

Sung Un Gang

The Making of Modern Subjects

Public Discourses on Korean Female Spectators
in the Early Twentieth Century



[transcript] GENDER, DIVERSITY, AND CULTURE
IN HISTORY AND POLITICS

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**Gender, Diversity, and Culture
in History and Politics** | Volume 3

Editorial

The series **Gender, Diversity, and Culture in History and Politics** showcases innovative research about the connections and interrelations of gender and diversity in political, societal, economic, cultural, and ecological discourse. The contributions will study long-term developments and upheavals across temporal and spatial boundaries in connection with overarching themes such as sexism, colonialism, racism, war, and strategies of domination and securing power. The series also addresses how resources were extracted and distributed from the early modern period to the present. Furthermore, it offers a forum to critically assess new approaches in these fields, to reach a deeper understanding of how gender and diversity shape history, politics, and culture. In line with the interdisciplinary, transnational, and global approach of the series, contributions from various disciplines such as social sciences, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, history, and natural sciences are welcome.

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Note on Romanization and Translation

For the romanization of Korean and Japanese words in this book I generally adhere to the McCune-Reischauer and Hepburn romanization system with exception of familiar or conventional spelling in English such as Seoul. Korean, Japanese, and Chinese names are given in the customary way in East Asia, that is writing surname and given name without a comma between them. The transliteration of scholars' names who publish in English follows the Western way of writing given name and surname. All translations of Korean sources are mine unless specified otherwise. Publications in Korean and Japanese language are first given with Romanized titles and their English translation in brackets, with shortened English titles in repeated citations. Citations from Korean and Japanese texts are paraphrased in English except for key phrases and terms, which are written both in Romanized transcription and English translation. Newspapers and magazines frequently quoted will be abbreviated in citations. Author names will be omitted in newspaper articles that appeared without an author's name.

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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 ūi 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.

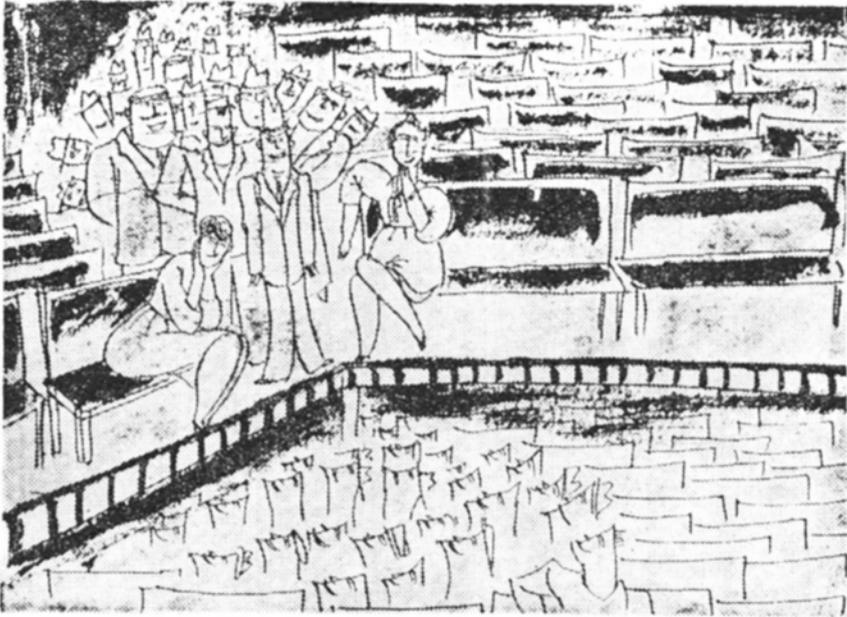
6 A-Saeng, "Manch'u P'unggyōng 1 [*Late Autumn Scenery 1*]," *Chosun Ilbo* (hereafter *CI*), October 26, 1930, 5.

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.

appropriate 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 (*pyōnsa*), 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 (*yōnswaegŭk*), 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, *Kyōngsŏng kwa Tokyo esŏ Yōnghwa rŭl Pondanŭn Kōt: Kwangaeksŏng Yōn'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 Yōnghwa ūi T'ansaeng* [The Birth of Korean Cinema] (Seoul: Pagijŏng, 2018), 253–59.

12 Woo Sujin, *Han'guk Kŭndae Yŏn'gŭk ūi Hyŏngsŏng: Konggong Kŭkchang kwa Sin'p'agŭk ūi 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: Ūnhaeng Namu, [2005]2019); Toriumi Yutaka, *Ilbon Hakja ka Pon Shingminji Kūndaehwa ron: Ilche Kangjŏmgi Ilbonin Tomok Ch'ŏngbu Ōpja ūi Pudang Iik ūl Chungsim ūro [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’ögi Yöngghwa üi Munhwajök 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 “Yŏn'gŭkchang 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 Lŭbtke (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 Munhaksa 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 Kyoee 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 Yǒngmi, "Ilche Shigi Toshi ūi Sangsudo Munje wa Konggongsǒng [The Water Supply Problem in Urban Areas and the Publicness in the Colonial Era]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 255–88.
- 41 Sǒ Chaegil, "Shingminji Shigi Chosǒnǒ Pangsong kwa Shingminji Konggongsǒng [Korean Language Broadcast and the Colonial Publicness in the Colonial Period]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 325–56.
- 42 So Hyǒnsuk, "Kyǒnggye e Sǒn Koadŭl: Koa Munje rŭl t'onghae Pon Ilche Shigi Sahoe Saǒp kwa Konggongsǒng [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-kyǒng, "1910-nyǒndae Ilche ūi Kongdong Myoji Chǒngch'aek kwa Chosǒnin ūi Kyǒnghǒm [Japanese Imperialists' Politics of Public Cemetry and Koreans' Experiences in the 1910s]," in Yun et al., *Colonial Publicness*, 396–418.
- 44 Yu Sǒnyǒng, "Kŭkchang Kugyǒng kwa Hwaltong Sajin Pogi: Ch'unggyǒk ūi Kŭndae Kŭrigo Chŭlgǒum ūi Hunyuk [Theatergoing and Watching Motion Pictures: The Shock of Modernity and Disciplining the Pleasure]," *Yǒksa Pip'yǒng* (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 also 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 Yŏn'gu*, 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 Ŏk, 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'aibŭ*], <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=ma>.
- 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 *Kaeböyk*, the reform- and independence-oriented magazine of the 1920s and 1930s. While publishers of *Kaeböyk* 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 Yön'gu 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 Yön'guso, 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 Yöngükksa Sillon: Sangkwön* [The New History of Korean Modern Theater: Vol. 1] (P'aju: T'aehaksa, 2011); Yu Minyöng, *Han'guk Kündae Yöngükksa Sillon: Hakwön* [The New History of Korean Modern Theater: Vol. 2] (P'aju: T'aehaksa, 2011); Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*; Cho Yönggyu, *Paro Chamnün Hyömnyulsa wa Wöngaksa* [Correcting the History of Hyömnyulsa and Wöngaksa] (Seoul: Minsogwön, 2008); Roh, *Others at Cinema*; Kwön Podürae, *Yönae üi Shidae: 1920-nyöndae Choban üi Munhwa wa Yunhaeng* [The Epoch of Love: The Culture and Trend of the Early 1920s] (Seoul: Hyönsil Munhwa Yöngü, 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 (*yönae*) and eugenic marriage, and *Korean Nora* (*Chosön üi 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 (*judan 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), *Hwangsöng 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, *Hwangsöng 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_release.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 Inchōn-based Korean newspaper *Chosōn 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, *Chosōn Shinmun Yōng'in-bon (1911–1915) [The Facsimile Version of Chosōn 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, *Chosōn-Tong'a Ilbo ūi T'ansaeng: Ōllon esō Kiōp 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 Yöhaksaeng [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.

1. Conditions of Korean Women's Playgoing

Inspector-General Shin Kae and others wrote a memorial to the throne and insisted that “a woman does not play in the garden during the day and does not leave the inner gate without reason [...]. We hope His Majesty to forbid women's leisure of spectating altogether [...].”
But the king did not grant the opinion.
*Sejong Sillok*¹

This chapter examines the conditions and practices of Korean women's playgoing during the Korean Empire (1897–1910). Women's playgoing was not self-evident on the Korean peninsula in the early twentieth century due to two reasons. Firstly, women's mobility, economic activities, and public presence were rigidly restricted during the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1897). Secondly, unlike neighboring countries such as China or Japan, there was no playhouse or theater building on the Korean peninsula before the close of the nineteenth century. Therefore, in order to comprehend the specificity of the Korean female audience, it is first necessary to understand how the complex changes in social, political, and cultural domains such as the social strata system (*shinbunje*), women's rights, and practices of playing and watching took place since the late nineteenth century.

1.1 Women's Spectatorship during the Chosŏn Dynasty

Confucian Visual Culture

The discourse and practices of Korean women's playgoing during the early twentieth century were closely related to that of the Chosŏn Dynasty. As the Chosŏn Dynasty's ruling philosophy, Confucianism had a far-reaching impact on Korean women's lives, includ-

1 *Sejong Sillok*, July 21, 1431. The dates in *Sillok* follow the lunar calendar.

ing their spectatorship.² Confucian teachings constructed a binary gender system based on the distinction between female (*yō*) and male (*nam*) and restricted Korean women's mobility and gaze. Confucian gender norms shaped the conception that women were primarily objects of gaze in Korea, which playhouse operators perpetuated in the 1900s.

From the beginning, the Chosŏn state enforced a series of laws and pedagogical interventions to reshape society following Confucian teaching.³ The core principle of social order in Confucian teaching was the Five Social Relations (*oryun*) and Three Bonds (*samgang*).⁴ Conceived by the Confucian philosopher Mencius, the Five Social Relations defined ideal interrelations between father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife, old and young, and friends.⁵ According to Mencius, love was at the core of the ideal father-son relation, duty the ruler-minister, precedence the old-young, and faith in the ideal friendship. Meanwhile, what characterized the relationship between a husband and a wife was “distinction.”⁶ The philosopher Tu Wei-Ming explains that “the underlying spirit is not dominance but division of labor” between a husband and a wife.⁷ However, he confirms that this “benevolent” principle “served as an ideological background for the Three Bonds,”⁸ another set of moral foundations in Confucian scholarship.

Tu explained that the Three Bonds “underscore[d] the hierarchical relationship as an inviolable principle for maintaining social order” by declaring “authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife.”⁹ The Three Bonds, too, were widely circulated by the Chosŏn state through publications such as *Samgang Haengsil To* (*Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds*, 1434), which taught Koreans the morals of

2 For the Confucianization process during the Chosŏn Dynasty and its impact on Korean women's lives, see Theodore J. Yoo, *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910–1945*, *Asia Pacific Modern* 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 15–57.

3 Chŏng Tochŏn (1340?-) was the most influential figure in the formative phase of the Chosŏn Dynasty. As the trusted adviser of Yi Sŏnggye, later King T'aejo, Chŏng Tochŏn not only recruited men for the coup, but also incorporated Neo-Confucianism structurally as well as philosophically into the new state system. He wrote the first legal codes of the dynasty, *Chosŏn Kyŏngguk Chŏn* [*Statutes for the Governance of Chosŏn*]. This work is regarded as the outline for “the source of sovereignty, the name of the dynasty, succession to the throne, introduction of members of the royal family, and the proper form of the royal pronouncements.” Chŏng Chaisik, “Chŏng Tochŏn, Architect of Yi Dynasty Government and Ideology,” in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William T. de Bary and JaHyun K. Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 59–88; quote is from 64. For the Confucianization process of Korea, see JaHyun K. Haboush, “The Confucianization of Korean Society,” in *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Princeton University Press, 1991), 84–110. See also: Martina Deuchler, “Propagating Female Virtues Propagating Female Virtues in Chosŏn Korea,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, eds. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun K. Haboush and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 142–69.

4 See Tu Wei-ming, “Probing the ‘Three Bonds’ and ‘Five Relationships’ in Confucian Humanism,” in *Confucianism and the Family*, eds. Walter H. Slote and George A. DeVos (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 121–36.

5 Tu, “‘Three Bonds,’” 125–29.

6 *Ibid.*, 127.

7 *Ibid.*, 127.

8 *Ibid.*, 130.

9 *Ibid.*, 122.

the Three Bonds through a collection of stories and illustrations.¹⁰ As the essence of social relations in Confucian thinking, the Five Relations and the Three Bonds defined gender norms based on the principles of binary distinction and hierarchical order between men and women.

Built upon these teachings, the Chosŏn Dynasty had a strictly hierarchical social structure based on social strata (*shinbun*), age, and gender.¹¹ One's position in society was determined by combining these elements, which meant that not every person of the same social stratum, age, or gender group had the same rights and duties. Instead, the life trajectories of women and men from the same social stratum were profoundly different from each other. Likewise, women of different social strata had distinct biographies.

During the Chosŏn era, every person was born into one of four social strata: the aristocrats (*yangban*), the middle people (*chung'in*), the commoners (*sangmin*, *yangmin*), and the "base people" (*ch'ŏnmin*).¹² Social stratum was principally inherited and defined one's rights, duties, and profession. Male *yangban*, "a potent fusion of landed wealth and political power,"¹³ were the most privileged members of society. Either "a literatus, a Mandarin, or 'scholar [-] official,'"¹⁴ they could devote themselves to the scholastic learning of Confucian classics and become high-ranked government officials or military officers when they passed the state examination (*kwagŏ*). The middle people (*chung'in*) became technocrats or regional government officers through examinations.¹⁵ Commoners (*yangmin*, *sangmin*) worked as farmers, artisans, and merchants and took up the biggest part of the Chosŏn Korean population.¹⁶ The "base people" (*ch'ŏnmin*) labored as "slaves, [...] professional mourners, shamans, servants, and *kisaeng*" as well as performers (*chaein*).¹⁷

Along with these divisions of social strata, Chosŏn Korean lawmakers and intellectuals envisioned distinction and hierarchical relations between women and men, too.¹⁸ The

10 Lee Sook-in, *Chŏngjŏl ūi Yŏksa: Chosŏn Chisigin ūi Sŏng Tamnon* [*The History of Chastity: The Gender Discourse of the Chosŏn Intellectuals*] (Seoul: P'urŭn Yŏksa, 2014), 13.

11 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 30.

12 Ibid., 18.

13 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2005), 51.

14 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 18–19.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 19.

18 Since the 1990s, the feminist perspective has contributed to diversifying understandings of Neo-Confucianism and Korean history. For analyses of the relationship between Neo-Confucianism and women in Korea, China, and Japan, see Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott, eds., *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). For insights into the influence of Neo-Confucianism on Korean women between the mid- and late Chosŏn era, see Kim Youngmin and Michael J. Pettit eds., *Women and Confucianism in Chosŏn Korea: New Perspectives* (Albany, N.Y., Bristol: SUNY Press, 2012). A comprehensive study of the gendered construction and institutionalization of chastity in the Chosŏn Dynasty can be found in Lee, *History of Chastity*. On the Japan's invasion of 1592 as the watershed in the enforcement of Neo-Confucian gender politics in Chosŏn, see Lee Sook-in, "The Imjin War and the Official Discourse of Chastity," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 22, no. 2 (2009), 137–56. About Yim Yunjidang (1721–93) and Kang Chŏngiltang (1772–1832), two female Confucian scholars of Chosŏn,

distinction between women and men and women's subordination to men as illustrated in the Five Relations and Three Bonds were supported further by Confucian epigrams. For instance, Chosŏn women were expected to follow the Three Rules (*samjong chi to*), which stipulated that every woman "cultivate obedience to one's father before marriage, to one's husband during marriage, and to one's son after the death of a husband."¹⁹ Additionally, the inside-outside principle (*naeoe*) became a powerful tool to restrict women's activities, social contacts, mobility, and visibility. As the historian Hyaewol Choi points out, the inside-outside principle "refer[red] to both physical and symbolic differences between women and men," which required women "to stay inside the house, attending to domestic matters, while men [were] in charge of external and public affairs."²⁰ *The Book of Rites*, one of the Confucian classics, dictated *naeoe* as follows:

The men should not speak of what belongs to the inside (of the house), nor the women of what belongs to the outside. Except at sacrifices and funeral rites, they should not hand vessels to one another. In all other cases when they have occasion to give and receive anything, the woman should receive it in a basket. If she [has] no basket, they should both sit down, and the other put the thing on the ground, and she then take it up. Outside or inside, they should not go to the same well, nor to the same bathing-house. They should not share the same mat in lying down; they should not ask or borrow anything from one another; they should not wear similar upper or lower garments. Things spoken inside should not go out, words spoken outside should not come in. When a man goes into the interior of the house, he should not whistle nor point. If he [has] occasion to move in the night, he should use a light; and if he [has] no light, he should not stir. When a woman goes out at the door, she must keep her face covered. She should walk at night (only) with a light; and if she [has] no light, she should not stir. On the road, a man should take the right side, and a woman the left.²¹

Clauses such as those on separating domains and keeping silent about *the other sex's* realm or wearing different garments correspond to what Choi summarizes as "physical and symbolic differences between women and men." Further clauses show that any contact between women and men was largely prohibited by the Confucian dogma, including touching or even chance encounters. The fact that only women had to cover their faces outside the home suggests that the question of gaze played a significant role in perfecting the principle of *naeoe*. Women in particular had to be concealed from men's gaze.

see Kim Youngmin, "Voices of Female Confucians in Late Chosŏn Korea," in *Religions of Korea in Practice*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 223–30. On the vulnerability of the patriarchal social order based on Neo-Confucianism and the manifold gender relations in the late Chosŏn Dynasty, see Jung Ji-Young, *Chilsŏ ūi Kuch'uk kwa Kyunyŏl: Chosŏn Hugi Hojŏk kwa Yŏsŏngdŭl* [Building and Cracking Order: Late Chosŏn Family Registers and Women] (Seoul: Sŏgang Taehakkyo Chulp'anbu, 2015).

19 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 30.

20 Hyaewol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2009), 209 (see note 127).

21 *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism, Part III The Li Ki, I-X*, trans. and ed. James Legge (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1885), 454–55.

Such teachings had a real impact on Korean women's life during the Chosŏn era. Following this principle, King T'aejo, the founder of Chosŏn, ordered married couples living in the capital to separate their sleeping rooms.²² As a result, noble residences had an extra door and walls that separated women's quarters from the rest of the house by the mid-sixteenth century.²³ A law was enforced to restrict *yangban* women's social contact as well: according to the 1397 law, aristocratic women were not allowed to meet "anyone else but their parents, siblings by blood, brothers of fathers, and siblings of mothers."²⁴ Furthermore, girls of all social strata were, on the whole, excluded from academic education in the Chosŏn Dynasty, following the ancient idea that "at the age of seven, boys and girls did not occupy the same mat nor [ate] together" and "a girl at the age of ten ceased to go out (from the women's apartments)."²⁵ Instead, they were expected to perfect the so-called "women's work," which included sewing, cooking, and preparing food for rituals.²⁶

Notably, restrictions on women's role, activities, and visibility based on Confucianism mainly targeted noble women in the Chosŏn Dynasty. While women of the commoner and the lowest stratum had greater mobility and visibility, *yangban* women were put under daytime curfew and forced to ride in a sedan chair to remain invisible to the public eye.²⁷ The historian Martina Deuchler states that *yangban* women were seen as "guardians and transmitters of Confucian norms and values" and required "to embody the ideal of female virtue"²⁸ as defined by Confucian dogma. To enforce these rules, the officialdom drew upon Confucian epigrams such as "a woman does not play in the garden during the day and does not leave the inner gate without reason."²⁹

With the popularization of the Confucian teachings during the second half of the Chosŏn Dynasty, however, some commoner women, too, hid themselves to a certain degree. Louise Jordan Miln (1864-1933), who read Dutch sailor Hendrick Hamel's *Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea, 1653-1666*, noted the change of custom during the last two hundred years of the dynasty. Depicting Korean women's green-colored covering cloth (*changot*), Miln wrote:

This green dress, which is used as a cloak, is almost exclusively the garment of the women of the middle class—the women who are not so poor that they are obliged to draw water, or to engage in any other forms of hard labour which would make the covering of their faces impossible—but who, at the same time, are occasionally obliged to go

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- 22 Yi Chaehŭi, "Kukka ka Kyŏnje han Yangbandŭl ŭi Hwaryŏ han Chugŏ Munhwa: Yangban ŭi Kŏjuji wa Chugŏ Saenghwal [Korean Aristocrats' Splendid Residential Culture Under State-Control: Yangban's Residence and Living]," in *Chosŏn Yangban ŭi Ilsaeng [Lives of Yangban in the Chosŏn Dynasty]*, ed. Chŏng Kŭngsik (P'aju: Kŭl Hang'ari, 2009), 201.
- 23 Yi, "Korean Aristocrats' Residence," 202-03.
- 24 Lee, *History of Chastity*, 30 and *T'aejo Sillok*, September 21, 1392.
- 25 Legge, *Sacred Books*, 478-79.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 479.
- 27 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 27-28; Jung Ji-young, "Chosŏn Shidae Punnyŏ ŭi Noch'ul kwa Oech'ul: Kyuje wa T'umsae [Escaping the Inner Room: Women between Regulation and Resistance in the Chosŏn Dynasty]," *Yŏsŏng kwa Yŏksa* 2 (2005), 149-81; refer to 152-57.
- 28 Deuchler, "Propagating Female Virtues," 165.
- 29 See *Sejong Sillok*, June 25, 1431, and *Sejong Sillok*, July 21, 1431.

abroad on some matter of household business. Wives and concubines and daughters of mandarins and of men of wealth do not often leave their own (by courtesy) house and gardens. When they do, they go in palanquins. They enter the palanquin in their own court-yard; the blinds or curtains are tightly closed.³⁰

An observation made by William Richard Carles (1848–1929), the British vice-consul to Korea, corroborates that women's social stratum, labor, and visibility were closely related in the Chosŏn Dynasty. In contrast to women of wealth and higher status, “women of the lowest class were standing at the doors of their houses, suckling their children, or doing some household work. Their faces, which were uncovered, bore the signs of smallpox, hard work, and hard fare.”³¹ Likewise, Horace N. Allen (1858–1932), who came to Chosŏn in 1884 as a missionary doctor of the American Presbyterian Church, pointed out that Korean women's visibility depended on their social status and wealth.

The women labour in the fields, sometimes knee-[d]eep in the mud and water of the rice plantations. They also engage as porters and peddlers along the roads, such, of course, *being poor creatures reduced to this work and unable to preserve the seclusion so dear to their more favoured sisters*. In cities the chief occupation of the similar class of women is that of the laundress. The washing is done wherever there is a brook and even at the sides of wells, the water sometimes finding its way directly back into the well from which it was dipped. All about the cities wherever there is a little brook or spring, there may be found a company of women with their paddles, pounding clothes on smooth stones in the water (emphasis added).³²

The stringent control of women's visibility under Confucian rule evidences that they were primarily regarded as objects of gaze rather than as beholders. *Kisaeng* women, who belonged to the lowest stratum (*ch'ŏnmin*), were yet another example that shows the complex entanglement between normative gender roles, strata, and visibility in Korea. Trained in poetry, music, and dance, *kisaeng* women belonged to the state and served as slave entertainers for noblemen.³³ In the service of men of a higher stratum, *kisaeng* women were allowed to have luxurious clothes and fancy accessories, which caught foreign visitors'

30 Louise J. Miln, *Quaint Korea* (London: Osgood, McIlvane & Co., 1895), 116–17.

31 William Richard Carles, *Life in Corea* (London, New York: Macmillan and co., 1888), 27. For the biographic details about Carles see Brother Anthony (Ahn Sŏnjae), “The Life of William Richard Carles,” <http://anthony.sogang.ac.kr/Carles/WilliamRichardCarles.html>.

32 Horace Newton Allen, *Things Korean: A Collection of Sketches and Anecdotes, Missionary and Diplomatic*, Elibron Classics Edition (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 96–97.

33 Woo Insu explains that “playing musical instruments or singing and dancing belonged to *kisaeng* women's *shinyŏk* [tasks assigned by the state].” As they could not secure their living solely through these duties, they had to perform in the private realm as well. Sometimes, female physicians (*ŭinyŏ*) and needlewomen (*ch'imsŏnbi*) working at the court were also assigned to perform dance and music at state banquets and private festivities, especially after King Injo halted the education of Seoul *kisaeng* women at the Bureau of Music (*chang'akwŏn*) as part of his political reform. See “Kisaeng ūi Sam kwa Saenghwal [The Life and the Livelihood of Kisaeng Women],” in *Ch'ŏnmin Yein ūi Sam kwa Yesul ūi Kwejŏk [Trajectories of the Low-Born Artists' Lives and Art]*, ed. Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (Seoul: Doosan Donga, 2007), 19–75; the quote is from 53–54.

attention.³⁴ Miln depicted the contrast between *kisaeng* women and other people: “She looks like some marvellous [sic!] human flower when you meet her in the streets of Söul [Seoul], and forms an indescribable contrast to the draggled crowds that draw apart to let her pass as she goes on her laughing way to her well-paid work.”³⁵ Despite the luxury they were entitled to, *kisaeng* women were not always the owners of their own pleasure. Miln noted her observation of *kisaeng* women: “No geisha girl [*kisaeng*] expects to be entertained. It is her business to entertain.”³⁶

Western travelers noticed the differences in *kisaeng* women's vivid presence and the elusive, if not invisible, existence of aristocratic women. George W. Gilmore (1858–1933) wrote:

Naturally, from the peculiarity of their mode of life and from the seclusion which limits them to the female apartments, boldness is not a trait of Korean women. Of the few women seen by the author during his residence in Korea, only two, and they were *keesang* (dancing-girls), were anything but modest.³⁷

An anecdote of the American movie maker Burton Holmes (1870–1958) implies that *kisaeng* women were regarded as objects of the gaze. As he amused a young prince of the Korean Empire with his motion picture machine, the imperial family endowed him with presents and invited him to the palace. “Next day [,] there came an invitation from the Fat Prince to appear at the palace to see the Imperial dancing girls; but a postscript begs us to be sure to bring the picture-machine.”³⁸ For the Korean royal family, *kisaeng* women's performances were a currency whose value corresponded with Holmes's motion pictures, as they, too, were a fascinating spectacle to foreign eyes.

34 *Kisaeng* women sometimes engaged in affairs with male aristocrats and became their concubines, yet they were distinct from *yunyō*—women involved in prostitution—who were not affiliated with the government and lacked artistic skills. See Woo, “Life of *Kisaeng*,” 22. *Kisaeng* women played manifold roles in cultural life during the Chosŏn Dynasty. In addition to music and dance, they actively participated in literary gatherings with aristocratic men and created poems. While male aristocrats considered such literary meetings a private entertainment, thus could be unconcerned about their occasionally vulgar creations, *kisaeng* women were held accountable for the content and quality of their poems. See Pak Yŏngmin, “19-Segŭ Yŏsŏng Sihoe wa Munhak Konggan: Unch'o Kŭrup ūl Chungsim ūro [Women's Poetry Gatherings and Literary Space in the 19th Century: Focused on Unch'o Poetry Circle],” *Minjok Munhaksŏ Yŏngu* 46 (2007), 37–67; refer to 42–44. For examples of *kisaeng* women's literary creations, see Woo, “Life of *Kisaeng*,” 62. Since women's scholarship was considered deplorable under the influence of Confucianism, only few aristocratic women could—often posthumously—publish their texts. However, throughout the dynasty, aristocratic women also engaged in writings, leaving behind autobiographical accounts, letters, poems, household related books, and moral teachings for women. See Lee Sook-in, *Tto Hana ūi Chosŏn: Shidae ūi Tŭm esŏ 'Na' ro Chonjae Haettŏn 52-myŏng ūi Yŏjadŭl* [Yet Another Chosŏn: 52 Women Who Existed as “I”] (Seoul: Han'gyŏre Ch'ulp'an, 2021).

35 Miln, *Quaint Korea*, 157–58.

36 *Ibid.*, 159.

37 George W. Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital: With Chapters on Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1892), 150.

38 Elias Burton Holmes, *Burton Holmes Travelogues: With Illustrations from Photographs by the Author*, 10 vols. 10 (New York: The McClure Company, 1908), 107.

The visibility of *kisaeng* women seems to refute the strict control exerted over bodies of noble women. However, it was in accordance with the gendered gaze of Confucianism which forcefully defined women as objects of the gaze and their visibility as a sign of moral flaw. *Kisaeng* women were visible, not *despite*, but *because* of their low social status, as Lilius H. Underwood (1851–1921) points out: “And yet, thus [,] to appear in public, allowing their faces to be seen by strangers, is the gravest breach of propriety in the eyes of all Koreans.”³⁹

Koreans of that time interpreted a woman's visibility as an index of their social status. Some regarded it as a universal rule that might be applied to other cultures, too. Allen, who guided the first Korean minister of United States Pak Chŏng'yang (1841–1905) to the high society of Washington D.C., observed the Korean aristocrat's astonishment to meet “wives and daughters of [the] most distinguished citizens”⁴⁰ at a banquet. Pak mistook them for “*gesang* [kisaeng]’ or dancing girls,” as “respectable women would never be seen by strangers”⁴¹ in Chosŏn.

During the Chosŏn era, a person's gaze and visibility were closely related to Confucian gender norms and the social strata system. Confucian teaching dictated the binary distinction between women and men and regulated women's mobility and visibility in the public domain. Until the late nineteenth century, being seen by others was regarded as immoral for women of Chosŏn, although not all women could afford to remain invisible from the public eye. Women of higher social position and economic status could use palanquins or covering clothes, while women who labored were ubiquitously visible. *Kisaeng* women, engaged as spectacular dancers for male aristocrats and their guests, fascinated the public with their unique garments, yet at the same time, they garnered little respect among the Korean people. Despite the varying degree of visibility among Korean women, Chosŏn-era custom and regulations indicate that they were primarily considered the object of gaze instead of the looking subject. As discussed below, however, the restriction does not mean that there was no female spectator in public altogether.

Chosŏn Women's Spectating of Processions

The restriction on women's mobility and social control of their visibility during the Chosŏn Dynasty did not necessarily mean that there was no female spectator. Far from remaining as objects of the gaze, they sought opportunities to participate in public events as onlookers and sometimes even actively outwitted rules banning their participation.

Analyzing the Chosŏn government records, this section first outlines how Chosŏn women attended processions from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, subsequently analyzing the observations made by two British visitors regarding Korean female spectators during the late nineteenth century. Expanding on Jung Ji-young's 2005 study of aris-

39 Lilius H. Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Top-Knots: Or Live in Korea* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1904), 93.

40 Allen, *Things Korean*, 160–61.

41 Ibid.

toocrat women's pastimes,⁴² I investigated *The Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty* and *The Record of Daily Reflections (Ilsŏngnok)* to understand court debates on female spectators.⁴³ Using keyword-search, I collected and analyzed 139 accounts about onlookers of processions and other state events between 1428 and 1861.⁴⁴

Processions of the Chinese delegation and the Korean royal families were the most spectacular event of Chosŏn, thus attracting people of every age, stratum, and gender. The Chinese envoy's procession was often amplified through the stunts and play of *chaein*. Tongwŏl, a diplomat who visited Chosŏn in 1488, documented that the Chosŏn government prepared "endless advent of fishes and dragons, a terrapin carrying a mountain on its back, two [outdoor] stages that are as high as the castle gate, acrobats running down tightropes, lions and elephants made out of horse leather, and phoenix made out of pheasants' feathers"⁴⁵ upon his arrival to the capital. Creating such spectacle burdened the Chosŏn Dynasty, particularly after the Japanese Invasion in 1592 and Manchu War in 1636. Therefore, the government discussed abolishing *narye*, the festive performances of *chaein*, in 1623, yet it was continued until 1784.⁴⁶ Consequently, the Chosŏn government discussed general conditions of such processions, including women's attendance, until the late eighteenth century.

Jung Ji-young emphasizes that noblewomen were relatively free to watch processions and other public festivities until the late fifteenth century, as the new Confucian dogma was not quickly adopted in their everyday lives.⁴⁷ For instance, some aristocratic women installed tents on the street side to enjoy *sandaehŭi*, the festive play, while others observed the Chinese envoy from pavilions, fully revealing their faces to the public eye.⁴⁸ By the mid-1400s, the custom did not change much, and some aristocratic women even climbed up the walls and trees to have the best view of processions.⁴⁹

However, as the officialdom tried to transform Chosŏn into a normative Confucian state, women's presence in public became a problem.⁵⁰ Thus, the Chosŏn government

42 Jung's analysis is based on nine cases spanning the years 1431 to 1670. See Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 159–62.

43 Written by royal historians, the chronicle records offer detailed insight into Chosŏn-era custom and the officialdom's evaluation and reaction to them. The records are translated into contemporary Korean language. The digitalized version of the former is serviced by the National Institute of Korean History, the latter by the Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics.

44 Part of the research was presented at Cambridge 2017 AHRC DTP Conference *Tradition and Transformation* on September 19, 2017. I am grateful to a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne for their generous funding, which allowed me to participate in the conference.

45 Cho Kyŏng'a, "Chosŏn Shidae Chungguk Sashin ūi Ch'um Hyang'yu [The Dance Appreciation of the Chinese Envoys in the Chosŏn Dynasty]," *Muyong Yŏksa Kirokhak* 35 (2014), 176–77.

46 Sa Chinsil "Injo Ihu Narye ūi Sasŭp kwa Sandae Togam P'ae ūi Hŭnghaeng Hwaltong [The Informal Practice of *Narye* and the Popularity of *Sandae Togam P'ae* after King Injo's Reign]," *Kong'yŏn Munhwa Yŏngŭ* 28 (2014): 83–151; refer to 93–99.

47 Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 159–62.

48 See *Sejong Sillok*, July 21, 1431; *Sejong Sillok*, January 22, 1449.

49 See Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 159–62.

50 JaHyun Kim Haboush, a historian of Confucian ideology, explains that the Chosŏn Dynasty "had become a normative Confucian society" by the eighteenth century, which was characterized by "patrilineage with its attendant ancestral and mourning rites, the universal acceptance of ethics concerned with the five social relations [*oryun*], the supremacy of the civil bureaucracy, the recruit-

discussed their attendance at processions as an important matter while organizing or reviewing those events between the early fifteenth century and late eighteenth century. As Jung points out, the continuum of the debate shows a situation in which regulations on women were difficult to establish.⁵¹ While the Confucianism-oriented officials insisted upon banning noblewomen's attendance of festivities from 1431 onwards,⁵² it was not until 1511 that a king agreed on enforcing such a ban.⁵³ During these 80 years, the Confucian scholars tried to persuade kings to ban noblewomen's onlooking on occasions of festive performances (*sandaehŭi*) in 1431,⁵⁴ processions of the Chinese envoy in 1450,⁵⁵ 1480,⁵⁶ 1492,⁵⁷ and 1503,⁵⁸ and King Sŏngjong's plowing ceremony (*ch'in'gyŏng*) in 1493.⁵⁹ Based on inside-outside norms, they argued that it was immoral for women to occupy the same space as unknown men and were particularly concerned that the violation of the Confucian gender norm would negatively impact diplomats from the Ming Dynasty.⁶⁰

King Sŏngjong was the first king to partially restrict Korean women's watching of public festivities. Throughout his reign (1469–95), King Sŏngjong upheld aristocrat women's rights to watch, yet he also enforced their duty to cover themselves.⁶¹ In 1481, he obliged the use of beaded curtains to cover noblewomen's faces during the procession.⁶² Seven years later, he prohibited women and men from climbing up the roofs as well.⁶³ Still, he did not entirely ban noblewomen's attendance of processions out of the belief that it counted as one of Chosŏn's custom.⁶⁴ Furthermore, he regarded the beaded curtains and tents standing along the streets as an integral part of the festive scenery.⁶⁵ By granting noblewomen the right to watch Chinese envoys, King Sŏngjong intentionally placed them on the scene as a subtle sign of Chosŏn's authority and defiance towards the Ming Dynasty.

In 1511, however, King Chungjong (1488–1544) banned *yangban* women's viewing of public events for the first time in Chosŏn history.⁶⁶ The government enforced a law that punished the head of household if a woman violated the ban; if there was no male head

ment of officials through a civil service examination, and the uniform adoption of a Confucian curriculum in educational establishments." See Haboush, "Confucianization of Korean Society," 84.

51 Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 150.

52 *Sejong Sillok*, June 25, 1431.

53 *Chungjong Sillok*, August 28, 1511.

54 *Sejong Sillok*, June 25, 1431.

55 *Munjong Sillok*, August 2, 1450.

56 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, April 22, 1480.

57 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, June 22, 1492.

58 *Yŏnsangun Ilgi*, April 1, 1503.

59 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, February 26, 1493.

60 *Sejong Sillok*, June 25, 1431, *Sejong Sillok*, January 29, 1450, and *Sŏngjong Sillok*, January 28, 1488.

61 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, March 9, 1488, and *Sŏngjong Sillok*, March 7, 1493.

62 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, May 8, 1481.

63 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, January 20, 1488.

64 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, March 9, 1488.

65 *Sŏngjong Sillok*, May 8, 1481.

66 *Chungjong Sillok*, August 28, 1511.

of household in her family, she was punished while wearing a single layer of clothes, thus revealing her to the public eye. However, its stringency led to a revision in 1513.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, some noblewomen found ways to watch spectacular state events despite the ban. Jung Ji-young draws attention to *yangban* women's appropriation of palanquins as mobile auditoriums from the early seventeenth century onwards.⁶⁸ When King Sŏnjo (1552–1608) noticed this during a rehearsal for the Chinese envoy's procession in 1606, he forbade women's attendance regardless of their social status, arguing that the Chinese would not be able to distinguish the commoner women from the noblewomen, thus leading them to think that Chosŏn's custom might be corrupt.⁶⁹ However, the general ban on noblewomen's attendance of the processions had to be reiterated in 1670, as the younger generation of *yangban* women, too, made use of palanquins.⁷⁰ Against all these regulations, noblewomen of the Confucian dynasty actively sought visual pleasure at various occasions such as the sudden appearance of a camel in the walled capital in 1695,⁷¹ the arrival of an envoy from the Qing Dynasty in 1727 on the street,⁷² or at home by hiding behind a paper wall with peepholes in 1787.⁷³

Isabella Bird Bishop (1831–1904), a British traveler and photographer who frequented Chosŏn between 1894 and 1897, observed how the capital's thoroughfares changed its hue during the King's procession due to the colorful clothes of women and children.⁷⁴ She wrote: "The singular monotony of baggy white coats and black crinoline hats [of men] was relieved by boy bridegrooms in yellow hats and rose-pink coats, by the green silk coats of women, and the green, pink, heliotrope and Turkey red dresses of children."⁷⁵ The fact that "the white crowd [men in white coats] once more overflowed" the street shortly after the procession indicates how quickly the inside-outside norm was reestablished, with women disappearing from the public realm even as old norms were being questioned at the close of the nineteenth century.

Court debates of the Chosŏn Dynasty show that women's viewing of processions was restricted in the sixteenth century. Policymakers, equipped with the Confucian gender norm, problematized aristocrat women's attendance in particular, arguing that this was against the inside-outside norm. Depending on the kings' decision, noblewomen (and sometimes even women of all strata) were forbidden to watch the public spectacles. Nevertheless, these women did not cease to pursue their pleasure. As they were forced to hide their faces and bodies during King Sŏngjong's reign, Korean women invented ways to comply with the ban while still watching the processions: the noblewomen used palanquins as a mobile auditorium, while commoner women wore covering clothes. This

67 *Chungjong Sillok*, August 24, 1513.

68 Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 161.

69 *Sŏnjo Sillok* 198, April 8, 1606.

70 *Hyŏnjong Kaesu Sillok*, February 18, 1670.

71 *Sukjong Sillok*, April 14, 1695.

72 *Yŏngjo Sillok*, March 7, 1727.

73 *Ilŏngnok*, February 21, 1787.

74 On Isabella Bird Bishop's travel photography see Luke Gartlan, "A Complete Craze: Isabella Bird Bishop in East Asia," *PhotoResearcher* 15 (2011), 13–26.

75 Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, With an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country* (New York, Chicago, etc.: F.H. Revell Co., 1898), 51.

practice continued until the end of the nineteenth century. Foreign visitors' accounts show that Korean authorities, female spectators, and the public found a balance between women's participation in public events and the Confucian gender norms. While perceived as the object of the gaze, Korean women challenged the boundaries of the inside-outside rule by pursuing their visual pleasure in public, which established a spectatorial precedence for Korean women's playgoing and theatergoing.

1.2 Women's Playgoing during the Korean Empire

Seoul's Playhouses

One of the biggest changes to the visual culture of the Korean peninsula in the late nineteenth century was the rise of the indoor theater. Unlike in China and Japan, there was no playhouse on the Korean peninsula before the late nineteenth century.⁷⁶ Instead of theaters, Korean plays took place on streets, marketplaces, in gardens, or out in nature.⁷⁷ The first indoor venues for plays appeared as an increasing number of foreign settlers came to Korea. The earliest account of such a venue on the Korean Peninsula was written by Lilius H. Underwood, a missionary of the American Presbyterian Church. As she returned from Chicago to Korea in the summer of 1893 and had to stay in Chemulp'o, present-day Inch'ön, due to her child's illness, her family found a lodging across from a Chinese theater:

On our return to Korea [...] most of the summer was spent at Chemulpo, as our baby was very sick. We stopped in a so-called *hotel*, kept by Chinamen. The long hot nights were rendered almost intolerable by the noise and odors of such a place. From early in the evening till past midnight [...] we were tortured by the high falsetto singing of the actors in a Chinese theatre across the street.⁷⁸

As a treaty port near the capital, Chemulp'o was an entrance for foreign travelers coming to Korea and had separate concessions (*chogye*) for Chinese, Japanese, and Euro-American merchants.⁷⁹ Underwood's recollection implies that the increase in movement of people and goods led to the establishment of theaters in Chemulp'o.

76 Yu Kiljun, *Söyu Kyönmun: Chosön Chisigin Yu Kiljun, Söyang ül Pönyök Hada* [Travels in the West: Yu Kiljun, the Chosön-Korean Intellectual, Translates the West], trans. Hö Kyöngjin (Seoul: Söhae Munjip, [1895]2004), 454.

77 See Gang, "From Streets to Theaters," 146–48.

78 Underwood, *Fifteen Years*, 103–04. Her statement that they spent the summer in Chemulp'o may include an error, because she and her family left Chicago in January 1893 and arrived in Seoul in early May 1893, before the summer began in Korea. See Yi Manyöl, and Ok Söngdük (eds.), *Öndöudü Charyojip II* [Horace Grant Underwood Papers II], *Yönse Kukak Ch'ongsö* 48 (Seoul: Yönse Taehakkyo Chulp'anbu, 2006), 330 and 725.

79 Kang Töku and Kang Okyöp (eds.), *Inch'ön Kaehangjang P'unggyöng* [Sceneries of the Open Port in Inch'ön] (Inch'ön: Inch'ön Kwangyök Si Yöksa Charyogwan Yöksa Munhwa Yön'gushil, 2006), 10.

Meanwhile, Seoul's inhabitants, too, encountered Japanese and Chinese play venues in foreign concessions starting from the close of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ The play companies installed tents or even built buildings to attract audiences and made them to pay to enter the sites.⁸¹ Although Koreans were attracted by circus and stunts, Chinese- and Japanese groups' business model was met with aversion because Korean spectators were not used to the idea of having to pay to attend a performance.⁸² Until the playhouse business was established in the early twentieth century, Korean players lived on voluntary payment of onlookers or customers who hired them to play at their festivities.⁸³ Therefore, Korean newspapers criticized Japanese and Chinese venues for charging audiences, calling their business "robberies" and "begging."⁸⁴ Eventually, however, the logic that each spectator must pay for performance took roots in Korea, as a growing number of playhouses started operating in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Hansöng Electric Company (HEC) gave additional impetus to the emerging Korean theater business in Seoul. Established by Arthur H. Collbran and Harry R. Bostwick in 1898, two American businessmen, the HEC built and operated the "electric streetcar, electric lighting, and telephone systems in Seoul."⁸⁵ Rumors had it that the company was also behind the sudden appearance of Korean play venues just outside the capital "because the benefit from the increase in passengers due to the dance [performance]" was "not little."⁸⁶ By the early 1900s, at the latest, the HEC's impact on the Korean theater industry became evident. The company began to show various Korean plays and motion pictures in its garage near the East Gate, and by 1904 it attracted more people by installing a merry-go-round in front of the garage theater.⁸⁷ The nameless yet vibrant theater of the HEC evolved into a regular playhouse in June 1907 under the name of *Kwangmude*, or The Light Stage.⁸⁸ The HEC's garage theater is known as the first indoor facility that presented shows and motion pictures for the Korean audience.

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- 80 On the Japanese concession in Seoul after the opening of Korean harbors to foreign powers see Yi Yöngyöng, *Hansöng-bu üi 'Chagün Ilbon,' Chin'ogogae hagün Ponjöng* [*The Little Japan in Seoul: Chin'ogogae or Honmachi*] (Seoul: Sigong Munhwasa, 2015). For the architectural heritage of the Japanese and Chinese concessions in Chemul'po (present day Inchön) see Han'guk Kündae Munhakkwan, ed., *Inchön, 100-nyön üi Shigan ül Kötta: Kündae Yusan kwa Hamkke Hanün Toshi T'amsa* [*Walking through the 100 Years of Inchön: An Exploration of the City with the Focus on the Modern Heritage*] (Seoul: Buk Ment'o, 2019).
- 81 Examples of and conflicts over the paying system in Chinese and Japanese concessions are analyzed in Gang, "From Streets to Theaters," 148–51.
- 82 For instance, a government official was caught and lynched by Chinese playgroup as he tried to peep into the bear play. See "Uhan Yöung [Stupid Like a Bear]," *HS*, March 29, 1899, 3. I became aware of this case through Woo Sujin's study. See Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 28.
- 83 For a detailed analysis see Gang, "From Streets to Theaters," 146–48.
- 84 "Chal Ttudürinda [Beating Well]," *Cheguk Shinmun* (hereafter CS), March 7, 1899, 3.
- 85 Son Minsuh, "Electrifying Seoul and the Culture of Technology in Nineteenth Century Korea" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2008), 79.
- 86 "Muhüi Tanggüm [The Dance Must Be Immediately Banned]," *HS*, March 31, 1900, 2. I became aware of this article through Woo Sujin's study. See *Modern Korean Theater*, 22 and 30.
- 87 HEC, "Tongmun an ... [Near East Gate ...]," *HS*, June 23, 1903, 3.
- 88 HEC, "Near East Gate" *HS*, June 23, 1903, 3; HEC, "American Korean Electric Company. Light and Power," *TMS*, August 4, 1904, 2.
- 88 Yu, *New History* 1, 65.

Soch'undae started operating on December 4, 1902, in Seoul's city center, and became a powerful competitor for HEC's Korean playhouse business.⁸⁹ This playhouse marks a watershed in Korean theater history due to three reasons: Emperor Kojong's involvement, the location, and the business structure. Firstly, Soch'undae was ostensibly set up by high-ranking government officials (*taegwan*) of the Korean Empire.⁹⁰ In fact, however, Emperor Kojong himself was one of the main investors and profitters of the venture.⁹¹ As the landlord, the Ministry of the Royal Household received rent and earnings from the entertainment company, which went directly into Emperor Kojong's vault.⁹²

Secondly, Soch'undae was the first playhouse built within the walled capital. During the Chosŏn Dynasty, performers (known as *chaein*), who belonged to the lowest stratum, were not allowed to reside inside the walled capital. Therefore, the decision to open a permanent playhouse in Seoul marked a radical departure from the past.⁹³ The impetus for this change may have come from the observations of Yu Kiljun, who was assigned to travel and inspect Western societies by Kojong. Yu's report emphasized the educational value of plays and highlighted the financial benefits of taxing commercial shows, which would contribute to state coffers.⁹⁴ The two-story building with a conical roof was built amidst the three major royal palaces (Kyŏngbokkung, Töksugung, and Kyŏnghüigung), signaling a strong connection to the Korean royal family and the commercial interests associated with it.⁹⁵ Due to its geographical and institutional ties to the Korean Empire's officialdom, Soch'undae swiftly became the center of the public discourse on the role of plays and playhouses.⁹⁶

89 Soch'undae was known by many different names, including Hüidae, Hyömnyulsa, and Wŏn'gaksa. Hüidae referred to stages in general, while Hyömnyulsa and Wŏn'gaksa were names of operating companies. To avoid any confusion, this study exclusively uses Soch'undae to refer to the playhouse building, although this name was quickly forgotten in the 1900s. For translations, other names will be replaced by Soch'undae if the original text refers to the building or the venue. Hyömnyulsa and Wŏn'gaksa will only be used as names of operating companies. For further discussions on the name see Cho, *Correcting History*, 55 and 112–50.

90 "Hyömnyulsa Kugyŏng [Watching Plays at Hyömnyulsa's Playhouse]," CS, December 16, 1902, 1.

91 Kwŏn Tohüi, "Taehan Cheguk Ki Hwangsil Kükchang üi Taejung Kükchang üro üi Chŏnhwan Kwajŏng e taehan Yŏngu [Converting Process from Imperial Theater to Public One during the Korean Empire: Focusing on Hüidae and Hyömnyulsa]," *Kugagwŏn Nonmunjib* 32 (2015), 97–129.

92 Kwŏn, "Converting Process," 114–15.

93 Theater historian Sa Chinsil points out that there were a few exceptional performers called "clowns in the capital (*kyŏngjung uin*)" who resided in Seoul during the Chosŏn Dynasty, yet the advantages of living in the capital city gradually diminished. See *Han'guk Yŏn'gaksa Yŏn'gu* [*The Study of the Korean Theater History*] (Seoul: Taehaksa, 1997), 211–18 and 309–11.

94 Yu, *Travels in West*, 454–56. About the possible impact of Yu's book on the establishment of Soch'undae see Gang, "From Streets to Theaters," 151–54.

95 For the design of Soch'undae see Cho, *Correcting History*, 202–11. The playhouse was at the present-day address 56 Shinmunro-1-ga, Jongno-gu, Seoul. See Yun Howoo, "Ch'oech'o Kündaesik Kükchang Wŏn'gaksa Chŏnghwak Han Wich'i Kirok Ch'ajatda [Record of the Exact Location of Wŏn'gaksa, the First Modern Theater, Is Found]," *Chugan Kyŏnghyang*, October 15, 2013, <http://weekly.khan.co.kr/khnm.html?artid=201310081637251&mode=view>.

96 The criticisms of playhouses during the 1900s are discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Thirdly, Soch'undae was the first playhouse in Korea managed by an entertainment company named Hyömnyulsa, which engaged exclusive performers.⁹⁷ Under the state and police's cooperation, the entertainment company boldly claimed that all Korean entertainers, including singers, dancing children, and *kisaeng* women of the capital, might be under their jurisdiction in 1903.⁹⁸ This monopoly was broken around August 1906, as Emperor Kojong was no longer involved in the playhouse business.⁹⁹ Afterwards, the operators and the playhouse's name changed several times until its final closure in 1912.¹⁰⁰

While the 1905 Protectorate Treaty between Japan and Korea posed a serious threat to the Korean Empire's sovereignty, the legal changes that followed gave rise to Seoul's Korean playhouse district. Specifically, the 1906 Road Management Rules, enforced as the second order of the newly reformed Police Department, banned, among others, "giving speeches, playing, or gathering the crowd on the street" under the pretext that these activities disturbed the traffic.¹⁰¹ Based on a 1872 Japanese ordinance, this rule "subjected acts, which had been either uninteresting for the power or unpunished publicly, to punishments as a part of the discipline that corresponded with [the colonizer's notion of] civilization."¹⁰² A similar clause in the 1907 Security Law, too, forbade earning money by showing gigs on the streets.¹⁰³ As the usual space of performance disappeared, indoor playhouses became the only alternative for Koreans to enjoy music, plays, and dances.

In line with these changes, three new Korean playhouses opened in the city center between 1907 and 1908. In June 1907, three Korean businessmen established Tansöngsa near Jongno, the main street of the capital.¹⁰⁴ Soon after, Chang'ansa was opened just across the street from Tansöngsa. In November 1907, a further three Korean businessmen erected Yönhüngsa about 450 meters west of Tansöngsa.¹⁰⁵ With the rejuvenation of Soch'undae under the new operation company named Wön'gaksa ("The Conic House") in July 1908 and that of HEC's garage theater under the new name of Kwangmudae ("The Light Stage"), Northern Town (Pukch'on) of Seoul and the East Gate area became a small yet meaningful Korean playhouse district.¹⁰⁶

97 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 41–43. The operating company lasted until July 1908. See Cho, *Correcting History*, 151.

98 "Yulsa Koshi [Hyömnyulsa's Notice]," CS, March 27, 1903, 3; "Kümji Kiyu [Ban on Kisaeng Women's Play]," HS, April 30, 1903, 2.

99 Kwön, "Converting Process," 117–18.

100 Cho, *Correcting History*, 190.

101 "Toro Kwalli Kyuch'ik (Kyöngshich'öng Ryöng che 2-ho)," *Kwanbo*, January 6, 1906, as cited in Yi Chongmin, "1910-nyöndae Kyöngsöng Chumindül üi 'Choe' wa 'Pöl': Kyöngbömjoe T'ongje rül Chungsim üro [Crime and Punishment on Residents of Kyungsung in the 1910's: Focused on the Control of Minor Offences]," *Seoul Hak Yöngu* 17 (2001), 95–130; refer to 102.

102 Yi, "Crime and Punishment," 103.

103 See Yi Süngüi, "Mudan T'ongch'i Ki Hüngaeng/chang T'ongje üi Kisul [The Technique of Control to Play and Theater During the Military Colonial Rule Period]," *Han'guk Kük Yesul Yöngu* 39, no. 3 (2013), 21.

104 See Yi Sunjin, *Chosönin Kükchang Tansöngsa 1907–1939* [The Korean Theater Tansöngsa 1907–1939] (Seoul: Han'guk Yöngsang Charyowön / KOFA, 2011), 11.

105 See Yu, *New History* 1, 66–73.

106 See Yu, *New History* 1, 63–67.

The Korean playhouses presented various Korean plays, dances, musical recitals, stunts, slide shows, and motion pictures. Wŏn'gaksa and HEC distinguished their venues from other playhouses by foregrounding specific genres and players. Upon starting the business on July 26, 1908, Wŏn'gaksa advertised that audiences could count on “twenty-four singing *kisaeng* (*kagi*), who are the top-tier of Seoul, and forty *p'ansori* singers including the renowned master singer Kim Ch'anghwan.”¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Kwangmudae continued to broaden its program in terms of genres: After impressing the public with a dazzling show including motion pictures and the musical play Ch'unhyangga on the opening night, Kwangmudae presented educational slide shows on hygiene as well as old and new dances, such as the “electric dance.”¹⁰⁸ Audiences of Yŏnhŭngsa, too, could enjoy various shows, including the small drum dance, folk songs, *p'ansori* pieces, and a *kisaeng*'s recital on a single night of the show in 1909.¹⁰⁹

Seoul's Korean theater district offered a wide range of entertainment choices for the onlookers, and its establishment meant more opportunities, competition, and the need for distinction for performers and theater operators of that time. However, the burgeoning theater business coincided with the Korean Empire's political crisis and Japan's increased control over Korea. This met with social criticism from the theater industry and its spectators, which had a significant impact on the discourse on theater and audience that had just begun. A more detailed analysis of the political crisis and its impact on Korean female audiences is undertaken in chapter 2.

Material Conditions of Theatergoing in the 1900s

For Seoul's female spectators, the emerging playhouse business of the early 1900s meant both a new opportunity and a new limitation. They could attend first-class *kisaeng* women's dances in Soch'undae theater, which used to be performed exclusively at royal banquets.¹¹⁰ Alternatively, they could take a streetcar to the last stop and watch motion pictures at Hansŏng Electric Company's garage theater.¹¹¹ Instead of envoys from the Qing Dynasty, visitors from the West caught their eyes and fulfilled their curiosity.¹¹² Concurrently, theatergoing required spare time and money to spend on this pastime. This section specifically evaluates the impact of economic power, leisure time, and child-care responsibilities on the female audience. By considering these factors, we can gain a

107 Wŏn'gaksa, “Advertisement,” *HS*, July 26, 1908, 3. The same advertisement was published in *TMS*, July 26, 1908, 3.

108 See “Yŏn'gŭk Kigwan [Wonderous Sight of Theater],” *Mansebo*, May 30, 1907; “Wisaeng Hwandŭng Hoe [Hygiene Slide Show],” *TMS*, July 31, 1907, 2; Kwangmudae, “T'ŭkpyŏl tae Kwanggo [Special Advertisement],” *HS*, May 26, 1908, 3.

109 Talgwansaeng, “Yŏn'gŭkchang Chuin ege [To a Theater Owner],” *Sŏbuk Hakhoe Wŏlbo* 16 (1909), 32.

110 Émil Bourdaret, *En Corée* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1904), 337.

111 “Yuwan Chowi [Watching Is at a Risk],” *HS*, July 10, 1903, 2.

112 Foreigners in the Korean Empire shared the memory of being observed by Korean people as a spectacle. For examples, see Allen, *Things Korean*, 18; Henry Savage-Landore, *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of the Morning Calm* (London: William Heinemann, 1895), 71; Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital*, 86.

deeper understanding of the context in which news briefs about women in playhouses were written and received.

Newspaper advertisements of the time indicate that Korean playhouses in Seoul showed plays at night.¹¹³ The business hours of playhouses were far from bad news for Seoul's female spectators because the capital's streets belonged to women during that time, while most men were under night curfew (*yagŭm*). Beginning in 1400, under King T'aejong's reign, the night curfew was a means of prohibiting crimes.¹¹⁴ At the close of the nineteenth century, Seoul's city government restricted its residents' movements in the capital between 8 p.m. and midnight, with exceptions for women and *yangban* men accompanied by servants.¹¹⁵ Setting part of the night as the women's outing time allowed them to engage in social activities without revealing themselves to others following the inside-outside norms. Allen, who enjoyed extraordinary rights as a diplomat from the U.S. and could go outside at nights like *yangban* men, described the liberty that women enjoyed in the late night from his observation:

The only lights to be seen were those from the lanterns of the few pedestrians. Most of the people to be met were women, each one white clad and closely veiled, carrying a tiny paper lantern giving out a feeble glow from its beeswax taper. For from the tolling of the "curfew bell" for the closing of the city gates, until the opening of the same at dawn, all common men except the attendants of a person of rank, were excluded from the streets[,] which were then given over to the women, who seemed to enjoy to the full this liberty of the city, and were taking this time to make their social calls and get some necessary out-of-door exercise. What better occasion could there be for the lone woman from a distant land to make her first progress on foot through the streets of this, to her, unexplored city.¹¹⁶

The night curfew policy changed several times after the Kabo Reform in 1895.¹¹⁷ Initially, the night curfew was abolished through the Reform in 1895. However, in June 1899, the movement of individuals was restricted again after 10 p.m.¹¹⁸ In May 1905, the police department banned women's going out after 9 p.m., drastically changing the custom.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that such changes had a liminal impact on women's playgoing at night. Depicting the success of motion pictures in and around Seoul, a 1903 article in the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* mentioned that the new spectacle "contributed to aristocratic women's onlooking" at Hansŏng Electric Company's garage and to the gathering of "thousands of prostituting women (*yunyŏ*)" at Soch'undae.¹²⁰ It is unclear if different groups of women went to separate venues, but the article shows that screenings between

113 See *HS*, December 4, 1902, 3 and *HS*, June 23, 1903, 3.

114 Yu Sŭnghŭi, "17-18-segi Yagŭmje ŭi Unyŏng kwa Pŏmyaja ŭi Silt'ae [The Night-Curfew of 17th-18th century and Violators]," *Yŏksa wa Kyŏnggye* 87 (2013), 87.

115 See Holmes, *Travelogues*, 58; Allen, *Things Korean*, 79.

116 Allen, *Things Korean*, 69-70.

117 Yu, "Night-Curfew," 104-05.

118 "Yagyŏng Kiŏm [Night-Curfew Reintroduced]," *HS*, June 26, 1899, 2.

119 "Kyŏngsa Kŭmnyŏng [Police Ban]," *CS*, May 20, 1905, 2.

120 "Watching Is at Risk," *HS*, July 10, 1903, 2.

8 p.m. and 10 p.m. were no problem even for women of a higher social stratum because they were used to going out at night.

Despite the 1905 ban on women's outings after 9 p.m., female audiences continued to frequent Seoul's playhouses. When Soch'undae reopened on March 4, 1906, contemporaries observed "thousands of men and women gathered like a cloud."¹²¹ On June 26, 1906, as the Tano Festival was held, the same playhouse presented shows all day from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and earned several one thousand wŏn a day, attracting "sons of prestigious families and playgirls."¹²² Likewise, when the upper floor of Tansŏngsa collapsed at 9 p.m. on July 3, 1908, the injured were mostly women because the accident happened in the women's section.¹²³ These cases suggest that Korean women continued to visit playhouses even after the 1905 ban on nighttime outings, raising questions about the duration and effectiveness of the ban.

Economic power was another decisive factor for a woman to become the audience of commercial playhouses. Soch'undae distinguished seats in three categories and priced them differently. For the first show on December 4, 1902, the playhouse charged one wŏn for a high-class seat, seventy chŏn for a middle-class seat, and fifty chŏn for a low-class seat.¹²⁴ Thereby, seats closest to the stage were the cheapest, while seats placed physically higher were more expensive than others.¹²⁵ This pricing scheme derived from the hierarchical social structure of Korean society and remained unquestioned until 1925.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the HEC sold tickets for a motion picture screening night at a flat rate of ten chŏn, lower than any seats in Soch'undae playhouse.¹²⁷

In short, to attend a play or a motion picture in a playhouse, one had to pay at least ten chŏn. To understand the value of playhouse tickets, it is helpful to investigate an expenditure record from the year 1904. The Ministry of the Royal Household left a long list of prices paid for the funeral of the Empress Dowager Myŏnghŏn in the winter of 1904.¹²⁸ The ministry paid 264 wŏn for twenty-two *pyŏlgam* (special directors), who safeguarded the coffin for twenty-three days, as food expenses. In other words, the average daily meal cost per person was 0.52 wŏn or fifty-two chŏn. This means that for the price of the high-class seat in Soch'undae, or one wŏn, one could feed an adult man for two days, and ten

121 "Yulsa Pŏnhwa [Bustling Hyŏmnyulsa]," March 4, 1906, *TMS*, 2.

122 "Yulsa Kyŏnghwang [Hyŏmnyulsa's Current Situation]," June 27, 1906, *HS*, 2. *Tano* is a festive day celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth Lunar month.

123 "Tansŏng Naksang [Accident at Tansŏngsa]," *HS*, July 5, 1908, 2. The women's section is discussed in chapter 3.

124 Hyŏmnyulsa, "Ponsa esŏ ... [Our company ...]," *CS*, December 4, 1902, 3.

125 See Bourdaret, *En Corée*, 247. The seating plan, which reflected economic power and gender, is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

126 As late as in 1925, an anonymous writer pointed out that the pricing should not follow the logic of social hierarchy, but the perspective that each seat offered. YK-Saeng, "Kaebangnan: Sok'i Kaeryang Hal Kŭkchang ūi Chwasŏk. Uch'ŭng kwa Area Ch'ŭng ūl Patkoa Kkumyŏ Nora [The Open Column: Theater Seats Need an Immediate Improvement. Exchange the Upper and Lower Floors]," *MS*, September 19, 1925, 2.

127 HEC, "Near East Gate," *HS*, June 23, 1903, 3.

128 Min Pyŏngsŏk, "Chohoe," March 11, 1904, *Kaksa Tŭngnok Kŭndae P'yŏn* [Copies of Administrative Bureaus Records], http://db.history.go.kr/id/mk_017_0060_0740.

chŏn would be about 20 percent of daily food expenses for an adult man. This was never a small amount in Korean society where famine and poverty were an ongoing problem.¹²⁹

Considering the relatively steep ticket prices, it was no coincidence that a Korean newspaper depicted theatergoing as a luxurious pastime of aristocrat women in April 1908 under the title "Some Are Singing, Others Are Crying." The journalist wrote: "innumerable aristocrat women chased after [plays] in groups at places such as Tansŏngsa and Yŏnhŭngsa," indicating that they had time and money at their disposal.¹³⁰ The noblewomen used their conditions of privilege to fulfill their desires for entertainment and participation in public life. Another group of women who could afford the ticket price was *kisaeng* and prostituting women. As companions of "sons of luxurious families,"¹³¹ *kisaeng* women and prostituting women often attended plays.

Although there are few accounts about commoner women, they, too, visited playhouses. The French traveler Émile Bourdaret documented how a woman with green covering cloth (*chang'ot*) attended plays at Soch'undae in the winter of 1902–03:

The lower rows are quieter, more modest. Here is a good woman, covered in her green coat, who shyly slips into an empty place, and, not knowing that the bench is made to sit, settles down comfortably on the ground. As she is in the front row, she will not lose a single note of the soft music that is to come.¹³²

Bourdaret's account shows that the commoner woman, who was obviously in the playhouse for the first time in her life, tried to comply with the inside-outside-norm by wearing *chang'ot* inside the building as well.¹³³ The late 1900s witnessed women of lower-income households going to playhouses with "some change in their pocket,"¹³⁴ too, which implies that playgoing became popularized among Koreans.

129 For instance, foreign residents commonly pointed out poverty and famine as problems of the Korean Empire. Allen wrote: "Speaking of cheese, it is remarkable that in Korea where are to be found such fine large cattle, there is no use made of milk, and this too in a land of such poverty that it would seem that all proper foods would be cherished as such." Alle, *Things Korean*, 121. Savage-Landor explained how poor Koreans sold themselves as slaves due to poverty: "[...] many people used to sell themselves in order to acquire a comfortable living. In time of famine this must have very often occurred [...]." Savage-Landor, *Corea*, 245. Gilmore pointed out that among others the low wage was responsible for poverty: "Koreans are wretchedly poor; poor not merely according to our standard, but judged by one much lower. One gauge of this poverty is afforded by their scale of wages." Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital*, 88.

130 "In'ga In'gok [Some Are Singing, Others Are Crying]," *HS*, April 29, 1908, 2.

131 "Yŏnsa Ilgŏp [Theaters Threaten]," *HS*, May 1, 1908, 2.

132 Bourdaret, *En Corée*, 249.

133 To manage the separation between different price categories of seats as well as women and men, playhouses would introduce makeshift architectural elements and a designated women's section in the late 1900s, which is discussed in further detail in chapter 3. As a photograph of the auditorium from 1934 shows, women and men were still seated separately, yet curtains or other means of segregation were no longer used in the early 1930s (see figure 17). According to Roh Jiseung, the coercion of gendered separation in theaters seemed to have been abolished by the late 1930s, likely in line with the abolishment of relevant laws in Japan in 1931. See Roh, "Colonial Female Audiences," 5.

134 "Yŏnhŭijang ūi Yasŭp [Savage Custom of Playhouses]," *HS*, November 29, 1907, 2.

The female audiences of playhouses, who paid money for tickets, understood their right as customers and insisted on it. The 1909 article shows how they confronted theater operators when their expectations were not met:

On the day before yesterday, in total four female spectators entered Yönhungsa at Sa-dong, Chung-bu; two of them promptly reclaimed the ticket price and gave the owner of the playhouse good scolding, saying “this, too, is a business, thus install a heater inside the playhouse so that visitors do not freeze to death” and returned home immediately. The company stopped the show one hour after they opened.¹³⁵

This article shows how two female visitors complained about the lack of heating in the hall. They were aware that the ticket price covered the cost of watching plays and the right to be in a convenient setting. Reminding the theater operator that running theater was “a business,” these confident women demanded proper treatment as paying customers. This case shows that Korean female spectators quickly became familiar with the logic of commercial playhouse business, which was unknown to Koreans until the late nineteenth century.¹³⁶ While women’s presence in public was still a rarity, some female audiences of Seoul actively exercised their rights, however trivial they might look.

While child-rearing was typically regarded as a women’s responsibility, having children did not appear to hinder women’s playgoing. In fact, it was common practice to bring children along. The theater reformer Hyön Ch’öl (1891–1965), for instance, remembered that some adults took him to motion pictures when he was twelve or thirteen years old.¹³⁷ In the 1910s, mothers would frequently bring their children to watch popular *shin’pa* drama like *Nunmul* (*The Tears*).¹³⁸ An anonymous audience member even complained in a reader’s letter in 1920 about noisy children at motion picture shows, but the presence of children at plays and motion pictures was not restricted.¹³⁹

Children in colonial Korea were allowed to watch plays and later movies with adults for both cultural and legal reasons. Firstly, there was a long-standing custom of playful watching in Korea. Korean audiences used to actively engage in performances by conversing with players and other spectators during performances.¹⁴⁰ As a result, there was a greater acceptance for people making noise or going around the theater during a performance within Korean playhouses. Even in 1917, as colonial intellectuals had long advocated an emotional immersion into plays, some Korean audiences urged theater operators to notify them more actively during a show, when someone called theaters and

135 “Yönhung Muro [No Heater at Yönhungsa],” *HS*, November 26, 1909, 3.

136 For the commodification of plays, see Gang, “From Streets to Theaters,” 146–54.

137 See Hyön Ch’öl, “Chosön Kükgye to Imi 25-nyön [Already Twenty-five-years of Korean Theater],” *Chogwang* 1, no. 2 (1935), 88, as cited in Cho, *Correcting History*, 230

138 See “Puin Aedokcha Nunmul Kük Kwallam Hoe Tae Sönghwang [The Big Success of the Play *Nunmul* for Female Readers],” *MS*, February 1, 1914, 3.

139 Namsansaeng, “Tokja Kurakpu [Readers’ Club],” *MS*, February 11, 1920, 4.

140 Chöng Ch’ungsil, a cinema scholar, points out that this specific type of spectating was common to the working-class movie theaters in Japan and Korea and calls this playful watching. *Watching Movies*, 212. Such spectating practices became a target of *modernization* and cultural assimilation under the colonial rule. See chapter 3.1.

wanted to talk to them. An audience advised theater operators to learn from Japanese theaters, where employees called the person from the stage and eventually put the name on the curtain or even walked around the auditorium with a flag bearing the audience member's name.¹⁴¹

Secondly, there were no age-based restrictions on media consumption in colonial Korea. In 1917, the Japanese government introduced Control Regulations for Motion Picture, which categorized films as suitable for the general audience or for those aged 15 and older. However, for reasons unknown, the age limit was not adopted in colonial Korea until 1940, although the Government-General usually enforced similar rules in colonial Korea.¹⁴² As a result, child-rearing did not principally hinder Korean women from going to theaters.

In the early 1900s, women of Seoul could easily visit playhouses as long as they could afford the ticket price. The fact that shows took place at night and that they might have to bring their children along did not discourage them from going to playhouses. The most prominent female audience members in the 1900s were aristocrat women, *kisaeng* women, and prostituting women, who had enough time and money to spend on their audiovisual pleasure.

The Gendered Interpellation of the Audience

As shown, Korean women were an integral part of the auditorium from the very beginning of the playhouse business. Nevertheless, operators of playhouses and playgroups exclusively interpellated men as the audience in their advertisements. These advertisements raise questions about how the gendered visual culture of the Chosŏn Dynasty was continued into the early twentieth century.

Throughout the 1900s, playhouses and companies frequently used *chŏmgunja* or *che-gunja*, plural forms of *kunja*, to address readers of their advertisements. *Kunja* refers to a realistic version of the ideal human with virtue and erudition in Confucian learning.¹⁴³ *The Analects of Confucius* characterizes *kunja* as persons possessing virtues such as wisdom, humanity, courage, decorum, modesty, and trustworthiness who try to perfect themselves by learning and studying.¹⁴⁴ *Kunja* had a gendered connotation because the term seldom referred to women. The historian Kim Ōnsun points out that the Chosŏn Dynasty's male scholars never introduced *kunja* as a role model for Korean noblewomen. Instead, Confucian books taught aristocratic women to perfect *womanly works* (*yŏgong*), such as making clothes for their families and preparing foods for ancestral rituals.¹⁴⁵

141 "Putpang'a [Brushstrokes]," MS, November 28, 1917, 3.

142 See Yi Sŏnghŭi, "Shingminji Shidae Hŏnghaeng (Jang) Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik ūi Munhwa Chŏllyak kwa Yŏksajŏk Chu'i [The Cultural Strategy and Historical Progress of Play and Playhouse: Control Regulations in Colonial Period]," *Sanghŏ Hakpo* 29 (2010), 149–87; see 159.

143 Pak Mira, "Chungguk Yugo ūi Isangjŏk In'gan Hyŏng: Sŏng'in kwa Kunja rŭl Chungsim ūro [The Ideal Human Types of the Chinese Confucianism: Through the Examples of *Sŏng'in* and *Kunja*]," *Chonggyo wa Munhwa* 7 (2001), 215–39; refer to 231.

144 Pak, "Ideal Human Types," 232.

145 See Kim Ōnsun, "Ye wa Sushin ūro Chŏng'ŭi Toen Mom [Bodies Defined by Decorum and Cultivation]," 'Mom' ūro *Pon Han'guk Yŏsŏngsa. Han'guk Munhwasa* 35 [The History of Korean Women

According to Kim Ŏnsun, some exceptional aristocratic women were posthumously called “*kunja* among women (*yŏjung kunja*).”¹⁴⁶ She points out that those women were commonly praised for having learned Confucian classics, which they successfully hid during their lifetime.¹⁴⁷ They pretended not to read or write and, if they were able, did it in the night after finishing their *womanly works*; some “burned their texts so that even a husband had no clue about his wife’s scholarship until she died.”¹⁴⁸ Kim deduces that by emphasizing a scholarly woman’s silence about her intellectual activities, male clan members could foreground that she knew her place in society, which enhanced the family’s glory.¹⁴⁹

Kim’s study reveals a gendered bias in how *kunja* was imagined and established as the ideal human being in the Chosŏn Dynasty. The fact that scholarly women were referred to as “*kunja* among women” instead of simply *kunja* reinforces the fact that that a *kunja* was generally imagined as a man, even without any markers of gender. The lack of the term “*kunja* among men (*namjung kunja*)” in *The Annals of Chosŏn Dynasty*, which encompasses over 500 years of royal records, confirms that *kunja* generally referred to men, too.¹⁵⁰

Is it possible that business owners of the Korean Empire did not address Korean women in newspaper advertisements because a significant part of women was illiterate?¹⁵¹ While this question cannot be entirely ruled out, advertisements for other businesses imply that the target customer was a decisive factor. With the establishment of Korean newspapers and the possibility of print advertisement, *kunja* became a common word for companies to address their target group in the late 1890s. Big companies such as the Bank of Hansŏng, as well as Seoul’s local businesses, such as Yimunsa Publishing Company and Gorschalki’s German Import Store, used the word in their newspaper advertisements.¹⁵² Unlike these companies, the Kumamoto Store in Seoul clearly articulated that it regarded Korean women as potential customers by using an extra appellation. Promoting a French perfume in the Korean newspaper *Tongnip Shinmun* in April 1897, the Japanese store wrote: “The artificial scent and perfume are produced in France, and they are goods of high quality. We hope many gentlemen (*che kunja*) and many ladies

through the Body. Korean Cultural History 35] (Seoul: Kyŏng’in Munhwasa, 2011), 123–63; refer to 156. About *womanly works* see *ibid.*, 146.

146 Kim, “Bodies Defined by Decorum,” 156.

147 See *ibid.*

148 See *ibid.*, 157.

149 See *ibid.*

150 Keyword search results show no accounts including *Kunja* among men (*Namjung Kunja*) while there are two accounts of members of the royal family praised as *Kunja* among women during King Chŏngjo’s reign in the late eighteenth century. See *Chŏngjo Sillok*, January 17, 1795, and *Chŏngjo Sillok* 15, February 6, 1783.

151 According to Hyaewol Choi, women’s literacy gained public support as a part of the modernization process and the Western missionary’s expansion to Korea. See Choi, “Women’s Literacy and New Womanhood in Late Chosŏn Korea,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 6, no. 1 (2000), 88–115.

152 See Bank of Hansŏng, “Hansŏng Ŏnhaeng Kwanggo [The Advertisement for Bank of Hansŏng],” *Tongnip Shinmun* (hereafter *TS*), April 15, 1897, 4; Yimunsa, “Hundong Yimunsa [The Publishing Company Yimunsa at Hundong],” *TS*, April 1, 1897, 4; Koshalgi, “Koshalgi Kwanggo [The Advertisement for Gorschalki’s Store],” *TS*, April 3, 1897, 4.

(*che puin*) come to buy it."¹⁵³ This example shows that if a company wanted to address women as customers, it had to use *che puin* in addition to *che kunjja*.

As mentioned above, Seoul's playgroups and playhouses adopted the term *kunjja* to address their potential customers, too. For instance, the group presented dancing children (*mudong*) on the riverside near Seoul called their target group *kunjja* in 1900.¹⁵⁴ Another example is a 1907 advertisement by Seoul's Majön Hotel, which attracted audiences with slide shows and motion pictures while addressing them as *kunjja*.¹⁵⁵ Operators of Soch'undae championed publishing advertisements and called their customers *ch'ömgunja*, a plural form of *kunjja*, throughout the years between 1902 and 1908, regardless of the occasion. When they announced the opening of the playhouse, a new program, closure, or reopening, they used the term:

We close from the 26th of this month to the 3rd of the following month. The ticket prices are one wön for the high-class, sixty chön for the middle-class, and forty chön for the low-class seats, so we hope you gentlemen (*ch'ömgunja*) honor our place by coming to us. Hyömyulsa.¹⁵⁶

We reopen the former Hyömyulsa [Soch'undae] and start various artistry on February 8 by the lunar calendar. As before, the show starts at 5 or 6 p.m. and goes on until 11 p.m., so we hope many gentlemen (*ch'ömgunja*) will watch. Hyömyulsa.¹⁵⁷

We start a play from July 26 onwards with the twenty-four outstanding *kisaeng* singers and forty master *p'ansori* singers, including Kim Ch'anghwan. The location is former Hyömyulsa at Yaju-hyön, and it opens at 7 p.m. every evening and closes at midnight. We hope gentlemen in general (*ilban ch'ömgunja*) will gather like clouds. Wön'gaksa.¹⁵⁸

The robust usage of *kunjja* needs an explanation because there was always a female audience in Korean playhouses and the operators could have used the term *che puin* to address them. Furthermore, limiting the advertisement's target group could negatively affect the sales, which contradicted the profit-oriented nature of the playhouse business. Although they set up ladies' seats surrounded by curtains, thus enabling women to attend plays and motion pictures, theater operators did not address them as spectators until the early 1910s.¹⁵⁹

According to the French philosopher Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation, these advertisements showed that Korean playhouse operators of the early 1900s imagined men as the audience and strengthened this gendered bias in the imagination of

153 Kumamoto Store, "Injo Sahyang Han'gae Kap Tatnyang [A Piece of Artificial Scent Costs Five Nyang]," *TS*, April 15, 1897, 4.

154 See Dancing Children's Site, "Yangnyök Iwöl Iship Ch'iril ... [From the February 27 by the solar Calendar ...]," *HS*, February 28, 1900, 3.

155 See Majön, "Hwaltong Sajin Kwango [Motion Picture Advertisement]," *TMS*, May 9, 1907, 3.

156 Hyömyulsa, "Kwanggo [Advertisement]," *HS*, January 26, 1903, 3.

157 Hyömyulsa, "Chön Hyömyulsa rül ... [The former Hyömyulsa is ...]," *TMS*, February 28, 1906, 3.

158 Wön'gaksa, "Ponsa esö Ch'irwöl Iship Yugil putö ... [From July 26 onwards, our company ...]," *TMS*, July 26, 1908, 3.

159 The meaning and function of women's seats in Korean plays are discussed in chapter 3.3.

the Korean audience. Althusser considers such acts of calling out an “interpellation” or “hailing.”¹⁶⁰ Interpellation is a process through which ideology “recruits subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all) or *transforms* the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all).”¹⁶¹ Althusser depicts how a simple act of calling out by a police officer on the street can make the targeted person “recognize[] that the hail was *really* addressed to”¹⁶² oneself and affect the person’s self-conception. For Althusser, targeting, hailing, and identifying oneself as the target are core mechanisms of ideology.¹⁶³

The usage of the term *kunja* in playhouse advertisements, too, can be regarded as interpellation. As such, *kunja* induced Korean readers to imagine men as bearers of the gaze in playhouses. The fact that there were women in playhouses, too, does not negate the thoughts beneath the gendered hailing but underlines them. Repeatedly using the term *kunja*, advertisers chose not to consider other members of the auditorium. Instead, the continuous interpellation of audiences as *kunja* was a part of the ideological process which alienated those who were not adult men in the public space, and which transformed women in the auditorium into objects that required a different explanation for their presence.

