to the complexity and variety of individual situatedness based on class, gender, race, health, and

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- 40 Kim Yŏngmi, "Ilche Shigi Toshi ūi Sangsudo Munje wa Konggongsŏng [The Water Supply Problem in Urban Areas and the Publicness in the Colonial Era]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 255–88.
- 41 Sŏ Chaegil, "Shingminji Shigi Chosŏnŏ Pangsŏng kwa Shingminji Konggongsŏng [Korean Language Broadcast and the Colonial Publicness in the Colonial Period]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 325–56.
- 42 So Hyŏnsuk, "Kyŏnggye e Sŏn Koadŭl: Koa Munje rŭl t'onghae Pon Ilche Shigi Sahoe Saŏp kwa Konggongsŏng [Orphans on the Border: Social Work and the Publicness During the Conial Era by the Example of Orphan Problems]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 357–95.
- 43 Chang Yong-kyŏng, "1910-nyŏndae Ilche ūi Kongdong Myoji Chŏngch'aek kwa Chosŏnin ūi Kyŏnghŏm [Japanese Imperialists' Politics of Public Cemetry and Koreans' Experiences in the 1910s]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 396–418.
- 44 Yu Sŏnyŏng, "Kŭkchang Kugyŏng kwa Hwaltong Sajin Pogŭ: Ch'unggyŏk ūi Kŭndae Kŭrigo Chŭlgŏum ūi Hunyuk [Theatergoing and Watching Motion Pictures: The Shock of Modernity and Disciplining the Pleasure]," *Yŏksa Pip'yŏng* (2003), 362–76; Yu, "Cultural Reception," 9–55.

other aspects of human life.⁴⁵ As discussed in later chapters, intersectionality is particularly useful for understanding the public discourse about theatergoing in early-twentieth-century Korea. This is because the centuries-old social hierarchy, rooted in one's stratum and gender, determined people's lives. Additionally, colonial politics sought to turn Koreans into assimilated colonial subjects, while enlightenment-oriented intellectuals endeavored to mold them into modern subjects—at times, these projects of colonial assimilation and modernization shared similar rhetoric and methodology,⁴⁶ as can also be observed in discourses surrounding Korean female spectators.

To investigate the heterogeneity of audience publicness in Korean theaters, this book deploys the notion of spectatorship. According to film scholar Judith Mayne, spectatorship

[...] is not only the act of watching a film, but also the ways one takes pleasure in the experience, or not; the means by which watching movies becomes a passion, or a leisure time activity like any other. Spectatorship refers to how film-going and the consumption of movies and their myths are symbolic activities, culturally significant events.⁴⁷

While foregrounding the relationship between spectators and movies, Mayne adds that spectatorship is “also and especially how that relationship lives on once the spectator leaves the theater.”⁴⁸ In other words, spectatorship encompasses viewers' experiences, their reflection on what and how they watched, and meanings attached to the act of spectating in a given society. As a societal and historical construct, female audiences and their gaze were also formed outside the theater. Therefore, my research takes various discourses *beyond the sphere of theaters* that influenced spectatorship into consideration, such as those of conventional spectatorship before the erection of playhouses, nation-building, colonial assimilation, cultural reform, sexuality, and socialism.

The notion of intersectional spectatorship—that there is not *an* audience but heterogeneous audiences with various experiences and stances—arose from Western feminist film scholars' theoretical intervention into the field in the 1970s. With her seminal work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey declared “a total negation of the ease and pleasure of the narrative fiction film”⁴⁹ that reproduces the patriarchal oppression of women. Mulvey deployed a dualistic framework of “active/male and passive/female”⁵⁰ to problematize the objectification of women in front of the persistent male gaze

45 See Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989), 139–67 and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991), 1241–99.

46 For instance, Henry observes that colonial authorities and nationalist Korean elites both engaged in public health matters. However, while the former aimed for the civic assimilation of Koreans by imposing hygiene regulations, the latter envisioned the development of national health and independence from Japan through improved hygienic standards. See Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 157–58.

47 Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (Routledge: London and New York, 1993), 1.

48 Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*, 3.

49 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), 8.

50 Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure,” 11. In doing so, Mulvey reproduces the gender binary of male and female, disregarding the existence of trans, non-binary, gender-fluid, and other gender-related identities.

in classic Hollywood movies, which encourage men to perpetuate voyeurism while enforcing female spectators to internalize exhibitionism.

The provocative essay ushered in critics of the heterosexual male gaze in film studies based on psychoanalytical concepts such as voyeurism and exhibitionism. However, Mulvey's work has also evoked criticism by other feminist scholars. For instance, Chris Straayer and Elizabeth Ellsworth questioned the heteronormativity in Mulvey's essay and claimed that lesbian readings of classic Hollywood movies "held a key to challenging the account of cinema as producing patriarchal subject positions—since lesbian viewers, at least, were subverting dominant meanings and confounding textual structures."⁵¹ Similarly, Jane Gaines criticized feminist film theories that exclusively dealt with white women as spectators and actresses, although "for them [women of color] exploitation can be personified by a white female."⁵² In this sense, Gaines noted that "male/female is a powerful, but sometimes blinding construct."⁵³ Meanwhile, bell hooks stressed that the act of watching had different meanings for black people in the U.S. due to the history of slavery: "The politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that the slaves were denied their right to gaze."⁵⁴ hooks elaborates on the black male gaze, pointing out that "black men were murdered/lynched for looking at white womanhood," and thus "the private realms of television screens or dark theaters could unleash the repressed gaze."⁵⁵ Explaining black female spectatorship, hooks points out that black women have developed an "oppositional gaze," as the media erased them while constructing "white womanhood as object of phallogocentric gaze."⁵⁶

These critical engagements with feminist film theory, which foregrounded the intersection of race and gender and history's significance to understand spectatorship better, have significantly influenced my analyses. Concurrently, it is important to note that studies prevalent in the Anglo-American world have often treated the presence of women in the auditorium as a matter of course. However, press accounts of theaters and cinemas from early twentieth-century Korea suggest that the very existence of a public facility called a theater and female spectators stirred controversy and fueled imagination. These Korean examples emphasize that discussions of audiences were inherently intersectional from the beginning, thus requiring an intersectional analysis.

Although small in number, recent scholarship has deployed an intersectional approach to colonial Korean spectatorship as well. Roh Jiseung's 2016 study highlights

While the limitations of binary gender categories are clear to me, this book draws upon the historical discourse of the early twentieth century, an era where the gender binary system remained mostly unquestioned. Unearthing the queer history of spectating in the Korean context remains a task for future research.

51 Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thorman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, [1988]1999), 293.

52 Gaines, "White Privilege," 294.

53 Ibid.

54 bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Feminist Film Theory*, 307.

55 hooks, "Oppositional Gaze," 309.

56 Ibid., 313.

gender and class of audiences as significant factors to understand the history of spectatorship in Korea.⁵⁷ Based on the assumption that film is a medium that subverts power relations surrounding cultural production and consumption, Roh focuses on moments of Korean cinema history in which the marginalized people could claim agency and felt empowered while watching movies.⁵⁸ In an earlier study of female cinema audience during the 1920s and 1930s, Roh identified patriarchal control of female movie fans and stigmatization of *kisaeng*-audience in the public debate as well.⁵⁹ On a collective level, Roh argues that watching movies based on Korean traditional novels during the colonial era might have evoked a sense of community by making emotionally appealing content accessible to the broader public. Meanwhile, Chŏng Ch'ungsil's 2018 study shows differences in the culture of spectation between the wealthier and poorer inhabitants of Tokyo and Seoul and how the expansion of the Japanese cinema industry to colonial Korea strengthened the gap.⁶⁰

While this study is indebted to the works mentioned above on spectatorship, two aspects of my research call for an alternative approach. Firstly, there are neither ego-documents left by Korean theatergoers nor well-preserved sources to retrace their relationship to theatrical plays and movies, such as playbills, direction books, film stripes, stage designs, costumes, or buildings. In fact, there are hardly any material sources available for the research of Korean theater and cinema history before the 1950s except for texts published in newspapers and magazines.⁶¹ Therefore, this study does not make assumptions about historical audiences' psychological condition or cognitive transformation during and after watching a play or a movie.

Secondly, this study recognizes that audiences of that time were often distracted and disturbed during a theatrical play or a motion picture by other audience members, venue employees, or the colonial police. They were far from ideal recipients of theatrical and cinematic signs, which required them to be quiet and concentrated on the stage. Instead, newspaper articles show that audiences crossed the stage, threw objects at actors, or yelled at them during plays, not to mention that they talked to each other, constantly moved into and out of theaters, flirted with each other, and even urinated in their seat. Meanwhile, employees walked through aisles with lit lanterns to find seats for belated guests or call their names loudly to put them on the phone. Colonial police officers censored shows and movies from the auditorium and surveilled the auditorium from the stage (see Chapter 3.3).

57 Roh Jiseung, *Yŏnghwagwan ūi T'ajadŭl: Chosŏn Yŏnghwa ūi Ch'ulbal esŏ Han'guk Yŏnghwa Hwanggŭmgi kkaji Yŏnghwa Pogi ūi Yŏksa* [The Others at the Cinema: A History of Movie-Watching from the Beginning to the Golden Era of Korean Cinema] (Seoul: Aelp'i, 2016), 9.

58 Roh, *Others at Cinema*, 5–7.

59 See Roh Jiseung, "Shingminji Shigi, Yŏsŏng Kwan'gaek ūi Yŏnghwa Ch'ehŏm kwa Yŏnghwa chŏk Chŏnt'ong ūi Hyŏngsŏng [The Cinematic Experience of Female Audiences and the Formation of Cinematic Tradition during the Colonial Period]," *Hyŏndae Munhak ūi Yŏngu*, no. 40, 175–217.

60 Chŏng Ch'ungsil, *Watching Movies*.

61 At the stage of research design, I visited ARKO Arts Archive Seoul in August 2015 and sought advice from Kim Hyŏnok, a curator of the archive. Sources and methodology will be discussed later in this chapter. Kim Hyŏnok (ARKO Arts Archive), 'Re: Kŭndae Yŏng'gŭk 1-ch'a Saryo Munŭi Kwallyŏn Tapbyŏn [Re: An Answer to the Query on Primary Sources Related to Modern Theater],' Email, 2015.