Not everyone necessarily read advertisements before going to playhouses. Instead, some simply enjoyed the plays without prior knowledge. These attendees defied the expectation that only men were meant to be in playhouses as the bearers of the gaze. Throughout the Chosŏn Dynasty, few scholarly women, including Queen Sohye (1437–1504), Andong Changssi (1598–1680), Kim Hoyŏnjae (1681–1722), Yim Yunjidang (1721–93), and Kang Chŏng’ildang (1772–1832), left texts in which they asserted that women, too, could become *kunja*, challenging the widespread belief that only men could aspire to such a status.¹⁶⁴ While these women of the Chosŏn Dynasty studied Confucian classics to become persons of knowledge and erudition, the women of early 1900s Korea took seats in playhouses alongside men who were flattered as *kunja*, thus exposing and questioning the gendered interpellation and expectations associated with playhouse audiences.

At the dawn of a new century, Korean men were encouraged to visit theaters, which might have enticed them with the somewhat indulgent name of *kunja* for a night of entertainment. Newspaper advertisements refashioned them as connoisseurs of the emerging urban culture. However, the exclusive interpellation of men as audiences underlines that even in theaters, the new institution promising fresh spectacles, continued the archaic Neo-Confucian regime of the gaze that defined solely men as normatively acceptable spectators.¹⁶⁵ The fact that Korean women frequented theaters and playhouses, re-

160 Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation,” trans. Ben Brewster, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London and New York: Verso 2014), 232–72.

161 Althusser, “Ideology and State Apparatuses,” 264.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 See Kim, “Bodies Defined by Decorum,” 161–63.

165 Here, I use the term “regime of the gaze” as a translation of German word *Blickregime*. One of the earliest references to *Blickregime* was in the German translation of Kaja Silverman’s lecture given at Depot in Vienna in the autumn/winter of 1995 and 1996, based on her book *The Threshold of the*

ardless of lacking formal interpellation as audiences, reveals that the process of subjectification took unexpected turns at times. Althusser's ideas remain still relevant to the discussion of Korean female spectators of the early twentieth century since this lacking interpellation preempted the media discourse of them as those who appeared in theaters as spectators, *nevertheless*. Despite not being summoned, Korean women went to theaters, purchased tickets, and took seats among other audience members. In the dark, they were about to become targets of persistent gaze and diverse politics aimed at transforming them into *modern* subject for various visions.

Visible World (New York and London, 1996). Natascha Noack and Roger M. Buergel, the translators, suggested using *Blickregime* for Silverman's "gaze", which again was building upon Jacques Lacan's notion of *le regard*. Choosing *Blickregime* instead of *Blick*, which would have been the literal translation of "gaze," Noack and Buergel moved the concept further from physiology while reinforcing the structural moment inherent to the English notion. Furthermore, they echoed Silverman's attention to the historicity of the gaze and its constructive characteristic by adding *Regime* to the *Blick*. See Christian Kravagna, "Vorwort," in *Privileg Blick: Kritik der Visuellen Kultur*, ed. Kravagna (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1997), 7, and Silverman, "Dem Blickregime Begegnen," in *ibid.*, 62. By using "regime of the gaze" instead of simply "gaze," I aim to focus more on the political than the psychoanalytical aspects inherent to the notion and debate of gaze in English speaking academia. Drawing upon Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Silverman explains that "he [Lacan] associates the gaze not with values specific to the last century and a half, but rather with illumination and 'the presence of others as such' (91, 84)" and uses camera as a "signifier of the gaze." For Silverman's concept of gaze see *Threshold*, 125–61, cites from 132 and 131.

2. Korean Women and Charity Concerts

We could not spend money unless it was a man's money, and we could not touch the money unless it was a man's money, so we were all about men's mind.

*Ch'oe Changja, A Discussion of Philanthropic Women*¹

This chapter analyzes the newspaper discourse of Korean audiences during the first decade of the 1900s, which was an era of political turmoil in Korean society. After the deprivation of diplomatic rights through the 1905 Protectorate Treaty, Emperor Kojong sought support from the European and American nations to maintain the country's independence in 1907.² As the Western imperialist nations refused to acknowledge the treaty's invalidity, Japan forced Emperor Kojong to abdicate on July 17, 1907, only to provoke nationwide resistance led by the “righteous armies (*üilyöng*),” or—as Bruce Fulton explains—“patriotic grassroots armies.”³ Meanwhile, the Japanese Empire forcefully entered into another agreement on July 27, 1907 with the Korean government, which “definitely place[d] the enactment of all laws and ordinances, the administration of all important Korean Government affairs, and all official appointments which relate to internal administration, under the control of the Japanese Resident-General.”⁴ “Today We Cry Out in Lamentation,” an editorial in the November 20, 1905 issue of the *Hwangšöng*

1 Ch'oe Changja, “Chasön Puiin üi Tamhwa [A Discussion of Philanthropic Women],” *Chasön Puiinhoe Chapchi* [*Philanthropic Women's Association Magazine*, hereafter *PWA Magazine*] (1908), 17.

2 Cumings, *Korea's Place*, 145.

3 Ibid. and Bruce Fulton, “Three Early-Modern Kasa,” *Acta Koreana* 20, no. 1 (2017): 308. Japanese officials and informants observed the immediate impact of Kojong's abdication in the capital. See Ikeda Jūzaburō, “Kyöngsöng Kuk Palshin Shinmun Chönbo Naeyong Pogo Kōn [Reporting the Content of Newspaper Telegram Sent from Seoul],” July 19, 1907, in *T'onggambu Munsō* 3 [*Documents of Residency-General* 3], http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_093r_0050_0040.

4 George T. Ladd, *In Korea with Marquis Ito* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), 433.

Shinmun, best captured the sense of crisis that would dominate the public discourse until Korea's final annexation by Japan on August 29, 1910.⁵

Against this backdrop, playgoing for a night of fun could be a highly provocative act because it signaled one's indifference to the country's political precarity and people's uncertainty. Korean newspapers began to criticize theatergoers and operators even more intensely and did not hesitate to call them "people who lost their common sense."⁶ Theater visitors were confronted with passers-by's sermons while standing in a line and even threatened by stones thrown into the hall in the middle of shows.⁷ Going to playhouses could not pass as an innocent pastime activity and the audience could not completely disregard the gravity of the political situation. Instead, the banality of playgoing itself became a problem for which some playgoers and the entertainment business tried to find solutions.

The late 1900s witnessed flourishing charity concerts in Seoul's playhouses. In these concerts, Korean women played a significant part—Not only did *kisaeng* women and newly established Korean women's charity groups attend charity recitals as audiences, but they also organized them.⁸ While former studies identified these events as a patriotic act of solidarity among Korean people, this study argues that the politics surrounding charity concerts, including Korean women's active engagement, were far more complex, thus requiring a careful reading. Prior studies have highlighted Seoul's Korean playhouses as an alternative space where Koreans could nurture themselves with a sense of national spirit in the face of oppression by the Japanese authorities. For instance, theater historian Yu Sönyöng asserts that from the very beginning, Korean theaters were not only an amusement facility but also a "space of ethnicity (*chongjok üi konggan*)" and a "place of gathering (*chip'ap üi konggan*)" which was otherwise forbidden by the colonial ruler.⁹ Examining cases of resistance, from rejecting police control to spreading leaflets criticizing Japanese colonial rule, Yu concludes that Korean audiences could find some solace for the hurt caused by the denial of their national identity by the colonial power in the enjoyment of spectacles, through which they could identify themselves with the nation.¹⁰

While Yu Sönyöng considers the anti-Japanese sentiment as the crux of national identity in the Korean theaters, theater historian Yu Minyöng concentrates on the sym-

5 Chang Chiyön, "Shiilya Pangsöng Taegok [Today We Cry Out in Lamentation]," *HS*, November 20, 1905, 1.

6 "Tae Yönhüijang Haya T'an Pang'in üi Shilgi Sangsöng [Deploring Compatriots Who Lose Their Common Sense Towards Playhouses]," *HS*, May 5, 1908, 2.

7 For cases of sermons see "Wanbi Ch'uryön [Donation of Ticket Price]," *TMS*, May 9, 1907, 3; "Yönhüijang Soshik [News from a Playhouse]," *TMS*, December 29, 1907, 2, and "Ügi Sonyön [The Righteous Youth]," *TMS*, April 28, 1909, 2. For plays interrupted due to stones that were thrown see "Yönjang T'usök [Stones Thrown Into the Playhouse]," *TMS*, May 18, 2 and "T'usök Yönjang [Stones Thrown Into the Playhouse]," *TMS*, June 22, 1909, 2. Further cases are discussed in chapter 2.3.

8 For instance, Philanthropic Women's Association (PWA) attended a charity concert as a group, which drew public attention. See "Chasön Yönjuhoe [Charity Concert]," *HS*, October 26, 1907, 1.

9 Yu, "Theatergoing and Watching," 373.

10 Ibid.

pathy for compatriots expressed through charity recitals.¹¹ Calling attention to *kisaeng* women's participation as organizers and donors of charity events in the late 1900s, he concluded that their "national consciousness was stronger than anyone else."¹²

Ironically, enlightenment-oriented Korean newspapers and magazines of that time were often skeptical about charity recitals at Korean playhouses despite their social contributions. Those benefit performances seem to have rather caused dissonance among Koreans than uniting them under the name of the nation and sympathy for compatriots. Instead of highlighting Korean playhouses as a site of gathering and nationalistic empowerment, enlightenment-oriented Korean newspapers such as the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* blamed Hyömnnyulsa's playhouse for "making a country waste time"¹³ and its visitors for being disrupters of Korea's national spirit, presenting as a stark contrast Min Yöngwan (1861–1905), who killed himself in an act of protest against the 1905 Protectorate Treaty. The *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* stated: "Although there are many people who would follow Min the Loyal by killing themselves for Korea, there is no means to wake up this bad seed [the playgoers]; so if this sort of people [the audience] does not perish, what is the use of all of them? We are constantly grieving for the future of Korea."¹⁴

Against this background, chapter 2 questions Korean playhouses and audiences' role in the nation-building process after the 1905 Protectorate Treaty. Mainly, this chapter examines controversies surrounding Seoul's audiences during the late 1900s in the context of two fund-raising actions: the National Debt Repayment Movement of 1907 and a series of humanitarian charity concerts. The grassroots National Debt Repayment Movement won the full support of the press and mobilized over 300,000 Koreans to donate for financial independence from Japan, confirming it as a case of nation-building, in contrast to charity concerts.¹⁵ Meanwhile, advocates of this movement did not hide their antipathy towards playhouses and playgoers, a dynamic that requires an in-depth analysis focusing on the role of female audiences in the nation-building process.

2.1 Building a Nation through Donation

Independence Gate

On June 20, 1896, the *TS* reported that King Kojong decided to erect a new gate in the capital's western part. The idea was initiated by Seo Jaephil (1864–1951), a reform-oriented Korean American who founded the newspaper and a political organization named Independence Club (*Tongnip Hyöphoe*).¹⁶ The monument, called Independence Arch (*Tongnip-*

11 See Yu, *New History* 1, 96–99.

12 Ibid., 125.

13 "Non Hyömnnyulsa [Discussing Hyömnnyulsa]," *TMS*, March 8, 1906, 1.

14 "Ch'aek Hyömnnyulsa Kwan'gwangja [Blaming Hyömnnyulsa's Spectators]," *TMS*, March 16, 1906, 2.

15 Han Sanggu, "1907-nyön Kukch'ae Posang Undong üi Chön'gukjök Chön'gae Yangsang Yöng'u [A Study on the Nationwide Development of Government Bond-Repayment Campaign in 1907]," *Inmun Yöngü* 75 (2015), 121–56; refer to 129.

16 Shin Yongha, *Kabo Kaehyök kwa Tongnip Hyöphoe Undong üi Sahoesa [The Social History of Kabo Reform and the Independence Club's Movement]* (Seoul: Söul Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2001), 376.

mun), was planned to be built near the West Gate, where the Chosŏn government used to receive Chinese envoys as a tributary state. The choice of the site had a symbolic meaning:

For centuries the arch [West Gate] stood there as a constant insult to the autonomy of Korea, an autonomy which China always hastened to assert when called upon to stand responsible for any tremble in the peninsula but which site always denied when it was safe to do so.¹⁷

According to the newspaper, the new arch would symbolize “a negation of Manchu dominance” and meant “independence not from China alone but from Japan [,] from Russia [,] and from all European powers.”¹⁸ As the editorial admitted, “the independence of Korea may be treated as a joke”¹⁹ because the state’s autonomy was in a vulnerable status. After Japan assassinated Queen Min in October 1895, King Kojong and the crown prince were only able to escape from Japanese surveillance by seeking shelter at the Russian Embassy in February 1896.²⁰ The decision to build a monument to Korea’s independence was the expression of a wish rather than a confirmation of reality.

To emphasize Chosŏn’s autonomy, the Independence Club decided to transform the whole area near the West Gate. In this venture, Mohwagwan (literally, “China Adoration Hall”), a building used to receive Chinese envoys, was renovated and reopened as Tongnipkwan (“Independence Pavilion”) on May 23, 1897.²¹ Furthermore, by creating an Independence Park to surround the Independence Arch and Independence Pavilion as a public sports area, Seo Jaephil conceptualized the area as a site where Koreans could commemorate Chosŏn’s independence as well as keep good health.²² As Korean historian Vladimir Tikhonov points out, Seo considered the physical fitness of future generations from a nationalist viewpoint: “The vision of a nation as an entity, represented by well-disciplined, regimented group of physically fit men, able and willing to exercise or playfully simulate violence on command was a sort of universalistic discourse for the publishers of *Tongnip Shinmun*.”²³

In his 2002 study *Korea between Empires*, historian Andre Schmid analyzed how Koreans constructed a national identity and its impact on the Korean peninsula at the turn of the last century.²⁴ Schmid argues that one of the biggest tasks of Korean nationalists in the late nineteenth century was “the decentering of the Middle Kingdom [China],”²⁵ which meant that Koreans began denying China’s hegemonic power over the peninsula while establishing narratives of cultural authenticity and the *purely* Korean national iden-

17 “Editorial,” *TS*, June 20, 1896, 1. Original in English.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 Cumings, *Korea’s Place*, 122.

21 Shin, *Social History*, 388.

22 *Ibid.*, 390.

23 Vladimir Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism and Nationalism in Korea – the Beginnings, 1883–1910: ‘Survival’ as an Ideology of Korean Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 65.

24 Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895–1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

25 *Ibid.*, 55–61; cite from the page 55.

tity. According to him, Independence Gate's construction was an important project to build a new Korean nation detached from Sinocentrism.²⁶

What Schmidt did not mention was that funds for the Independence Gate's construction were collected through a fundraising campaign. Thereby, the Independence Club turned the construction project into a nation-building process in which people could participate through donation. This aim is clearly stated in an editorial of the *Tongnip Shinmun*, which emphasized three reasons why people's donations were significant. Firstly, the independence from China—however insecure the sovereignty of Korea was—pertained not only to the Chosŏn government but to the whole nation.²⁷ It was a bold argument to make because it had not been long since the Chosŏn government brutally put down peasant armies with the Chinese armies' help.²⁸ In fact, the crisis of Chosŏn's sovereignty was accelerated by this decision. As Schmid put it, "Japan used the opportunity to end Chinese influence on the peninsula"²⁹ and eventually started the First Sino-Japanese War in Chosŏn, where Japan defeated China. According to Japanese historian Inoue Katsuo's 2014 study, the Japanese army that operated on the Korean peninsula followed the order to "slaughter all people"³⁰ engaged in the peasant army. It led to approximately 30,000 deaths among Koreans.³¹ Based on this fact, Inoue called the Japanese intervention into the Korean peasant army's war the first genocide operation of the Japanese army.³² Having barely recovered from such calamity, urging Koreans to celebrate the country's questionable independence from foreign countries can be seen as an attempt to underplay domestic conflict and instead call people's attention to the enemies abroad.

Secondly, the *Tongnip Shinmun* argued that fundraising would be a lesson for future generations that their ancestors shared in the enthusiasm for the country's independence:

Furthermore, when future generations see Independence Arch and Independence Park, they will say that in the Founding Year of Kōnyang [1896], such-and-such person donated such-and-such amount of money for the people of the whole country and made a site where they could improve their health and do exercises; they considered Chosŏn's independence a joyous occasion, so they marked [the occasion] by [erecting an] everlasting [symbol].³³

Remarkably, the organizers were fully aware of how posterity would interpret the symbolic meaning of the fundraising. They initiated a nationwide donation campaign be-

26 Ibid., 72–73.

27 "Nonsŏl [Editorial]," *TS*, July 4, 1896, 3.

28 See Cumings, *Korea's Place*, 119.

29 Schmid, *Korea between Empires*, 26.

30 Inoue Katsuo, "Ilbon Kun Ch'oech'o ūi Chenosaidū Chakchŏn [The First Genocide-Operation of the Japanese Army]," in *Tonghak Nongmin Chŏnjaeng kwa Ilbon: Tto Hana ūi Chŏng-il Chŏnjaeng [Tonghak Peasant War and Japan: Another Sino-Japanese War]*, eds. Nakatsuka Akira and Han Hyein (Seoul: Mosinūn Saramdŭl, 2014), 77.

31 Inoue, "First Genocide-Operation," 113.

32 Ibid., 61.

33 "Editorial," *TS*, July 4, 1896.

cause not only the arch but also people's participation in its construction should be made visible and commemorated. Their contemporaries were encouraged to become role models that future generations could feel connected to and eventually called upon to follow.

Thirdly, the fundraisers aimed to present Chosŏn as an aspiring modern nation to the rest of the world through people's participation in the project. According to them, people's donations to the project would prove their public conscience (*kongshim*), a quality that the reform-oriented intellectuals of the Independence Club considered quintessential to a *modern* nation. Adopting a conversational style, the article explained what public conscience was by enumerating examples.

I can see that Chosŏn is developing [into a *modern* nation].

How come?

Because Koreans pull money out of their pockets to do many things for the people of the whole country, show their eternal loyalty, make [Chosŏn] an equal[ly autonomous] country to the rest of the world through independence, want His Majesty to have the same authority as other emperors of the world, are willing to do a good deed for their compatriots and to spread their merits and virtue, want to light up the glory of the country as bright as the sunshine, and are eager to be remembered as people who were loyal and who cherished their people for a long time (emphasis added).³⁴

According to this article, public conscience included philanthropy (*chasŏn*), fidelity to the head of the state, political awareness of one's acts, identification as a member of the nation, and patriotism. This article about donations for the erection of the Independence Arch implied that a donor might have all these qualities. Thereby, the newspaper made it clear that it was significant to cultivate such virtues when others could see and approve them. The *Tongnip Shinmun* drew readers' attention once more to the existence of foreign powers, not as enemies, but as the audience of Korea's development:

If this project turns out well, *all the donors will appear as patriots and persons who care for their people in the eyes of the whole world*. Can't you see from this one example that Chosŏn has also developed public conscience (*kongshim*) and is willing to do anything for its compatriots and brothers? (emphasis added)³⁵

To sum up, the fundraisers defined donations for the Independence Arch as a contribution to the state and urged Koreans to become a part of the nation's history by partaking in the project. The initial plan was to integrate the donors' names into the symbol of the autonomous state. The Independence Club announced that they would attach wooden tickets with donors' names onto the arch, and if they raised as much money as 20,000 wŏn, "a big stone tower would be erected with names engraved on it."³⁶ Although these plans were not realized, donors' names were published in the newspaper and magazine

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

of the Independence Club, inscribing them into the aspiring national history of *modernized* Korea.

Regarding participation, the campaign found great resonance among the broader public. I compiled and analyzed the list of donors published in the *Tae Chosŏn Tongnip Hyŏphoe Hoebo* (Independence Club Magazine) to assess the campaign's impact.³⁷ About 3,200 people sent a total of 5,897 wŏn between July 4, 1896, and July 31, 1897, including the crown prince, who donated 1,000 wŏn.³⁸ The donors had diverse backgrounds: there were high-ranked government officials such as Yi Ch'aeyŏn, the mayor of the capital, as well as *kisaeng* women.³⁹ Even Sin Kisŏn, a political enemy of the Independence Club with a Sinocentric leaning, sent money to the organization, as did Christians of a church in Taegu, a city in the southern part of the country.⁴⁰ Russian and American diplomats and their families also contributed to the project. Except for the 1,000 wŏn donated by the crown prince, the average donation was 1.53 wŏn, while more than 25 percent of the donors gave 0.10 wŏn or less. The Independence Arch budget was set at 3,825 wŏn, yet due to the extended plans for the Independence Park and Pavilion, the organizer continued to collect money even in September 1898.⁴¹

The Independence Arch was planned as a monument to Chosŏn's sovereignty against foreign powers. By financing the arch and the site surrounding it through public donations, the organizers urged Koreans to express their consent to the state's politics and identify themselves with the state as members of the Korean nation. The campaign was successful and was able to raise money from people across social and regional boundaries. Later in the 1900s, the memory of this campaign might have encouraged contemporaries to participate in another donation campaign for the state's sovereignty.

National Debt Repayment Movement

After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, imperial Japan started a financial reform of the Korean government. By assigning the Korean government tasks such as currency reform, improvement of the education system, infrastructure construction, and Japanese officials' employment, imperial Japan imposed a heavy debt on the Korean government with an interest as high as 70 percent. As a result, the amount of debt that the Korean Empire had to repay Japan added up to a striking 1.3 million wŏn, which exceeded the Chosŏn tax

37 I counted the number of donors based on the *Tae Chosŏn Tongnip Hyŏphoe Hoebo* (*Independence Club Magazine; hereafter ICM*) from issue no. 1 to no. 17. Additionally, I took lists published in the newspaper between April 24, 1897, and May 1, 1897, into account, too, to identify overlaps and omissions.

38 The donation amounts are based on the July 1897 issue of the *Independence Club Magazine*. Independence Club (IC), "Ponhoe Pojogŭm u Hoeboga Suip P'yo [List of Income from Donations and Magazine Sales]," *ICM* 16, 11–17.

39 IC, "Tongnip Hyŏphoe Pojogŭm Suip Inmyŏng P'yo [List of Donors for Independence Club]," *ICM* 1, 20; IC, "Tongnip Hyŏphoe Pojogŭm Suip Inmyŏng P'yo [List of Donors for Independence Club]," *ICM* 4, 19.

40 IC, "List of Donors for Independence Club," *ICM* 1, 20.

41 Shin, *Social History*, 380; Independence Club, "Tongnip Hyŏphoe esŏ ... [The Independence Club ...]," *TS*, September 6, 1898, 4.

revenue of 1906. By means of this debt, the Japanese power was able to gain additional control over the Korean government.⁴²

Alarmed by this development, two of Taegu's local newspaper publishers, named Kim Kwangje and Sō Sangdon, proposed a nationwide donation campaign on January 29, 1907 to repay the debt.⁴³ In an open letter addressed to the Korean people, the two publishers claimed that throughout history, each subject's loyalty had decided a country's fate, and that donating money for the redemption of the Korean Empire constituted such an occasion to demonstrate loyalty.⁴⁴ Despite different causes, Repayment Movement considered donations a powerful tool for participatory nation-building and contribution to state sovereignty, similar to the campaign for the Independence Gate.

Although the recent wars of Japan against China and Russia led to the Protectorate Treaty, the authors took Japanese people's contribution during these wars as a positive example of how people's collective efforts could overcome a country's hardships:

Back then, [Japan] started wars against the Qing Dynasty and Russia, and this small country won those wars against big countries. This was not only because the army risked death and joyously rushed to the battleground full of blood, but also because people at home made shoes and sold them or sold their belongings, and women gathered rings to contribute to the military fund. [...] Oh, is it reasonable that our 20 million compatriots make no decision and plan nothing but only look at how the country runs towards collapse and how anxious His Majesty is with folded arms in such difficult times for the country? [...] Isn't it time to be awake and to arouse loyalty? Now, the national debt amounts to 13 million wŏn, and our Korean Empire's fate depends on it. If we repay it, we can keep the country; if we do not, we will lose it.⁴⁵

The sudden increase in Korea's national debt was primarily due to Japan's coercion, and the campaigners were calling for an end to the financial dependency on Japan. Given their intentions, this letter needs to be read between the lines. By not mentioning the creditor while praising the Japanese people's collective endeavor to fight against bigger foreign powers, Kim and Sō could avoid the charge of spreading anti-Japanese propaganda while still encouraging Koreans to stand against Japan, which had gained more power over Korean politics after the 1905 Protectorate Treaty.

The publishers argued that Koreans could pay back 13 million wŏn of the national debt if they quit smoking for three months and donated twenty chŏn to the cause instead.⁴⁶ This calculation seems to have lowered the threshold because many donations were of a small amount. Beginning with 25 anonymous servants who collected money and sent it to the bureau on February 18, 1907, an average of 500 donors donated daily for 424 days

42 See Ch'oe Ch'anghŭi, "Kukch'ae Posang Undong [The National Debt Repayment Movement]," *Shinpyŏn Han'guksa [The New Korean History]* 43, ed. National Institute of Korean History (Seoul: Hakmunsa, 1999), 134–55; 134–37.

43 Ch'oe, "National Debt Repayment Movement," 137.

44 Kim Kwangje et al., "Kukch'ae 1300-manwŏn Posang Ch'wijijsŏ [Purpose of Repaying the National Debt Amounting to 13 Million Wŏn]," *TMS*, February 21, 1907, 3.

45 Kim et al., "Purpose of Repaying," *TMS*, February 21, 1907, 3.

46 Kim et al., "Purpose of Repaying," *TMS*, February 21, 1907, 3.

until October 31, 1908.⁴⁷ The National Debt Repayment Movement exemplifies how a donation can evolve into a grassroots nation-building process.⁴⁸ As the fundraising reached its peak, 4,200 donors' names were published in newspapers on a single day.⁴⁹ In the end, over 317,000 Koreans donated ca. 180,000 wŏn for the repayment of the Chosŏn government's debt.⁵⁰ Besides the scale of participation, the sum that each donor sent also reveals the movement's grassroots character. Han Sanggu's extensive data analysis of the 196,000 donors shows that 67.7 percent of the contributors belonged to the lower-income subaltern population who sent up to fifty chŏn per person.⁵¹

Newspapers and magazines played a significant part in the popularization of the Repayment Movement. Publishing the overwhelmingly long lists of donors every day, newspapers offered concrete figures that most Koreans could identify with, encompassing persons of diverse sexes, social strata, ages, and regions.⁵² In doing so, newspapers made visible and connected individuals of a similar mind who took action to achieve financial independence from Japan. Concurrently, newspapers highlighted individuals whose contribution was the least expected, such as a certain Mrs. Kang, who worked as a day laborer and sent four wŏn, or a group of rickshaw pullers.⁵³

Echoing the *Tongnip Shinmun's* expectations, newspapers of the late 1900s weaved the Independence Arch into the National Debt Repayment Movement's nation-building narrative. In an editorial titled "I Stand Up and Dance in the Spring Breeze for Twenty Million Compatriots after Watching the Nation's Patriotic Spirit Arise" published by the *Hwangŏng Shinmun*, an author expressed his excitement that "yesterday, the number of patriots [who donated money and were] published in the newspaper counted several dozen, and today, many hundreds."⁵⁴ For him, the increasing number of donors was a clear sign that Korea would remain a sovereign state thanks to this collective endeavor, and the Independence Arch and the national flag served as its symbol:

Although Qin Shi Huang resurrected to arise as a khan in the East and Napoleon returned as emperor in the West, and although millions of battleships gathered [in front of Korea] like ants and countless numbers of cannonballs fell like rain, how could they dare to scorn our Independence Arch and the waving of our independent flag?⁵⁵

Besides the number of participants and amount of money, letters sent to newspapers show that donors actively participated in the nation-building process. These letters were

47 Han, "Nationwide Development," 132.

48 *Ibid.*, 144.

49 *Ibid.*, 124.

50 *Ibid.*, 126–27.

51 *Ibid.*, 129–30.

52 See Ch'oe, "National Debt Repayment Movement," 139–45.

53 "Kungbu Ch'ung'üi [Loyalty and Integrity of a Poor Woman]," *TMS*, February 26, 1907, 2; "Ch'abu Chur'üi [A Driver's Righteous Act]," *TMS*, March 23, 1907, 1. I became aware of these examples through Ch'oe, "National Debt Repayment Movement," 140.

54 "Kyŏn Kungmin chi Aeguk Chŏngshin Shibal Hago Hyang Ich'ŏnman Tongp'o Haya Kimu Ch'unp'ung: Sok [Witnessing the Rise of People's Patriotism, Feeling the Dance of Spring Breeze towards the Twenty Million Compatriots: Part 2]," *HS*, March 9, 1907, 2.

55 "Witnessing Rise: Part 2," *HS*, March 9, 1907, 2.

mainly published in the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* and the *Hwangŏng Shinmun*, yet other Korean newspapers such as *Mansebo* and *Kongnip Shinbo*, too, printed donors' texts.⁵⁶ Often titled "Letters Explaining Purpose (*ch'wijiŏ*)," these letters generally included the introduction of self-organized local groups that gathered money, their whereabouts, the urgency of financial aid by the people, plans for continuous fundraising, and a call for participation addressing other Koreans.⁵⁷ By expressing their motivation to partake in the movement and encouraging others, the writers of these letters broadened the imagined nation across age, gender, and geographic boundaries through newspapers. Borrowing Benedict Anderson's words, "it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁵⁸ Likewise, letters declaring the necessity of paying back the national debt portrayed the nation as a "*community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."⁵⁹

For instance, ten initiators of the Hanbuk National Debt Repayment Association emphasized that "*even* wives, daughters-in-law, and small children developed patriotic hearts (emphasis added)"⁶⁰ in the wake of the movement, including those usually neglected by the male-dominant and hierarchical society in the imagined Korean nation. A similar group based in Chinan and Changsu districts, in the southwestern part of Korea, wrote, "although we are foolish people from faraway villages, how can our hearts not beat upon hearing this [news of national debt repayment movement] and be moved!,"⁶¹ pointing to their emotional bond to the rest of the country as their motivation to collect and send money. Such letters flooded *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* and *Hwangŏng Shinmun* between February 1907 and January 1909.⁶²

Like the *Tongnip Shinmun* did during the fundraising campaign for the construction of the Independence Arch, Korean newspapers of the late 1900s interpellated individuals as members of the Korean nation. They portrayed participants of the National Debt Repayment Movement as patriots contributing to national independence, which led to an unprecedented number of people sending money to the newspapers. Those who sent money also represented a wide variety of regional, gender, age, and economic

56 The keyword search in the Korean Newspaper Archive showed approximately 78 results in *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*, 61 results in *Hwangŏng Shinmun*, ten in *Mansebo* and one in *Kongnip Shinbo*.

57 See "Kukch'ae Posang Sŏbuk Ŭisŏng Hoe Ch'wijiŏ [Purpose of the National Debt Repayment Association of Sŏbuk Ŭisŏng]," *TMS*, February 28, 1907, 3; "Hanbuk Kukch'ae Posang Tansŏng Hoe Ch'wijiŏ [Purpose of the National Debt Repayment Association of Tansŏng]," *HS*, March 15, 1907, 1; "Kukch'ae Posang Tanyŏn Ŭimu Hoe Ch'wijiŏ [Dutiful National Debt Repayment Association's Purpose]," *TMS*, April 4, 1907, 1; "Hwanghae-do Ŭnnyul-gun Naesŏ [A Letter from Ŭnnyul-gun County, Hwanghae-do Province]," *TMS*, May 5, 1907, 1.

58 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, [1983]2006), 6.

59 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

60 "Hanbuk Kukch'ae Posang Tansŏnghoe Ch'wijiŏ [Purpose of Hanbuk National Debt Repayment Association]," *HS*, March 15, 1907, 1.

61 "Chinan-Changsu Yanggun Kukch'ae Posang Ch'wijiŏ [Purpose of National Debt Repayment from Chinan-County and Changsu-County]," *TMS*, March 26, 1907, 3.

62 Keyword search in the Korean Newspaper Archive.

backgrounds, and listing them on newspapers helped readers identify themselves with their unknown compatriots.

2.2 Audiences and Playhouses: Destabilizers of the Nation

While the participants of the Repayment Movement were represented as patriotic and genuine members of the Korean nation, playhouse visitors were severely criticized as apathetic, lavish, and negligent by newspapers. I suggest that these two groups mutually constituted each other as symbolic counterparts. Spending money on a night's entertainment was castigated as immoral, particularly while people across the whole country were donating money to newspapers so that the government could pay off the debt and become independent again. Examining the different charges made against different groups in the audience, i.e., students, the rich, and women, this section explores the different expectations attributed to each group, as articulated by the reform-oriented media.

Apathetic Audiences: The Privileged

On April 26, 1909, a young man interrupted the audience gathered in front of Chang'ansa theater:

In the night before yesterday, when numerous Korean men and women were buying tickets and entering Chang'ansa playhouse, a young man with a short hairstyle, who was watching them, warned them while crying: "Because the economic situation is bad, there is no small number of people who run away after going bankrupt and our compatriots are worried about starving every morning and every evening. How is it possible that you set aside money and waste your time devouring playhouses and prostitution?" Thereupon, many spectators lamented the situation, praised [him] together and went home.⁶³

The "Righteous Youth," as the newspaper called him, represented the widespread discomfort with theatergoers in Korea during the late 1900s. In this time, audiences became controversial in the newspaper discourse. In particular, as the main culprits of the national crisis, high-ranking officials' playhouse visits were observed critically by Korean journalists. Public trust in Chosŏn government elites had already collapsed shortly after the Protectorate Treaty, mainly because high-ranking government officials had joined the treaty without any protest. The public antipathy towards the elite politicians reached its peak with the attempted assassins of the so-called Five Traitors of 1905 (*Ŭlsa Ojŏk*), who signed the treaty against the emperor's will.⁶⁴ Two days after the treaty's conclusion, the owner of *Hwangŏng Shinmun* Chang Chiyŏn (1864–1921) published an editorial titled "Today We Cry Out in Lamentation" severely criticizing the five ministers. Chang

63 "Righteous Youth," *TMS*, April 28, 1909, 2.

64 Yu Yŏngryŏl, "Aeguk Kyemong Undong ūi Chŏn'gae [The Development of Patriotic and Enlightenment-Oriented Movement]," *New Korean History* 43, 277–334; see 307–10.

Chiyŏn denounced them, saying they were “worth less than dogs or pigs,” as they “dedicated the 4,000-year-old Korean history and the 500-year-old Royal Ancestral Temple as well as the Altar of Earth and Grain to foreigners, and turned the twenty million Koreans into slaves of others”⁶⁵ for their benefit.

Going to playhouses certainly did not have as grave a consequence as signing the treaty. However, it could still be interpreted as an act of carelessness and egoism amid the grassroots campaign to regain the state’s full sovereignty. The following is a set of articles about officials’ merrymaking from late 1907, when the National Debt Repayment Movement had already attracted thousands of participants.

Mr. Cho Nambok, the former royal chamberlain, and Mr. Cho Sangmok, the secretary of the Ministry of the Royal Household, have so much fun these days that they not only have much fun with *kisaeng* in gay quarters but also spectate [shows] one day in Kwangmudae and on another night in Tansŏngsa.⁶⁶

A former secretary meets [...] prodigal sons and groups of thugs every day at playhouses and prostituting *kisaeng*’s houses. [...] Why does he like things that would ruin not only his but also others’ lives so much?⁶⁷

Mr. Cho Minhŭi, the Head of the Royal Chamberlains, threw a party the day before yesterday [...]. After visiting the party, Mr. Yun Tŏkyŏng, the High Minister of the Queen’s Office, Mr. Yun T’aekyŏng, the Minister of Fisheries, and Mr. Li Chiyong, the advisor of the Consultative Committee, went together to Tansŏngsa [...] and enjoyed plays.⁶⁸

It was not only the ministers and secretaries but also a member of the Korean royal family and a son of Lee Wanyong, the most despised among the Five Traitors, who were under public observation at playhouses: “The evening before yesterday, Prince Yŏngsŏn (Mr. Lee Chunyong) was escorted by five *kisaeng* women, while Lee Hanggu, the son of Lee Wanyong, brought two *kisaeng* women to Yŏnhŭngsa, watched plays, and behaved improperly.”⁶⁹ Another article, which repeated the rumor a while later, represents the frosty public perception of the visits to the theater of the privileged:

Rumors have it that Prince Wanhŭng (Mr. Lee Chaemyŏn) gave Prince Yŏngsŏn, who is his family member, a scolding, saying that “when you were in Japan, the general public had hope [in you], but after returning to Korea, you have had no other business but wasting your time on *kisaeng* women, getting concubines, and going to playhouses and festivities, so that you are confronted with people’s criticisms. How aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”⁷⁰

65 Chang, “Today We Cry,” *HS*, November 20, 1905, 1.

66 “Yangssi ŭi P’ungnyu [The Elegant Entertainment of the Two Men],” *TMS*, September 21, 1907, 2.

67 “Sisa P’yŏnnon [Commentary],” *TMS*, October 19, 1907, 2.

68 “Chaldŭl Nonda [They Do Play Well],” *TMS*, December 1, 1907, 2.

69 “Yŏnsa P’ungnyu [The Elegant Entertainment at Yŏnhŭngsa],” *TMS*, April 22, 1908, 2.

70 “Ch’am Kŭrohanji [Is This True?],” *TMS*, May 15, 1908, 2.

As evidenced, newspapers often gave details about the officials—their names, ranks, and places they visited—and made critical remarks (“They Do Play Well”) or criticized them directly (“Why does he like things that would ruin not only his but also others’ lives so much?”). In another example, a journalist estimated how much money a high-ranking official spent on a night of pleasure: “Mr. X [...] tours through Hyömyulsa, Tansöngsa, or Buddhist Temples for good drinks and beautiful *kisaeng*. The money he spends on a single banquet allegedly sums up to fifty-sixty or even hundred wön.”⁷¹ Through these kinds of reports, Seoul’s playhouses became a stage for the elites’ profligate lifestyle amid the national crisis.

The high-ranking officials and the rich were castigated for wasting money on their egoistic merrymaking. A *Hwangšöng Shinmun* editorial from May 1908 criticized Seoul’s playhouse visitors for “losing their common sense,”⁷² as they ignored the national crisis and its impact on the nation. This editorial described the crisis with the image of crying children and wives: “Children are crying at their fathers and wives at their husbands.”⁷³ In such a situation, it would be common sense “to worry about the folk” and their “livelihood.”⁷⁴ However, the audiences in the capital showed no such empathy. In the eye of the writer, the audiences broke emotional solidarity with a people in agony:

Recently, the most prosperous and developing [business] in Seoul is [that of] Hyömyulsa, Tansöngsa, and Yönhöngsa. Famous singers and voluptuous *kisaeng* are cooperating; small hand drums make thundering noise, singing and dances are riotous; these are the music of a country that falls into decay. Spectating men and women gather [at playhouses] like clouds, forget going home until dawn, spend money for the first and middle-class seats just like frost and wind strip the leaves of trees. Is this crowd happy due to the peaceful time or their rich and flourishing lives? If [they] had a humane common sense, [they] would not have reached that state.⁷⁵

Markedly, the editorial problematized the wealthier inhabitants of Seoul who could afford more expensive tickets. Isolated both financially and spatially from the national crisis, playhouses in the capital were represented as sites for luxurious pastimes.

Though rare, *yangban* women were also depicted as an apathetic audience. Compared to some of their male counterparts, who were high-ranking officials, aristocrat women remained as an anonymous mass.

Recently, as a feel of spring and flowers fill the air and willows are flaunting their beauties, many aristocrat women form groups and go to mountains to see flowers during the day and to Yönyejang, Tansöngsa, Yönhöngsa, and the likes at nights, boosting the debauchery to the extreme. Now in every region, there is constant saturation of gunfire; [even] cocks and dogs keep silent; children are crying at their fathers and wives at their husbands—a scene that is too horrible to look at. In this regard, as the

71 “Küma Pulak [Now We Are Not Entertained],” *HS*, March 20, 1908, 2.

72 “Deploring Compatriots,” *HS*, May 5, 1908, 2.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

people of the capital are enjoying a peaceful era alone [...], indeed some people are lamenting, [while] others are singing in Korea these days.⁷⁶

This critique of the aristocratic women shared the rhetoric and logic of critiques of other privileged audiences, such as high-ranking officials and rich men. Another article also criticized aristocratic women for the same reason as other audience groups. Emphasizing the economic crisis that the Korean nation was undergoing, the article, titled “Luxury Urges Bankruptcy,” problematized that “not only the rich [men] from noble families but also [noble] ladies [...] and young students” were wasting their money on luxurious clothes that they wore at “Tansōngsa as well as Hyōmnyulsa.”⁷⁷

Meanwhile, journalists stereotyped the nation’s suffering and sometimes even repeated the same exact rhetorical figures. For instance, two of the news articles from the *Hwangšōng Shinmun* quoted above shared the same expressions to describe the hardships of the nation: “Some People Lament, Others Sing,” which was published on April 29, 1908, and “On Playhouses and Its Visitors Who Lost Common Sense,” published on May 5, 1908. Both articles included the following phrases: “Children are crying at their fathers and wives at their husbands,” and “A scene that is too horrible to look at,” a rhetorical expression of empathy. Most likely, these were cliché, “a convenience of printing, specifically a stereotype block bearing text that was used to produce multiple printed copies.”⁷⁸ Besides its practical use, the repeated rhetoric could represent “the nation” as a homogenous group with shared experiences of suffering.

The Protectorate Treaty of 1905 impacted the social conception of playhouses and audiences in the public discourse. Playhouse visitors of the capital were represented as the wasteful and apathetic masses, forming a striking contrast to benefactors of the National Debt Repayment Movement, whose empathy and financial contribution was directly linked to the strengthening of the Korean nation, thus contributing to the public good. In the imagination of the nation as a community of shared suffering, spending money on playhouses could not be an individual choice; it was criticized as a waste of the nation’s money, as evidence of apathy, and even as the reason for the economic decline of the individuals and the nation.

Endangered Hope: Male Students

Educating the younger generation was one of the most urgent tasks that Korean reformists undertook in the 1900s. They regarded Western-style school education as inevitable for Korea to achieve modernization and remain sovereign as a state. Citing an editorial of the *Hwangšōng Shinmun*, Tikhonov explains that “the notion that [...] ‘the wealth and strength of a country depends on its ability to employ talent; the availability of talent depends on education, and the development of education depends on how it is

76 “Some Are Singing,” *HS*, April 29, 1908, 2.

77 “Sach’i nūn Ch’okmang Changbon [Luxury Urges Bankruptcy],” *HS*, May 22, 1908, 2.

78 Orin Hargraves, *It’s Been Said Before: A Guide to the Use and Abuse of Cliches* (New York, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

encouraged,' was a commonly held view in reformist circles."⁷⁹ To survive the imperial powers as an independent nation, investments were made to establish public primary schools: By 1906, 57 Western-style public primary schools had opened.⁸⁰ For the nation's sake, Koreans were also ready to open the school doors to girls and women, who had previously been excluded from schooling throughout the Chosŏn Dynasty. Schmid points out that "In an age of competition, according to the charter of the Academy for the Education of Women, 'the need for women's education is one of the means for national survival."⁸¹ Starting as a missionary's venture in 1886, women's schools soon became a vehicle for modernizing the country.⁸²

The high degree of Koreans' expectations on education to overcome Japanese rule was best captured in Min Yŏnghwan's suicide note. Min, the head of the Royal Bodyguard, committed suicide on November 30, 1905, after failing to persuade King Kojong to annul the treaty. The letter he left behind was posthumously published in the daily newspaper *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*. In his letter, Min urged Koreans to "strengthen their will and attend to learning"⁸³ to recover Korea's independence.

Although the rich and the political elites were the dominant audience members, visiting playhouses became increasingly popular among less-wealthy people during the first decade of the 1900s, when the Korean theater district was established in Seoul. In 1907, an editorial in the *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* titled "Savage Custom of Playhouses" counted "commoner women," "lower-class workers," and "[male] students" among the new frequenters of playhouses along with "sons of rich families" and "officials."⁸⁴

Given the educational expectations, it is not hard to imagine the public rage about students who began appearing in Korean playhouses. Newspapers of the time reported critically about students at playhouses. An article titled "Hyŏmnyulsa Spoils People" warned that night schools were losing students because they preferred to spend their time at the playhouse.⁸⁵ Notably, students frequenting playhouses were not as harshly condemned by the media as the rich or the governmental officials were. The article "Savage Custom of Playhouses" levels its critique against students differently from those against the rich and the aristocrats. The article singles out high-ranking officials among the audience as the patrons of the "savage custom,"⁸⁶ namely *chaeins'* plays, music, and dances. On the other hand, students were categorized as part of "middle-class society," responsible for Korea's "progress into civilization" and about to be contaminated by the evil custom.⁸⁷ The article also distinguished the "middle-class society" from the lower class and emphasized the importance of keeping them safe from the bad influences from

79 Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism*, 143; He cites from the *HS*, December 9, 1902.

80 Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism*, 143.

81 Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 40.

82 Choi, *Gender and Mission*, 33.

83 "Tokgye Chŏngmin Poguk Yusŏ [Read Min Yŏnghwan's Patriotic Last Will]," *TMS*, December 3, 1905, 1.

84 "Savage Custom," *HS*, November 29, 1907, 2.

85 "Yulsa Oin [Hyŏmnyulsa Spoils People]," *HS*, April 13, 1906, 3.

86 "Savage Custom," *HS*, November 29, 1907, 2.

87 *Ibid.*

both upper- and lower-classes.⁸⁸ As members of the “middle-class,” students in playhouses symbolized the endangerment of the nation’s hopes, which had to be corrected before it was too late.

Meanwhile, evidence of female students in Korean playhouses during the early 1900s has not yet emerged. It is probable that their domain was still restricted to schools due to the inside-outside custom (*naeoe*). The necessity of women’s school education found growing support in Korean society, yet it had to be done in an unthreatening way to the traditional gender norms and their followers. Therefore, even late into the first decade of the 1900s, female students and their educators had to carefully negotiate any further steps outside of the socially approved realm. For instance, Poshin Women’s School advertised in 1906 that all teachers were women “to make it easy to teach Korean aristocrat women who follow the inside-outside rule.”⁸⁹ Sharing the same room with men was severely tabooed, particularly for unmarried women of higher social stratum. Furthermore, female students also were required to wear veiling clothes to hide their faces in public.⁹⁰ Though veiled, their presence outside of the domestic realm itself was a public spectacle: Ehwa Women’s School sometimes received over 1,000 tourists on special occasions, and its pupils’ excursions, too, were observed with astonishment.⁹¹ Under the restrictive gender norms, social expectations, and immense public curiosity, it is likely that female students did not yet dare to visit playhouses—which was about to change soon.

The enlightenment-oriented media critically noted male students’ playhouse visits. However, as they posed new hope for the nation, the accusation turned toward the aristocrats and disdained performers whose decaying morals might infiltrate students, thus hindering them from realizing the nation’s modernization and independence from Japan. Besides social stratum and economic power, gender norms also directly affected one’s access to playhouses and how one’s theater visits were evaluated.

“Lewd Women and Prodigal Men”

Besides the apathetic and luxurious lifestyle during the national crisis and distraction from learning, Korean newspapers criticized audiences for their sexual immorality. In May 1906, reformers pointed out that the HEC was showing young audiences erotic motion pictures, which might negatively influence them.

Recently, Hansŏng Electric Company near the East Gate has contributed to spectators’ pleasure and laughter by offering motion picture screenings and all kinds of plays. However, according to a witness, [there is] a peculiar thing [and] that is pictures of

88 Ibid.

89 Poshin Women’s School, “Kyosu Kwajŏng [Curriculum],” *HS*, May 26, 1906, 4.

90 See Yun Sŏngnyŏl, *Top’o Ipko ABC, Kat Ssŭgo Maenson Ch’ŏjo: Sin Munhwa ūi Palsangji, Paejae Haktang Iyagi* [*Learning ABC in Traditional Coat, Doing Gymnastics in Traditional Hat: Stories of Paejae Haktang, the Source of New Culture*] (Seoul: Hakminsa, 2004), 69; Kim Powŏn, “Yŏhaksaeŋ Shidae Hoesanggi [Reminiscence of My Times as a Female Student],” *Shin Kajŏng* (hereafter SK) (December 1935), 152.

91 Yun, *Learning ABC*, 66 and 69.

how men and women obscenely flirt. If men and women, whose youthful vigor is not yet calmed down, watch such things, it might incite their lust, thus [such pictures] can quickly spoil young people's character. Nevertheless, [the playhouse] is crowded with young people who have neither knowledge nor awareness. Thus this [playhouse] is not different from Hyömnyulsa's playhouse. As police officers are responsible for the protection of the people, such play venues should be closed.⁹²

Regardless of the program, however, Korean playhouse visitors had already appropriated the space as a sexual outlet since the early 1900s. Mainly, female sex workers and male sex buyers used playhouses to get to know each other. In December 1908, the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* criticized Seoul's police for neglecting the duty of upholding public morals and custom for the nation's sake. Among others, the reform-oriented newspaper questioned why the police wasted their time on a secret investigation of prostituting women in the city instead of going to theaters, indicating that it was a well-known fact that female sex workers and male customers misused playhouses:

The lewd public morals would decrease if [the police] would go to theaters, arrest all the gaudily dressed women, and thoroughly examine them instead of secretly investigating prostitutes in the capital. Although [the police] sees [them in playhouses], [it] does not ban them. Isn't it a mistake of the police? Keeping manners in order is an essential business of the police, yet for the benefit of the outlaws, [the police] allows the play. As a result, regardless of their being men or women, old or young, everyone is crazed about obscene songs and sounds of conical wooden oboes and forgets about the chaotic and uncertain worldly affairs. Isn't it a mistake of the police?⁹³

Coining the term “Lewd Women and Prodigal Men (*ũmbu t'angja*),” Korean newspapers branded playhouse visitors per se as a threat to public morals. *ũmbu t'angja* was not a clearly defined term but rather filled with images of decadence. Satirical lyrics published in the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* in December 1908 depicted them as people who listen to obscene songs in playhouses while smoking cigarettes.⁹⁴ Theater historian Mun Kyōng'yōn stresses that the term “lewd women and prodigal men” refers to extravagance and pursuit of pleasure.⁹⁵ Additionally, the term was sexually connotated, particularly after 1910. For instance, *Maeil Shinbo* used the term in June 1910 to criticize female sex workers and male customers who met each other in Korean playhouses.

Recently, thugs have attracted young men and unlicensed prostitutes to theaters, and they flirt with each other, making [theaters] a land of opportunities for *lewd women*

92 “Hwalgong Ŭigŭm [Motion Pictures Should Be Banned],” *HS*, May 5, 1906, 3.

93 “Ch'aek Kyōngwan [Blaming the Police],” *TMS*, December 30, 1908, 2.

94 “Yōnch'oyo [The Cigarette Song],” *TMS*, December 25, 1908, 2.

95 Mun Kyōng'yōn, “Han'guk Kūndae Yōng'ŭk Hyōngsōng Kwajōng ũi P'ungsok T'ongje wa Orak Tamnon Koch'al: Kūndae Ch'ogi Konggong Orak Kigwan ũrosō ũi Kūkchang ũl Chungsim ũro [A Study on the Custom Control and Entertainment Discourse in the Formative Process of Modern Korean Theatrical Practice: The Theater as a Public Entertainment Institution in Early Modern Era],” *Kugō Kungmunhak*, No. 151 (2009), 343–68.

and *prodigal men*. The public criticizes the police for not taking care of this [problem] (emphasis added).⁹⁶

The short article suggested that theater employers condoned—if not actively encouraged—such meetings between prostituting women and sex buyers. This suspicion was confirmed through a disclosure a few months later. An employee of Chang'ansa theater publicly defamed its manager, who favored those employees who brought in more prostituting women into the house.⁹⁷ Next year, the rumor that playhouse operators had given free tickets to female sex workers as presents to attract more visitors, too, was proven to be true.⁹⁸ Despite the criticisms and calls for police intervention, this practice continued.⁹⁹ The accusations of having made a profit from sexual trade involving audiences led to ongoing criticisms of the theater business and theater visitors on the one hand and of the lacking police intervention into Korean playhouses on the other. Without specific descriptions, Korean newspapers sometimes used the term *umbu t'angja* to defame the audiences in general.¹⁰⁰

By generalizing the audiences as *umbu t'angja* and calling for police intervention, the reform-oriented newspapers provided an excuse for the colonial power to monitor the audience and regulate theaters. In particular, the public morals (*p'unggi*) were an essential yet ambiguous pretext that the colonial authorities could use to control Korean playhouses, to censor the plays, and to discipline the audience who were depicted as *umbu t'angja*.¹⁰¹ For instance, shortly before the annexation in May 1910, Seoul's police secretly investigated playhouses and listed 22 men and 30 women as *umbu t'angja* without much explanation.¹⁰² Potentially, anyone could be pointed out as a problematic citizen in any theater by the police; the covert observation of “lewd women and prodigal men” meant the omnipresence of surveillance and the discretionary use of police force upon audiences in theaters. One year later, the police announced that it would “arrest all *umbu t'angja* [in Seoul] without exception,”¹⁰³ demonstrating the growing disciplinary power over Korean inhabitants after the annexation.

Although the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* opposed Japan's growing influence in Korea, the anti-Japanese newspaper welcomed the police control of playhouses.¹⁰⁴ As theater historian Woo Sujin points out, the state intervention into Korean theaters around 1910 cannot be simplified as Japanese aggressors' oppression of Korean tradition; instead, it was also in the context of modernization process that defined specific elements of culture

96 “Yönjang Unu [Sexual Liaisons in Theaters],” *TMS*, June 7, 1910, 2.

97 “Chang'ansa P'ungp'a [Troubles of Chang'ansa],” *MS*, September 30, 1910, 2.

98 “Tansöngsa üi P'ungsok Koeran [Decay of Public Morality at Tansöngsa],” *MS*, April 7, 1911, 2.

99 “Yön'gükkye: Kangsöllu üi Sönak Ilp'yöng [Theater World: A Comment on the Good and the Bad of Kangsöllu],” *MS*, April 30, 1912, 3.

100 See “Sönak Pyönggö [Doing Good Things and Bad Things Together],” *TMS*, May 30, 1909, 2; “Sugüm Hoesa [Company That Collects Money],” *TMS*, June 3, 1909, 2.

101 For further analysis of this topic see chapter 3.

102 “Kü Ppunilkka [There Is More To It Than That],” *TMS*, May 8, 1910, 2.

103 “Ümbu T'angja üi Pyöngsik [Lewd Women and Prodigal Sons Hold Their Breath],” *MS*, December 2, 1911, 3.

104 See “Küri Hal Iriji [That Is the Right Decision],” *TMS*, June 15, 1910, 2.

more valuable for its aim than others.¹⁰⁵ To be clear, the Residency-General did coerce Korean entertainers to learn the Japanese language and perform under the name of enhancing public morale. Concurrently, the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*'s support of police intervention shows how widely the moral police was accepted, particularly when it was regarded as necessary for the Korean nation's modernization. Demanding the enhancement of Korean playhouses' public morals, the enlightenment-oriented Koreans accorded with the Residency-General, which declared Korean plays as obscene and the audience as *ũmbu t'angja*.

2.3 Embodying the Philanthropy: Politics of Charity Concerts

Seoul's Charity Concerts between 1906 and 1910

While intensifying criticisms confronted playhouse businesses and playgoers, theater operators began to host charity shows and recitals between 1906 and 1910. The first charity show was presented at Soch'undae on April 1, 1906, at a time when its reopening had caused heated controversy. As newspapers criticized the theater for impoverishing Koreans and corrupting public morals, Hyömnyulsa (the operating company of Soch'undae) announced that it would host a charity concert in aid of the Korean Red Cross.¹⁰⁶ The company advertised that the plays would be unprecedented in terms of artistry, raising potential visitors' expectations. For this one evening, there were two price categories (a VIP ticket for two wŏn and a first-class seat for one wŏn) instead of four (1, 0.6, 0.4, or 0.2 wŏn) as was usual.¹⁰⁷ By reducing the number of categories and increasing the prices, Hyömnyulsa ensured that the affluent audiences would donate enough money.

Soch'undae was already thriving with "not less than thousands of spectators every night."¹⁰⁸ Thus, the charity event had a different purpose to simply doing business. Besides the obvious goal to aid the Red Cross, the charity show caused an echo that lasted longer than the show itself. Namely, the beneficiary of the concert, the Korean Red Cross, helped the playhouse to establish a positive public image by advertising in the *Hwangšong Shinmun* and the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*, two severe critics of Hyömnyulsa, for four consecutive days between April 4 and April 7, 1906. The humanitarian organization thanked the playhouse for its generous donation through this advertisement:

Hyömnyulsa agreed to our benevolent mission and donated to us its daily income of 170.30 wŏn, even without subtracting the cost of 80 wŏn. [...] We appreciate the enlightened will with all our hearts and want to spread [the good deed], so nationals and foreigners, please note this.¹⁰⁹

105 See Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 111–12.

106 Korean Red Cross, "Taehan'guk Chŏk Shipchasa Kibu Kong'yŏn Kwanggo [Advertisement of the Korean Red Cross Charity Concert]," *TMS*, March 30, 1906, 3.

107 For the ticket prices see *TMS*, March 30, 1906, 3 and "Blaming Hyömnyulsa's Spectators," *TMS*, March 16, 1906, 2.

108 "Sisa Hoehae [Humorous Depiction of Current Affairs]," *TMS*, April 1, 1906, 2.

109 Korean Red Cross, "Hyömnyulsa esŏ Ponsa ũi ... [Hyömnyulsa supported our ...]," *HS*, April 4, 1906, 3.

The April 7, 1906 issue of the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* exemplifies the benefit of such an advertisement for the theater. While the newspaper severely castigated the playhouse through an editorial titled “The Indictment of Hyömnyulsa” on the front page and claimed that the theater deluded Koreans, the advertisement on the third page praised the same playhouse, dulling the critique to some degree.¹¹⁰

Following Hyömnyulsa’s charity concert for the Korean Red Cross, Seoul’s Korean playhouses began cooperating with various philanthropic organizations and fundraising campaigns. When Hyön Yöng’un, an influential Korean official supported by the Japanese authorities, took over the much-criticized Soch’undae in December 1907 and reopened it, he threw charity concerts with *kisaeng* women’s performances that lasted for three days, as if he were trying to put a seal on public criticisms that were sure to follow.¹¹¹ Seeing as his wife operated the Korean Red Cross and had cooperated with the playhouse one year ago, it is very likely that Hyön knew the charity concert would be a win-win for both the playhouse and the event’s beneficiaries.¹¹²

Meanwhile, the three founders of Tansöngsa championed refashioning their business as a philanthropic mission through a public speech. In June 1907, Chi Myönggün, Pak T’aeil, and Chu Suyöng called together their employees and declared their business aims. *Mansebo* reported:

Three businessmen from Seoul, Chi Myönggün, Pak T’aeil, and Chu Suyöng, took the initiative of developing the entertainment world of our country and are now constructing a playhouse near the P’ajo bridge with the approval of the authorities. Three days ago, they called actors and the likes at the Taewön Pavilion of Yöngdo Temple outside the East Gate and emphasized the nature and history of entertainment and its improvement as an epochal mission. They explained the purpose of establishing the [playhouse] company [as well], which was first to provide the entertainers a workplace to make a living, and secondly, to spend the profits for educational work and charity work. Arriving just in time, Mr. Min Yöngso, the Head of *Ch’anyukyönböpsö*, and other high-ranked officials who returned from Hwadong School’s sports festival, listened to these goals. As their representative, Mr. Kim Chunghwan held a speech to encourage their work’s honorable aims and the entertainment world’s cooperation. Afterward, the participants watched the players’ entertainment features and dispersed.¹¹³

The founders’ speech exemplified the need for the Korean playhouse business to legitimize its existence after facing severe public criticisms. Although Tansöngsa never stopped being a profit-oriented company until its closure in 2012, its founders declared

110 “Yulsa Chip’ye [Harms of Hyömnyulsa],” *TMS*, April 7, 1906, 1.

111 Cho Yönggyu traces how Hyön Yöng’un may have instrumentalized charity concerts to enhance Hyömnyulsa’s public image. See Cho, *Correcting History*, 141–47.

112 “Chöksa Söllip [Establishment of the Red Cross],” *CS*, June 10, 1905, 2.

113 “Yönye Tansöngsa Söllip [Tansöngsa Entertainment Established],” *Mansebo*, June 7, 1907, as cited in Shin Hyeju, “Tansöngsa Kong’yön Hwältong e kwanhan Yesulsa chök Yöng’u: 1910-nyön-1918-nyöndaek Kkaji üi Chönt’ong Kong’yön Yesul üil Chungsim üro [A Study on the Performing Art History in the Tansöngsa Theater-Focused on Performance during 1910–1918],” *Han’guk Ümaksä Hakpo* 56 (2016), 207–69; see 207–08. *Ch’anyukyönböpsö* was an educational group erected in April 1907. See “*Ch’anyukyönböpsö Ch’wijiisö* [Purpose of *Ch’anyukyönböpsö*],” *TMS*, March 24, 1907, 1.

that their primary purpose was the theater's contribution to the "improvement" of the Korean entertainment world, which was "an epochal mission,"¹¹⁴ a phrase that fully embraced the reformist rhetoric. Furthermore, the founders focused on the social aspect of the theater business—namely, stabilizing the entertainers' livelihood and returning profits to society by supporting educational and charity work. Through the encouragement of government officials who attended the speech, the founders gained moral approval for their playhouse business.

The speech of Tansöngsa's founders reflected the spirit of the times. The late first decade of the 1900s witnessed flourishing charity events in Seoul's Korean playhouses, not only in Tansöngsa but also in other venues, including Soch'undae, Yönhüngsa, Kwangmudae, and Chang'ansa. As listed in table 1, there were at least 26 charity concerts and screenings from 1907 to the annexation by Japan on August 22, 1910, in playhouses and other venues.¹¹⁵ Before analyzing the politics behind charity concerts in the following sections, the present section offers an overview of the 26 concerts that help us understand the diversity of people involved in these events and the central role Korean playhouses and Korean women played in them.

By hosting charity events, Seoul's playhouses tried to clear away the stigma. Regardless of their usual critical stance towards playhouses, Korean newspapers published advertisements, articles, and letters of thanks related to charity concerts, thus helping the disgraced sites to appear as institutes of philanthropic deeds and social participation in the public eye. Among the 26 charity concerts for Korean beneficiaries in Seoul held between 1907 and 1910, 16 took place in Seoul's Korean playhouses. Soch'undae hosted five charity events, while Yönhüngsa, and Tansöngsa each hosted four events. Chang'ansa offered its venue for two concerts and Kwangmudae (formerly the garage theater of Hansöng Electric Company) for one. In some cases, charity concerts also took place in other venues, such as Kyöngsöng Orphanage, the Japanese theaters Kabukiza and Naniwakan, the YMCA, Aesü Hausü Inn, and tea houses.¹¹⁶

114 Yi Hyowön, "Century-Old Movie Theater Bankrupt," *The Korea Times*, September 25, 2008, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/art/2011/12/141_31674.html. Original in English; JTBC, "Han'guk Yönghwa 100-nyön Yöksa ... Tansöngsa. 'Yöksagwan' üro Chae Tanjang [100 Years History of Korean Cinema ... Tansöngsa Reopens as a History Museum]," October 23, 2019, https://news.jtbc.joins.com/article/article.aspx?news_id=NB11900030.

115 Historians Han Kyumu and No Kiuk found 19 charity concerts in the same period. See Han and No, "Taehan Cheguk Ki Kyöngsöng Koawön üi Söllip kwa Unyöng [Kyöngsöng Orphanage's Establishment and Operation during the Korean Empire]," *Hyang'to Seoul* 76 (2010), 163–210, refer to 209–10.

116 See table 1.

Table 1: Charity events for Korean beneficiaries in Seoul between 1907 and 1910. (*: Unidentifiable titles and names)

	Date	Venue	Organizer(s) / beneficiary	Program, performers	Notable audiences	Donors	Media reports
1	April 1, 1906	Sochundaе	Hyōnmyulsa / Korean Red Cross	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, March 30, 1906, 3; HS, April 4, 1906, 3.
2	June 1–2, 1907 ¹	Kabukiza	Kumagai Raitarō (or Kumagai Yoritarō) and others / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Unknown	Itō Hirobumi and the Chinese General Director, Korean women	Full list	HS, Mai 31, 1907; HS, June 5, 1907; HS, June 11, 1907
3	Nov. 2, 1907	Kwangmudae	A special support group of the orphanage / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Speech, motion picture, hygiene slides, instrumental music, and other entertainment	Philanthropic Women's Association (PWA)	Full list	HS, Oct. 26, 1907; HS, Nov. 8, 1907; TMS, Nov. 12, 1907
4	Dec. 25–27, 1907 ²	Sochundaе	Kwangji Kyeok, Yōnhwa, Kūmhwa, Chukyōp, Kyesōn, Aengmu, Chaeryōn / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Jesters from Pyōngyang, slides, pansori, gymnastic stunts; Buddhist dance, sword dance, flower dance, boat dance, Xiang Yu dance, ball dance, drum dance (mugo), Jyāng'ūng yōngmu,* drum dance (pukchum), lion dance, crane dance	Hyōn Yōng'un, kisaeng women, Korean noblewomen, Chinese and Japanese men	Full list	TMS, Dec. 21, 1907; HS, Dec. 24, 1907; TMS, Jan. 7, 1908
5	Unknown	Tansōngsa	Unknown / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Unknown	Korean and Chinese men, kisaeng women	Full list	TMS, Jan. 7, 1908
6	June 1908 (three days incl. June 24)	Sochundaе	PWA / PWA Home for Children's Famine Relief ³	Kwangji women's performance (Repertoire uncertain), motion picture of the Korean crown prince	General audience, gentlemen, noblewomen, kisaeng women	Full list	TMS, June 25, 1908; TMS, June 26, 1908; TMS, July 4, 1908; HS, July 15, 1908

	Date	Venue	Organizer(s) / beneficiary	Program, performers	Notable audiences	Donors	Media reports
7	June 27-July 3, 1908	Tansöngsa	Cho Pyönguk and others / Kyöngsöng Orphanage	Yegi women's performance (repetoire uncertain)	High ranked officials incl. Yi Chunyong, Korean women	Full list	HS, June 28, 1908; TMS, June 30, 1908; HS, July 5, 1908; HS, July 8, 1908; TMS, July 11, 1908; TMS, July 19, 1908;
8	July 10-12, 1908	Yönhöngsa	Former government officials, managers of Yöhöngsa and yegi association, yegi women, / PWA (Home for Children's Famine Relief)	Dancing children, yegi's songs, playgroup from Pyöng'yang, Chünhyangga, etc.	yegi women, Korean officials incl. Yi Wanyong, and an American woman	Full list	HS, July 2, 1908; HS, July 8, 1908; HS, July 17, 1908
9	July 12-14 or 15, 1908	Changansa	Approx. 100 Kwariji women / Kyöngsöng Orphanage	Kwariji women's performance (program uncertain)	Nearly 1,000 visitors on the night of July 13, 1908	Partial list (gentlemen and kwariji women)	TMS, July 11, 1908; HS, July 14, 1908; TMS, July 15, 1908.
10	Aug. 7-14, 1908	Changansa	Unknown / School of Engineering and Mathematics	Unknown	Korean officials incl. Yi Chunyong, Yi Chiyong, Cho Minhui accompanied by kiseng women	Partial list	TMS, Aug. 11, 1908; TMS, Aug. 14, 1908; TMS, Aug. 16, 1908
11	Aug. 15, 1908	Tansöngsa	Yi Kyuha and others / Kyöngsöng Orphanage	Plays and a motion picture of the Korean crown prince	Unknown	Unknown	HS, Aug. 9, 1908

	Date	Venue	Organizer(s) / beneficiary	Program, performers	Notable audiences	Donors	Media reports
12	Aug. 28–30, 1908	Kabukiza	Taehan Women's Association (TWA) / Sericulture School	<i>Kwanji</i> and <i>geigi</i> (Japanese <i>yegi</i> women) European- and American-style new play, Japanese theater master <i>idong munbu yŏnje</i> *, military play, <i>migitik</i> *, <i>pugituk</i> *, comedy, <i>oehapgituk ch'ŏso</i> *	Gentlemen and noblewomen, general audience	Unknown	HS, Aug. 25, 1908; TMS, Aug. 25, 1908; Keijo shinbun Aug. 30, 1908 (as cited in Yi Chisŏn 2015)
13	March 1909 (a week)	Tansŏngsa	PWA / Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, March 7, 1909
14	April 1–9, 1909	Soch'undae	Hansŏng Kisaeng Association (HKA) / Famine in Munchŏn-gun county	Unknown	Unknown	The amount of donation is published without names	TMS, April 1, 1909; HS, April 15, 1909; TMS, April 17, 1909
15	April 23–25, 1909	Yŏnhŭngsa	Unknown / Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, April 24, 1909
16	May 23, 1909	Benevolent Women's Hall at Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Benevolent Women's Association (BWA) / Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Slides and motion pictures	Around 1,000 visitors from women's and other societies	Unknown	HS, May 22, 1909; HS, May 25, 1909
17	May 30, 1909	Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	BWA / Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Motion pictures	Unknown	Unknown	HS, May 30, 1909

	Date	Venue	Organizer(s) / beneficiary	Program, performers	Notable audiences	Donors	Media reports
18	June 1909	Unknown	Maeda Yūjirō / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Recital	Japanese people	Partial	HS, July 22, 1909
19	July 22, 1909 (two weeks)	Yōnhūngsa	Unknown / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	HS, July 22, 1909
20	Aug. 1909	Yōnhūngsa	Min Wōnsik, Pae Kihwan / Home for Children's Famine Relief	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, Aug. 25, 1909
21	Nov. 5, 1909	Aesū hausū Inn	Foreigners in Seoul / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Music	Wives of General Consuls from Russia and Germany and other foreigners	Unknown	HS, Oct. 27, 1909
22	March 23–29, 1910	Naniwakan	Midwife Training Center / Midwife Training Center	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	HS, March 19, 1910; HS, March 24, 1910; TMS, March 24, 1910
23	April 13–20, 1910	Sochiundae	HKA (represented by Yōnhong, Aengmu, Nongwōl) / Kyōngsōng Orphanage	Korean traditional performances by <i>kisaeng</i> women, cooperation with Kim Wōnggi	Unknown	Partial	HS, April 10, 1910; TMS, April 10, 1910; TMS, April 14, 1910
24	June 10–13, 1910	YMCA	Korean-Japanese Women's Association (KJWA; <i>Hamil Puiinhoe</i>) / Sukmyōng Women's High School	Japanese music (10 & 11 June), Korean music (13 June)	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, June 9, 1910; HS, June 11, 1910

	Date	Venue	Organizer(s) / beneficiary	Program, performers	Notable audiences	Donors	Media reports
25	July 12–15, 1910	Tee House Ch'uison dawŏn	Ladies / Women's Common School (Yōja Pohak-wŏn)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, July 12, 1910
26	July 1910	Tee House Sanhyŏn dawŏn	Ch'anggi women's Association / Women's Common School	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	TMS, July 16, 1910; HS, July 16, 1910

Source: Data from *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* and *Hwangŏng Shimmun*.

¹It is likely that the concert was postponed or extended on short notice, as the HS reported on June 5, 1907 about “the concert last night.” See “Puingye Chasŏn [Women's Charity],” HS, June 5, 1907, 1.

²Based on the HS article of December 21, 1907, and December 24, 1907, Han and No claimed that there were two separate concerts held by *kwari'gi* women (*kisaeng* women who belonged to authorities)—the first one between December 21 and 23, 1907, and the second one between December 25–27. See “Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage,” 209. As the organizers and the venue were the same, however, it is more likely that the concert was postponed to the later schedule, which happened often at that time. Furthermore, there was only one list of donors from a single charity concert instead of two. See “Kyŏngsŏng Koawŏn 1-hoe [The First Charity Concert for Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage],” TMS, January 7, 1908, 3.

³PWA opened the Home for Children's Famine Relief between February 5, 1908, but decided to transfer the children to other institutions around August 1908. Going against this decision, Kim Sŏkja began taking care of the children by herself from September 1908 onwards. See Yi Pangwŏn, “Hanmal Yŏsŏng Chasŏn Tanch'e Chasŏn Puihŏe Yŏng'u [A Research on the Philanthropic Women's Association in the End of the Chosŏn Dynasty],” *Ehwa Sahak Yŏng'u* 50 (2015), 267–305, refer to 289–91.

The aims of charity events were announced either through advertisements or newspaper articles. The audience and performers donated to humanitarian and educational causes. With 15 charity events, Kyöngsöng Orphanage was the biggest beneficiary of these events. Home for Children's Famine Relief shared a similar goal as the orphanage, yet there were only three charity concerts for this institution. The famine of Munch'öng-gun county was another humanitarian cause for which Seoul's inhabitants organized a charity concert and collected money. The fact that the School of Engineering and Mathematics, Sericulture School for Women, Sukmyöng Women's High School, Midwife Training Center, and Women's Common School were supported through charity events shows that education, particularly women's schooling, increasingly found endorsement among contemporaries.

There is a total of twelve charity concerts whose estimated proceeds from fundraising are known. The money actually delivered to the beneficiary comprised of part of the gross sales of charity events, consisting of donations and ticket sales, and excluding expenses such as rent, compensation for performers, and meals. For instance, the charity concert's gross sales for the orphanage at Kabukiza in June 1907 was 800 wön, of which 570 wön were from the ticket sales and 230 wön from donations. However, the net amount of the contribution to charity was 506.31 wön.¹¹⁷ Likewise, Hansöng Kisaeng Association's charity concert for the famine relief of Munch'ön in April 1909 raised 783.60 wön, yet in the end, only 200 wön were sent to the region due to the high costs resulting from the length of the concert and the number of *kisaeng* women engaged in it.¹¹⁸ In most cases, however, the actual amount of money sent to beneficiaries is unclear.

It is also notable that there were various methods to raise funds, such as receiving cash on the spot, selling tickets on the street and at the box office, and accepting the promise that one would donate a certain amount of money later. To pressure donors, Kyöngsöng Orphanage even published the names of people and the amounts they promised to donate, demanding the "quick" fulfillment of their promises.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, as another charity event for the orphanage showed, organizers and beneficiaries could never fully count on the goodwill of the audiences. For instance, Philanthropic Women's Association (PWA; *Chasön Puinhoe*) raised 300 wön to support the repairs of the orphanage in July 1908, yet in the end, the association could send only 50 wön because (beside usual costs) numerous people required the refund of their tickets so that 200 wön were withdrawn.¹²⁰ These cases indicate that the actual amount of money given to charities must have often been less than what was disclosed through the media, making the effectiveness of charity performances questionable.

The organizers were often Korean women who either belonged to women's philanthropic groups or worked as *kisaeng*. Of the 23 charity concerts whose organizers are identified, 14 of these were organized by groups of Korean women, such as the PWA,

117 Kyöngsöng Orphanage, "Kyöngsöng Koawön Chasön Yönuhoe Suipküm Kwango [Notice on Income from the Charity Concert for Kyöngsöng Orphanage]," *HS*, June 11, 1907, 4.

118 Hansöng Kisaeng Association, "Kwanggo [Advertisement]," *HS*, April 15, 1909, 3.

119 Kyöngsöng Orphanage, "Koawön Kwango [Advertisement of the Orphanage]," *TMS*, November 12, 1907, 3.

120 "Chasönhoe Chasön [Charity by PWA]," *TMS*, July 4, 1908, 2.

the Benevolent Women's Association (BWA; *Chahye Puinhoe*), the Taehan Women's Association (TWA), the Korean-Japanese Women's Association (KJWA), *kisaeng* women, and the Midwife Training Center. Besides Korean women, Korean officials, playhouse operators, Japanese settlers, and other foreigners in Seoul initiated charity concerts for Korean beneficiaries, too.

Some charity events were organized across social and ethnic boundaries. For instance, the charity concert of June 1908 was organized by the PWA and presented *kwan'gi* women (literally “*kisaeng* women of government offices”).¹²¹ While the former largely consisted of women from a higher social rank, the latter belonged to the lowest social group. Nevertheless, *kwan'gi* women of three palaces offered to stage their repertoire for three days and even made monetary contributions.¹²² The link between high society and servants of the Korean royal house was a palace matron named Ch'ŏn, who served the Empress Sunjŏng and participated in the PWA as a member.¹²³

Korean and Japanese residents cooperated for charity concerts as well. The first charity concert for Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage was initiated by a group of Japanese settlers, including Kumagai Raitarō (or Kumagai Yoritarō), and took place at Kabukiza in June 1907.¹²⁴ George T. Ladd, an American who accompanied Itō Hirobumi as a diplomatic adviser to Korea between March 1907 and June 1907, witnessed how a pair of Korean and Japanese women sold tickets “for the charity to a public entertainment given [on] behalf of a benevolent enterprise,”¹²⁵ indicating close cooperation between these two groups. Likewise, Korean and Japanese women made a joint effort to raise funds for TWA's Sericulture School.¹²⁶ This concert took place in the Japanese playhouse Kabukiza and featured Korean *kwan'gi*, Japanese *geigi* (equivalent to Korean *kisaeng* women), and Itō Fumio Company's *shimpa* drama, staging entertainment from both countries.¹²⁷

The audience could enjoy a wide range of music, plays, stunts, slides, and even motion pictures at charity events. From this selection, Korean *kisaeng* women clearly stood out. Among the 15 charity events whose program is mentioned in the newspaper, eight hired Korean *kisaeng* women as performers. Their recitals must have been a critical factor for the success of the fundraising in terms of popularity. As *kwan'gi* women gave their first charity recital for Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage at the Soch'undae in December 1907, for instance, they sold 1,978 tickets (200 tickets for the first-class seats, 778 tickets for the

121 As all *kisaeng* women belonged to the government until 1908, *kwan'gi* is a synonym for *kisaeng* women. The fact that they called themselves *kwan'gi* in and after 1908 implies that they tried to distinguish themselves from other women after the distinction between *kisaeng* and prostituting women was abolished. See chapter 2.3 and Woo, “Life of *Kisaeng*,” 70.

122 “Chasŏnhoe Sŏnghwang [Success of PWA],” *TMS*, June 25, 1908, 2.

123 Yi, “Research on PWA,” 279.

124 “Chasŏn Yŏnjuhoe Palgi [Initiating a Charity Recital],” *HS*, May 31, 1907, 2.

125 Ladd, *In Korea*, 87.

126 “Chasŏn Yŏnhoe [Charity Concert],” *HS*, August 25, 1908, 2.

127 “Daikan Fujinkai Ensōkai [TWA's Concert],” *Keijō Shinpo*, August 30, 1908, 2, as cited in Yi Chisŏn, “Ilmun Ilganji Kyŏngsŏng Shinbo wa Kyŏngsŏng Ilbo e Surok Toen 20-segi ch'o Chosŏn Kong'yŏn Yesul Kisa Punsŏk: 1908-nyŏn-1915-nyŏn Kisa rŭl Chungsim ūro [An Analysis of Articles about Korean Performing Arts in Japanese Daily Newspapers *Keijō Shinpo* and *Keijō Nippo*],” *Kugak Kyoyuk Yŏn'gu* 9, no. 2 (2015), 59–102; refer to 64.

second-class seats, and 1,000 for the third-class seats) for three nights of shows, raising 795.60 wŏn in funds.¹²⁸ Motion pictures were seldom, yet beloved by the audience at charity events, too. The audience would devour films from around the world and watch the Korean crown prince on the screen.¹²⁹ Besides the entertainment, fundraisers often gave a speech explaining the event's aim and appealing to the audience's sympathy.¹³⁰

Despite the charity concerts, however, playgoing was still conceived as an antisocial and anti-national activity. Added to the reformists' contempt for merrymaking during the national crisis, the fact that not a single charity concert was organized for the National Debt Repayment Movement could be a reason behind this stigmatization. As discussed in the following sections, organizers of such events and theater operators were often close to the Residency-General, and there was tension between supporters of the movement and the playhouse business.

As the speeches of the founders of Tansŏngsa showed, theater operators were aware of the antipathy toward theaters prevalent in society and began to advocate the theater's social contributions beyond entertainment and profit-seeking. Philanthropy, which was declared a modern value in Korean public discourse since the nineteenth century, and fundraising, seen as its modern practice, were suitable for the showcasing of the theater's civic nature. All Korean theaters in Seoul participated in charity performances, and sometimes there was cooperation between organizers and performers across social and ethnic boundaries. The audience was also filled with people of various gender, classes, strata, and race; donors were named in newspapers, similar to the National Debt Repayment Movement. In the following section, a detailed analysis of charity recitals' reports reveals why charity performances could not be fully integrated into the project of patriotic nation-building, which interests were intertwined at the events, and what role they played in the emergence of Korean noblewomen and the *kisaeng* women as modern subjects.

Diverse Interests behind Charity Concerts

Despite the good intentions and material contributions to humanitarian projects, charity concerts at Korean playhouses in the late 1900s could neither rehabilitate the entertainment industry's reputation nor unite Korean people under the name of philanthropy. Instead, charity concerts revealed ruptures between the humanitarian ideal and interests of diverse groups, which were a source of potential conflict. This section highlights the various interests of three groups involved in charity concerts in the late 1900s: *kisaeng* women, their male custodians (called *kibu*), and the Residency-General. In doing so, this

128 "First Charity Concert," *TMS*, January 7, 1908, 3.

129 "Chasŏn Yŏnjuhoe [Charity Recital]," *HS*, October 26, 1907, 1; "Kwan'gwangja Yŏhae [Audience Came Like the Rising Tide]," *TMS*, June 26, 1908, 2; "Yejin Paegwan [Precious View of Wits and Truth]," *HS*, August 9, 1908, 2.

130 See "Yegŭ Yŏnsŏl [*Kisaeng's* Speech]," *TMS*, July 11, 1908, 1; "Yŏnjuhoe Sŏnghwang [Success of Recital]," *TMS*, July 15, 1908, 1; "Chahye Puihoe Hwandŭng [Slide Show of BWA]," *HS*, May 25, 1909, 2.

study shows the complex social and political context in which charity concerts were situated. Against this background, the significance of Korean women's active involvement in these events will be discussed.

***Kisaeng* Women's Interest in Charity Projects**

Kisaeng women played a significant part in charity events as organizers, performers, and donors. However, their participation in charity events sometimes provoked disapproval among the people. Controversies surrounding two charity concerts show that the local community even boycotted *kisaeng* women and clowns' participation due to their alleged harmful influence on the audience. In November 1907, Kyōngsōng Orphanage organized a charity event featuring eight *kisaeng* women and clowns in Kaesōng, based on the success of its charity shows in Seoul.¹³¹ However, the plan was met with stiff opposition from local residents, who considered such concerts "not educational and would make young men's minds dissolute," and warned the organizer that the performers "will not be allowed to enter the region, when they bring *kisaeng* and clowns."¹³²

Likewise, when Seoul's Soch'undae sent a company to Kaesōng in March 1910, five local educationists and Christians organized their own charity concert featuring educational plays.¹³³ This boycott was so successful that the tour group struggled to raise money for a trip back to Seoul. These controversies show the gap between Seoul, where *kisaeng* and *chaein* performers' active participation in charity events was already institutionalized, and Kaesōng, where people required coherence between charity events' moral causes and their programs. These cases resonate with the skepticism about playgoing under the name of charity and the criticism that the people of Seoul overindulged in selfish pleasures while the rest of the country was suffering.

Meanwhile, *kisaeng* women's active participation in charity concerts was closely tied to their own interests. According to Yi Chōngno's 2014 study, their charity events cannot be understood separately from the *kisaeng* system's structural changes caused by the 1908 *Kisaeng Control Act* and *Prostitutes Control Act*. Central to these laws was the re-categorization of Korean *kisaeng* women. Yi Chōngno explains that the *Kisaeng Control Act* cut the tie between the Korean court and *kisaeng* women and redefined them from government servants to private female entertainers.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the *Prostitutes Control Act* treated all *kisaeng* women, except for those qualified as first-class (*ilpyae*), en bloc

131 "Kisaeng Kwangdae nŭn Pulgin [*Kisaeng* and Clowns Unwelcomed]," *TMS*, November 26, 1907, 3.

132 "Kisaeng and Clowns Unwelcomed," *TMS*, November 26, 1907, 3. Eventually the concert took place, yet it is unclear if *kisaeng* women and clowns were allowed to perform. Although the repertoire of the concert could not be confirmed, it is highly likely that neither *kisaeng* women nor clowns performed at the event because the donors' list includes only two names of *kisaeng* women, which is a much smaller number than other charity concerts where *kisaeng* women performed. See "Koawōn Kaesōng Yōnjuhoe Shi ... [As the charity concert for the orphanage took place in Kaesōng, ...]," *TMS*, December 20, 1907, 3.

133 "Kaesōng ūi Yōnjuhoe [Recital in Kaesōng City]," *HS*, March 2, 1910, 1.

134 Yi Chōngno, "Kisaeng Sahoe ūi Chaep'yōn e Ttarūn 1910-nyōndae Ch'um Yōnhaeng ūi Pyōndong Yōn'gu: Sōul Chiyōk Kūndae Kūkchang esō Yōnhaeng Toen *Kisaeng* Ch'um ūl Chungsim ūro [A Study on Changes of Dance Performance during the 1910s Following Realignment of the *Kisaeng* Society]," *Tongyang Yesul* 26 (2014), 364–90; refer to 369.

as prostitutes (*changgi*), bringing them under hygienic control and forcing them to move to Si-dong, a red light district in the southern part of Seoul.¹³⁵ This measure had a significant impact on the third-class *kisaeng* women (*samp'ae* or *yegi*) because the law neglected the distinction between them and *yunyŏ* (prostituting women), who neither belonged to government office nor were trained as dancers, musicians, or physicians like *kisaeng* women were.¹³⁶

Despite the change of their legal status, the third-class *kisaeng* women were more often called artistic *kisaeng* (*yegi*) than prostituting women (*yunyŏ*).¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the subordination to the new category meant a social downfall for the third-class *kisaeng* women. Thus, they strived to improve their status in various ways.¹³⁸ Yi points out that these *yegi* women tried to represent themselves as trained entertainers and not as prostitutes by performing at charity events.¹³⁹ Additionally, they began appropriating dance repertoires that had been exclusively danced by the first-class *kisaeng* women from 1912 onwards. By doing so, they eventually earned chances to substitute the prestigious first-class *kisaeng* women in theaters and gain the approval of the audience—the audience, who commented that they looked like “true *kisaeng*,” which meant the first-class *kisaeng* women.¹⁴⁰ Yi asserts that these efforts were substantial, given that about twenty *yegi* women were able to obtain the license as first-class *kisaeng* women in 1916 through this way.¹⁴¹

Kibu Men's Interest in Charity Concerts

Kisaeng women's active participation in charity concerts was also closely related to *kisaeng* associations' social approval. The 1908 *Kisaeng Control Act* and *Prostitutes Control Act* compelled *kisaeng* women to establish associations and register themselves. According to the historian Kwŏn Tohŭi, core to the changes to Korean *kisaeng* women's affiliations resulting from this organizational change was taxation.¹⁴² Earlier that year, a law was enacted allowing for-profit organizations to be taxed; thus, the Residency-General could make direct economic gains from *kisaeng* and prostituting women's activities by mandating the formation and membership of associations.¹⁴³ Under the new law, some of the *kibu* men, who used to control and manage *kisaeng* women's business outside the palace, actively led the formation of an association to maintain their control of *kisaeng* women even under the new system.¹⁴⁴

135 Yi, “Changes of Dance,” 369–70.

136 Woo, “Life of *Kisaeng*,” 22.

137 Kwŏn Tohŭi, “20-segi *Kisaeng* ūi Kamu wa Chojik: Kŭndae *Kisaeng* ūi Hyŏngsŏng ūl Chungsim ūro” [Singing, Dancing, and Organization of twentieth century *Kisaeng*: Focusing on the Formation of Modern *Kisaeng*], *Han'guk Ŭmak Yŏn'gu* 45 (2009), 5–27; refer to 15.

138 Yi, “Changes of Dance,” 371.

139 *Ibid.*, 372.

140 *Ibid.*, 373–74.

141 *Ibid.*, 374.

142 Kwŏn, “Singing, Dancing, Organizations,” 11.

143 *Ibid.*

144 *Ibid.*, 13.

My research into news reports about *kibu* men found that they gained forces to maintain their control over *kisaeng* women. To this end, Pak Hanyŏng and several dozen other *kibu* men filed a petition to Metropolitan Police in October 1908 to start a *kisaeng* association.¹⁴⁵ The police rejected it, arguing that the petition not only violated the new law, but there was also a “concern that *kisaeng* women, in general, would not be able to act freely.”¹⁴⁶ The police made it clear that it did not recognize *kibu* men’s jurisdiction over *kisaeng* women.

Besides this legal struggle, *kibu* men experienced strong opposition from the Korean media, too. Announcing the news of their attempt to establish an association, the daily newspaper *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* decried that the association would cause “truly infinite damage to the custom and industry of the general public.”¹⁴⁷ The newspaper interpreted *kisaeng* associations as an additional example of “malicious societies (*ak sahoe*)” next to theaters where “petty tricks” were played, and asserted that banquets with *kisaeng* women would hamper the development of Korean society.¹⁴⁸ Instead of giving up, over one hundred panders organized themselves to move their interests forward despite the new law and discussed establishing a *kisaeng* association at Soch’undae in December 1908.¹⁴⁹ Noting this incident, the daily newspaper *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* harshly criticized *kibu* men through an editorial, disgracing them as parasitic men who take advantage of the *kisaeng* women: “*Kisaeng* women who prostitute are pathetic. However, you are men enough to erect associations in order to take their scraps? [You] Must be worse than a dog or a hog.”¹⁵⁰ As *kibu* men took the initiative to establish associations, they became the main target of criticism.

In the end, however, they succeeded in maintaining their unofficial authority over *kisaeng* women even under the new legal system.¹⁵¹ A few months later, newspapers began reporting activities of a Hansŏng Kisaeng Association (HKA).¹⁵² While this organization’s establishment bypassed the public eye without drawing much attention, HKA’s charity concert for famine relief in Munch’ŏn-gun made the news in April 1909.¹⁵³ The newspapers of this period show that the charity concert successfully foregrounded *kisaeng* women of the HKA instead of their male custodians. For instance, reporting on the success of the concert, the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* gave the article a flattering title: “*Kisaengs’* Noble Intention.”¹⁵⁴ Likewise, HKA’s charity concert for Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage in April 1910 was announced by three *kisaeng* women named Yŏnhong, Aengmu, and Nongwŏl, successfully overshadowing the existence of *kibu* men in the organization.¹⁵⁵ In this way, *kisaeng* associations’ initiatives in charity concerts can be read as a collective pursuit to

145 “Ch’ŏngwŏn ūl Hwant’oe [Petition Rejected],” *TMS*, October 31, 1908, 2.

146 “Petition Rejected,” *TMS*, October 31, 1908, 2.

147 “Sowi *Kisaeng* Chohapso, [The So-Called *Kisaeng* Association],” *HS*, November 21, 1908, 2.

148 “So-Called *Kisaeng* Association,” *HS*, November 21, 1908, 2.

149 “*Kisaeng* Chohap Sagŏn [The *Kisaeng* Association Incident],” *TMS*, December 9, 1908, 2.

150 “Shisa Pyŏngnon [Comments on Current Affairs],” *TMS*, December 18, 1908, 2.

151 Kwŏn, “Singing, Dancing, Organizations,” 13.

152 “Kuhyul Yŏnju [Famine Relief Concert],” *TMS*, April 1, 1909, 2.

153 “Famine Relief Concert,” *TMS*, April 1, 1909, 2.

154 “*Kisaeng* Kotŭi [*Kisaengs’* Noble Intention],” *TMS*, April 17, 1909, 2.

155 Yŏnhong, Aengmu, and Nongwŏl, “Ponso esŏ ... [Our Association ...],” *TMS*, April 12, 1910, 2.

gain social approval by appearing as benevolent groups and redirecting the public interest from “parasitic” *kibu* men to “charitable” *kisaeng* women.

The Residency-General's Interest in Charity Projects

Japanese settlers in Seoul and the Residency-General also invested in charity projects for Korean beneficiaries. Between June 1907 and June 1910, five charity concerts took place that Japanese people in Seoul fully or partially organized (see Table 1). Among these events, two were held for the Kyōngsōng Orphanage, while charity concerts for TWA's Women's Sericulture School, the Midwife Training Center, and Sukmyōng Women's School took place once each. Three of the five performances were hosted in Seoul's Japanese theaters Kabukiza and Naniwakan, one at the YMCA, and the other at an unknown venue. As Korean noblewomen and *kisaeng* women were involved in these events, analyzing these concerts' political context can help explain why their activities could not be fully integrated into the nation-building project despite their humanitarian and pedagogical aims, unlike the National Debt Repayment Movement.

The first charity concert for Kyōngsōng Orphanage in June 1907 was received very well among the Korean public, which considered it a genuine act of humanitarian aid. After the concert, the *Hwangšōng Shinmun* reported how two young Korean women were moved by the foreigners' generosity and donated money after attending the show:

Yesterday, our country's noblewomen and foreign countries with goodwill gathered at the charity concert for the orphanage. A female student of our country and a girl watched the concert, and the student donated one wŏn and the girl fifty chŏn for the office [of the orphanage], saying that “even foreigners are offering support like this, so although I am a woman, how can I watch and do nothing as a fellow countrywoman [of the orphans]? This is what I have now, and it is little, but please accept it and help the orphans even for a short period.” When asked their names, [they refused to tell] so we do not know who they were, but their benevolence is so great that it cannot be paid back with a word of praise.¹⁵⁶

The article shows that Japanese settlers were foregrounded as organizers and contributors of the charity event, and their benevolence motivated the Korean audience to learn from their actions and donate money.¹⁵⁷ The charity concert might have helped the Japanese settler community to claim its moral superiority over their Korean contemporaries, too. The fact that a series of similar concerts emerged afterward indicates that the charity concert organizers at the Kabukiza helped institutionalize charity events in Korean playhouses.

However, what the newspaper article omitted was that the five Japanese organizers of this event were not ordinary settlers but close aides and collaborators of the Residency-General. My research into the documents of the Japanese Embassy revealed that

156 “Women's Charity,” *HS*, June 5, 1907, 1.

157 Remarkably, the two donations were later omitted from the list, leaving behind the possibility that their contribution was either included in that of Kyōngsōng Women's Association, who donated 15-wŏn, or the story was fabricated. See “Notice on Income,” *HS*, June 11, 1907, 4.

Kumagai Raitarō (or Kumagai Yoritarō), the event's main organizer, was the police department's chief at the Japanese Embassy.¹⁵⁸ Police reports show that one of his main interests was collecting information on Koreans' anti-Japanese movements shortly before and after the 1905 Protectorate Treaty.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Koyama Yoshi, another of the event's planners, was the attending physician of Itō Hirobumi, the first Resident-General. He was most trusted by Itō and joined him as a member of the entourage in November 1905, as Itō came to Korea to push ahead the Protectorate Treaty.¹⁶⁰ Nakamura Saizō,¹⁶¹ Yamaguchi Tahee,¹⁶² and Wada Tsuneichi¹⁶³ were representative figures of Seoul's Japanese settler community, who had come to Chosŏn Korea before the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894, ran multiple companies in Korea, and were rewarded by the Japanese government with positions in the chamber of commerce, infrastructure construction contacts, and the Order of Merit. The organizers' profiles insinuate that the Japanese charity concert for Kyōngsŏng Orphanage may have been, in fact, a part of the Residency-General's colonial politics. At the concert, the Resident-General himself had been in the auditorium as well and had donated hundred wŏn.¹⁶⁴

Indeed, the Residency-General carefully observed charitable facilities in Korea in the following years. Confidential documents reveal that Japanese authorities feared the possibility that Christian missionaries from the West and their Korean followers would evolve into a threat to the Japanese hegemony over the Korean peninsula. Han Gyumu and No Kiuk's 2010 study found that the Residency-General paid close attention to the political and religious stances of Kyōngsŏng Orphanage's management staff.¹⁶⁵ In September 1909, as an internal conflict between Christian staff and non-Christian directors over the orphanage's future broke out, the Japanese authorities suspected that the Christian staff were trying to hand the orphanage over to Western missionaries.¹⁶⁶ The anonymous official did not hide his enthusiasm over the decision of one of the directors

158 "Ilbon Paech'ŏk Undong Oe 1-kŏn Pogo Kŏn [Report on Anti-Japanese Movement and Another Matter]," September 23, 1905, *Documents of the Japanese Embassy in Korea* 26, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_026r_0040_0160. For the list of initiators see "Initiating Charity Recital," *HS*, May 31, 1907, 2 and "Notice on Income," *HS*, June 11, 1907, 4.

159 See "Report on Anti-Japanese Movement," *Documents of the Japanese Embassy in Korea* 26; "Paeil Undongja Tŭng'ŭi Yukkun Ch'amjang Kim Yŏngjin kwa Mildam Naesa Pogo [Report of an Internal Investigation Into the Secret Conversation among the Army Officer Kim Yŏngjin, Anti-Japanese Activists and the Likes]," November 18, 1905, *Documents of Japanese Embassy* 24, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_024r_0110_0370; "Paeil Undongga Pak Yonghwa Tŭng Yi Yongik Pokkwan e taehan Sangju Shido P'ungsŏl e kwanhan Pogo [Report on the Rumored Trial for Rehiring Yi Yongik by Anti-Japanese Activists Including Pak Yonghwa]," *Documents of Japanese Embassy* 24, November 18, 1905, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_024r_0110_0380.

160 "Idŭng T'ŭkp'a Taesa Suhaeng'wŏn Myŏngdan T'ongji Kŏn [Informing the list of entourage for Itō, the Ambassador Extraordinary]," November 16, 1905, *Documents of Japanese Embassy* 24, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_024r_0110_0090.

161 "Nakamura Saizō," *Han'guk Kŭnhyŏndae Inmul Charyo* [Data of People in Modern and Contemporary Korea], http://db.history.go.kr/id/im_215_23310.

162 "Yamaguchi Tahee," *Data of People*, http://db.history.go.kr/id/im_215_11584.

163 "Wada Tsuneichi," *Data of People*, http://db.history.go.kr/id/im_215_23878.

164 "Notice on Income," *HS*, June 11, 1907, 4.

165 Han and No, "Kyōngsŏng Orphanage," 188–89.

166 *Ibid.*

to dedicate the orphanage to a new religion named Shich'ön'gyo as a countermove "in order to cut all connections to the Christian church":

Luckily, the older brother Yi Woohyön [who managed the orphanage with his younger brother] was connected to [the pro-Japanese group] Ilchinhoe. Thus, he decided to turn to Shich'ön'gyo, a religion that many members of Ilchinhoe believe in, and bring the orphanage under the auspices of Shich'ön'gyo, in order to cut all connection to the Christian church. On September 2, Yi Woohyön met Pak Hyöngch'ae from Shich'ön'gyo and started the negotiation. I am inspecting the case further.¹⁶⁷

Another confidential document that I found during my research demonstrates that the Residency-General viewed philanthropy primarily as a means of expanding its influence over Korea, hence explaining why it tried to control Christian charity projects. Already in March 1908, a year and a half before the religious conflict at the orphanage broke out, the Japanese authorities had begun nationwide surveillance of charitable projects led by Western missionaries. Advocating the inspection, Miura Yagorō, a secretary of Residency-General, argued that

Christian missionary work has already affected [Japan's] corrective improvement projects of Korea directly and indirectly, [so] I think it is a matter that needs to be scrutinized, [but] it seems that even mission projects which have been publicly announced have not been thoroughly investigated yet.¹⁶⁸

Facing the possibility of Western interference, Miura called for an inspection of "schools, hospitals, orphanages, and medical centers" run by Western missionaries.¹⁶⁹ For a thorough investigation, he planned to travel across the Korean peninsula, including Kyöngsöng and its suburbs, Kaesöng, Suwön, Ansöng, Ch'öngju, Anju, P'yöngyang, Hwangju, Kongju, Taegu, Miryang, Pusan, Masan, Mokp'o, and Kunsan by himself.¹⁷⁰

While this idea itself is not unusual, Miura's proposal to give "ten to twenty wön in donations for their charity work" and its reasoning is noteworthy.¹⁷¹ He asserted that "the emotional harmony (*kanjō no yūwa*) [that the donation creates] would make things easier for the investigation."¹⁷² Miura's plan was approved by Ishizuka Eizō, the deputy secretary of general affairs at the Residency-General, along with an astonishingly large

167 "Kyöngsöng Koawön üi Naehong [The Internal Conflict of Kyöngsöng Orphanage]," September 7, 1909, *Documents of Residency-General* 6, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_096r_0010_6590, as cited in Han and No, "Kyöngsöng Orphanage," 188–89.

168 Miura Yagorō, "Kidokkyo P'ogyo Sangt'ae Chosa rül Wihae Ch'uljang Ch'ido Kōn [Business Trip for Investigation of Christian Missionary Work]," *Documents of Residency-General* 1, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_091r_0070_0070.

169 Miura, "Business Trip."

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid. For the Japanese version see Miura Yagorō, "Fukyō Jigyō Torishirabe no Tame Shutchō no Kudan [Business Trip for Investigation of Christian Missionary Work]," *Documents of Residency-General* 1, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_091_0070_0070.

budget of 50,000 wŏn solely for donations.¹⁷³ Ishizuka advised Miura to take special care to hide their true intentions. In his written consent, Ishizuka instructed Miura to explain to missionaries that his visits and donations were purely based on his “personal interest” during his regional inspection instead of “by order of the Residency-General,” in order to avoid “further misunderstanding.”¹⁷⁴ This precaution, however, makes it even more apparent that the Japanese authorities knew their inspection was a kind of surveillance method based on the presumption that Western missionary work was a political threat to the process of colonization in Korea, and it thus needed to be hidden. These documents show that the Residency-General used the donations to approach their political opponents more efficiently and gain information, and that it was ready to pay large sums of money for these aims.

Such revealing documents could not be found about charity concerts for Korean beneficiaries at Kabukiza and Naniwakan between June 1907 and March 1910. However, internal documents of the Residency-General strengthen the hypothesis that the support from the Japanese settler community and high-ranking Japanese officials, including the Resident-General Itō Hirobumi himself, were very likely a tactically planned action to enhance the “emotional harmony” between Koreans and Japanese, which would help the colonial power control Korean civil society and the risks they posed.¹⁷⁵ From the Residency-General’s perspective, it made more sense to support philanthropic projects than other projects such as National Debt Repayment Movement.

In some cases, organizational and financial support for charity projects was necessary for the Residency-General to control Korean civil society. Particularly, Kyōngsŏng Orphanage posed an obvious risk to the Residency-General due to its bold anti-Japanese leaning. According to Han and No, its founder Yi P’ilhwa aimed to educate children into persons “who love their country and are loyal to their ruler (*aeguk ch’unggun*).”¹⁷⁶ This educational goal took the form of anti-Japanese patriotism: its pupils attended the Korean Empire’s official festivities and a memorial ceremony for Min Yōnghwan in December 1906, who had committed suicide in protest of the Protectorate Treaty. Furthermore, they even stood at the front of the cortège for Chōng Chaehong in July 1907, who had killed himself after failing to assassinate Itō Hirobumi earlier that month.¹⁷⁷

Only a month prior to this assassination attempt, Itō had donated one hundred wŏn to the orphanage at a charity concert. Sending children to his assassin’s funeral was all the bolder since it was a sign of refusal of the Residency-General’s further involvement. Nevertheless, the Residency-General kept monitoring the orphanage instead of directly suppressing it: the charitable facility received widespread support from society for its humanitarian aims despite the uneasiness that charity concerts caused. The sponsors’ list

173 Ishizuka Eizō, “P’ogyo Saōp Ch’uijosa rŭl wihan Ch’uljang Kōn [On the Travel for the Investigation into Missionary Work], *Documents of Residency-General* 1, http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_091r_0070_0070.

174 Ishizuka, “On Travel.”

175 Itō donated 100 wŏn for the Kyōngsŏng Orphanage in June 1907 and announced that his family would start charitable work for schools and hospitals in December 1909. See “Notice on Income,” *HS*, June 11, 1907, 4. and “Idūng Ka Shin Saōp [New Business of the Itōs],” *HS*, December 17, 1909, 2.

176 Han and No, “Kyōngsŏng Orphanage,” 165–66.

177 *Ibid.*, 175–76.

reveals that the orphanage received support from various people across the boundaries of nationality, religion, politics, stratum, and gender. Among others, Emperor Kojong, the Resident-General, some Christians, the leader of Ch'öndogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), the consul general of the Qing Dynasty, diplomats of other countries, patriotic as well as pro-Japanese Korean officials, wives of high-ranking government officials and *kisaeng* women, and the wealthy and day laborers sent money to the orphanage.¹⁷⁸ Taking down the orphanage would have disturbed the “emotional harmony” between the Japanese authorities and other groups surrounding the orphanage, which would have hindered Korea’s colonization at an early stage.

Another indication that donations and charity concerts were used to gain control over Korean civil society was the PWA’s charity concerts. The PWA’s personnel changes and its involvement in Kyöngsöng Orphanage coincided in June 1908.¹⁷⁹ The organization began taking on a pro-Japanese leaning around this time, as numerous active pro-Japanese men took positions in this women’s group.¹⁸⁰

Charity concerts and donations were newly introduced practices to realize humanitarian ideals and education through citizens’ economic contributions. However, in the first decade of the twentieth century, people who planned or hosted charity performances in Seoul had various interests beyond these ideal goals. The cases of *kisaeng* women, *kibu* men, and inspections of Residency-General show that the practice of charity was also a way to improve one’s social status, maintain power, and manage potential political threats. The diversity of organizers and their varying interests offer an alternative perspective to the opinion prevailing in prior studies that such fundraising events might have been solely motivated by a love for compatriots and a desire to strengthen the ethnic identity of Koreans. Instead, the charity performance was an event where various interests that could not be integrated into the grand narrative of nation-building through the participation as did the National Debt Repayment Movement collided and erupted; indeed, the possibility of humanitarian cooperation across ethnic groups was sought through charity concerts, but this cooperation was supported by the Residency-General, which utilized donations as a means of “emotional harmony” for the sake of colonization.

Sermons and Stones Targeting Audiences

Despite playhouse owners’ contributions to humanitarian projects and donations raised in theaters, criticisms of playhouses and their audiences did not quiet. On the contrary, while some people expressed their objections to theatergoers with sermons on morality, others did so with stones. On May 9, 1907, the *Taehan Mael Shinbo* reported how two men from Ch’aeryöng initiated an impromptu donation for the National Debt Repayment Movement with people gathered in front of a local playhouse.

178 For donors’ list, see *ibid.*, 202–08.

179 “Wiyön Kowön [Charity for the Orphanage],” *TMS*, June 25, 1908, 3.

180 See Yi, “Research on PWA,” 279–80.

In Ch'aeryŏng, as a foreigner sold tickets for a motion picture, many men and women fought with each other [to buy a ticket first]. Ryu Mongt'aek and Chŏng Ch'anyu, who happened to come across the scene, became sad and said: "Recently, people of the whole country are single-mindedly donating for the National Debt Repayment Movement. *How can it be a nation's true duty to spend money and property on ephemeral fun in times like this? If [you] send [the money you would] waste to repay the country's debt, everyone would become happy.*" When they paid one wŏn each, the good-hearted Kim Yŏngsun and several others were moved by them and gave up watching the motion picture; men and women who filled the place competed [to donate] first with the money for tickets, which summed up to 9.15 wŏn. [They] sent it to our company. Their affectability deserves to be a model for the nation (emphasis added).¹⁸¹

This fable-like anecdote behind a donation captures how the National Debt Repayment Movement advocates reevaluated theatergoing in the context of the national crisis. In the Repayment Movement's logic, the money spent on a theater visit equaled the loss of a donation. Spending money on motion pictures was also seen as egotistic because if people were to donate the money instead, it would make "everyone [...] happy." Furthermore, the people wasting money on this "ephemeral fun" were symbolically separated from the "people of the whole country [...] single-mindedly donating" to achieve financial independence from Japan. In a broader sense, playhouse visitors were the immoral Others. In contrast, those who changed their minds and donated the money to the Repayment Movement were praised as "a model for the nation," mainly due to their emotional responsiveness to the moral and nationalist call. Notably, these exemplary individuals gained recognition and were known by name, while the egoistic and uncooperative spectators remained anonymous and voiceless in the newspaper.

To some Koreans, even charity could not justify spending leisure time at playhouses. On the last night of *kisaeng* women's charity show on December 29, 1907, at Soch'undae, an anonymous man expressed his discomfort with the show in front of the gathered crowd:

The night before yesterday, spectators gathered like clouds at The Officials' Club [Soch'undae], Yajugae. Thus, there were not enough tickets. A stranger held a long speech, yelling, "How could the nation [*kungmin*] entertain themselves with *kisaeng* women in times like this?" and went away.¹⁸²

As it was the third night of the charity concert, the man likely knew the concert's aims—or, at least, he noticed that *kisaeng* women would perform that night. Even if he did not know the background, the journalist who reported the incident could have critically commented on the man's actions if he found his sermon problematic. However, neither the man nor the journalist seems to have regarded the charity concert as a reasonable idea. Instead, by calling the gathered crowd "nation," the man tried to place the spectators within the bigger political context of the time and to make them reflect on themselves.

181 "Kukch'ae Posang Ŭiyŏn'gŭm Suipgŭm 3-wŏl chung Muhojil [National Debt Repayment Movement Donation Income of Marcy 1907, No Specific Order]," *TMS*, May 9, 1907, 4.

182 "Yŏnhŭijang Soshik [News from Playhouses]," *TMS*, December 29, 1907, 2.

The words of this rebuke might have been harsh enough to listeners, but it was not as harsh as the stones thrown into playhouses during the summer of 1909. Newspaper articles show that there were at least eight incidents between May 1909 and July 1909 where Seoul's Korean playhouses became a target of stone-throwing (see table 2). Two things are particularly striking. Firstly, among the eight attacks, seven were aimed at Tansöngsa, while only one incident happened at Soch'undae. Secondly, two other targets of stone-throwing were either closely related to a corruption scandal or a collaboration with the Japanese authorities.

Table 2: A list of stone attacks in Seoul, 1909, by media reports.

	Date	Location	Incident	Report
1	April 29, 1909	Tansöngsa	As the playhouse was too crowded with the Korean audience, the Japanese film narrator hit them with a wooden stick to drive them out. In return, Koreans threw stones at him, causing a great mess.	TMS, May 1, 1909, 2.
2	May 16, 1909	Tansöngsa	Stones were thrown into the theater during the play and caused a commotion.	TMS, May 18, 1909, 2.
3	May 21, 1909	Tansöngsa	Stones were thrown into the theater during the play and stopped it.	TMS, May 23, 1909, 2.
4	May 22, 1909	Tansöngsa	Approximately 200 audiences attended a play sung by <i>p'ansori</i> singers, and stones were thrown into the theater, but the show went on.	HS, May 25, 1909, 1.
5	May 25, 1909	Tansöngsa	Approximately 300 audiences attended a play, and the stone attack stopped it.	TMS, May 27, 1909, 2.
6	May 26, 1909	Hwang Sang's House	Stone attack at night, police report.	TMS, May 28, 1909, 2.
7	June 20, 1909	Tansöngsa	Stones were thrown into the theater during the play and caused a commotion.	TMS, June 22, 1909, 2.
8	June 27, 1909	Tansöngsa	The stone attack on the Metropolitan Police's hygiene slide show seriously wounded people and caused great chaos among the 1,000 attendees.	TMS, June 29, 1909, 2.
9	July 4, 1909	Wön'gaksa (Soch'undae)	The stone attack during the play <i>Ch'önnibong</i> caused a commotion, and police investigated.	TMS, July 6, 1909, 2; HS, July 6, 1909, 3.
10	Dec. 1909	Sö Ch'angbo's House	Stone attack specifically targeting Sö, because he signed the open letter for the merger between Korea and Japan.	TMS, Dec. 24, 1909, 2; HS, Dec. 24, 1909, 2.

Source: Data from *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* and *Hwangöng Shinmun*.

Stone-throwing targeting playhouses first began in a dispute between a Japanese performer and a Korean audience member at Tansōngsa. According to a *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* report, on April 29, 1909, a Japanese person who showed motion pictures and played various gigs tried to get rid of the Korean audience with a wooden stick, as he found there were too many of them.¹⁸³ Raged by his violence, Koreans picked up stones and threw them into the playhouse, “causing a great disturbance.”¹⁸⁴ Starting with this incident, Tansōngsa was attacked by anonymous stone-throwers seven more times. It is likely that the ongoing rage was partially based on anti-Japanese sentiment.

Another possible reason behind these attacks was the growing social antipathy toward the theater’s management. Although its founders claimed that the playhouse would improve the Korean entertainment industry and the society, the company sparked controversy as it was revealed in March 1909 that it did not pay its employees proper wages.¹⁸⁵ To make the situation worse, the manager, Li Igu, also did not pay the 150 wŏn in donations to an educational project as he had promised.¹⁸⁶ Through these mishaps, Tansōngsa seemed to have lost its credibility as a contributor to society and became a target of stone attacks.

Newspaper reports show that the stone-throwers caused severe damage to the operation of theaters. The conspirators attacked theaters during the play and caused commotions, interruption of events, and even physical injuries to the audience. Immense chaos broke out as the Metropolitan Police’s Hygiene Department presented a slide show at Tansōngsa on the night of June 27, 1909. According to *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*, about 1,000 people in the theater panicked, and many of them became seriously injured by the stone attack.¹⁸⁷ The repeated stone-throwing might have also been the reason why charity concerts began taking place in places other than theaters from May 1909 onwards.¹⁸⁸

Over the summer of 1909, stone-throwing gradually evolved into a means of nonofficial judgment against corrupt officials of the Korean Empire and pro-Japanese activists. The attack on Hwang Sang’s home on May 26, 1909 symbolizes people’s rage against the Korean officialdom. *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* reported that around 11 p.m., “stones flew into the house of Hwang Sang like rain.”¹⁸⁹ Hwang was a concubine of Kim Kakhyŏn, the head of the Food and Festivity Council (*chŏnsŏnsa*), who had gained notoriety earlier that year after bribing the deputy justice minister to get the position and embezzling public funds to make up for the money.¹⁹⁰ As neither Hwang nor Kim stood out in public for any other reason, it is probable that the anonymous conspirators wanted to punish the corrupt official for his luxurious lifestyle built on taxes.

Meanwhile, a series of stone attacks on Sŏ Ch’angbo’s House in December 1909 was a clear sign of hostility against Korea’s annexation to Japan. Sŏ became a target of attacks after he publicly consented to and signed the pro-Japanese group Ilchinhoe’s open letter

183 “Yŏnjang P’ungp’a [A Disaster at the Playhouse],” *TMS*, May 1, 1909, 2.

184 “Disaster at Playhouse,” *TMS*, May 1, 1909, 2.

185 “Yaman ūi Shimjang [Barbaric Heart],” *TMS*, March 23, 1909, 2.

186 “Barbaric Heart,” *TMS*, March 23, 1909, 2.

187 “T’usŏk Pusang [Injuries Due to Thrown Stones],” *TMS*, June 29, 1909, 2.

188 See table 2.

189 “Hwangsang Ryangsŏk [Hwang Sang’s Both Stones],” *TMS*, May 28, 1909, 2.

190 “Hyŏpsa T’allo [The Sly Job Revealed],” *TMS*, April 15, 1909, 1.

approving Korea's annexation to Japan that same month.¹⁹¹ Reporting about how unidentified people threw stones into his house every night, *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* introduced him as someone “who agreed with Ilchinhoe's open letter advocating the annexation” and described how his sister severed personal links with him due to his political activities: “she even stopped providing him rice, which she used to give him every month.”¹⁹² In this case, the stone attack was aimed at pro-Japanese politicians.

Political sermons and stone attacks tell us that even charity concerts could not enhance the societal reputation of Seoul's Korean playhouses between 1906 and 1910. People who were observing the political turmoil disapproved of theatergoers who did not participate in the collective efforts to maintain Korea's sovereignty.

The Question of Women's Agency at Charity Concerts

As discussed in chapter 2.3, various interests intersected at charity concerts in Seoul during the late 1900s. *Kisaeng* women, their associations, and Japanese settlers, all of whom organized benefit performances, did not merely act out of humanitarian motives but tried to bring forward their own social, economic, and political interests. Considering the diverse interests of organizers, Korean women's active participation in charity concerts also deserves scrutiny. Like any other group or agent, they had other motivations besides pursuing humanitarianism or patriotism.

Prior studies found that *kisaeng* women could successfully distinguish themselves from prostituting women through charity concerts after the new legislation in 1908, which erased the conventional differentiation among these two groups. While those analyses foreground the interest and identity of *kisaeng* women as a group, newspapers of that time indicate that some *kisaeng* women could stand out as exceptional individuals and gain fame. Some *kisaeng* women could impress the public by putting their names down as organizers in advertisements for charity concerts. The benefit concert for Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage at Soch'undae between December 25 and 27, 1907 was a major example of how individual *kisaeng* women could enhance their reputations through a charity concert. Announcing their plans, seven *kisaeng* women who worked at a Korean royal palace—Kyeok, Yŏnhwa, Kŭmhwa, Chukyŏp, Kyesŏn, Aengmu, and Ch'aeryŏn—put their names in the advertisement (see figure 2).¹⁹³ In so doing, they distinguished themselves from “about a hundred of *kisaeng* women and others”¹⁹⁴ involved in the concert. Likewise, three *kisaeng* women named Yŏnhong, Aengmu, and Nongwŏl ran several advertisements with their names to promote a benefit performance in April

191 “T'usŏk Nanji [The Fuss of Stone Throwing],” *TMS*, December 24, 1909, 2. For his letter of agreement see “Kim Sŭnggyu Tŭng ŭi Ilchinhoe ŭi Hanil Hapsa Sŏngmyŏng kwa Ch'ongni Taeshin Yi Wanyong ŭi Kanch'aek e taehan Kyut'an P'ogomun Kŏn [Ilchinhoe's Statement for the Japanese Annexation of Korea and the Censural Condemn of Yi Wanyong's Trick, Written by Kim Sŭnggye et al.],” *Documents of Residency-General* 8. http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_098r_002o_1110.

192 “Isŏk Taeryang [Stones Instead of Food],” *HS*, December 24, 1909, 2.

193 “Kisaeng Chasŏn Kong'yŏn Soshik [News of Kisaeng's Charity Concert],” *HS*, December 24, 1907, 3.

194 “News of Kisaeng's Charity,” *HS*, December 24, 1907, 3.

1910 at Soch'undae for the orphanage, representing “93 *kisaeng* women”¹⁹⁵ who belonged to the HKA.

Advertisements for charity concerts with *kisaeng* women's names highlighted them as individuals who acquired a way of practicing *modernity* through their traditional profession. As these events were often hosted under organizations' names, adverts with individual *kisaeng* women's names were even more outstanding.¹⁹⁶ In these advertisements, the *kisaeng* women were individuals with agency and not a mere spectacle.

Unlike aristocrat women, being known in public by name was not shameful for *kisaeng* women.¹⁹⁷ On the contrary, gaining fame through one's artistry or virtue was regarded as an honor for *kisaeng* women. When someone achieved public fame as a *kisaeng* woman, she was called *myönggi*, or renowned *kisaeng*.¹⁹⁸ One such example shows that commitment to charity concerts was a new way of becoming *myönggi* in the early twentieth century. According to a news brief published by *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* on July 11, 1908, “Yönshim, a *yegi* who lives in Shigunggol, gave a long and passionate speech about the situation of the orphanage at the charity recital at Tansöngsa. Everyone who listened to it praised her.”¹⁹⁹ This report demonstrates that *kisaeng* women not only performed dance and music on stage but also explained the cause of the fundraising and motivated the audience to contribute to the good deed. Considering that some audience members were of higher social strata than the *kisaeng* woman herself, standing in front of them and guiding them to the practice of charity, a *modern* act, must have been challenging and empowering for her at the same time. Mastering the task was rewarding because the third-class *kisaeng* woman could prove her virtue and gain fame, fulfilling the conditions to be called *myönggi*.

195 Yönhong, Aengmu, and Nongwöl, “Pon sö esö ... [Our Association],” *TMS*, April 12, 1910, 2; “Koawön ül Wihæsö [For the Orphanage],” *TMS*, April 13, 1910, 3; “Yönju Kaehoe [Holding a Recital],” *TMS*, April 14, 1910, 3.

196 Among others, charity concerts for Kyöngsöng Orphanage at Chang'ansa in July 1908, for famine relief in Munch'ön at Soch'undae in April 1909, and for the Women's Common School in July 1910 were announced solely under the name of organization. See “Kisaeng üi Chasön [Kisaeng's Benevolence],” *TMS*, July 11, 1908, 1; Hansöng Kisaeng Association, “Munch'ön Kun Kigün ül Wihaya ... [For the aid of famine in Munch'ön ...],” *HS*, March 31, 1909, 3; “Yögyo Yönju [Recital for Girls' School],” *TMS*, July 12, 1910, 2.

197 Correcting the misapprehension that Korean women had no proper names before the nation oriented itself towards the West, Cho Kyut'ae's 1980 study substantiates that they did have names, although there were gender-biased differences between women and men. According to Cho, men of the Chosön Dynasty could have several names such as a child name (*amyöng*), an adult name (*kwanmyöng*), a courtesy name (*cha*), and a literary name (*ho*), while most of the women had only humble child names. Kim Hara's 2013 study on Yu Manju, the Confucian literate from the eighteenth century, shows that some Korean men argued for the inclusion of women's names in official documents. See Cho Kyut'ae, “Chosön Shidae Yöja Irüm üi Öhakchök Koch'al [A Philological Study of the Women's Names in the Chosön Dynasty],” *Yösöng Munje Yön'gu* 9 (1980), 283–96; Kim Hara, “Chosön Yösöng üi Irüm e Taehan Han Koch'al: Yu Manju üi Yösöng Inshik kwa Kwallyön Hayö [Study on Names of Chosön Women: In Relation to Yu Manju's Views on Women],” *Han'guk Kojön Yösöng Munhak Yön'gu* 27 (2013), 83–120.

198 Woo, “Life of Kisaeng,” 21.

199 “Kisaeng's Speech,” *TMS*, July 11, 1908, 1.

Yi Yonggu and Yu Kiljun.²⁰⁰ It was not a one-time happening. It is rather hard to find a list of donors that does not include *kisaeng* women's names, while noblewomen's names were seldom to be found. In some cases, *kisaeng* women donated more money than more affluent and influential men, proudly taking up the first positions on the donors' list.²⁰¹ These lists capture rare moments where the women, belittled as "flowers that understand language (*haeōhwa*)," made the very social group that gave them the euphemistic name speechless and appeared as the *modernized* subject, well-versed in the virtue of philanthropy.²⁰²

An anonymous letter sent to *PWA Magazine* vividly captures the astonishment that some contemporaries felt witnessing *kisaeng* women's commitment to social causes. The writer of the letter expressed his astonishment and sense of shame at the news of *kisaeng* women's charity work:

I am just a foolish person from a humble household [...]. Recently, as I heard that *kwangi* women gave a charity recital and *yegi* women organized a charitable entertainment event in order to donate all income to the Children's Famine Relief run by the PWA, I could not help but lament. [...] Nowadays, it is women who run the Children's Famine Relief, and it is also *kwangi* and *yegi* women who organize concerts and entertainment and donate money for charity work—it brings such shame on a man like me [...]. Nevertheless, this shame is not because of the PWA but *kwangi* and *yegi* women; I cannot dare to compare PWA's level of knowledge [to mine] and commend the group. However, *kwangi* and *yegi* women used to waste their time singing, dancing, and making music in the blooming morning and moonlit night. Now they did this beautiful deed out of charity overnight—it would be a strange thing even for men. How can I not be ashamed of being a man? [...] Thus, I donate ten wŏn in gold coin and still cannot get rid of my shame, but I congratulate them: hurray for the PWA and hurray for *kwangi* and *yegi* women.²⁰³

The letter reveals that due to the double marginalization of *kisaeng* women based on their status and gender, their contemporaries had little expectations of them. As the anonymous writer realized that he had prejudices against *kisaeng* women, who outdid him in helping others (whatever their initial motivation was), he felt "shame" as a man. Due to

200 Kyōngsōng Orphanage, "Advertisement of Orphanage," *TMS*, November 12, 1907, 3.

201 For instance, *kisaeng* women named Hwasōn, Nongwŏl, and Ch'aeryŏn donated ten wŏn on the third night of the charity concert for Kyōngsōng Orphanage in December 1907 and were mentioned before all other donors. Meanwhile, Ryurok, another *kisaeng* woman, donated ten wŏn on the first night, and was listed after influential Korean men, such as Ryu Chinhong and Hyŏn Yŏng'un, who contributed the same amount. "First Charity Concert," *TMS*, January 7, 1908, 3. This suggests that, although the primary criterion for the list was the amount of contribution, factors such as gender and societal status also influenced the arrangement, with alphabetical order being disregarded.

202 *Haeōhwa* referred to *kisaeng* women in general, yet there were individual *kisaeng* women who used it as their personal name as well. The oldest record of a *kisaeng* woman with this name in *The Annals of Chosŏn Dynasty (Sillok)* dates back to 1479. See Woo, "Life of Kisaeng," 21; *Sōngjong Sillok*, September 5, 1479. The term was broadly used in the twentieth century, too, as Yi Nūnghwa's 1927 book *Chosŏn Haeōhwa Sa (The History of Flowers that Understand the Language in Chosŏn)* exemplifies.

203 Mumyŏngssi, "Kisŏ [A Letter]," *PWA Magazine* 1 (1908), 29–31.

this experience, the man donated money for a charitable cause. It is likely that other contemporaries, too, learned a similar lesson as they found out about *kisaeng* women's charity work and joined the fundraising, feeling ashamed of their disinterest in philanthropic projects.

Meanwhile, women of higher strata usually chose to remain anonymous. While some women behind the PWA revealed their names by publishing their texts in the magazine, Korean noblewomen neither put their names on the advertisement nor on donors' lists. Instead, they were only known by their family name or in relation to their male family members, such as "Mrs. Yim who lives in Chi-dong," "Mrs. Shin, [...] Mrs. Kim, Mrs. Cho," or "the mother of Mr. Cho Dong'yun."²⁰⁴ Ch'oe Haok, who put her name on a donors' list published on the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* on January 7, 1908, shows that the custom of seclusion for noblewomen was about to be broken.²⁰⁵ However, for most of them, the custom still had a hold on their lives.

While strictly keeping to the rule that noblewomen's names should not be known publicly, some played a significant part in organizing charity concerts, while others only paid visits to such events. As Ladd's observation and other cases exemplify, they even cooperated with women across boundaries of ethnicity and social status; they sold tickets on the street with Japanese women or received help from *kisaeng* women, who thankfully drew public attention to the humanitarian projects.²⁰⁶ Ladd wrote,

The hardest crust to break will doubtless be that which encompasses and crushes the Korean lady. In Japan[,] there has never been anything quite comparable to the still present degrading influences bearing upon the womanhood of the upper classes in Korea. But while we were in Seoul, for the first time so far as known in its history, a Korean lady walked upon the streets, and after making several calls in this fashion, rode home in the electric car! *Her companion was a Japanese lady, and the two were selling tickets to a public entertainment given [o]n behalf of a benevolent enterprise.* Being present ourselves at this same entertainment, we saw to our surprise quite one hundred Korean women, dressed in their native costume, enter the theatre[] and seat themselves among the Japanese of their own sex. If this thing goes on, racial hatred is doomed. For soon it is to be hoped, or feared, according to one's point of view, that Korean ladies will attend garden parties and, perhaps, finally, frequent afternoon teas and evening receptions, at which foreigners of both sexes are present. And this, I am sure, is a sight never as yet beheld by mortal eyes; at least my eyes saw no sign of its beginning as yet in the now half[-]opened 'Hermit Kingdom' (emphasis added).²⁰⁷

Ladd, an advocate and adviser of Itō Hirobumi, painted a rosy picture of Korean women's liberation and even the possibility of peace between them and their Japanese sisters: "if

204 "As the charity concert took place in Kaesŏng..." *TMS*, December 20, 1907, 3; "First Charity Concert," *TMS*, January 7, 1908, 3; PWA, "Kwanin Kurakbu esŏ ... [At the Officials' Club ...]," *HS*, July 15, 1908, 3.

205 See Cho, "Study of Women's Names," 286–87.

206 TWA's charity concert, for instance, took place at the Japanese theater Kabukiza and featured both Korean and Japanese female dancers. See "TWA's Concert," *Keijō Shinpo*, August 30, 1908, 2, as cited in Yi, "Articles about Korean Performing Arts," 64.

207 Ladd, *In Korea*, 87.

this thing goes on, racial hatred is doomed.” Indeed, he overestimated Japanese women’s influence on Korean women while neglecting recent changes because his contemporaries had already witnessed how Korean noblewomen had become vocal for their cause and claimed their place in society. At the close of the nineteenth century, a group of Korean noblewomen who had named themselves Ch’anyanghoe (“Praise and Encouragement Association”) erected schools for women and even protested the government’s decision to abolish the People’s Assembly in November 1898.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, Ladd observed a bonding moment between the high societies of the two countries, as the concert they promoted was organized by individuals closely associated with Itō Hirobumi himself, contributing to the preservation of their prestige. Apart from that, however, his depiction is useful in understanding how active and visible Korean noblewomen in charity work were. Very likely, some Korean *yangban* women of the early 1900s regarded broadening their social realm through charity work as their first goal and achievement, enacting gendered colonial publicness amid the political turmoil.

Texts published in *PWA Magazine* show that factors such as a stereotypical understanding of women’s virtues, role models from foreign countries, egalitarian ideals within the concept of philanthropy, and a reformist urge for women to modernize themselves played a substantial in expanding women’s realm. The magazine explained that the PWA was established “as an imitation of charity associations in civilized countries,” and “it is unsurprising that there are women’s charity associations in the East and the West because women have a more benevolent and kind heart than men.”²⁰⁹ This attribute was certainly gendered and could easily limit women’s realm to care work closely connected to their tasks at home as caregivers. Concurrently, however, the gendered division of labor could also be appropriated as a key to open the door to society under the pretext that Korean women should take over the *womanly task* of organizing themselves and doing charity work outside the home—as they did from the early 1900s onwards.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, Korean women could observe how foreign women actively stood up for humanitarian causes in Korea, which may have inspired them to follow suit. For instance, the first bazaar in Korea was held at the Japanese consulate in Seoul on November 6, 1897, organized by the Japanese Women’s Philanthropic Association.²¹⁰ Likewise, the late 1890s also witnessed how an English woman started an orphanage for Korean children in Seoul.²¹¹ It is possible to assume that Korean society accepted women’s involvement in philanthropic works through such examples.

208 Ch’anyanghoe was the first Korean women’s organization, and its members were mostly noblewomen. On their activism, see Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, “Mapping a Hundred Years of Activism. Women’s Movements in Korea,” in *Women’s Movements in Asia. Feminisms and Transnational Activism*, eds. Mina Roces and Louise P. Edwards (Milton Park: Routledge, 2010), 189–91. They earned compliment for partaking in the demonstration that “their loyal minds is better than that of men’s.” See “Ch’anyanghoe Puintül i Ch’ungae Chishim i Kyökpai Haya ... [Out of loyal heart, Ch’anyanghoe’s women ...],” *CS*, November 10, 1898, 3.

209 PWA, “Palgan Ch’uiji [The Purpose of the Publication],” *PWA Magazine* 1, 1.

210 “Ilbon Puin Chasönhoe esö ... [The Japanese Women’s Philanthropic Association ...],” *TS*, November 6, 1897, 3.

211 “Kohaewön Kyuch’ik [Rules of the Orphanage],” *TS*, June 30, 1899, 3.

Meanwhile, the egalitarian belief that everyone was born kind-hearted, and thus, anyone could help others, empowered Korean women to undertake charity work regardless of their strata and educational background. The *PWA Magazine* repeated this aphorism throughout its first issue, putting a strong emphasis on the universality of good nature in every human being (while asserting that women had more of it than men). For instance, the publisher stated that “Heaven gives a good nature to each human being when it creates them, thus there is no person without a benevolent heart”²¹² and broadened this humane quality to the most disdained group under the social rank system: the butchers. “Even butchers, who kill [animals for the living], feel the urge to save a child when they see it crawl into a well. This urge stems from the bottom of the good heart that the Heavens bestowed them with.”²¹³ Likewise, a woman named Kim Hŭnggyŏng echoed this idea in her short speech, which was transcribed and published in the magazine, in which she said, “How does one do good? I can do good things with my mind because every person has a good nature.”²¹⁴ These examples show that the firm belief in the goodness of human nature was the basic premise of Korean women’s charity work in the early twentieth century.

Furthermore, the advocates of women’s charity work declared it a way for Korean women to contribute to the country’s modernization. From their perspective, charity work was not only for the humanitarian cause but also for enhancing the competitiveness of the whole nation. The Western-oriented characteristics of the Enlightenment and Civilization discourse were immanent to this narrative. Kim Hŭnggyŏng reinforced the idea that “the more developed the philanthropy, the higher the degree of civilization, and the higher the degree of civilization, the stronger the nation will become,”²¹⁵ which would eventually make individuals happier, too. For her, the West was a promising example that a country could become stronger through charity work: “In all the civilized countries of the West, the foundations of civilization became solid through charity work, such as running the orphanage, home for blind children, nursing home, and Red Cross. Thus, let us do charity and become people of a civilized country, too.”²¹⁶ The civilization narrative offered Korean women a sense of mission to drive change even while their access to the country’s politics and economy was limited.

At the same time, PWA members recognized charity as a kind of women’s movement to expand women’s participation in society and encouraged active participation by fellow women. Urging Korean women to become more engaged in charity work, chairwoman Ch’a Ch’ŏnggyŏng emphasized that Korean women had been socially constrained, although they were equal to men:

When creating us human beings, God made the same number of men and women, gave us the same consciousness, and the same wisdom. There is no way that we are

212 PWA, “Purpose of Publication,” 2.

213 Ibid.

214 Kim Hŭnggyŏng, “Chasŏn puin ūi yŏnsŏl [The Speech of a Benevolent Woman],” *PWA Magazine* 1, 13.

215 Kim, “Speech of Benevolent Woman,” 14.

216 Ibid.

different. However, whether good or evil, it has always been men who were active, while we women do not even have a choice of who is prominent [figure in history].²¹⁷

For Ch'a, making up for Korean women's lack of activity was not only a question of their social participation but also their prosperity as a collective. Adopting the Social Darwinian narrative, Ch'a explained that persons subject to charity were eliminated from the struggle for survival. From this point of view, she argued that doing charity work in her generation was a starting point to improve the social standing of the future generations of Korean women because it would put them on the side of the benefactor and not the beneficiary:

This era [we are living in] is the arena of competition for survival. If we do not become active like others, we women cannot avoid becoming beneficiaries of other people's benevolence instead of saving them. Let alone wash away the previous shame, we would make women of the future fall into a miserable situation again. Therefore, we women must work even harder. Let us not miss this extraordinary time. If we waste this time, those years will never wait for us and will never come back.²¹⁸

To summarize, diverse groups of Korean women in the early 1900s discovered charity concerts as a vehicle to realize their own goals, turning theaters into a locus of gendered colonial publicness. While *kisaeng* women used it as a chance to earn fame, most Korean women of higher social strata rather chose to remain anonymous. Instead of fame, noblewomen considered charity concerts as a portal to leave home and broaden their scope of social activities and network. Meanwhile, *PWA Magazine* shows how the discourse and practices of charity work empowered Korean women across social boundaries to get involved in charity work. Following the examples of foreign women, Korean women organized themselves into charity groups. While the belief in every woman's good nature encouraged women of all strata to overcome hesitation, the claim that women were more sympathetic than men helped them take over the field as activists. Furthermore, PWA women saw themselves as agents of the country's modernization and precursors for future generations of Korean women. In this regard, charity work was also a form of self-help to enhance women's status in the late Korean Empire that took place in theaters. By actively practicing philanthropy, which was promoted as a symbolic act of modern values, some Korean women appeared in the media as modern subjects in the first decade of the 1900s. In the subsequent decade (and the first decade of colonial rule), however, they would be called upon to embody modern subjectivity in the theater in a very different way.

217 Ch'a Ch'öngyöng, "Chöng Öpnün Köt to Chö Irwöl lo, Pan'gaun Köt to Chö Irwöl Ira [The Time Is Merciless, Yet Also Promising]," *PWA Magazine* 1, 11.

218 Ch'a, "Time Is Merciless," 13.

3. Social Education in Korean Theaters

'Cause you *make* me feel,
You *make* me feel,
You *make* me feel like a natural woman.
*Aretha Franklin, (You Make Me Feel Like) A
Natural Woman*¹

On August 22, 1910, Prime Minister Yi Wanyong signed the Treaty of Annexation with Japan. The abdication of Emperor Sunjong a week later finalized Korea's status as a colony of the Japanese Empire.² During the first decade of the colonial rule (1910–19), the Government-General launched a series of assimilation policies based on the Japanese discussions that took place before the annexation.³

Historian Mark E. Caprio remarks that Japanese assimilation policies in Korea were formed through Japan's own experiences with Western-oriented transformation under the pressure of Western expansion, with the 1868 Meiji Restoration being its epitome.⁴ Soon, Japan appropriated the Western mission of educating “the savage” and started its own assimilation policies to conquer ethnic minorities on the Japanese archipelago and Taiwan.⁵ In the Japanese discourse of the closing nineteenth century, Korea and its people were increasingly connoted with cultural and political backwardness, geopolitical threat, and character flaws which legitimated Japan's assimilation policies.⁶

Caprio questions to what extent Japan was able to realize the assimilation rhetoric in its political decisions. While the intermingled history of Korea and Japan and similarities of race, language, and religion presented a rosy picture of assimilation, Koreans' alleged inferiority to Japanese legitimated the one-sided assimilation policies.⁷ Through the as-

1 Gerry Goffin, Carole King, and Jerry Wexler, *(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman*, sung by Aretha Franklin (New York: 1967), emphasis added.

2 Cumings, *Korea's Place*, 145.

3 Mark E. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 16.

4 See Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*, 19–48.

5 See *ibid.*, 49–80.

6 See *ibid.*, 86–92.

7 *Ibid.*, 92.

simulation, policymakers tried to turn ethnic Koreans into “imperial subjects (*teikoku no shinmin*),” which was distinguishable from the colonizers, who were called “imperial nationals (*teikoku no kokumin*).”⁸

The discrepancy between the rhetoric of inclusion and the practice of division was best captured in the colonized Koreans’ education from 1910 onwards. In the 1910s, the elementary school education for Korean children was shorter than for Japanese children and focused on language proficiency and work ethic instead of academic subjects.⁹ Caprio notes that the Korean daily newspaper *Maeil Shinbo*, an organ of the Government-General, served the colonial assimilation policies as a means of the so-called “social education” (K: *sahoe kyoyuk*, J: *shakai kyōiku*).¹⁰ The *Maeil Shinbo* disseminated lessons from classroom textbooks such as “thriftiness, hard work, health and nutrition, and eradication of ‘feudal custom’”¹¹ to the broader public. Furthermore, the newspaper highlighted the degree of Koreans’ assimilation into the Japanese colonial order by featuring Korean participants in imperial events such as Annexation Day and the Japanese emperor’s birthday.¹²

Meanwhile, Todd A. Henry, a historian of modern Korea, broadens the understanding of Japanese assimilation policies. Pointing out the multifaceted nature of the assimilation, he demonstrates “how public spaces became targeted points of interventions aimed at transforming nonelite inhabitants from disobedient objects of rule into self-regulating, if not self-governing, subjects of power”¹³ in their everyday lives. Considering the limited access to school education and low literacy rate among Koreans during the colonial era,¹⁴ spatial interference was necessary for the colonial authorities. Furthermore, Henry suggests considering that the Government-General was not omnipotent nor were its policies monolithic, which allows for an understanding of the assimilation process beyond the top-down-approach.¹⁵

From this perspective, Henry examines the Government-General’s restructuring of Seoul’s urban spaces and rules imposed on them as mechanisms of spiritual, material, and civic assimilation. Thereby, he illuminates how colonized Koreans and Japanese settlers constantly contradicted and deviated from the Government-General’s plans while pursuing their own interests, which created room for negotiations and ruptures in the colonial order. For example, the Government-General successfully mobilized diverse groups of Koreans to visit the 1915 Industrial Exhibition at Kyōngbokkung Palace, designed to juxtapose “Korea’s past as premodern, closed, and defunct with Japan’s present as modern, open, and progressive.”¹⁶ Despite the curatorial finesse and guides

8 Ibid., 84.

9 See *ibid.*, 92–100.

10 *Ibid.*, 100.

11 *Ibid.*, 101.

12 *Ibid.*, 105–10.

13 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 4.

14 See Daniel Pieper, “Korean as Transitional Literacy: Language Policy and Korean Colonial Education, 1910–1919,” *Acta Koreana* 18, no. 2 (2015), 393–421; refer to 414–16.

15 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 6.

16 *Ibid.*, 99.

who should have helped Korean visitors understand the exhibition's message, Koreans primarily consumed it as a spectacle instead of making much interpretative effort.¹⁷

Although Henry does not mention it, Seoul's Korean playhouses, too, were one of the public sites where the colonial police and media could exercise their power onto the colonized bodies. Police officers who attended plays surveilled the auditorium as well as the stage under the name of *public safety* and *civic morality*. Meanwhile, the *Maeil Shinbo* circulated stories of police intervention and audiences' complaints about other theatergoers' conduct, reinforcing such interventions' disciplinary effect, as this chapter will illustrate.

Mun Kyōng'yōn's 2009 study revealed that the early Japanese colonial policy aimed to control and alter Korean theater to enhance *p'ungksok*, or custom, and assimilate Koreans.¹⁸ To achieve this goal, collaborative Japanese nationals in Korea proposed initiatives such as constructing grand Japanese theaters, inviting Japanese theater groups to the new colony, or organizing tours with support from broader Japanese settlers' communities to *enlighten* the Korean population.¹⁹ While Mun's study highlights the significance of theaters in the Japanese assimilation policy in general, my examination of newspaper discourse from the 1910s shows that there was a line of assimilation policy specifically targeted Korean women.

Extending discussion of colonial subjectification to Korean theaters and female spectators of the 1910s, chapter 3 examines how the Japanese assimilation policies affected the Korean theater and how Korean audiences, especially women, were subjected to assimilation politics. Mainly, this chapter takes up Henry's approaches to social education by heeding the audience's experiences, media reports on spectators, and police interventions in theaters. Having emerged during the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the concept of social education identified new media, such as playhouses and plays, as an essential element that shapes people's ways of behaving and thinking.²⁰ While theater represented a source of social problems for some intellectuals, others considered it an effective means of education. Either way, the concept of social education called for active intervention into theatrical practices by the authorities and pedagogues.

Political tensions over theaters in the 1910s were not merely produced by the dichotomy of the colonizers and the colonized. At the Korean theaters in Seoul, conflicts also occurred between Koreans. Often, it was colonial police and the media that intervened and made use of this tension. However, the colonized Koreans, too, appropriated the colonial surveillance system to reestablish the social order they subscribed to. In particular, the hierarchical social order of the Chosŏn Dynasty based on social stratum and gender clashed with new logic of the public space that people of diverse backgrounds had to share, which led to constant negotiations between diverse expectations that would form the audience publicness in colonial Korea.

17 See *ibid.*, 97–113.

18 Mun, "Custom Control," 362–64.

19 *Ibid.*, 363.

20 For the conceptual history of social education in the Japanese context see chapter 3.1.

3.1 Theater's Role in Colonial Social Education

"Social Education (*shakai kyōiku*)" in the Japanese Debate

In his 1985 study, the British pedagogue J.E. Thomas argued that social education played a significant role in forming the democratic social order after Japan's defeat in World War II.²¹ According to him, the Japanese term "social education" might correspond to "what is called in the west 'liberal adult education.'"²² Mainly focused on the development of the concept in the Japanese archipelago, Thomas's work pays no attention to how this concept relates to Japanese colonial rule in Korea and Taiwan before the end of WWII.²³

Social education had been a key concept to realize the reformist zeal in Japan during the Meiji Era (1868–1912).²⁴ Reviewing prior studies and sources in five consecutive papers, a Japanese pedagogue, Satō Sanzō, analyzes the concept's complex history.²⁵ According to Satō, the earliest account that mentions the term "social education" is the December 1882 issue of a periodical named *Shichi Ichi Zappō*, which reported that a man named Ukida Kazutami held a speech titled "The Principle of Social Education (*Shakai Kyōiku no Ri*)."²⁶ Satō explains that unlike other neologisms of that time, including "society (*shakai*)," social education was not a translated term but a creation of Meiji Japan.²⁷ Satō points out that the term "social education" emerged when schools became the central institution for education in Japan.²⁸ Between the late 1870s and early 1890s, Japanese

21 See J.E. Thomas, *Learning Democracy in Japan* (London: SAGE Publication, 1985).

22 Thomas, *Learning Democracy*, 4.

23 Thomas touches upon the fact that the social education became "an agent of propaganda" in Japan during the 1930s yet misses the opportunity to critically examine its usage in Japan's colonies prior to the 1930s. See *ibid.*, 36.

24 Under the title "Shakai Kyōiku wa, Naze *Shakai Kyōiku* to Meimei Sareta noka [How Did 'Social Education' Gain the Name?]," Satō Sanzō published five treatises between March 2009 and March 2011. This chapter draws upon these studies. The studies' titles, including "Sono 1: Meiji 10-nendai no Shakai Kyōiku Ron Kenkyū no Kentō o Tōshite [Part 1: Through a Study of Social Education Theories During the Second Decade of the Meiji Era]," *Hirosakidaigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 101 (March 2009), 129–38; "Sono 2: Meiji 10-nendai no Shakai Kyōiku Ron Kenkyū no Kentō o Tōshite [Part 2: Through a Study of Social Education Theories During the Second Decade of the Meiji Era]," *Hirosaki Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 102 (October 2009), 133–40; "Sono 3: Yamana Jirō *Shakai kyōiku Ron* no Rekishiteki Ichidzuke o Megutte [Part 3: On the Historical Position of Yamana Jirō's *On Social Education*]," *Hirosaki Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 103 (March 2010), 139–50; "Sono 4: Satō Zenjirō *Saikin Shakai kyōikuhō* no Rekishiteki Ichidzuke o Megutte [Part 4: On the Historical Position of Satō Zenjirō's *Recent Methods of Social Education*]," *Hirosaki Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 104 (October 2010), 111–19; "Sono 5: Meiji 30–40-nendai no Shakai Kyōiku Ron no Tokuchō [Part 5: Through A Study of Social Education Theories During the Last Two Decades of the Meiji era]," *Hirosaki Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 105 (March 2011), 105–15, will be shortened to "Social Education" with the part number of the given article in the notes.

25 The rendition of accounts on social education in this study, including Yamana Jirō's 1892 book and Satō Zenjirō's 1899 book, are based on Satō's studies.

26 Satō, "Social Education 1," 131.

27 *Ibid.*, 135.

28 *Ibid.*, 137.

education politics prioritized moral education (*tokuiku*) over knowledge education (*chiku*).²⁹ However, skepticism arose over whether schools alone could fulfill the mission of moral education. Against this background, society gained importance as an entity that would replenish school education.³⁰

Satō explains how this concept broadened its meaning from passive prevention of harmful effects to the active intervention into and usage of the social environment to educate people. In the late 1880s, Japanese reformists began to use this concept to refer to society's formative power (*keiseiryoku*).³¹ They regarded social education as an essential part of education along with school and home education. Notably, social education was understood as a means of supplementing school education in terms of moral education. With the aim of putting into effect this concept, reformists focused on improving custom.³²

In this venture, advocates of social education in Japan asserted that theaters and playhouses needed to be controlled and improved to protect students and children from possible harm. For instance, an 1886 editorial of *Kyōiku Hōchi* argued that diverse things of society such as religion, theater reform, and women's leisure time affected people "involuntarily,"³³ thus they needed to be improved for the sake of children's social education. Likewise, in 1887, *Kyōiku Jiron* counted everyday behaviors of parents and teachers as well as things popular such as singing, dancing, playing, music, structure of houses, and design of clothes as elements that affected children's education, and were thus in need of improvement.³⁴ Using the term popular education (*tsūzoku kyōiku*), the newspaper *Yomiuri Shinbun*, too, highlighted "play, military story, lecture, dramatic recitation (*jōruri*), popular songs (*ika*), newspaper, magazine, sumo wrestling, and toys"³⁵ as elements of moral education outside the school in 1888.

While the 1880s mainly focused on limiting the potentially negative influence society could have on children, the 1890s witnessed a positive turn in the social education discourse. According to Satō, Japanese reformists began to arrange educational works and plans directly targeting students and others, which are thought to have a good influence on them.³⁶ Thereby playhouses were cast in an ambiguous light. In his 1898 book *Nihon Genji Kyōiku Zen* (*The Complete Japanese Education Today*), for instance, Yoshimura Torajirō considered plays in playhouses (*yose*), smoking, illustrated books, and popular songs as things to be passively prevented because they might harm Japanese custom and educa-

29 Satō, "Social Education 2," 140.

30 Satō, "Social Education 1," 131.

31 Satō, "Social Education 3," 145.

32 *Ibid.*, 144–45.

33 "Shasetsu Kyōiku Hōchi no Kairyō [Editorial: Kyōiku Hōchi's Improvement]," *Kyōiku Hōchi*, November 20, 1886, as cited in Satō, "Social Education 3," 143.

34 Hosokawa Kentarō, "Shakai Kyōiku no Gaimoku [Overview of Social Education]," *Kyōiku Jiron* 73 (April 1887), as cited in Satō, "Social Education 3," 143–44.

35 Sugiura Jūgō, "Katō Hiroyuki-kun no Tokuiku Ron [On Moral Education of Katō Hiroyuki]," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, May 15, 1888, as cited in Satō, "Social Education 3," 144.

36 Satō, "Social Education 5," 108.

tion.³⁷ According to him, the museum, library, amusement center (*yūgijō*), role models, beneficial books and pictures counted as things to be actively encouraged.³⁸

Meanwhile, those who reconceptualized social education as a form of non-school education for adults saw educational potential in theaters.³⁹ Kumagai Gorō, who translated Paul Bergemann (1862–1946)'s 1899 book *Aphorismen zur sozialen Pädagogik* in 1900, was one of them.⁴⁰ He chose social education (*shakaiteki kyōiku*) as the Japanese translation of the German term *soziale Pädagogik*, bringing together two different concepts with their own histories.⁴¹ Under Bergemann's influence, Kumagai counted theater as a non-school institution for adult education, in addition to the entertainment hall, exhibition, concert, public reading, and museum.⁴²

Satō explains how differently the same concept of social education was interpreted by two prominent figures of the Japanese discourse, namely, Yamana Jirō and Satō Zenjirō.⁴³ While the former regarded society as an agent of education with formative power, the latter saw the society as the target of educative measurements.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Yamana viewed social education as having a different function from school education, while Zenjirō argued that both school and social education shared one goal: the formation of the state.⁴⁵ Satō sees a clear connection between Zenjirō's understanding of social education and the burgeoning idea of an imperialist state after Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.⁴⁶ Considering society as "a kind of organism,"⁴⁷ Zenjirō accentuated that an individual's happiness cannot be anything else but what benefits the nation and the state. In this context, Zenjirō advocated the "education of public sentiments" and "regulation of the society"⁴⁸ via social education as a means of cultivating a healthy, functioning, imperial body.

37 Ibid., 109.

38 Yoshimura Torajirō, *Nihon Genji Kyōiku Zen* [Current Education in Japan], (1898), 220, as cited in Satō, "Social Education 5," 109.

39 For social education as a form of non-school education for adults see Satō, "Social Education 5," 110–11.

40 Satō, "Social Education 5," 111. For the Japanese reception of *soziale Pädagogik* through Kuragai's translation, I consulted Kurachi Norihiro, "Doitsu Shakai-teki Kyōiku-gaku no Juyō to Shakai Kyōiku: Kumagai Gorō no Kyōiku Ron Kara [Introduction of 'Social Pedagogy' from Germany and Shakai-Kyōiku: On Goro Kumagai's Theory of Education]," *Journal of Lifelong Education Field Studies* 6, no. 17 (2018), 3–17.

41 Satō, "Social Education 5," 111.

42 See Kurachi, "Introduction of 'Social Pedagogy,'" 9 and 12.

43 To avoid any confusion based on the same surname, I use Satō to refer to the scholar who investigated the Japanese debate over social education and Zenjirō to the author of the late nineteenth century.

44 See Satō, "Social Education 4," 112.

45 See *ibid.*, 114.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, 114–15.

48 *Ibid.*

Theater and Social Education (1): Education Using New Media

As a vehicle for education in every age group and social setting, social education was beneficial for the Japanese politics of assimilation in Korea. The varied understanding of social education and theater's role in it were laid out in the Korean context, too, eventually becoming an integral part of the discourse and practice of theater politics during the colonial era.

The call for social education (*sahoe kyoyuk*) through Korean playhouses first emerged in the first decade of the 1900s. Notably, the formation of a Korean theater district in Seoul during this period sparked a controversy over the playhouse business. While some people called for abolishing theaters altogether, others insisted on educating the audience through *enlightened* performances and usage of playhouse facilities.⁴⁹

The term "social education" was introduced to the Korean discourse in 1906 through two routes. Ōgaki Takeo (1862–1929), a Japanese journalist who lived in Korea, first used the term in the Korean context on May 19, 1906 in a lecture titled "The Effects of Education," which he held at the third meeting of the Korean Self-Strengthening Association (*Taehan Chaganghoe*) with 67 attendees.⁵⁰ This speech was published in the *Hwangšōng Shinmun* in two segments in May 1906 and re-published in the first issue of *Taehan Chaganghoe Wōlbo* (*The Monthly Magazine of the Korean Association for Self-Strengthening*) in July 1906.⁵¹ In August of that same year, Ch'ae Kyubyōng published an article titled "Social Education" in the journal of the Great Korean Learning Group (*Taegūk Hakhoe*), an enlightenment-oriented Korean students' association in Tokyo.⁵²

The explanations of social education by Ōgaki and Ch'ae shared some characteristics. Firstly, they began their accounts by introducing the trichotomy of home, school, and social education.⁵³ Secondly, both texts claimed that the target group of social education was adults.⁵⁴ Thirdly, both authors introduced newspapers and public lectures as essential means of social education.⁵⁵ Although it is unclear exactly whose book the authors read, the influence of the late nineteenth-century discourse of social education in Japan is recognizable. Both authors drew upon the idea that social education was about enhancing social institutions' positive influence on adults' resocialization. Soon became the education trichotomy, adult education, and the importance of new education com-

49 For instance, Yi P'ilhwa pleaded Emperor Kojong to abolish Soch'undae in April 1906. "Ryulsa Hyōkpa [Abolish Hyōmnyulsa's Theater]," *HS*, April 25, 1906, 2.

50 *Taehan Chaganghoe Wōlbo* [*The Monthly Magazine of the Korean Association for Self-Strengthening*; hereafter *TW*] (July 1906), 38.

51 Ōgaki, "Taehan Chaganghoe Yōnsōl: Kyoyuk ūi Hyogwa [Lecture for the Korean Association for Self-Strengthening: The Effects of Education]," *HS*, May 24, 1906, 3 and *HS*, May 25, 1906, 3. *TW* (July 1906), 46–53. This chapter uses *Taehan Chaganghoe Wōlbo* as the source.

52 Ch'ae Kyubyōng, "Sahoe Kyoyuk [Social Education]," *Taegūk Hakpo* (hereafter *TH*) 1 (August 1906), 23–24.

53 Ōgaki, "Effects of Education," 46; Ch'ae, "Social Education," 23.

54 Ōgaki, "Effects of Education," 46; Ch'ae, "Social Education," 23.

55 Ōgaki, "Effects of Education," 46; Ch'ae, "Social Education," 23.

mon in the Korean enlightenment-oriented intellectuals' discourse, who sought to overcome the national crisis through education between 1900 and 1910.⁵⁶

While numerous Korean intellectuals adopted the concept of social education, Ōgakī was a rare case that regarded plays and theaters as a means of social education in the Korean discourse. According to him, social education meant acquiring knowledge through contact with new social institutions and media such as newspapers, public speeches, libraries, and theaters. He emphasized the importance of social education as a crucial element of *civilized* countries:

To sum up, children and infants are contingent on home- and school education, while persons beyond that age are subject to social education. People of civilized countries highly praise the benefit of newspapers and the affective power of speeches, saying that they have a profound impact on the education of the nation and recommend them each other ceaselessly; meanwhile, in Korea, some county headmen and other local government officials disturb the publication of newspapers, and some people send newspapers back. This is comparable to the First Qin Emperor's fooling of his own people; [people doing] this [rejecting newspapers] are enemies of civilization and progress and can be called sinners who strain the Great Korean Emperor's sincerity.⁵⁷

According to Ōgakī, social education through reading newspapers and books as well as attending public speeches were fundamental to educating people beyond the school age. As a journalist and public speaker, he was aware of the media's influential role in spreading ideas. In his speech, Ōgakī claimed that playhouses, too, could be used as a medium to disseminate Confucian values to the broader masses. He asserted that theatergoers should be able to “watch the deeds of loyal vassals and righteous officials, as well as filial sons and chaste wives with one's own eyes, in order to understand the meaning of ‘Encouraging Good and Punishing Evil’ (*kwōnsōn ching'ak*).”⁵⁸ Emphasizing Confucian values for the *civilization* of the Korean nation was not a contradictory claim for him. In his 1906 treatise “I See that People of Great Nations Share Three Characteristics,” Ōgakī claimed that “people of great nations have a conservative spirit and concurrently an enterprising spirit.”⁵⁹ Following his logic, teaching Koreans Confucian values, equivalent to the aforementioned “conservative spirit,” was a part of the nation's moral development, and theaters could be useful for this purpose.

Based on his notion of social education, Ōgakī criticized commercial playhouses in Seoul, especially Soch'undae:

56 The frequent usage of the term “social education” by members of *Taegük Hakhoe* indicates the popularity of the concept in the Japanese academic discussions of that time. See (selected), Kim Pohyōn, “Kongha T'aegūkhakhoe Ch'anglip [Celebrating the Founding of T'aegük Hakhoe],” *TH* (December 1906), 8; Yi Tongch'ō, “Chōngshin chōk Kyoyuk ūi P'iryo [The Necessity of Mental Education],” *TH* (June 1907), 5–10; “Kohaksaeng ūi Chōnghyōng [Self-Supporting Students' Feelings],” *TH* (July 1907), 50–54.

57 Ōgakī, “Effects of Education,” 46–47.

58 *Ibid.*, 46.

59 Ōgakī Takeo, “Widae han Kungmin enūn Samgae T'ūksōng i Yuham ūl Kyōnham [Great Nations Share Three Characteristics],” *TW* (August 1906), 1.

Currently, Hyömnyulsa [the operating company of Soch'undae] also calls itself a playhouse. However, it does not disrupt the corruption of public morals (*p'ungsok üi koeran*) by bringing numerous *kisaeng* women together and stimulating the youth's dissipation. It only aims at filling the wallets of two or three persons. Thus, you should know that Hyömnyulsa can never be counted as the category mentioned above [of institutions for social education].⁶⁰

His criticisms of Soch'undae seem to be in line with his Korean contemporaries' objection to the theater. Yi P'ilhwa, the vice director of the Office of Sacrificial Rites (*pongsangsi*), urged Emperor Kojong "to ban the performances [of Soch'undae] immediately"⁶¹ and to teach proper music (*chöngak*) to Korean people. Unlike Yi, however, Ōgaki did not deny the pedagogical potential of theaters as such. Instead, he criticized Soch'undae particularly for staging *kisaeng* women's shows. Alluding to the concept of social education, the Japanese journalist implied that theaters could teach Koreans about moral values, but only if they offered educational plays instead of entertaining shows.

Ōgaki's understanding of theaters as an institution for Korean adults' social education was in line with that of Kumagai Gorō. His call for positive usage of theaters preceded the discourse of theater improvement that centered on introducing alternative narratives and genres to Korean audiences.

Theater and Social Education (2): Compensating for Koreans' "Uncouth Nature"

While many of Seoul's citizens enthusiastically welcomed the growth of Seoul's Korean theater district, both Confucian and enlightenment-oriented intellectuals were skeptical about the new development. As discussed in chapter 2.2, enlightenment-oriented Koreans severely criticized Korean theatergoers already before colonization, branding them as "Lewd Women and Prodigal Men."⁶² Korean daily newspapers blamed the authorities for allowing playhouses and urged them to take action to prevent moral decay. In its May 5, 1908 editorial, for instance, the *Hwangsöng Shinmun* asserted that Korean theaters failed to spread pedagogical messages as in the "civilized countries (*munmyöng-guk*)" and "those who are responsible should ban or improve it."⁶³ Meanwhile, a satirical commentary in the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* entitled "Blaming the Police" castigated the police for neglecting the prostituting women's theater visits and obscene songs performed on stage.⁶⁴ Since the Korean police were already under the influence of Imperial Japan since the Agreement of July 1907, the sharp criticism of the police in the anti-Japanese Korean newspapers can be read as a criticism aimed at Imperial Japan, which took control over

60 Ōgaki, "Effects of Education," 46.