In respect of these facts, this study draws upon theater scholar Dennis Kennedy's approach to spectators.⁶² Considering audiences' heterogeneous social, psychological, empirical, aesthetic, and cognitive conditions, Kennedy noted that "a spectator is a corporeal presence but a slippery concept,"⁶³ a notion which applies to the Korean audiences of the early twentieth century. In order to define audiences, Kennedy underlines the physical presence of people at theaters, which can be adapted to explain the Korean discourse during the colonial era as well: "if there is a universal in a gathered group it must be the gathering itself, in the simple act of being present, as simultaneous witnesses or participating observers, at an event offered for display precisely for this group."⁶⁴

In the Korean context, past audiences and what they watched are not entirely approachable through firsthand sources, and the spectators were often distracted. However, there is a large number of texts published in newspapers and magazines that discuss them. The next subsection will first propose the theoretical background and concepts from postcolonial studies as adequate tools for tackling the project's challenges.

Dissecting the Silence of Korean Female Audiences

Korean women who went to the theater remained silent about their experiences as spectators. This might be the reason why little research has been conducted to investigate Korean female audiences during the colonial era, despite the unwavering public interest expressed in historical sources. Writing histories of colonial Korean female spectators brings with it challenges of subaltern historiography. To borrow Gayatri Spivak's words: "If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."⁶⁵ When facing the silence, historians can be tempted to speak for historical actors by filling the void that subaltern women left instead of showing them adequately.⁶⁶

Concurrently, assuming that Korean women were unable to "speak" goes against what sources tell us about them because "gaps in the transmission of the past"⁶⁷ do not mean the absence of the past altogether. Indeed, Korean women voiced their opinions on literature, education, labor, sexuality, household, religion, patriotism, rural reform, or even birth control already from the late nineteenth century onwards and never stopped

62 Dennis Kennedy differentiates between audience as "a group of observers at a performance" and spectator as "an individual member of an audience." To avoid misunderstanding, however, I use "audiences" and "spectators" to mark the plurality of gathered people in the auditorium and "an audience member" and "a spectator" to refer to a specific individual. Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5.

63 Kennedy, *Spectator and Spectacle*, 3.

64 Ibid., 14.

65 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 41.

66 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 28.

67 John Durham Peters, "History as a Communication Problem," in *Explorations in Communication and History*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008), 26.

doing so during the colonial era.⁶⁸ Furthermore, there are rich indications that Korean women were enthusiastic theatergoers already during the colonial era. Not only did the contemporary witnesses observe an increase in women at theaters, but also women's magazines gradually ran more movie advertisements and pictorials featuring Hollywood stars. In short: Korean women's silence on their theater- and moviegoing is conspicuous and merits a nuanced reading.

Based on this observation, my research examines accounts about female spectators not only as simple statements about them but also as factors shaping their silence. I adopt Michel Foucault's concept of discourse as "practices that systematically form objects of which they speak"⁶⁹ where the content and speakers of the statement are restricted based on power relations. Drawing upon the Foucauldian concept of discourse, I will argue that the discourse about female spectators aimed to turn them into subjects. In this process of subjectification, I understand the making of female audiences in a twofold sense.

Firstly, narratives and images of Korean female audiences were manifested through their media representations. Therefore, the following chapters examine what kinds of statements were made about them at each given period and how they "form[ed] a complex web"⁷⁰ of meaning because they shaped the way people understood Korean women's spectatorship.

Secondly, this study investigates the discourse on female audiences as a "mode[] of objectification which transform[s] human beings into subjects."⁷¹ Newspaper articles, editorials, and gossip sections formed societal expectations of Korean women to think and behave in specific ways, mainly when they frequented illicit spaces such as theaters. Therefore, this study considers the discourse on female spectators as a product and producer of "a relationship of power," which is "an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future."⁷² This study will reveal how the media tried to turn them into specific subjects, such as women, compatriots, colonized subjects, future mothers and wives, and the ignorant. This subjectification followed not only the gender boundaries but also that of social strata: the process of subjectification started at the very moment when some of the women were allocated to the so-called women's section while others were not, which represented "dividing practices"⁷³ in the Foucauldian sense. To analyze the micro and macro power relations beneath the discourse, I adopt other Foucauldian concepts, including disciplinary power, subject, and commentary. In doing so, this study investigates the public discourse about women's theatergoing and regulative measures targeting them as a process of shaping new womanhood for various aims.

68 See Choi, *Sourcebook*.

69 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Pantheon Books: New York, 1972), 49.

70 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 49.

71 Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982), 777–95, see 777.

72 Foucault, "Subject and Power," 789.

73 Ibid., 777.

Particularly, this study explores whether mass media discourses about colonial Korean female spectators were everyday attempts to shape them into *modern* subjects.⁷⁴ Here, a *modern* subject refers to someone thinking and acting in a so-called *civilized* way, a category influenced by the prevailing belief at that time that history and civilization might progress linearly towards a specific goal—which has been the basis for imperial expansion and colonization, thus criticized and deconstructed to this day. As Dipesh Chakrabarty highlights, the normative imaginary of what characterizes a *developed civilization* and if a person/nation/culture might be *civilized enough* was informed by Eurocentric imperialist thoughts.⁷⁵ As such, determining a level of civilization of any entity is inherently arbitrary, entangled with issues of power and gaze.