61 *Diary of the Royal Secretariat* vol. 3193, April 17, 1906, http://db.itkc.or.kr/inLink?DCI=ITKC_ST_Zo_A43_03A_24A_00120_2006_206_XML.

62 See "Cigarette Song," *TMS*, December 25, 1908, 2; "Sönak Pyönggö [The Good and The Bad Live Together]," *TMS*, May 30, 1909, 2.

63 "Deploring Compatriots," *HS*, May 5, 1908, 2.

64 "Blaming Police," *TMS*, December 30, 1908, 2.

the police, yet did not do any better at maintaining the public order in the eyes of the enlightenment-oriented Koreans.⁶⁵

Challenged by critics on multiple occasions, Seoul's police finally discussed the option to "send police officers in civilian dress to every district and theater to investigate secretly"⁶⁶ in April 1909. Theater historian Yi Sünghüi points out that the legal grounds for police intervention into Korean theaters remained weak at that time. During the 1910s, Rules Controlling Plays (*Hünghaeng Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik*), first enforced by the Pusan Regional Branch of the Residency-General in April 1910, was the only law that determined the requirements for theaters.⁶⁷ This law, consisting of eleven clauses, was a simplified version of equivalent laws in Japan, which enabled very flexible ruling of the colonial police.⁶⁸

According to Yi, Rules Controlling Plays determined registration of theater businesses and construction and maintenance of venues in technical terms, while only vaguely mentioning police intervention into theaters through one clause: "Public safety, civic morality (*kongdöksim*) or sanitary facilities can be [regulated] by order of police officers."⁶⁹ Leaving terms such as "public safety" and "civic morality" undefined, these rules allowed the colonial police to "manage and produce their own exceptions,"⁷⁰ which was common under imperial rule. In other words, until Rules Controlling Plays and Play Venues (*Hünghaeng küp Hünghaengjang Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik*) were enforced in 1922, police control of Korean theaters was open to a greater arbitrariness.⁷¹ To justify their actions, regional police offices often used Security Law and hygiene police (*wisaeng kyöngch'al*) during the 1910s.⁷²

Matsui Shigeru (1866–1945) is a crucial figure that shaped police intervention into Korean theaters even before annexation. He became the director of the Police Affairs Bureau of Korea in September 1909, which put him in charge of the police nationwide.⁷³ Matsui's 1913 book, *Self-Government and the Police*, suggests that the concept of social education pro-

65 See Kim Unt'ae, "T'ongambu Sölch'igi üi T'ongch'i Cheje [Governance System During the Era of Residency-General]," *New Korean History* 42, ed. National Institute of Korean History (Seoul: Hakmunsa, 2003), 239–92; refer to 289.

66 For the criticism of the police see "Kyöngch'algwän Muöm [Rude Police]," *TMS*, March 23, 1909, 2. The quote is from "Maeümyö Chungch'i [Strict Punishment of Prostituting Women]," *TMS*, April 3, 1909, 2.

67 See Yi, "Cultural Strategy," 149–87.

68 *Ibid.*, 150–54.

69 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 349.

70 Ann L. Stoler and Carole McGranahan, "Introduction: Refiguring Imperial Terrains," in *Imperial Formations*, eds. Ann L. Stoler, Carole McGranahan and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe, N.M., Oxford [U.K.]: School for Advanced Research Press; James Currey, 2007), 3–42; refer to 8.

71 See Yi, "Cultural Strategy," 160.

72 See Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 118–20; Yi, "Cultural Strategy," 149–50.

73 For brief biographical data see "Matsui, Shigeru (1866–1945)," *Portraits of Modern Japanese Historical Figures*, Website of National Diet Library Japan, <https://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/e/datas/395.html>; The first document that he signed as director of the Police Affairs Bureau of Korea was dated on September 7, 1907. Matsui Shigeru, "Bötojoyökyöhökoku Ken [Report on the Situation of Mobs]," *The Documents of Residency-General* 10 http://db.history.go.kr/id/jh_100r_0040_0260.

vided him with the logic and practical ideas for theater regulation.⁷⁴ Notably, he argued that Koreans needed to be socially educated through the use of public facilities because these institutions would compensate for the allegedly coarse natural environment of the Korean peninsula:

In this regard, nature influences people to reach the proper state harmoniously. Obviously, this is not far-fetched. Looking at the landscape in Korea, for instance, mountains are bare fields, rivers are few, and there are fewer places where people can enjoy the scenery of the coast, leading to people's vulgarity, indecency, love of conflict, and destruction of their taste, which eventually destroys the smoothness of *communal life*. Koreans like to argue about the origin of things. I think this is why there are many conflicts among the Japanese who live in Korea than their time in the homeland. The landscape of Korea is coarse. To harmonize [people] naturally, we must seek ways to complement this defect by using a workforce so that those who lead a tasteful *communal life* can be satisfied. I think the most appropriate way to accomplish this is by establishing *institutions for social education, namely parks, theaters, concerts, social clubs, libraries, art galleries, zoological and botanical gardens*, which will harmonize a person's mind, make people have taste, lead the way gracefully, encourage them to develop *civic morality [kōtoku]* and to make them successfully live a peaceful *communal life* (emphasis added).⁷⁵

Matsui disparaged Korea's natural landscape and made it responsible for the allegedly defective characteristics of Koreans. Besides the sense of superiority towards the colonized, his text is based on the belief that the environment plays a decisive role in forming human character and, by extension, society. Matsui even blamed the "coarse" environment for causing more conflicts among Japanese settlers in Korea than in their homeland. Enhancing public morality through social education, he believed, would bring harmony between Korean indigenous people and Japanese settlers.⁷⁶

Henry's 2014 book *Assimilating Seoul* explains the concrete meaning of civic morality in the context of colonization. Henry found that throughout the 1910s, the *Maeil Shinbo* and the Japanese daily newspaper *Keijō Nippō*, media organs of the Government-General, blamed Koreans for lacking civic morality and behaving in an "uncivilized" as well as "selfish" way when they refused to give up their houses and land for the sake of the colonial regime's street improvements. Simultaneously, the newspapers argued that civilized people would willingly comply with the colonial state's demands.⁷⁷ Henry's analy-

74 Matsui Shigeru, *Jichi to Keisatsu [Self-Government and the Police]* (Tokyo: Keigansha, 1913). I became aware of this book through Henry's 2014 study *Assimilating Seoul*, 41. My English translation of the quotes is based on Kim Daye's Korean translation from the Japanese original text. I express my gratitude for her generous help.

75 Matsui, *Self-Government and the Police*, 830–31.

76 Theater scholar Peter W. Marx points out that this widespread belief in theater's impact on audiences in Japan and colonial Korea resemble that of European naturalism. While this intriguing observation exceeds the scope of my book, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him for sharing his insight with me, which encourages me to investigate the reception of naturalism in colonial Korea in a future project.

77 See Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 38–39.

sis shows that the Japanese colonial power is heralded with civic morality, not because of its ethical values but its usefulness in colonial politics. As the disobedient Koreans were expected to internalize civic morality and comply with the colonial policies, the concept of civic morality was also a tool for “new forms of subjectification”⁷⁸ to produce docile colonial subjects.

What characterizes Matsui’s understanding of social education is its focus on experiences of public spaces and facilities. Compared to Ōgaki, who concentrated on new media content, Matsui considered public spaces such as parks, concerts, social clubs, libraries, art galleries, zoological and botanical gardens essential to changing people’s mindset and behavior. Further examples of lacking civic morality in Japan that Matsui observed are about exposed bodies, misconducts, and moving through the public space. As measures to enhance public morality in Japan, Matsui listed regulations such as the ban on thigh exposure in Tokyo’s trams and the implementation of left-hand traffic for the pedestrians in Tokyo.⁷⁹ Citing a song about civic morality, Matsui explains that following regulations such as “do not enter the prohibited sites” and “bans on making noise, laying down on the street, or drunkenness in busy traffic areas” might be the quintessence of social education.⁸⁰

Bringing together the concept of social education and education’s contribution to the state, Matsui clearly succeeded Satō Jenzirō’s notion of social education. Matsui believed that through the control of behaviors, the police could control the colonized people’s mindsets. For him, subjecting oneself to the police was the epitome of a civilized society, where people prioritized the state over individual rights. Henry points out that Matsui regarded “officially sanctioned uses of public space” as “the most effective way to advance civic morality among the colonial population”⁸¹ and assimilate them to the Japanese state. Approaching social education mainly “from the perspective of bad influence”⁸² in the natural environment to form an ideal colonial society, Matsui’s understanding of social education was closer to Satō Jenzirō’s than Yamana Jirō’s.

Matsui Shigeru’s idea of social education and civic morality was very likely related to the control of audiences’ conduct in Korean theaters that began shortly before 1910 and continued after colonization in 1910.⁸³ As discussed later in chapter 3.3, the colonial police and media began focusing on each individual’s behavior and disciplining the audiences. In other words: Colonial police control of Korean theaters and the discourse of theater improvement targeted not only the stage but also the auditorium. In this regard, Ōgaki and Matsui contributed to the dual control of Korean theaters by highlighting various aspects of theater as a means of social education: the former considered theatrical plays as a kind of teaching material for the audience, while the latter regarded the theater

78 Ibid., 38. Henry’s analysis is expanded to Korean theaters in chapter 3.3. of this study.

79 Matsui, *Self-Government and Police*, 832.

80 Ibid., 833.

81 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 41.

82 Satō, “Social Education 5,” 108.

83 For additional insights into the Japanese colonial authorities’ discussions on utilizing Japanese theaters for the assimilation of the Korean population, see Mun, “Custom Control,” 359–64.

space as a site to “conduct the conduct”⁸⁴ of the colonized Koreans, through which the colonial power was exercised. Despite this difference, Ōgakī and Matsui both advocated social education in Korean theaters under the same premise of civilization and making Koreans into *modern* subjects.

3.2 How to Watch *Shinp’a*: Expectations of Cultural Assimilation

Seoul’s entertainment business during the 1910s underwent several structural changes. Firstly, three Korean playhouses that enjoyed popularity during the 1900s, including Soch’undae, Yōnhūngsa, and Chang’ansa, stopped operating in this era.⁸⁵ Secondly, Kwangmudae, the HEC’s former garage theater, found a new home at an amusement park in the middle of the capital and attracted audiences with traditional plays and motion pictures.⁸⁶ Thirdly, the town’s early cinephiles would welcome the first Korean-only movie theater named Umigwan in 1912 and the grand reopening of Tansōngsa as a movie theater in 1918.⁸⁷ Han Sang’ōn, the Korean cinema historian, notes that these changes were closely related to the changes brought by Japan’s colonization in the Korean economy. Megata Tanetaro’s financial reform, which took place between 1905 and 1908, led to the bankruptcy of Korean patrons of playhouses.⁸⁸ After the annexation, colonial banks refused to give loans to Korean businesspeople. Thus, they did not have financial backups for risky business models such as that of a playhouse.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the Government-General stopped permitting Koreans to open theaters allegedly due to “public security and hygiene reasons”⁹⁰ after 1913. As a result, only three Korean theaters—Umigwan, Kwangmudae, and Tansōngsa—survived the 1910s, all owned by the Japanese.⁹¹

Meanwhile, the Korean theater business came under the direct influence of Japan economically and culturally after the annexation. The Japanese theater genre *shimpa* (new school) was popularized through the active support of the *Maeil Shinbo*, the Government-General’s Korean daily newspaper. Drawing upon prior studies, chapter 3.2 outlines the political background of *shimpa*’s emergence as a new form of national theater in Japan and the *Maeil Shinbo*’s role in the localization and popularization of this genre in Korea during the 1910s. Subsequently, chapter 3.2 analyzes reports on the Korean audiences of two *shimpa* pieces as examples of cultural assimilation through theaters.

84 Corey McCall, “Conduct,” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, eds. Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 68–74; citation from 69.

85 See Han, *Birth of Korean Cinema*, 38–52.

86 *Ibid.*, 45.

87 *Ibid.*, 159–62.

88 *Ibid.*, 93–94.

89 *Ibid.*, 95.

90 *Ibid.*, 96.

91 *Ibid.*, 95 and 159.

Maeil Shinbo's Promotion of Korean *Shimp'a*

Shimpa was one of the numerous genres that emerged in late nineteenth century Japan. It was a “more realistic” style of play compared to the highly stylized *kabuki* and employed the themes of “lives, loves[,] and sorrows of the new middle class”⁹² as well as contemporary political occurrences as material.

Siyuan Liu, a scholar of Asian theater history, points out the political calculation behind and support for this new genre in Meiji Japan. Deeply impressed by American and European theaters, members of the Iwakura Mission (1871–73) sought to establish a national theater that could represent Japan as a civilized nation in the eyes of the West.⁹³ Liu explains that Meiji politicians favored *kabuki* over *nō* for its “mass appeal” in Japan and “international appeal since *kabuki*’s theatricality, dialogue, and dramatic actions were much closer to the recognizable forms of Western theatre the delegates watched during their tour—drama, melodrama, and opera.”⁹⁴ As part of this endeavor, the Meiji politicians strove to “eliminate sexual and violent content and replace it with contemporary and Western plays so that *kabuki* could be ‘civilized’ enough to be seen by foreign dignitaries.”⁹⁵ This undertaking was best captured by the establishment of *Engeki Kairyō-kai* (Theater Reform Society) in 1886, which was supported by the Foreign Minister and the Education Minister, with the following aims:

1. To reform the evil conventions of hitherto existing theatre and cause the realization of good theatre.
2. To cause the writing of plays for the theatre to be an honourable profession.
3. To build a properly constructed auditorium which will be used for theatre performances, music concerts, song recitals, etc.⁹⁶

Soon, some theater-makers came up with another genre more realistic, thus suitable to the reformists’ goal, than *kabuki*, whose characteristic acting differed from how people moved and spoke in daily life.⁹⁷ The New School, or *shimpa*, also focused more on political topics and popular narratives of that time, especially newspaper novels.⁹⁸ Concurrently, *shimpa* groups were flexible enough to include some typical *kabuki* acting styles and actors to ensure mass appeal.⁹⁹ Notably, *shimpa* groups continued to use *onna gata* (female impersonators) and ceaseless background music characteristic to *kabuki*.¹⁰⁰

92 Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre: A Century of Change and Continuity* (London: Japan Library, 2002), 14–15.

93 Siyuan Liu, “Paris and the Quest for a National Stage in Meiji Japan and Late-Qing China,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 26, no. 1 (2009), 54–77; see 60.

94 Liu, “Paris and Quest,” 60.

95 Ibid.

96 Matsumoto Shinko, *Meiji Zenki Engekiron-shi* (Tokyo: Engeki Shuppan-sha, 1974), 295, as translated and cited in Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 10.

97 This claim is based on Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 11–16.

98 Ibid., 15.

99 Ibid., 14–16.

100 Ibid., 16.

Eventually, *kabuki* lost the politicians' support to be established as the national theater to *shimpa*. According to Liu, the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese officials' pursuit of masculinizing the state's representation played a pivotal role in deciding the fate of these competing genres. As the Sino-Japanese War broke out and several theater companies sought to handle the war onstage, the censors endowed Kawakami Otojirō's *shimpa* group with an exclusive right to stage the war, in the belief that "only this realistic theatre with educated actors would appropriately 'inspire the military with its valor and excitement' unlike the effeminate *kabuki* actors."¹⁰¹ What distinguished Kawakami from other *shimpa* makers was that he founded a more Western-leaning branch of *shimpa*: he excluded *onna gata*, female impersonators, and continuous background music after his study trip to France in 1893.¹⁰² With the political support, Kawakami's branch of *shimpa* emerged as the "relevant, national form"¹⁰³ of theater that convincingly represented the *masculinity* of the militarizing country.

Having threatened *kabuki*'s popularity in less than two decades, *shimpa* traveled to the Korean peninsula with the Japanese settlers, who built their own theaters and hired *shimpa* companies from Japan.¹⁰⁴ The Korean theater historian Yang Sūngguk counted approximately 430 *shimpa* pieces between November 1907 and December 1911 in Seoul's Japanese theaters.¹⁰⁵ In terms of the repertoire, the Japanese *shimpa* companies in Korea developed independently from Japan, as they created new pieces based on news, regional situations, and novels published in local media for Japanese settlers.¹⁰⁶ According to Yang, such new repertoires took up more than 75 percent of the *shimpa* plays performed in Seoul during the 1910s.¹⁰⁷

This active business had a direct impact on Korean theater. Under the Korean name of *shimp'a*, the Japanese genre made a career as *the* improved theater for Korean audiences in colonial Korea during the 1910s. Yim Sōnggu (1887–1921), a former employee of a Japanese theater in Seoul, observed how the Japanese played *shimpa* and started his own troupe named Hyōkshindan, or The Innovation Group.¹⁰⁸ After the successful debut at the Japanese theater Onariza in the winter of 1911 and at the Korean theater Tansōngsa

101 Liu, "Paris and Quest," 64.

102 Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 16.

103 Liu, "Paris and Quest," 64.

104 Theater historian Hong Sōnyōng identified that the Japanese theaters in Seoul were not yet specialized in a certain genre around 1910, and thus presented *kabuki*, *shimpa*, *naniwabushi*, and motion pictures in a single venue. Around this time, *shimpa* companies such as Tamiya-Matsumuraza, Kimuraza, and Iza played *shimpa* pieces in the Japanese theaters of Seoul. See "1910-nyōn chōnhu Sōul esō Hwaltong Han Ilbonin Yōngūk kwa Kūkchang [Japanese Players and Theaters of Seoul During the 1910s]," *Ilbon Hakpo* 56, no. 2 (2003), 243–52; see 251.

105 Yang Sūngguk, *Han'guk Shin Yōngūk Yōngu* [A Study on Korean New Theater] (Seoul: Yōngūk kwa in'gan, 2001), 92.

106 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 97–98.

107 *Ibid.*, 97.

108 See "Yedan Ilbaegin 12 [One Hundred Persons of Entertainment World, Part 12]," *MS*, February 11, 1914, 3, and Yu, *New History* 1, 304–05.

in January 1912, his group became one of the most active Korean theater companies in the 1910s.¹⁰⁹

Concurrently, the *Maeil Shinbo* designated *shinpa* as the proper theater for the newly colonized Korean people. Considering the significance of *shimpa* for Imperial Japan to represent its conformity to Western civilization, it comes as no surprise that the colonial newspaper gave unwavering support to Korean *shinpa* companies in the early 1910s. In an April 1912 reporting on Hyökshindan, which had debuted only two months earlier at a Korean theater, the *Maeil Shinbo* praised the group for fulfilling its “duty to the common good”¹¹⁰ and for serving as an exemplary case of plays contributing to the cause of social education.

A play is something that reforms obscene custom and decaying morals and leads to good custom; thus, it is not exaggerated to call it a school for social education. [...] When speaking of Korean plays, it is generally acknowledged that Hyökshindan follows a good aim and uses suitable materials [...].¹¹¹

Yim's venture to adapt the Japanese genre on the Korean stage found support directly from the colonial authorities, too. In January 1912, the Government-General's advisor Song Pyöngjun and the Korean Emperor Sunjong, who was under complete control of imperial Japan, attended Hyökshindan's performance and granted them money, boosting the Government-General's efforts to launch *shinpa* as the improved theater for Korean people.¹¹²

Soon after the debut at Tansöngsa, Hyökshindan toured in Chemulp'o and began staging plays on a daily basis at Yönhüngsa upon returning to Seoul.¹¹³ Between February and September 1912, Yim Sönggu staged 41 Japanese *shimpa* pieces in the Korean language at Yönhüngsa with only nine days of break.¹¹⁴ During this period, Hyökshindan staged military plays and criminal plays such as *Musa chök Kyoyuk* (*Educating the Warrior*), *Ch'in'gu üi Hyöng Sarhae* (*The Murder of a Friend's Older Brother*), and *Yuk'yölp'o Kangdo* (*The Burglar with a Six-Shooter*).¹¹⁵ Doing so, Hyökshindan played a significant part in popularizing the Japanese genre in colonial Korea. Inspired by Hyökshindan's success, other Koreans started playing *shinpa*, too. Yuiltan (*The Only Group*) in Kaesöng, Hyökshin Sönmidan (*The Innovation and Clear Beauty Group*), and Munsusöng (*The Star of Excellent*

109 Examining contradictory statements of contemporary witnesses about the group's debut, Yang Söngguk specified the period of the troupe's debut in Japanese and Korean theaters. See *Korean New Theater*, 58 and 80.

110 “Hyökshindan üi Üimu: Hyökshindan üi Kong'ik Üimu [Hyökshindan's Duty: Hyökshindan's Duty for the Public Good],” *MS*, April 6, 1912, 3.

111 “Hyökshindan's Duty,” *MS*, April 6, 1912, 3.

112 “Songja üi Yönguk Kwallam [Mr. Song Watched Play],” *MS*, January 6, 1912, 2.

113 Hyön Ch'öl, “Nunmul üi Mudae rül Papko Kan Idül [Those Who Stepped on the Tearful Stages],” *Chogwang* 2 (December 1935), 91.

114 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 203–04.

115 *Ibid.*

Scholarship) in Seoul made their debuts between February and March 1912, shortly after Hyökshindan's debut.¹¹⁶

The *Maeil Shinbo* played a significant role in introducing and popularizing *shinp'a* on many different levels. Firstly, the newspaper favorably reported about Korean *shinp'a* groups as a sign of cultural improvement of colonized Korea. Succeeding the idea of Theater Reform from the Meiji era, the *Maeil Shinbo* employed the dichotomy of the old and the new theater. Unlike in Meiji Japan, this dichotomy was not only about old and new forms but also about Korean and Japanese traditions. The *Maeil Shinbo* overlaid the narrative of Korea's civilization through colonization onto the theater reform debate:

As there have always been many obscene phrases in Korean plays, gentlemen and our sisters have frowned upon them. Recently, many men eager to improve theater appeared in and started *shinp'a* plays, calling themselves Hyökshindan and Hyökshin Sönmidan. As they benefit [moral] principles of the world and people's mind [by teaching the principle of] Encouraging Good and Punishing Evil (*kwönsön ching'ak*), [the current time] deserves to be called a new era in the entertainment industry.¹¹⁷

The same newspaper refashioned crowded theaters in Seoul during the Lunar New Year holiday as a sign that the annexation might have brought peace to the Korean peninsula while highlighting *shinp'a* groups. To be exact, the article mentioned audiences of Korean wrestling games, too. However, the transition from the praise of the new era to that of the two *shinp'a* groups was so seamlessly done that it signaled a strong connection between those two factors:

The merciless time passes by like a wave. The harsh winter and cold snow have gone, and the peaceful season of spring with warm sunshine has reached. Consequently, the Lunar New Year has come. Thanks to custom of ancient days, or the grace of contemporary politics, every house is peaceful, and every person gives off vigor; and when we inspect each theater, we can fairly call it an era of peace and a world of happiness. Hyökshindan's new play at Yönhüngsa, Sa-dong district, deserves to be called an example for the spectators by representing Encouraging Good and Punishing Evil, recommending education, and expressing loyalty and filial duty. As society positively evaluates the play, the number of visitors reaches about 1,000 people every night. [Hyökshin] Sönmidan's new play at Tansöngsa has the same aim as Hyökshindan and can be called exemplary. Thus, the number of visitors reaches 800–900 people every night.¹¹⁸

The *Maeil Shinbo's* promotion of Korean *shinp'a* plays was a politically motivated act. As the articles reveal, the newspaper actively used the dichotomy between the allegedly outdated and demoralizing Korean plays and the new and pedagogically valuable Japanese plays. This way, the press organ of the Government-General declared colonized culture

116 See Yu, *New History* 1, 316–20.

117 Yil Kija, "Yönye Soshik [Entertainment News]," *MS*, February 22, 1912, 3.

118 Paengmyönsaeng, "Yöngükkye [The Theater World]," *MS*, February 28, 1912, 3.

as something ontologically inferior, which should be replaced by the colonizer's cultural practices.¹¹⁹

Notably, Korean *shimp'a* groups, too, adopted the colonizer's point of view on Korean plays to advertise that they were the answer to the call for theater improvement. For instance, Hyökshin Sönmidan portrayed itself as the theater group for educated people with sophisticated taste, who sought an alternative to Korean plays:

Because the handed-down Korean plays are too crude to satisfy the progressive people, we will imitate *shimpa* plays, which are warmly welcomed in the Japanese metropole right now, and start playing them following the latest taste, from January 2 by the lunar calendar at Tansöngsa in Chung-gu district. Educated men, please keep coming to see the play. December 26 by the lunar calendar, Hyökshin Sönmidan.¹²⁰

Yun Paeknam (1888–1954) and Cho Chunghwan (1884–1947), who studied in Tokyo and worked for the *Maeil Shinbo* as journalists, considered their *shimp'a* company Munsusöng as a remedy for immorality. The newspaper emphasized that they had “studied in Japan for many years” and were critical about Korean plays, thus wanting to “set a good example for [improving] the Korean custom.”¹²¹ Noticeably, this group tried to distinguish itself from Yim Sönggu's group in terms of acting and choosing the material. Yun recollected how he and Cho sighed at the sight of the crude stage setting and Yim's narration with a strong accent, an obsolete trail of *kabuki* theater.¹²² Furthermore, while Yim focused on military dramas and criminal stories inspired by Japanese war dramas and newspaper reports, Yun and Cho ambitiously staged the most successful *shimpa* repertoire, *The Cuckoo*, based on a best-selling Japanese novel that Cho translated into Korean.¹²³ The educated and reform-oriented Koreans' engagement in *shimp'a* theater implies that some Korean cultural elites shared the call for social education through theater after colonization.

Secondly, the *Maeil Shinbo* provided Korean *shimp'a* groups with new repertoires by promoting the dramatization of newspaper novels. Like Japanese *shimpa* plays, which were able to rapidly gain popularity by adapting newspaper novels in Japan since the

119 “The inferior Korean people, he [Count Hayashi Tadasu] cautioned, also faced the challenge of assuming a ‘Japanese style’—they must adopt ‘Japanese spirit and thought.’” Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Politics*, 83.

120 Hyökshin Sönmidan, “Kwanggo [Advertisement],” *MS*, February 15, 1912, 3.

121 “Munsusöng u Ch'urhyön [Munsusöng Also Appears],” *MS*, March 27, 1912, 3.

122 See Yun Paeknam, “Chosön Yöng'ük Undong üi 20-nyön chön ül Hoego Hamyö [Looking Back on the Korean Theater Movement 20 Years Ago],” *Kük Yesul* (April 1934), 19–21; refer to 21. According to Yang Söngguk, Yim might have been influenced by *naniwabushi*, a subgenre of *shimpa* played in Seoul from the Summer of 1911 onwards. *Naniwabushi* adopted *chöbo*, the narration with strong intonation in *kabuki* plays, which was considered obsolete at that time. See *Korean New Theater*, 70–74.

123 Hyökshindan's first Korean *shimp'a* play was known to be an adaptation of Japanese military play, either *Educating the Warrior* or *Kunin üi Kijil* (*A Soldier's Quality*). See Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 66. For programmes of Korean *shimp'a* groups, see Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 281–86. See also “Yönye-gye Chönghwang [Recent Affairs of the Entertainment World],” *MS*, March 31, 1912, 3. For the analysis of Munsusöng's debut see chapter 3.2.

1890s, Korean *shinp'a* companies also became more popular through the dramatization of serialized novels published in the Government-General's media.¹²⁴

Hyökshindan's 1913 production of *Ssangoknu* (*Double Jaded Tears*) was the first *shinp'a* drama based on a newspaper novel.¹²⁵ This novel was serially published between July 17, 1912, and February 4, 1913, in the *Maeil Shinbo* by Cho Chunghwan, the newspaper's journalist and founder of Munsusöng.¹²⁶ Adapting Kikuchi Yühō's 1899 novel *Onogatsumi* (*My Fault*) for Korean readers, Cho made the translation and adaptation of Japanese newspaper novels popular in colonial Korea.¹²⁷ The fact that it was not Cho's own theater group Munsusöng but his rival Yim Sönggu's company that dramatized the novel implies that there might have been a cooperative relationship between the *Maeil Shinbo* and *shinp'a* groups in general.

The play *Double Jaded Tears* was sold out and was eventually extended by two days, which was "an unprecedented success ever since the opening of Yönhüngsa and the begin of Hyökshindan."¹²⁸ After *Double Jaded Tears*, the *Maeil Shinbo*'s novels including *Pongsön-hwa* (*Touch-Me-Not*), *Ujung Haeng'in* (*A Passerby in the Rain*), *Changhanmong* (*A Long Heartburning Dream*), *Nunmul* (*The Tears*), *Tanjangrok* (*Heart Breaking Stories*), *Kuk üi Hyang* (*The Scent of Chrysanthemum*), *Hyöngje* (*Brothers*), and *Chöngbuwön* (*The Grudge of the Chaste Wife*) became a welcome material for *shinp'a* companies.¹²⁹

The adaptation of newspaper novels extended the lifespan of a repertoire.¹³⁰ Before *Double Jaded Tears*, Hyökshindan used to replay the same piece within a short period of time while quickly changing their program. *The Murder of a Friend's Older Brother*, for instance, was staged seven times between February 21, 1912, and November 29, 1912, and was never played again.¹³¹ Similarly, *The Burglar with a Six-Shooter* premiered on February 18, 1912, and was performed for the last time on February 11, 1913, after Hyökshindan had staged the piece five times.¹³² On the contrary, the novel-based plays were often

124 Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 15.

125 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 102.

126 See Pak Chinyöng, "Iljae Cho Junghwan kwa Pönan Sosöl üi Shidae [Cho Chunghwan and the Age of Adapted Novels]," *Minjok Munhaksa Yöngu* 26 (2004), 211.

127 See Pak, "Cho Chunghwan," 211 and 220.

128 About the commercial success, see "Yönyegyë: Ssangokru taum e Pongsönhwa [Entertainment World: A Touch-Me-Not Comes After *Double Jaded Tears*]," *MS*, May 4, 1913, 3. The quote is from "Yönyegyë: Tae Kalch'ae Chung üi Ssangokru [Entertainment World: *Double Jaded Tears* Receives a Big Applause]," *MS*, May 1, 1913, 3.

129 Many of the newspaper novels were adapted from Japanese novels, which were partially also an adaptation of Western fictions. *A Long Heartburning Dream* was an adaptation of Ozaki Kōyō's *The Usurer* (*Konjiki yasha*, 1897); *Heart Breaking Stories* was based on Yanagawa Shunyo's novel *Unknowingly* (*Nasanu naka*, 1913); *The Grudge of the Chaste Wife* was an adaptation of Kuroiwa Ruikō's *The Abandoned Boat* (*Suteobune*, 1894), which was adapted from Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1867 novel *Diavola; or The Woman's Battle* (also known as *Run to Earth*). See Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 98–112.

130 The following analysis of the lifespan of repertoires is based on Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 88–91.

131 While Yang omitted it, there was another performance of *The Murder of a Friend's Brother* by a women's group on September 23, 1912, which was instructed by Yim Sönggu. See "Yönyegyë: Puin Yöngudan [Entertainment World: Women's [Theater] Research Group]," *MS*, September 25, 1912, 3.

132 Including the performance by the women's group on September 27, 1912, the piece was played six times. See Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 90.

played several times over two to three years and by diverse theater groups. *Double Jaded Tears*, for instance, was played five times between April 1913 and April 1916 by Hyökshindan and Yesöngjoa. *A Long Heartburning Dream* was staged seven times between July 1913 and March 1916 by Yuiltan and Hyökshindan. Fans of *The Tears* could see five different interpretations of the play between October 1913 and December 1915 produced by two major rival groups, Hyökshindan and Munsusöng.¹³³ In other words, theater companies could revive a play and bring a repertoire from another company more easily thanks to the textual source. As these novels circulated as books, there must have been a lasting demand for dramatization, which explains the longer lifespan of newspaper adaptations.

Furthermore, *shimp'a* groups could interpret stories and characters more freely instead of depending on Japanese *shimpa* actors in Korea or those who saw them in Japan thanks to newspaper novels. According to a contemporary witness and theater scholar Ahn Chonghwa, Hyökshindan used to learn new repertoires solely based on the oral instruction and demonstration by a Japanese actor named Komatsu: once he explained the storyline, Yim Sönggu decided the cast and translated Komatsu's words and actions during the demonstration.¹³⁴ Komatsu's influence on Hyökshindan is controversial; there is no firsthand evidence, and Ahn's book is based on episodes that he heard from other people.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, even if the Japanese actor's role was limited to telling unknown stories or giving advice, such a role became obsolete once the group could directly access popular novels. The fact that Yim traveled to Tokyo in June 1914 "to watch famous Japanese *shimp'a* plays with his own eyes, to study [them], as well as to practice considerable skills" implies that he felt the need to learn how to direct and act by himself instead of learning plays piece by piece through one actor.¹³⁶

While the dramatization of newspaper novels during the 1910s involved crucial changes in theater practices, recent studies have reinforced the idea that this was a carefully designed media strategy in favor of Japanese colonial politics. As the literary scholar Ch'oe T'aewön points out, the *Maeil Shinbo* exerted "nearly absolute influence on the reception of *shimp'a* play during the 1910s, as the newspaper monopolized editorial, critique, and circulation of various information about performances."¹³⁷ Meanwhile, Yi

133 Ibid.

134 See Ahn Chonghwa, *Shin'güksa iyagi* [The Stories from the New Theater Period] (Seoul: Chinmunsa 1955), 95, as cited in Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 203. Yang Söngguk points out that there is room for reconsideration as to how much influence Komatsu had on Hyökshindan, as the group changed their program all too often to regularly learn a new play from the Japanese actor. Rather, Yang asserts that Yim might have learned how to create new plays from the Japanese *shimpa* groups in Seoul, who actively created new plays using news and current events. Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 62, 78–79, and 97–98.

135 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 44.

136 "Hyökshindan Yim Sönggu Tonggyöng Yuhak Soshik [The News of Yim Sönggu's Study Trip to Tokyo]," MS, June 17, 1914, 3.

137 Ch'oe T'aewön, "Pönan Sosöl, Midiö, Taejungsöng: 1910-nyöndaee Sosöl Tokcha üi Munje rül Chungsim üro [Adapted Novels, Media, and Popularity: Focused on the Question of the Readers in the 1910s]," *Han'guk Kündae Munhak kwa Ilbon* [Modern Korean Literature and Japan], ed. Saegusa Toshikatsu (Seoul: Somyöng Chulp'an, 2003), 23–37; refer to 27.

Yōng'a draws attention to the political importance of *shinp'a* for the newspaper.¹³⁸ According to a survey, the circulation of *Maeil Shinbo* dropped sharply from 10,000 copies in 1908 to 3,000 in 1910 as it became a propaganda channel after the annexation.¹³⁹ Yi points out that the low circulation was not an economic but a political problem as an organ of the Government-General.¹⁴⁰ To regain popularity among its target readers, the colonial press organ ran novels on the front page and increased the advertisements of new serial novels.¹⁴¹ Additionally, the newspaper added serialized *p'ansori* narratives in 1912, aimed at the broader public.¹⁴² Furthermore, the *Maeil Shinbo* started publishing readers' thoughts on novels, inviting them to "build a network with other readers that they had never seen in person through their own texts and others' in the newspaper."¹⁴³ She analyzes that the newspaper's circulation rose sharply, far beyond the pre-colonization level, by the end of 1912 due to this series of measures.¹⁴⁴ There are further indications that this cooperative relationship between *shinp'a* companies and the *Maeil Shinbo* was a carefully designed business.¹⁴⁵ For instance, the newspaper supported the productions by reporting on them daily and publishing photographs of stages and auditoriums. Additionally, the newspaper actively encouraged the readers to go to theaters by offering them 50 percent discount coupons.¹⁴⁶ These were effective social education tactics because theater companies could attract more audiences, while the organ of the Government-General gained popularity through novels and their stage adaptations.

Korean literature historian Pak Chinyōng points out that Cho Chunghwan was "the pivot that could tactically involve media such as novels, play, and newspaper"¹⁴⁷ because the leader of Munsusōng was also deeply involved with the *Maeil Shinbo* as a journalist and novelist. Every year from 1912 to 1914, Cho published two serial novels in the daily newspaper, namely *Double Jaded Tears* (1912), *Pyōngja Samin* (*Three Patients*, 1912), *A Long Heartburning Dream* (1913), *The Scent of Chrysanthemum* (1913), *Heart Breaking Stories* (1914),

138 Ch'oe, "Adapted Novels," 28; Yi Yōng'a, "1910-nyōndae Maeil Shinbo Yōnjae Sosōl ūi Taejungsōng Hoektūk Kwajōng Yōn'gu [A Study on the Popularization of *Maeil Shinbo*'s Serialized Novels during the 1910s]," *Han'guk Hyōndae Munhak Yōn'gu* 23 (2007), 43–81; refer to 48.

139 Han Wōnyōng, *Han'guk Kūndae Shinmun Yōnjae Sosōl Yōn'gu* (Seoul: Iho Munhwasa, 1996), 68, as cited in Yi, "Popularization of MS novels," 48.

140 Yi, "Popularization of MS novels," 48.

141 See *ibid.*, 49–53.

142 See *ibid.*, 61–62.

143 *Ibid.*, 64.

144 *Ibid.*

145 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 243.

146 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 102.

147 Pak Chinyōng, "Pigūk chōk Sarang ūi Pōnyōk kwa Saeroun Shidae ūi Kkum [A Translation of a Tragic Love and a Dream of the New Era]," in Cho Chunghwan, *Puryōgwi* [*The Cuckoo*], ed. Pak Chinyōng (Seoul: Pogosa, [1912]2006), 291–307; see 294.

and *Pibongdam* (*The Pond of Flying Phoenix*, 1914).¹⁴⁸ As Pak argues, “it was no coincidence that the unrivaled success of his novels, the heyday of *shin’pa*, and the expansion of *Maeil Shinbo* all occurred between 1912 and 1914.”¹⁴⁹

Cho was aware of the use of newspaper novels to popularize *shin’pa* theater and the newspaper. Announcing the serial publication of *Double Jaded Tears* on July 10, 1912, he encouraged readers to collect each issue because the novel could be dramatized in the future: “It would be worth a lot reading the novel beforehand as a reference when this novel is played someday. Therefore, when you subscribe to this newspaper, it would also be a good idea to collect each episode of *Double Jaded Tears* without omitting an issue.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, both Cho and the *Maeil Shinbo* regarded the serialization of the novel as a way to hold readers’ attention to the newspaper and planned to dramatize the novel even before publication.

The increase in the circulation of the *Maeil Shinbo* and commercial success of *shin’pa* plays based on newspaper novels show that the newspaper succeeded in inviting more Korean readers to become the audience of *shin’pa* plays. Korean newspaper readers began to regard the novels as material for plays through this transmedia strategy. Based on an analysis of readers’ letters during the 1910s, literature historian Kwŏn Podŭrae argued that the readers were more interested in plays than novels and that “readers were an audience first.”¹⁵¹ Pointing out that readers were interpellated as future audiences and audiences as loyal readers of the colonial newspaper, Ch’oe T’aewŏn argued that dramatization of newspaper novels changed the perception of colonized Koreans regarding reading novels and watching plays:

In this era, a new kind of reader, who *watched* plays in novels and *read* novels in plays, came into being. For them, the *shin’pa* stage was a text that reenacts events of a novel through the *acting of living actors*, and novels that appeared in the newspaper every day were a theater that ran plays *that have not started yet*.¹⁵²

The transmedia tactic of the *Maeil Shinbo* employing newspapers, novels, and plays created a media space where the colonized were constantly in touch with several mediums of social education that Ōgaki Takeo introduced as such. In light of these considerations, however, the following questions emerge: did the colonial Korean spectators watch what they imagined during the reading? Or did something else confront them?

148 *Double Jaded Tears* was an adaptation of Kikuchi Yūhō’s 1899 novel *My Fault* (*Onogatsumi*) and was the first adapted novel serialized in *Maeil Shinbo*. *A Long Heartburning Dream* was an adaptation of Ozaki Kōyō’s *The Usurer* (*Konjiki yasha*, 1897); *Heart Breaking Stories* was based on Yanagawa Shunyo’s novel *Unknowingly* (*Nasanu naka*, 1913). Based on the vocabularies and lack of *shin’pa* adaptations, Pak Chinyŏng assumes *The Scent of Chrysanthemum* and *The Pond of Flying Phoenix* were Cho’s own creation. See Pak, “Cho Chunghwan,” 211–14.

149 Pak, “Translation of Tragic Love,” 294.

150 Cho Chunghwan, “Ssangoknu [Double Jaded Tears],” MS, July 10, 1912, 1.

151 *Epoch of Love*, 94. Yi Yŏng’a suggests that dramatization and illustrations of newspaper novels were two important elements that constituted visual culture of the 1910s. See “Shin Sosŏl e Nat’anan Shinp’agŭk chŏk Yoso wa Shigaksŏng Koch’al [Shin’pa-Elements and Visuality in the Korean Novel],” *Han’guk Hyŏndae Munhak Yŏngu* 19 (2006), 161–89.

152 Ch’oe, “Adapted Novels,” 33.

The Cuckoo: Enforcing the Cultural Technique of Beholding

Cinema historian Chŏng Ch'ungsil's 2018 study on spectatorship in Seoul and Tokyo identified the colonial era as a time when heterogenous spectating practices coexisted.¹⁵³ Examining newspaper reports about the audience's behaviors in movie theaters in different social milieus of Korea and Japan, he illustrates how the playful, interactive watching became marginalized while silent viewing was established as a habitus for the urban middle class, students of elite universities, and *modern girls (modan kŏl)* and *-boys (modan poi)*, who eagerly embraced Western life-style such as fashion, language, and mannerism.¹⁵⁴

Chŏng's study pinpoints the movie theater's socio-geographic location, operators' business strategy, infrastructure, and the audience's self-understanding as decisive factors for spectating behaviors. According to him, old movie theaters of the entertainment district and workers' residential areas, such as Asakusa, Oomori, Kamata in Tokyo, and the Korean theater district in Seoul's Northern Town nurtured playful watching during the early twentieth century. Audiences at these theaters talked to each other and reacted loudly to the spectacle by yelling and clapping their hands. Furthermore, the film narrator (K: *pyŏnsa*, J: *benshi*), who performed in front of screens using voice, instruments, and their own body, as well as sweet vendors and female employees who guided the latecomers through seats with lanterns constantly distracted people from the screen.¹⁵⁵

Meanwhile, from the close of the 1920s onwards, new grand movie theaters in Nishi Ginza, Tokyo, and the Japanese district in Namch'on (Southern Town), Seoul, began restricting everything that would distract the audience from the movie. This change was related to the technical development of talkie movies presented in luxurious movie theaters with sound systems. In this new environment, people were urged to keep silent and concentrate on the movie.¹⁵⁶

Chŏng observes that in Japan, the educated middle class distinguished itself as the cultural elite from the masses by declaring focused viewing as the proper way of movie-watching and by criticizing distracted audiences.¹⁵⁷ This habitus migrated to colonial Korea as Japanese cinema operators built new movie theaters in the Japanese district of Seoul in the 1930s and adopted the business strategies of Nishi Ginza's movie theaters. As a result, Koreans who identified themselves as "true movie fans" distinguished them-

153 See Chŏng, *Watching Movies*.

154 According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, "the habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices." As such, habitus constitutes lifestyles that symbolize one's position in the society and functions as cultural capital that enables distinction between social classes. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London and New York: Routledge, [1984]2010), 166–68. For the contemporaries' debate on modern girls and -boys see "Yu Kwangyŏl: What is Modern? The Great Debate on Modern Girl, Modern Boy," in Choi, *Sourcebook*, 74–75.

155 See Chŏng, *Watching Movies*, 75–90; 122–30; 150–76.

156 See *ibid.*, 99–121.

157 See *ibid.*, 114–17.

selves from the unfocused “theater audience.”¹⁵⁸ In short, both in Japan and colonial Korea, audiences who identified themselves as cultural elites branded playful watching as an uncultivated practice while forging the concentrated viewing as a distinctive habitus.

While Chōng’s study focused on movie audiences of a later period, the concept of playful watching and beholding can also be applied to explain the *Maeil Shinbo* discourse of the Korean *shinpa* audience in the early 1910s. During this period, the Government-General’s public organ critically discussed Korean audiences’ behavior during *shinpa* performances, initiating a regulatory discourse that disparaged the long-established practice of playful watching and introduced a new blickregime of beholding. To further illustrate and substantiate this argument, the following analyses will focus on newspaper reports of *The Cuckoo*, a popular *shinpa* play of the early 1910s in Korea.

Munsusōng’s ambitious debut performance of *The Cuckoo* in March 1912 demonstrates that Korean audiences of *shinpa* plays were not acquainted with the latest genre. *The Cuckoo* was based on Tokutomi Rōka’s best-selling Japanese novel *Hototogisu*, which tells the tragic love story of Namiko, who gets divorced under the pressure of her mother-in-law and dies from tuberculosis.¹⁵⁹ At the time of its premiere in Korea, this novel was unknown to most audiences because it was published later, in August 1912.¹⁶⁰

Although the storyline had the potential to appeal to Korean audiences emotionally, Munsusōng could hardly convince the audience. As a detailed review in the March 31, 1912 issue of *Maeil Shinbo* described, they even laughed at what was meant to be tragic scenes and became clamorous:

Speaking of Munsusōng, its members studied for many years in Japan and watched many Japanese plays. It is fair enough to say that they did very well in their first performance. [...] Although it was the [group’s] debut, many spectators came to the play and filled the theater. However, it was a pity that the audience could not understand the meaning of the play *The Cuckoo* due to the coarse explanation of Hong Chongch’an, which eventually destroyed what all actors worked hard at. There are tragic passages and moments in the play when people could have shed tears out of sympathy and loyalty, but many of the audience laughed when they should have miserably wept, and eventually, the theater became noisy. This is not because the actors played wrong, but the audience did not know how to watch. I have one word of warning for all actors: even if you succeed in acting, you cannot call it a success when spectators cannot understand it. Therefore, anyone who is good at explaining, whether Cho Chunghwan or Yun Paeknam, should explain as if he would chew and swallow what the next act is about (emphasis added).¹⁶¹

Remarkably, the solution that the journalist suggested was solely focused on the explanation of the story instead of the acting skills. The journalist even calls the acting “successful,” although the audience could not understand the play at all. Possibly, the article might have been written under the strong influence of Cho Chunghwan or Yun Paeknam,

158 See *ibid.*, 177–205; the quote is from 194.

159 Cho Chunghwan, *Puryōgwi* [*The Cuckoo*], trans. and ed. Pak Chinyōng (Seoul: Bogosa 2006).

160 Pak, “Translation of Tragic Love,” 295. Cho Chunghwan translated the book into Korean as well as played the part of Namiko’s father in the play. “Recent Affairs,” *MS*, March 31, 1912, 3.

161 “Recent Affairs,” *MS*, March 31, 1912, 3.

who were also journalists of the *Maeil Shinbo*.¹⁶² However, regardless of their influence, the author of the review identified the audience's spectating behavior as the main problem of the failed performance: they "did not know how to watch."

As the anonymous journalist suggested, Korean *shinpya* groups used to tell the whole story before each act of a play began.¹⁶³ Providing spectators with explanations of each scene was akin to instructing spectators on how to recognize what they saw and heard as theatrical symbols that conveyed meanings and encouraging them to relate with the emotions that the play expressed. Requiring a better explanation, the author of the review expected the theater group to teach the audience what they lacked to his eyes—namely, the cultural technique of beholding *shinpya* plays.

Inherent to this opinion was the pressure for colonized Koreans to be culturally assimilated as subjects of imperial Japan by recognizing the value of Japanese culture as the superior one and accepting it. The journalist's explanation that *The Cuckoo* might be "the masterpiece" of a Japanese writer and that the members of Munsusōng studied in Japan for a long time, and they even watched numerous Japanese plays accentuated the authenticity of their acting style while conveying the less-educated Koreans' inability to appreciate it as such.¹⁶⁴ In short, instructing the colonized Koreans to become educated viewers of *shinpya* plays was an essential part of their cultural assimilation into the Japanese culture, and underneath this process was the colonial politics of subjectification.

Regardless of the importance granted to the Japanese genre, some Korean audiences felt alienated by the new aesthetics of *shinpya* performances. Recollecting a Korean *shinpya* play that he watched as a child, the playwright Pak Chin (1905–74) wrote that it was "weird": "All methods on the stage were completely Japanese. When they spoke [in Korean], they imitated the Japanese accent; they mimicked the walking when they moved. Thus, it was weird to our [Koreans'] ears and eyes."¹⁶⁵ Yun Paeknam remembered that Hyökshindan's leader Yim Sōnggu used to utter the soliloquy "with an accent,"¹⁶⁶ very likely an attempt to imitate the Japanese actors.

Interestingly, theater historian Woo Sujin explains that these contemporary witnesses might have made a somewhat exaggerated caricature of the early *shinpya* performances because they recollected them from the perspective of realism drama, introduced to Korea later in the 1920s, and goes on to say that these unnatural and exotic performances appeared as the civilized and serious *New Play* to the eyes of the audience of that time.¹⁶⁷ However, as the contemporary review of *The Cuckoo* and other examples discussed in the following sections demonstrate, Korean audiences openly criticized the alienating elements in *shinpya* plays and even laughed at tragic scenes already in the 1910s. This implies that they continued their playful watching habit and persisted in

162 For Cho Chunghwan's career as journalist, theater maker, and translator as well as his life-long cooperation with Yun Paeknam's, see Pak, "Translation of Tragic Love," 291–307.

163 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 151.

164 "Recent Affairs," MS, March 31, 1912, 3.

165 Pak Chin, "Yōn'gūk Chapgam [Thoughts on Plays]," *Yesulwōn Po* 8 (1962), 95, as cited in Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 177–78.

166 Yun, "Looking Back Theater Movement," 20.

167 See Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 179.

making comments on ongoing *shinpa* plays, just as they used to do so during *p'ansori* (epic chant), traditional masked dances, and puppet plays.¹⁶⁸

As a response to the playful watching habit, *Maeil Shinbo* continued to stigmatize the behaviors of Korean audiences by publishing readers' letters. The propaganda organ of the Government-General did not reveal who sent these short comments and some letters appeared to be advertisements for a theater troupe or operator.¹⁶⁹ Regardless of anonymous readers' true identity, however, the brief satirical comments were written in a colloquial style and had an alias at the end. Therefore, each comment could elicit sympathy from many readers, thanks to the high readability and interesting content.¹⁷⁰

Using these readers' letters, the *Maeil Shinbo* tried to normalize concentrated watching for indoor performances. For example, on April 12, 1912, two weeks after the performance of *The Cuckoo*, the newspaper published a critique of Korean audiences from an anonymous reader: "I want people who go to the theater, men or women, just to sit down and watch; but there is a lot of strange things going on, probably because they are a populace without knowledge (*chishik i ömnün paeksöng*). They just cannot be patient for even a short while."¹⁷¹

The omitted details of the alleged misbehavior can be easily imagined based on other letters: the audience as well as theater staffs of Kwangmudae, for instance, talked during plays.¹⁷² Alternatively, they made a scene by trying to buy snacks across seats and floors, which distracted all the other audiences and made them "laugh aloud clapping their hands"¹⁷³ at the happening. Meanwhile, the assumption that playful watching might be related to lack of knowledge, generalized as a characteristic of the Korean "populace," reveals a racist view of those who still interacted with actors and other spectators. In other words, the writer of the letter considered focused watching as a sign of education, even civilization.

The media organ of the Government-General strengthened the view that playful watching might be a behavioral mark of social outcasts. Another anonymous reader complained about a *kisaeng* woman named Paek Namsu, who encouraged Pak P'algwé, the twelve-stringed zither player, at a recital by shouting, "that is great! (*jota*)"¹⁷⁴ and by dancing at her seat in the auditorium. Doing so, the woman blurred the strict distinction between the stage and the auditorium that the advocates of *shinpa* theater wanted to

168 See Chöng, *Watching Movies*, 157

169 For instance, an anonymous reader's praise of a new electric fan at Yönhüngsa reads like a commercial for the theater: "Hyökshindan of Yönhüngsa theater plays well. Moreover, to improve spectators' hygiene, they installed an electronic fan in the middle [of the theater]. I couldn't bear the heat outside, but as soon as I entered there, it was the climate of fall festivities. The temperature was so cool that I didn't feel like coming out anytime soon. One cannot help but going there to avoid the heat." P'isöja, "Tochöng Tosöl [Rumors]," *MS*, June 20, 1912, 3.

170 The political implications of the uncertain authenticity of readers' letters will be discussed later in the text.

171 Toldolsaeng, "Rumors," *MS*, April 13, 1912, 3.

172 Kwön'gosaeng, "Tokja Kurakbu [Readers' Club]," *MS*, September 14, 1913, 3.

173 Kwan'güksaeng, "Tokja Kibyöl [Readers' Letters]," *MS*, January 29, 1914, 3.

174 Kugyöngkkun, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, May 16, 1915, 4.

establish. The reader behind the pen name Kugyöngkkun [Spectator] severely criticized her: “What a madness! Well, I suppose that is what *kisaeng*s are like.”¹⁷⁵ Defining Paek’s encouraging call and dance as madness and attributing it to her social status, the anonymous Spectator tapped into the new power relation between the old play of the colonized Koreans and the new play of the Japanese colonizer. In the popular discourse of theater reform that pivoted around the *shinpa* genre, playful watching was declared a rule-breaking madness, and concurrently, some of its perpetrators were degraded based on the century-old contempt against their social strata and professions.

Part of the reason behind the Spectator’s fury might be related not only to Paek’s status but also her gender—she was a woman. *Maeil Shinbo* articles and readers’ letters show that a man fought against performers,¹⁷⁶ while another man even assaulted his wife in the theater.¹⁷⁷ However, no man was accused of behaving improperly in relation to his gender or profession. Given that the active interaction between a performer and listeners at *p’ansori* recitals was customary, it is unlikely that Korean men became suddenly silent during performances in the 1910s. Nevertheless, women who publicly expressed their excitement were regarded as wayward and received adverse media treatment via readers’ letters.

Another short letter in the August 26, 1913 issue of the colonial newspaper reveals the complex entanglement of gender and cultural assimilation. In the letter, a reader depicted how a woman “slapped her knee and called out, ‘that is good!’”¹⁷⁸ at a male clown’s vulgar gag in a theater. Instead of the clown, the observer disparaged only the female audience member: “What a bad woman.”¹⁷⁹ Remarkably, the sender did not accuse her of being a bad spectator, but a bad *woman*—criticism based on the belief that a woman should not flirt with a man, not to mention that she should not actively pursue her sexual desire. It seems that while the verbal communication and active expression of excitement in theaters in general were stigmatized as an uncivilized act, a playful audience was rendered abnormal and publicly called out if one was a woman, of lower social status, or both.

The reviews of *The Cuckoo* required the dispersed Korean audiences to accept the unfamiliar aesthetics of *shinpa* plays. Ultimately, they were expected to refine their way of watching so that they would learn to cry instead of laugh at what was meant to be tragic, which was a form of social education through theaters aimed at cultural assimilation. As discussed in the following analysis, the crying of the Korean *shinpa* audience was considered a sign of civilization, particularly for women.

The Tears: Disciplining Female Audiences

As examined earlier, *shinpa* was refashioned as *the* answer to the call for theater improvement in the 1910s, particularly in the context of colonial assimilation of Koreans. A dis-

175 Ibid.

176 Somunsaeng, “Readers’ Letters,” *MS*, May 11, 1915, 4.

177 Mokkyökjä, “Readers’ Letters,” *MS*, September 17, 1914, 4.

178 Kajüngaeng, “Readers’ Club,” *MS*, August 26, 1913, 3.

179 Ibid.

tinctive characteristic of *shinp'a* plays was their emphasis on evoking deep sentiments of sorrow. Looking back at the 1910s as the pioneering era of theater improvement in colonial Korea, literature critic Yi Hön'gu (1905–82) encapsulated the essence of *shinp'a* as tears:¹⁸⁰

Despite the differences in all their stage acting and interpretations, what Yim Sönggu's group and the group [of Yun Paeknam and Cho Chunghwan] had in common was tragedy [*pigük*]. In other words, they were consistent in regarding *crying as the quintessence of the theater*. The only difference was that the former was a group of theory-less actionists who follow the motto 'let us make them cry no matter what!' while the latter tried to appeal to the people how moving the human tragedy was through artistic works (emphasis added).¹⁸¹

His criticism that *shinp'a* actors "had to be weepers"¹⁸² echoed what audiences of that time complained about actors' exaggerated crying acts. A reader wrote the following to the *Maeil Shinbo* in March 1912:

The new play of Hyökshindan at Yönhüngsa is very well done and deserves to be called an example. However, I wished Yim Sönggu and Ko Suchöl, who played westernized women, stopped crying. I really do not want to listen to it. One should cry when one has to cry, and one should laugh when one has to laugh—to keep crying all the time is a flaw (emphasis added).¹⁸³

As Woo Sujin points out, this pathos-laden Japanese genre notably appeared to respond to the enlightenment-oriented intellectuals' call for "sad play (*sül'p'ün yönhüi*)."¹⁸⁴ A 1908 editorial in the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* entitled "The Improvement of Theater" asserted that spectating "historical stories of heroes and great men" as well as "royal subjects and patriots" would move the audience so that they would "develop the lofty and clean mind."¹⁸⁵ Thus, the editorial asserted that "if there is someone who cares to improve theaters, he should solely devote himself to the sad play in order to provoke the nation's [lofty and clean] feelings and sentiments."¹⁸⁶

Although this editorial did not mention the source, the idea that a tragic play could affect the audience and eventually improve their moral qualities strongly resembled Aristotle's theory on tragedy. In *Poetics*, Aristotle defined tragedy as "an imitation of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude" and explained that a tragedy accom-

180 For the biographic information of Yi Hön'gu, see Yun Pyöngro, "Yi Hön'gu," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/EO046471>.

181 Yi Hön'gu, "Chosön Shin'güksa Sang üi Küküyon üi Chiwi [The Status of Theater Art Research Group in the History of Korean New Theater]," *Kük Yesul* (April 1934), 2–9; refer to 4.

182 Yi, "Theater Art Research Group," 3.

183 "Rumors," *MS*, March 27, 1912, 3.

184 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 86–88.

185 "Yönhüjjang üi Kaeryang Hal Köt [Improve the Playhouse]," *TMS*, July 12, 1908, 1.

186 "Improve Playhouse," *TMS*, July 12, 1908, 1.

plishes “*catharsis* (purgation)” of spectators’ emotions, such as “pity and fear.”¹⁸⁷ As the classicist Stephen Halliwell points out, the feeling of pity and fear and their *catharsis* are “an experience which deeply fulfills and enhances the whole mind”¹⁸⁸ for spectators. It is assumable that the outline of Aristotle’s theory was transmitted to Korea via Japan, where *Poetics* had been translated and discussed from 1887 onwards.¹⁸⁹

While Aristotle and the anonymous writer of the 1908 editorial considered historical characters’ heroic deeds as the proper materials of tragedies and sad plays, the adapted novels of the *Maeil Shinbo* told stories of contemporary people who suffer from everyday challenges, such as poverty, sexual threats, and conflicts in the family. In other words, the adapted novels of colonial Korea during the early 1910s represented the tragedy of the common people.¹⁹⁰ The introduction of a contemporary *shin’pa* tragedy as an educational piece for the Korean audience and for women in particular, along with instructions on how to emotionally engage with this new genre, is depicted in the media discourse of *The Tears*.

The Tears was an adaptation of Watanabe Katei’s 1905 newspaper novel *Kichijōji*.¹⁹¹ When it was serialized in the *Maeil Shinbo* between July 16, 1913, and January 21, 1914, this work of fiction proved to be sad *shin’pa* play material that would appeal to the Korean audience. Announcing the dramatization of the novel’s first segment by Hyōkshindan, the newspaper wrote that “dozens of letters that praise the novel reach our company every day” and that the novel might have set “a new record for a novel published in a newspaper [in terms of] the ovation and agreement, which reached a peak.”¹⁹² Likewise, photographs of the fully-packed auditorium during performances of *The Tears* in October

187 Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *The Loeb Classical Library: Aristotele Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell (Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA, 1995), 27–141; the quote is from 47.

188 Stephen Halliwell, “Introduction,” in *Loeb Classical Library*, 3–26; the quote is from 19.

189 Hisamatsu Sadahiro’s 1887 book *The Outline of German Drama (Doitsugikokutai)* introduced Aristotle’s *Poetics* in detail. *Poetics* was fully translated from Russian into Japanese by Futaba Teishimeī between 1888 and 1892 in five segments. Mori Ogai, who studied medicine in Berlin, introduced among others Aristotle’s theory of tragedy to the Japanese society. Furthermore, Raphael von Koeber (1848–1923), who lectured at Tokyo Imperial University from 1893 onwards, taught *Poetics* and ancient Greek, which resulted in Plato’s translation into Japanese and establishment of philology of Latin and Greek in Japan. For an overview of German influence on the Japanese reception of Greek tragedy and Aristotle’s *Poetics*, see Kim Saryang, “Kūrisū Pigūk ūi Ilbon Ch’och’anggi Suyong Yōn’gu [A Study on the Early Reception of Greek Tragedies in Japan],” *Kong’yōn Munhwa Yōn’gu* 28 (February 2014), 409–48.

190 Yi Yōngmi, *Han’guk Taejung Yesulsa, Sinp’asōng ūro Ikta: Changhanmong esō Morae Sigye kkaji [Reading the History of Korean Popular Arts through the Shinpaness: From A Long Heartburning Dream to The Hourglass]* (Seoul: P’urūn Yōksa, 2016), 47.

191 *Kichijōji* was serialized in *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* between May 18, 1905 and October 13, 1905. Ch’oe T’aewōn, “Iljae Cho Chunghwan ūi Pōnan Sosōl Yōn’gu [A Study on Cho Chunghwan’s Novel Adaptations],” PhD Diss., Seoul National University (2010), 132.

192 “Hyōkshindan ūi Nunmul Yōn’guk [The Play *Tears* by Hyōkshindan],” *MS*, October 25, 1913, 3 and “Nunmul kūk ūi Nunmul Chang [Collective Crying During the Play *The Tears*],” *MS*, October 28, 1913, 3.

1913, January 1914, and February 1914 showed that the dramatization of the novel was a commercial hit (see figure 3).¹⁹³

Figure 3: *Yönhüngsa* was “about to explode because of approximately 1,000 spectators” attending *The Tears*.



Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, October 28, 1913, 3. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

The Tears depicts the hardships of a virtuous Korean noblewoman, Mrs. Sö, in contemporary Seoul.¹⁹⁴ She marries the aspiring banker Cho P'ilhwan, the one her father trusts the most. However, after having an affair with a *kisaeng* woman called Mrs. P'yöng'yang, the husband and his lover plot against Mrs. Sö: Using a faked love letter to her, Cho charges her with unfaithfulness and kicks her out of the home. Although the accusation was wrongful, she remains silent and stays at her parents' home in Kaesöng because she fears disgracing her husband and father. However, having yearned to see her son Pongnam for several years, she dares to visit him secretly against her father's will. As she witnesses how Mrs. P'yöng'yang mistreats Pongnam, she promises to rescue him the next day. But the son mistakes another woman for Mrs. Sö and disappears with her before Mrs. Sö arrives. In despair, Mrs. Sö attempts to kill herself but is rescued by a stranger and becomes housekeeper of her savior. Meanwhile, her husband is robbed of the whole family fortune by Mrs. P'yöng'yang and her other lover. In the end, Mrs. Sö finally rejoins her son and her husband, while Mrs. P'yöng'yang repents of her sins after the betrayal of her new lover. With a Western missionary's guidance, Mrs. P'yöng'yang returns the family the robbed fortune and becomes a social reformer.

193 “Nunmul Yöngük [The Play *Tears*],” MS, October 28, 1913, 3; “Karyön han Sössi Puin ... [The Poor Mrs. Sö ...],” MS, January 28, 1914, 3; “Nunmul Yöngük üi Puihoe Sönghwang [The Success of the Play *Tears* for Female Audiences],” MS, February 2, 1914, 3.

194 The following summary of the novel is based on Yi Sanghyöp, *Nunmul [The Tears]* (Seoul: Üilyu Munhwasa, [1914]1966).

The theater production of *The Tears* became a major commercial success. Between 1913 and 1916, there were at least six productions of *The Tears* (see table 3).¹⁹⁵ The aggressive marketing using 50 percent discount coupons, photographs of audiences, and reports about renowned people's attendance culminated with six sold-out shows in a row in January 1914, where Hyökshindan played the complete story.¹⁹⁶ Recording sold-out shows every night, this production was extended to ten days, while *shinpa* plays usually ran no longer than five days.¹⁹⁷

Table 3: Stage productions of *The Tears* during the 1910s.

Date	Venue	Group	Notes
Oct. 25–29, 1913	Yönhüngsa, Seoul	Hyökshindan (led by Yim Sönggu)	Only the first part of the novel was staged.
Jan. 26–31, 1914	Yönhüngsa, Seoul	Hyökshindan (led by Yim Sönggu)	The novel was performed in full length.
May 1–3, 1914	Yönhüngsa, Seoul	Munsusöng	Exceptional performance held during the daytime on Buddha's Birthday and for housewives.
The end of June–beginning of July, 1915	Chinju, Kyöngsangnam-do province	Hyökshindan (led by Yim Sönggu)	
Dec. 19–20, 1915	Tansöngsa, Seoul	Hyökshindan (led by Yim Sönggu)	
Feb. 24–25, 1916–25	Tansöngsa, Seoul	Hyökshindan (led by Yim Sönggu)	

Source: Data from *Maeil Shinbo*.

The play marked a watershed in Korean women's spectatorship, too, because Korean housewives were actively encouraged to attend a play for the first time. In promoting the play, the *Maeil Shinbo* emphasized that the drama was based on a pedagogical novel, particularly apt for women.¹⁹⁸ At the peak of the efforts to attract housewives was an

195 Using keyword search, I could find articles about six different stage productions of *The Tears* published by *Maeil Shinbo* during the 1910s.

196 "Ümnyök Saehae Ch'öt Möri e *Nunmul* Yön'gük [The Play *Tears* at the New Year's Begin after the Lunar Calendar]," *MS*, January 25, 1914, 3; "Che 1-il üi *Nunmul* Kük Sönghwang [Success of the Play *Tears* on the First Day]," *MS*, January 28, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kük kwa Myöngsa Manjwa [The Play *Tears* and Celebrities Filling the Auditorium]," *MS*, January 31, 1914, 3.

197 Ch'oe, "Adaptation, Media, Popularity," 30.

198 See "Play *Tears*," *MS*, January 25, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kük üi Köil Iksöng [Greater Success of the Play *Tears* Yesterday]," *MS*, January 29, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kük üi Tae Sönghwang Puin Kwallamhoe T'üksöl [Huge Success of the Play *Tears*: A Special Performance for Ladies]," *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

extra night of performance only for female audiences on January 31, 1914. The newspaper announced that this event was planned because “many families still stick to the old family [inside-outside] rule. Thus, ladies cannot go to the theater where there are many men.”¹⁹⁹

The communications organ of the Government-General knew that the event was not only about female audiences but particularly for women who did not frequent any public space due to their social status. The newspaper added: “Responding to many ladies’ wishes, we open ladies’ theater on January 6 according to the lunar calendar. On that day, we will make *pure ladies* (*sunjŏn han punyŏ*) see the play with satisfaction and pleasure by prohibiting any man from entering [the theater].”²⁰⁰ In other words, the target audience was very likely neither in school education nor in other public institutions, where they could learn to adapt themselves to the rules that the Government-General enforced, becoming a reliable subject of colonized Korea. The newspaper interpellated these women as “ladies (*puin*),” “lady audience (*puin kwan’gaek*),” and “pure ladies,” which silently excluded *kisaeng* women, who frequented theaters as audiences.²⁰¹ By calling a group which had been difficult for the colonial power to reach, and encouraging them to attend the play, the *Maeil Shinbo* contributed to the Government-General’s effort to broaden the colonial politics of cultural assimilation.

The daily newspaper announced that the event was decided spontaneously. However, “hundreds of purses for ladies and the tasty cigarettes”²⁰² given to female audiences as gifts clearly show that it was a thoroughly planned promotional event—for both cigarettes and *modern* theater. At this event, female audiences themselves became a media spectacle. As the description “lady audience” implied, these women drew public attention not only because of their gender but also their social stratum. Korean society had already witnessed groups of *kisaeng* women attending charity shows since the first decade of the 1900s, who were also consumed as a spectacle. However, the sight of housewives at theaters was scarce.²⁰³ Describing the photograph, the *Maeil Shinbo* highlighted the diversity of the gathered crowd through the colors of their garments, related to their social status, and their hairdos (see figure 4):

[This photograph shows] The situation of the performance of the play *The Tears* for the female readers, presented by our newspaper at Yŏnhŭngsa of Sa-dong on January 31. Little children, boys, ladies, yellow, red, blue, and white dresses, fur-lined hoods, winter caps, bonnets, pompadour—it was a colorful land of women where all were mixed in a place and cried, laughed, talked, and smoked together.²⁰⁴

199 “Huge Success,” *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

200 *Ibid.*

201 *Ibid.* *Kisaeng* women were frequently mentioned by their artist names along with the name and location of their association, while non-*kisaeng* women were seldom called by name.

202 “Huge Success,” *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

203 There are indications that women who organized charity events also attended performances as audiences, yet they did not stand in spotlight of the media. See chapter 2.3.

204 “Nunmul Yŏn’gŭk ūi Puihoe Tae Sŏnghwang [Successful Performance of *The Tears* for Ladies],” *MS*, February 2, 1914, 3.

The strong sense of community that the photograph's caption conveyed mirrored reports and readers' letters about female audiences who attended *The Tears*. In particular, the colonial newspaper highlighted how the lady audiences expressed their sympathy for Mrs. Sō's fate through crying in public. Reporting on a regular show of *The Tears* with a mixed audience, the newspaper recounted that the women's section was "a site of collective crying and sobbing," where "many flowery young ladies whimpered with reddish faces."²⁰⁵ According to another article, audiences were deeply absorbed in the play: "the whole auditorium was silent, and the only things that moved were the handkerchiefs that dried the tears in the women's seats and reflected the light."²⁰⁶ A woman reproached another woman sitting next to her for not crying at the tragedy, and some accused men (who attended a mixed-audience performance) of heartlessness because they smiled instead of crying.²⁰⁷

Figure 4: Female audiences of *The Tears* on January 31, 1914.



Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, February 2, 1914, 3. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

205 "Collective Crying," MS, October 28, 1913, 3.

206 "Huge Success," MS, January 30, 1914, 3.

207 "Tears and Celebrities," MS, January 31, 1914, 3.

These reports represented Korean female audiences, called lady audiences, as champions of cultural assimilation. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, they perfectly deciphered the yet unfamiliar aesthetics of *shinpa* and echoed the sad emotions that the play was supposed to convey. The consecutive and repeated depiction of female audiences' tears in the Government-General's press organ also accentuated emotional receptiveness and crying as a distinctive characteristic of women compared to those who did not cry, particularly men. On January 31, 1914, the all-female attendees marked the climax of the tearful Korean female audiences' imagery when,

In the third act, as Mrs. Sō was driven out, thousands of ladies who filled the playhouse cried tears like rain from their thousands of eyes. Even the splendid flag hanging from the ceiling seemed long faced by the sight of the fluttering towels wiping the tears. At the scene of Pongnam's mistreatment and reunion with Mrs. Sō, a sense of pity tortured [the audience] and got stuck in [their] heart. The whole house was silent and not noisy, except for some snuffles from the crying.²⁰⁸

Meanwhile, the distinctions between "ladies" and *kisaeng*, as well as women and men, were partially mended in the pathos-driven auditorium where everyone cried. The *Maeil Shinbo* published a letter from a spectator of *The Tears* in October 1913: "Watching the play *The Tears* indeed made people shed tears. In the women's section, people cried at the same time as if they had promised each other to do so, and although I am a man, I cried, too."²⁰⁹ Another man shared his observation of how a *kisaeng* woman participated in the public crying: "How she cried at the play *The Tears*. That girl was so kindhearted. People say that women of demimonde have little mercy, but when you look at Pohwa, that is not true."²¹⁰ The crying audience and readers across the gender- and stratum boundaries may seem to have built "an emotional community,"²¹¹ yet at the same time, this spectacular audience represented culturally assimilated colonized Koreans in the eyes of the colonial power.

Taking these media representation at the face value, theater historian Woo Sujin asserts that *shinpa* dramas, including *The Tears*, brought into being a community based on sentimentality in playhouses.²¹² However, it is doubtful that *The Tears'* female audience had actually shown their sympathy to the degree that the newspaper described—because there was a contradictory observation, which indicates difficulties related to watching and understanding *shinpa* for untrained spectators. In June 1914, the *Maeil Shinbo* published a Japanese woman's review of the play initially featured in a Japanese magazine. The woman, who attended one of the performances for mixed-gender audiences, complained mostly about Korean women's disturbing behaviors in the ladies' seats. According to her, they were mostly chatting and laughing even at tragic scenes:

208 "Puin Aedokja Nunmul Kük Kwallamhoe Tae Sōnghwang [Big Success of *The Tears* Performance for Lady Readers]," *MS*, February 1, 1914, 3.

209 Tajōngsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 26, 1913, 3.

210 P'ungnyurang, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 29, 1913, 3.

211 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 228.

212 *Ibid.*, 231–32.

At the scene where she [Mrs. Sō] apologizes to her husband, bears a grudge, and hesitates to part from her son, we [she and her Japanese companion] cannot help but cry tears even though we do not understand a single word. Nevertheless, the spectators (especially in the ladies' seats) still chatter and even laugh at the crucial part.²¹³

The fourth act takes place several years later. Pongnam, the son the woman thinks of day and night, is abused by his stepmother every day, even though he is at the adorable age of nine. The mother who cannot stand the longing for her son comes to him and cries while she lifts the child, who was beaten up right in front of her. And those in the ladies' seats laugh once again. What is so funny about it, I thought to myself with anger.²¹⁴

Although this review was contradictory to the previous reports, the *Maeil Shinbo* did not correct them. Instead, the newspaper turned the review into a lesson instruction for the ill-mannered Korean audience in general, as a short preface revealed: "We translated the original text without a single alteration, as the discussion contains a few things that Chosŏn people should go through, who are not familiar with theater viewing."²¹⁵ While this essay contradicted the former reports, publishing this essay with the critical commentary had the same goal as praising crying female audiences. Namely, both depictions contributed to the establishment of focused viewing, instead of playful watching, of *shin'pa* performances.

The Japanese woman hints that the *shin'pa* acting was an obstacle rather than an invitation to feel the tragic pathos that actors tried to embody. Mainly, the combination of contemporary Korean tragedy and the Japanese-styled acting did not seem to fit together very well. The Japanese woman noticed that the female impersonator, who played the part of Mrs. Sō, mimicked the Japanese method of crying instead of the Korean one²¹⁶:

In real life, she would have cried *aigo*, but she squeezed out a whine in a Japanese manner in the play. As she lacked a facial expression, it was not really moving, but the bending and stretching as well as the strength and the weakness in her voice let me guess the actor's study, so I became sad.²¹⁷

213 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Nummul Yong'gŭk ūl Kyŏn Han Naeji Puin ūi Kamsang 2 [A Japanese Woman's Impression of Attending the Play *Tears* 2]," MS, June 27, 1914, 3.

214 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "A Japanese Woman's Impression of Attending the Play *Tears* 3," MS, June 28, 1914, 3.

215 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 1," MS, June 26, 1914, 3.

216 Even after Kawakami excluded female impersonators from his *shimpa* productions, Korean *shin'pa* groups used to hire *yŏhyŏng paeu* (literally 'feminine-shaped actors') for female roles due to lack of actresses in the 1910s. In students' plays, it was common for male students to play women's parts even in the 1920s. See Yi Hwajin, "Yŏpaeu ūi Tŭngjang: Kŭndae Kŭkchang ūi Shinche wa Seksyuŏlit'i [The Appearance of Actresses: Bodies and Sexuality in Modern Theaters]," in Yi Sangwoo et al., *Wŏlgyŏng Hanŭn Kŭkchangdŭl: Tong Asia Kŭndae Kŭkchang kwa Yesulsa ūi Pyŏndong* [Theaters Crossing Borders: Modern Theaters in East Asia and Changes of the Art History] (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2013), 270–307.

217 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 2," 3.

This statement includes a powerful example of a disciplined audience, who understood what the unskillful acting was supposed to convey and responded to the intention, fulfilling the role expected of her by the actor and the cultural discourse of the *shinpa* audience. Such vocal skills were one of the acting techniques taught by the Japanese actor Komatsu to actors of Hyökshindan.²¹⁸ However, as the complaints about this specific whining sound attested, many Korean audiences found it rather disturbing.²¹⁹ As the play, if not the genre, pivoted around the pathos and excessive crying on stage, the Japanese way of crying in *shinpa* plays must have been an emotional obstacle for many Korean spectators. Furthermore, as the housewives seldom went to theaters, they were even less familiar with this new way of acting than their male compatriots and *kisaeng* women, which makes it comprehensible that they laughed even at tragic scenes.

Additionally, the Korean *shinpa* actors were wildly experimenting with their visual presentation on the stage. For example, the Japanese reviewer implied that Mrs. Sō's makeup was colliding head-on with her character. Instead of embodying the conservative and plain lifestyle of the Korean noblewoman, the female impersonator was wearing "pompadour with a decoration made with the seven treasures, so that she looked like [someone from] the street advertisement."²²⁰ In fact, Hyökshindan used to focus on making a strong visual impression than on creating a convincing theatrical reality for Korean audiences. For instance, in another play, Yim Sönggu wore an expensive silk garment, although he played the role of a ricksha-man.²²¹

Meanwhile, Hyökshindan presented a transformation of the old-styled protagonist into a modern woman at the end of *The Tears*. According to the Japanese reviewer, Mrs. Sō appeared in a completely different costume and posture in the last scene, where all characters celebrated their family reunion. "The lady [Mrs. Sō] seemed like a completely different person in the brown-colored Western dress, Western hat, and with her hands on her waist, whereas she had looked only at the ground when she wore Chosön attire."²²²

Such a change of appearance and personality was not mentioned in the novel. The reason behind this alteration would remain undisclosed. The female impersonator might likely have chosen the most impressive costume for the grand finale. Nevertheless, Mrs. Sō's new appearance and posture, which signaled her westernization and newly developed self-confidence, could also have impressed the Korean female audience. Mainly, for those women who could visit the theater only on the occasion of women-only performances, Mrs. Sō's transformation might have been an eye-opening experience suggesting that they, too, could transform themselves into modern subjects, just like the once old-fashioned protagonist vividly showed on the stage.

The promotion of *shinpa* in the early 1910s aimed to assimilate colonial Korean spectators culturally. However, to decipher *shinpa* dramas, the audience needed to know the

218 Pak, "Thoughts on Plays," 95 as cited in Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 177–78.

219 "But I wished Yim Sönggu and Ko Such'öl, who played westernized women, made the less of the whining sound. I really don't want to listen to it." "Rumors," MS, March 27, 1912, 3.

220 Hach'ön Yakch'onyö, "Japanese Woman's Impression 2," 3.

221 Yi Sögu, "Han'guk Yön'gük Undong üi T'aeagi Yasa [Behind Stories from the Beginning of Korean Theater Movement]," *Shin Sajo* (January 1964), 85.

222 Hach'ön Yakch'onyö, "Japanese Woman's Impression 3," 3.

plot and connect it to the stage performance, which was unfamiliar to most contemporaries. Despite the publication of novels and explanations before the play, the colonial Korean audience frequently reacted improperly in the eyes of the *Maeil Shinbo* and other advocates of the *shin'pa* genre. The media organ of the Government-General propagated focused and empathetic spectatorship as a new, normative way of watching for theater audiences, yet it was a cultural technique that had to be learned.

In this context, the depiction of crying female audiences at *shin'pa* plays symbolized highly assimilated colonial subjects. Due to its tragic plots, depiction of women's hardship, and emphasis on motherhood, the *Maeil Shinbo* regarded *shin'pa* as an excellent means of social education—in the sense of cultural assimilation—for Korean housewives, who were rarely schooled. However, this population group had few opportunities to learn and to practice focused watching at plays and may have been somewhat familiar with the playful watching of Korean plays that took place outdoors during festivities. The disclosure that Korean women laughed loudly at tragic scenes of *The Tears* in the mid-1910s indicates that diverse ways of watching and cultural techniques were competing behind the representation of successful cultural assimilation, creating a moment of audience publicness.

3.3 How to Behave in Theaters: Discipline and Negotiation

Foucauldian Concepts of Discipline and Subjectification

Foucauldian thinking provides the means to discuss allegedly trivial regulations in colonial power relations, which is explored in detail in this chapter. According to Michel Foucault, “an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future,” or “the conduct of a conduct,”²²³ is core to a power relation. As the use of the “infinitely small of political power” onto the “minuteness of the details”²²⁴ through the police is one way in which the state controls the mechanisms of discipline, an analysis of the police intervention into the auditorium can proffer new perspectives on the process of colonial subjectification in an everyday context. Additionally, Foucauldian concepts of discipline and the relevance of gaze to this concept bring together self-governance and colonial subjectification in the cases of the Korean audience's complaints about others in the auditorium. Adopting these concepts helps us understand the discourse about female spectatorship in the colonial period related to gender, colonial politics, and Confucian social order.

In his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault analyzes the disappearance of public torture and the emergence of “a new strategy for the exercise of the

223 Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 789. The expression “the conduct of conduct (*conduire des conduits*)” is omitted in the English translation of the text originally written in French. See McCall, “Conduct,” 68.

224 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 213–14.

power to punish.”²²⁵ According to him, physical punishments have been used as a tool to gain control over subjects by exercising power onto their bodies. In this sense, he calls state control of “the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission” as activities of the political economy of the body, which aims to make the body into “useful forces”²²⁶ by subjectifying it and turning it into labor power.

Foucault argues that strategies of the political economy of the body changed in line with the development of the capitalist economy.²²⁷ As the capitalist economy grew from the seventeenth century onwards, the target of crimes altered “from the attack of bodies to the more or less direct seizure of goods,” while its organization took the form of “marginal criminality” rather than “mass criminality.”²²⁸ Concurrently, lawmakers began regarding property rights as more important than before. Therefore, penal reformists of England, France, and the United States designed laws and institutions “to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body”²²⁹ in the eighteenth century, which led to a reinforcement of discipline.

According to Foucault, discipline means “the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility.”²³⁰ Through discipline, the state and other authorities could “increase[] the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminish[] these same forces (in political terms of obedience),” turning the subjects into the “docile body”²³¹ that is useful and not threatening. In this sense, Foucault says that “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.”²³² Although discipline had always been in “monasteries, armies, workshops,” Foucault argues that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century marked a watershed because, during this era, discipline became “general formulas of domination”²³³ in Europe. He summarizes the mechanism of discipline as follows:

To sum up, it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality, or rather an individuality that is endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so, it operates four great techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly, in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges ‘tactics.’ Tactics, the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the vari-

225 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 81–82.

226 *Ibid.*, 25–26.

227 See *ibid.*, 76–87.

228 *Ibid.*, 76. Foucault sums it up as “the economy of illegalities was restructured with the development of capitalist society.” See *ibid.*, 87.

229 *Ibid.*, 82.

230 *Ibid.*, 137.

231 *Ibid.*, 138.

232 *Ibid.*, 170.

233 *Ibid.*, 137.

ous forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice.²³⁴

Foucault counts observation, normalizing judgment, and examination as three quintessential means of exercising discipline.²³⁵ While he takes the military camp, school, hospital, orphanage, and workshop in eighteenth-century France and Prussia as exemplary institutions that employed these methods, his analysis of disciplinary institutions can be applied to colonial Korean theaters and newspapers as well.

Korean society was already familiar with Western-style drills and discipline by the 1910s. Korean historian Vladimir Tikhonov found that from the end of the nineteenth century onward, the Korean Empire's officialdom hired English and Russian soldiers as teachers and introduced military drills and gymnastic exercises to public schools as "modern"²³⁶ education. Such training was believed to give birth to a new kind of masculinity and to nurture "the national vigor (*kungmin ūi wŏn'gi*),"²³⁷ which was thought to be essential to survive the imperial expansion of Western and Japanese nations. Through demonstrations and sports festivals, the image of a disciplined body became an essential element of the Western-oriented modernity on the Korean peninsula.

To be clear, Korean theaters were different from Western-style schools in terms of accessibility and the aim of the discipline, although they increasingly counted as a pedagogical institution. Tikhonov points out that military drills and Western gymnastics were only accessible to men of noble and middle-class lineage for a long time; thus, the poor, the lower class, and women were excluded from this specific type of subjectification.²³⁸ In other words, the imagery of the national body that could symbolize modernity and the nation's competence was primarily embodied through men.²³⁹ In contrast, a theater was more easily accessible to the broader public. Furthermore, the aim of discipline in everyday settings such as theaters after colonization was not to strengthen Korean theatergoers' national vigor but to turn them into loyal subjects of colonial rule.²⁴⁰

234 Ibid., 167.

235 Ibid., 170.

236 Vladimir Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation: Gender Ideologies in Traditional Korea and in the 1890s-1900s Korean Enlightenment Discourse," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 4 (2007), 1029-65; see 1049.

237 Tikhonov, "Masculinizing Nation," 1058. Recent archival findings show that already in 1888, the Chosŏn Dynasty had hired three drill instructors from the U.S. to establish the military school named Yŏnmu Kong'wŏn. See Yi Kihwan, "'Pudi Chŏng'yebyŏng ūro K'iwŏ Chuseyo': Ch'odae Chumi Kongska ka Mi Kyogwan ege Ponaen Pyŏnji 131-nyŏn Mane Palgul ['Please Train Them as Elite Soldiers': Letters to the U.S. Military Instructor Sent by the First Korean Ambassador in the States Was Found After 131 Years]," *Kyŏngnyang Shimun*, September 17, 2019, http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201909170800001&code=960100&fbclid=IwAR13NCCf38WAdSooj2jigeYZNkbNR-sxZoRZegxVACuzr3yW6CBgKiaRk.

238 See Tikhonov, "Masculinizing Nation," 1060.

239 Tikhonov argues that this specific imagery of the national body in the cultural memories of Koreans was exploited by the Japanese Empire during the Pacific War and later by authoritarian regimes in both North and South Korea after the end of World War II. See *ibid.*, 1061.

240 See Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 4.

As a superimposed space between the call for social education and the need for entertainment, Korean theaters were operated in such a way that they could be easily used for discipline. However temporarily, the audience was enclosed in one space and allocated to specific sections of the auditorium depending on their gender and economic power, while the colonial police safeguarded this segregation through on-the-spot interventions. The timetable of theaters, too, disciplined Koreans to adapt themselves to the given order regardless of one's social rank.²⁴¹ Above all, the colonial police relentlessly observed the auditorium based on the unequal power relations between the colonizer and the colonized, and the *Maeil Shinbo* disseminated moral judgment about misdeeds of Korean audiences.²⁴² Additionally, fellow audience members also practiced observation and judgment. Their comments in the letters sent to the daily newspaper defied the realm of curiosity and personal exchange of opinions. Through their publication, complaints about other members of the auditorium became a means of public shaming and an invitation to colonial police control over Korean theatergoers' conduct.

In this way, the theater became a space where visitors were taught to internalize the gaze and change their behavior to meet normative expectations expressed by the authorities, journalists, and their compatriots. The mutual observation between members of the audience cannot solely be explained by the expansion of the colonial power relation. As exemplified later in this chapter, some audiences grounded their complaints with the social norms of the Chosŏn era, which could be read as a pursuit to maintain the Confucian behavioral codes under Japanese colonial rule. Foucault's explanation that "the overthrow of these 'micro-powers' does not, then, obey the law of all or nothing; it is not acquired once and for all by a new control of the apparatuses nor by a new functioning or a destruction of the institutions"²⁴³ can be applied to the inside-outside-norm. Although the Chosŏn Dynasty, which coerced gendered segregation and regulation of women's bodies, disappeared, the notion and practices of the inside-outside norm outlived the political entity.

However, the Korean audience's anonymous complaints about other theatergoers published in the *Maeil Shinbo* simultaneously contributed to the exercise of another micro-power aimed at making reliable colonial subjects. The police interventions, reports by journalists of the colonial newspaper, and anonymous readers I examine later in this chapter constituted "bits and pieces" of "the political technology of the body,"²⁴⁴ as Foucault calls it.

241 Horace N. Allen (1858–1932), who came to Korea as a Protestant medical missionary and cooperated with both American and Korean governments, shows how the new railway system changed the custom of social ranks, and introduced the concept of punctuality to the Korean population. He wrote: "The railway soon became a great educator. The trains would not wait even for a noble. If one such sent word he was coming and arrived in the afternoon for a morning train, he would invariably find it had gone off and left him. Trains have even pulled out on schedule time with some great yangban coming down the street with his chair men on the run and his attendants well ahead shouting "yahbo, yahbo come on yeetso" (say! say! wait a little), to all of which the engine seemed oblivious (emphasis added)." *Things Korean*, 133.

242 For detailed analysis of the police control targeting the Korean audience see chapter 3.3.

243 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

244 *Ibid.*, 26.

The Penetrating Gaze: *Maeil Shinbo's* Role in Disciplining Process

As observed in chapter 2.2, Korean newspapers before the annexation in August 1910 used to depict the members of the audience as an anonymous mass, often using the cliché that “people gathered like clouds” in theaters.²⁴⁵ Individuals whose identity and conduct were reported were usually influential people such as high-ranked politicians, businessmen, and members of the Korean royal family.²⁴⁶

After the annexation, however, critical comments on the government officials disappeared from the public debate, as regime-critical Korean newspapers were abolished.²⁴⁷ Instead, under the new name and ownership, the *Maeil Shinbo* began to expose names, addresses, and affiliations of people who were not public officials. The editorial entitled “Play and Female Student” from April 9, 1911, exemplifies this tendency. Pointing out that an increasing number of students went to theaters despite the school and police ban, the anonymous author made the name, affiliation, and address of a female student and her sister public:

On the day before yesterday, a certain Mr. Chǒng, who lives in Tonggok, Chung-bu and whose full name is unknown, went to Chang'ansa, accompanied by his wife Pak Chǒngja and his sister-in-law Pak Ch'isun, a student of Yangsim Women's School. Each of them took a seat and watched diverse plays. As their conduct was very sordid and rude (*pip'ae*), criticism was rampant among the general audience.²⁴⁸

Remarkably, the attending police officer did not intervene in the family's alleged misconduct despite the criticism “among the general audience.” Nevertheless, the organ of the Government-General took corrective action by reporting on them, which was a de facto punishment. Because Neo-Confucian custom still had a hold on Korean society in the early 1910s, being publicly known by name itself was a public disgrace, particularly for women except for *kisaeng*. Furthermore, it is very unusual that the man remained anonymous while the women were exposed to the public, a fact which must have added even more shame to the family. This article indicates that the *Maeil Shinbo* began to function as a control organ of the general public's misconduct after the annexation.

Another article from April 9, 1912 handled a man who trespassed into the women's section. He was punished twice—first by the police, then by the newspaper. His identity, too, was published:

At around 11 p.m. the day before yesterday, a prodigal man sat next to women's section in Yǒnhūngsa at Sa-dong, Chung-bu. As he restlessly chatted with a girl and disturbed the order, a clerk of the theater prohibited this sordid and rude behavior, but the man, in the misconception that [he] did a good thing, blamed the clerk and was about to

245 For instance, the following articles used the cliché “people gathered like clouds”: “Ryulsa Pǒnhwa [Flourishing So'chundae],” *TMS*, March 4, 1906, 2; “Mudo Kūkchang [A Theater without Morality],” *HS*, May 14, 1906, 3; “Yǒnhūijang Soshik [News from Playhouses],” *TMS*, December 29, 1907, 2.

246 See chapter 2.2.

247 Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*, 101.

248 “Yǒng'guk kwa Yǒhaksaeung [Play and a Female Student],” *MS*, April 9, 1911, 3.

make trouble. An attending police officer called him in and investigated his name and profession. According to the man, he was Lee Wönyong living in 31-tong 10-ho, Sangma-dong, Chung-bu, 26 years old, and used to work as an assistant police officer at the Nam-bu police office but had no profession since he was fired. The police officer gave him a strict scolding, told him not to do such sordid things again, and sent him off.²⁴⁹

Without such reports, the police officer's intervention would have remained a one-time happening, and its impact could have been restricted to the people attending the performance that night. However, the daily newspaper, the new media of that time, expanded the spectatorship of this crackdown to several thousand people across the country by reporting it. *Maeil Shinbo* reports on the colonial police's intervention into audience interactions can be brought together with the Foucauldian statement that "a secret punishment is a punishment half wasted."²⁵⁰ As the mouthpiece of the Government-General, the *Maeil Shinbo* made the one-time punishment into "an ever-open book"²⁵¹ for a broader public. Through such reports, the newspaper intended not only to criticize "past offense" but also to prevent "future disorder."²⁵²

For Koreans, it meant that they could not always remain anonymous in theaters anymore. Instead, there was always the possibility that police officers, other audience members, or a journalist would pillory them for their misconduct. In effect, the *Maeil Shinbo* induced Korean audiences to change their behavior in the public space by internalizing the colonial police's and the media's observant gaze.

To be clear, observing and disciplining others' conduct in public was not entirely unknown to Koreans of the time. People paid close attention to others' behavior and gaze in public, and such behavioral control was particularly effective in regulating aristocratic women's bodies and sexuality.²⁵³ Nonetheless, the possibility of anonymously blackmailing someone using the newspaper was new. Some Koreans would quickly get acquainted with the idea and practice of everyday surveillance aimed at ordinary people that the *Maeil Shinbo* boosted through reports on Korean theaters.

The correspondence column offered an outlet for Korean audiences' own experiences in theaters. Thereby, it is crucial to critically question the authenticity of these readers'

249 "Kükchang Kyölbi Sangjung: Kügöt i Musam Haeng'wiya [A Theater Is Not a Mulberry Field: What a Behavior]," *MS*, April 9, 1912, 3. Mulberry fields became a synonym for a place of secret sexual encounter since a poem titled *At the Mulberry Field* was published in *Book of Songs (Shijing)*, known to have been edited by Confucius. For the etymology of mulberry fields, see Kan Hoyun, *Saero Palgul Han Chusaeng Chön*, Wisaeng Chön *üi Charyo wa Haesök [Newly Found Materials of Tale of Chusaeng and Tale of Wisaeng and Their Interpretations]* (Seoul: Pagijöng, 2008), 232.

250 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 111.

251 *Ibid.*

252 *Ibid.*, 93.

253 Jung Ji-young's 2005 study offers an overview of public debates over aristocratic women's conducts in public spaces documented in *Annals of the Chosön Dynasty*. According to her study, the Chosön Government imposed laws to control aristocratic women's visibility and conduct, which encompassed the design of the sedan chair, horse riding, public spectating, picnics, and participation in Buddhist rituals in the mountains. Such controls were initiated by rumors and observations of aristocratic women's behavior in the public. See Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 149–81.

letters. In general, the possibility that colonial authorities intervened in the editorial work of the *Maeil Shinbo* cannot be entirely dismissed, especially concerning the selection, editing, or even fabrication of these short, anonymous texts. For instance, censors might have pressured editors to feature only opinions aligning with colonial policies. Alternatively, journalists could have fabricated stories to advance the newspaper's agendas. While the authenticity of all letters published in the colonial newspaper cannot be guaranteed, one thing is certain from the perspective of historical discourse analysis: the daily newspaper decided to publish *these specific utterances and not others* in the form of readers' letters, creating the impression of colonial publicness and giving space to unidentified rumors. The *Maeil Shinbo* published numerous brief comments on shows,²⁵⁴ complaints about theaters' inadequate sanitary facilities,²⁵⁵ or about clerks who talked loudly during plays.²⁵⁶ Through these letters, the writers demanded improvement of theater operations and insisted on paying guests' rights. The newspaper used the correspondence column to amplify criticisms of Korean theatergoers and to call for investigations as well. People behind these letters were aware that such critical reports about individuals worked as a punishment:

There are many offenses against public decency in theaters these days, so why doesn't your newspaper take *disciplinary action* [*chinggye*] against them based on that fact? Maybe you will take a *big disciplinary action* after fully looking into the cases (emphasis added).²⁵⁷

There has been a dirty rumor going around about a theater these days, and according to the rumor, [the theater] has not one or two problems. Hasn't your company heard of anything about it? What is the matter with you that you have not said anything?²⁵⁸

Although the *Maeil Shinbo* did not immediately report such rumors in the form of articles, the periodical enacted disciplinary power by publishing such letters and setting off a warning signal. While some readers demanded that the newspaper discipline wayward behaviors in theaters, others took the initiative themselves. For instance, an "Evaluator (*P'umpyōngja*)" complained about the luxurious attire of a female audience and problematized her lack of decency:

254 "I heard the rumor that Hyōkshindan's new play at Yōnhūngsa, Sa-dong, is very good. But I didn't have time to watch the play, because I was busy doing chores. The day before yesterday was the Great Full Moon Festival, so I went to spectate, but holy cats! How many people there were! I almost got trampled to death. The play was indeed very good. But it was so noisy that I could not pay close attention." Il puin, "Rumors," *MS*, March 5, 1912, 3.

255 "I hope that theatres' toilets will be improved. Leaving a toilet so dirty in places where a large gathering takes place hinders the public health a lot, so I hope theater businessmen would pay some attention." Chuūisaeng, "Readers' Club," April 2, 1913, 3.

256 "Kwangmudae does present interesting plays, but I can hardly watch them because of people talking loudly. Clerks seem to be louder than anyone else." Kwōn'gosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, September 14, 1913, 3.

257 Kalmangsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, April 27, 1913, 3.

258 T'apboja, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 17, 1913, 3.

The other day, a young girl took a seat in the high-class section of a theater all by herself. I do not know how rich she was, but she decorated herself with pure gold all over her body, dazzling viewers' eyes. It is her fault to be so extravagant with her wealth, and whoever her husband was, he was not even half discreet.²⁵⁹

The anonymous reader asserted that flaunting wealth was inappropriate, and more so for women. She neither misbehaved nor broke the law, yet her attire went against the writer's sense of decency. The *Maeil Shinbo* tacitly agreed with him by publishing the letter without any critical comment. This letter reinforced an unwritten rule that frowned upon luxurious dresses, not to mention the patriarchal belief that a husband might be responsible for his wife's conduct.

By sending letters to the colonial newspaper, numerous observers aimed to correct the behavior of others. Like the *Maeil Shinbo*, these observers, too, used the public disclosure of others' identities as a means of threatening and disciplining them.

A student at a school in the Pak-dong district went to theaters every night instead of studying. Eventually, he failed an exam this time. While some students have a hard time due to lack of money and cannot study, how can this one fail the exam just because he idled away in theaters? It is sad. This time, I will forgive him, but I will write his name and send it to the newspaper when this happens again.²⁶⁰

Certain persons of a particular theater, you should better come to your senses. [You] think people would not know about it, but people eventually find out. Recently, many people are paying attention to [you] because the ugly rumor is correct and precludes all doubts. Everyone in the theater industry knows [what I mean] when they think about what they do. Keep your hands still, both men and women. Otherwise, a slight movement can cause you [big trouble].²⁶¹

The threat to disclose personal information was an attempt to intervene via public shaming, an area of action in which police did not interfere. Appalled by a recent tendency for some female and male students to sit side by side and have dates in theaters, another observer, too, menaced: "If the situation remains this bad, I am going to look into the students' name and the school's names as well and publish it to the world."²⁶² In doing so, the anonymous observers tried to force students to focus on their learning and control their sexuality, too.

Meanwhile, the second letter was meant to trigger a moment of self-discipline among "everyone in the theater industry" by urging them to "think about what they do." Before and after the letter's publication, there was no media report about any scandal related to employees of Korean theaters.²⁶³ Thus, it is impossible to know what the author of the letter problematized. However, if the lack of incidents were related to the

259 "Samyön P'albang [All Around the World]," MS, October 9, 1912, 3.

260 T'onghansaeng, "Readers' Letters," MS, December 27, 1914, 4.

261 Kyönggyeja, "Rumors," MS, July 4, 1912, 3.

262 Kaet'ansaeng, "Readers' Club," MS, September 5, 1913, 3.

263 I investigated reports between June 1912 and August 1912.

letter, the writer might have achieved what they intended, namely, inducing the clerks to internalize the eyes of surveillance and discipline themselves.

Shortly after the annexation, the *Maeil Shinbo*'s focus changed from government officials to ordinary citizens. The mouthpiece of the Government-General influenced the audience to internalize the colonial power's gaze and become a modern subject that governed itself, as the newspaper reported misconduct of spectators and police intervention cases with personal information. Following this approach, it seems that some audience members and readers voluntarily shared their observations on audiences and clerks of Korean theaters, exercising disciplinary power over them as well. In this way, the daily newspaper contributed to the expansion of the colonial power's control of the conduct of the colonized, and the audience became both the subject and object of the everyday surveillance.

Negotiating Social Norms (1): Gendered Segregation

Besides the *shinpa* drama and the rebuking newspaper articles, house rules, too, induced Korean people at playhouses to accept certain norms. Notably, the seating plan corresponded with the preexisting understanding of the social order and one's place in society. That is to say, the separation between the "ladies' seats (*puinsök*)" and "men's seats (*namjasök*)" perpetuated the Confucian norm of inside-outside (*naeoe*), which strictly prohibited contacts of any kind between women and men.²⁶⁴ Ladies' seats exemplify how the social practice of *naeoe* defined the modern institution even during Japanese colonial rule.

The gendered segregation in Korean theaters was first confirmed by a 1908 report in the daily newspaper *Hwangsöng Shinmun*.²⁶⁵ The newspaper reported that, as a part of Tansöngsa's upper floor collapsed on July 3, 1908, only women were injured because the accident happened in the women's section.²⁶⁶ It should be noted that during the years 1907 and 1908, Seoul's theater business became competitive due to the opening of three Korean theaters in the northern part of the city.²⁶⁷ When competition among Korean theaters in Jongno was in full swing, setting up women-only seats might have been one of the essential means to include more Korean women in mixed-gender public spaces. Concurrently, the women's section was also useful for Korean women who wanted to enjoy entertainment and participate in public life.

During the early 1910s, the women's section became an integral part of Korean theaters in Seoul. Interestingly, Korean theater buildings were not built as per the custom of gendered segregation; as a result, theater operators had to come up with a makeshift

264 Accounts mentioning ladies' seats are, among others, as follows: Kukyöng Han Cha, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 26, 1913, 3; Puiin Kwallamja, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, March 15, 1914, 3; Kuyöngkkun, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, May 16, 1915, 4. Men's seats were seldom mentioned during the 1910s. See Ttökgage, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 13, 1913, 3; Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 19, 1913, 5.

265 "Tansöng Naksang [Hurt from Falling at Tansöngsa]," *HS*, July 5, 1908, 2.

266 "Hurt from Falling," *HS*, July 5, 1908, 2.

267 For the formation of Korean theater district in Seoul see chapter 1.2.

solution. A reader's letter from 1912 reveals that Yönhungsa installed curtains to segregate women's seats from the rest.²⁶⁸ Parts of the seats in Kwangmudae, Chang'ansa, and Tansöngsa, too, were designated as women's seats, yet there is no clear evidence as to whether these theaters used curtains as well.²⁶⁹ Curtains had already been used to maintain the inside-outside norm in other new institutions such as churches and schools.²⁷⁰ The makeshift characteristic of gendered segregation in modern buildings signals that the spatial separation between women and men in public spaces was an eroding yet tenacious practice in Korea.

With or without the visible and physical dividing elements, the women's section drew public attention. Notably, some male spectators upset the public by staring at the female audience or even trespassing into the women's section. Other visitors who closely observed such behavior were possibly the ones who sent letters to the *Maeil Shinbo* to criticize them or urge authorities to investigate the intruder:

Whose son is the guy that shamelessly stared at the women in the women's section instead of watching [the play] in a particular theater the other night, whispered with illegal prostitutes before and afterward, and walked up and down without noticing that others were paying attention to him and cursing him? [He was] Wearing a full-length hemp cloth coat, a white sports hat, and pockmarked. He looked hideous. Do you know who he is? If I were a police officer, I would cause a bolt of lightning right now.²⁷¹

The other night, as I went to Yönhungsa to see Hyökshindan's play, a person stood between the men's and women's sections and watched how ordinary women [*ilban yöin*] spectated the play over the curtain instead of watching [the play] as if he were inspecting something. As his conduct was severely despicable and ill-mannered, there was a torrent of abuse from every side. Sure enough, the attending police officer caught him and carried out a rigorous investigation on charges of disturbing the order and morals. He turned out to be Paek Raksüng, who lived in either P'aju or Yangju and was a younger brother of Paek Rakso, who lived in Kamtjöng'gol, Chung-bu. How refreshing it was [to see him contained]!²⁷²

Recently, there are all sorts of [wayward] people in theaters. I cannot stand the sight of the three jerks wearing a headband, skullcap, and horsehair hat going to theaters in groups every night, looking only at the women's section and making remarks. [They keep doing it because] Maybe they have not burned their fingers yet.²⁷³

These letters reveal the complexity beneath the seemingly unilateral concept of social education. As some Koreans appropriated the theater space to satisfy their voyeuristic desire, it was not always the colonial police that disciplined them. There were other Koreans,

268 "Not Mulberry Field," MS, April 9, 1912, 3.

269 Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Letters," MS, August 8, 1912, 3.

270 See Yun, *Learning ABC*, 59–61.

271 Tongmaesaeng, "Rumors," MS, July 25, 1912, 3.

272 Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Letters," MS, August 8, 1912, 3.

273 Pimokja, "Readers' Letters," MS, October 8, 1914, 4.

presumably conservative people with a Neo-Confucian leaning, who contributed—with or without intention—to reinforce the colonial police's intervention. As they detected a vacuum in the disciplinary power that maintained social order, which was formerly rooted in Neo-Confucianism, they tried to uphold the inside-outside norm in the new political and spatial setting. In this vein, they turned to colonial police intervention to make up for the vacuum in the patriarchal disciplinary power.

Meanwhile, female theatergoers celebrated their newly gained access to the public space by taking off their covering clothes in theaters despite harsh criticisms by contemporaries during the 1910s. In this way, the shift in the inside-outside norm and related practices took place. While the Confucian moralists insisted upon hiding women's bodies and faces from the gaze of others, Korean women appropriated the spatial characteristics of a theater—it had a roof and walls, thus it was still “inside”—to justify their choice not to wear covering clothes in theaters, pushing the boundaries of their freedom a little further. A reader's letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* shows how Korean women experimented with their presence in public and their sexuality:

The total number of female audiences in each theater is more than 1,000 every night, and most of them show their faces, look around at the men's section, and make gestures with fingers and lips in the playhouse; yet, why do they cover themselves when they go outside? [...].²⁷⁴

Some contemporaries were unsettled to see how some Korean women actively expressed their interest in men in theaters. A witness wrote to the *Maeil Shinbo*: “How bizarre that a woman from the ladies' seats looked over men's seats, gestured at them and laughed.”²⁷⁵ Another audience member even disclosed the whereabouts and the name of a woman who darted a glance at men's seats: “The night before yesterday, Albong'i from Yong-dong neighborhood went to a theater. The sight of her darting a glance at men from each level and smiling was so disgusting that I could not bear it.”²⁷⁶ In this way, women's active pursuit of sexuality was marked as “bizarre” or even “disgusting.”

Concurrently, visiting the theater was closely related to the experiences of sexual threats and public humiliation for some women. A woman complained in a letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* that men's persistent gaze and audible judgments toward female audiences made her hesitant about going to theaters.

On a rare occasion I had to go to a theater, I found it humiliating and unbearable how men point and look at [women]. If I went there more often, I would die young due to the poisonous watching and pointing. Not only that. They seem to discuss whose concubine one is, who she is, whether she is pretty or ugly. It is no wonder that my husband prohibits me from going to watch [plays] often.²⁷⁷

274 Chososaeng, “Readers' Club,” *MS*, March 25, 1913, 3.

275 Mokdosaeng, “Readers' Club,” *MS*, March 19, 1913, 5.

276 Inch'ön kugyöngkkun, “Readers' Club,” *MS*, October 7, 1913, 3.

277 Ttökgage, “Readers' Club,” *MS*, March 13, 1913, 3.

Women became a target of unsolicited sexual advances outside theaters as well. They were followed by strangers after the show or even verbally harassed by young male students gathered behind theaters, which eventually restricted women's spectatorship.²⁷⁸

While there were two sections based on the gender binary, there were complex unwritten rules closely related to women's marital status, social rank, and male guardians. Neither the colonial police nor other audience members problematized specific women sitting outside the women's section. For instance, *kisaeng* women could easily cross the gendered border and sit among men as they escorted their male companions or sought a new one.²⁷⁹ Married women and concubines, too, could sit next to their husbands.²⁸⁰

A notable difference between the police and Korean audiences was revealed as some female students began to go to theaters with male students. Instead of turning to the police, people urged schools to discipline them better, indicating that the police were not in charge of controlling female students.²⁸¹ In other words, the colonial police did not problematize women in the men's section regardless of their social rank, profession, or marital status during the early 1910s.

What distinguished female students from *kisaeng* women and married women was that they were thought to be sexually inactive. Age played no vital role in discussing their sexuality because there were young *kisaeng* women as well as young married women.²⁸² While *kisaeng* women and married women were allowed to be sexually active for the sake of their patrons' pleasure or reproduction, female students had no socially approved excuse for being sexually active. As long as women were trained to follow the Wise Mother, Good Wife (*hyönmo yangch'ö*) ideal, which was the primary goal for women's school education, and child-rearing was expected solely of them, marriage meant the end of school education for women.²⁸³ In other words, female students accompanying male students challenged society's expectation that they had to be sexually inactive and fully focused on their learning. While this was a rare case in the 1910s, the 1920s witnessed an increasing number of female students in movie theaters, which is analyzed in the next chapter in detail.

Despite the separated seats and danger of humiliation, some women and men still engaged with each other. To communicate with strangers across the gender, class, and stratum boundaries, Koreans used children who sold tea and cigarettes in theaters:

278 About a man who chased after women repeatedly, see T'ongjüngaeng, "Readers' Club," MS, August 20, 1913, 3. For a female spectator's complaint about male students who harassed women near Chang'ansa, see Il Puin, "Readers' Letters," MS, June 9, 1914, 4.

279 See Panggwansaeng, "Readers' Letters," MS, January 22, 1915, 4; Pugajaje, "Readers' Club," MS, April 19, 1913, 3.

280 See Han Yöin, "Readers' Letters," MS, September 23, 1914, 4.

281 See Kaet'ansaeng, "Readers' Club," MS, September 5, 1913, 3.

282 About the custom of the early marriage see chapter 4.2.

283 For instance, students of Ehwa Hakdang quit school once they married. It was only in the 1930s that an increasing number of Ehwa graduates maintained their studies or careers after marriage. See Ihwa Yöksagwan, *Ihwa 110-yönsa: Öje wa Onül* [The 110 Years History of Ehwa: Yesterday and Today] (Seoul: Ihwa Yöja Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2007), 26 and 78.

The bad behavior of women and men in the theater is always caused by children making pocket money by selling cigarettes and tea. They are the ones doing all the secret errands before and afterward. The theater director will have to keep his eyes wide open.²⁸⁴

As I always say, all the miscellaneous things in the theater have been caused by children who sell cigarettes. They are doing this and that.²⁸⁵

I wish they would get rid of the kids who sell tea at the theater or not let them cross the aisle. All evil comes from the kids going back and forth.²⁸⁶

Colonial police responded to some Koreans' calls for stricter regulation of the public order in theaters from 1914 onwards. For instance, on November 16, 1914, the police raided Kwangmudae to control the so-called *purangja* (tramps) and arrested six Koreans. The *Maeil Shinbo* reported that the police had already been "paying attention to them" because they "frequently visited bars and theaters without jobs, stared at women's seats and commented on [female spectators], and often showed excessive misbehavior."²⁸⁷ In September 1915, the police announced that it would regulate the segregation between women and men more strictly to fight the corruption of public morals. To ensure the separation, the police separated the audience already at the entrance, which led to "stringent separation of men and women in theaters, too."²⁸⁸ The police also applied gendered segregation to children under the age of eleven,²⁸⁹ likely to prevent child vendors from running errands between men and women.

To summarize, the seats in Korean theaters were separated by gender. Some Koreans still crossed the boundary, challenging both Neo-Confucian social order and the colonial police's concept of public morality. Other Koreans called for more active police involvement in cases of resistance against the gendered segregation in theaters. However, there were disagreements between the colonial police and some Koreans, especially over women's violations of this separation. While the *Maeil Shinbo* was accumulating complaints about the disorder in the theaters and the police's inadequate response to various scandals, the police began a raid against the so-called "tramps" in September 1914, enforcing substantial control over the theater space.

Negotiating Social Norms (2): Social Strata and Classes

The theater scholar Dennis Kennedy explains that it was the view of the stage that distinguished the more prestigious seats from others in the European proscenium theater.

284 Kyönggosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 5, 1913, 3

285 Ch'öllian, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, January 13, 1914, 3.

286 Hwaktamsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 30, 1914, 3.

287 "Hwanggüm-jöng Punsö esö Purangja Tae Ch'önggyöl [Hwanggüm-jöng District Police Drives Out Hobos]," *MS*, November 18, 1914, 3.

288 "Kükchang P'unggi Ch'wich'e [Regulating the Public Morality of Theaters]," *MS*, September 9, 1915, 3.

289 "Hwältong Sajinkwan üi Ch'wich'e" [Regulating the Motion Picture Places]," *MS*, September 3, 1915, 3.

In a standard proscenium theatre the best seats for viewing, which are not necessarily the closest seats, are by custom the most expensive, and a clear downward grading is established for those with progressively inferior sightlines. Thus inscribed in the seating plan of large theatres—even those with open stages—is a *scopic hierarchy* that unconsciously replicates an antiquated social hierarchy (emphasis added).²⁹⁰

Meanwhile, Korean playhouses followed a different logic from the very beginning. Émile Bourdaret, the French railway technician who worked in Korea for four years, noted this difference after visiting Soch'undae shortly after its grand opening in the winter of 1902 and 1903:

Tickets are distributed at a less than modest ticket office, and when you enter, you climb a wooden staircase that leads to the first gallery, or rather to the single floor of the theater, gradually leading down to the foot of the stage. The most modest places are downstairs near the orchestra, and what an orchestra! The middle-class ones are above and opposite [of the lowest-class seats], and the high-class seats and the two reserved boxes are on the sides, on a special gallery. *In my opinion, these are the worst places*, but no need to express any critique, [because] that would take us too far. Let us instead note the roofed theater's innovation because until now, the representations and the acrobatics were always given in the wind, the actors being sheltered from the sun or the rain by a canopy (emphasis added).²⁹¹

According to Bourdaret, there were three categories of seats in Soch'undae, namely the low-, the middle-, the high-class seats and boxes on the galleries. To his curiosity, seats near the stage were the cheapest, while other seats, higher than others, were more expensive. He believed that the boxes on the side of the stage might be the “worst places” because from there, one's sight of the stage was restricted. He was aware of what Kennedy called “scopic hierarchy” in European proscenium theaters and wondered why Seoul's first indoor playhouse did not follow this logic.

Yi Ch'angsuk's 2004 study on Chosŏn Koreans' travelogues implies that the seating plan might be influenced by theaters in China. On the rare occasion he went abroad as a part of a mission in 1766, Hong Daeyong (1731–83) went to a playhouse right next to the gate to Peking. Among other things, he documented how ticket prices differed depending on the physical height of the seat's position: a seat on the ground right next to the stage cost only as much as 1/64 of a seat on the upper deck.²⁹² Other travelogues from the nineteenth century, too, noted that in Chinese playhouses, seats placed higher were more expensive.²⁹³ Both Chinese and Korean playhouse operators shared the idea that

290 Kennedy, *Spectator and Spectacle*, 135.

291 Bourdaret, *En Corée*, 247. I became aware of this text through Cho Yŏnggyu's 2008 study. My gratitude to Kolja Naumann for the translation of the French text into English.

292 See Yi Ch'angsuk, “Yŏnhaengnok Chung Chungguk Hŭigok Kwallyŏn Kisa ūi Naeyong kwa Kach'i [Accounts on the Chinese Theater in Travelogues and Their Value],” *Chungguk Hakpo* 15 (2004), 71–95; see 80.

293 See Yi, “Accounts on Chinese Theater,” 80.

one's position in the social hierarchy needed to be translated into the physical height of the seat in the theater.²⁹⁴

In the 1910s, Korean theaters' seating plans were still divided into three price categories and two gender categories. According to the ticket price, seats were called upper-level seats (*sangdüngsök*), middle-level seats (*chungdüngsök*), and lower-level seats (*hadüngsök*). For spectators in colonial Korea, the theater was a space where they could directly experience advantages and disadvantages based on their socioeconomic status. Theaters provided various facilities and services for different levels of seats, which was particularly unpleasant for the lower-class section's audience. An audience member complained about this discrimination in a letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* in December 1913:

All spectators buy tickets with money as valuable as a piece of gold in order to enter the theater and watch [plays]; while there is no room to sit in the lower-class as seats cost less, [theater operators] tie up rafters with rope, entangled with wire mesh, in fear of [lower-class audiences] going to the middle-class seats. They do not even light a single stove [at lower-class seats] after being so hard on us for every possible reason. Do they think that our money is a mere piece of broken porcelain? While treating people who pay so coldly, they take others with false tickets to the upper-class seats and warm up the fire. What an unequal place it is!²⁹⁵

The audience member criticized Korean theaters for discriminating against people who could only afford lower-class seats. According to him, theaters did not prepare enough seats in the lower-class section so that the spectators could not properly sit. Moreover, theater operators physically divided the lower- and middle-class using wire ropes, which he recognized as an effort to safeguard the higher-class section from people in the lower-class section with no seats. Theaters did not provide lower-class sections with heating, either. Furthermore, to the writer's frustration, theater operators guided people with invitation tickets to warmly heated upper-class seats, making money spent on lower-class tickets, "as valuable as a piece of gold" for the poor, worthless like "a mere piece of broken porcelain."

This letter is powerful proof that the categorized seats led to discrimination based on socioeconomic status in Korean theaters. The discrimination against people in the lower-class section evoked the feeling of inequality and frustration instead of a strong bond among ethnic Koreans, which was generally presumed by prior studies. Another audience member's response published on the following day indicates that there were other Koreans critically aware of the issue of discrimination against the low-income audience, too.

The Pulp'yönggaek's letter that you introduced yesterday in the Readers' Club was very refreshing. Indeed, it makes me angry that theaters do not light the stoves for the

294 An anonymous critic pointed out in 1925 that the pricing in Korean playhouses complied with the hierarchical social structure of Chosön, where the *yangban* stratum were more privileged than other groups of people. He demanded a rearrangement of the pricing system. YK-Saeng, "Urgent Need of Improving Theater," *MS*, September 19, 1925, 2.

295 Pulp'yönggaek, "Readers' Club," *MS*, December 4, 1913, 3.

lower-class seats and block the front with wire mesh or rafters, but what offends me the most is that the employees, who cater to higher-class guests, glare and yell at us when we misbehave a little. If things are like this, how could we take the lower-class seat?²⁹⁶

Earlier that year, the Korean theater Umigwan was temporarily shut down by Seoul's northern police due to the corruption of public morals.²⁹⁷ The police problematized several incidents: for instance, the film narrator Sō Sangho not only stared at women's seats and gave a lewd account of films but was also accused of fraud, which brought considerably more notoriety to the already disdained theater business. An incident that "a bestial man and woman were caught in the contemptible act by other audience in a toilette on the second floor"²⁹⁸ heightened the theater's notoriety even more. Furthermore, the Korean public was furious about a Japanese employee who beat and swore at Korean visitors for minor misbehaviors. Finally, female employees on the second floor, too, discriminated against visitors who wore modest dresses while flirting with rich young men. While the suspension of business was a reaction to all these incidents, the Japanese vendor and female ushers' examples indicate that Korean audiences experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity and class.²⁹⁹

Although a person of low social status could sit in the prestigious section through invitation or personal connections, it was a controversial issue. A 1914 reader's letter problematized that a prostituting woman was sitting on a special-class seat:

The night before yesterday, I was at Tansōngsa and found that the man-woman order was severely disturbed. A prostituting woman was even sitting in the special-class seats. That should not be happening.³⁰⁰

As this letter discusses the prostituting woman, it reads like a critique of "man-woman [dis]order" in the theater. However, there is no account telling such women were "even" sitting in the middle- or an upper-class section. Inherent to this brief letter is a displeasure to see the woman of the lowest social status taking a seat in the auditorium's most prestigious section. She challenged the belief that a person with a low social status should not enjoy benefits granted exclusively to the privileged.

Meanwhile, there was tension between the stage and the auditorium, too, based on the violation of the hierarchical social order. A reader's complaint from 1913 indicates that some Korean audiences felt disturbed when performers, who used to belong to the lowest social stratum in the Chosōn Dynasty, behaved boldly in theaters: "How *dare* a clown of a certain theater go to upper-, middle-, and lower-class seats without any hesitation with a

296 Tonggamsaeng, "Readers' Club," MS, December 5, 1913, 3.

297 "Umigwan e Ka Ilbong: Umigwan ūi Cheban Akhaeng. Yōngōp Hōga kkaji Chōngji [A Blow for Umigwan: All the Bad Deeds of Umigwan. Even the Business Is Suspended]," MS, May 3, 1913, 3.

298 "Blow for Umigwan," MS, May 3, 1913, 3.

299 Ibid. The assault on Korean visitors by a Japanese employee was reported earlier. "Umigwan ūi Samilgan [Three Days of Show in Umigwan]," MS, April 23, 1913, 3.

300 Kwan'gūksaeng, "Readers' Letters," MS, February 17, 1914, 3.

pipe in his mouth, *no matter how this world has become?* That was a nasty behavior (emphasis added).³⁰¹

The writer was upset because the performer behaved waywardly according to etiquettes of the Chosŏn era. The performer not only trespassed the domain of the higher social stratum but also smoked a pipe in front of them. As Gilmore observed, smoking in Korea was granted only to people of higher stratum when people of diverse backgrounds were in the same place.³⁰² By not hiding his pipes and even approaching visitors, the performer painfully reminded some in the audience “how this world has become,” namely, a society without an official strata system.

Audiences of that time problematized male performers’ jokes and their gazes targeting the women’s seats, too. As women of higher status attended plays, male performers’ behavior challenged the inside-outside norm that protected noblewomen from communicating with men. Behind the displeasure that spectators at Korean theaters felt about the male performers’ flirtatious behavior was the taboo of sexual contact between women of higher social rank and lower caste men during the Chosŏn era.³⁰³ Multiple contemporaries expressed their anger over male entertainers’ approach to women in the ladies’ seats, sending in comments such as: “I am sick of actors looking at the ladies’ seats whenever they come out and explain something. Even if we put aside the shame it brings on us as women, one should take care of one’s own behavior in front of everyone.”³⁰⁴ “I do not want to see some clown watching the ladies’ seats whenever he enters the theater. What kind of behavior is that?”³⁰⁵ “I hate a clown of a certain theater who makes bad jokes when he comes out on the stage to sing a *p’ansori* because he wants to talk with the women’s section.”³⁰⁶

A 1913 case of two male performers reveals that the strata system still operated effectively, although there was legally no stratum anymore. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, Chi Tonggŭn, who used to perform acrobatics, and Cho Chinyŏng, known for his repertoire *Song of House Guardian God*, mistakenly believed that an aristocratic woman had ex-

301 Kwallamja, “Readers’ Club,” MS, August 3, 1913, 3.

302 “But the servant never smokes in the presence of his master. So the servants about foreigner’s houses, if they are caught by the master with a pipe in their mouth, take it out and hide it behind them. Often when going down to the river for swans in the early morning, and taking my soldier along, I would put in my pocket a cigar to cheer him as we waited for the light to come or the fog to lift; but he would never smoke before me. Were we waiting, he would get behind a boat, where he could not be seen, or if we were walking he would come some distance behind me. If a nobleman passes along the street, the common people who are smoking hide their pipes until he has gone by.” Gilmore, *Korea from Capital*, 117–18.

303 During the Chosŏn Dynasty, men of higher social strata could take women of lower rank as their concubines, while the sexual relationship between noblewomen and lower caste men was severely punished. *Chosŏn ūi Seksyuŏllit’i: Chosŏn ūi Yongmang ūl Malhada* [*Chosŏn Sexuality: On the Desire During the Chosŏn Dynasty*] (Seoul: Karam Kihoek, 2009), 127–28.

304 Il Puin, “Readers’ Club,” MS, March 29, 1913, 5.

305 Mo Pyŏlsil, “Readers’ Club,” MS, August 5, 1913, 3.

306 Ch’ŏllian, “Readers’ Letters,” MS, September 12, 1914, 4.

pressed sexual interest in them during their show.³⁰⁷ Misinterpreting her gestures as a sign to follow her, they ran after her rickshaw from Chang'ansa to her house. As she entered her home without noticing the men, they knocked on the door and asked about her intention, only to be scolded. Calling them "ignorant vulgar clowns," the woman warned them that they should not expect to "live their whole lives," which scared them so much that they ran away and took the first train to Pusan, a city on the South Coast, only to be chased by the authorities.³⁰⁸

As her words indicate, she was upset not only because the men approached her with sexual interest, which she did not share, but also because they behaved disrespectfully towards her: men of the lowest stratum like the performers were the last persons to be allowed to make such an advance on an aristocratic woman like her. Likewise, it is possible that there was a similar strata imbalance behind another miscellaneous news item from January 1914: "A clown of a theater narrowly avoided severe punishment after sending a letter to a woman he has never seen before."³⁰⁹

As a response to these cases, Seoul's colonial police enforced new rules in April 1916 to control public morals in Korean theaters. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, the new regulation forbade not only mixed seating of women and men but also direct contact between spectators and performers:

Considering the current situation of theaters and motion picture houses in Seoul, it is not exaggerated to say that there are many harmful incidents. The police station in charge is going to enforce morals through strict regulation of things that harm public morals, such as arousing bad feelings among the audience by doing something cruel or obscene in a play, audience entering rooms for film narrators and other actors, actors or film narrators indiscreetly going to the auditorium, disorder between men's and women's seats and sitting together or film narrators giving explanations that spoil public morality.³¹⁰

The ban suggests that contact between the audience and the performers often took place, and that the police considered it a spoiling of public morality. Against the background that some performers tried to approach female audiences, the ban on "audience entering rooms for film narrators and other actors" can be interpreted as a measure against sexual contact between performers and spectators. Meanwhile, the other ban on "actors or film narrators indiscreetly going to the auditorium" responded to complaints based on social strata.

307 "Sahoe P'unggi wa Yönyegye: Sahoe P'unggi wa Yön'gükchang Öttök'e Hamyön Choülkka [Social Morality and the Entertainment World: Social Morality and Theaters. How Can We Handle the Matter?]," *MS*, April 16, 1913, 3.

308 "Social Morality and Entertainment," *MS*, April 16, 1913, 3.

309 Miltamsaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, January 17, 1914, 3.

310 "Kükchang üi P'unggi Ch'wich'e Palgyön Hamyön Ömböl Handa [The Regulation of Public Morals at Theaters: When Caught, Get Punished]," *MS*, April 1, 1916, 3.

The issue of gendered segregation was mentioned again in the 1922 *Rules Controlling Theaters and Plays*.³¹¹ The repeated mentions of the need for stricter separation in theaters reveals that Koreans kept crossing the boundaries of their seats despite the 1916 ban. The social order of Chosŏn society was fully reflected in the allocation of space in the Korean theaters. Thus, even such minor violations and discipline by the colonial power reminded Koreans of the social order based on social strata and gender and triggered its negotiation.

Chapter 3 explored the discourse of Korean theater as a means of social education after colonization, with a focus on the spread of *shinpya* led by the *Maeil Shinbo* and the control of audience behavior by colonial authorities and spectators. Social education in colonial Korea encompassed the acquisition of knowledge through new media and the learning of public decorum at new public places, contradicting the earlier belief that Korean theater might lead to the moral and economic decline of the Korean nation. *Maeil Shinbo* journalists and *shinpya* producers endorsed Japanese theater's superiority and encouraged Koreans to learn how to watch this new Japanese genre. These endorsements were driven by the intertwined interests of newspapers, theater businesses, and colonial authorities. Using popular *shinpya* plays based on newspaper novels such as *The Cuckoo* and *The Tears*, the colonial newspaper actively interpellated Korean women as audiences who were beyond the reach of colonial authorities' assimilation politics. These women were expected to become culturally and emotionally assimilated colonial subjects by learning proper behavior as audience members and understanding *shinpya* plays to a degree that they would cry while watching tragic fates unfold. However, these efforts were met with unexpected challenges as Korean (female) audiences often laughed at unfamiliar styles of acting by actors.

In the 1910s, colonial authorities and the *Maeil Shinbo* closely monitored audience behavior in general, too. The press organ of the Government-General publicized stories of violations and punishments, turning Korean playhouses into a disciplinary institution that tried to turn visitors into colonial subjects. Theatergoers were allocated to many different and intersecting subject positions based on their gender, ethnicity, economic power, and social strata. Concurrently, some Korean audience members also observed and reported misbehavior of others to the *Maeil Shinbo*, further expanding the colonial police's disciplinary power. It was not seldom that their intention was, however, upholding keeping the long-standing Confucian values and social hierarchy. Reflecting the conflicting and diverse interests of the colonial authorities, theater operators, and Korean individuals, norms regarding their sexuality, position in the social hierarchy, and proper behavior as colonized subject were negotiated in colonial Korean theaters in the 1910s.

311 "Hünghaengjang küp Hünghaeng Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik [Rules Controlling Theaters and Plays]," MS, March 1, 1922, 3. The impact on the rules on Korean theater business is discussed in the following chapter.

4. Female Students and Romantic Movies¹

Now a film titled DEMI-VIERGES is playing, about which the critics write: A typical case shows the mentality of young girls from so-called good society who want to savor the tingling charm of erotic adventures with precocious sensuality. They attract the man and give him almost everything – *tout excepté ça*. They play lustfully with the fire until they burn themselves on it. This is my exact picture, except for the final sentence, of course, that will come soon!

Marlene Dietrich, Diary of September 17, 1919²

The 1920s witnessed “a surge in Korean female students in ladies’ seats of theaters.”³ As school education was still rare for Korean women, secondary school students were counted as the elite of the nation. Korean newspapers and magazines, whose number increased under the so-called cultural rule (*munhwa t’ongch’i*) of the Government-General since 1920, competitively spread observations, criticisms, and rumors of the Korean female students in movie theaters. Criticisms of female students’ moviegoing, which were closely related to ideas about their sexuality, depicted romantic movies as a kind of a sexual stimulant that the young women eagerly took. Also, contemporaries believed that Western romantic movies were a gateway to *yōnae*, or romance, for female students.

Considering that women of other professions and ages, such as *kisaeng* women and laborers, were regarded as an intrinsic part of the auditorium by the early 1920s, the pub-

1 A part of Chapter 4 has been published under the title “Liebesfilme, Geschlechtskrankheiten und eugenische Ehe: Diskurse über Seouler Kinobesucherinnen in den 1920er- und 30er-Jahren” in the *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Vol. 48(2), in German.

2 Marlene Dietrich, *Diary of September 17, 1919*, as cited in Eva Gesine Baur, *Einsame Klasse: Das Leben der Marlene Dietrich* (München: C.H. Beck 2017), 50.

3 “Kükchang Puinsök e Kyökhchüng Toen Chosön Yöhsaksaeng: Tobalchök Yönaegük e Shimch’wi Hayö Ch’önyö üi Sunjinhan Chöngsö Nanmu [A Surge in Korean Female Students in Ladies’ Seats of Theaters: The Virgin Sentiment Dances Wildly, Drunk on Provocative Romantic Dramas],” *MS*, December 15, 1926, 4.

lic debates of female students' theatergoing warrant an in-depth analysis. Based on articles, commentaries, readers' letters, and films, chapter 4 examines the politics behind the controversy over the Korean female students' spectatorship during the 1920s. Analyzing these traces, I examine how the younger generation, particularly women, appropriated the disdained pastime as part of a budding youth culture that distinguished them from the rest of Korean society. Thereby, this chapter pays close attention to the reformist discourse of sexuality, marriage, and sexually transmitted diseases (STD), which were entangled with the discourse on women's role in society on the one hand, and movies that ran in theaters on the other hand.

4.1 Western Romantic Movies and Korean Female Students

Korean Cinema Culture in the 1920s

By the early 1920s, there were three Korean and four Japanese movie theaters in Seoul. Cinemas that targeted Korean audiences such as Umigwan, Tansöngsa, and Chosön Kükchang (Chosön Movie Theater), were located at Jongno, the main street of the capital.⁴ Meanwhile, Kirakukan, Chūōkan, Taishōkan, and Koganekan targeted Japanese settlers in Seoul, whose number rapidly increased after the 1910 annexation.⁵ These movie theaters were operating at Kirakucho (present-day Ŭljiro) on the southern bank of Chönggyech'ön stream.⁶

The separation between the Korean and Japanese movie theaters was rooted in the language barrier during the silent movie era. As there was no sound, film narrators used to give an introductory explanation of the movie. For instance, Kyöngsöng Kodüng Yönye Kwan (Kyöngsöng High-Class Entertainment Hall) started as a mixed-language cinema in 1910 and offered explanations in both Korean and Japanese languages.⁷ However, the film narration changed with time. Instead of a simple explanation before the screening, movie theaters in Seoul began offering accompanying explanations (*chungsöl*) like in Tokyo. Film narrators described each scene and did the voice acting on behalf of the silent actors on the screen, which could not be done in two languages concurrently.⁸ As a result, the linguistic separation became institutional, geographic, and often ethnic separations in the movie theaters in Seoul.⁹

4 Kim Sunju, "Yöngghwa Shijang ürosö üi Shingminji Chosön: 1920-nyöndaee Kyöngsöng üi Chosönin Kükchang kwa Ilbonin Kükchang üi Chungsim üro [Colonial Korea as a Movie Market: Focusing on Seoul's Korean Theaters and Japanese Theaters in the 1920s]," *Han'guk Munhwa Illyuhak* 47, no. 1 (2014), 135–72; refer to 136.

5 Kim, "Colonial Korean Movie Market," 136. The number of Japanese settlers living in Seoul rose sharply from 25,242 in 1909 to 38,186 in 1910 and 66,024 in 1914. See Han Sang'ön, "1910-nyöndaee Kyöngsöng üi Kükchang kwa Kükchang Munhwa e kwanhan Yöng'u [A Study on Theater and Theater Culture in Seoul During the 1910's]," *Yöngghwa Yöng'u* 53 (2012), 403–29; refer to 406.

6 Kim, "Colonial Korean Movie Market," 143–44.

7 Han, *Birth of Korean Cinema*, 211–12.

8 *Ibid.*, 213.

9 Chöng, *Watching Movies*, 138.

The cornerstone for cinema's development "into a prominent form of mass entertainment"¹⁰ in Korea was laid in the late 1910s. Around this time, colonial Korea became "a part of the market managed by branch offices of the U.S. movie companies that advanced to Japan."¹¹ In 1916, Umigwan began supplying American movies under a special contract with Universal Pictures, while Tansöngsa and Chosön Movie Theater brought Western films through Shōchiku, a Japanese distribution company.¹² Indeed, the contract relationships changed several times over the 1920s as American film distributors such as Paramount, United Artists, MGM, Fox, as well as Japanese competitors, including Nikkatsu and Star Film, entered the picture.¹³

Securing a film distribution network was essential to the colonial Korean film business because hardly any commercial films were produced by Korean creators until the early 1920s.¹⁴ As film historian Dong Hoon Kim points out, "the unstable political and economic state of Joseon [Korea] as a colony [...] affected not only the growth of the film business but the culture industry overall."¹⁵ Even after Korean film creators began to produce commercial films in the early 1920s, Korean films accounted for "at best, 5 percent of all the films screened at cinemas"¹⁶ during the colonial era.

During the "era of watching-only (*kamsang man üi shidae*)," Korean audiences preferred Western films to Japanese films.¹⁷ Following this preference, movie theaters targeting the Korean audience mainly showed foreign films and only a few Japanese movies.¹⁸ Oka Shigematsu, a colonial censor, wrote in a 1933 essay that Korean movie theaters might "currently completely boycott Japanese movies."¹⁹ Uneasy over this tendency, the Government-General restricted the number of foreign movies in 1934 to

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- 10 Dong Hoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 18. Original in English.
- 11 Yi Hogöl, "Shingminji Chosön üi Oeguk Yöngghwa: 1920-nyöndae Kyöngsöng üi Chosönin Yöngghwagwan esö üi Oehwa Sang'yöng [Foreign Films in Colonized Korea: Exhibition of Foreign Films in Korean Film Theaters of Seoul in 1920s]," *Taedong Munhwa Yöng'u* 72 (2010), 79–116; refer to 83.
- 12 Yi, "Foreign Films," 83–85.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 86–91.
- 14 Kim, "Colonial Korean Movie Market," 135–72.
- 15 Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema*, 18.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 1. Analyzing the statistics of the censorship organ, Korean film scholar Yi Sunjin found that among 2,422 films censored in a year between August 1926 and July 1927 only 18 were categorized as "genuinely Korean films whose producers, stories, and actors were all, or mainly, Korean." "Shingminji Shigi Yöngghwa Kömyöl üi Chaengjömdül: Ch'önsöl [Issues of Colonial Movie Censorship: An Introduction]," in *Shingminji Shidae üi Yöngghwa Kömyöl 1910–1934 [Movie Censorship During the Colonial Era: 1910–1934]*, ed. Korean Film Archive (KOFA) (Seoul: KOFA, 2009), 15–39; see 17.
- 17 Korean author Yim Hwa used the term in his 1941 treatise. "Chosön Yöngghwaron [On Korean Cinema]," *Ch'unchu'u* 13, no. 6 (1941), 84, as cited in Baek Moonim, "Chosön Yöngghwa üi Chonjaeron: Yim Hwa üi Chosön Yöngghwaron üi Chungsim üro [An Ontology of Korean Cinema: Focusing on Yim Hwa's 'On Korean Cinema']," *Sanghō Hakpo* 33 (2011), 73–213; refer to 191.
- 18 Police Bureau, Government-General of Chosön, "Hwaltong Sajin P'ilüm Kömyöl Kaeyo: Taishyo 15-nyön (1926-nyön) 8-wöl putö Syowa 2-nyön (1927-nyön) 7-wöl kkaji (1931) [A Report on the Movie and Film Censorship: From August 1926 to July 1927 (1931)]," *Movie Censorship 1910–1934*, trans. Hong Sönyöng, Yu Sönyöng, and Ch'ae Yöng, 153–290; refer to 188.
- 19 Oka Shigematsu, "Yöngghwa Kömyöl Chapgam (1933) [Thoughts on Movie Censorship (1933)]," in *Movie Censorship 1910–1934*, trans. Hong, Yu, and Ch'ae, 324–27; refer to 324.

expand the influence of Japanese movies and profit from Japanese entertainment capital that advanced into Korea.²⁰

Koreans' preference for Hollywood movies is notable because Japan was geographically and culturally closer to the Korean peninsula than the U.S. Korean movie scholar Baek Moonim points out that previous studies often explained this tendency as an example of Koreans' political rejection of the colonizer's culture.²¹ However, recent film scholarship has revisited this subject, considering further aspects behind Koreans' preference of American movies. Baek emphasizes that the feeling of coevalness that American movies evoked among Koreans played a decisive role.²² According to her, American movies, which enabled viewers to share the same time consciousness as America, could compensate for the sense of delay that Korea might be behind the times in terms of Enlightenment and Civilization.²³

Meanwhile, the colonial government's censorship organ found that Korean audiences of the late 1920s had difficulties with differences in language and culture when they watched Japanese movies.

Considering genres of movies, movie theaters operated by Japanese show historical movies, contemporary stories, and others as they initially aim for Japanese audiences, while movie theaters that aim for Korean audiences show primarily Western movies and Korean movies produced in Korea, such as Korean historical movies, contemporary stories, et cetera. This [tendency] originated from a marketing strategy, yet Korean audiences cannot understand Japanese movies because these are different in terms of history, humanity, and custom; thus, they are not interested in them, and Japanese movies attract fewer audiences. Western movies mainly deal with contemporary stories, and the European films are translated and narrated in the Korean language—in general, they are easier to understand than Japanese movies, and Korean audiences especially tend to like the Western action movies from America.²⁴

This report indicates that the urban audience of Korean theaters in the 1920s identified themselves more with the modernity depicted in the Hollywood movies of that time than the Japanese movies. In combination, Korean audiences were more interested in experiencing the vision of modernity transmitted through American movies than comprehending the geographically close yet unfamiliar Japanese movies.

20 Yi, "Issues of Film Censorship," 28.

21 Baek Moonim, "Kamsang ūi Shidae, Chosŏn ūi Miguk Yŏnsok Yŏnghwa [American Serial Movies in Korea during the Era of Viewing]," in *Chosŏn Yŏnghwa wa Halliudū* [Chosun Cinema and Hollywood], ed. Yŏn'gu Moim Sinema Babel (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2014), 15–72; refer to 26.

22 Baek, "American Serial Movies," 26.

23 Ibid.

24 Police Bureau, "Report on Movie Censorship," 282.

Kissing Scenes in Romantic Movies

Western romantic movies, or *yōnaegūk*, arose as a new popular genre of Seoul's movie theaters in the early 1920s.²⁵ According to the censorship organ's statistics, romantic movies were the second most popular genre after action movies (*hwalgūk*), which had attracted Korean audiences since the 1910s.²⁶ The great success of the movie *WAY DOWN EAST* (1920) and the public's unabated interest in the director, David W. Griffith, were indicators of the 1920s romance movie boom in colonial Korea.²⁷

The popularization of romantic movies posed a new challenge to the colonial censors. The Police Bureau of the Government-General justified the censorship of Western films with "public security" and "public morality"²⁸ reasons. Colonial censors cut numerous action films due to their depiction of "ethnic conflicts, class conflicts" and "revolution and revolts,"²⁹ which could remind colonized Korean audiences of their own struggles with unjust colonial rule. Meanwhile, what concerned the censors about romantic movies were loving scenes.³⁰ Thereby, they justified the colonial censorship with the alleged underdevelopment of Korean society. "In particular, there are many parts of human drama (*injōngmul*) and romantic movies that cannot be admitted in light of the current public order and morals of Korea, so many such things are cut out."³¹

Kissing scenes, which were abundant in movies from the West, particularly challenged the colonial censors, and contemporaries were aware of this fact. An anonymous essay published by the daily newspaper *Chung'oe Ilbo* in 1927 reveals that Koreans knew about the censorship practice: "Kissing scenes are the ones that censors of the police department pay the most attention to [...] whenever his [a censor's] eyes catch these [kissing] scenes, scissors cut off the film under his stern order."³²

Because the censors were not always thorough, Koreans could still watch kissing scenes in Western movies and came to associate Western movies with the visual representation of kisses. The writer of the essay claimed that "there is no Western motion picture without any kissing scene. When I think about it, no one seems to have seen a motion picture where nobody kisses at all."³³ A 1935 article titled "A History of the Kiss" went so far as to assert that "in Chosŏn, there had not been kisses before. [...] It was since the American movies came to [colonial Korea] that kissing was popularized."³⁴ Contrary to this claim, Shin Yunbok's painting *Wōlha Chōng'in* (Lovers under the Moonlight; see

25 Yi, "Foreign Films," 99.

26 Police Bureau, "Report on Movie Censorship," 204.

27 Yi, "Foreign Films," 99.

28 Police Bureau, "Report on Movie Censorship," 227.

29 Ibid., 228.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 P'isaeng, "Kissū Nandam [Talking Wildly about Kisses]," *Chung'oe Ilbo* [hereafter CO], July 10, 1927, 3.

33 P'isaeng, "Talking about Kisses," CO, July 10, 1927, 3.

34 "K'issū ūi Yōksa (sang) Kū Saengni wa Pyōngni nūn Öttōhan ka [A History of the Kiss 1: What Is Its Physiology and Pathology]," *DI*, June 28, 1935, 4.

figure 5), produced before Hollywood movies came to the Korean peninsula, shows that Chosŏn Koreans, too, kissed to express their affection.

Figure 5: Shin Yunbok, *Wŏlha Chŏng'in* (Lovers under the Moonlight).



Source: Eighteenth-nineteenth century, Ink painting with pale color, 28.2 x 35.6 cm, Seoul. Courtesy of Kansong Art and Culture Foundation.

The article “History of Kiss” reveals two aspects of the colonial Korean reception of kissing scenes in Western movies. Firstly, the article created a false genealogy of kisses and asserted that they were from the West, which was inaccurate. Korean feminist scholar Pak-Ch’a Minjŏng analyzed the newspaper discourse of kisses in the 1930s and concluded that “kisses were gaining meaning as a specifically Western and up-to-date sexual practice”³⁵ in the 1930s. Thereby, some Koreans considered kisses not just as a Western and foreign practice but as a marker of civilization. A 1938 article claimed that the more a folk’s reproductive function degenerates, the more developed its competence in kissing.³⁶ “History of Kiss” explained that depending on the degree of civilization, people might focus on different senses while kissing as well.³⁷

Secondly, kisses were closely related to the cinematic experience of the colonial Korean audience. A 1928 analysis of kissing scenes in American movies suggests that watch-

35 Pak-Ch’a Minjŏng, *Chosŏn ūi K’uiŏ: Kŭndae ūi T’ŭmsae e Sumŭn Pyŏnt’aedŭl ūi Ch’osang* [The Queer of Chosŏn: Portraits of the Perverts Hiding in the Ruptures of Modern Times] (Seoul: Hyŏnshil Munhwa Yŏn’gu 2018), 86.

36 “Saengsik Kinŭng i T’oehwa Toel surok K’isŭ ka Paldal Twe [The More a Folk’s Reproductive Function Degenerates, The More Developed Its Sufficiency in Kissing],” *CI*, June 21, 1938, as cited in Pak-Ch’a, *Queer of Chosŏn*, 86.

37 “History of Kiss 1,” *DI*, June 28, 1935, 4.

ing kissing scenes shot in close-up on the large screen in movie theaters had an immense impact on the audience:

[American movies] thrust kissing scenes right into the face of the audience using close-up. Then the audience cannot help but be thrilled by this as if one came to the movie theater to see only this one love scene. Just as comedians are needed in comedy, tens of thousands of love scenes are embedded in celluloid films by countless researchers of love scenes.³⁸

Chosŏn Koreans did circulate paintings explicitly depicting sexual acts called *ch'unhwa*, but they consumed such paintings in private.³⁹ The collective and public nature of movie watching made on-screen kisses particularly problematic. Even in the U.S., where most kissing scenes in colonial Korean theaters were produced, the first on-screen kiss shot by Thomas Edison sparked a public uproar.⁴⁰ Pointing out that Edison's film featured a kissing scene that two actors used to play at the end of a musical farce, historian John E. Semonche underlines the importance of the medium on people's reception.⁴¹ Eventually, the Hays Production Code (1930) "set a limit of thirty seconds"⁴² for kissing scenes in a movie.

Even before the Hays Production Code was enforced, Hollywood movies were put under censorship in colonial Korea. The colonial censorship was often arbitrary, so that censors erased some kissing scenes while leaving others untouched. Cecil B. DeMille's 1921 movie *FORBIDDEN FRUIT* and Charles Chaplin's 1923 movie *A WOMAN OF PARIS* (see figure 6) provides material evidence.⁴³ In *FORBIDDEN FRUIT*, a romantic comedy drawing upon the story of Cinderella, censors erased two kissing scenes that were four seconds and one

38 "Hünghaeng Kach'i rül Chŏnghhanün Yŏnghwa ūi Rŏbüssin-K'isü Chal Hanün Paeu ka Kōbu ka Toenda [Love Scenes in the Movie that Decide Over the Success: Actors Who Kiss Well Become Rich]," *CI*, March 6, 1928, 3.

39 *Ch'unhwa* was produced and circulated through personal connections between painters and patrons. See Kim Hŏnsŏn, "Sam kwa Sŏng'yok ūi Yesul, Ch'unhwa ūi Unmyŏng: Han'guk ūi Ch'unhwa Yŏtbogi [The Art of Life and Sexual Desire and the Fate of *Ch'unhwa*: A Glance at Korean *ch'unhwa*]," ed. Kyujanggak Han'gukak Yŏn'guwŏn, *Kūrim ūro Pon Chosŏn [Comprehending Chosŏn Through Paintings]* (Seoul: Kūl Hang'ari, 2014), 383–414.

40 John E. Semonche, *Censoring Sex: A Historical Journey Through American Media* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 97–98.

41 Semonche, *Censoring Sex*, 97.

42 *Ibid.*, 114.

43 The Korean daily newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* published lists of 46 censored movies with scene descriptions, length, and reasons twice in 1926. Based on these lists, I was able to identify and examine two feature length movies that were still preserved. *FORBIDDEN FRUIT* was first shown in Korea at Chosŏn Movie Theater on January 17, 1926. "Sinae Kak Kūkchang Kūmju Sang'yŏng Yŏnghwa: Moda Myŏnghwa rül Sang'yŏng chung [Movies Running This Week in Downtown: All Theaters Showing Great Movies]," *DI*, January 18, 1926, 3. *A WOMAN OF PARIS* premiered in Tansŏngsa on January 31, 1926 under the title P'ARI ūi Yŏsŏng. "P'ARI ūi Yŏsŏng [A WOMAN OF PARIS]," *Shidae Ilbo*, February 1, 1926, 2. Copies used for this study are as follows: *FORBIDDEN FRUIT*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille (1921; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, Silent Hall of Fame Enterprises, 2016), DVD; *A WOMAN OF PARIS: A DRAMA OF FATE*, directed by Charles Chaplin (1923; Hollywood, CA: Chaplin Studio, Warner Home Video, 2004), DVD.

second each.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, four kisses (two on lips, one on a hand, and another on foot) between Mary and Nelson, the two protagonists, and two hugging scenes (one between Mary and Nelson, the other between Mary and Steve) passed the censorship.

As there was no written guideline for the censorship, it is unclear what criteria the censors used to decide whether or not to delete kissing scenes in *FORBIDDEN FRUIT*. Possibly, the censor weighed the relationship between the characters more heavily than their marital status: the kisses that remained were all between Mary and Nelson, the two protagonists of the movie, while Steve, Mary's legal husband, is an antagonist who abuses her. The kiss in the theatrical play that Mary and Nelson attend might have been cut off due to the prevailing eroticism despite its short duration.

Figure 6: A kissing scene with Adolphe Menjou (left) and Edna Purviance (right) from the film A WOMAN OF PARIS.



Source: Courtesy of Roy Export S.A.S.

Scenes depicting physical affection in *A WOMAN OF PARIS*, too, were censored arbitrarily. While cutting out the first kissing scene between the two protagonists, Marie and Jean, the censors left three kissing scenes and a hugging scene. Although *A WOMAN OF PARIS* was inspected in the same month as *FORBIDDEN FRUIT*, it is difficult to identify any patterns in the censorship regarding kissing scenes in these movies.

44 The calculation is based on the length of cut films and Bruce F. Kavin's 1987 book *How Movies Work*. Kavin explained that "a reel is approximately 950 feet of 35mm film, with a maximum length of 1000 feet," equivalent to ca. 28,960 to 30,480 centimeters. According to him, 16 fps (frames per second) was "a more-or-less the standard silent projection rate" and "a full reel took about 15 minutes to project." See *How Movies Work* (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 46–47.

Recent studies established that movie censorship in colonial Korea became standardized and professionalized with the 1926 Censorship Regulation on Motion Picture Films.⁴⁵ This new rule was not yet enacted as *FORBIDDEN FRUITS* and *A WOMAN OF PARIS* were censored. The 1926 Censorship Regulation, however, also left room for arbitrary censorship practices by setting an ambiguous standard. According to the new law, “provocative embraces and kisses in love scenes or brutal images” could be cut off when censors considered them to have “a disturbing impact on the impression directly coming from the screen image.”⁴⁶

Kissing scenes that survived colonial censorship had a lasting impact on young audiences. The 1927 essay in the *Chung'oe Ilbo* claimed that “even with their eyes shut, they could see beautiful stars kissing. Eventually, kisses in Western motion pictures had a profound impact on young men and women of Chosŏn.”⁴⁷ The 1935 article on the history of the kiss noted that two Hollywood stars in particular, Rudolph Valentino and Adolphe Menjou, “became teachers of kissing (*kissŭ ūi sŏnsaeng*)”⁴⁸ to Korean people, indicating that the audience took Western movies as references for their relationships.

Kissing scenes in Western movies had a broad impact on the discourse of the body and sexuality in colonial Korea. Notably, women's lips became a fetishized and symbolic object as well as an economic investment. Some argued that “[women's] red lips are the first to catch one's eye” and lips were “a substitute for genitals.”⁴⁹ Others claimed that one could read a woman's characteristics based on the shape of her lips.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the increased interest in kisses and Hollywood stars led to the popularization of lipsticks, too.⁵¹

Pak-Ch'a's study demonstrates how kisses became a highly desired yet perverted and outlandish act among Koreans under the strict social control of sexuality during the 1920s and 1930s. While on-screen kisses widely circulated, actually kissing someone in public was regarded as delinquency and controlled by the police.⁵² Pak-Ch'a argues that the only realm where the physical expression of intimacy was legitimated was the commercial one, which included movies, advertisements, and places where women worked.⁵³ Some men used physical violence to kiss women working in precarity, such as those employed

45 Pak Hyeoyŏng, “1926-nyŏn 'Hwalgong Sajin Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik 1934-nyŏn 'Hwalgong Sajin Yŏnghwa Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik' ūl Chungsim ūro [Focusing on the 1926 Censorship Regulation on Motion Picture Films and the 1934 Censorship Regulation on Motion Picture Movies],” *Movie Censorship 1910-1934*, 113-23; see 115.

46 Oka, “Chosŏn esŏ ūi Yŏnghwa Kŏmyŏl e taehayŏ [On Movie Censorship in Chosŏn] (1931),” *Movie Censorship 1910-1934*, trans. Hong, Yu, and Ch'ae, 314-23; refer to 317.

47 P'isaeng, “Talking about Kisses,” *CO*, July 10, 1927, 3.

48 “History of Kiss 1,” *DI*, June 28, 1935, 4.

49 Yi Tal, “Sŏng'yokgam ūl Chungsim ūro Hayŏ Pon Yŏnghwa Yŏbaeu ūi Yukch'e Ko [Thoughts on Movie Actresses' Body with a Focus on Their Sex Appeal],” *Yŏnghwa Shidae* (March 1935), 63-64; refer to 64.

50 “Yŏnji Ch'irhan Kŭ Ipsul Pomyŏn Kŭ Yŏja ūi Sŏngjŏng ūl Anda [You Can Read a Woman's Characteristics by Her Lips Wearing Rouge],” *CI*, March 21, 1934, 1.

51 “History of Kiss 1,” *DI*, June 28, 1935, 4.

52 Pak-Ch'a, *Queer of Chosŏn*, 93-94.

53 *Ibid.*, 92-94.

at bars, restaurants, and cafés.⁵⁴ She points out that colonial Korean society showed little sympathy towards women working in the public sphere who experienced such harassment because “the society was only interested in protecting women worth the protection,” to which “female servers of cafés or female drivers”⁵⁵ did not count.

In this context, female students and unmarried young women who went to movie theaters in the 1920s and 1930s challenged far more than public expectations. Behind the public discourse on these unexpected female audiences, there was the politics of gender, class, and strata. Who were they, and why were they regarded as worth protecting, while other groups of Korean women in playhouses and movie theaters were not?

Female Students: Controversies and Agency

In March 1924, the *Maeil Shinbo* reported a rapid increase in Seoul’s cinema audience size. The daily newspaper indicated that the steep growth of the entertainment industry was mainly due to the increase in moviegoers, who sought consolation in cinema: “Watching motion pictures is necessary for a moment of comfort, yet we cannot help but be surprised by the amount of money spent on it.”⁵⁶ According to an article, 1,436,187 people visited playhouses and movie theaters in Seoul in 1923, and these theaters had 3,101 business days altogether.⁵⁷ Furthermore, ticket sales for playhouses and movie theaters in Seoul amounted to 1,430,000 wŏn, equivalent to five wŏn a year per every citizen of Seoul.⁵⁸

Despite the popularization of movie watching, not every individual’s theater attendance was socially accepted. Female students in theaters were among the most stigmatized audience groups in the 1920s. Geographically, Seoul’s female students could easily access the Korean theater district as most women’s schools were situated in the old city center.⁵⁹ Priced between a minimum of twenty chŏn and one hundred chŏn (or one wŏn), movie tickets were not cheap, but students receiving family support had money at their disposal to buy books, go shopping, and watch movies. Furthermore, many female students who came to Seoul from other regions lived outside their home and dormitories, evading surveillance by their parents and schools.⁶⁰

54 Ibid., 96–97.

55 Ibid., 98.

56 “Yŏnghwagye [Movie Industry],” *MS*, March 2, 1924, 3.

57 “Movie Industry,” *MS*, March 2, 1924, 3.

58 Ibid.

59 As of 1926, there were seven women’s secondary schools in Jongno-gu district and one in Chung-gu district.

60 For instance, a study of Tongdŏk Women’s Secondary School showed that of 1,435 students between 1926 and 1945, 526 students or 36.7 percent of the students lived separated from their family. See Kim Myŏngsuk, “Hakchŏkpu rŭl t’onghae Pon Ilche Kangjŏmgi Tongdŏk Yŏgo Yŏhaksang ūi T’ŭksŏng Yŏn’gu [A Study on the Characteristics of Female Students at Dongduk Girls’ High School during the Japanese Colonial Period],” *Yŏsŏng kwa Yŏksa* 26 (2017), 273–303; see 287–88. Hyaewel Choi argued that Christian schools in particular regarded the strict control of female students’ lives a necessity to discipline them, and thus supervised their everyday lives including visits from parents and the receipt of letters. On October 15, 1923, students of Sung’ui Girls’ School

Female students were confronted with alienization and criticisms when they went to theaters. A letter sent to the women's monthly magazine *Shin Yōsōng* in 1924 vividly captures the moment of encounter between female students and other people in the Korean theater. The writer, a female student, complained about her friends' unpleasant experiences at a theater:

It was last autumn. Back then, the theater company T'owōlhoe did something called a literary art drama (*munyegük*) at Chosōn Theater. My friend R. went there with three friends of hers to watch the piece. In the women's section on the second floor, commoner women, female servants, and *kisaeng* were sitting together. As the female students appeared there, the theater's atmosphere changed, and everyone looked at them as if they were goblins who emerged in the daylight. Although they, too, were women, other women (not to mention the men) were suspicious of them and talked a lot about them. "They must be *kisaeng* women," "they are girl students," "but no girl student comes to such place" (where is the law that bans female students' theatergoing?), "if they are girl students, they must be indiscreet," "recently, there are *kisaeng* women who dress up like girl students' and the like."⁶¹

The letter attests that female students' theater visits were considered unusual, if not delinquent, in the early 1920s. Ten years later, people still suspected that young women strolling Seoul's theater district might be prostituting women.⁶² The students expected acceptance, at least from other women in the theater who challenged the inside-outside norm just like they did. However, the women of other ages, strata, and professions showed hostility towards them. The "commoner women, female servants, and *kisaeng*" in the theater, often branded as the lewd women, were in this instance the gatekeepers who alienated the female students. The other women even questioned the authenticity of their identity, indicating that the well-educated and wealthy young women had landed on a terrain of socially marginalized and branded people.

Besides their mere presence in the auditorium, their understanding of theater, too, was challenged by other audiences. The young students considered T'owōlhoe's play, an interpretation of Anton Chekhov's *The Bear*, an educational cultural production categorized as "literary art play," which served also as a pretext for them to go to theaters despite the social norms. Nevertheless, the playful banter of other audience members overwhelmed them. The anonymous writer complained how a woman yelled, "Chastity? Oh, what a rotten piece of meat is that!"⁶³ in the middle of the play, where the heroine refused to consent to a male antagonist. Ironically, people looking for the source of the mishap

protested the oppressive education environment and demanded, among other things, the substitution of Ra Chingyōng, the head of the dormitory. See *Gender and Mission*, 104–05.

- 61 Yi, "T'owōlhoe ūi Yōngük Kukyōng ūl Kattaga [As They Went to see a Play by T'owōlhoe]," *Shin Yōsōng* (February 1924), 35–36; citation from 35.
- 62 Kang Yangsu's 1932 essay begins with the assumption that the women who seemed lost in the theater district "must be nightly flowers or [...] daughters of rich families." Kang, "Kükchangga esō Pon Kū Yōja ūi Chach'wi [The Vestiges of the Woman I Saw at the Theater District]," *Puin Kongnon* (May 1932), 56–57; refer to 56.
- 63 Yi, "As They Went," 35.

wrongfully accused the female students of this provocative call.⁶⁴ The audience considered female students who went to theaters audacious enough to make crude jokes on sexuality.