This becomes evident when examining early twentieth-century Korea, as various media suggested diverse ideals of reformed personhood depending on the time and political interests. In the 1890s, for instance, Western-oriented reformers of Tongnip Hyôphoe (Independence Club) considered an ideal man to be someone with physical health, a zest for action, and Western education who could compete with Westerners. Concurrently, they promoted the idea that women should be the nation's devoted mothers and wives. By the 1920s, the individualist became a liberal ideal, while others idolized socialist revolutionaries. Meanwhile, patriots ready to sacrifice their lives for anti-colonial endeavors were marginalized, and thoroughly assimilated Koreans were widely propagated from the closing 1930s. The media sought out those who conformed to these ideals, presenting them as role models, while publicly condemning those who fell short. Within the theater, a contested space of entertainment, demoralization, and social education, women were often portrayed as needing explanation, commentary, and discipline. Support and opposition to them pivoted around the ongoing question: What should a Korean woman be?—while the female spectators remained silent.

Nevertheless, this book does not consider the silence of female spectators as proof of successful subjectification through media representations and societal discipline. Instead, it builds on Henry's research approach, which delved into the meaning of subaltern inhabitants' deviations from regulations imposed by the colonial authorities and male intellectuals. Focusing on colonized Korean female spectators, this study departs from nationalist history writing, which often adopts a top-down perspective and dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized. In doing so, this study also makes a produc-

74 This study questions the understanding of modernization that is based on the idea of a linear development of history. However, such a notion of modernization can be repeatedly observed in sources I examine. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate the source language from my analytical usage of the term. In sources cited in this book, the term *modern* often refers to "westernized," "done in Japanese ways," or "new." To mark the historical terminology as such, I added the Romanized Korean words—such as *munmyông kaehwa* (Civilization and Development)—and analyzed the historical context of the phrases. When I use modernization as an analytical term to describe a certain process, I refer to "a constant production of otherness (ein ständiges Erzeugen von Anderssein)" as defined by Niklas Luhmann. Niklas Luhmann, *Beobachtungen der Moderne [Observations on Modernity]* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 1.

75 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference. With a New Preface by the Author*, Dipesh Chakrabarty (Princeton, N. J., Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 8.

tive contribution to Yun Hae-dong's premise that postcolonial history writing can discuss "the formation of individual subjects through the emergence of colonial publicness."⁷⁶

Historical Discourse Analysis: Sources and Methods

This book undertakes historical discourse analysis with a focus on Seoul's Korean women in theaters. Here, the word "historical" not only refers to the temporal situatedness of actors, events, and materials in the past but also encompasses the historicity of female spectators as a discursive construct and naturalization of specific images of them. In other words, this study seeks to explicate the knowledge and actuality of Korean female audiences as a result of societal construction processes.⁷⁷

For this aim, this study analyzes feature articles, news briefs, editorials, readers' letters, reviews, and other accounts published in Korean newspapers and magazines between the 1890s and 1930s. Newspapers that I consulted with include *Tongnip Shinmun* (TS), *Hwangŏng Shinmun* (HS), *Cheguk Shinmun* (CS), *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* (TMS), *Maeil Shinbo* (MS), *Dong-A Ilbo* (DI), and *Chosun Ilbo* (CI).⁷⁸ Most of these newspapers were made accessible via the internet through the Korean Newspaper Archives of the National Library of Korea.⁷⁹ *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*, which are still published, are serviced by NAVER News Library.⁸⁰ For magazine articles, I performed keyword searches on the Ko-

76 Yun, "Colonial Publicness," 172.

77 See Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse* [Historical Discourse Analysis], 2., aktualisierte Auflage (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2018), 18.

78 *Tongnip Shinmun* (1896–99) was published by Seo Jaephil with Korean and English pages, targeting foreign readers as well. These were later separated into two versions of the newspaper. For this study, I consulted the Korean version. *Tongnip Shinmun* started with approximately 300 copies per issue, reaching 3,000 copies for the Korean version by November 1898. The newspaper aimed to enlighten the Korean nation, considering the West as the role model. "Tongnip Shinmun," in *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0015984>. *Hwangŏng Shinmun* (1898–1910) was initially published by Namgung Ōk, who shared a similar reform-oriented stance with makers behind the *Tongnip Shinmun*. Starting with 2,000 circulations, it increased to 3,000 already in 1900. Yi Myŏngsuk (ed.), "Hwangŏng Shinmun," in *Shinmun Haeje* [Overview of Newspapers] on the Korean Newspaper Archive https://nl.go.kr/newspaper/news_release.do. *Cheguk Shinmun* (1898–1910) specifically attracted women and other population groups who could not read classical Chinese like male aristocrats and literati, because its articles were solely written in vernacular Korean characters (*han'gŭl*) until 1903. Its circulations are estimated to be less than that of *Hwangŏng Shinmun*. Kim Tŏkyŏng (ed.), "Cheguk Shinmun" (ibid.). With 13,000 copies per issue in 1909, *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* (1904–10) became the most popular Korean newspaper before colonization. More details will follow in the text. See "Taehan Maeil Shinbo" (ibid.). *Maeil Shinbo* (1910–45) was the official organ of the Government-General. Its circulations was around 2,600 in 1910, rising to approximately 22,500 in 1926. However, the Korean-owned *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* surpassed this newspaper, publishing nearly 30,000 and 24,600 copies per day in the same year. After the crackdown on these two newspapers beginning in 1937, *Maeil Shinbo* expanded to 110,000 copies per day as of 1938. Kwŏn Siyong (ed.), "Maeil Shinbo" (ibid.). More details about *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* will follow in the text.