Despite suspicions and criticisms, Korean female students went to theaters and cinemas. As they discovered their preferences for romantic movies, newspapers and magazines discussed it as a worrisome phenomenon. On December 15, 1926, the *Maeil Shinbo* published an article titled “A Surge in Korean Female Students in Ladies’ Seats of Theaters: The Virgin Sentiment Dances Wildly, Drunk on Provocative Romantic Dramas.”⁶⁵ This article offers valuable insight into the rationales behind the critiques of female students’ movie watching and society’s joint efforts to discourage them from going to theaters. A journalist asserted that female students’ theatergoing allegedly demonstrated that “the harmful effect of women’s liberation at its very beginning”⁶⁶ because it was only a recent development that Korean women entered the public sphere.

The journalist interviewed four teachers at renowned women’s schools in Seoul and a theater manager. A principal claimed that female students’ theatergoing was “wrong, not [only] because films might corrupt their morality, but [also] [...] visiting such poorly lit spaces could lead to *some kind of harm* (emphasis added).”⁶⁷ Ahn Haengjung, a teacher of Ehwa Women’s High School, explained why he was concerned about girl students’ moviegoing and what his school was planning to do to control them:

If the government announces that a film is necessary for an educational purpose, our school lets [our students] see the film in a group viewing. If students frequent movie theaters on their own, they can easily be entangled with bad people, and their innocent sentiments can easily be agitated by entertaining films. Thus, from now on, homeroom teachers will undertake rounds of patrols and strictly discipline [the students in movie theaters].⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the comment of an anonymous theater director in the same newspaper article points to the societal and medical complexity of the supposedly cinema-typical damages. “As you know, the theater is a place where all kinds of guests come. *Even kisaeng women would get sick if they frequented the theater*, therefore much more temptation might be there for damsels who do not know the world (emphasis added).”⁶⁹ This pathological argument against female students’ movie watching and the distinction between them and *kisaeng* women are elaborated upon in chapter 4.3. Before that, I focus on sociocultural background of the concern that female students might pursue romance under the influence of romantic movies, which was widely shared throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The interviewees and the journalist believed that moviegoing could encourage female students to meet somebody who was not approved by their usual custodians, namely their parents, and start a romance.

64 Ibid., 36.

65 “Surge in Female Students,” *MS*, December 15, 1926, 4.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

Figure 7: Police register card of Yu Kwan-sun.



Source: Courtesy of the National Institute of Korean History (Korean History Database).

A prime embodiment of the notion of female students as the nation's new hope was Yu Kwansun (1902–20; see figure 7). The student of Ehwa Women's Secondary School became a symbolic figure of the movement after she was caught by the colonial police due to her participation in the protest and was tortured to death at the notorious Sōdaemun prison.⁷⁶ Female students' heroic activism during the March First Movement evoked the hope that educated women would contribute to Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule. Some observers considered the increase in students itself as a result of the March First Movement. An American observer reported in 1924 that Koreans were showing a growing interest in sending their children to schools. He understood this new trend as an aftermath of the March First Movement in 1919 against Japan's "application of naked force."⁷⁷ He wrote: "A few years ago—before 1919—the people were indifferent or hostile to the schools. Now they are eager to have their children attend, and the problem is to take care of them all."⁷⁸ His comment implies that the active participation of young Korean students in the anti-colonial movement might have demonstrated the necessity of school education, which, in turn, could have led to an increase in the number of Korean youth in the school system.

Indeed, the number of Korean students rapidly increased starting from 1919. The number of students enrolled in Korean public primary schools exceeded 100,000 for the

76 For the impact of Yu Kwansun's protest on her cohort during and after the March First Movement see Kwōn Podūrae, *3-wōl 1-il ūi Pam: P'ongnyōk ūi Segi e Kkum Kkumūn P'yōnghwa ūi Kkum* [*The Night of March First: A Dream of Peace in the Century of Violence*] (P'aju: Tolbegae, 2019), 387–89.

77 Ralston Hayden, "Japan's New Policy in Korea and Formosa," *Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1924), 474–87; see 474.

78 Hayden, "Japan's New Policy," 484.

first time in 1920. Between 1919 and 1925, this figure recorded a growth of about 10–50 percent every year and reached 315,000 in 1925.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, there were significantly fewer students in secondary education than in primary, indicating its prestigious status. As of 1925, there were about 9,100 Korean male students in public and private secondary schools.⁸⁰ In comparison, the number of female students attending the same level of schools was 84 percent and 78 percent less, respectively. Because of their rarity, female students became a burning focal point of public interest.

Shortly after the March First Movement, the narrative and imagery of female students gained a new hue. Instead of political activists, female students were consumed as a subject of gossip, “whose thoughts, attitudes, fashion, and private lives became almost a public obsession”⁸¹ in the 1920s and 1930s. The theatergoing and criticisms of Korean female students were situated in this atmosphere of post-1919 society, where their desire to explore the world outside their homes and schools and social expectations collided. As female students developed interests in romantic movies, their contemporaries were alarmed because they defied the idealized role of future Wise Mothers and Good Wives and the nation’s new political hope.

Sexuality was a realm where the collision became most apparent. As students’ moviegoing was considered “a study of kissing”⁸² and “a field trip for love,”⁸³ female students’ movie watching was primarily interpreted as their active exploration of sexuality. For instance, in March 1927, the popular magazine *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* highlighted female students’ moviegoing as “a strange phenomenon.”⁸⁴ According to an anonymous writer,

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- 79 KOSIS, “Kongnip Pot’ong Hakkyo Kyowŏn mit Saengdo [Teachers and students in Korean public primary schools],” https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=999&tblId=DT_999N_4281114&conn_path=l2.
- 80 KOSIS, “Kwallip Kodŭng Pot’ong Hakkyo sanghwang [Situations of the Korean Public Secondary Schools],” https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=999&tblId=DT_999N_57711211&conn_path=l2; “Sarip Chunghakkyo Sanghwang (wŏn kodŭng pot’ong hakkyo) [Situations of the Korean Private Secondary Schools],” https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=999&tblId=DT_999N_203042&conn_path=l2.
- 81 Choi, *Gender and Mission*, 104.
- 82 Songjaksaeung & Sŏrungsaeng, “Pyŏnjang Kija Amya T’amsagi [The Story of an Investigation Through the Dark Night by Journalists in Disguise],” in *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* (hereafter *PG*; January 1927), 64.
- 83 Samdae Pugung and P’ayŏng, “Puryang Namnyŏ Ilmang T’ajin, Pyŏnjang Kija Yagan T’ambanggi [Catching Prodigal Men and Women with One Throw: The Story of an Investigation Through the Night by Journalists in Disguise],” *PG* (February 1928), 121.
- 84 “Kŭkchang Mandam [Humorous Commentary on Theaters],” *PG* (March 1927), 94. *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* was published from November 1926 to August 1934 by the publishing house Kaebyŏksa. Initially founded in 1920 with the aim of enlightening and politically awakening the Korean public, the Kaebyŏksa successfully launched the magazine *Kaebyŏk*. However, as the August 1926 issue was banned and all copies were confiscated and destroyed, the magazine was discontinued. Consequently, the publisher established *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* with the motto “Hobby and Practical Use (*Ch’wimi wa Shirik*),” shifting the focus to providing entertainment-oriented reading material. According to Kim Ūn’gyu, the magazine was affiliated with the Ch’ŏndogyo (Religion of Heavenly Way) and its religious social movement, which sought social reform and independence through cultural endeavors. “1920/30-nyŏndaek Kŭndae Ch’wimi Tongmul Chapchi Pyŏlgŏn’gon ūl t’onghan Kaebyŏksa ūi Maeche Parhaeng Chŏllyak e taehan Yŏn’gu: Parhaeng Chuch’e, P’yŏnjip Panghyang, Parhaeng

female students “account[ed] for more than half” of women in the auditorium by then and did not fail to shriek at every kissing scene—as “just woken up sexually”⁸⁵ as they were. For the author, the fact that young women enjoyed the graphic representation of intimacy was “astonishing.”⁸⁶

Another essay, written by the popular playwright Yi Sögu, bluntly expressed the anxiety of romantic motion pictures’ affective power on female students. He claimed that motion pictures would sexually activate them and would eventually ruin their lives:

When a love scene reaches its peak, a youthful exclamation comes from ladies’ seats. We all have seen the second or third graders of women’s schools having their hands around the other’s waist and repeatedly howling “*aigo* [oh, my].” In this way, they have too many chances to mislead themselves. As they are virgin women who are awakening sexually, it is impossible that their minds remain silent after [listening to] the film narrator’s sweet explanations and seeing the demonstration of love shown on the screen. Thus, the desire for the other sex explodes [...] and [the girl student audience] goes to parks, Wölmido island, and theaters seeking a lover. However, all she has is a history of prostitution and disgrace when she wakes up from the dream.⁸⁷

In his imagination, female students who frequently watched romantic films would not only end up with a failed romance but “a history of prostitution and disgrace.” It was an abrupt argument to make, even against the background that of that time, since women’s pursuit of romance and sexual desire was regarded as disgraceful for them and their families.

While there is no reliable account of individual women’s fates after watching romantic movies, there are indications that movies influenced both the dating culture of the youth and its reception in colonial Korea. The youth of Seoul met and dated in playhouses and movie theaters. By the early 1930s, young Korean men asked women to go to movie theaters, parks, the Han River for a boat ride, and the hot springs in Wölmido.⁸⁸ Some

Ch’ejje rül Chungsim üro [On Kaeb’yöksa’s Publishing Strategy in the 1920s and 30s through the Modern Hobby Magazine *Pyölgön’gon*. Focusing on the Publishing Entity, Editorial Direction, and Publishing System],” in *Han’guk Ch’ul’panhak Yöngu* 39(2), 5–33; see 18–19. Kim Kyöngmi’s recent study found that *Pyölgön’gon* reinforced its focus on entertainment while reducing the price from 50 chön to 5 chön in 1931, leading to the explosive popularization and broadening of readership, including the working class, for this magazine. In the first two months following this reconceptualization, the circulation of this magazine increased by 20,000 copies. “Pyölgön’gon 5-chön Chapchi üi Maech’e Chölyyak kwa Taejungsöng üi Yökhak Kwan’gye [The Dynamic Relationship between the Media Strategy of the 5-chön Magazine *Pyölgön’gon* and Its Popularity],” in *Han’guk Ömun Hakhoe* 148, 131–63; see 135–41.

85 “Humorous Commentary on Theaters,” 94.

86 Ibid.

87 Yi Sögu, “Kyöngsöng’üi Jassü: Söul Mat Soul Ch’ öngjo [Jazz of Seoul: The Taste and Atmosphere of Seoul],” *PG* (September 1929), 36.

88 See Mumyöngch’o, “Yöhaksaeng ül T’alnaenün Ilgop Kaji üi Tae Hamjöng [Seven Traps for Female Students],” *PG* (May 1931), 25.

Korean students purposefully went to Japanese theaters instead of Korean ones to evade social control and “to enjoy a secret rendezvous.”⁸⁹

Furthermore, the new generation of Koreans who sought an alternative to the traditional form of intimacy eagerly took movies as new references to express their emotions. Yi Sögu claimed that young Koreans were writing love letters with an exaggerated pathos which was typical to film narrators’ explanations during romantic movies.⁹⁰ The youth adopted certain behaviors from Western romantic movies and plays, too. A 1936 editorial of the popular magazine *Samchölli* depicted how a student couple that the author had observed flexibly changed their behavior and pretended not to know each other in front of others in a specific way, which he found to “resemble Western movies to an unbelievable degree.”⁹¹ Adopting the rhetoric and behavior from the movies, the younger generation explored their sexualities in new ways. The new mannerisms of showing affection were, in a sense, a performance of modernity, as they took place in public and the witnesses, too, were familiar with the movies so that they could easily see the connection between what they saw on-screen and on Seoul’s streets.

While foregrounding female students’ *yönae* as a sign of their promiscuity, the Korean media concealed or reduced men’s involvement in the romance. “Seven Great Traps for Female Students,” an article published by *Pyölgöng’gon* in 1931, exemplifies men’s contradictory urge to protect their female kin from other men and to seduce women to fulfill their desire.⁹² This article, written as a dialogue between “me” and a friend whose younger sister entered a school in Seoul, informed readers how to seduce naïve female students—including asking them out to theaters—while gossiping about women who were raped, betrayed, harassed by men and became mentally ill or chose to die after jumping into a romance.⁹³ In combination with the detailed description of seductive scenarios, the conclusion sounded more like an encouragement of sexual assault and victim-blaming than a warning for men:

So, in the end, it comes to the point that women are still weak. When men tempt them in the first place, women are hesitatingly accepting their advances instead of pulling themselves together. Even when the women realize the men’s true intentions, they would not dare to expose the men at fault because they are afraid of letting others know that they were robbed of their virginity.⁹⁴

Instead of telling men not to rape women, the Korean media focused on warning women. For example, *Pyölgöng’gon*’s satirical commentary cautioned that “women should not rush along even if their [female] friends encourage them to go to Japanese theaters. People

89 Sojebu, “Haehak P’ungja Ch’un’gye Tae Ch’önggyöl [Humourous and Ironical Cleaning of the Spring],” *PG* (May 1930), 69.

90 Yi, “Jazz of Seoul,” 34.

91 “Yöhaksaeng Haengsang Pogoso” [A Report on Female Students’ Behavior], *Samchölli* (hereafter *SL*) (November 1936), 196.

92 Mummyöngch’o, “Seven Traps,” 23–25.

93 *Ibid.*, 23–25 and 33.

94 Mummyöngch’o, “Seven Traps,” 33.

will already be laughing and pointing at you behind your back.”⁹⁵ Writers and publishers excused such biased warning under the premise that female students were to become “wives and mothers soon, whose habits and behavior could infiltrate the home,”⁹⁶ omitting the equally important role of men as future husbands and fathers.

Some even asserted that male students were only victims of female students when it came to sexuality. In an essay titled “On Female Students,” the novelist Pang In’gün boldly insisted that “it was always the girl students who showed interest first,”⁹⁷ even if boys seemed to seduce girls. According to his logic, men were mere “idiots” and “slaves of girl students.”⁹⁸ He asserted that female students had to take special care of their bodies and minds because they could be “easily addicted to romance.”⁹⁹ If a young woman entered marriage “as a withered flower” after experiencing “all kinds of things” or pre-marital sex, there might be “no chance for the home’s prosperity.”¹⁰⁰ According to him, female students were to become “precious mothers to bear the new Korea,”¹⁰¹ thus any romance before the marriage would harm her future home.

Echoing these views on female students’ spectatorship and responsibility, women’s schools tried to control the movie watching. Teachers from women’s schools gathered to discuss how to prevent their students from going to theaters.¹⁰² Some women’s schools in Taegu, a city in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, even expelled their pupils when they were caught in playhouses.¹⁰³

Although rare, female students’ watching of romantic movies did find some support in the public debate. In an essay titled “The Cinema and Female Students” published in the cinema magazine *Munye Yŏnghwa* (Art Movie) in 1928, an anonymous author insisted that young women could gain insights into men-women relationships through romantic mo-

95 Sojebu, “Humourous and Ironical Cleaning,” 69.

96 “Report on Female Students,” 200.

97 Pang In’gün, “Yŏhaksæng Ron [On Female Students],” *Tonggwang* (December 1931), 55.

98 Pang, “On Female Students,” 55. The argument that men might be, by nature, driven by their libido and thus cannot be held accountable for their sexual acts can also be observed in the Weimar Republic. Max von Gruber, a medical doctor, claimed that “most men are entirely without will against the power of their sexual urges,” thus “nothing can be hoped for from the stupid and weak masses” as he attended Reichsgesundheitsrat in 1919 to discuss the spread of STDs among soldiers (as cited in Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin*, Cambridge 2010, 72). While similar claims have been made across time and space, the temporal and thematic similarities between the German and colonial Korean cases do require further inspection. A hypothetical assumption is that this perception of men’s sexuality in the context of STD prevention might have migrated from Europe to East Asia with the popularization of sexology. On reception and development of sexology in Japan see Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). This remains a task for future research. I extend my deep gratitude to the anonymous peer reviewer who provided me with this valuable information.

99 Pang, “On Female Students,” 55.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., 56.

102 Pödül, “K’Inema wa Yŏhaksæng [The Cinema and Female Students],” *Munye Yŏnghwa* (1928), 38.

103 Various Authors, “Taegu Yŏsŏng Chwadamhoe [A Roundtable of Women from Taegu],” *SK* (May 1934), 209–15; refer to 213.

tion pictures.¹⁰⁴ Using his niece as an example, the author depicted how female student audiences actively interpreted and questioned the images and narratives in motion pictures. When asked by the author, his sixteen-year-old niece, a cinephile, summed up the plot of a romantic motion picture she recently watched. In this love story, the male character becomes furious after finding out about the female character's past lover, although he, too, had had a lover before her. Pointing out his double standard, the girl commented that his reaction was "ridiculous." As the author showed empathy towards the male character, she refuted him: "Why should he be entitled to get angry [about her past]? What right does he have? They both have the same kind of past."¹⁰⁵

Her response exemplified how female students became aware of gendered inequalities in both films and their own lives even while consuming the representation of idealized romance on the screen. In this specific case, the young cinephile touched upon the contemporary critique of chastity that had been a unilateral obligation on women.¹⁰⁶ Such an attack on the cult of female chastity was regarded radical in the 1920s: the major women's magazines remained silent about it, while the most provocative periodical titled *Sōng'ae*, literally, "sexual love," published head-on critiques of the unequally imposed duty of chastity, which were partially removed through censorship.¹⁰⁷ Unlike male intellectuals' misconception that all young women would pursue romance after watching romantic motion pictures, some female student audiences critically grappled with what they saw and formed their own opinions about relationships.

"The Cinema and Female Students" underlined that watching movies helped female students by citing a self-proclaimed "modern boy" and "expert of developing romantic relationships with girl students."¹⁰⁸ The modern boy insisted that female students who watched motion pictures were not to be fooled, whereas others could be tempted—"as fast as in three hours."¹⁰⁹ Following the essay's logic, watching romantic motion pictures might even be advisable for young women because they could provide them with indirect experiences in romance, thus preventing them from falling into actual romance. In this way, the essay advocated the female students' spectatorship. Concurrently, this essay shared similar expectations of young, educated women with opponents of their movie watching in that young women should neither become sexually active nor pursue romantic relationships regardless of the influence of films.

104 Pödül, "Cinema and Female Students," 38.

105 Ibid.

106 Lee, *History of Chastity*, 34.

107 See Kim Ch'ōnpa, "Chōngjo Kwannyōm ūi Pip'an [Criticizing the Notion of Chastity]," *Sōng'ae* (April 1924), 29–33; refer to 32.

108 Pödül, "Cinema and Female Students," 38.

109 Ibid.

4.2 Redefining Marriage and Intimacy

Influences of Eugenics and Social Darwinism

The discourse of Korean female students at movie theaters captures the junction of the long-standing *naeoe* principle, newly formulated social expectations of the elite women, prevailing eroticism in Western movies, and young women's zeal for exploration and leisure. However, female students' consumption of romantic movies was closely related to the reform of sexuality and marriage taking place as a part of the nation's modernization process, too. In particular, the contempt and fascination projected onto female students' bodies in theaters reveal the conflict between the desire for the so-called Love's Supremacy and the biopolitics of eugenic marriage.

The reformist zeal at the end of the nineteenth century seized marriage custom in Korea as well. The 1894 Kabo Reform brought two new rules: firstly, widowed noblewomen were now allowed to marry again;¹¹⁰ secondly, the Chosŏn government set the minimum age for marriage at sixteen for women and twenty for men, putting an end to the custom of marriage between children (*chohon*).¹¹¹

Noble women's remarriage was strictly forbidden during the Chosŏn Dynasty as women of this stratum were considered a moral example.¹¹² The feminist Confucian scholar Lee Sook-in points out that the lesson that "a woman should not serve two husbands" was considered the equivalent of the doctrine that "one should not serve two kings," the fundament of the hierarchical state order.¹¹³ As a means of keeping the Confucian social order upright, the Chosŏn government punished women's remarriage and discriminated against their male offspring when they tried to reach for official positions.¹¹⁴ By legalizing widows' remarriage, the government finally yielded to centuries-long appeals for their humanitarian aid due to the precarity, the hardship of remaining chaste, and vulnerability to crisis that widows faced.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, criticisms of marriage between children served a different purpose. The historian Chŏn Ponggwon explained the custom of early marriage as a product of the Confucian notion of family duty.¹¹⁶ Giving birth to a son and passing on ritual services for ancestors to the male heir was considered an essential duty for an individual. Thus, parents and elders of clans arranged marriages for the younger generation to increase the chances of obtaining a male heir.¹¹⁷ Besides, as "the average life expectancy was ex-

110 Lee Sook-in points out that ban on noblewomen's remarriage was controversial ever since its enforcement in 1485. *History of Chastity*, 308.

111 *Kojong Sillok*, June 28, 1894.

112 Lee, *History of Chastity*, 59.

113 *Ibid.*, 298.

114 See *ibid.*, 299.

115 See *ibid.*, 304–14.

116 Chŏn Ponggwon, *Kyŏngsŏng Komin Sangdamso: Tokja Sangdam ūro Pon Kūndae ūi Sŏng kwa Sarang* [Seoul Counseling Service: *Sexuality and Love of the Modern Times Through Readers' Counseling*] (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 2014), 23.

117 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 22–23.

tremely short due to starvation, warlords, and diseases,”¹¹⁸ early marriage flourished in Chosŏn.

Core to child marriage was the interest of the patriarchal clan to continue its lineage. The reformist calls for abolishing the early marriage custom were based on the premise that marriage should prioritize the interests of the Korean nation as a whole over that of the clan. Instead of gaining a male heir who would continue the ancestral ritual, Western-oriented reformists of the Independence Club argued that marriage should contribute to the nation by producing physically and mentally fit Koreans, which they believed to be essential for national prosperity and competitiveness. An editorial in the February 12, 1898 issue of *Tongnip Shinmun* on Korea's early marriage exemplifies this line of argument:

The marriage between a man and a woman is a matter of great importance in life. However, it is related to those who marry and *the whole country*, posterity, and *the rise and fall of the race*. Thus, every country regulates marriage by law and forces a man and a woman to receive approval from the government and the church to become a married couple. The people of other nations nowadays are independent, *of strong race*, and have *full-grown bodies* because the marriage law is rigorously enforced to a certain degree. Abroad, the marriage law first regulates the age of men and women; a man should be over twenty-one, and a woman nineteen. Unlike in Qing China or Korea, no stranger makes a match between a girl and a boy who do not know each other. Instead, when grown up, a man and a woman voluntarily promise to become a married couple in freedom. Then they get governmental and church approval, perform a wedding ceremony with good manners in front of relatives and friends. From that day, the two bodies become one and share the life, death, ups and downs together (emphasis added).¹¹⁹

Notably, the editorial asserted that state intervention into marriage was necessary because marriage and reproduction would decide “the rise and fall of the race.” The Western-oriented intellectuals behind *Tongnip Shinmun* set foreign nations' characteristics and bodily features as the ideal and suggested regulating marriage in order to create a “strong race” with an “independent” mindset and “full-grown bodies.” This editorial proves that the reform-oriented public discourse of sexuality and marriage was from very early on bound to the idea of racial competitiveness and nation-building.

The argument that Koreans should regulate marriage age to improve national health was disseminated by reform-oriented intellectuals starting in the late nineteenth century. Criticizing early marriage in Korea and advocating Western marital custom, another editorial in the *Tongnip Shinmun* in 1896 pointed out that “what is most detrimental to the nation is that children marry before their bones grow, and *their children are not strong enough, and the human seeds are gradually reduced* (emphasis added).”¹²⁰ A decade later, Yun Ch'iho, a Western-oriented reformist and former member of the Independence Club, affirmed in a public speech that “India, China, and Chosŏn are the Eastern countries where

118 Chŏn, *Seoul Counseling Service*, 22.

119 “Namnyŏ kan ūi honin ... [A marriage between a man and a woman ...],” *TS*, February 12, 1898, 1. The remarks on race are discussed later in this section.

120 “Namp'yŏn kwa anae ran kŏt ūn ... [A husband and a wife are ...],” *TS*, June 6, 1896, 1.

the custom of child marriage is rampant, and unfortunately, these three countries are weak.¹²¹ In doing so, he indicated that marriage between children might have led to foreign dominance of these countries.

Inherent to these calls was the eugenic and Social Darwinian understanding of marriage and reproduction. Eugenics can be summarized as “the rational planning of, and intervention into, human breeding, the application of *selection* to humans based on statistical probability and an understanding of the mechanisms of heredity.”¹²² This idea emerged under the influence of European biological science, which discovered “patterns of human, plant, and animal heredity”¹²³ starting in the eighteenth century. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin’s (1809–82) *Origin of Species* (1859) and the theory of natural selection motivated his cousin, Francis Galton (1822–1911), to establish the ideas and practices of eugenics.¹²⁴ Through *Hereditary Genius* (1869) and other publications, he asserted that humankind should control its evolutionary process by allowing people with *good* mental and physical traits to reproduce while disqualifying those with *bad* qualities for breeding using state violence in order to “improve” human populations.¹²⁵ Although first met with skepticism, his project of eugenics was institutionalized in 1907 with the establishment of the Francis Galton Laboratory for the Study of National Eugenics at University College London in Britain.¹²⁶

Although the term eugenics (*usaenghak*) became popularized in the 1920s, editorials in the *Tongnip Shinmun* and Yun’s speech show that Korean reform-oriented intellectuals were already familiar with its core ideas since the late nineteenth century. My research into the diary of Yun Ch’iho from November 5, 1892 shows that the “pioneering Social Darwinist”¹²⁷ became acquainted with the eugenic perspective during his studies in the U.S. Comparing the poor manners of Lottie Berry, a daughter of a streetcar driver, to the excellent manners of children from better social standing, Yun noted: “Compare this little girl [Lottie] with Faith, the bright and sweet girl of Professor Harris, or with Sarah Br., or with Mary McClure—all nearly of the same age. *We cannot then help believing in the hereditary transmission of culture and refinement* (emphasis added).”¹²⁸

Historian Vladimir Tikhonov identifies Social Darwinism “as a common, unifying mode of thinking for almost all the major groups and personalities of the modernization-oriented intelligentsia”¹²⁹ in early twentieth-century Korea. He explains that Her-

121 Yun Ch’iho, “Taehan Chaganghoe Yönsöl Chohon üi Ihae [A Speech at the Korean Self-Strengthening Society: Understanding Early Marriage],” *HS*, July 23, 1906, 3.

122 Philippa Levine and Alison Bashford, “Introduction: Eugenics and the Modern World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Bashford and Levine (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–26; refer to 5.

123 Levine and Bashford, “Eugenics and Modern World,” 4.

124 Diane B. Paul and James Moore, “The Darwinian Context: Evolution and Inheritance,” in *History of Eugenics*, 27–42; 27.

125 Paul and Moore, “Darwinian Context,” 28–31.

126 *Ibid.*, 37.

127 Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism*, 8.

128 Yun Ch’iho, *Yun Ch’iho Ilgi 2* [Yun Ch’iho’s Diary], November 5, 1892, 404, http://db.history.go.kr/i/d/sa_025_0030_0110_0050. Original in English.

129 Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism*, 8.

bert Spencer (1820–1903), particularly his famous phrase “survival of the fittest” from 1852, contributed to the establishment of “the cluster of ideas”¹³⁰ named Social Darwinism. Spencer’s prospect that the lack of resources would lead to competition for the sake of survival found resonance across political, social, national, and religious borders.¹³¹ Tikhonov identifies three main factors for the widespread acceptance of this idea in the Korean discourse: firstly, there was “a certain demand for a new all-explaining, all-encompassing creed”¹³² that the crisis of Neo-Confucianism created. Secondly, Social Darwinism provided Koreans with explanations for their experiences of international conflicts and threats from foreign powers; as a result, “the struggle for survival was generally understood, first and foremost, as rivalry between nations (or sometimes even whole races), not persons”¹³³ in the Korean discourse. Thirdly, Koreans with higher education could ensure their hegemony over other Koreans even under colonial rule by self-fashioning themselves as bearers of “scientific”¹³⁴ knowledge to improve the nation.

Although “Social Darwinism was hardly pivotal for Japanese nationalism as such,” it was “highly relevant as an ideological background for Japan’s colonial enterprises”¹³⁵ during the 1900s and 1910s. Japanese authorities discussed the ban on spicy food, child marriage, and opium in Korea because these “three evils”¹³⁶ would exhaust Koreans’ vigor, which would negatively impact the efforts of the Japanese administration in Korea. After the Protectorate Treaty, the Korean government changed the age limit for marriage again on August 14, 1907, in line with the Japanese Civil Law: fifteen for women and seventeen for men.¹³⁷ This age limit was reaffirmed through the Government-General’s Ordinance No. 13 in 1922.¹³⁸ For the colonial government, the age limit for marriage was a way to enhance Koreans’ industrial productivity as well. As Korean female factory workers used to stop working after marriage, the Japanese economist Takahashi Kameikichi argued that child marriage was “unfavorable to industries in Korea.”¹³⁹

Despite the repeated ban, the custom of marriage between children persisted in Korea. Shortly after the ban on early marriage was reinforced, the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo* reported that because people made their children marry secretly in the night, the Minister of Law imposed stronger measures which held that children born under such secret marriage were illegitimate.¹⁴⁰ As the Government-General started taking the census in 1912, of the 121,993 newly wedded women, 21,564 people (17.7 percent) were found to be un-

130 Ibid., 4.

131 Ibid., 4–5.

132 Ibid., 13.

133 Ibid., 13.

134 See *ibid.*, 14–16.

135 See *ibid.*, 17–18.

136 “Han’guk Shijōng e Kwanhayō [On the Korean Administration],” *Documents of the Japanese Embassy* 26 [Documents of the Japanese Embassy in Korea], http://db.history.go.kr/id/jjh_026r_0110_0250.

137 Chōn, *Seoul Counseling Service*, 26.

138 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 156.

139 Takahashi Kameikichi, *Gendai Chosen Keizei Ron*, 407, as cited in Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 157.

140 “Amhon to Mot Hanün Pöp [Law Forbids Secret Marriages],” August 22, 1907, *TMS*, 4.

der fifteen.¹⁴¹ Men's early marriage was not surveyed until 1920; however, 51,974, or 42.6 percent, of grooms in 1912 were aged between seventeen and nineteen, which was still too young according to the age limit for marriage of twenty stipulated by that the Kabo Reform.¹⁴² Consequently, the Government-General revised the Korean Civil Law in 1923 and implemented a solid deterrent to nullify marriages between men under the age of seventeen and women under fifteen.¹⁴³

Besides the intention to improve the Korean nation and Japanese colonial endeavors to boost productivity, the humanitarian problem of child marriages became a relevant issue from the 1920s onwards.¹⁴⁴ Kim Hyegyöng, a historian of the family system in Korea, found that child marriage was regarded as an infringement of children's rights to be educated and handled as respectable human beings, as the children's rights movement became popularized in the 1920s.¹⁴⁵ Through this movement, colonial Korean society began reconsidering the role of children from that of practitioners of filial duty to persons in need of protection and education.¹⁴⁶

This new line of argument was amalgamated with the Social Darwinian criticism of child marriage in the 1920s. For instance, "The Harms of an Early Marriage," an article published in the women's magazine *Kajöng Chapchi* (The Home Magazine), argued that Chosön Koreans had forced their children to marry to please the elders in the family, to retire from the household labor, and to imitate custom of the aristocrats. The result was, according to the article, the inadequate education at home on the one hand, and the physical problems of the posterity, on the other hand:

Entering a marriage before a person is fully grown up is like hastening a life to age even before it becomes mature. Parents might say that they made their children marry because they cherish them, yet the result is that the parents sentence their children to death. [...] *Everyone knows that the people of Chosön become very ill and ugly, mainly because of child marriage.* [...] How could immature persons be good at parenting when they give birth to children before they become mature? As children are raised and taught improperly, society is getting damaged more and more—so much harm is done by one's mistake. [...] [In early marriage,] a father does not choose a woman whom his son likes but a daughter-in-law that he likes. [...] Eventually, the divorce issue emerges, which is a significant moral problem (emphasis added).¹⁴⁷

To eliminate the custom of child marriage, *Kajöng Chapchi* printed a declaration in front (see figure 8). "Please do not commit the sin of early marriage in your family, dear readers.

141 KOSIS, "Marriage by the Age of Husband and Wife," http://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=999&tblId=DT_999N_020037&conn_path=l2.

142 Ibid.

143 Chön, *Seoul Counseling Service*, 26.

144 Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 172–76.

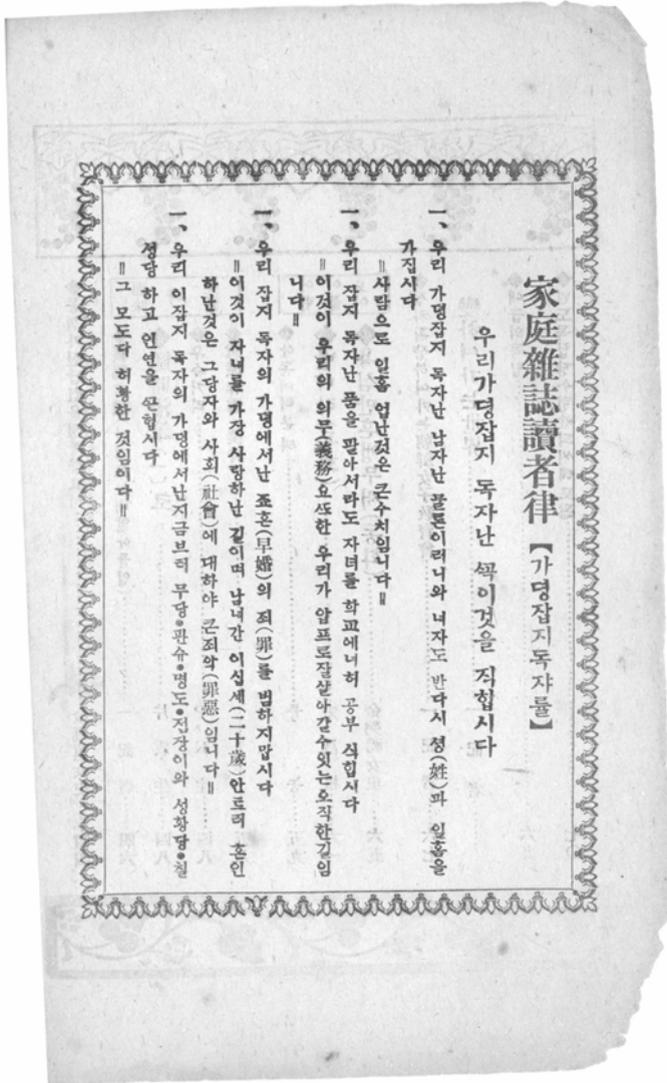
145 See Kim Hyegyöng, *Shingminji ha Kündae Kajok üi Hyöngsöng kwa Chendö* [The Formation of the Modern Family and Gender under the Colonial Rule] (P'aju: Ch'angbi, 2006), 184–86.

146 See Kim, *Formation of Modern Family*, 185–94.

147 Yi Chöngro, "Chohon üi P'yehae [Harms of Early Marriage]," *Kajöng Chapchi* (May 1922), 18–20; the quote is from 19–20.

This is the way to love your children the most, and [making children] marry under the age of twenty for both men and women is a great sin for the persons and the society.”¹⁴⁸

Figure 8: The Declaration for the Readers of Kajōng Chapchi (May 1922).



Source: Courtesy of Hyundam Mun'go.

148 “Kajōng Chapchi Tokja Ryul [Kajōng Chapchi Readers' Rule],” *Kajōng Chapchi* (May 1922, page number not provided).

The legalization of widowed noblewomen's remarriage exemplified that such reform was partially a response to contemporary needs. However, the criticisms of child marriage and the state intervention into it were a means of regulating sexuality for macroscopic political aims. In this regard, Western-oriented Korean reformists and the Japanese colonizers shared an interest in regulating child marriage and enhancing Koreans' physical and mental ability through state intervention. Although the recognition of children's right to education changed the debate in the 1920s, the Social Darwinian understanding of early marriage remained.

Influence of Ellen Key

While the prosperity of the Korean nation, colonial politics and economy, and the hardships of individuals emerged as new rationales behind marriage reform, some Koreans began seeing individual happiness as the goal of marriage and intimacy. According to the literary historian Kwŏn Podŭrae, this tendency reached its peak in the early 1920s, making it "the epoch of love (*yŏnae ūi shidae*)."¹⁴⁹

Kwŏn reveals that three factors were pivotal for the reconceptualization of intimacy during the 1920s. Firstly, the topic gained momentum through the term *yŏnae*, a translation of the word love which exclusively referred to intimacy in an affectionate relationship, while other related Korean words had a patriotic, filial, or religious connotation.¹⁵⁰ Secondly, love became a relevant agenda for the social and political discourse of reform in Korea through the popular reception of the Swedish writer Ellen Key. Thirdly, some of the new generations of Koreans, including educated women and men, modern girls (*modan kŏl*) and boys (*modan poi*), as well as feminist New Women (*shin yŏsŏng*), evoked heated debates in the media by challenging gender norms.¹⁵¹

Notably, the introduction of the new notion, its theorization, and the emergence of a young generation that actively pursued this new ideal of intimacy had preceded in

149 Kwŏn, *Epoch of Love*.

150 *Yŏnae* (C: *liàn'ài*, J: *ren'ai*) originated from a Chinese neologism of the nineteenth century composed of two Chinese characters that meant love: 戀 (K: *yŏn*, C: *liàn*, J: *ren*) and 愛 (K: *ae*, C: *ài*, J: *ai*). As previous studies of its etymology have shown, the new word emerged first as a translation of *love* or *amour* in China, and later spread to Japan and Korea. In China, Walter Henry Medhurst's English and Chinese Dictionary (Ying Hua zidian, 1847–48) first coined the term *liàn'ài* as a translation of "to love tenderly," which was picked up by Nakamura Manasao in 1897 for the translation of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*. From the late 1900s onwards, *yŏnae* was sporadically used in Korea until it became a controversial issue in the early 1920s. See Hsiao-yen Peng, *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: The Dandy, the Flâneur, and the Translator in 1930s in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris* (Routledge: London and New York, 2010), 189; see also Kwŏn, *Epoch of Love*, 15.

151 Kwŏn, *Epoch of Love*, refer to 32–36; 43–53; 58–67 and 128–34. According to Kim Sujin, in Korean, the terms *shin yŏsŏng* and *shin yŏja* were used interchangeably as synonyms. However, in China, the former carried connotations of bourgeois individualists, while in Japan, the latter referred to Japanese women who sympathized with the feminist group Seitō. Kim Sujin, *Shin Yŏsŏng, Kūndae ūi Kwaing: Shingminji Chosŏn ūi Shin Yŏsŏng Tamnon kwa Chendŏ Chŏngch'i, 1920–1934* [New Women, the Abundance in the Modern Times: The Discourse of New Women and the Gender Politics of Colonial Korea, 1920–1934] (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2009), 219.

Japan.¹⁵² Japanese historian Kanno Satomi called the Taisho Era (1912–26) the Japanese “era of love (*renai no jidai*)”¹⁵³ in her 2001 study. Kanno and Kwŏn commonly underline that the romanticized ideal of love was able to influence the younger generation through bits of knowledge spread via books and articles. Mainly, the Japanese reception of Ellen Key and Kuriyagawa Hakuson’s book *Kindai no Ren’aikan (Modern Views on Love)* played a significant part in the 1920s reform discourse and practice of love in Japan and Korea.

Ellen Key was an influential figure worldwide during the first half of the twentieth century who questioned concepts of parenthood, childhood, sexuality, and women’s rights. Her book *Barnets Århundrade (The Century of the Child, 1900)* was translated into nine European languages during the first decade of the 1900s; the first part of *Lifslinjer (Lifelines, 1903–06)* appeared in Germany under the title *Über Liebe und Ehe* (1904), to be followed by the American translation entitled *Love and Marriage* (1911) and the Japanese translation (1913).¹⁵⁴

Love and Marriage aims to establish eugenic ideas as a “new morality” that radically transforms “the ideas of the morality of sexual relations upheld by the religions and laws of the Western nations.”¹⁵⁵ In *Love and Marriage*, Key insists on human intervention into the evolution process of humankind for the “strengthening of its position as humanity and its elevation to super-humanity.”¹⁵⁶ With this aim, she called for the regulation of individuals’ reproduction: “The development of the race gains when the lives less worthy to survive are not reproduced in offspring; but the life of the individual and of the race suffers when young people, mature and in every way fit, are not in a position to reproduce and rear offspring.”¹⁵⁷ For her, restricting people’s freedom to find a partner and give birth to children was a minor problem: “Freedom for love’s selection, *under conditions favourable to the race; limitation of the freedom*, not of love, but of procreation, where the conditions are unfavorable to the race—that is the new line of life (emphasis added).”¹⁵⁸ *Love and Marriage* was “not so much a demand for the rights of freedom in love as it is a plea for the recognition of the duty of society not to condemn any love between man and woman, which makes for the enhancement of their own most perfect life and the life of the race.”¹⁵⁹

152 Kanno Satomi, *Kūndae Ilbon ūi Yōnaeron: Sobi Toenūn Yōnae Chōngsa Sūk’aendŭl [Theories of Love in Modern Japan: Love, Love-Death, Scandals and Their Consumptions]*, trans. Son Chiyŏn (Seoul: Nonhyŏng, 2014), 19.

153 Kanno, *Theories of Love*, 19.

154 Thorbjörn Lengborn, “Ellen Key (1849–1926),” *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* XXIII, no. 3/4 (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 1993), 836; Yu Yŏnsil, “Kūndae Hanjung Yōnae Tamnon ūi Hyōngsŏng: Elen K’ei Yōnae Kwan ūl Chungsim ūro [The Formation of Korean and Chinese Discourse of Love During the Modern Era: Focusing on Ellen Key’s Notion of Love],” *Chungguk Sa Yŏngu* 79 (2012), 141–94; see 157.

155 Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage: With a Critical and Biographical Introduction by Havelock Ellis* (New York, London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 1.

156 Key, *Love and Marriage*, 53.

157 *Ibid.*, 43–44.

158 *Ibid.*, 150.

159 R. Dixon Kingham, “Key, Ellen: Love and Marriage,” *Eugenics Review* 3, no. 2 (1911), 178–79; see 178.

Love and Marriage found huge resonance in colonial Korea under the strong influence of the Japanese reception.¹⁶⁰ Essential to the Korean reception of Ellen Key was Japanese literature critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson's 1922 book *Modern Views on Love*. *Modern Views on Love* was published in twenty segments in the daily newspaper *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* between September 30 and October 29, 1921 and was subsequently made into a book the following year, becoming a bestseller.¹⁶¹ According to the Korean literary scholar Ku Inmo, Kuriyagawa's interpretation of Ellen Key was based on "the interest in and the demand of logics for discovering modern individuals' self and liberation."¹⁶² In other words, Kuriyagawa focused on the notion of marriage based on love while neglecting the aspect of eugenics as the goal of such marriages.¹⁶³ Instead of eugenics, he considered the unity of the body and the soul as the essence of Ellen Key's concept of love. The Japanese writer schematized the history of love in a dialectic manner, claiming that it had developed from sexual love via spiritual love to their synthesis—the love that combined body and soul—and declared it a goal that people of the modernized world had to pursue:

It should be an age of the Unitarianism of love (*renai*) that combines the body and the soul, which follows the era of the physical instinct in ancient times and the spiritual and religious worship of women in the Middle Ages. It [the era of the Unitarianism of love] is modern.¹⁶⁴

This reading contradicted Key's critical stance against "follow[ing] their subjective feelings at the cost of the race and treat[ing] their love as an end in itself."¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Key became famous as the advocate of love's ultimate value above other things in Japan and Korea. Ironically, Korean eugenicists tried to dismantle this specific notion of love in the 1920s, discussed later in this chapter.

Under Kuriyagawa's influence, the Korean reception of Ellen Key, too, sidelined her eugenic claims while refashioning her as an advocate of individual happiness through love. A contemporary witness recalled in 1929 that the Japanese translations of *Love and Marriage* and *Modern Views on Love* were widely read among Korean students, but that *Modern Views on Love* had specifically coined the popular phrase "Love's Supremacy" (*yōnae chisang chuūi*).¹⁶⁶ The writer Yi Sōkhun, too, recollected in 1932 that "the ideology of Free Love spread rapidly after the 1919 March First Movement" and "Kuriyagawa Hakuson's *Modern Views on Love* had a profound influence on the intelligentsia."¹⁶⁷ Strictly speaking,

160 Yu, "Korean and Chinese Ellen Key," 142.

161 Kanno, *Theories of Love*, 30.

162 Ku Inmo, "Hanil Kūndae Munhak kwa Elen K'ei [Ellen Key and Modern Literature of Korea and Japan]," *Yōsōng Munhak Yōngu* 12 (2004), 69–94; refer to 80.

163 Ku, "Ellen Key and Literature," 79.

164 Kuriyagawa Hakuson, *Kūndae Ilbon ūi Yōnaegwan [Modern Views on Love]*, trans. Yi Sūngshin (P'aju: Mun, [1922]2010), 22.

165 Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage*, 19.

166 Ch'oe Ūisun, "Na ūi Yōnae wa Kyōrhongwan [My Perspective on Love and Marriage]," *SL* (September 1929), 31.

167 Yi Sōkhun, "New Theories of Love," *Shin Tong'a* (December 1932), as cited in Yi Sūngshin, "Han'guk esō ūi Kūndae ūi Yōnaegwan Suyong ūi Yangsang: Kim Tong'in ūi Kim Yōnsil Chōn ūl Chungsim ūro

Free Love and Love's Supremacy were two different concepts: the former referred to romantic and physical relationship untied to the duty of marriage, while the latter meant the absolute importance of love over any other thing in life. Yet, both concepts challenged ideologies that sought to restrict and control individual sexuality such as Confucianism and Eugenics, and were sometimes used as synonyms, Yi exemplifies.

No Chayöng's 1921 essay "Ellen Key, the No. 1 Feminist" exemplifies the Korean reception of Key.¹⁶⁸ The essay was published in two segments in the monthly magazine *Kaebhyök* (*The Dawn*) in February and March 1921 and highlighted the love-ethic (*yönae todök*) in *Love and Marriage*.¹⁶⁹ Similar to Kuriyagawa, No emphasized that core to Key's love-ethic was a love that combined body and soul (*yöngyuk ilch'i üi yönae*): "A love that is simply sensual is called Free Love and a love that is simply spiritual is platonic love, or mental love (*chöngsin yönae*)—yet, neither is love in its genuine meaning."¹⁷⁰ No mentioned Ellen Key's allusion to eugenics, yet he did not recognize that Key prioritized racial improvement over love. Instead, he argues that that racial improvement might be something that one might obtain while pursuing individual happiness through love, which contradicted Key's original claim:

Ellen Key considered love to be the ideal, the root, and the spirit of life. She believed that people in love must feel mutual happiness. At the same time, she thought that the happiness one feels during romance was the most crucial element that constructs social happiness. The essence of her masterpiece *Love and Marriage* is that we should find a balance between the ever-growing requirement for racial betterment on the one hand and the individual demand of happiness in love on the other hand. As mentioned above, Ellen Key was a lover of life and an admirer of life. *She believed that the improvement of life could be naturally achieved while individuals pursue the happiness of love* (emphasis added).¹⁷¹

The fact that No prioritized love over eugenic goals becomes clear when he summarizes Key's thoughts with a single phrase that she might have "made love the basis of all morals."¹⁷² In this vein, No completely overlooked the importance of eugenic arguments in Key's notions of love marriage and the so-called free divorce.¹⁷³ Instead, he argued that a marriage based on love was necessary for the realization of personal happiness. What

[Korean Reception of Kuriyagawa Hakuson's *Modern Views on Love*: Through the Example of Kim Tong'in's Novel *The Life of Kim Yönsil*," *Ilbon Munhak* 74, no. 2 (2008), 271–80; see 274.

168 On the influence of No's essay on the later texts about Ellen Key see Ku, "Ellen Key and Literature," 81.

169 No Chayöng, "Yösöng Undong üi Che Irinja Elen K'ei [Ellen Key, the No. 1 Feminist (Part 1)]," *KB* (February 1921), 46–53; "Yösöng Undong üi Che Irinja Elen K'ei, Sok [Ellen Key, the No. 1 Feminist (Part 2)]," *KB* (March 1921), 45–50. The essay was based on Japanese treatises by Ikuta Chökō and Honma Hisao as well as the Japanese translation of Key's biography by Havelock Ellis. Ku, "Ellen Key and Literature," 80–81.

170 No, "Ellen Key 1," 50.

171 *Ibid.*, 50–51.

172 *Ibid.*, 52.

173 *Ibid.*, 52–53; No, "Ellen Key 2," 45–48.

he amplified was her critique of a loveless marriage, which reminded many Koreans of their own marriages, which they were forced to enter as children.¹⁷⁴

Unlike No's explanation, however, Key considered love important for marriage because it might be necessary to "perfect the race."¹⁷⁵ The ideological backbone of her support for unrestrained divorce, too, was eugenics, as she hinted: "the race does not exist for the sake of monogamy, but monogamy for the sake of the race."¹⁷⁶

Pak Wönhüi's 1926 article reveals that Koreans used Key's aphorisms for claims that completely contradicted her belief in eugenics. Explaining theories related to love, Pak replaced the eugenic connotation of terms such as "life" and "improvement" with the call for self-improvement and self-reflection, reminiscent of Confucian teachings of self-cultivation (*sushin*). He wrote:

Ellen Key said that sexuality is the matter of life and social happiness; thus, it is the most important one among all problems. She meant that love creates not only a new individual but also a more exuberant and more complete human; through love, we can reach sophisticated human nature that combines body and mind.¹⁷⁷

Misinterpreting and appropriating Ellen Key's thinking as an endorsement for individual happiness instead of racial improvement, the Korean reception of *Love and Marriage* laid an essential epistemological foundation for the practices and discourse of love (*yönae*) in colonial Korea from the 1920s onwards.

The Boom of Love (*yönae*)

Empowered by the idea of Love's Supremacy, the younger generation of the 1920s boldly practiced romance even without justifying it as a preliminary step for marriage. Kwön Podürae demonstrates that love-death (*chöngsa*) or love-suicide (*yönae chasal*) was a radical expression of Love's Supremacy.¹⁷⁸ According to her, love-deaths became a social problem in the 1920s, as numerous young people attempted to kill themselves after failing in love.¹⁷⁹ To prevent suicides, Seoul's Metropolitan Police increased their patrols. The June 20, 1922 issue of *Dong-A Ilbo* reported:

An Evil Tendency Among the Youth. Police Patrols Parks and Other Sites at Night to Monitor.

Recently an ideology called *yönae* permeated the heads of young students, causing them anguish and to suffer; not a small number of them even committed suicide. As the summer comes, some bring their lovers to isolated sites such as the pine grove

174 Kwön, *Epoch of Love*, 108.

175 Key, *Love and Marriage*, 23.

176 *Ibid.*, 289.

177 Pak Wönhüi, "Chega üi Yönaegwan Sok [Various Schools' View of Love: Part 2]," *CI*, January 16, 1926, 3.

178 See *Epoch of Love*, 180–92. According to Kanno Satomi's 2001 study, Japan witnessed increasing numbers of love-deaths during the early 1920s, which indicates concurrence of the phenomenon in Korea and Japan. See *Theories of Love*, 77–82.

179 Kwön, *Epoch of Love*, 186.

of Samch'öng-dong, Namsan Park, the Iron Bridge of the Han River, or Changch'ungdan district and [...] talk through the night, while others kill themselves there heartbroken by an unfulfilled love, and the others do ugly things without reserve. As this does much harm to ethics and social morality, the police are planning a crackdown. At nights, the police will send commissars to Samch'öng-dong, the Han River, Namsan Park, and Changch'ungdan district and make them control [such incidents] through the night; an anonymous police officer warned that the public should be aware of the problem.¹⁸⁰

According to statistics published in the *Dong-A Ilbo* on June 25, 1922, there were 37 suicides and about 30 attempted suicides in the capital during the first half of 1922.¹⁸¹ The primary cause of suicide was troubles related to *yönae*, while poverty, the usual cause of suicide in Korea, was the second most frequent cause.¹⁸²

Kwön demonstrates that around this time, love-suicide was becoming a trope in the popular imagination of *yönae*, too, as numerous works of fiction of the time exemplified.¹⁸³ This trope was appealing to the public as the ultimate expression of love, possibly resulting in the “explosive increase”¹⁸⁴ of love-suicides in the early 1920s. After killing herself with poison, Kang Myönghwa, a *kisaeng* woman who experienced severe rejection from her lover's wealthy family, became an icon of “pure and devoted love,” and her story was adapted into at least four different novels and became popular among female students.¹⁸⁵ The incidents of love-death and their consumption as a popular symbol of *yönae* indicate that the idea of Love's Supremacy fascinated the younger generation to the degree of self-destruction.

Achieving individual happiness through *yönae* contradicted the convention that parents or elders of the clan decided one's spouses. According to Korean historian So Hyönsuk, a significant number of educated young men divorced the wives they were forced to marry after they got acquainted with the idea of love marriage.¹⁸⁶ She introduces a lawyer's recollection that there was a sudden boom of divorce among the male students who went abroad for school education after the March First Movement:

[Legal] Divorce emerged—although there was [customary] divorce beforehand—after the March First Movement as a nationwide awakening took place in Korea. Rumors have it that even a divorce alliance was organized among students who studied

180 “Ch'öngnyön Kan üi Ak Kyöngnyang [An Evil Tendency Among the Youth],” *DI*, June 20, 3.

181 “Il-Yönae [Number One-Romance],” *DI*, June 25, 1922, 3.

182 “Number One-Romance,” *DI*, June 25, 1922, 3.

183 See Kwön, *Epoch of Love*, 185.

184 See *ibid.*, 186–90; the quote is from 186.

185 *Ibid.*, 189.

186 For the conflict between educated husbands and their old-fashioned wives, see So Hyönsuk, *Ihon Pöpchöng e Sön Shingminji Chosön Yösöngdül: Kündaejök Ihon Chedo üi Toip kwa Chendö* [Colonial Korean Women at the Divorce Court: The Introduction of the Modern Divorce System and Gender] (Koyang-si: Yöksa Pip'yöngsa, 2017), 254–89. Related cases appeared in the anonymous consultation section of the newspaper. See Chön, *Seoul Counseling Service*, 13–102.

abroad, and they returned to Korea with a diploma and a firm resolution to divorce their wives.¹⁸⁷

The Western-educated men came to think that old-fashioned women, equally forced to marry as themselves, were not a good match for them. The lawyer summed up this situation, saying, “It is common that [educated men] file for divorce, complaining that ‘I cannot live with her because she is ignorant, has low taste, and an ugly face!’ but that is not a sufficient reason for a [legal] divorce.”¹⁸⁸

The September 1922 issue of the women’s magazine *Puin* (*The Lady*) offered a rare insight into conflicts of Korean married couples with an unequal educational background. Through an essay titled “The Resentment Against My Cold-Blooded Husband,” a woman named Kim Ch’unhwa spoke out about how her husband had neglected her ever since their wedding. Born in a rural area of P’yŏng’an-do province, she was not sent to school but grew up “taking care of babies, gathering wild herbs, and weeding”¹⁸⁹ until she married her husband, a student, at the age of fifteen. She painfully guessed that he disliked her because she was not as sophisticated and beautiful as her educated husband wished.¹⁹⁰ She wrote,

Of course, we are not a good match because he is an educated man, while I am a mere country bumpkin. [To him] Nothing seems to match. However, what can I do about it? What can I do about how our Chosŏn society functions and how our parents matched us? I can neither divorce nor die suddenly, so what can I do? Bitter or sweet, we manage to live together. Meanwhile, I realize that I am ignorant and ugly.¹⁹¹

Another essay titled “Complaints About My Old-Fashioned Wife” exemplifies the complaints of a man who had a school education. As his wife, an “old-fashioned” (*kushik*) woman, did not attend school, she could not fulfill his requirement of proper child rearing:¹⁹²

[...] she can neither talk to the child logically nor explain to him using examples to make him understand but tries to suppress him quickly. If he does not obey her, the

187 Yi In, “Ihon Munje wa Hyŏndae Pŏmnyul [The Question of Divorce and the Modern Law],” *SL* (September 1929) 38. I became aware of this source through So’s 2014 study *Colonial Divorce Court*, 254. There are two other contemporary witnesses that assert the existence of the divorce alliance. See Ch’unp’a, “Ondol Pang Yahwa [Nightly Episodes from the Room with a Heated Floor],” *PG* (December 1931), 28; Ahn Hwasan, “Musan Kyegŭp ūi Song Todŏk Ron [On the Sexual Moral of the Proletariat],” *SL* (March 1933), 69.

188 Yi, “Question of Divorce,” 39.

189 Kim Ch’unhwa, “Naengjŏng han Namp’yŏn e taehan Na ūi Wŏnhan [The Resentment against My Cold-Blooded Husband],” *Puin* 4 (September 1922), 33.

190 See Kim, “My Cold-Blooded Husband,” 33–37.

191 *Ibid.*, 34–36.

192 Myohyangsanin, “Kushik Anae e taehan Na ūi Pulp’yŏng [Complaints About my Old-Fashioned Wife],” *Puin* (September 1922), 38–44.

caretaker [the mother] becomes upset, and they start fighting each other. Thus, she often seems to be ruining his character, which makes me worried.¹⁹³

The Western-educated man grounded his complaint with his wife's inability to nurture their son in a modern way. Kwön's 2003 study indicates that men who enjoyed Western-style education developed a sense of entitlement to women of comparable educational and cultural backgrounds while disqualifying other women as their proper partners: The women's magazine *Shin Yösong* published a case of a man who even required his old-fashioned wife "to wear pompadour in the manner of female students," only to demand her divorce because "you are dressed like a girl student now, but you have studied nothing, so you have no qualification to be my wife."¹⁹⁴

Historian So Hyönsuk notes that although both women and men suffered from child marriage, divorce was not a solution for most Korean women of that time "because it was difficult for a woman to become economically independent or remarry."¹⁹⁵ In practice, men's unrestricted divorce meant abandonment for their wives.¹⁹⁶ For women, "divorce was involved with complex problems that could not be simply substituted by slogans such as 'women's liberation' or 'self-awakening.'"¹⁹⁷ To avoid getting divorced, many Korean women sought out belated school education.¹⁹⁸

The demand for divorce among Western-educated men shows that the new ideal of love-marriage was closely linked to social status. Men believed that educated elite women were the right partners for them and sought divorce. They pursued *yönae* as praised by Ellen Key's advocates from Korea and Japan and depicted by Western movie stars on-screen. Ironically, as they desired marriages with women of above-average academic backgrounds and urban taste, their yearning for New Women would likely end in eugenic marriages, despite their belief that they pursued Free Love and Love's Supremacy.

Discussing "Eugenic Marriage" in the Late 1920s

From the mid-1920s onwards, eugenics became a relevant topic in the public discourse of sexuality in colonial Korea. Stimulated by the U.S. law to enforce eugenic population policies, the Japanese Interior Ministry began developing a "racial improvement policy" aimed at "exclusion of bad elements" and "proliferation of good elements"¹⁹⁹ in June 1926. On June 3, 1926, the *Dong-A Ilbo* reported the news in detail:

The Interior Ministry plans to protect and encourage migration and colonization as a solution for the population problem and is concurrently examining the racial improve-

193 Myohyangsanin, "My Old-Fashioned Wife," 42–43.

194 Kwön, *Epoch of Love*, 79.

195 So, *Colonial Divorce Court*, 254.

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid., 256–57.

199 "Chongjok Kaeryang Kyehoek: Pomnyöng ül Chejöng Hayö Naeüihoe e Check'ul? [Plans on Racial Improvement: A Law Will Be Submitted to the Japanese Parliament?]," *DI*, June 3, 1926, 1.

ment (*chongjok kaeryang*) with an attention to racial hygiene (*minjok wisaeng*). According to the Department of Hygiene's study, congenital racial improvement aims at 1. exclusion of bad elements and 2. proliferation of good elements. [The study] Named A. pause of small children's reproduction and B. pause of the reproduction during illness as temporary methods [of racial improvement] and suggests A. ban on marriage and B. elimination of reproductive ability for the fundamental [racial improvement]. To improve the race after the birth, 1. sports and 2. hygiene is to be practiced. As the immediate improvement is entirely depending on the nation's awakening, [the study suggests that the state] would conduct sterilization surgeries or ban the marriage of the leper and the mentally ill by law. Mainly, as the ban on the lepers' marriage is indispensable to terminate leprosy, the Japanese parliament plans to propose this law. As the marriage ban for the mentally ill and others also require legislation, [the Japanese government] is investigating the laws of each state in America.²⁰⁰

Nevertheless, it was not until the late 1930s that the Japanese parliament enforced eugenic laws. According to Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew's 1998 study, "a prolonged conflict with China (1931–1945) and expanding colonial territories required more soldiers and colonists, and many Japanese leaders became much more concerned with population policies."²⁰¹ In this zeitgeist, a bill for the sterilization of murderers and miscreants was introduced to the Japanese parliament in 1935.²⁰² The eugenic biopolitics reached its peak as the National Eugenic Law was enacted in July 1940 in Japan.²⁰³ According to Kim Kyōng'ok's 2013 study, the National Eugenic Law aimed to increase the healthy population during the war through two measures: sterilization of the unhealthy and prevention of healthy people's birth control.²⁰⁴ Under this law, 454 people were sterilized in Japan between 1941 and 1945.²⁰⁵

The mid-1920s debate in Japan was the watershed of eugenic discourse in colonial Korea, too, because the adoption of eugenics into the legal system became a relevant topic in the Korean public discourse in the late 1920s. Around this time, Korean medical experts who were trained in America, Europe, and Japan began promoting the importance of hereditary conditions to realize eugenic goals for the nation's sake. In an article titled "Obtaining a Healthy Spouse is the First Step to Domestic Hygiene," Yi Kapsu, a medical doctor educated in Germany, compared marriages and reproduction to cultivation to underline the importance of hereditary health for marriage:

200 "Plans on Racial Improvement?," *DI*, June 3, 1926, 1.

201 Otsubo Sumiko and James R. Bartholomew, "Eugenics in Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883–1945," *Science in Context* 11, 3–4 (1998), 545–65; see 549.

202 See Kang Hyegyōng, "Ilche Shigi Sōngbyōng ūi Sahoe Munjehwa wa Sōngbyōng Kwalli [Sexually Transmitted Diseases as a Social Problem and Management of Them]," *Han'guk Minjok Undongsa Yōn'gu* 59 (2009), 87–125; refer to 114.

203 See Kim Kyōng'ok, "Ch'ongnyōkjōn Ch'ejegi Ilbon ūi In'gu Chōngch'aek: Yōsōng ūi Yōkhwal kwa Ch'asedae Sang ūl Chungsim ūro [The Japanese Population Policy During the All-Out War: Focusing on Women's Role and the Vision of the Next Generation]," *Ilbon Yōksa Yōn'gu* 37 (2013), 35–66; see 38.

204 Kim, "Japanese Population Policy," 39–40.

205 *Ibid.*, 40.

When we talk about domestic hygiene, we discuss clothing, food, and living from a sanitary perspective, yet it is not a fundamental discussion [...]. [...] To realize the family's health, which is the aim of domestic hygiene, the first thing we should strive for is making family members obtain [spouses with] a healthy body or healthy hereditary conditions. In other words, it is like having to improve the tree in order to obtain fruits of fine quality.²⁰⁶

The establishment of the Korean Eugenic Association (KEA) in Seoul in 1933 marked the institutionalization of the eugenic movement in colonial Korea.²⁰⁷ KEA aimed to “increase the society’s happiness by improving the offspring’s body and mind in eugenic terms.”²⁰⁸ As Shin Yŏngjŏn’s 2006 study found, its 85 founders were influential in the public discourse and played a pivotal role in disseminating eugenics through public lectures, roundtable discussions, counseling, newspaper columns, and the KEA’s periodical *Eugenics (Usaeng)*.²⁰⁹ Tapping into the eugenics debates in the United States, Germany, and Japan, Korean eugenicists declared that “one cannot expect a coincidence if one seriously thinks about the future of the nation” and called for “the reduction of the least interesting persons’ breeding in the nation (*minjok chŏk pŏnshik*)” and “the increase of much better persons’ breeding in the nation.”²¹⁰ From this perspective, the advocates of eugenics and members of the KEA propagated the so-called eugenic marriage (*usaenghak chŏk kyŏrhon*) as a new marital ideal from the end of the 1920s onwards.

Unlike in the Japanese archipelago, eugenic laws were not enforced in colonial Korea despite the Japanese colonial rule.²¹¹ Nevertheless, the concept of racial improvement became increasingly popular in Korean public discourse in line with the Japanese discourse. While there was no legal ground to enforce eugenic biopolitics between the late 1920s and mid-1930 on a state-level, Korean eugenicists eagerly promoted the private implementation of their marriage model in the media, particularly choosing the right spouse based on physical and mental health. Concurrently, they criticized the passion-driven *yŏnae* because it might hinder a rational choice. For instance, the social pedagogue Ch’oe Tusŏn emphasized the importance of eugenics to the issue of marriage in 1928. Citing Francis Galton’s studies, he determined that children born to people possessing bad characteristics such as laziness, promiscuity, or mental illnesses were very likely to become orphans, sick, prostitutes, criminals, alcoholics, epileptics, or to die young.²¹² He insisted that people born under parents of “superior lineage”²¹³ became medical doctors, lawyers,

206 Yi Kapsu, “Kŏngang han Sangdaeja rŭl Kuhanŭn Kŏt i Kajŏng Wisaneg ūi Ch’ŏt Kŏrum [Obtaining a Healthy Spouse is the First Step to Domestic Hygiene],” *DI*, January 6, 1928, 5.

207 See KEA, “Chosŏn Usaeng Hyŏphoe Hoeh’ik [Bylaws of Korean Eugenic Association],” ed. KEA, *Usaeng* 1 (1934), 36.

208 KEA, “Bylaws,” 36.

209 Shin Yŏngjŏn, “Shingminji Chosŏn esŏ ūi Usaeng Undong ūi Chŏngae wa Kŭ Sŏngkyŏk [The Development of Eugenic Movement in Colonial Korea and Its Characteristics],” *Ŭisahak* 29 (2006), 133–55; see 137.

210 Ch’oe Tusŏn, “Choŭn Kyŏrhon kwa Nappŭn Kyŏrhon: Öttŏn Namnyŏ wa Kyŏrhon Haeya Hal Kŏt In’ga [A Good Marriage and a Bad Marriage: Whom Should We Marry?],” *PG* (February 1928), 140.

211 Shin, “Development of Eugenic Movement,” 152.

212 See Ch’oe, “Good and Bad Marriage,” 140.

213 See *ibid.*

judges, educators, merchants, and landlords; thereby, he refashioned heredity as the sole factor that decided over a person's fate. He claimed that "the most practical way that we could practice [eugenics] is nothing other than through the choice of a spouse," particularly "the choice of the lineage,"²¹⁴ by which he mainly meant hereditary mental characteristics. From the eugenic perspective, he warned readers against romantic love: "Love is blind. [People fall in love] Simply when their eyes meet on the street or receive a love letter. Marriage is the most dangerous when it is done after having a secret affair."²¹⁵

The medical discourse of eugenic marriage defined health primarily as a hereditary condition and warned about the genetic harm that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) would cause for the marriage and the nation. Eugenicians argued against passion-driven relationships mainly due to widespread STDs and their negative impact on hereditary health. The practical way to achieve hereditary health was choosing the right spouse based on physical health, intellect, and mental status. In line with this belief, the medical doctor Yi Kapsu defined the "achievement of the offspring's sound constitution and [sound] race"²¹⁶ as the goal of marriage. Thereby, he asserted that a body free from STDs was key to realize racial hygiene since, as he argued, some STDs could be inherited by the offspring and cause congenital disorder:

Usually, the husband catches syphilis or gonorrhoea and infects his wife; simultaneously, [these diseases are] passed from the pregnant mother to the children, causing the offspring's infection with the diseases. Eventually, a family member or blood relatives can fall into a deplorable situation.²¹⁷

Like Ch'oe Tusŏn, the medical doctor also asserted that "the drunken[ness] in the idealized *yŏnae*"²¹⁸ was an obstacle for eugenic marriage, arguing that it could lead to the infections with STDs. What seemingly began as a caution for the youth evolved into a call for totalitarian biopolitics. Although the Government-General did not implement Japanese laws such as the 1927 Venereal Disease Prevention Ordinance or the 1940 National Eugenic Law into the colonial Korean legal system, the discussions and concepts surrounding these laws greatly influenced the public discourse on sex and marriage in colonial Korea starting in the late 1920s.²¹⁹

214 Ibid., 141.

215 Ibid.

216 Yi, "On Domestic Hygiene," 5.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 Pak Chŏng'ae's 2016 study found that the colonial government did not introduce the Venereal Disease Prevention Ordinance to colonial Korea due to the lack of budget and police force. She explained that the Government-General revived the idea to implement the revised law as Japan entered the so-called total war period in 1938, yet as the Japanese Parliament postponed the approval of the revised bill due to urgent matters related to the war, the legislation change in colonial Korea was not realized. "Chosŏn Ch'ongdokbu ūi Sŏngbyŏng Yebang Chŏngch'aek kwa Hwaryubyŏng Yebangnyŏng [The STD Prevention Policy of the Government-General in Korea and the Venereal Disease Prevention Ordinance]," *Sarim* 55 (2016), 299–326; see 314–17. Sumiko Otsubo Sitcawich's 1998 dissertation provides insight into Japanese eugenic politics, including the 1940

4.3 Women's Moviegoing in the Context of Eugenic Marriage

Politics of Gender in the Eugenic Discourse

Like their counterparts in other countries, Korean eugenicists called for the state control of reproduction and individuals' careful choice of spouses. They saw considerable risk in the passion-driven romantic relationships, which had attracted the younger generation of Koreans since the early 1920s. In the eyes of eugenicists, pursuing one's happiness through love and marriage could potentially threaten the nation's health and prosperity, and thus needed to be carefully monitored and prohibited. Therefore, Korean eugenicists warned women specifically to maintain sound health by avoiding theaters and the risks attached to them, including STDs. STDs, such as syphilis or gonorrhea, were some of the most common diseases among Koreans during the colonial period.²²⁰ According to the statistics of the Hospital of the Government-General between 1914 and 1926, 20 percent of the patients received medical treatment for STDs, which outnumbered digestive troubles (19.5 percent), and respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis (18.7 percent).²²¹

STDs were usually called *hwaryubyöng*, or diseases of the demimonde, in colonial Korea.²²² As this name implied, STDs were generally believed to be spread through sexual intercourse with sex workers. As per this understanding, the colonial government mainly focused on controlling female sex workers' health to prevent STDs. For instance, the Japanese colonial power continuously broadened the range of medical inspection from licensed Korean prostitutes (*yunyö*) to *kisaeng* women, waitresses, and hostesses at bars, often considered unlicensed sex workers.²²³ However, the medical checkups did not reduce infections with STDs.²²⁴ Kang Hyegyöng's 2008 study on the colonial regulation of STDs found that the infection rate of Korean women in the sex industry increased from 10 percent in the 1920s to nearly 50 percent in the 1930s, and it was estimated that at least 10 percent of the general population was infected with STDs.²²⁵

From the early 1920s, Korean medical experts pointed out that men who bought sex were responsible for the spread of STDs and demanded legal action against them. For example, Hō Yöngsuk, the first Korean woman to pass the doctoral qualification examination of the Government-General, asserted in 1920 that the law must restrict a man's

National Eugenic Law. "Eugenics in Imperial Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883–1945" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1998), 7–9.

220 Kang, "STD as Social Problem," 88.

221 Chang Mun'gyöng, "Pomch'öl Puiñ Wisaeng [Women's Hygiene in the Spring]," *Yösöng* (April 1937), 80–81, as cited in Kim Miyöng, "Ilche ha Chosön Ilbo üi Söngbyöng Kwallyön Tamnon Yön'gu [A Study on *Chosun Ilbo's* Discourse of STD under the Colonial Rule]," *Chöngshin Munhwa Yön'gu* 29 (2006), 389–417; see 392.

222 Kang, "STD as Social Problem," 87.

223 On the broadening of the anti-STDs law's targets during the colonial era, see Yamashita Yöng'ae, "Shingminji Chibae wa Kongch'ang Chedo üi Chöng'gae [The Colonial Rule and the Development of the Licensed Prostitution System]," *Sahoe wa Yöksa* 51 (1997), 143–83.

224 See Kang, "STD as social problem," 109–10.

225 See *ibid.*, 96–98.

right to marry for a certain period when he had an STD.²²⁶ Similarly, a 1927 *Dong-A Ilbo* article concluded that unless men changed their behavior, the preventive measures, which solely focused on prostituting women, would not stop the spread of STDs.²²⁷ The article pointed out that, due to men who bought sex, “STDs also enter the innocent and peaceful home.”²²⁸ As a solution, the article urged men to marry before they turned twenty-five so as to not feel tempted to go to the red light district.²²⁹ Additionally, the article required men not to buy sex even if their wives got sick or gave birth to children, revealing the degree of the ordinariness of buying sex for married men at the time.²³⁰ The daily newspaper *Chosŏn Chung’ang Ilbo* reported that during the New Year’s holidays between January 1 and 6, 1934, 2,325 men visited the licensed quarter at Shinjŏng in Seoul, and spent 22,523 wŏn.²³¹

Around this time, eugenicists recognized that women, too, played a significant part in the hereditary health of their offspring, just like men. A 1932 *Maeil Shinbo* article explained that the maternal line was as important as the paternal line when it comes to the offspring’s traits: “According to Galton’s study on the influence of ancestors on heredity, generally half of a trait is inherited from each parent.”²³² Such an explanation was necessary due to the customary differentiation between the maternal line called *oega*, literally the *outside family*, and the paternal line *ch’in’ga*, or the *close family*. The article corrected the misbelief that the heredity would also follow this conceptual distinction: “As many of the mother’s traits are inherited by children, the *oega*, too, has a significant relationship to heredity. The formal name and the hereditary content do not match.”²³³ Additionally, the article even asserted that the maternal line might have an even more significant influence on children’s intelligence than the paternal line.²³⁴

Having established the importance of women’s role in heredity, warning about STDs addressed women more often than men, although the latter were habitual sex buyers and the central intermediate hosts of STDs. For instance, Korean eugenicists called for women to build up knowledge of STDs and make the right choice of spouses or manage their sexual health in the marriage. The medical doctor Oh Wŏnsŏk’s 1932 article “Various Venereal Diseases Ruin the Home and the Society: Wives Should Prevent Husbands’

226 Hŏ Yŏngsuk, “Hwaryubyŏng Cha ūi Honin ūl Kŭmhal Il [Forbid STD Patients’ Marriage],” *CI*, May 10, 1920, 3.

227 “Hwaryubyŏng Yebang 3 [Preventing STDs 3],” *DI*, February 14, 1927, 3. I became aware of this article through Kang Hyegyŏng’s 2008 study.

228 “Preventing STDs 2,” *DI*, February 13, 1927, 3.

229 See “Preventing STDs 3,” *DI*, February 14, 1927, 3.

230 See *ibid.*

231 For instance, See “Sahoe ūi Amin Ch’anggi Munje e taehayŏ 8: Maeŭm Ron Ilbyŏl [On the Problem of Prostitutes and *Kisaeng*, the Cancer of the Society 8: An Overview of Opinions on Prostitution],” *Chosŏn Chung’ang Ilbo*, August 18, 1934, 3.

232 “Kyŏrhon kwa Usaenghak 4 Kyŏrhon ūi Chungdae han Ūiŭi: Abŏji P’yŏn Yujŏnja poda Ōmŏni P’yŏn i Tŏ Chung’yo. Chiryŏk Yujŏn e Issŏsŏ nŭn Tŏ hae [Marriage and Eugenics 4 The Important Meaning of Marriage: Maternal Genes Are More Important than the Paternal, Even More So When It Comes to the Inheritance of the Intellect],” *MS*, October 13, 1932, 3.

233 “Marriage and Eugenics 4,” *MS*, October 13, 1932, 3.

234 *Ibid.*

Venereal Diseases” for *Chosun Ilbo* is a prime example. In this serialized article, he informed Korean women about the infection routes, symptoms, remedies, and dangers of gonorrhea, which was often transmitted from husbands to wives. Instead of men who habitually bought sex and got infected with STDs, Oh Wönsök blamed Korean women for not knowing enough about STDs, thus posing a threat to their homes. “Venereal diseases do not selectively evade women of the demimonde or men who are close to them but also harm good and wise housewives and innocent children. How pathetic that most Korean housewives do not even know the cause of their suffering.”²³⁵ Ironically, as there were a significant number of men infected with STDs, the success of the eugenic marriage was solely dependent on women who were not infected yet. Under this guise, eugenicists assigned Korean women the task of accomplishing a eugenic marriage so that it burdened and even disgraced them instead of empowering them.

The medical doctor knew that men frequently bought sex, infected their wives, and even caused infertility of women.²³⁶ However, while blaming the female sex sellers as “the origin of venereal diseases”²³⁷ and requiring their strict control, Oh Wönsök stated that “the abolishment of licensed and unlicensed sex work in Korean society is impossible” and required only “a better education about sex” for the youth and “the use of a condom”²³⁸ as preventive measures for men. Meanwhile, the eugenicist urged readers to strictly supervise the hygiene and behaviors of daughters from an early age. He advised parents to “wash the wood board used as a seat before girls sit and wash them [particularly when used] in public baths”²³⁹ to avoid an indirect infection with gonorrhea. In combination with other texts on women’s behavior, Oh Wönsök’s article could mislead readers to believe that men might be less responsible than women in STD prevention. “Parents Must Make the Female Students Come Home for the Winter Vacation Even If They Refuse: Female Students Are Easy to Fall,” an article published on the same page as Oh Wönsök’s third segment of his serialized article, reinforced such a misconception. According to the article, if daughters were studying in Seoul separated from their parents in the countryside, parents “must make them come home” on “the very first day of the vacation.”²⁴⁰ The article argued:

For sure male students are easy to fall, especially during this time [vacation]; regarding this, if a female student does not go home but stays in Seoul during the vacation, it means that she has already fallen. Even if she has not fallen yet and remains in Seoul due to a special occasion, all kinds of temptations stretch out from everywhere to an innocent girl who is alone in a lonely room.²⁴¹

235 Oh Wönsök, “Yörö Kaji Hwaryubyöng ün Kajöng kwa Sahoe rül Mangch’imnida: Kajöng Puindül ün Namp’yön üi Hwaryubyöng ül Miri Yebang Hayö K’un P’ihae rül P’ihashiyo 1 [Various Venereal Diseases Ruin the Home and the Society: Wives Should Avoid Greater Harms by Preventing Husbands’ Venereal Diseases 1],” *CI*, December 7, 1932, 5.

236 See Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 1,” *CI*, December 7, 1932, 5.

237 Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 6,” *CI*, December 13, 1932, 5.

238 Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 7,” *CI*, December 14, 1932, 5.

239 Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 2,” *CI*, December 9, 1932, 5.

240 Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 3,” *CI*, December 10, 1932, 5.

241 Oh, “Various Venereal Diseases 3,” *CI*, December 10, 1932, 5.

Figure 9: An advertisement for nutritional supplement during the pregnancy in a women's magazine.



Source: *Shin Kajōng* (September 1936). Courtesy of Hyun-dam Mun'go.

Nevertheless, men had a higher chance of catching syphilis or gonorrhea than female students, as they began to buy sex at very young ages. As of 1930, visiting cafés was customary among male students, which led to increased chances of having sexual contact with unlicensed prostitutes and being infected with STDs.²⁴² In 1934, for instance, the case of a 15-year-old male student who had sex with a waitress and was infected with syphilis became public.²⁴³ In 1938, a professional school found out through a health check that 10 percent of the male applicants aged between 18 and 19 already had venereal dis-

242 Sojebu, "Humourous and Ironical Cleaning," 67.

243 See Akch'ōnsaeng, "Tae Kyōngsōng ūi SOS [SOS from the Grand Kyōngsōng]," *PG* (April 1934), 29–31.

eases.²⁴⁴ In light of these facts, Oh's advice that parents should "think once more about daughters than sons so that they do not fall"²⁴⁵ not only hindered the actual STD prevention but also revealed the gendered bias behind the eugenic biopolitics.