79 Korean Newspaper Archive [Taehan Min'guk Shinmun Ak'aibū], <https://nl.go.kr/newspaper>.

80 NAVER News Library, <https://newslibrary.naver.com/search/searchByDate.naver>.

rean History Database of the National Institute of Korean History, which provided text materials for 83 magazines published in the first half of the twentieth century.⁸¹ Additionally, I perused 39 volumes of women's and ten volumes of movie magazines replicated by Hyundam Mun'go.⁸² For women's magazines *Puin* and *Shin Yösöng*, I used KRPIA's digitalized version.⁸³ Furthermore, fictional and non-fictional books and movies, which influenced the discourse of women's theatergoing, are also discussed. Additionally, I consulted the first seven volumes of sourcebooks published by the Korean Film Archive (KOFA) which cover the period between 1911 and 1926 and encompass newspaper texts related to playhouses and movie theaters.⁸⁴ Articles introduced by other scholars' works including Yu Minyöng, Woo Sujin, Cho Yönggyu, Roh Jiseung, and Kwön Podürae, too, were analyzed.⁸⁵

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- 81 Korean History Database [*Han'guksa Teit'a Beisü*], <https://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=m a>.
- 82 Formerly known as Adan Mun'go. *Adan Mun'go Mi Konggae Charyo Ch'ongsö* 2014: *Yösöng Chapchi* [*Collectanea of Undisclosed Materials by Adan Mun'go*, 2014: *Women's Magazines*], 39 volumes, ed. Adan Mun'go (Seoul: Somyöng, 2014); *Adan Mun'go Mi Konggae Charyo Ch'ongsö* 2013: *Yöngük Yöngghwa Chapchi* [*Collectanea of Undisclosed Materials by Adan Mun'go*, 2013: *Theater and Movie Magazines*], 10 volumes, ed. Adan Mun'go (Seoul: Somyöng, 2013). I examined these materials during research trips to Leiden, The Netherlands in March 2016 and to Oxford, United Kingdom in August 2016. Here I would like to express my gratitude to a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities, Cologne and DAAD for their generous support for the research trips.
- 83 *Puin* and *Shin Yösöng* on KRPIA, <https://www.krpia.co.kr/product/main?plctId=PLCT00005236>. Both magazines were conceptualized as an equivalent of *Kaebiyök*, the reform- and independence-oriented magazine of the 1920s and 1930s. While publishers of *Kaebiyök* tried to reach old-styled Korean women excluded from school education with *Puin* (1922–23), they changed their strategy and reconceptualized their women's magazine, now entitled *Shin Yösöng*, as for educated Korean women. See Yi Sanggyöng, "Puin esö *Shin Yösöng* kkaji: Kündae Yösöng Yöng'ü üi Kich'o Charyo [From Puin to *Shin Yösöng*: The Essential Source for Studies of Modern Womanhood]," *Kündae Söji* 2 (2010), 146–50. I studied these magazines during my stay in Seoul between March and August 2018 as a junior fellow at the International Center for Korean Studies of the Kyujanggak Institute, Seoul. I am grateful for the chance to work with other international scholars of Korean Studies at my home university.
- 84 The first seven volumes are published as hardcopies, while the later four volumes are downloadable on the website of the Korea Film Archive (KOFA). KOFA, *Han'guk Yöngghwasa Yöng'uso, Shinmun Kisa ro Pon Chosön Yöngghwa: 1911–1917* [*Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1911–1917*], ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2008); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1918–1920*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2009); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1921–1922*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2010); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1923*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2011); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1924*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2012); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1925*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2013); *Korean Movies Seen through Newspaper Articles: 1926*, ed. KOFA (Seoul: KOFA, 2014).
- 85 Yu Minyöng. *Han'guk Kündae Yöng'üksa Sillon: Sangkwön* [*The New History of Korean Modern Theater: Vol. 1*] (P'aju: T'aehaksa, 2011); Yu Minyöng, *Han'guk Kündae Yöng'üksa Sillon: Hakwön* [*The New History of Korean Modern Theater: Vol. 2*] (P'aju: T'aehaksa, 2011); Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*; Cho Yönggyu, *Paro Chammün Hyömnnyulsa wa Wöngaksa* [*Correcting the History of Hyömnnyulsa and Wöngaksa*] (Seoul: Minsogwön, 2008); Roh, *Others at Cinema*; Kwön Podürae, *Yönae üi Shidae: 1920–nyöndae Chöban üi Munhwa wa Yuhæng* [*The Epoch of Love: The Culture and Trend of the Early 1920s*] (Seoul: Hyönsil Munhwa Yöng'ü, 2003).

In the first phase of my research, I selected general keywords such as theater (*kükchang*, *yön'gükchang*), spectating (*kwan'gük*, *kwallam*), and audience (*kwan'gaek*), as well as more specific keywords such as the names of various theaters, titles of plays and movies, and the names of people, based on information gained from previous research on Korean theater and film history. Then, through repeated keyword searches in online databases, I collected texts and images published in newspapers and magazines from the late 1890s to the 1930s, including news briefs, editorials, miscellaneous news, readers' letters, advertisements, caricatures, and photographs. While reading and analyzing these sources, my focus was particularly on references to female audiences, female characters, and female performers. Additionally, attention was given to the characteristics and recurring themes of coverage in each period. As a result, I identified keywords that became the focus of each chapter, such as charity performances in theaters organized by Korean women, tears of female audiences, romantic love (*yōnae*) and eugenic marriage, and *Korean Nora* (*Chosŏn ūi Nora*), a euphemism referring to emancipatory women, inspired by the famous heroine of Henrik Ibsen's drama *A Doll's House*. A comprehensive understanding of the broad spectrum of public discourse about Korean female spectators in Seoul emerged through a review of previous research on each topic and analyses of additional sources.

Based on this first analysis, I divided my research into three broad time periods: the late 1890s to 1910, the 1910s, and the 1920s and the early 1930s. I explored the major political and media shifts that occurred in each period and how they related to discourses about theater and female audiences. Politically, this study includes the period from the 1894 Kabo Reform to the forced annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910; the Military Rule (*mudan t'ongch'i*) period in the 1910s when "Japan relied on force to ruthlessly subjugate any Korean resistance, did not allow any freedom or autonomy to Koreans, and totally disregarded Korean traditions and interests"⁸⁶; and the so-called "Cultural Rule" (*munhwa t'ongch'i*) period from the 1920s to the early 1930s, "which employed tactics of appeasement and divide and rule, while tolerating limited cultural and social freedom for Koreans."⁸⁷

Simultaneously, the development of Korean media has been closely linked to these political and historical changes. From the late 1890s, Korean-language periodicals such as the *Tongnip Shinmun* (1896–99), *Cheguk Shinmun* (1898–1910), *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* (1898–1910), and *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* (1904–10) were published in Seoul.⁸⁸ While *Tongnip Shinmun* and *Cheguk Shinmun* had already ceased publication before the colonization, *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* and *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* discontinued in the aftermath of Japan's

86 Hong Yung Lee, "Introduction: A Critique of 'Colonial Modernity,'" in *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910–1945*, ed. Hong Yung Lee, Yong-Chool Ha, and Clark W. Sorensen (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2013), 5.

87 Lee, "Critique of 'Colonial Modernity,'" 6.

88 The information about each newspaper is based on the commentaries from the Korean Newspaper Archive (*Taehan Min'guk Shinmun Ak'aibū*) provided by the National Library of Korea. Explanations for each newspaper can be found by clicking on the title of the respective newspaper at the following URL: "*Shinmun Haeje* [Commentaries on Newspapers]," https://nl.go.kr/newspaper/news_relate.do.

annexation of Korea in August 1910.⁸⁹ Soon after, the Government-General re-published *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* under the new name of *Maeil Shinbo*, abbreviating *Taehan*, which referred to Great Korea.⁹⁰ Once a critical newspaper on Korean officials and Japan's imperialist expansionist policies, *Maeil Shinbo* served as a press organ of colonial authorities during the Japan's colonial rule of Korea and enjoyed a monopoly as the only Korean-language newspaper with nationwide distribution in the 1910s.⁹¹ The fierce anti-colonial movement that erupted across the country in 1919 had a profound impact on Japan's policy toward the Korean peninsula and Korean-language media. In response to the 1919 March First Movement, Saitō Makoto was appointed as the new governor-general with the intention of preventing a repeat of the upheaval by “venting the Korean people's discontent to some extent through their newspapers, just as smoke is vented through chimneys, and by keeping a close eye on the Korean people's discontent expressed in newspapers.”⁹² Against this backdrop, Korean-language daily newspapers such as the *Dong-A Ilbo* and the *Chosun Ilbo*, which are the core sources of this study, were founded in 1920, as well as Korean-language women's magazines, literary magazines, and popular magazines such as *Shin Yōsōng*, *Kaebiyōk*, and *Pyōlgōn'gon* and magazines specializing in theater and film such as *Yōnghwa Shidae* and *Noksōng*. However, the Korean media under the Cultural Rule were unstable, as they were subject to surveillance, censorship, suspension, confiscation, and closure by the Government-General. This applies not only to the short-lived media that appear only a few times in this study, but also to the more prominent ones, such as *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*.⁹³

Existing research has primarily focused on judging the political orientation of post-1910 Korean publications in terms of a binary pro- or anti-Japanese label. This was an integral aspect of the historical reappraisal necessary to investigate the realities and accountability of the atrocities that occurred during the colonial period, including

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- 89 Beside *Maeil Shinbo*, Government-General published *Keijō Nippō* for Japanese readers and *Seoul Press* for the English-speaking audience. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*, 101. Recently, the Inchŏn-based Korean newspaper *Chosŏn Shinmun* was discovered. As of January 2022, the first four years of the newspaper (October 4, 1911–January 31, 1915) have been published as a facsimile edition. See Yonsei University Institute for the Study of Korean Modernity, *Chosŏn Shinmun Yōng'in-bon (1911–1915) [The Facsimile Version of Chosŏn Shinmun: 1911–1915]* (Seoul: Yonsei University Library, 2020).
- 90 *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* was published by Ernest Thomas Bethell (1872–1909), a British businessman and publisher who worked in Japan and Korea. The newspaper could adopt a critical stance towards both Korean and Japanese authorities due to Bethell's relative freedom as a foreigner living in Korea. Bethell died after imprisonment following a politically motivated prosecution. For more information about Bethell's biography and his role as the publisher of *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*, see Chin-sok Chong, “Ernest Thomas Bethell (1872–1909),” in *Britain and Japan. Biographical Portraits*, ed. Hugh Cortazzi (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 481–90.
- 91 The final issue of the *Maeil Shinbo* was published on August 16, 1945, the day after Japan's defeat in World War II.
- 92 Chang Shin, *Chosŏn-Tong'a Ilbo ūi T'ansaeng: Ōllon esŏ Kiŏp ūro [The Birth of Chosun Ilbo and Dong-A Ilbo: From Press to Business]* (Koyang-si: Yōksa Pip'yōngsa, 2021), 170.
- 93 *Chosun Ilbo* was established by a pro-Japanese Korean organization named Taejōng Ch'inmokhoe (Daishō Fellows) with close ties to the Governor-General yet ran articles critical of the colonial rule to attract Korean readers, which led to repeated confiscations and suspensions. See Chang, *Chosun and Dong-A*, 16–57.