The so-called in-utero infection was a powerful tool to make Korean women as equally responsible for their children's infections with STDs as their husbands. In his contribution to Ehwa Women's Professional School's magazine, Yi Myŏngghyök, a Columbia graduate who taught biology at Yŏnhŭi University, informed the female students of the importance of physical and mental health care for women during pregnancy.²⁴⁶ His text revealed the large gap between the responsibilities given to women and their limited scope of action regarding STD prevention. Instead of offering concrete plans or strategies, the biologist repeatedly explained how fathers could pass viruses to babies through mothers:

The fetus and the pregnant mother are closely related to each other, and the nutrition, respiration, and excretion of the fetus are processed through the maternal placenta. Although the blood vessels of the fetus are not directly connected to the maternal blood vessels, they exchange blood and other materials through osmotic action as only a single membrane separates them. Therefore, if a pregnant woman has pathogens of syphilis, they will be transmitted to the fetus in the end. Infectious diseases and other illnesses such as tumors and endometritis will significantly harm the fetus. Even if the pregnant mother does not have any fatal disease, the illness of the refractory and careless father can be inherited by the fetus through the mother, causing miscarriage or stillbirth. [...] Furthermore, some people risk infections with horrible diseases and throw themselves into the hideous depths [of the red-light district]; they not only get injuries and diseases their bodies cannot cure for their whole lives, but also make their wives and children suffer.²⁴⁷

In their articles, Korean eugenicists often categorized women into those who belonged to the demimonde (*hwaryugye*) and those who did not. prostituting women, *kisaeng*, barmaids, and waitresses were regarded as "the least interesting"²⁴⁸ for the nation, as rather a risk to be managed than persons in need of care and protection. Considering that they were not even given the freedom to reject male sex buyers with STDs or resign from work due to their STD infections, such a categorization perpetuated the vicious cycle in which female sex workers were exposed to STDs without any protection while being punished for spreading STDs.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, they asserted that the women outside the demimonde needed extra protection from STDs, as they were deemed as "much better persons."²⁵⁰ It

244 "Kagyŏng hal Ch'oegŭn Haksaeŋgye P'unggi! [Recent Students' Surprising Morals!]," *CI*, March 5, 1938, 2.

245 Oh Wŏnsök, "Various Venereal Diseases 3," *CI*, December 10, 1932, 5.

246 On Yi Myŏngghyök's activities as a member of Korean Eugenic Association, see Shin, "Development of Eugenic Movement," 138.

247 Yi Myŏngghyök, "T'aegyo ran Kŏt ũn Muŏt In'ga? [What Is Prenatal Education?]," *Kyoji lhwa* (1930), 13–14.

248 Ch'oe, "Good and Bad Marriage," 140.

249 See "Hwaryubyŏng Yebang 3 Hwaryubyŏng i Manyŏn toenŭn Ne Kaji K'ŭn Wŏnin [STD Prevention 3 Four Reasons Behind the Prevalence of STD]," *DI*, February 14, 1927, 3.

250 Ch'oe, "Good and Bad Marriage," 140.

must be noted that eugenicists did not prioritize women's health for their cause but that of the offspring. A 1927 article titled "The Prevention of STDs" in the *Dong-A Ilbo* exemplifies this:

Allegedly 99 percent of women from the demimonde are infected with venereal diseases. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that all of them have STDs. However, many housewives have been recently infected with STDs, and the diseases are spreading to female factory workers and unmarried peasant women. The pain and the loss of efficiency are the second most serious problem; [the most pressing problem] is that the STDs harm posterity, so that they have congenital syphilis and are born with low intelligence, or with a delinquent nature and easily become criminal, or lose their eyesight. For society and the state, it is a huge loss and a severe problem.²⁵¹

This article revealed that women's good health was primarily regarded as a condition for a sound posterity in the STD discourse. Even their economic value as workers was less critical than their reproductive function: "the pain and the loss of efficiency is the *second* most serious problem (emphasis added)." As a human resource of the colonial economy and a pawn of colonial biopolitics, the beneficiaries of women's health were not themselves but employers, businessmen, and the state.

Meanwhile, the medical doctor Chang Mun'gyōng tenaciously depicted how STDs impeded women's generative functions and children's health. In her article for the women's magazine *Yōsōng* (*Women*), Chang explained that the embryo turned "scary and gross" and would eventually be born dead when the mother passed onto it an STD.²⁵² Moreover, she assumed that syphilitic children would become either inefficient at work or delinquent when grown-up, putting women under even greater moral pressure. Although the doctor defined STDs as "a heavenly punishment for men entering the red-light district" and pointed husbands out as the intermediate host, she argued that women, too, were responsible if babies were born with STDs: "It is not the child's fault, but [...] the parents."²⁵³

Under these circumstances, the women's magazine *Shin Kajōng* (*New Home*) published a special issue on sexual education for women in September 1936 that featured interviews with experts under the title "How Not to Marry a Venereally Infected Man." Nineteen out of twenty-one experts advised readers to demand a health certificate from their future husbands. Several experts added that the women had to take the initiative and bring their men to trusted doctors due to possible manipulation of certificates by their potential husbands.²⁵⁴ Besides the health certificate, three people recommended young women to observe their future husbands' conduct.²⁵⁵ A married couple shared that they traced each other's lives by exchanging their diaries from the last four to five years.²⁵⁶

251 "STD Prevention 1," *DI*, February 12, 1927, 3.

252 Chang Mun'gyōng, "Sōngbyōng e taehayō [On STDs]," *Yōsōng* (June 1936), 46–47; see 46.

253 Chang, "On STDs," 46–47.

254 See "Sōngbyōng Hwanja ege Shijip An Karyōmyōn [How Not to Marry a Venereally Infected Man]," *SK* (September 1936), 32–38.

255 See "How Not to Marry," 32, 35, and 37.

256 *Ibid.*, 38.

Yi Yōsōng, a socialist anti-Japanese activist, even insisted on introducing a state marriage license to realize the ideal of a eugenic nation.²⁵⁷ However, this was only a minority opinion. Chōng Kuch'ung, a doctor and KEA member, advised that the best prevention method was to check a man's health certificate because "only about 50 percent of men around the age of thirty are not sexually ill."²⁵⁸ In general, the interviewees agreed that it was women's task to achieve a eugenic marriage "for the cause of national health."²⁵⁹ Adhering to this view, the magazine also featured a nutritional supplement advertisement that might help mothers give birth to healthy children (see figure 9).

The impact of such burdening and stigmatizing of women can be detected in reports about women who attempted suicide due to their husbands' STDs.²⁶⁰ In March 1926, Kim Tong'ok tried to kill herself after she became syphilitic through her husband. She managed to save money and buy 606, the famous syphilis drug, yet as the drug did not work and her family fell into poverty due to the expensive medicine, she saw no other choice.²⁶¹ Kim Sōngdae, who received gonorrhea from her husband, committed suicide at Pukch'ōn River in the P'yōng'anbuk-do province in March 1928 after her husband and parents-in-law abused and drove her out of their home due to her illness.²⁶² Kim Pong'ae, a twenty-seven-year-old woman from Namhae, killed her daughter and herself in July 1937 after her husband was treated for an STD for four years without showing any improvement.²⁶³ In September 1934, Mrs. Yang and her husband Kim Taesik committed suicide at the Han River after her mother-in-law wrongfully blamed her for her husband's STD infection.²⁶⁴

The eugenic discourse, which emerged at the end of the 1920s and was set in motion in the 1930s, declared the so-called racial improvement as the goal of gender relations. With this aim, eugenicists distanced themselves from traditional marriages, where parents select their children's spouses, and Free Love, where individuals prioritized their happiness and sexual liberty instead of remaining chaste until marriage. Instead, they advised their contemporaries to carefully choose spouses to optimize the hereditary conditions of the offspring and eventually contribute to the nation. In Korea, where STDs were prevalent, the minimum condition for eugenic marriage was a body free of STDs. Even though many men were infected with STDs and spread them to female sex sellers and homemakers, the advocates of eugenics sidelined this problem. Instead, they promoted stricter medical examinations of women working in the sex industry and reinforcing women's self-discipline and social control. Notably, women of childbearing age

257 See *ibid.*, 36.

258 *Ibid.*, 33.

259 *Ibid.*, 33 and 36.

260 I became aware of following newspaper articles through Kang Hyegyōng's 2009 study. Refer to "STD as social problem," 104-06.

261 "Namp'yōn ūro put'ō Chōnyōm toen Maedok [Syphilis Infection Through the Husband]," *CI*, March 14, 1926, 2.

262 "Chega Pyōng Omyō chugo Allūndago Ch'ukch'ul [Husband Abandons Wife for Being Sick After Infecting Her]," *DI*, March 21, 1928, 5.

263 "Kayōpsūn Tu Saengmyōng! [Two Poor Lives!]," *DI*, July 17, 1937, 4.

264 "Chōnyul hal Hwaryu Pyōngma Tallak han Kajōng P'agoe, [Horrible STD Destroys a Happy Family]," *DI*, September 5, 1934, 1.

were asked to build up their knowledge of STDs and even “prevent STDs of their husbands” because they could transmit STDs from men to the offspring through in-utero infection. In this way, the discourse of eugenics in colonial Korea reduced sexuality to a reproductive issue and put pressure on Korean women to bear the heavy burden of racial improvement. The discourse of eugenics in the 1930s justified the social demand that women meet more stringent and detailed conditions than men regarding their conduct, and in this context, Korean women were further discouraged from everyday practices such as moviegoing.

Maternal Health and Moviegoing

Korean eugenicists considered the uncontrolled desire for love and intimacy a threat to their goal of racial improvement. While requiring careful management of sexuality, the call for eugenic marriage and hereditary health mainly addressed young women. Therefore, their lifestyle, including theater visits, became a relevant issue for eugenic marriage because films gained notoriety as the medium of love and movie theaters as a site for sexualized contact.

From the late 1920s, Korean medical experts advised women not to go to theaters as it might be harmful for pregnancy. Medical texts brought up the concept of prenatal education (*t'aegyo*) and the so-called mental hygiene (*chöngshin wisaeng*) as they repudiated pregnant women's movie watching. The daily newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* was the leading portal for spreading the concept of prenatal education and pregnant women's mental hygiene in colonial Korea. Introducing prenatal education through a series of articles in 1929, the newspaper defined prenatal education as “a pregnant mother's mental preparation to give birth to a good child.”²⁶⁵ Highlighting the correlation between physical and mental status, the article considered pregnant women's emotions as the most influential mental factor for the fetus. According to the article, pregnant women were advised to maintain peace of mind—without any “turbulent of emotion” or “desire.”²⁶⁶ Hō Shin, a gynecologist at Seoul Imperial University, underlined the theory of mental hygiene and insisted that “things that could stimulate the emotion, such as plays, music, novels and the likes are bad” for pregnancy.²⁶⁷ Additionally, he stated that “a neighborhood of theaters is not good”²⁶⁸ as a living environment for pregnant women due to its turbulence. In another column, the medical doctor recommended that women avoid theaters during pregnancy because of the danger of catching infectious diseases.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the

265 “Chohün Chanyö Nannün T'aegyo ran Muöt 1: Imshin jung üi Chöngshin Wisaengün T'aea e K'ün Yönghyang üi Chunda [What Is Prenatal Care to Bear Good Children 1: Mental Hygiene During Pregnancy Has a Profound Impact on the Unborn Child],” *DI*, September 29, 1929, 7.

266 “What Is Prenatal Care 1,” *DI*, September 29, 1929, 7.

267 Hō Shin, “Imshin Punman Sanyok e taehan Ilban Chishik kwa Söpsaengböp 11: Taech'e T'aea nün Öttök'e Yöngyang üi Önnün'ga [General Knowledge About Pregnancy, Delivery, Childbed and Rules for Maintaining Health 11: How Does a Fetus Take in Nutrition?],” *DI*, March 16, 1930, 5.

268 Hō, “General Knowledge About Pregnancy 11,” *DI*, March 16, 1930, 5.

269 Hō Shin, “Imshin Punman Sanyok e taehan Ilban Chishik kwa Söpsaengböp 22 Moch'e T'aea e Yönghyang Chunün Imshin chön hu Pyöng [General Knowledge About Pregnancy, Delivery,

Notably, an earlier account on prenatal education and theater visits insisted on exactly the opposite. “The Science of Racial Improvement,” one of the earliest Korean articles about eugenics that the women’s magazine *Uri ūi Kajōng* (*Our Home*) published in 1914, introduced the concept of eugenics to Korean women and claimed that it “included prenatal education,”²⁷² as both aimed to *improve* the offspring. As a means of maintaining maternal health, the article exemplified how Francis Galton brought his wife “to a theater that played comedy when there was discord in the house.”²⁷³ In other words, Galton recognized comedy’s positive influence on pregnant women because it was thought to help them maintain good psychological health and eventually give birth to *fit* children. Regarding the effect of theater visits on pregnancy, this article did not find great resonance among Korean eugenicists.

To manage sexual and hereditary health, Korean eugenicists disapproved of children’s moviegoing as well. Yi Kapsu, the director of the KEA, called for the sexual education of Korean children from an early age to limit their exposure to sexuality through popular media, including motion pictures, and to stop them from developing uncontrollable lust. In his 1931 contribution to the popular magazine *Pyōlgōn’gon*, the eugenicist wrote:

If [parents] do not teach their children any knowledge about sexual desire from an early age, questions of sexuality would torment their nerves when they reach a certain age so that they read evil books or want to listen to the narrations at motion pictures. What is extremely dangerous currently is that children fall into the demimonde and seek lust from prostitutes or practice the bad habit of masturbation. [...] Nevertheless, it occurs very often that children listen to explanations from a lousy friend, motion pictures, or evil books and receive a bad influence because their parents or educators neglect the sexual education that the children need the most.²⁷⁴

Sexual education for children, including restricting their media consumption, was a means of managing hereditary health from an early age. His article published in the women’s magazine *Shin Kajōng* (see figure 10) offered the argument that when children developed an interest in sexual matters through popular media, they would eventually do great harm to society as a whole:

Thus, too strictly keeping questions of sexuality secret causes children to feel terrified, anxious, or tormented. Moreover, when they develop much stronger curiosity, they try to understand sexuality through bad books, evil motion pictures, or plays. As they have even stronger sexual desire, they come to do unnatural things [...] the most dangerous things are falling into masturbation, perverted sexual desire, or hav-

272 “Injong Kaesōn Hak [The Science of the Racial Improvement],” *Uri ūi Kajōng* (February 1914), 36–38; see 36.

273 “Science of Racial Improvement,” 37.

274 Yi Kapsu, “Chosōn Yōsōng ūi Song Kyoyuk e taehayō: Chanyō rül Tushin Pun ūn Pandūshi Han Pōn Ilgūshipshio [On Korean Women’s Sex Education: Parents Should Read It],” *PG* (January 1931), 51–52.

ing sex with prostitutes. Furthermore, they often end up committing a great sin and disturbing society in general.²⁷⁵

Yi named motion pictures as one of the main elements that would activate the youth's desire for actual sexual relationships in a wrong way and even make them descend into the demimonde. As the head of the KEA, it is likely that the "great sin" he mentioned referred to STD infections and disruption of hereditary health.

Figure 11: A picture of Seoul's waitresses receiving health check.



Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, September 2, 1930. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

Kisses, which became famous through Western romantic movies, were rediscovered as a means of STD infection under the influence of eugenics in the 1930s. A 1930 article in the *Maeil Shinbo* pointed out that kisses could transmit syphilis, along with tuberculosis, diphtheria, influenza, and cerebrospinal meningitis:

Syphilis causes a rash on the mucous membrane and skin in the second stage. Among them, papules, or colored spots, that erupt on mucous membranes such as lips or gum have many pathogens (spirochete) on their surface; thus, there is a risk that the pathogen will spread directly to the contact area. The reason behind the case that some people catch syphilis through their mouth by a cigarette lit by a woman of the demimonde is because the pathogen from colored spots was attached to [the

275 Yi, "Korean Women's Sex Education," 7.

cigarette]. When one can be infected with [syphilis] through a mere cigarette, the infection is 100 percent sure when a mouth directly touches another mouth, and the movement of teeth or tongues mechanically stimulates the lips, causing bruises to the mucous membrane. Additionally, [syphilis] can also be spread to small children through this way. Often someone other than parents kiss a child, yet this should never be allowed.²⁷⁶

Echoing the concerns about STD infections through kisses, the *Maeil Shinbo* published a picture (see figure 11) that showed how doctors examined waitresses' mouths at a café in Seoul with the caption "Kiss-Crazed Café Boys Should Be Relieved: Health Check of Waitresses of Cafés in Ponchöng District."²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in his 1931 contribution to the popular magazine *Tonggwang* (*Eastern Light*), the medical doctor Oh Wönsök warned that "you should not forget that prostitutes' health check conducted once or twice a week is extremely insufficient, thus do not feel relieved."²⁷⁸ He, too, counted kisses as a means of syphilis infection along with sexual intercourse and indirect contact with syphilis patients via household items and musical instruments.²⁷⁹

The daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* soothed readers that it might be unlikely that Easterners catch syphilis through kisses because kisses were not as ordinary as in the West, not to mention that syphilis pathogens were rarely found around the lips.²⁸⁰ However, the article informed that syphilis pathogens deep in the mouth or inherited syphilis were hard to find and could be transmitted through kisses, thus instructed readers to "brush teeth after kissing with hydroperoxide, rivanol, or iodine," although the surest way to prevent the infection might be "not kissing at all."²⁸¹ Another article in the *Dong-A Ilbo* from 1935, which praised Rudolf Valentino and Adolphe Menjou as "teachers of kissing"

276 "Hwabok üi Mun in Saram üi Ip: K'issü ro putö Chönyöm tönün Yörö Kaji Chönyöm Pyöng [The Mouth Is the Entrance of Luck and Unluck: Various Contagious Diseases Transmitted through Kisses]," *MS*, May 9, 1930, 5.

277 "K'issü Kwang Kkap'we Poidül Anshim hal II [Kiss-Maniac Café-Boys Should Be Relieved]," *MS*, September 2, 1930, 2. The symbolic attribution of sexually transmitted diseases to marginalized women who worked as prostitutes, as well as their real health and medical consequences for these women manifested themselves in terms such as "venerea" and "venereal disease," whose etymology leads to the ancient goddess Venus. See Katja Sabisch, *Das Weib als Versuchsperson. Medizinische Menschenexperimente im 19. Jahrhundert am Beispiel der Syphilisforschung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 9. Comparative research on German and Korean women who, due to their gender and status, were subjected to health policy and medical intervention in the form of experimentation, control, and media representation would reveal the extent and forms of intersectional violence against marginalized women even more clearly. I became aware of Katja Sabisch's study through one of the reviews for the partial publication of this chapter in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* in German language. I would like to thank the reviewer for the valuable reference.

278 Oh Wönsök, "Kagong hal Maedok Pyöng, Kü Wönin Ch'iryo küp Yebang Pöp, Sunkyöl han Chöngnyön ege Türinün Kyöngbo [The Terrifying Syphilis, Its Causes, Remedy, and Preventive Methods: An Alarm for the Innocent Youth]," *Tonggwang* (January 1931), 72–77; refer to 77.

279 Oh, "Terrifying Syphilis," 75.

280 "K'issü wa Pyöng üi Chönyöm: K'issü Hayödo Pyöng e ttara Chönyöm i toego An Toemnida [Kisses and the Spread of Diseases: Even If You Kiss, Infection Depends on the Sort of Disease]," *CI*, June 19, 1932, 4.

281 "Kisses and Spread of Diseases," *CI*, June 19, 1932, 4.

for Korean cinephiles, stated that “from the perspective of pathology, kisses are treated in the most unfortunate way,” because “debilitated people, people with high blood pressure, and patients with neuralgia should not kiss. Of the various risks transmitted by kissing, tuberculosis and syphilis are the most dangerous.”²⁸²

Unlike in Japan, the colonial government did not enforce eugenic law in Korea.²⁸³ Nevertheless, Korean eugenicists successfully launched the agenda of eugenic marriage through the print media and allocated women's bodies and sexuality to the biopolitics of racial improvement. In this context, women's theater visits and movie watching gained a new meaning as a threat to national health, as these activities might harm their future children's prenatal education. Regarding the ambivalent intellectual influence of eugenics on the discursive construction of individual love and relationship, the supposedly emancipatory practice of romantic love in colonial Korea in the 1920s can also be seen as an attempt by privileged, educated men with a high level of education to find a new lover who corresponds to the (self-)image and ideal of the modern Korean man. The fact that the men who dominated the public discourse in colonial Korea liked to imagine the New Women as their ideal partners sheds a different light on the public uproar over women moviegoers in the 1920s—that they ultimately sought to restrict and control the sexuality of the women they themselves yearned for.

Stories Untold

Medical and eugenic discourses about the disadvantages of women's moviegoing added more weight to the stigmatization of their spectatorship. Under the biopolitics that primarily targeted women's bodies and sexuality, watching movies could be regarded as a sign of a woman's moral corruption and a threat to national health.

The stigmatization of the theater as a space of illicit sexuality, Western romantic movies as catalysts of uncontrollable desire, and biopolitics focusing on women's bodies reinforced the silence of the Korean female audience and writers in the discourse of theater and movies.²⁸⁴ For this study, I consulted nearly 15,000 pages of Korean women's magazines, and 150 pages of movie magazines appeared between 1908 and 1945. I found five texts in magazines, which include women's narrative of their theater- and movie going.²⁸⁵

282 “History of Kiss 1,” *DI*, June 28, 1935, 4, and “History of Kiss 2,” *DI*, June 26, 1935, 4.

283 Shin, “Development of Eugenic Movement,” 152.

284 Korean actresses publicly talked about their work experiences as well as actors and movies. While their narratives require further academic research, this study remains focused on the topic of female audiences' silence about their theater- and movie going. See “Ch'ömdan Yösöng Yönghwain Chwadamhoe [A Round-Table Talk of the Vanguard Women in the Movie Industry],” *Chosön Yönghwa* (October 1936), 74. Some contemporaries regarded actresses “cousins” of *kisaeng* women. K.O. Saeng, “Yöbaeu wa Kisaeng [Actress and *Kisaeng*],” *Changhan* (January 1927), 32.

285 This includes Yi, “As They Went” from 1924; Pödü, “Cinema and Female Students” from 1928; Cho Pongsun, “P'aen üi P'yöngji: Kim Yönsil Önni ege [A Fan Letter: To Sister Kim Yönsil],” *Yösöng* (May 1936), 20–21; Ch'oe Chönghui, “The Sorrow that ‘there's no tomorrow,’” *SL* (August 1938), 143; and Various Authors, “Ihwa Yöjön Ibön Pom Choröpsaeng Kasüm sok ül Türyöda Ponün Chwadamhoe [A Round-Table Talk to Look into the Hearts of This Spring's Graduates from Ehwa Women's College],” *Yösöng* (June 1939), 24–32. According to Roh Jiseung, female writers Mo Yunsuk and Yi Sön-

While Korean women remained silent about their movie- and theatergoing, women's magazines began featuring stills and stories of the newest films in the late 1920s. Together with observations made by contemporaries, these articles indicate that *kisaeng* women, female students, and educated homemakers were essential customers of movie theaters. The first women's magazine that featured Western movie stills in 1927 was the *kisaeng* women's magazine *Changhan*.²⁸⁶ By 1933, major women's magazines such as *Shin Kajōng* and *Shin Yōsōng* introduced the newest Western movies by publishing stills and summaries regularly.²⁸⁷ This change signalizes growing interest among women of higher economic and social class in moviegoing despite the stigma attached to women's spectatorship.

Around this time, moviegoing was rebranded as a status symbol among the youth and young adults of the urban area.²⁸⁸ Theater scholar Roh Jiseung points out that the intelligentsia and students disregarded Korean films as “mere experiments” and film narrators’ performance as “tasteless show,”²⁸⁹ while most Korean spectators still enjoyed their act. Instead of simply attending movies, these so-called “high-class movie fans (*kogūp p'aen*)” distinguished themselves by “memorizing names of movie directors and actors and read carefully the critics printed in newspapers and magazines to show off their knowledge in cinema itself.”²⁹⁰ Chōng Ch'ungsil's 2018 study draws attention to the establishment of upmarket movie halls in Nishi Ginza, Tokyo, and the emergence of the young and well-educated movie fans in the early 1930s.²⁹¹ This development directly influenced Seoul's movie industry as the Japanese investors quickly adopted this upmarket strategy and built luxurious movie theaters for Seoul's Japanese settlers.²⁹² Roh and Chōng commonly underline that the introduction of talkie movies accelerated the division between educated movie fans who could read subtitles or understand foreign languages and those who needed film narrators' explanation to watch foreign movies.²⁹³

Stills and detailed synopses in women's magazines had, therefore, a twofold function. For operators of movie theaters and movie fans, these were a marketing tool. However, for women who did not watch movies, these articles helped them to keep up with peers who distinguished themselves through knowledge of movies. The pieces of knowledge they gained through reading women's magazines could have even been crucial cultural capital to find the *right match*, achieving the goal of eugenic marriage by appropriat-

hūi left short sentences to Hollywood stars in the September 1938 issue of *Chogwang* as well. See Roh, “Colonial Female Audiences,” 18.

286 “Chisang Yōnghwa: CHŎLMŪN YŎJA ŪI ILSAENG [Movies on the Page: SANDY],” *Changhan* (January 1927), 38–39.

287 See L.M.N., “Chisang Yōnghwa: William Fox Chakp'um CHŎNGJO CH'AP'YO [Movie On-Paper: William Fox's THE YELLOW TICKET],” *Yōin* (September 1932), 74–75; “Yōnghwaran [Movie Section],” *Shin Yōsōng* (December 1932), 66–67; Sambosaeng, “Chisang Yōnghwa: PŪLONDŪ PINŎSŪ [Movie On-Paper: BLOND VENUS],” *SK* (February 1933), 122–26.

288 Roh, *Others at Cinema*, 69.

289 *Ibid.*

290 *Ibid.*, 96–97.

291 Chōng, *Watching Movies*, 99–117.

292 *Ibid.*, 177.

293 Roh, *Others at Cinema*, 102; Chōng, *Watching Movies*, 195.

ing the medium that eugenicists disagreed with the most. Because knowledge of movies was helpful to refashion oneself as “high and noble,”²⁹⁴ as a contemporary characterized the young moviegoers of the 1930s.

The fashion pictorials of Hollywood stars in women's magazines also prove that educated Korean women were familiar with Western movies in the 1930s.²⁹⁵ Remarkably, they adopted the hairdos and makeup of Hollywood actresses. For example, cutting bangs like the ones Katharine Hepburn wore in a movie was a trend among young Korean women in the spring of 1935.²⁹⁶ Explaining what factors can boost a woman's attractiveness, the women's magazine *Shin Kajöng* cited a Hollywood expert who claimed that “the balance of body, cheerful voice, and proper sports”²⁹⁷ might be essential. In one rare case, a girl sent a fan letter to a Korean actress and asked her for advice on how to become an actress, which was answered by the actress Kim Yönsil personally.²⁹⁸

While eugenicists accentuated the dichotomy of cinema and marriage, the youth of the 1930s saw little problem in combining both. In his 1933 comics titled “Become a Husband Like This!” Ch'oe Yöngsu advised men to spend their leisure time with their wives: “[A husband] Should not enjoy hobbies and leisure time alone. Aren't Korean housewives feeling sick at heart because they are not getting the same benefits as their husbands?”²⁹⁹ To accompany his suggestion, Ch'oe illustrated a married couple that happily watches a movie together (see figure 12). Likewise, the popular magazine *Samchölli's* anonymous survey of Seoul's female students revealed that many of them expected their future husbands to enjoy watching movies as their hobby, right next to “reading literary works” and “listening to music.”³⁰⁰ The magazine concluded that “it is not unreasonable to have such a desire, as watching motion pictures has become an essential part of the lifestyle of young men and women today.”³⁰¹

Young intellectual couples used cinematic vocabularies and imageries to represent a new marital relationship based on love, too. Shim Hun, the aspiring novelist and movie director, offered a glimpse into his marriage life by publishing a part of his diary in *Samchölli*. He wrote that, to soothe his angry wife, he gave her “a diary and a women's

294 Sük'ürin Ppalchwi, “Kogüp Yöngghwa P'aen Tönün Pigyöl Shipch'ik [Ten Secret Tips to Become a High-Class Movie Fan],” *PG* (June 1930), 118. The author wrote the term “high and noble” in English alphabet.

295 For instance, *Shin Kajöng* introduced Greta Garbo as the fashion icon from the Europe. “Chön Segye rül P'ungmi Hanün Kkret'a Kkalbijüm [Greta Garbism Conquers the World],” *SK* (November 1933), 78. Even after Japan entered the Pacific War and women's magazines propagated frugality in women's magazines, they introduced Hollywood stars' fashion to Korean readers. “Hölliuü Süt'aiil [Hollywood Style],” *Yösöng* (January 1940), 10–11.

296 “Yuhaeng Hwajang [Trendy Makeup],” *SK* (May 1935), 132–34; see 132.

297 “Miin i Toeryamyön [How to Become a Beauty],” *SK* (September 1935), 75.

298 See Cho, “Fan Letter,” 20–21.

299 “Irön Namp'yön i Toera! [Be a Husband Like This!],” *SK* (December 1933), 134–35; see 135.

300 Various Authors, “Naega Isang hanün Shillang hu Chogön: Soul Mo Yöja Kobo Choröp Pan Kyusu Chan [My Conditions of the Ideal Husband: Suggestions by Senior Students of a Certain Women's Secondary School],” *SL* (January 1935), 131–35; refer to 133.

301 Various Authors, “Conditions of Ideal Husband,” 133.

magazine” and “a hail of kisses on her nose”³⁰² as a gift. Shim thanked his wife Ahn Chŏng’ok for preparing the meal, which would have been taken for granted by older generations, and “kissed her on the forehead” as she “buried her head in his chest,”³⁰³ which was reminiscent of love scenes in Western movies, often summarized as kisses and hugs. To depict how lovely Ahn seemed to him as he came home drunk, Shim borrowed a technical term from screenplays and wrote that her face looked “blurred with a *soft focus* to my drunken eyes,”³⁰⁴ inviting readers to imagine their everyday life as a scene in a movie. His diary exemplified that the young generation of Koreans, who enjoyed Western education and pursued modern marriage life, adopted the marriage lifestyle from Western movies, embodied modern love, and used the language of cinema.

Figure 12: Ch’oe Yongsu’s illustration of a married couple watching a movie together.



Source: *Shin Kajong* (December 1933). Courtesy of Hyundam Mun'go.

Nevertheless, speaking publicly about their love for movies was still an act of courage for Korean women even by the close of the 1930s. No Ch'ŏnmyŏng, a renowned poet, confessed her reluctance to publicly speak out about her preferences in actors after being humiliated once when she did. Asked by the popular magazine *Samch'ŏlli* in 1938 about her favorite movie star, she answered:

Once I answered [to the same question] Robert Taylor for a newspaper's entertainment section, [which the newspaper] required of me. However, due to the exaggerated title that the editor gave [to my answer], I appeared as if I fell in love with the

302 Shim Hun and Ahn Chŏng'ok, "Shillang Shinbu ūi Shinhon Kongdong Ilgi [The Joint Diary of a Groom and a Bride]," *SL* (February 1931), 54.

303 Shim and Ahn, "Joint Diary," 58.

304 *Ibid.*, 54.

Western entertainer and received many insults, which bothered me for a few days. Since then, I have not only hated Robert Taylor, but also, I cannot like any actor anymore.³⁰⁵

No Ch'önmyōng's story indicates that the stigmatization of women's interest in movies and movie stars since the 1920s had a lasting impact on the conception of female movie fans in colonial Korea. Women's silence detected in the colonial Korean discourse of movies was very likely the result of the judgment female moviegoers faced during this time. This hypothesis can be substantiated by the broad spectrum of topics about which Korean women of the era publicly spoke through newspapers and magazines. They voiced their opinions not only on issues such as women's school education, which received wide support due to its contribution to *larger* political issues (for instance, achieving Korea's independence from Japan by enhancing the level of education or the assimilation of colonized Koreans into the Japanese Empire); they also did not shy away from representing their interests in discussions on *yōnae*, marriage, divorce, chastity, birth control, fashion, and socialism.³⁰⁶ They might have chosen to remain silent about their theater- and moviegoing experiences since they had to carefully consider the necessity of public utterance; the danger of losing their legitimacy in the colonial media landscape might have outweighed the urgency and benefit of risking their reputation.

The boom of foreign movies resulted from the colonial policies that restricted Korean investors' involvement in the cinema business. While rejecting Japanese movies, Korean audiences developed a preference for Western action films during the 1910s and consumed romantic movies in the early 1920s. The pre-code era Hollywood movies often entailed graphic representations of sexual intimacy, such as kissing scenes and hugging scenes. These movies deeply impacted the colonial Korean audience of the time. In particular, the public display of erotic images, the usage of close-ups, and the collective watching made moviegoing an unprecedented experience. Although colonial censors also considered Western movies a medium of sexuality and eroticism, the censorship practice itself was arbitrary even after the standardization of movie censorship in 1926. Therefore, Korean audiences, including young female students, could consume these powerful images of intimacy in public spaces. The gaze of young women upon these scenes created a moment of colonial publicness. Their pursuit of entertainment and fulfillment of sexuality stood in striking contrast to manifold expectations for them to become Wise Mothers, Good Wives and patriotic elites of the nation.

Furthermore, female students' consumption of Western romantic movies and pursuit of casual relationships contradicted the ideal of eugenic marriage. Korean eugenicists of the late 1920s, who organized themselves under the direct influence from the United States, Germany, and Japan, claimed STD prevention and the so-called eugenic marriage as suitable biopolitical means for *improving* the Korean race. As there was no eugenic law in colonial Korea, Korean eugenicists' efforts were focused on public campaigns targeting the modification of people's everyday behavior and educating them on the importance of STD prevention, mainly when they chose spouses. Due to the high STD infec-

305 No Ch'önmyōng, "Naega Choa Hanün Nambaeu [My Favorite Actor]," *SL* (October 1938), 151.

306 See Choi, *Sourcebook*.

tion rate among men, Korean eugenicists focused on protecting women's health, adding more social pressure and obligations on them. Eugenicists such as Yi Kapsu regarded moviegoing as a cause of sexual depravity, redefined kisses as a means of syphilis infection, and advised pregnant women to avoid theaters for the sake of mental hygiene. As a place where women could consume romantic movies and even meet strangers for *yōnae*, movie theaters posed a threat to the eugenic biopolitics. In this way, the public discourse of female audiences since the early 1920s was closely related to the gender politics aimed at reforming sexuality and gender relations. Notably, women's moviegoing was rebuffed due to traditional concepts of chastity as well as new medical knowledge and biopolitics, which required the restriction of women's sexuality. Watching foreign movies became a means of social distinction among the younger generation during the 1930s, yet female audiences seldom spoke about their cinema experiences publicly because of its stigmatization.

5. A *Doll's House* and Interventions into Women's Spectatorship

The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself.
*Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own*¹

This chapter analyzes the discourse of colonial Korean women's reception of Henrik Ibsen's 1879 drama *A Doll's House* in the 1920s and the 1930s.² *A Doll's House* tells the story of Nora, who leaves her husband and three children after a marriage crisis. Upon leaving, Nora declares that she was raised as a doll by her father and handed over to her husband Helmer, yet she is a human before she is a mother and wife. Through Nora, Ibsen showed how women were born into the patriarchal power structure, and that family lives were intrinsically a part of this oppressive system for women.³ Leaving her home behind, Nora became *the* symbol of the women's liberation movement worldwide, giving rise to debates over women's rights and cultural productions dealing with women who questioned conventional gender norms.⁴

From the early 1920s onwards, colonial Koreans took part in the "global phenomenon of *A Doll's House*."⁵ The epicenter of the reception and discussions of *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea was not theaters but print media, such as daily newspapers, popular maga-

1 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Orlando: A Harvest Book, [1929]1989), 55.

2 For this chapter I use William Archer's 1889 English translation and two Korean translations by Yang Könsik and Yi Sangsu. See Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House: Play in Three Acts*, trans. William Archer (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889); Ibsen, *Nora*, trans. Yang Könsik (Seoul: Yöngch'ang Sögwän, 1922); Ibsen, *Inhyöng üi Ka [A Doll's House]*, trans. Yi Sangsu (Seoul: Hansöng Tosö Chusik Hoesa, 1922). To avoid confusion, this chapter uses translators' names in the footnotes in addition to the author's name.

3 The drama's impact on feminist discourse is discussed in chapter 5.1.

4 The global scope of the reception of *A Doll's House* is discussed in chapter 5.1.

5 Julie Holledge, "Addressing the Global Phenomenon of *A Doll's House*: An Intercultural Intervention," *Ibsen Studies* 8, no.1 (2009), 13–28.

zines, and books.⁶ With two translations appearing in 1922 and numerous texts drawing upon them, *A Doll's House* became a critical and contentious work in colonial Korea.⁷ As the historian Hyaeweol Choi put it, “some viewed the character [Nora] as an iconic embodiment of the modern self, while others considered her to be a classic example of the perfidious influence of Western ideals, especially feminism, in destabilizing the family.”⁸

Previous research has thoroughly investigated the Korean reception of *A Doll's House* from various perspectives. Literary historians found that this drama was understood as a means of introducing Western realism to Korean literature and disseminating the idea of individualism.⁹ Contemporaries saw unique value in Ibsen's drama because it dealt with social problems, which was rare in Korean literary tradition.¹⁰ As the theater scholar Yi Sünghüi points out, praising Nora as the symbol of individualism was an expression of the zeal for Western-oriented modernization and an alternative way to imagine and reinforce the idea of Korean emancipation from Imperial Japan.¹¹ Recent comparative studies have placed the Korean reception of *A Doll's House* in the context of the broader East Asian reception of Ibsen's works and found close relations between translations and literary adaptations of the famous play in colonial Korea, China, and Japan.¹²

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- 6 Despite its prominence, there were only four stage productions of *A Doll's House* during the colonial era. For an overview of the four productions see chapter 5.1.
 - 7 Yang Könsik and Pak Kyegang's translation, serialized in *Maeil Shinbo*, was published as a book under the title *Nora* in June 1922. Only five months later, another Korean translation by Yi Sangsu appeared under the title *A Doll's House*. See Pak Chinyöng, “Ipsen kwa Segye Munhak üi Shing-minji: Yang Könsik üi Inhyöng üi Chip Pönyök kwa Sarang üi Kaksöng [Ibsen and Colony of World Literature: Yang Könsik's Translation of *A Doll's House* and *The Awakening of Love*],” *Minjok Munhaksa Yöngu* 58 (2015), 9–35; see 18. For a comparative analysis of the Yang and Pak's translation and Yi's translation of *A Doll's House*, see Kim Chaesök, “1920-nyöndaee Inhyöng üi Chip Pönyök e taehan Yöngu [A Study on the Translation of *A Doll's House* in the 1920s],” *Han'guk Kük Yesul Yöngu* 36 (2012), 11–36.
 - 8 Hyaeweol Choi, “Debating the Korean New Woman: Imagining Henrik Ibsen's 'Nora' in Colonial Era Korea,” *Asian Studies Review* 36, no. 1 (2012), 59–77; refer to 60.
 - 9 The interest in individualism among Korean intellectuals in the context of *A Doll's House* is discussed in chapter 5.2.
 - 10 For instance, see the preface of *Nora* written by the literature critic Kim Chöngjin: “Looking back on the past of our literary scenes, what values has our literary art taught us for our lives and what did it imply for our academic circle? They [the poets] sat all day long alone in their quiet houses and wrote, ‘Flowers are blooming, birds are singing, and the moon is bright.’ The questions of life that agonize us and evoke a yearning in us the most, such as what our lives were and what kind of enlightenment we should acquire in the future so as to lead a truthful life, were completely irrelevant [to the old literature].” Kim Chöngjin, “Sö [Preface],” in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*, 1–3; refer to 1.
 - 11 See Yi Sünghüi, “Ipsen üi Pönyök kwa Söng Chöngch'ihak [The Translation of Ibsen and Gender Politics],” *Yösöng Munhak Yöngu* 12 (2004), 37–68.
 - 12 See Su Shan Shan, “Inhyöng üi Chip üi Naon Yönyu wa Puinnon üi Kwallyöng Yangsang Yöngu [A Study on the Connection between *The Reason of Getting Out of the Doll's House* and *Die Frau und Der Sozialismus*],” *Hyöndaee Munhak Iron Yöngu* 56 (2014), 347–75; Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 9–35; Deng Qian, “Yömm Sangsöp Ch'ogijak e Nat'anan Ipsen Suyong Yangsang Yöngu: *Chisangsön üi Wihayö* wa *Cheya rül* Chungsim üro [The Acceptance of Ibsen in Yeom Sang-Seop's Early Works: A Study Focused on *For the Supreme Good* and *New Year's Eve*],” *Kukje Ömnum* 68 (2016), 7–37.

Meanwhile, feminist scholars focused on the question of how the drama initiated debates over women's liberation in the public discourse. Their studies found that Nora was debated in close relation to the new concept of the Korean New Women (*shin yōsōng*) of the time. Furthermore, they confirmed that numerous Korean male writers of that time explored modern womanhood by adapting the motif of leaving home.¹³ Hyaewool Choi's 2012 study, which encompasses editorials, literary adaptations, and public scandals surrounding New Women and *A Doll's House*, proffers so far the most extensive insight into the Korean reception of the drama in the English-speaking scholarship with attention to feminism.¹⁴

As a symbolic work of realist drama and women's liberation, *A Doll's House* was discussed throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Korea not by women, who remained mostly silent, but primarily by male intellectuals.¹⁵ Of the more than one hundred texts mentioning Ibsen or Nora which I consulted for this study, only five of them were written by women: Kim Wōnju, Na Hyesōk, Kang Ch'ilsōng, Kim Ryōsun, and Kang P'yōngguk. Concurrently, treatises, newspaper columns, and literary adaptations related to *A Doll's House* often addressed Korean women as passive readers.¹⁶ Korean literary scholar Ryu Chinhūi summarizes the gendered communication of the play as a process that reestablished women as the Other during the colonial era in Korea.¹⁷

Chapter 5 expands on the feminist criticisms of the public discourse surrounding colonial Korean women's reception of *A Doll's House*. My approach distinguishes itself from prior studies by bringing literary adaptations of *A Doll's House* closer to non-fictional texts on the drama, such as columns and newspaper articles. I analyze them together using the Foucauldian concept of the commentary to explore how these texts contributed to the formation and limitation of Korean women's readership and spectatorship.¹⁸ Foucault counts commentaries as one of the procedures that "ward off its [a discourse's] powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance every event, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality."¹⁹ Foucault explains that such procedures emerged because discourse is not only an expression of desire but also a desired object that evokes power struggles:

There is nothing surprising about that, since, as psychoanalysis has shown, discourse is not simply that which manifests or hides desire—it is also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates

13 See Yi, "Translation of Ibsen"; Ryu Chinhūi, "Han'guk ūi Ipsen Suyong kwa Noraijūm ūi Yōk'ak [The Reception of Ibsen and Significance of 'Noraism' in 1920, 30's Korea]," *Na Hyesōk Yōn'gu* 2 (2013), 192–222.

14 Choi, "Debating Korean New Women."

15 Ryu, "Reception of Ibsen," 206.

16 Yi, "Translation of Ibsen," 59–60.

17 Ryu, "Reception of Ibsen," 217.

18 I would like to express my gratitude to Stephan Packard for introducing me to this concept.

19 Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," trans. Ian McLeod, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1970]1981), 51–78; see 52.

struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.²⁰

Foucault insists that commentaries neither endlessly create new discourses about the primary text nor selflessly recite the primary text, although they might seem to do so. Instead, commentaries manifest their interpretations and even things that “never [have] been said” by “tirelessly repeat[ing]” them while wrongfully claiming that these things were “silently articulated ‘beyond’” the written words of the primary text.²¹ As a result, commentaries construct seemingly new discourse but concurrently restrict what can be said about the primary text. Foucault wrote:

Commentary exercises the chance element of discourse by giving it its due; it allows us to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is this text itself which is said, and in a sense completed. The open multiplicity, the element of chance, are transferred, by the principle of commentary, from what might risk being said, on to the number, the form, the mask, and the circumstances of the repetition. The new thing here lies not in what is said but in the event of its return.²²

Public discussions of *A Doll's House* and literary creations inspired by this piece in colonial Korea included interpretations of the play and even instructions on how particularly Korean women should understand the drama. By reading these texts as commentaries in the Foucauldian sense, I demonstrate the formative process of the discourse about women's emancipation and spectatorship in Korea during the 1920s and 1930s which encompasses various genres of texts. Through a series of analyses, chapter 5 aims to understand how the cultural discourse possibly preconditioned women's understanding of *A Doll's House* in the 1920s and 1930s. Through the case of *A Doll's House*, this chapter elaborates on the ways in which female audiences and readers in colonial Korea experienced cultural creations closely related to their own lives was interceded by male voices, and how they were marginalized in social discussions related to this play. In addition, by introducing rare cases of women who expressed their own opinion on the play, this chapter pays closer attention to the traces of women's knowledge and political movements that are not captured in the mainstream public discourse. Through this analysis, chapter 5 will show that male intellectuals attempted to determine the position of women in the cultural discourse and that women evaded from such an attempt.

20 Foucault, “Order of Discourse,” 52–53.

21 *Ibid.*, 57–58.

22 *Ibid.*, 58.

5.1 *A Doll's House* in Colonial Korea

A Brief Trajectory of *A Doll's House*

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* premiered on December 21, 1879, at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark.²³ Shortly after the world premiere, the drama was translated and played in other countries and caused further debates. Particularly, Nora's departure at the end of the drama caused unease among contemporaries worldwide because Nora's decision to leave her house radically challenged the notion of motherhood of the time. Halvdan Koht, a contemporary witness, noted that "*A Doll's House* [...] exploded like a bomb into contemporary life [...] ending not in reconciliation, but in inexorable calamity, it pronounced a death sentence on accepted social ethics."²⁴

Conflicts surrounding *A Doll's House* paradoxically testify that patriarchy, which allocates women to the domestic realm as wives and mothers, had supra-regional power. The controversy surrounding Nora's decision went so far that the drama was only performed with a different ending in Germany 1880. The Flensburger Stadtstheater presented the play as early as February 6, 1880, with two alterations that curtailed the scenes of the protagonist's controversial decision. Following the name of the main character, the play's title was changed to *Nora*; furthermore, the ending was changed due to the public outcry concerning Nora's separation from Helmer.²⁵ Particularly, the actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, who played Nora, refused to follow the original ending, arguing that she would never leave her children.²⁶ Eventually, Ibsen had to provide the theater company with another ending "in which Nora does not leave the house but is forced by Helmer to the doorway of the children's bedroom; here a few lines are exchanged, Nora sinks down by the floor and the curtain falls."²⁷ Ibsen called the alteration "barbaric outrage."²⁸ In this altered version, Nora's last words symbolically showed women's struggle between the individualistic pursuit of self and the normative expectations of motherhood: "Oh, this is a sin against myself, but I cannot leave them!"²⁹ Likewise, the 1883 American premiere concluded with a *happy ending*, while a similar alteration to the Australian premiere could

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- 23 Julie Holledge, Jonathan Bollen, Frode Helland, and Joanne Tompkins, *A Global Doll's House: Ibsen and Distant Visions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.
- 24 Halvdan Koht, *The Life of Ibsen, Volume 2* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), 152, as cited in Michael Meyer, "An Introduction to *A Doll's House*" in Henrik Ibsen, *Ibsen Plays: Two*, trans. Meyer (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 11–21; see 16–17.
- 25 Wilhelm Friese, "Einleitung," in *Ibsen auf der deutschen Bühne: Texte zur Rezeption. Ausgewählt*, ed. Friese (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976), VII–XXIV; see XIII.
- 26 Meyer, "Introduction," 18.
- 27 *Ibid.* The public of Munich could watch the original ending on March 3, 1880, at Münchener Hoftheater. See *ibid.*, 19.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 29 Carolyn Joy Lenske, "An Ibsen Timeline," in *Words on Play: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production, A Doll's House* (San Francisco: American Conservatory Theater, 2004), 22–27; refer to 25.

only be hindered by the actress Janet Achurch, who toured the world playing Nora and refused the alternative ending.³⁰

Nora and other mother figures in Ibsen's dramas "had loud echoes in British novels of the period, with New Womanish heroines [...] all experiencing motherhood as a fraught and finally unrewarding phase of their lives,"³¹ which broke with the conventional depiction of motherhood and questioned the myth of the maternal instinct. Even before poststructuralist feminist language was developed, the drama "sparked discussions on women's rights in public and private circles, coffee shops, and bourgeois salons" as it was a "powerful intervention in the existing social order."³² In the U.S., the critics and advocates of Nora exchanged heated arguments through newspapers and magazines. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* defamed Nora as a "freak," and the *Chicago Times* denounced the drama as "morbid, forced, repulsive" as the authentic script was played in the 1889–90 season.³³ Meanwhile, Annie Nathan Meyer (1867–1951), who founded the first women's college named Barnard College in New York City, espoused the drama. According to her, Ibsen's drama was "a clarion call to women to throw off the yoke of the Past, to arise, to put aside their worn[-]out ideals and to boldly assume the duties of the Present Age."³⁴

Unni Langås's 2006 poststructuralist feminist study of *A Doll's House* offers a critical analysis of the backlash against Nora's decision. Langås suggests that the drama is "an analysis of how gender and gender subordination is produced."³⁵ Adopting Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, Langås demonstrates that Nora "puts her own ideas, hopes, and illusions in conflict with the surrounding sanctions and restrictions"³⁶ by doing allegedly *unwomanly* things, such as taking a loan instead of her father and her husband and leaving her husband and three children behind. Her action invites spectators to consider gender identity "as one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures."³⁷ Concur-

30 See Marvin Carlson, "Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in America," in *Global Ibsen*, ed. Fischer-Lichte, Barbara Gronau, and Christel Weiler (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 39–52; see 39–40; Jacqueline Martin, "A Doll's House in the Antipodes," in *Global Ibsen*, 53–64; see 53–54.

31 Sally Ledger, "Ibsen, the New Woman and the Actress," in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-De-Siècle Feminisms*, eds. Angélique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 79–93; see 84.

32 Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Introduction," in *Global Ibsen*, 1–16; see 1–2.

33 *New York Dramatic Mirror*, January 18, 1890; *Chicago Times*, March 6, 1890, as cited in Carlson, "Ibsen's *Doll's House*," 40.

34 "Ibsen's Attitude Toward Women," *The Critic* 16 (1890), 132, as cited in Carlson, "Ibsen's *Doll's House*," 40.

35 Unni Langås, "What Did Nora Do? Thinking Gender with *A Doll's House*," *Ibsen Studies* 5, no. 2 (2006), 148–71; see 148.

36 Langås, "What Did Nora Do?" 157. Judith Butler summarizes gender performativity as follows: "In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration." "Preface (1999)," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), vii–xxvi; see xiv–xv.

37 Butler, "Preface (1999), xv.

rently, Langås observes that Nora “blurs any distinction between a supposed player and an authentic self”³⁸ as sometimes she seems to *believe* in the roles she plays. According to Langås, sensing that gender identity can be performed through verbal and corporeal acts is one possible reason behind viewers’ feelings of unease because it unsettles the belief that the gender binary and heteronormative roles might be *natural*. Langås summarizes: “Consequently, the performative aesthetics of *A Doll's House* may be read as a highly developed deconstruction of the distinction between natural and artificial behavior, between a gendered essence and a way of playing.”³⁹

With over 1,000 productions worldwide between the world premiere in 1879 and 1946, *A Doll's House* emerged as a momentous drama, embodying budding feminism around the globe.⁴⁰ East Asia witnessed the scandalous last scene of the play as well: the Ibsenian play premiered in 1911 in Japan, in 1914 in China, and in 1925 in colonial Korea.⁴¹ As the original text of an influential Japanese translation, William Archer’s 1889 English translation played a crucial part in the East Asian reception of the drama. In Japan, Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918), who studied Western drama, literature, and aesthetics at Oxford and Berlin, translated the drama based on Archer’s version and directed the Japanese premiere in 1911.⁴²

The boom that the Japanese production created motivated Chinese and Korean students in Japan, including Lu Jingrou and Hyōn Ch’ōl, to direct *A Doll's House* in China (1914) and Korea (1925).⁴³ In both countries, the drama was received as a text of social reform. In China, Nora was considered “as an archetype for new women [] and new people” and “became closely aligned with New Culture enlightenment”⁴⁴ during the 1919 May Fourth period. Similarly, the Korean reception of the drama was situated in the reform discourse after the 1919 March First Movement.⁴⁵

Recasting Gender: *A Doll's House* and the Japanese New Theater

A Doll's House was introduced to Japan first through a partial translation in 1893. Takayasu Gekkō translated excerpts from the drama and *An Enemy of the People*, published under

38 Langås, “What Did Nora Do?” 164.

39 Ibid.

40 For the keyword search see IbsenStage, <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/search>.

41 Ozasa Yoshio, *Ibbon Hyōndae Yōngūksa: Myōngch’i, Taejōng P’yōn* [History of the Modern Theater in Japan: Meiji and Taishō Era], trans. Myōng Chinsuk, Yi Hyejōng, and Pak T’aegyū (Seoul: Yōngūk kwa In’gan, [1985]2012), 58; Chengzhou He, “Interculturalism in the Theatre and Chinese Performances of Ibsen,” *Ibsen Studies* 8, no. 2 (2009), 118–35; see 118. See also Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 19.

42 Mitsuya Mori, “Women’s Issues and a New Art of Acting: *A Doll's House* in Japan,” in *Global Ibsen*, 75–88; see 79.

43 Deng Qian, “Nora ūi Homyōng kwa Kach’ul ūi Pyōnjūngbōp: Han’guk kwa Chungguk esō ūi Inhyōng ūi Chip Pōnyōk kwa Chōngjōnhwa [The Interpellation of Nora, the Dialectic of Running Away: A Comparative Study on the Translations of *A Doll's House* in Korea and China],” *Minjok Munhaksa Yōngū* 58 (2015), 43.

44 Chi Limin, *Modern Selfhood in Translation: A Study of Progressive Translation Practices in China (1890s-1920s)* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018), 139.

45 The Korean reception of the drama is discussed in detail in chapter 5.2, 5.4, and 5.5.

the title *Ibsen's Social Plays* (*Ibsen Saku Shakai Geki*) without drawing much attention.⁴⁶ In 1901, both dramas were translated again by Takayasu and republished, this time in full length.⁴⁷ His translation of *A Doll's House* was based on an English version.⁴⁸ However, the drama did not cause a sensation until the Literary Society played it on September 22, 1911, under the direction of Shimamura Hōgetsu.⁴⁹ Shimamura was one of the Western-oriented intellectuals in Japan who gathered around Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), an influential Japanese thinker. Under his guidance, the Literary Society endeavored to establish a new form of theater called *shingeki*, literally “New Theater.” Theater scholar Ayako Kano summarizes the aims of *shingeki* as follows:

New Theater involved new ideas and practices such as faithful adherence to the playwright's intentions, well-trained interpreters shunning commercial success and placing themselves at the service of the play, and spectators regarding the performance as a serious text to be read and appreciated without sexual involvement with the performers.⁵⁰

A Doll's House premiered at a minor stage installed in Tsubouchi's garden between September 22 and 24, 1911, and debuted on the professional stage of the Imperial Theater in November 1911.⁵¹ Kano argues that the premiere of *A Doll's House* “marked a decisive step for New Theater itself”⁵² concerning three aspects: its successful performance proved Japanese theater's ability to adopt European modern theaters; it presented the first actress trained in European acting techniques; furthermore, it had a lasting impact on the feminist movement in Japan.⁵³ In particular, Matsui Sumako (1886–1919), the actress who played Nora, embodied the theatrical and social innovation theater reformers wanted to achieve as the first actress trained in the European acting style in Japan.⁵⁴ Until the Metropolitan Police Office allowed mixed-gender plays in August 1891, the 1629 ban on women's acting in plays still had a hold on the Japanese stage.⁵⁵ In *kabuki* and *shimpa* plays, female roles were principally played by *onnagatas*, female impersonators.⁵⁶ However, ever since Toyama Masakazu (1848–1900) and Suematsu Kenchō (1855–1920) separately called for the abolition of *onnagata* in 1886 to establish a Western-oriented modern theater, the appearance of an actress was considered to be a significant step to

46 Reiko Abe Auestad, “Ibsen's Individualism in Japan: John Gabriel Borkman and Ōgai Mori's *Seinen* (Youth, 1910),” *Ibsen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2006), 44–67; see 45 and 63.

47 Auestad, “Ibsen's Individualism,” 45.

48 Jens-Morten Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage 1876-1918: A Quantative Study* (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2018) 138 (see note 186).

49 Mori, “Women's issues,” 79.

50 Ayako Kano, *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theater, Gender, and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 13.

51 See Mori, “Women's Issues,” 79.

52 Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 184.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*, 63.

55 According to Ozasa, there were a few female actors in *kabuki* despite the ban, such as Ichikawa Kumehachi. See Ozasa, *Modern Theater: Meiji and Taishō*, 37–38.

56 See Mori, “Women's Issues,” 77–78.

improving Japanese theater.⁵⁷ In the years that followed, Japanese audiences witnessed the emergence of actresses such as Chitose Beiha in *shimpa* plays.⁵⁸ They were (former) *geisha* women trained in traditional music and dance.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Matsui Sumako was neither *geisha* nor trained by *kabuki* experts but a married woman and homemaker. She decided to learn realistic acting through the Literary Society's two-year acting course, which encompassed textual expositions of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in English. Eventually, her choice to become an actress led to the end of her marriage, as she could not fulfill the conventional expectations as a wife.⁶⁰ In this sense, Matsui's biography overlapped with Nora's.

People who used to watch *kabuki* and *shimpa* were deeply impressed by *shingeki*'s realistic acting style. An episode shared by a theater critic captured the moment where the realistic acting style, unfamiliar to most audiences of the time, became an element for the educated population to distinguish themselves, mainly because of its alienness. The critic's coachman asked him:

"But that wasn't like theater. As if we were watching people in real life. When they played the scene where the woman would depart, they did it as if they were really parting. You enjoyed it?"

"I did."

"Do you intellectuals want to see that kind of theater, paying so much money?"

"Yes, I do, I must."

"I don't understand why that was good."

"It was good to see actors as if they were living persons."

"I see. Then, I will say nothing more."⁶¹

This conversation reveals that some intellectuals began to embrace this new way of acting and to distinguish their taste from people whose notion of theater was closely tied to *kabuki* or *shimpa* acting styles. Notably, advocates of *shingeki* rejected *kabuki* theater. *Shimpa* (new school), which also aimed to overcome *kabuki* before *shingeki*, was nevertheless deeply influenced by *kabuki*.⁶² However, establishing different theater aesthetics from *kabuki* was a difficult task due to a matter of convenience: *kabuki* was already well-established with a rich repertoire and a pool of actors to draw from. Thus, young theater-makers were often dependent on the human networks of the *kabuki* world. Some *shimpa* and *shingeki* makers could not help but cast *kabuki* actors or train the aspiring actors under the guidance of *kabuki* experts. However, with Matsui, the Literary Society drew a

57 See Sugai Yukio, *Kūndae Ibon Yōn'gūk Nonjaengsa* [*The History of Modern Japanese Theater Controversies*], trans. Sō Yōnho and Pak Yōngsan (Seoul: Yōn'gūk kwa In'gan, [1979]2003), 9–17.

58 Ozasa, *Modern Theater: Meiji and Taishō*, 38.

59 Mori, "Women's Issues," 78.

60 Ibid.; Ozasa, *Modern Theater: Meiji and Taishō*, 54–55.

61 Kawamura Hanabishi, "Shienjo to *Ningyo-no-je* [The Private Stage and *A Doll's House*]," *Kabuki* (November 1911), 39–40, as trans. and cited in Mori, "Women's Issues," 83.

62 The description of *shingeki* in this paragraph is based on Ozasa, *Modern Theater: Meiji and Taishō*, 38–39.

clear line between its understanding of realistic drama and the styles prevalent in previous Japanese theaters.

After Matsui's impressive debut, intellectuals began connecting the realistic aesthetic of *shingeki* and actresses' assigned biological sex, and "acting like a woman" [became] contested territory."⁶³ The female writer Tamura Toshiko (1884–1945) commented:

No matter how much these ancient *onnagata* suffered for the sake of their art, it's not like they left us any special artistic techniques to portray women on stage. Just by wearing female wigs they were made into beautiful women, roughly imitated simple expressions of women's grief, anger, joy, and left us these as *patterns*. That's all.⁶⁴

In the beginning, audiences accepted both *onnagata* and actresses as female characters while allocating them to different acting styles. As a theater magazine asked twelve renowned writers about their opinion on who was better at playing a female part, ten of them stated that "they had no preference for one over the other; *onnagatas* were better for *kabuki*, an actress better for a modern play."⁶⁵ However, as Kano's study found, "the rise of the actress, then, brought with it a marginalization of the *onnagata*" while actresses could claim the New Theater stages for their own.⁶⁶ In this sense, Kano concludes that "the emergence of the actress and the marginalization of *onnagata* in modern Japan was both a liberating and repressive phenomenon."⁶⁷

It is notable that in Japan, the casting of actresses for female roles and realistic theater aesthetics landed with the premiere of *A Doll's House*, which challenged the very notion of naturalness of gender identity, whose performativity was already epitomized by *onnagata*. A possible explanation is that the actress herself on stage, mostly unforeseen, signified the emergence of new societal roles for women. Tamura asserted that actors trained in *kabuki* would not have access to the mentality of New Women, strengthening her claim that the role of a New Woman must be played by an actress who enjoyed a Western education: "The role of an awakened woman [*jigaku shita onna*], or a woman with a modern education and a scientifically developed brain, would not be comprehensible to male actors raised in the Japanese *kabuki* theater."⁶⁸

Based on Sugita Hisajo (1890–1946)'s 1922 haiku, Japanese theater scholar Mitsuya Mori underlines that since the premiere, Nora became a referential figure for Japanese women to reflect on their own social status and to speak out about their understanding of women's roles:

63 Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 18.

64 Tamura Toshiko, "Ne Hanashi ["Ne" Story]," *Engei Gahō* (January 1912), 144, as trans. and cited in Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 18. It should be noted that Tamura's understanding of *onnagata* is based on gender binary, sidelining the possibility that some *onnagata* actors did not identify themselves as men.

65 Mori, "Women's Issues," 81.

66 Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 8.

67 Ibid.

68 Tamura, "'Ne' Story," 144. Here, too, Tamura assumed that all *onnagata* were cisgender men.

Darning a pair of socks
 As a teacher's wife
 I have no courage to be a Nora.⁶⁹

The premiere of *A Doll's House* functioned as a vehicle for the feminist movement in Japan. The women's group Seitōsha (The Bluestockings) initiated the feminist discussion by consistently discussing the drama in their magazine *Seitō*.⁷⁰ As Kano sums up, "the label 'New Women' was given to the group soon after the journals' founding [in 1911], when tabloid journalists gleefully reported that these women engaged in strikingly unfeminine behavior,"⁷¹ such as visiting brothels and drinking alcohol. Otake Kōkichi, a painter who "dressed like a man,"⁷² contributed to the group's reputation as a New Women (*atarashi onna*)'s gathering, too. After watching the Literary Society's *A Doll's House* twice and even interviewing Matsui in Osaka, she praised Nora and the actress in her contribution to *Seitō*'s May 1912 issue. Otake wrote:

Here is a woman who uses her being a woman as a climbing rope, who grounds her art in the strength of being a woman, and attempts thence to build up the richness of her artistry and the natural skill that overflows from the essence of being a woman [...]. I cannot help but be impressed that a woman would start from her own sex [*jiko no sei*] and venture on this journey.⁷³

However, other women of Seitōsha showed ambivalent or critical reactions towards Nora and Matsui's performance. For instance, Ueno Yōko blamed Nora for her selfishness as she might have believed "that she can sacrifice everyone else in order to attain her own individual goal,"⁷⁴ although she was in favor of Nora's pursuit of individual awareness as such. Hiratsuka Raichō, the group's leader, disapproved of Nora's choice and Matsui's acting with a harsher tone. Leaning towards the Buddhist ideal of "nullifying oneself and achieving religious enlightenment,"⁷⁵ she criticized Nora for misunderstanding emancipation and self-centeredness. She concluded her letter addressed to Nora as follows: "A woman's life should be a high, beautiful music of religion, a piece of poem expressing truth. Mrs. Nora, if you don't come to realize this, if you don't come to grasp this miracle, take a pistol or poison. Good-bye."⁷⁶ Disagreeing with Nora, Hiratsuka found "nothing to touch the heart"⁷⁷ in Matsui's performance either. Despite the diverse receptions, Matsui

69 As cited in Mori, "Women's Issues," 82–83.

70 Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 194. The text analyses of *Seitō* draw upon Kano's extensive investigations and translations of the texts from Japanese to English. See Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 194–99.

71 *Ibid.*, 127.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Otake Kōkichi, "Akai Tobira no Ie yori [From the house of red doors]," *Seitō* 2, no. 5 (May 1912), 32–53; the quote is from 40, as trans. and cited in Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 199.

74 Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 197.

75 Mori, "Women's Issues," 80.

76 Hiratsuka Raichō, "Nora San he [To Mrs. Nora]," *Seitō* 2, 133–41; quote from page 141, as cited in Mori, "Women's Issues," 80.

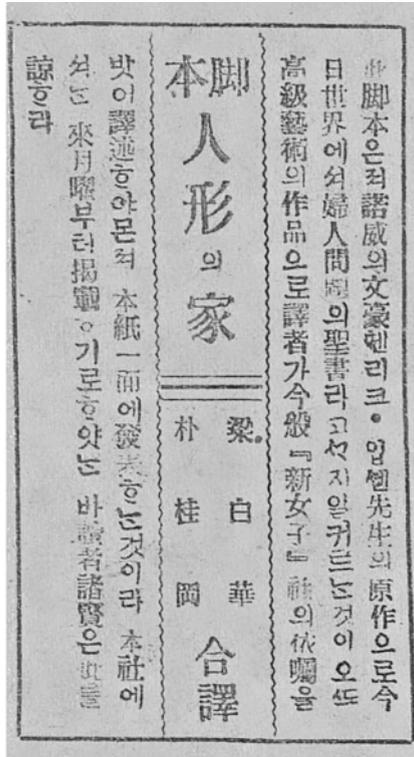
77 Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi Josei wa Taiyō de Atta 2 [In ancient times woman was the sun 2]* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1971), 350, as cited in: Kano, *Acting Like Woman*, 198.

and her debut role, Nora, marked an aesthetic innovation in the Japanese theater scene, challenging established gender roles by venturing into a territory that had long been restricted for women.

The Korean Reception of *A Doll's House*

Characteristic to the Korean discourse of *A Doll's House* during the colonial era is its rather loose connection to the theatrical sphere since Nora and the play were more widely known via texts in the 1920s and 1930s than performances. As discussed later in chapter 5.3, *A Doll's House* and Nora were popular tropes that sparked heated discussions on women's liberation and gave rise to further literary productions. Before analyzing the discourse that evolved around the drama, a brief overview of stage productions in colonial Korea will help elucidate the tension lying beneath Korean texts on the play's explosive potential and commentaries aiming to form women's spectatorship.

Figure 13: An announcement of the serialization of *A Doll's House*.



Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, January 22, 1921, 1. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

The first Korean translation of *A Doll's House* was undertaken by Kim Wŏnju (1896–1971), the feminist activist, and Yang Kŏnsik, a scholar of Chinese literature.⁷⁸ While studying in Tokyo between 1915 and 1918, Kim became aware of the Japanese feminist group Seitō.⁷⁹ Upon her return to Korea, she founded a women's organization and named it Ch'ŏngt'ap (Bluestocking), inspired by Seitō.⁸⁰ In cooperation with Korean New Women such as Na Hyesŏk, Kim Hwalran, and male intellectuals including Yang and Yi Noik, she published the Korean women's magazine *Shin Yŏja* (*New Women*) in 1920.⁸¹ Kim Wŏnju initially commissioned Yang to translate the drama into the Korean language for her magazine.⁸² Furthermore, she planned to produce the play for Korean audiences and play Nora's part herself.⁸³ However, her plan was canceled as the colonial censorship banned *Shin Yŏja* due to a short story that Kim wrote for the magazine in June 1920.⁸⁴ The colonial censors problematized Kim's short fiction *The Life of a Young Widow* (*Ch'ŏngsang ūi Saenghwal*) for presenting a woman who defied the idealized image of a Wise Mother and Good Wife.⁸⁵ It told the story of a young woman who feels attracted to her dead husband's distant relative.⁸⁶

For this reason, the first Korean translation of *A Doll's House* was serially published in the daily newspaper *Maeil Shinbo* between January 25, 1921, and April 3, 1921, as a co-translation by Yang and Pak Kyegang under the Korean title *Inhyŏng ūi Ka* (*A Doll's House*).⁸⁷ Notably, the colonial government allowed the publication of the drama although it had already caused controversies in Japan.⁸⁸ The newspaper even introduced *A Doll's House* as “the bible of the ‘woman question (*puin munje*)’ in the world,”⁸⁹ placing the drama in the context of women's emancipatory movements in other countries of the time. The fact that the daily newspaper printed *A Doll's House* on the front page indicates that the publication of the drama itself was newsworthy to contemporaries.⁹⁰ As discussed in the rest of chapter 5, the drama, which appeared in at least two different translations during the colonial era, initiated lively discussions through newspapers and magazines.

78 Sŏ Chŏngja, “Iryŏp Kim Wŏnju Shin Yŏja Kŭ ūi Sasang Tashi Ikki [Re-reading Kim Wŏnju's *Shin Yŏja* and Her Thoughts],” *Na Hyesŏk Yŏn'gu* 2 (2013), 33–73; refer to 51.

79 Sŏ, “Re-reading Kim Wŏnju,” 41.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 “Doll's House,” MS, January 22, 1921, 1.

83 Choi, “Debating Korean New Woman,” 64.

84 Sŏ, “Re-reading Kim Wŏnju,” 43–44.

85 Ibid., 44.

86 Ibid.

87 Choi, “Debating Korean New Woman,” 61. Yang's translation was published under the title *Nora* by Yŏngch'ang Sŏgwan in 1922.

88 For the Japanese debates related to *A Doll's House* see Dina Lowy, “Nora and the ‘New Woman’: Visions of Gender and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 26 (2004), 75–97.

89 MS, January 22 and 23, 1921, 1.

90 See Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 17.

Table 4: Korean productions of *A Doll's House* during the colonial era.

Date	Venue	Group	Notes
Sept. 1925	Ch'öndogyo Hall, Seoul	Chosön Actors' School (Chosön Paeu Hakkyo)	Korean premiere of the drama
Oct. 21, 1926	YMCA, Seoul	Chosön Christian College (Yön-hüi Ch'önmun Hakkyo)	Celebration of the third anniversary of the college's student council
May 11–12, 1929	Ch'öndogyo Hall, Seoul	–	Presented by the publishing company Chungsongsa
April 18–19, 1934	Public Hall, Seoul	Dramatic Arts Research Group (Kük Yesul Yönguhoe)	The last official production of <i>A Doll's House</i> in Colonial Korea

Source: Pak, "Ibsen and Colony", 19; *Maeil Shinbo*, *Dong-A Ilbo*, and *Chosön Ilbo*.

Meanwhile, *A Doll's House* did not leave a notable trace as a stage production during the colonial era, which poses a striking contrast to the often-heated debate over its protagonist and the drama's contribution to the development of Korean theater.⁹¹ The newspapers, popular magazines, and literary texts leave the impression that the stage performances received little attention from the public, or that the reviews fell afoul of the colonial censors—none of these hypotheses is verifiable. Thereby, performing *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea was entangled with efforts to reform Korean theater, including influences of *shinpa*, while contending with the challenges posed by colonial censorship.

So far, four stage productions of *A Doll's House* are known to have been realized by Korean groups during the colonial era (see table 4). The premiere by students of Chosön Actors' School (Chosön Paeu Hakkyo) in September 1925 at Ch'öndogyo Hall in Seoul represents an endeavor to establish a Korean version of New Theater (*shin'gük*).⁹² Chosön Actors' School was the first educational institute in Korea dedicated to the realization of a new form of performance art.⁹³ Hyön Ch'öl, the founder of this school, was trained in

91 Except for the 1934 production by the Dramatic Arts Research Group (Kük Yesul Yönguhoe), there is hardly any trace of these performances. Consequently, the possibility of undocumented performances of *A Doll's House* cannot be ruled out. For instance, the novelist Shim Hun mentions having attended a performance of the play in Korea only once in the 1920s, featuring female students as actors ("Problem Drama of Ibsen 1," 2). Until now, however, no additional documentation of this production has emerged beyond his statement.

92 Yi, "Translation of Ibsen," 43. The film historian Yi Yöng'il's archive included a picture of the cast of *A Doll's House*, including Pok Hyesuk, which was posthumously published by the movie magazine *Cine 21* in 2001, http://m.cine21.com/news/view/?mag_id=2912. The same photograph, with a higher resolution, can be found in the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, serviced by the Academy of Korean Studies. See <https://mono.aks.ac.kr/s/media/dc/dc541b8a-ba79-45db-8067-81a61c3f0413.jpg?preset=orig>.

93 See Sung Meung-hyen, "Hyön Ch'öl üi Yöng'ük Iryök kwa Chosön Paeu Hakkyo (1924–26) Koch'al: P'osüt'ü K'olloniöl Pip'yöngjök Kwanjöm esö [Thoughts on Hyön Ch'öl's Career in Theater and

shingeki as Shimamura's student and was an actor in his theater company between 1913 and 1917.⁹⁴ He decided to train Korean women as actresses and cast them for female parts in the drama, echoing Shimamura's call for realistic plays. Pok Hyesuk, a former girl student who ran away from home to pursue an acting career, played the role of Nora in the Korean premiere of *A Doll's House*.⁹⁵ While her educational background and her rebellious decision to leave her parents' home behind bore certain similarities to Nora's character, potentially sparking public interest, no sensation happened after the premiere. In fact, there were already women who acted on stage in Korea. When Pok entered the actors' school in 1925, she already had been acting on Korean stages since 1921, too, so the audience was not surprised to see her again on the stage.⁹⁶

The second performance of *A Doll's House* by students of Chosŏn Christian College (Yŏnhŭi Chŏnmun Hakkyo), a renowned boys' school, on October 21, 1926, is an intriguing case that demonstrates the lasting impact of *shimp'a* theater, or determination of Korean students to perform this piece against all odds. Because there is a strong likelihood that the role of Nora was played by a male student. The play was a part of the third-anniversary celebration of the Chosŏn Christian College's student council on October 21, 1926.⁹⁷ This specific occasion suggests that the event was in line with students' theater (*haksaeŋg kŭk*) movement of the time, which had a political and cultural mission of edu-

'Chosŏn Actors' School (1924–26)': From the Perspective of Postcolonial Criticism," *Han'guk Yesul Yŏn'gu* 13 (2016), 245. The school provided a two-year program for theater- and film acting. Students took 14 courses in the first year, including "Overview of Art, Script Reading, History of Eastern Drama, History of Western Drama, History of Motion Picture, Overview of Fiction, Overview of Screenwriting, Overview of Stage Drama, Overview of Film Drama, Overview of Musical Drama, Facial Expression Gymnastics, Stage Drama Practice, Film Drama Practice, Lecture on Dramaturgy," and 23 courses in the second year, including "Introduction to Art, Stage Theater Acting, Film Theater Acting, Screenplay Studies, Facial Expression Psychology, Psychology of Mass, Stage Aesthetics, Film Aesthetics, Stage Drama Watching, Film Drama Watching, Introduction to Modern Drama, Script Reading, Facial Expression Gymnastics, Musical Drama, Korean Musical Drama, Korean Instrumental Music, Western Instrumental Music, Korean Dance, Western Dance, Makeup, Stage Drama Practice, Film Drama Practice, and Opera Practice" (see 262–63). However, Pok Hyesuk testified that she "didn't actually learn any skills" and that the school was disrupted by conflicts between the school's administrators. Pok left the school just over nine months after enrollment. See Pok Hyesuk. "Paeu Pok Hyesuk [The Actress Pok Hyesuk]." An Interview on April 7, 1967, in *Taedam, Han'guk Yŏn'gŭk Imyŏnsa: Kong'yŏn Yesul Che 1-Tae ūi Yesurindŭl* [The Conversation: Behind the Scenes of Korean Theater. The First-Generation Performing Artists], ed. National Research Institute of Cultural Properties (Taejŏn: Kungnip Munhwajae Yŏn'guso, 2006), 55–62.

94 See Sung, "Thoughts on Hyŏn Ch'ŏl," 245.

95 Yi, "Translation of Ibsen," 43 and Pok Hyesuk, "Pok Hyesuk [An Interview in 1976]," in *Yi Yŏng'il ūi Han'guk Yŏnghwasa rŭl wihan Chŭngŏnnok: Kim Sŏngch'un, Pok Hyesuk, Yi Kuyŏng P'yŏn* [Testimonies for the Korean Cinema History Collected by Yi Yŏng'il: Kim Sŏngch'un, Pok Hyesuk, and Yi Kuyŏng] (Seoul: Sodo, 2003), 61–174; see 109.

96 Pok Hyesuk began her career as an actress in a theater group in 1921, before entering the Chosŏn Actors' School. See Pok, "Interview 1976," 110–16.

97 "Yŏnhŭi Haksaeŋghoe Samju Ch'anglip Kinyŏm [Celebrating the Third Anniversary of Chosŏn Christian College's Student Council]," *DI*, October 21, 1926, 3.

cating the public and establishing an alternative theater culture.⁹⁸ While advancing their enlightenment-oriented agenda, these amateur groups did not always fully adhere to the requirements of the New Theater, as male students played women's parts as well.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the ban on a planned performance of *A Doll's House* in November 1926 reveals that the colonial government began considering the drama a potential problem for the regime. In aid of Kūnhwa Women's School, a three-day fundraising event was organized for November 19, 23, and 24, 1926, at the YMCA.¹⁰⁰ An advertisement in the daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* informed its readers that the show would present several plays, including *A Doll's House*, featuring popular actress Yi Wōlhwa in the leading role.¹⁰¹ However, the event was postponed because the colonial censors banned *A Doll's House* on short notice.¹⁰² Eventually, the event took place on December 1 and 2 with an alternative program.¹⁰³ The colonial government's ban on *A Doll's House* was closely related to the fear that educated young women would be inspired by Nora's choice and would revolt against the patriarchal family system and colonial rule. As a journalist who attended another charity event for Kūnhwa Women's School noted, female students literally "rushed to"¹⁰⁴ these events and took a large part of the audience. In an introductory essay on Ibsen, the novelist Shim Hun briefly mentioned in 1928 that the drama "is now forbidden by the authorities because it allegedly encourages the spirit of treason among women."¹⁰⁵ In other words, the colonial power understood Korean women's emancipation in close relation to Korea's liberation from Japanese rule. It is also possible that the colonial authority began questioning the performance of *A Doll's House* in this enlightenment-oriented setting, given that the Chosōn Christian School presented the play only about a month ago.

After a long hiatus, the third known production of the drama took place on May 11 and 12, 1929, to celebrate the launch of the monthly magazine *Chungsōng* (*The Voice of the Mass*).¹⁰⁶ A newspaper article indicates that organizers went through a long period of negotiation with the colonial authorities. The magazine had planned to stage the play in

98 Woo Sujin, *Han'guk Kūndaegŭk ūi Tong'yōkhak: Shingminjiki Yōngŭk kwa Sahoe, kūrigo Munhwa ūi Kyosōp* [The Dynamics of Korean Modern Drama: Negotiations of Theater, Society, and Culture in Colonial Korea] (Seoul: Somyōng Ch'ulp'an, 2020), 256–57.

99 For instance, Tong'uhoe, a students' group that toured through the Korean peninsula in the early 1920s, assigned male students to play female characters. See Ma Haesong, "Sōul ro Tora Kashin Hwanghyōng ege: Kwangju eso [To Brother Hwang Who Returned to Seoul, From Kwangju]," *DI*, July 29, 1921, 4.

100 "Kūnhwa Yōhakkyo ūi Ŭmak kwa Yōngŭk Taehoe [A Concert and Theater Plays of Kūnhwa Women's School]," *CI*, November 17, 1926, 3.

101 "Concert and Theater Plays," *CI*, November 17, 1926, 3.