routine political surveillance and arbitrary repression, suppression of freedom of speech and thought, confiscation of assets, and military, industrial, and sexual coercion. By the 2000s, issues of colonial publicness, which had drawn less attention due to this binary focus, had emerged as important topics in the media sector as well. For example, the fact that the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* functioned as propaganda outlets which actively promoted Japanese imperialist and colonialist policies from the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 is already well established.⁹⁴ Contrastingly, during the 1920s to the early 1930s, these newspapers also published articles and editorials with an anti-colonial stance, actively introducing various anti-colonial struggles abroad and various alternative ideas, including socialism.⁹⁵ Media historian Chang Shin notes that the conflict of management versus editorial staff was present in colonial Korean-language dailies, and that the editorial direction and articles in a given outlet varied depending on the time period and the political stance of the editors and reporters.⁹⁶

These findings suggest that, while the general political orientation and tone of early twentieth-century Korean newspapers and magazines may be identified, individual texts and images must be analyzed with a more complex context in mind. Stance towards women's rights and female audiences, in particular, were not always as clear-cut, with conflicting arguments and discussions often taking unexpected turns within the same publication. For example, a film magazine, *Munye Yŏnghwa* (Art Cinema), which focuses on light reading about films and actors, published an anecdote about a female student criticizing the male-dominated interpretation of films.⁹⁷ In another instance, a socialist writer who favors women's social activities published an article in *Kaebŏk* declaring that the issue of women's emancipation is a task for women to solve on their own.⁹⁸ This shows that issues such as women's rights and the promotion of social participation, which were referred to as "ladies' issues (*puin munje*)" at the time and were related to female spectators, were an important part of the colonial grey zone.

94 See *ibid.*, 154–95.

95 See *ibid.*, 16–57. Notably, these newspapers are reluctant to acknowledge the historical fact that they actively introduced socialism to Korean readers as part of the anti-colonial struggle in the 1920s and 30s, which historian Vladimir Tikhonov calls the "red decades" in Korean history. They simultaneously sideline their collaboration with the colonial authorities and refashion themselves as the representatives of the nation against the colonial rule throughout the colonial era. Tikhonov explains that newspapers and magazines of the period played an important role in popularizing Marxism in colonial Korea. The *Dong-A Ilbo*, in particular, went to the extent of sending Lee Kwang-yong to Moscow as a correspondent in 1925. Vladimir Tikhonov, *The Red Decades: Communism as Movement and Culture in Korea, 1919–1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2023), see 132 and 216.

96 Chang analyzes how the business interests overweighed the mission of critical press in both *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo* in the 1930s. See Chang, *Chosun and Dong-A*, 154–95.

97 Pödül, "K'inema wa Yōhaksang [The Cinema and Female Students]," *Munye Yŏnghwa* (March 1928), 38. Magazines and newspapers republished as facsimiles are cited under their original page numbers, while texts from sourcebooks and collected works are cited under the page numbers of the edited books.

98 Yang Myŏng, "Sugam Tasöt P'yŏn [Five Thoughts That Came to My Mind]," *Kaebŏk* (hereafter *KB*) (May 1924), 63–65.

While these materials represent rich sources for history writing, it should be noted that the colonial era is also marked by severe censorship, which will be discussed in chapters 2, 4, and 5. Inquiring into the colonial era requires paying particular attention to why certain aspects of the past are still visible while others are not.⁹⁹ Rather than accepting an article's content at face value, it needs to be treated as a mixture of censored contents and information that haphazardly reveals cracks and contradictions in colonial rule. Such critical reading requires scrutinizing not only the report's content but also changes in the public gaze that the articles reproduced. Thus, I aimed to read records also "sideways,"¹⁰⁰ as suggested by communication scholar John Durham Peters for historians. More specifically, I sought to ask and answer questions including why a specific event was considered worth reporting, as "it is the unusual that gets documented"¹⁰¹; where the focus of report and discussion was laid in each source; how each discussion related to other discussions of the time; and how and why the discourse changed over time against the backdrop of rapidly changing political and media currents.

Furthermore, this study also posed questions about logics and images the media of the time used to construct female audiences. Considering historical narratives, events, and figures as constructions is an essential prerequisite for reflecting on political conflicts, repressions, and negotiations in the colonies regarding what and how to represent them in the analysis of the sources. The primary challenge in this research involved constantly reminding myself of and inferring the perspectives from which the primary sources—the publications of the period—were written, why they were able to be printed and distributed despite the colonial censorship, and what this fact says about the content of what was published as well as about colonial power. The widespread practice of publishing articles anonymously did not make matters any easier. Furthermore, in the absence of sources to verify the experiences and thoughts of the female spectators, decoding the significance of the very fact that these texts and images were published was as necessary as the content they convey, which makes the core of the historical discourse analysis.

Although the sources I used were published nationwide, the media's attention was fixed on the country's capital. Therefore, the discoveries made in this book are limited to Seoul's female population, in a strict sense. Regarding the coverage of Korean newspapers and their intense interest in the cultural life of the capital, however, it can be assumed that the discourse on Seoul's female spectators had an impact on other parts of the country as well.

Overview of Chapters

Despite this dynamically changing media landscape before and during the colonial era, Korean female spectators in Seoul continued to appear in the media. This study consists of five chapters encompassing public discourses about Seoul's female audiences between

99 See Peters, "History as Communication Problem," 21.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

1900 and the mid-1930s. While scholars of the colonial era typically focus on the years between 1910 and 1945, I decided to include the time before the annexation as the establishment of the Korean theater business precedes 1910. Because the media environment and Korean people's everyday lives underwent rapid changes with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and Japan's radical turn to ultranationalism, the time between 1937 and 1945 requires extensive investigation, which is beyond the scope of this research.

Chapter 1 examines the conditions under which Korean women could become spectators. This chapter explains how Confucianism shaped women's spectatorship on the Korean peninsula during the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897) and what sort of effect this teaching had on women's theatergoing in the early twentieth century. Analyzing newspaper advertisements of plays and recitals, I ask whether Korean theater operators were ready to accept women as their customers. Based on this analysis, chapter 1 argues that playhouses, where people of any gender and social stratum could enter, challenged Confucian norms that restricted women's activities.

Chapter 2 sheds light on the political turmoil that the 1905 Protectorate Treaty caused on the Korean peninsula and its impact on the discourse about theater and theater audiences. Chapter 2 asks why the enlightenment-oriented Korean newspapers severely castigated theater audiences based on newspaper articles and editorials. The question is how and why going to the theater evolved into a matter affecting the nation's fate, or, in other words, how the discourse of theater audiences became a part of the nation-building discourse. To answer this question, chapter 2 analyzes two fundraising projects closely related to the nation-building process of that time: the 1908 National Debt Repayment Movement and charity plays in Korean playhouses. Furthermore, chapter 2 analyzes diverse interests behind women's associations and *kisaeng* women, who actively organized charity events in theaters and became significant donors.

Chapter 3 reflects on the impact of Korea's annexation by Japan on the audience discourse during the 1910s. This chapter mainly focuses on the concept of social education (K: *sahoe kyoyuk*, J: *shakai kyōiku*). Developed in late-nineteenth-century Japan and introduced to Korea in 1906, the concept considered theaters primarily a pedagogical site instead of art or entertainment. This chapter questions how this new understanding of theater was acted out in combination with colonial politics. For this aim, chapter 3 analyzes two relevant phenomena: promotion of Japanese-style *shinpa* plays through the daily newspaper *Maeil Shinbo*, the media organ of the Government-General, and discussions and accusations of audiences' mischief by the same newspaper. Although the Government-General did not appear as a driving force on the surface, this chapter calls attention to the dominant position that *Maeil Shinbo* had after the Government-General abolished all the other Korean newspapers in Seoul. As the promotion of *shinpa* and corrective discussions on audiences' behavior were closely related to Korean women's way of watching plays in playhouses, chapter 3 asks how effective the gendered resocialization in Korean theaters under colonial rule was.

Chapter 4 delves into the discourse of women's sexuality and spectatorship under the so-called Cultural Rule during the 1920s. As an increasing number of female students and unmarried young women began watching American and European romantic movies, Korean newspapers and magazines started to report about the sexual and moral harm of such movies. This chapter allocates the scandalizing media reports and columns to the

discourse of sexual reform, which catered to a broad spectrum of agendas, including the so-called eugenic marriage and Free Love. After overviewing the popularization of the Western movies and key concepts of sexual reform, chapter 4 analyzes how the discourse of eugenic marriage brought together young women's theatergoing and issues such as maternal health, STD, and the nation's future.

Chapter 5 analyzes how Korean female audiences' voices were marginalized in the discourse pivoting around them through the example of Henrik Ibsen's drama *A Doll's House*. The Norwegian drama tells the story of a bourgeois woman's disillusionment with her marriage and awakening to the pursuit of her Self. Interestingly, Korean male intellectuals tried to decide if and for what aims Korean women should read the drama or watch the play. In these closed discussions, Korean male writers disapproved of the feminist message inherent to this story while foregrounding other issues such as individualism, nationalism, and socialism. These voices were core to media reports, fictional texts, and literary reviews discussing the play where women could hardly expose their own perspectives. Using the Foucauldian concept of commentary to focus on the meaning-making process across different text genres, this chapter identifies four different positions on the drama and considers whether their commentaries influenced Korean women's understandings of the play.

Through these layers of analysis of Korean female spectatorship during the colonial era, this book seeks to diversify the notion of spectators and spectatorship by highlighting that they are historical constructs in constant conversation with society and its various actors, and therefore take different forms in any given society. Furthermore, I hope this study will contribute to postcolonial history writings of other eras and countries through its examination of the concept of colonial publicness.