102 "Kūnhwagyo Yōngŭkhoe [Theater Play of Kūnhwa Women's School]," *CI*, November 24, 1926, 2.

103 "Kūnhwa Huwōn Yōngŭk Sōnghwang [Great Success of Theater Plays in the Aid of Kūnhwa Women's School]," *DI*, December 3, 1926, 2.

104 Pongmyōn Kija, "Kūnhwa Yōhakkyo Huwōnhoe Chuch'oe Yōngŭk Taehoe Pip'angi [Critiques on the Kūnhwa Women's School Concert Presented by the Supporters' Association]," *Shin Yōsōng* (July 1926), 84.

105 Shim Hun, "Ipsen ūi Munjegŭk 1 [The Problem Drama of Ibsen 1]," *CI*, March 20, 1928, 2.

106 "Inhyōng ūi Ka Sangyōn: Chungsōngsa Tokcha Wian [The Play *A Doll's House*: Presented by *Chungsōng* Publishing Company for the Readers]," *DI*, May 3, 1929, 3.

January 1929, as the first issue was published, yet “it has been delayed due to various formalities and the day before yesterday, the censor granted the permission.”¹⁰⁷ Behind this production was Hyŏn Ch'öl, who had directed the Korean premiere of 1925 and had initiated the new magazine.¹⁰⁸ Notably, the *Chosun Ilbo* introduced the drama as “a world masterpiece that calls for women's liberation” and cited a publisher who claimed that “this play will become extremely popular with the general public because it is a drama of social problems.”¹⁰⁹ While further reports or reviews are missing, it is likely that the political aspect of the play appealed to Korean audiences.

The Dramatic Arts Research Group's 1934 performance in Seoul was the fourth known and last production of *A Doll's House* during the colonial era. Nora's part was played by Kim Pokchin, a nursery teacher, author of children's literature, and actress of the group.¹¹⁰ The performance left some traces, including an LP record of the last dialogue between Nora and Helmer, two photographs of the performance, and a few reviews.¹¹¹ The performance was initially scheduled for April 12 and 13, but the Government-General postponed it due to concerns about its impact on society.¹¹² To avoid the ban, the company had to limit the number of spectators by making them pre-register as so-called “viewer members” and agree with the authorities that the drama would never be played again in Korea.¹¹³ Literary scholar Yi Sünghŭi explains that from the viewpoint of Japanese colonial politics, which sought to consolidate patriarchal fascist authority, individualist or liberal plays like *A Doll's House* had to be strictly controlled just like socialist works.¹¹⁴ Concurrently, the fact that the colonial authorities allowed the performance instead of banning it altogether exemplifies the arbitrariness of colonial rule that creates exceptions, which empower the colonial ruler's arbitrariness further.¹¹⁵

While Hyŏn Ch'öl, trained at the Literary Society, apparently followed Shimamura's example and attempted to introduce realist drama in Korea, colonial Korean discourses

107 “*Doll's House* by *Chungsŏng*,” *DI*, May 3, 1929, 3.

108 “*Chungsŏng Palgan Chunbi* [Preparation for *Chungsŏng*],” *DI*, December 1, 1928, 2.

109 “*Chungsŏngsa Chuch'oe Nora Kük Sang'yŏn* [*Chungsŏng's* Publishing Company Presents the Nora Drama],” *CI*, May 4, 1929, 3.

110 Chŏng Insŏb, *Kim Pokchin, Kiŏk ūi Pokkak* [Reinstating the Memories of Kim Pokchin] (Seoul: Kyŏng'in Munhwasa, 2014), 44–45. I became aware of Kim Pokchin, who has been forgotten in the Korean theater historiography, through Professor Kim Pokgi, who introduced me to her grandson and the author of her biography. My gratitude to both scholars who shared their time and stories with me in Seoul 2018.

111 The Dramatic Arts Research Group, “Inhyŏng ūi Ka [A Doll's House],” 1934, track 3 on *K'olŏmbia Yusŏnggi Wŏnban* (13) *Kük Yesul Yŏn'guhoe: 1934-nyŏn Kū Hae I Ttang ūi Yŏn'gŭk* [Gramophone Record by Columbia (13) The Dramatic Arts Research Group: The Korean Drama of 1934], LGM, 1996. For a picture of the Dramatic Arts Research Group's production of *A Doll's House* see “*Kük Yesul Yŏn'guhoe*,” *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (<https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0007366>). On April 19, 1934, the *Dong-A Ilbo* reported on this production, featuring a picture of the stage as viewed from the audience. See figure 17.

112 “*Nora ūi Chosŏn Sang'yŏn ūn Ibŏn i Ch'oehu Mudae* [This Is the Last Performance of *Nora* in Korea],” *DI*, April 12, 1934, 3.

113 “Last Performance of *Nora*,” *DI*, April 12, 1934, 3.

114 Yi, “Translation of Ibsen,” 49.

115 Stoler and McGranahan, “Introduction,” 8.

and practices related to *A Doll's House* had specific aspects that these cannot simply be reduced to the transplantation and repetition of the culture of *advanced* societies.¹¹⁶ Regarding the Nora-phenomenon of colonial Korea as merely a delayed repetition or imitation of the controversy in the West and Japan poses the risk of reproducing the historicism that serves colonialism, as Chakrabarty pointed out. Chakrabarty argues that assuming a specific social phenomenon might have occurred “first in Europe, then elsewhere” posited “historical time as a measure of the cultural distance (at least in institutional development) that is assumed to exist between the West and the non-West,” and that it “legitimated the idea of civilization.”¹¹⁷

Furthermore, it should be noted that while Hyōn, too, sought to remove *shinpa* elements from the Korean stage as his teacher tried to take distance from *shimpa* in Japan, his venture was a critical engagement with the colonial cultural politics supported by the Government-General during the 1910s. In this sense, the Korean reception of *A Doll's House* can be better understood as a case of transculturation, “whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”¹¹⁸ Because, as Korean commentaries on the Norwegian drama will demonstrate later in this chapter, colonial Korean tried to “determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for.”¹¹⁹ Also in this regard, the Korean reception and discourse of *A Doll's House* warrant a nuanced reading particularly in relation to colonial politics—even if, or precisely because, colonized Koreans of that time internalized the colonial and imperial narrative of modernization to a certain degree.

5.2 Affirmative Commentaries: *A Doll's House* as a Pedagogical Play

Individualism for National Independence

Korean literary scholar Kim Miji explains that during the colonial era, individualism (*kaein chuūi*) was often considered more relevant than feminism in the Korean reception of *A Doll's House* during the 1920s.¹²⁰ In fact, most affirmative commentators of *A Doll's House* kept silent or even rejected Nora's decision to leave her husband and children. Even the liberal and favorable commentaries of the drama sidelined criticisms of marriage as an oppressive system for women and eventually made it difficult for women to actively express their agreement with Nora's choice. Meanwhile, many commentators chose to focus on Nora's individualist declaration that she was above all a human being. What

116 Sung, “Thoughts on Hyōn Ch'öl,” 245.

117 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 7.

118 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991), 36.

119 Pratt, “Arts of Contact Zone,” 36.

120 Kim Miji, “Inhyōng ūi Chip Nora ūi Suyong Pangsik kwa Sosōljōk Pyōnju Yangsang: 1920–30-nyōndae Sosōl kwa Pyōngmun e Wōnyong toen Nora ūi Ūimi rŭl Chungsim ūro [Introduction and Variation of Nora from *A Doll's House*: Focusing on Nora's Meaning in Korean Literary Works of the 1920–30s],” *Han'guk Hyōndae Munhak Yōn'gu* 14 (2003), 173–97; refer to 177–79.

precisely did the Korean intellectuals understand by “individualism,” and how was it related to other readings of *A Doll's House*, particularly the feminist one?

Until the early 1920s, individualism was rarely discussed in the Korean media. If it did appear, it was assessed negatively. For instance, an anonymous author explained in a 1908 treatise about the modern government system that individualism hindered the functioning of the modern state by prioritizing personal needs over the state's right to intervene in people's lives.¹²¹ Another author, a Korean student in Japan, depicted individualism as a kind of decadence that would deprive younger generations—who should contribute to the nation's development into a competitive state—of their zeal for self-improvement. Therefore, he urged other students abroad to avoid becoming individualists.¹²² In both examples, individualism was seen as contradicting the concept of the state and the nation.

Individualism emerged as an essential idea in the social reform discourse in colonial Korea in the early 1920s. The historical sociologist Shin Gi-wook explained:

Many Korean leaders, especially those engaged in the early Patriotic Enlightenment movement, were fascinated with the concept of the individual in sharp contrast to the traditional conception of the individual seen only as a member of a collective. They identified the strong collective orientation of traditional Korean society as a source of stagnation and criticized the Confucian emphasis on filial piety, social harmony, the family system, and formalism for its role in repressing individual talent and initiative.¹²³

In the context of colonial Korea during the 1920s, Korean intellectuals saw the necessity to curb individualism for the sake of the nation's emancipatory endeavor. In this effort, the monthly magazine *Kaebiyōk* played a significant role in disseminating an idea that might be called (albeit not without contradiction) nationalist individualism among Koreans. The magazine aimed to spread “the innovative energy of world reform”¹²⁴ to colonial Korea and give voice to the people after the 1919 March First Movement. *Kaebiyōk* grew quickly as the centerpiece of the critical discourse with record sales of up to 10,000 copies in its heyday, mainly thanks to its fearless criticisms of Japanese colonial power.¹²⁵

121 See “Kukka ūi Kaenyōm (sok) [The Concept of the State (continued)],” *Sōu* (May 1908), 15.

122 See Ch'oe Hosōn, “Isangjōk Inkyōk” [The Ideal Personality], *Taehaen Hūnghakpo* (February 1910), 21.

123 Shin Gi-wook, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 147. Original in English.

124 “Ch'anggansa [On the Occasion of the Magazine's Establishment],” *KB* (June 1920), 2.

125 Han Kihyōng, “Kaebiyōk ūi Chonggyojōk Isang Chuūi wa Kūndae Munhak ūi Sasanghwa [The Religious Idealism of the Beginning of the *World* and Ideologization of Modern Literature],” *Sanghō Hakpo* 17 (2006), 43. In his 2005 study, Han Kihyōng demonstrated that *Kaebiyōk* challenged the so-called Cultural Rule of the Government-General by criticizing its intensifying censorship. See “Munhwa Chōngch'igi Kōmyōl Ch'ieje wa Shingminji Midiō [The Censorship System and Colonial Media in Korea during the Cultural Rule Era of Japanese Imperialism],” *Taedong Munhwa Yōngu* 51 (2005), 69–105. Ch'oe Suil's 2006 study found that the Censorship Office confiscated *Kaebiyōk* 40 times, imposed a fine once, and suspended it once until it shut down the magazine in August 1926 after the publication of the 72nd issue. He counted more than 148 articles that were erased from the magazine. See “Kūndae Munhak ūi Chaesaengsan Hoero wa Kōmyōl: Kaebiyōk ūl Chungsim

Instead of rejecting individualism as sheer egocentrism or decadence, this reform-oriented magazine published a series of articles advocating individualism's potential to fuel the country's development. For instance, Oh T'aehwan's article "The Collision of New and Old Thoughts in Drastic Changes," which appeared in the first issue of *Kaeb'yŏk*, explained individualism as the key to the positive changes to colonial Korean society brought about by the young generation of the early 1920s.¹²⁶ He pointed out that individualism questioned the Confucian notion of human relations, particularly the filial piety of children, which had been the fundament of the social order during the Chosŏn Dynasty.¹²⁷ According to him, although Confucian ethics was aimed at social integration, at its core lay the younger generation's unconditional obedience to the existing order.¹²⁸ He declared it as an untimely mode of life because such obedience hindered the progress of Korean society amid the international competition:

The world has entered the era of competition where Western culture affects the East, and Eastern affairs become the problem of the West. The world created an atmosphere that encouraged each individual's free development. Thus, each society felt the necessity to develop individual genius, foster their ability to achieve something better than their ancestors. Today, it has become an age of progress, not an era of conservatism.¹²⁹

Additionally, he insisted that in a world where every country encouraged the younger generation to develop to its full potential, it was "self-evident" that "the [parents'] duty towards the offspring becomes more important than the [offspring's] duty towards the ancestor."¹³⁰

Despite this bold claim, Oh did not claim individual well-being as the highest priority, over the interests of the society or state. An individualist in the nationalist reform discourse did not refer to someone who advocated personal freedom in opposition to the state or other political unit, but a person separated from the family and subscribed to the state. In another article entitled "A Brief Explanation of Individualism," *Kaeb'yŏk* highlighted individualism as the driving force of Western civilization.¹³¹ The article argued that, as the French Revolution and American Independence—"the peak of individualism and the height of the liberal movement"—exemplified, individualism could pave the way to freedom of thought, will, press, religion, association, and profession as it had in the nineteenth century West.¹³²

ūro [Reproduction Circuit of Modern Literature and Censorship: Focused on the Magazine *Kaeb'yŏk*], *Taedong Munhwa Yŏn'gu* 53 (2006), 77–120; refer to 83–85.

126 Oh T'aehwan, "Kŭpp'yŏn haya Kanŭn Shin Ku Sasang ūi Ch'ungdol [The Collision of New and Old Thoughts in Drastic Changes], *KB* (June 1920), 81–82.

127 Oh, "New and Old," 81–82.

128 *Ibid.*, 83.

129 *Ibid.*, 83–84.

130 *Ibid.*, 84.

131 See Kojŏp, "Kaein Chuūi ūi Yagūi [A Brief Explanation of Individualism], *KB* (July 1920), 91–97. The author's identity is unclear. Kojŏp (孤蝶) is the Korean transcription of Baba Kochō (孤蝶) 's name.

132 Kojŏp, "Brief Explanation of Individualism," 92–93.

Kaeb'yŏk changed the negative connotation attached to individualism by highlighting its potential contribution to the nation's reform. Introducing individualism as the philosophical root of liberal movements and progress in the West and urging readers to embrace the idea, *Kaeb'yŏk* indicated that individualism could be a way to achieve independence from Japan.

Nora as a Figure of Anti-Colonial Individualism

Under these circumstances, several Korean treatises on *A Doll's House* foregrounded Nora as the symbol of the individual (*kaein*) or even as “the most appropriate example of individualism.”¹³³ To be clear, it was not the unique situation of colonial Korea that *A Doll's House* was received as a drama advocating individualism. Explaining the influences of Ibsen's plays on European societies, Arnold Hauser claimed that the issues of self-realization and individualism particularly appealed to the younger generation.¹³⁴ Likewise, Chinese intellectuals who gathered around the magazine *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) advocated Nora as the symbol of the so-called “sound individualism,” which supported individuals to express and develop their talents fully.¹³⁵ What distinguishes Korean comments on Nora that highlighted her as an individualist from others is how they sidelined the critique of patriarchy and misogyny inherent to Nora's words and actions. Commentaries written by prominent male authors such as Hyŏn Ch'ŏl, Kim Ŏk, and Yi Sangsu underline this tendency, whereas Yŏm Sangsŏp makes a rare case of affirmation by a male intellectual who praised Nora's decision for her pursuit of Self.

Hyŏn Ch'ŏl's treatise “Modern Literature and Ibsen,” published in the magazine *Kaeb'yŏk* three weeks before the Korean translation of *A Doll's House*, set the direction of the play's affirmative interpretation.¹³⁶ According to the director, Ibsen's dramas taught readers and audiences to lead a life based on self-awakening (*chagak saenghwal*) and to pursue the improvement of society.¹³⁷ His understanding of self-awakening harbored a political aspect in the colonial context because he emphasized the importance of free will and independence:

133 See Kim, “Variation of Nora”; Yi, “Translation of Ibsen”; Ryu, “Reception of Ibsen.” Quote is from Pak Yŏnghŭi, “*Kaeb'yŏk* Ch'anggan 4-chunyŏn Kinyŏmho Purok: Chuyo Surŏ Sajŏn [The Supplement to the Fourth Anniversary of *Kaeb'yŏk*'s Foundation: A Dictionary of Important Words],” *KB* (July 1924), 11.

134 “Ibsen owed his European fame to the social message of his plays, which was reducible, in the final analysis, to a single idea, the duty of the individual towards himself, the task of self-realization, the enforcement of one's own nature against the narrow-minded, stupid and out-of-date conventions of bourgeois society. It was his gospel of individualism, his glorification of the sovereign personality and his apotheosis of the creative life, that is, once again a more or less romantic ideal, that made the deepest impression on the younger generation.” See Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art 4: Naturalism, Impressionism, the Film Age, with an Introduction by Jonathan Harris* (London and New York: Routledge 1999), 138.

135 Deng, “Interpellation of Nora,” 62.

136 Hyŏn Ch'ŏl, “Kŭndae Munye wa Ipsen [Modern Literature and Ibsen],” *KB* (January 1921), 129–38.

137 Hyŏn, “Modern Literature and Ibsen,” 132 and 135.

You can find frequent usage of words such as Self-awakened [*chagakjök*] and Independent [*chajujök*] in Ibsen's dramas. [These words mean that] One determines not to be dragged down by others and not to subordinate oneself to others, but to deal with everything by one's free will. Ibsen's spirit tells us not to act under the influence of others' force like a machine but to carry out things on our own initiative and from the bottom of our hearts.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, Hyön Ch'öl claimed that true love (*chinjöng han yönae*) was the foundation of individual happiness and eventually the improvement of society as a whole. Thereby, he echoed the call of marriage reform: “[Through his works, Ibsen tells us that] Unless a man and a woman are united by true love, they cannot help ending their precious lives unhappily. The unhappiness of life! The unhappiness of society! He says that all these result from a shallow and frothy love.”¹³⁹ Summing up, Hyön brought together self-awakening and true love as a successive process towards social improvement. “In other words, he [Ibsen] asserts that society can enter the path of improvement only if we reach true love based on a self-awakened attitude. Ibsen's view is that this might be the only course of social improvement.”¹⁴⁰

Hyön Ch'öl analyzed Nora's character under the premise of social improvement while refuting the feminist aspect of her actions. He argued that “Ibsen did not instruct [women] to abandon their husbands, children, and home. What he meant was that life as an awakened human being could not be exchanged with anything else.”¹⁴¹ He excluded other readings—such as those that recognize Nora's final action as a protest against patriarchal family structure and women's restricted role in it—by saying that “Ibsen put great importance on society.”¹⁴² Likewise, he reduced Nora's disillusionment with her marriage to merely failed love due to Nora's lack of self-awakening, which could be recovered because she (and not her husband) reached a new consciousness.¹⁴³ He stated: “How much more misfortune there would have been if Nora had passed the phase without the self-awakening.”¹⁴⁴

While making commentaries on Ibsen's dramas, Hyön Ch'öl did not cite any part of the play, making Koreans utterly dependent on his interpretation of the drama. Meanwhile, other essays that discussed Nora in the context of individualism commonly drew upon the last dialogue between Nora and her husband. For instance, calling Nora “the embodiment of individualism,”¹⁴⁵ the poet Kim Ök extensively cited the dialogue for his 1921 essay “Modern Literature”:

138 Ibid., 132–33.

139 Ibid., 135.

140 Ibid., 136.

141 Ibid., 134.

142 Ibid., 135.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Kim Ök, “Kündae Munye 5 [Modern Literature 5],” *KB* (December 1921), 121–31; refer to 127.

Helmer: To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! You don't consider what the world will say.

Nora: I can pay no heed to that! I only know that I must do it.

Helmer: It's exasperating! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

Nora: What do you call my holiest duties?

Helmer: Do you ask me that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

Nora: I have other duties equally sacred.

Helmer: Impossible! What duties do you mean?

Nora: My duties towards myself.

Helmer: Before all else, you are a wife and a mother.

Nora: That I no longer believe. I think that before all else, I am a human being, just as much as you are—or, at least, I will try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth, I can't be satisfied with what most people say and what is in books. I must think things out for myself and try to get clear about them.¹⁴⁶

Unlike Hyön, who sidelined the feminist aspect of the drama, Kim Ŏk mentioned that Ibsen's dramas, particularly *A Doll's House*, delved into the so-called "woman question" and introduced Nora's leaving as an attempt to reject women's normative role as the Wise Mother and Good Wife.¹⁴⁷ However, the poet indicated that the feminist movement, which he understood as a branch of individualism, might have exceeded an acceptable degree, and Nora's departure might be an expression of an excessive individualism:

With the growing influence of the self-oriented philosophy, many different problems arose in various areas [of society]. The most powerful and controversial problem was that of men and women. In other words, [the issue of] the "woman question," feminism, or the improvement of women's rights. Respect Men and Despise Women [*namjon yöbbi*] was already a thing of the past, and the era of Respect Women and Despise Men [*yöjon namb*] was just about to arrive.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, in the preface for his 1922 translation of *A Doll's House*, Yi Sangsu subtly re-fashioned the drama as a gate to anti-colonial thinking, especially for women.¹⁴⁹ He explained that the Norwegian drama had led to "women's self-awakening to their individu-

146 Kim, "Modern Literature 5," 127. Kim Ŏk cited from Yang Könsik and Pak Kyegang's Korean translation, which was based on three different translations from the original text: Takayasu Gekkō's 1893 Japanese translation, Shimamura Hogetsu's 1911 Japanese translation, and Robert Farquharson Sharp's English translation of 1910. Hogetsu's 1911 translation was based on William Archer's 1889 English translation. For the comparative study of Korean and Japanese translations of *A Doll's House*, see Kim Chaesök, "Study on Translation," 11–36. After comparing the quotation in Kim Ŏk's text to Archer's and Sharp's English translations, I decided to directly cite from Archer's version instead of translating it back to English or using Sharp's translation because the Korean translation is very close to Archer's translation. See Ibsen and Archer, *Doll's House*, 116–17.

147 Kim, "Modern Literature 5," 126–27.

148 *Ibid.*, 126.

149 Yi Sangsu, "Möritmal [Preface]," in Henrik Ibsen, *Inhyöng üi Ka [A Doll's House]*; hereafter Ibsen and Yi, *A Doll's House* (Seoul: Hansöng Tosö Chusik Hoesa, 1922), trans. Yi Sangsu, 1–4. I express my deep gratitude to Professor Pak Chinyöng of Seonggyunkwan University, who generously provided

ality.”¹⁵⁰ He advised his readers not to consume the drama “from an entertainment standpoint like other novels or plays”¹⁵¹ but to recognize the social problem of discrimination against women prevalent in the drama. Notably, Yi Sangsu grasped that Korean women were suffering from double discrimination as colonized women. His remark that “class, discrimination, and inequality, which are [current] social problems, consist of [multiple] folds”¹⁵² reveals that he saw the intersectionality of discrimination and oppression, where combinations of various elements, such as economic status, ethnic identity, and gender affect each other concurrently. Paying closer attention to colonized women, he put forward that particularly they suffered from multiple layers of oppression. Yi said that discrimination against women was a universal phenomenon commonly seen in “civilized countries” such as Norway as well as in a society “deprived by persecution by strong conquerors.”¹⁵³ Nevertheless, he urged readers to be aware of how Korean men, suppressed by Japanese colonial power, “glare at their wives and yell at them at home.”¹⁵⁴

Discussing double discrimination of Korean women under misogyny and colonialism, and mainly focusing on the gender issue, Yi Sangsu subtly reminded readers of the other discrimination—colonial rule. In other words, he appropriated *A Doll's House* as a vehicle to reinforce Korean women's sense of political injustice through their awakening as individuals, which would eventually nurture their critical mindset against the Japanese colonizer. Indeed, Yi constantly urged readers to be critical of women's and *other* social issues. He explained that *A Doll's House* handled various social problems such as the “social improvement problem, women's problem, family problem, marriage problem, love problem, personality problem.”¹⁵⁵ He repeatedly highlighted that *A Doll's House* dealt with “not only women's problem but also life problems” and advised readers “to study the problems together.”¹⁵⁶ Considering that he defined the “maximum enjoyment of equality and liberty” as his and his readers’ “greatest desire,” as well as “obtaining freedom from restriction” and “seeking liberation from bondage” as “the cry of the times and the [core] problem of social remodeling,”¹⁵⁷ one cannot help but think about the ultimate yet unspeakable problem of the time: Japan's colonial rule over Korea.

Yi Sangsu's biography supports the hypothesis that he introduced *A Doll's House* as an anti-colonial text for women, too. He was closely connected to anti-Japanese student groups in Tokyo,¹⁵⁸ and the colonial police surveilled him as “a person with a strong conviction against Japan, who always propagates that cultivating competence is a way for

me with copies of both versions of Korean translations by Yi Sangsu and Yang Könsik with me upon my visit to Seoul in 2018.

150 Yi, “Preface,” 2.

151 *Ibid.*, 4.

152 *Ibid.*, 1.

153 *Ibid.*

154 *Ibid.*

155 *Ibid.*, 3.

156 *Ibid.*, 3–4.

157 *Ibid.*, 1.

158 “Yi Sangsu” in *Waejōng Shidae Inmul Charyo [Data of People During the Japanese Rule]*, http://db.history.go.kr/id/im_108_02873.

Chosŏn to escape the rule of Japan.¹⁵⁹ Thereby, women's education seemed to have been a fundamental part of his anti-colonial activism. As he settled down in Korea, he founded Silch'ŏn Women's School in Seoul.¹⁶⁰ Considering these circumstances, his commentary seems to invite readers to see Nora's escape from Helmer as an allegory of Korea's escape from Japan's colonial rule.

While focusing on the idea of politically awakened individuals' contribution to the Korean nation, the novelist Yŏm Sangsŏp spoke in favor of Nora's leaving, which, at that time, was very rare in the Korean discourse of *A Doll's House*.¹⁶¹ Through his 1922 essay "For the Supreme Good," Yŏm declared that the handed-down morality in the present society was based on inequality in personal relationships between women and men, parents and children, the political system of feudalism, and religious belief which coerced people to prioritize someone else other than themselves.¹⁶² Notably, he severely criticized the family system for comprising "remnants of despotism" and asserted that the supremacy of family was "not an unchanging truth with an absolute meaning for a new human being, who seeks a new life."¹⁶³ From this perspective, Yŏm asserted that Nora achieved "the supreme good" by uncompromisingly and radically breaking with a system that coerced her to deny her Self as a human being—or, by the "revolution of the Self."¹⁶⁴ Concurrently, Yŏm also noted that "a nation's prosperity and the whole of mankind's happiness can be pursued"¹⁶⁵ based on egoism.

Some reform-oriented Korean intellectuals of the 1920s welcomed Nora from *A Doll's House* as an example of an individualist who freshly gained an emancipatory spirit. While affirming Nora's self-awakening and individualism, their commentaries often downplayed her egress and criticisms of patriarchy. With few exceptions, the affirmative commentaries situated the drama primarily in the colonial context and suggested Korean women wake up like Nora and contribute to the Korean nation.

5.3 Rejective Commentaries: Nora of Chosŏn and the Question of True Awakening

"To Nora": Annulling Emancipatory Messages

The Korean translation by Yang Kŏnsik of *A Doll's House* appeared as a book in June 1922 under the new title *Nora*. Regarding its commentaries, *Nora* was a fascinating case

159 "Yi Sangsu" in *Data of People*. For more on Yi Sangsu's political activities, see Pak Chinyŏng, "Munhak Ch'ŏngnyŏn ūrosŏ ūi Yi Sangsu wa Pŏnyŏkka ūi Unmyŏng [Yi Sangsu, the Literary Youth and the Destiny of a Translator]," *Tonam Ōmunhak* 24 (2011), 59–88.

160 "Yi Sangsu" in *Data of People*.

161 See Yi, "Translation of Ibsen," 56–57.

162 See Yŏm Sangsŏp "Chisang Sŏn ūl Wihayŏ [For the Supreme Good]," in *Yŏm Sangsŏp Munjang Chŏn-jip 1: 1918–1928 [Complete Works of Yŏm Sangsŏp, Vol. 1: 1918–1928]*, Han Kihyŏng and Yi Hyeryŏng (eds.) (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2013), 200–24; refer to 209–15.

163 Yŏm, "For Supreme Good," 208–09.

164 *Ibid.*, 205.

165 *Ibid.*, 223.

because it was published with six different prefaces and one postscript, all written by renowned Korean writers and artists. These included: a short episodic piece on Empress Consort Wu from the Chinese Tang Dynasty as an epigraph, lyrics of the song “Nora” written by female artist Na Hyesök, sheet music for the song “Nora” by Paek Uyong, literary critic Kim Chöngjin’s preface, the novelist Yi Kwangsu’s preface entitled “Noraya (To Nora)”, the translator Yang Könsik’s introduction, and the female publisher Kim Wönju’s postscript. Notably, the unusually high number of texts attached to the play corresponded to the broad spectrum of opinions on Ibsen’s work at the time.¹⁶⁶ The texts also revealed how different interpretations competed to intervene into—mainly female—readers’ reception of the drama.

Except for Yi Kwangsu’s letter entitled “To Nora,” the texts published in *Nora* evaluated the drama positively. Na Hyesök’s lyrics, which took Nora as the lyric subject, conveyed the message that Korean women, too, should notice their value as human beings and break the suppression against women.¹⁶⁷ Kim Chöngjin emphasized that the social drama would lead to an aspiration for new kinds of literature in Korea since its main topic for poetry had been the beauty of nature.¹⁶⁸ The translator Yang Könsik introduced the “woman problem” as the core of *A Doll’s House* and suggested concentrating on its message rather than criticizing Nora.¹⁶⁹ Kim Wönju, who ventured into the translation and stage production of *A Doll’s House* already in 1920, expressed her wish for the book to awake more women and men so that they saw the oppression under which Korean women had to live.¹⁷⁰

The relation between the epigraph, which consisted of Empress Consort Wu’s fable, and *A Doll’s House* is not intuitively comprehensible, but for this very reason it opens to broader possibilities of interpretation. Literary historian Pak Chinyöng explains that this epigraph might have called the readers’ attention to the issue of “women’s independent awareness and sovereignty,”¹⁷¹ which the Chinese Empress symbolized. On closer inspection, the epigraph tells the story of the Empress who asked her servant about the identity of the writer of a book she had read; upon hearing that the Duke of Zhou (Zhōugōng) wrote it, she noted, “I knew that it was done by a man’s hand. If a woman of the Zhou Dynasty had written it, she would not have written it that way.”¹⁷² In other words, this epigraph reflects the belief that the author’s gender might be recognizable through the text’s style and content. Applied to the reception of *A Doll’s House* in colonial Korea, this story could have marked the temporal, cultural, and gender differences that particularly female readers might have noticed from a book written by a European male author. Yet, it is unclear who decided to insert this epigraph into the book and for what reason.

166 Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 22.

167 Na Hyesök, “Nora,” in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*. No page number is given to her lyric and note in the original publication. Na Hyesök wrote another version of the lyrics from the viewpoint of Ibsen’s Nora for the *Maeil Shinbo*. I revisit her lyrics and Kim Wönju’s postscript in chapter 5.5.

168 Kim, “Preface,” 1–3.

169 Yang Könsik, “Yökchaön [The Translator’s Note],” in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*, 8–14.

170 Kim Wönju, “Pal [Postscript],” in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*, 177–78.

171 Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 22.

172 The epigraph is published on an unnumbered page.

Meanwhile, Yi Kwangsu was very outspoken in his antipathy towards the emancipatory message in *A Doll's House*. In "To Nora," written in a mixed style of essay and letter addressed to Nora, Yi Kwangsu boldly urged her to return home. He insisted that in Korea and other countries, numerous women were running away from their homes under the influence of Nora.¹⁷³ His prognosis—"Nora seems to lure all daughters of the world out of home eventually"¹⁷⁴—revealed his anxiety over the possible consequence of Korean women's reception of *A Doll's House*: that they might be inspired by her and refuse to become devoted wives and mothers. Particularly, the last scene entailed defiant arguments that could be seamlessly applied to reject the still-prevailing notion of the inside-outside rule in Korea.

Instead of bluntly criticizing Nora, Yi Kwangsu appropriated the motif of Nora's awakening to annul its potential threat to the patriarchy. He insisted that her awakening as a human being was only the pre-stage of a *true* culmination for Nora:

No! Nora! You must realize one more thing. Your awareness that "I am a human being!" is proud and self-evident enlightenment that even God cannot prevent. It is an excellent service, which history will not forget in 10,000 years that you dragged daughters of the world into the yard of the wide world where *human beings* get together. However, you have to take one step further and become aware that "I am a chick [*kyejip*]!" and "I am a wife!" as well as "I am a mother!" Only then will your individuality be completed.¹⁷⁵

Urging Nora to become aware of herself as a "chick" and to restart her life as wife and mother, Yi Kwangsu tried to restore the gendered division of labor and women's duty of motherhood that Ibsen's drama questioned. Langås draws attention to rich indications that Nora's "various roles and actions investigate the frames of activity that are culturally given and accepted for female behavior."¹⁷⁶ Langås continued:

Ibsen change[d] the focus of the nineteenth-century gender debate and ideology from nature to culture, from being to acting. Nora's experiences do not reveal the female nature, but how the culturally constructed norms of the time produce notions of femaleness and govern her life as a woman.¹⁷⁷

Yi Kwangsu's pursuit of restoring the gendered division of labor and upholding the gender binary becomes more evident when he accuses Nora of wanting to become a man:

Call them out, Nora! Call all the daughters of the world out to the broad yard—but Nora! What are you going to give them? You took the needle, the bowl, and the baby from their hands, so what are you going to give them instead? You gave them suffrage, chalk, streetcars, the steering wheel of the car, and even guns and knives. Nora, is it

173 Yi Kwangsu, "To Nora," in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*, 4–7; refer to 4.

174 Yi, "To Nora," 5.

175 *Ibid.*, 5–6.

176 Langås, "What Did Nora Do?," 164.

177 *Ibid.*, 166.

your purpose to be a man this way? So, will you sing the song of your victory for having completed the emancipation of your individuality when you cut your hair, wear men's clothes, smoke a cigarette, and stagger down the broad street drunk on alcohol?¹⁷⁸

This wrongful accusation revealed that Yi Kwangsu regarded being a wife and mother essential for a *proper* woman. Thereby, he failed to understand that someone could still identify herself as a woman even if she rejected the conventional gender roles of wife or mother. Furthermore, alleging that emancipatory women might want “to assimilate with men,” the novelist accidentally confessed that he considered civil rights men's privilege.¹⁷⁹ Korean feminist activists of his time had already pointed out that the differences between women's and men's privileges were not naturally given but culturally constructed.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Yi Kwangsu persistently brought back the gender binary to insist that women could not enjoy equal rights as men because they could not transform themselves into men:

No matter how you cut your hair, you cannot grow a beard; no matter how much you dress as a man, your breasts and hip will not disappear; and no matter how much you prance about on the broad streets, your fat, round, and pretty body will not turn into one with bulging bones and muscles as well as broad shoulders.¹⁸¹

Reclaiming sex as a fate one could not evade, Yi Kwangsu ordered Nora to “come back to your husband and become a well-behaved sweet wife and mother in a new sense.”¹⁸² Although “To Nora” was addressed to the heroine of Ibsen's drama, the recipients he had in mind were Korean women who would read the book, *Nora*. His demand on Nora to “illuminate them as women and make them reenter the inner gate”¹⁸³ after waking them up echoed the aim of women's school education of the time to educate future Wise Mothers and Good Wives, where female students had to leave the school when they got married.

Awakening of Love: The Feared Power of the Theater Performance

As Yi Kwangsu's preface exemplified, the serialization in the daily newspaper and the book were a sufficient reason for many to worry about the drama's influence on Korean women. However, contemporaries expected that Nora's story would have much stronger resonance if it were finally performed on stage. Thus, the writer Cho Ch'un'gwang asserted in 1925 that there should be no theater production of *A Doll's House* in Korea. He asserted:

Because the ignorant people only imitate the external ideas expressed on the surface without seeing the necessity [of specific actions] inside [of drama]. [...] It is very dan-

178 Yi, “To Nora,” 5.

179 Ibid., 7.

180 See chapter 5.5.

181 Yi, “To Nora,” 6.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid., 7. About the social expectations of women's education and female students see chapter 4.1.

gerous to play famous western dramas for this level of people. *The departure of Nora from A Doll's House is meaningful only because it results from her education and self-awakening*; if a woman from an ignorant society understands the superficial idea [of the play] on the stage and eventually abandons her husband and loving children to leave home, I cannot help but call it terrible bewilderment. It is not the fault of the art that this immoral act happens but the impresario who presents [the play] without paying attention to the educational status of the people (emphasis added).¹⁸⁴

Like his contemporaries, Cho Ch'un'gwang, too, foregrounded Nora's awakening as the essential requirement to justify her elopement. As demonstrated later, male commentators maintained their interpretative dominance over Korean women by claiming that they were entitled to judge whether a woman's actions were legitimate or not based on her epistemic status. In doing so, the male intellectuals turned women's leaving of home into a question of their knowledge and degree of intellectual development while marginalizing other reasons that made women leave their homes.

The fear that *ignorant* Korean women would imitate Nora after watching *A Doll's House* on stage became a motif of literary creation, too. Yang Kōnsik's 1923 drama *Sarang ūi Kaksōng* (*Awakening of Love*) was a satirical comedy about Korean housewives agitated by Nora and her enthusiastic followers.¹⁸⁵ In this drama, the question of gendered conflict, social changes, and the theater's influence on women are amalgamated to the point of absurdity. Like Yi Kwangsu, Yang Kōnsik appropriated the motif of awakening. *Awakening of Love* can be read as a commentary mainly addressed to female audiences because their allegedly wrong interpretation of Ibsen's drama causes the conflict, and they are reprimanded for it. By doing so, the comedy tries to persuade Korean women not to follow the emancipatory message in *A Doll's House*.

In *Awakening of Love*, two middle-class Korean homemakers named Hyewōn and Tongasuk extemporarily decide to leave their husbands following Nora's example. The marriage crisis is caused by a combination of two things: their attendance of the play *A Doll's House* and their acquaintance with a New Woman named Yi Yōngja, who infiltrates these naïve wives with the feminist interpretation of the play. Yi Yōngja, a teacher, wins the trust of the housewives during their husbands' absence, both of whom are navy captains. She lures Hyewōn and Tongasuk to attend *A Doll's House* and discusses the play with them.¹⁸⁶ She even reenacts the last scene of *A Doll's House* while explaining the play to Sōngsun, Hyewōn's sister-in-law. Sōngsun remains unimpressed by the teacher's recitation and reenactment, while Hyewōn and Tongasuk see the play through the reen-

184 Cho Ch'un'gwang, "Sahoe ūi Mulkyōl kwa Yōn'gūk ūi Samyōng 1 [The Current Society and the Mission of the Theater 1]," *DI*, January 12, 1925, 6.

185 This study is based on the republication of *Awakening of Love* made public by Pak Chinyōng. Yang, "Sarang ūi Kaksōng [Awakening of Love]," *Minjok Munhaksā Yōn'gu* 58 ([1923]2015), 101–20.

186 In *Awakening of Love*, the performance of *A Doll's House* was organized by Kim Wōnju's publishing company Shin Yōja. The literary historian Pak Chinyōng posed the possibility that there might have been a stage performance of *A Doll's House* in the early 1920s in colonial Korea. Pak, "Ibsen and Colony," 28. Until now, however, no evidence has been found that proves the performance took place. About Kim Wōnju and her publishing company see chapter 5.1.

actment again and are finally won over. They begin seeing their own marriages from the perspective of Nora as the unmarried teacher invites them to do:

Hyewŏn: After watching Nora, I realized what men are really like, so I will divorce right away.

Tongsuk: I will divorce, too, and become a human being in the first place.

Yi Yŏngja: (towards them) Right. There is a saying that goes, “to know but not to practice is worse than not to know,” so when you know something, you should put it into action. Until when do you have to remain dolls and be treated not as a human being? If you are ever going to do it, keep your head straight and do it right because we have to see the true miracle.¹⁸⁷

Under Yi Yŏngja’s influence, Hyewŏn and Tongsuk strongly identify themselves with Nora and consider their marriage as hollow as Nora’s. This decision appears particularly absurd because it is not based on the reflection of their marriage, and no conflict between them and their husbands is mentioned. This way, their decisions appear baseless, and the housewives remain vulnerable to the Norwegian play’s dangerous influence intensified through the suspicious New Woman, who lacks the experience of marriage. Through the mouth of Hyewŏn’s husband, the playwright warns against *A Doll’s House*:

Captain Son: Hey, are you listening to me? It is common that people forget about themselves and want to become like the character when they watch a play. Hyewŏn, you are deeply affected by Nora. When people watch a drama about a loyal subject, they want to avenge themselves. But I don’t think there are people who want their king to be beaten to death by someone so that they can take revenge. It is not right to harass your husband and children because you want to be Nora.¹⁸⁸

Hyewŏn even shows signs of insanity when she declares to her husband that she is leaving. She claims to have been “greatly awoken” as Nora and insists that “our home is just like a doll’s house,” and Captain Son resembles Helmer simply because Captain Son loves her and cherishes her like “a lark” and “a doll.”¹⁸⁹ Pointing out differences between *A Doll’s House* and their own life, Captain Son tries to persuade her that she is not Nora and there was no such conflict in their marriage like in the Norwegian drama. However, Hyewŏn identifies herself with Nora so strongly that she believes that she was married to Captain Son for eight years like Nora instead of five years and had three instead of two children.¹⁹⁰ She begins speaking and acting “like an actor,” which makes Captain Son say that “she seems to be insane!”¹⁹¹ As he experiences that Tongsuk, too, declares her divorce to his colleague Captain Yu, he sighs that “all Korean women seem to have become Nora while

187 Yang, “Awakening of Love,” 106.

188 *Ibid.*, 110.

189 *Ibid.*, 108.

190 *Ibid.*, 110.

191 *Ibid.*

[we were] traveling around in the distance."¹⁹² Through scenes like these, an unrealistic yet powerful male anxiety shimmers through the satirical drama.

Notably, the New Woman's threat to the conventional marriage and gender norms is most keenly sensed and exterminated by Hyewön's mother-in-law, Mrs. Pak. She fulfills the conventional role of a mother-in-law who controls the daughters-in-law and protects the interests of her son and, ultimately, the paternal lineage.¹⁹³ From the beginning, Mrs. Pak shows a strong sense of antipathy towards Yi Yöngja, the New Woman, and characterizes her as someone incomprehensible under the conventional gender norms. To the eyes of Mrs. Pak, Yi Yöngja is bluntly "the bespectacled one," which denounces her scholarship, and "a person who seems to be half-man and half-woman,"¹⁹⁴ a characterization which indicates that the New Woman teacher could bring confusion to the conventional gender roles manifested in the gender binary.

Not only Yi Yöngja's looks but also what she brings to Hyewön disquiets the marriage and her family life: before *A Doll's House*, the New Woman teacher had already taught Hyewön "mathematics and [Christian] religion,"¹⁹⁵ the symbol of Western science and belief system that confronts traditional knowledge and values. Furthermore, the New Woman introduces Hyewön to a dubious medicine "that prevents pregnancy," telling her that giving birth to a child makes women "quickly get older."¹⁹⁶ This medicine deters the traditional duty of daughters-in-law in Korea to carry on the paternal genealogy by bearing children, particularly sons.¹⁹⁷ Reiterating these traditional ideas, Captain Son, too, says giving births to children might be "women's job,"¹⁹⁸ equivalent to men's profession outside the home. Although the medicine does not play a significant role in the drama, it does demonstrate the degree of risk that Yi Yöngja poses to the conventional family model. In combination with *A Doll's House*, which allegedly motivates housewives to leave their married family altogether, the medicine gives women the power to make decisions over their own bodies and, furthermore, shakes gender norms surrounding marriage life from the root.

Eventually, the crisis of marriage is overcome through Mrs. Pak's guile. Ironically, Mrs. Pak uses marriage, which Yöngja condemns so much, as a lever to change the flow of

192 Ibid., 112.

193 Kim Hyegyöng's 2006 study on the transformation of Korean families found that severe conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law was one of arguments for Koreans to adopt the nuclear family model in the 1930s. See *Formation of Modern Family*, 295.

194 Yang, "Awakening of Love," 102.

195 Ibid., 107.

196 Ibid., 102. Linda Gordon's 2007 study found "that birth control technology came to us with modern medicine" is "a prevalent myth." She underlines that "birth control was not invented by scientists or doctors" but "is a part of folk culture, and women's folklore in particular, in nearly all societies." She found that there were also "potions or pills" for birth control in "the ancient world and in modern preindustrial societies." The pills that Yi Yöngja brings to Hyewön and Tongsuk can be considered as a form of such folklore. See Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007). The quotes are from 13–14.

197 The task of producing a male heir was particularly assigned to a family's eldest son and his wife. Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 22–23.

198 Yang, "Awakening of Love," 109.

the game. Mrs. Pak suggests that her son, Captain Son, falsely seduce Yi Yǒngja so that the bond between the New Woman and Hyewǒn breaks. Although Captain Son fails at this task, Captain Yu, the husband of Tongsuk, takes inspiration from him and successfully tricks the man-hating teacher. Captain Yu claims that “a truly awakened woman would not change [her mind] after watching a mere play” and flatters Yi Yǒngja, saying that “every woman should choose a husband after an [genuine] awakening”¹⁹⁹ like hers. Fooled by his honeyed words about Western-style marriage life, Yi Yǒngja relinquishes her skepticism of marriage and promises Captain Yu that she will have “the second awakening”²⁰⁰ to become his wife.

Shocked by this turn of events, Tongsuk begs Captain Yu to return home; likewise, Captain Son repeats his proposal to the confused New Woman, which also makes Hyewǒn anxious: the table is turned now, and Hyewǒn criticizes him for forgetting about their marriage and children, while Captain Son insists that “it all belonged to a doll’s house” and he, too, “will undress the doll clothes.”²⁰¹ In this way, the subversive energy that threatened marriage life and the bond between younger generations of women under the influence of *A Doll’s House* backfires as a reactionary force that reinforces hegemonic gender norms, which dictate bearing children as women’s task and home as their place to be. The last sermon of Mrs. Pak and the confessions of the prodigal daughters-in-law restores the hitherto normative marriage life while condemning teachings from *A Doll’s House* as *Western*, thus unfitting for Korean people.

Mrs. Pak: (raises her hand and speaks to them as if she were giving a speech) Well, well, I have to ask you to stop. The married couple is determined by Ch’ǒnhwangssi [a legendary king of ancient China] and does not originate from the West. Thus, what comes down from the old times should be better left to old people like us. Mr. Yu has his wife and Son Sǒngmo his own, so they better go back home. For Koreans, a woman like Nora from the West is useless. One should not accept a woman like Nora into a family in the first place. (Towards Hyewǒn and Tongsuk) If you are jealous, you’d better not divorce, and if you learned that the Western way is not good, then take better care next time. Now, everybody back to the doll’s house!

Tongsuk: Oh, I am awakened for the second time!

Hyewǒn: Oh, I am awakened for the second time, too!

(Each couple, Son Sǒngmo and Hyewǒn as well as Yu Kiwǒn and Tongsuk, go out arm in arm through doors on the left and right side. Also, Mrs. Pak follows them and goes out through the right door).²⁰²

Curiously, Yang Kǒnsik, who translated *A Doll’s House* himself, presents skepticism against the Norwegian drama through this play.²⁰³ Although Western ideas already had

199 Ibid., 116.

200 Ibid., 117.

201 Ibid., 119.

202 Ibid., 119–20.

203 The literary historian Pak Chinyǒng suggested that it is highly likely that the work was not Yang’s own creation but an adaptation of an unknown Japanese drama. Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 27. Nevertheless, the radically confrontational views on Nora and the women’s movement in *A Doll’s House* and *Awakening of Love* is still problematic.

a significant impact on East Asia, including colonial Korea, the playwright concludes that Nora's claim to become an individual before a wife or mother cannot be accepted in Korea. Yang seems to be trying to instill fear in female readers and future audiences that they may lose their chances for marriage in pursuit of the modern Self. Considering that Yang Kōnsik was the translator of *A Doll's House* and closely cooperated with the female publisher Kim Wōnju, it is surprising how bluntly *Awakening of Love* defames Nora and Korean women inspired by her. The literary historian Pak Chinyōng points out that Yang undermined "the revolutionary characteristic and emancipatory value"²⁰⁴ of *A Doll's House* by his hand through *Awakening of Love*.

Pak Chinyōng hypothesized that *Awakening of Love* was designed as an advertisement for *A Doll's House*, which the same publisher released under the title *Nora* in June 1922.²⁰⁵ While I agree with this hypothesis, I add that Yang Kōnsik and the publisher considered the satirical comedy not just as an advertisement but a cautionary tale, especially for women *before* they read or watched Ibsen's drama. There are two indications for this hypothesis: firstly, as discussed here, *Awakening of Love* refutes the content of *A Doll's House* and satirizes Korean women who sympathize with Nora. Secondly, at the end of *Awakening of Love*, an editor's comment declares the Korean parody as a prequel to the Norwegian play, saying, "Please read the world-famous book *Nora*, the sequel of this [book]."²⁰⁶ Considering that *Nora* appeared already a year before *Awakening of Love*, this sentence seems to be an instruction for Korean (female) readers on the *proper* order and way to read *A Doll's House*—first the rejective commentary, then the primary text.

Awakening of Love was an attempt to directly influence contemporary Korean women's reception and understanding of the controversial play. In this regard, *Awakening of Love* shares the arguments and the intention of novelist Yi Kwangsu's text "To Nora."²⁰⁷ Through *Awakening of Love* and "To Nora," the publishing company Yōngch'ang Sōgwan tried to influence women's reception of *A Doll's House* even before its premiere, performed by a Korean theater company in 1925.

The Wife of the Incompetent Man: The Fall of Korean Nora

Kim Tong'in's 1930 short novel *Munūngja ūi Anhae* (*The Wife of the Incompetent Man*) is a symbolic work that marks the time when Nora's status as a role model for Korean women became increasingly questioned.²⁰⁸ This short story was published in the daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* from July 30 to August 8, 1930, and is said to contain the writer's own experience: Kim Tong'in's first wife left him and their son for Tokyo in 1927 with their daughter as he went bankrupt.²⁰⁹

204 Pak, "Ibsen and Colony," 31–32.

205 Ibid., 28.

206 Yang, "Awakening of Love," 120.

207 See Pak, "Ibsen and Colony," 33.

208 This chapter is based on the version that appeared in *Chosun Ilbo* between July 30, 1930, and August 8, 1930. I became aware of this novel through Kim Miji's 2003 article. See "Variation of Nora," 189–92.

209 Kim, "Variation of Nora," 189.

This semi-autobiographical novel illustrates the inner life and allegedly short life cycle of Nora of Chosŏn (*Chosŏn ūi Nora*). Through the example of a runaway homemaker Yŏngsuk, Kim Tong'in depicts in a dry tone how the *delusions* of women, who identify themselves with Nora, lead them to ruin. Thereby, he dismisses the emergence of the Korean Nora as a result of wrong choices informed by the incomplete judgment of each woman while marginalizing the social and personal situations that lead to these women's downfall. Furthermore, juxtaposing Yŏngsuk's desperate actions to realize her ideal and her husband's suffocating inaction in their relationship, whose interaction leads to Yŏngsuk's moral and economic bankruptcy, the novelist inadvertently reveals the discriminatory nature of the conventional gender norms that punish women even without left-behind-men's active participation in the process.

The story begins with Yŏngsuk leaving her home with her daughter, Oksun, when her husband loses all the family fortune. Her husband, a rich heritor, leaves "all family affairs"²¹⁰ such as borrowing money from others, meeting guests on his behalf, visits to government offices, and managing farmers working on their property to her, neglecting his socially expected role as the head of household. Instead, he spends his time "writing and publishing coarse novels and leading a fast life."²¹¹ Although Yŏngsuk was forced to fill his absence in the beginning, she soon becomes "proud" of being "the housewife, the head, and the representative of the household," thanks to her nature, which allegedly "lacked womanly tameness but had manly activeness and competence."²¹² The author, who sticks to the gender binary, describes this marriage as "bizarre."²¹³

Notably, Kim Tong'in explains Yŏngsuk's action always as a reaction to her husband's absolute inaction throughout the novel. She runs away from home because her husband does nothing to rescue the family;²¹⁴ she decides to go to Tokyo because her husband neither chases after her nor writes a letter while she is in Seoul to persuade her.²¹⁵ She stubbornly remains in Tokyo because her husband shows absolutely no reaction to her wish to return.²¹⁶ Even when Yŏngsuk spreads terrible rumors about him after the divorce, he "did nothing but keeping silence."²¹⁷ His inaction and silence have two obvious functions: on the one hand, it causes conflict between him and his wife; on the other hand, Kim Tong'in disapproves of Yŏngsuk's self-motivation by defining her actions primarily as a reaction to her husband's inaction. The less apparent third function of his inaction is a demonstration of power inherent in his position. He does not even *need* to act against his wife because instead of him, the patriarchal apparatus will punish her for trying to break away from it. I will elaborate on this point later in this analysis.

The precariously maintained marriage breaks down as the husband suddenly decides to owe money to all the inherited lands to start a business, only to fail. To make matters worse, the husband "hurriedly runs away to Seoul" after "assigning the wife to liq-

210 Kim Tong'in, "Wife of Incompetent Man 1," *CI*, July 30, 1930, 4.

211 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 1," *CI*, July 30, 1930, 4.

212 *Ibid.*

213 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 1," *CI*, July 30, 1930, 4.

214 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 2," *CI*, July 31, 1930, 4.

215 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 4," *CI*, August 2, 1930, 4.

216 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 7," *CI*, August 5, 1930, 4.

217 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 9," *CI*, August 7, 1930, 4.

update the family property," leaving Yöngsuk and two children alone in P'yöng'yang for six months. After returning, he idles away his time with fishing for a year and a half. Meanwhile, Yöngsuk gradually begins to think of leaving her home behind. For Yöngsuk, leaving home was "a dream and a belief that is deeply embedded in the head, and at the same time, a fantasy without any reality." However, as she discovers *A Doll's House* on her husband's bookshelf and reads the play, she comes to think of leaving home as a realizable option.²¹⁸

Figure 14: An illustration of Yöngsuk and her daughter leaving her husband.



Source: *Chosun Ilbo*, August 2, 1930, 4. Courtesy of Chosun Ilbo.

Kim Tong'in underlines differences between Yöngsuk and Nora, Yöngsuk's misunderstanding of Nora's motivation, and their shared yearning. Yöngsuk cannot understand why Nora, married to a competent and caring man such as Helmer, decides to leave home. Yöngsuk is depicted as incapable of comprehending the problem of the marriage system handled in the drama either. Instead, she feels that she was connected to Nora because of her wish to leave home. Ironically, Kim Tong'in refashions this empathetic reading of *A Doll's House* as a wrong way to understand the drama:

She did not clearly understand why Nora ran away. Helmer loved her. Helmer was a wise husband. He was not as incompetent and irresponsible as her own husband. Nora respected him. Yöngsuk, a lump of intellect though she was, could not understand why Nora, who felt happy under this circumstance, ran away. Nevertheless, she resonated with the catharsis displayed in the act [of leaving home]. Since then, she kept thinking

218 The quotes are from Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 2," *CI*, July 31, 1930, 4.

about leaving home in one corner of her mind, although she regarded it simply as an impossible thing to do.²¹⁹

As executive officers come and seize the family's property after two years of bankruptcy, Yöngsuk finally decides to escape home. Planning to go to school and become independent, she takes the remaining money of 3,000 wön and her daughter. At the same time, however, she does not completely give up the idea that she might return home as a housewife sooner or later.²²⁰ In other words, she migrates to Tokyo while experiencing internal conflicts between her wish to transform herself into a New Woman and to return to the old life. Interestingly, Kim Tong'in describes how Yöngsuk led a less happy marriage than Nora. However, he does not seem to think that it is thus more probable that Yöngsuk will leave her husband than Nora. Instead, Kim demonstrates that Yöngsuk—unlike her husband or the writer himself—misunderstood *A Doll's House* and repeatedly declares that she is not Nora. In doing so, he argues that Yöngsuk's running away is fundamentally different from Nora's.

To put it simply, she was not Nora. So, she did not leave home because of reveries and vague, abstract notions like Nora did. Leaving home for good, which has always been in one corner of her mind, was merely a dramatic addition to her short journey to soothe the gloom of recent days. Therefore, this episode can be seen as an event planned for a long time, and at the same time, it was nothing more than a play created by reverie.²²¹

On the other hand, Kim does not criticize Nora as harshly as some of his contemporaries. Kim seems to highly appreciate the fact that Nora realized the discrimination against women inherent in marriage *even though* the crisis in her marriage had just been overcome; thus, her change of perception and her departure is treated as more epistemologically or politically profound than Yöngsuk's, who was in the middle of economic bankruptcy and emotional crisis. While presenting Nora as the ideal modern woman, Kim defames the Korean women inspired by the character as imprudent and inferior imitators because they allegedly lacked the awakening.

Similarly, Yöngsuk's transformation into the Korean Nora is depicted merely as a revenge against her husband. After a month of running away, Yöngsuk comes back to P'yöng'yang defeated: her husband chased after their daughter and took her back from Tokyo, while ignoring Yöngsuk's wish to go home. Furthermore, back home, Yöngsuk experiences severe criticisms and exclusion from the local community because of her "ill reputation" as a woman who abandoned her husband and children after his bankruptcy.²²² Her decision to divorce him and to partake in feminist activism in Seoul is explained as a pursuit to reestablish her reputation in an alternative domain:

219 Ibid.

220 See Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 3," *CI*, August 1, 1930, 4.

221 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 3," *CI*, August 1, 1930, 4.

222 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 8," *CI*, August 6, 1930, 4.

To speak of her determination back then, she had to go to Seoul and become a prominent women's liberation movement figure. She must bear greater and brighter fame than her husband won in society as a novelist. When Nora meets Helmer again after leaving his home, she had to obtain a personality and fame that make Helmer bow down. With these aspirations, she decamped from P'yŏng'yang and moved to Seoul.²²³

Kim Tong'in declares that her new identity is nothing but a fake. Abbreviating her activism into mere curses targeting men and squealing between happy wives and husbands, he deprives the feminist movement of social and historical relevance. Instead, he depicts how satisfied Yŏngsuk is with being called Nora of Chosŏn without "any regret or a lingering affection for her children."²²⁴ This depiction echoes earlier accusations that she took her daughter only as bait for her husband.²²⁵ Repeatedly representing her as a woman without the so-called maternal love, a characteristic mistaken as a distinctively female instinct, Kim Tong'in brands feminist activism as something against the allegedly natural order of gender.

Meanwhile, Kim focuses on how Yŏngsuk, now a Nora of Chosŏn, cannot help but seek sexual pleasure and the approval of men, and steps into debauchery. Suffering the most "under the wave of sexual desire that sometimes struck her like a storm," Yŏngsuk tries to hook up on the night street. However, due to her mature appearance, she is insulted as a "grandma," which makes her to pay more attention to wearing cosmetics.²²⁶ She and all of her feminist colleagues are described as leading a radical life for that time: each of them has one or several lovers, whom they also share. Through this depiction, Kim Tong'in inscribes excessive sexual lust and indulgence into Nora of Chosŏn. In doing so, he utilizes the still prevailing taboo of women's active pursuit of sexual desire to denounce them morally.

Leaving home behind, Yŏngsuk enters the market of Free Love where people seek partners based on the physical attractiveness or economic power that compensates for the lack of physical charms. Kim Tong'in depicts exclusion from the love and marriage market as Yŏngsuk's greatest fear. Yŏngsuk enters a second marriage based on Free Love, and ironically, she becomes even more dependent on her new husband. As he, too, knows the rule of the free-love market well, Yŏngsuk fears that he would soon leave her, mainly because he is younger than her. Overwhelmed by the anxiety that "everything will be ruined only if wrinkles appear on her face," she even gives him all her savings from the first marriage. Nevertheless, as the money runs out, he leaves her.²²⁷

Depicting Yŏngsuk's sexual adventures and failures, the author presumably demonstrates how Yŏngsuk was hoisted with her own petard. What is revealed regardless of his intentions is that the sexual freedom of women was under conditions different from men. Notably, the fact that Yŏngsuk's aging influences her relationships with men proves this circumstance. As her youth and money run out, she becomes "a sort of working

223 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 8," *CI*, August 6, 1930, 4.

224 *Ibid.*

225 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 5," *CI*, August 3, 1930, 4.

226 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 9," *CI*, August 7, 1930, 4.

227 Kim, "Wife of Incompetent Man 10," *CI*, August 8, 1930, 4.

woman who sells her smile on the street to feed herself.”²²⁸ The precarity that drives her to sell her sex is not represented as a tragedy of society but as a bleak future that she deserves as a wayward woman.

Notably, this bitter end to Yöngsuk’s leaving home is directly juxtaposed with her first husband’s comeback as a successful writer with a new happy marriage. The novel shows that the husband does not even need to take any action personally—neither revenge nor reconciliation. Even without his involvement, society itself doles out punishment on wayward wives; because women become powerless as they grow older, they become completely reliant on either men or money, or both. By making the wrong choices, Yöngsuk seems to walk voluntarily onto a path of doom, while her husband does absolutely nothing to her.

Realizing that she is trapped in a patriarchal system that discriminates against women, Yöngsuk asks herself if she was “nothing but a mere victim of her time,”²²⁹ one in which Nora and women’s emancipation were applauded. Furtively mixing in his voice with Yöngsuk’s, Kim Tong’in assesses the Noras of Chosön as creatures of fad:

Nowadays, newspapers report every day of New Women leaving their homes behind and running away. Like Yöngsuk, all of them break away without any complete self-awareness because of their temporary rebellion, excitement, or being talked into doing so by someone else, with no time to think about their future. And this phenomenon will keep going on. Twenty, thirty, or fifty years later, when this *history* exemplifies what end the pioneers like Yöngsuk came to, it will stop.

Then am I a mere warning example for people to come? Considering this, she trembled all over. Her mind was always full of anxiety for her future.²³⁰

The Wife of the Incompetent Man stands at the inflection point of the sudden change of the time as the expression “Nora of Chosön” became defamatory of women who pursued their desires outside the home.²³¹ This novel is a cynical evaluation of Korean women who regarded Nora as their role model and challenged the existing marriage system. Kim Tong’in indicates that women should overcome themselves instead of discriminations against them. As he foregrounds criticisms of the Korean Nora, the inability of men, which can be considered the cause of running away, is concealed, as Kim Miji pointed out.²³² Instead, Kim Tong’in carries out a kind of revenge on his wife through the short story.²³³

This short story is also a cynical warning to female readers of *A Doll’s House*. The author points out that women’s empathetic reading leads to an identification with Nora, the fictional character, which could eventually lead to a fatal end. In doing so, *The Wife of the*

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 Ibid.

231 Pak Induk, a famous New Woman and Christian educator, gained a notoriety as Nora of Chosön as her divorce was made public in 1931. See Choi, *Gender and Mission*, 161.

232 Kim, “Variation of Nora,” 192.

233 Ibid.

Incompetent Man blends together the voices of patriarchal intellectual men, who decide to interpret women's emancipatory narratives as an unambiguous warning.

Chakrabarty explains how European colonial powers justified their dominance over "Indians, Africans, and other 'rude' nations"²³⁴ by claiming that these nations were—unlike European and American nations—too immature for self-government, thus allocating them to an imaginary waiting room to wait for the right moment. The rejective commentaries surrounding Korean women's reception of *A Doll's House* is an excellent example of how the colonized male intellectuals tried to relaunch dominance over their female compatriots by creating another "imagined waiting room of history"²³⁵ for women inside the waiting room for the colonized—by telling them that they should not yet fully accept feminism. Enacting "the stagist theory of history on which European ideas of political modernity were based"²³⁶ on Korean women, these Korean male intellectuals revealed that gender was an integral part of colonial publicness as well.

5.4 Affirmative-Critical Commentaries of Korean Socialists

Socialist Views on the Inequality of Korean Women

In the 1920s and 1930s, many commentaries about *A Doll's House* were written from a socialist perspective. Socialism became a relevant ideology in debates on the women's rights movement in colonial Korea in the early 1920s. Mark E. Robinson identified three main reasons why socialism emerged in this period as an alternative political idea for some Koreans. Firstly, they became skeptical about "the future of the West and the wisdom of emulating its political model"²³⁷ after witnessing World War I. Secondly, although the Allied Powers were heralded with slogans such as "internationalism, pan[]humanism, and global cooperation,"²³⁸ colonized Koreans soon learned that these ideas were relevant only to the West and their powerful allies, such as imperial Japan. Meanwhile, Koreans' repeated attempts to find support amongst the Western countries for liberation from Japan failed because the Allies approved Japan's rule over the Korean peninsula. Thus, many Koreans felt left behind and developed "a sense of betrayal"²³⁹ towards Western liberalism. Thirdly, the failure of the 1919 March First Movement raised questions about the validity of "the pacificism and nonviolent tactics of the movement."²⁴⁰ As a result, an increasing number of Korean activists and intellectuals regarded socialism as a means of achieving emancipation from Japanese colonial rule.²⁴¹ Robinson points out

234 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8.

235 Ibid.

236 Ibid., 9.

237 Michael E. Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 107.

238 Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism*, 107.

239 Ibid., 108.

240 Ibid.

241 See *ibid.*

that after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Union emerged “as a champion of oppressed peoples,”²⁴² and as its ideological backbone, socialism had a strong appeal to the colonized Koreans.

Socialist ideas circulated among Korean diaspora communities in Russia, Manchuria, and Japan in the closing years of the 1910s, which led to the emergence of Korean socialist and communist organizations in and outside the Korean peninsula.²⁴³ For instance, Yi Tonghwi established the Korean Socialist Party (*Hanin Sahoe Tang*) in Khabarovsk in 1918; in the same year, Nam Manch'un instated the Korean section of the communist party in Irkutsk. Yi Tonghwi, again, founded the Korean Communist Party (*Koryŏ Kongsan Tang*) in Shanghai in 1921.²⁴⁴ On the Korean peninsula, organizations such as the Korean Women's Socialist League (*Chosŏn Yŏsŏng Tong'uhoe*, hereafter KWSL) and Korea Artista Proleta Federacio (KAPF) played a pivotal role in advocating socialist views in Korean public discourse.²⁴⁵

Korean sociologist Kim Kyŏng'il points out the different educational and religious backgrounds of Korean socialist women. While most liberal feminists studied in Japan and United States and had Christian beliefs, socialist women seldom had overseas experiences and kept a distance from the Christian religion.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, socialist feminists distinguished themselves from liberal feminists by critiquing their agenda, including reforming the home and Wise Mother and Good Wives, women's education, and suffrage, which sustained the capitalist system instead of subverting it.²⁴⁷ While the Korean socialist texts analyzed in this chapter focus on middle-class women in urban areas, Korean socialists demanded improvement of female factory workers' working conditions and sought solidarity with women in rural areas, too.²⁴⁸

Korean socialists explained discrimination against women and oppressive marriage custom as byproducts of capitalism.²⁴⁹ For instance, Pak Wŏnhŭi, a founding member of

242 Ibid., 107.

243 See *ibid.*, 109–14.

244 See *ibid.*, 109.

245 KWSL, the first Korean socialist women's organization, was established in May 1924. “They viewed economic transformation as the basis for the true emancipation of women and thus kept a central focus on women laborers as the basis of socio-economic and political transformation. [...] The socialist women were too literal in their interpretation of the foreign ideology of socialism and tried to apply the theory too mechanically to colonial Korea, which was still a feudal agricultural society.” Choi, “Introduction,” in *Sourcebook*, 8–9. KAPF was founded in August 1925 and lasted until May 1935. Literary scholar Kim Yunsik explains that “the KAPF political organization [] was communicating both directly and indirectly with RAPP (Rossiskaia Assotsiatsiia Proletarskikh Pisatelei) of the Soviet Union, as well as with NAPF (Nippona Artista Proletaria Federacio) of Japan,” and was thus “involved with the Comintern.” “KAPF Literature in Modern Korean Literary History,” *Positions* 14, no. 2 (2006), 405–25; refer to 407 and 422 (see note 1).

246 Kim Kyŏng'il, “1920-30-nyŏndae Han'guk ūi Shin Yŏsŏng kwa Sahoe Chu'ui [The Korean New Women and Socialism during the 1920s and 1930s],” *Han'guk Munhwa* 36 (2005), 249–95; see 251.

247 Kim, “New Women and Socialism,” 260.

248 For female factory workers' living conditions and gender politics see Yoo, *Politics of Gender*, 127–60. Women's magazine *Yŏsŏng chi Woo* (*Women's Friend*, 1920–30) thematized rural women's hardship and urban women's meaningful contribution to rural women's lives in various articles.

249 However, the socialist criticism ignores that the discrimination against women and marriage custom were established already before the capitalist economy took root in the Korean peninsula.

KWSL and Seoul Women's Youth Alliance (*Kyöngsöng Yöja Chöngnyön Hoe*), claimed that women were deprived of "all rights defined by constitutional and civil law" and "treated only as a means to reproduce and bring up children"²⁵⁰ through the gendered segregation of labor, which allocated women to the domestic realm. She recognized the influence of the French women's movement since the late eighteenth century and publications "such as Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Ghost*, Mrs. Ellen Key's theories of love (*yönaeron*), and British women's suffragette movement (*kwangp'öpa undong*)"²⁵¹ on Korean women's movements. Nevertheless, Pak Wönhüi evaluated them as only "a partial movement for women's emancipation" because she believed that the capitalist economy was "the fundamental problem."²⁵² In this belief, she claimed that "when we fix the capitalist economic system into a socialist economic system, we will have economic freedom; when we socialize the domestic labor, we will have the freedom of profession [...]"²⁵³ As the first step to women's liberation, Pak suggested "making teachings of the social science [socialism] clear and advocate them widely."²⁵⁴

Pyön Hüiyong's treatise "Historical Thoughts on the Men-Women Conflict," serially published by *Dong-A Ilbo* in 1922, was a salient example of early socialist commentaries on *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea. He understood the drama as a criticism of capitalism and marriage and argued that Nora's marriage depicted how marriage became an exchange of women's sex and men's money under capitalism. He argued:

To men's eyes, women were simply an instrument for [satisfying] libido, and to women's eyes, men were nothing but an easy means of living. How a minor conflict of interest develops into ferocious combat in a marriage based on greed is expressed in great detail in *A Doll's House* [...]. In short, all inequality between two sexes boils down to one problem: women's economic dependency on men.²⁵⁵

Identifying "women's economic dependency on men" as the fundamental source of gender-based inequality, Pyön claimed that "the first step to ending all inequality and all fights among men and women as well as the whole of humankind is to destroy the very roots of the capitalist economic system and realize economic equality."²⁵⁶ Both Pak and Pyön prioritized the spread of socialist worldviews, fought against capitalism, and claimed that women would achieve emancipation once socialist endeavors bore fruit.

However, when it came to how Korean women became economically dependent on men, Korean socialist men were quick to blame women for their own misery. Yang

Other socialist feminists were aware of this problem and focused on overcoming the custom. See Kim, "New Women and Socialism," 264–65. For the influence of Neo-Confucianism on lives of women during the Chosön Dynasty see Haboush, "Confucianization of Korean Society," 84–110, and Martina Deuchler, "Propagating Female Virtues in Chosön Korea."

250 Pak Wönhüi, "Urihoe üi Ch'uiji [Our Organization's Aim]," *DI*, January. 8, 1926, 3.

251 Pak, "Our Organization's Aim," *DI*, January. 8, 1926, 3.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.

254 Ibid.

255 Pyön Hüiyong, "Namnyö T'ujaeng üi Sajök Koch'al 3 [Historical Thoughts on the Men-Women Conflict 3]," *DI*, January 27, 1922, 1.

256 Pyön, "Historical Thoughts 3," *DI*, January 27, 1922, 1.

Myōng's 1924 essay revealed that some Korean socialist men considered women's emancipation exclusively a women's problem. Yang insisted that women should not expect any support from men in the socialist feminist movement because it might be as contradictory as "realizing socialism with the support of capitalism."²⁵⁷ Instead of solidarity across the gender boundary, Yang emphasized the importance of change in women's consciousness and took Nora as a positive example:

I am telling you that the women's rights movement fundamentally depends on the question of whether women are self-awakened. Becoming aware of the fact that they are someone's wife, mother, and at the same time individuals like men! Discovering oneself as a woman and concurrently an individual will be the true first step of the women's rights movement.²⁵⁸

As women's magazines exemplified, educated Korean women actively spoke out about their needs regarding social engagement and equality in the family from the 1920s.²⁵⁹ In line with this development, socialists began criticizing educated women for egoistically pursuing their own well-being. Particularly, criticizing Korean women's economic dependency on men and their alleged lack of self-awakening became socialist men's sport during the late 1920s. In his 1926 column "Korean New Women Forget about the Liberation of the Self," the socialist Ok Sunch'öl even argued that women might have "given up the human and individual life and maintained their lives because they subscribed to men's economic superiority and lived on men as a parasite."²⁶⁰ Although he did not clearly refer to Ibsen's drama, he repeatedly compared Korean women to dolls and toys, a metaphor whose emergence coincided with the popularization of *A Doll's House*.²⁶¹ Instead of patriarchy or gendered inequality in the distribution of means of production, he argued that it was women themselves who turned themselves into dolls. Remarkably, he denounced Korean female students for going to school "to become a more splendid accessory of men"²⁶² and insisted that women's school education might be comparable to *kisaeng* women's learning of poems and music. Echoing Ok's view, a male student at a renowned school asserted in his award-winning essay that Korean women likely consider men's financial ability the most crucial condition for marriage and compared their marriages to prostitution.²⁶³

Not only did such views neglect the gendered discrimination that hindered educated women from getting proper jobs after graduating from school, but they also contributed

257 Yang Myōng, "Sugam Tasöt P'yön [Five Thoughts that Came to My Mind]," *KB* (May 1924), 63–65.

258 Yang, "Five Thoughts," 64–65.

259 For the English translation of selected articles from Korean women's magazines see Choi, *Sourcebook*.

260 Ok Sunch'öl, "Chagi Haebang ül Manggak Hanün Chosön üi Shin Yösöng 3 [Korean New Women Forget about the Liberation of the Self 3]," *DI*, October 13, 1926, 3.

261 See Ok, "Forgetting Liberation of Self 2," *DI*, October 12, 1926, 3, and "Forgetting Liberation of Self 4," *DI*, October 14, 1926, 3; Ok, "Yangsöng Munje ro Poa Yönae Kyörhon ül Nonham [On Marriages Based on Yönae as a Gender Problem]," *Shinmin* (May 1927), 43.

262 Ok, "Forgetting Liberation of Self 4," *DI*, October 14, 1926, 3.

263 Ch'oe Hwal, "Na üi Honingwan 3 [My View on Marriage 3]," *DI*, January 12, 1927, 5.

to the tendency to blame women for their own discrimination. Socialist men often saw themselves as the evaluators and instructors of women's rights instead of comrades who suffered from the capitalist economy. Determining that Korean women were in the middle of a transition period from the premodern stage to the modern, Ok Sunch'öl promptly diagnosed that "Korean women, too, are in the middle of social evolution,"²⁶⁴ as if men were ahead in the alleged social evolutionary process. Meanwhile, KWSL pointed out that men were responsible for the oppression of women in their 1924 manifesto: "Men deprived us of all rights we originally had and gave us death and diseases instead."²⁶⁵ However, texts from Korean male socialists indicate that this criticism found little resonance among them.

In the discourse of socialist feminism, its evaluation of Nora deteriorated sharply in the late 1920s. There are two main reasons for this change. Firstly, Korean female workers' poor working conditions and lives drew critical attention from the public, which eventually changed the context of the reception of *A Doll's House*. Around this time, women's magazines disgorged articles on Korean female workers' precarious economic situation. The May 1932 issue of *Puin Kongnon* deplored that Korean women earned "an initial salary of a mere 15.6 wŏn per month, although their ordeal was not a small one to graduate from secondary school and find a job as a salesclerk, bank clerk, or office worker."²⁶⁶ Meanwhile, women who took up an occupation that did not require school education worked under even harsher conditions. The socialist women's magazine *Yösŏng chi Woo* interviewed a nanny, telephone operator, retailer, tram conductor, taxi driver, servant, housekeeper of a motel, rice cake seller, bank clerk, and oil seller in 1930, all of whom complained about the pressure, insults from supervisors and customers, sexual harassment, and low income.²⁶⁷

The louder Korean working class women's voices were, the harsher the criticisms of Nora's story became. For instance, reflecting on Ibsen's influence on the Korean women's movement, the literary critic Ahn Ham'gwang argued in 1932 that *A Doll's House* was the tragedy of the bourgeois class and that it was outdated: "Women's economic independence is the most important element to abolish bourgeois morality. In general, modern women, who breathe this social atmosphere, have already long been regarding something like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* as an antique."²⁶⁸

Secondly, Russian politician and writer Aleksandra Kollontai (1872–1956) overshadowed Nora as a new role model for Korean socialist women around this time. An "activist, essayist, author of social legislation on women's issues" and "the world's second female

264 Ok Sunch'öl, "Kwadogi üi Ilban Kyŏngnyang kwa Chosŏn Yösŏng üi Min'gamsŏng (chung) [General Tendency in a Transition Period and Korean Women's Sensibility 2]," *DI*, November 1, 1926, 3.

265 "Yösŏng Tong'u Palhoeshik ün 23-il Ch'öndogyo esŏ [KSWL Foundation Meeting on the 23rd at Ch'öndogyo Center]," *DI*, May 22, 1924, 2.

266 "Kkosip [Gossip]," *Puin Kongnon* (May 1932), 28–29; refer to 29.

267 "Chigöb Chŏnsŏn esŏ Iljin Ilt'oe Hanün Nangjagun üi Hamsŏng [The Shouts of Women Going Back and Forth on the Job Front]," *Yösŏng chi Woo* (January 1930), 24–36. For a similar article covering and targeting middle-class women, see "Chigöp Yösŏng Saenghwal Kirok [A Documentation of Working Women's Lives]," *SK* (January 1933), 127–39.

268 See An Ham'gwang, "Chosŏn Yösŏng kwa Munye [Korean Women and the Literary Art]," *Yŏin* (October 1932), 14–18; refer to 19.

ambassador²⁶⁹ in Norway, Kollontai was a vibrant personality in Soviet Russia. She became a pivotal figure in colonial Korean discourse of socialist feminism through her novel *Chōgyōn* (*Red Love*), which appeared in 1928 in Korea following the 1927 Japanese translation.²⁷⁰ Originally titled *Василиса Малыгина* (*Vasilisa Malygina*) after the protagonist, *Red Love* introduced a female character who prioritized her social engagement over domestic labor and marriage.²⁷¹ Furthermore, the *Dong-A Ilbo* published an essay by Kollontai in December 1929 under the title “Views on Love and Marriage in the Future Society”, in which she declared that when more women had income through paid work, they would neither need to marry men nor depend on them:

New women commence work. They will go into business, industry, teaching, and other works. From year to year, the number of women who support themselves increases. As they live an economically independent life, they will lead a life as a human and a useful [person] like men do. They will be gradually liberated from marriage as a means of living. Unlike in the past, they will not have to behave suave or chaste to draw men’s affection. This has been their trouble and handicap.²⁷²

Kollontai foresaw that women’s economic independence from men would change love and marriage. She argued further that

Today’s women, the professionals who have achieved independent living, do not prioritize love (*yōnae*). For instance, it is clear that a female doctor would not misuse her time for her beloved husband. In this way, when women have a sense of fulfillment through their professional duty, they will work for their profession instead of their husbands.²⁷³

Responsive to Kollontai’s texts and biographic details about her love life, some Korean socialists actively spread the idea that women should devote themselves to work instead of love and marriage. While Kollontai emerged as the new role model for socialist women, Nora was depreciated. For instance, Chōng Ch’ilsōng, a socialist feminist and former *kisaeng*, disapproved of Nora as a role model for socialist women in 1929, as she debated Kollontai’s perspective regarding women’s roles in both society and in the family with a journalist in the popular magazine *Samch’ōlli*:

Nora’s [liberation] was a case of individual self-awakening. Because she was awakened to her individuality, she was able to leave her barrister husband’s house one snowy night. But where could she go and what resources did she have to support herself? It

269 Ruth Barraclough, Heather Bowen-Struyk, and Paula Rabinowitz, “Introduction: Sex, Texts, Comrades,” in *Red Love Across the Pacific: Political and Sexual Revolutions of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Barraclough et al., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), vi–xviii; see xiii.

270 Barraclough et al., “Introduction,” xii.

271 Aleksandra Kollontai, “Vasilisa Malygina,” in *Love of Worker Bees*, trans. Cathy Porter (Chicago: Academy Press Limited, [1923]1978) 21–181.

272 Kollontai, “Changnae Sahoe üi Yōnae kŭp Kyōrhon’gwan (sang), [Views on Love and Marriage in Future Society 1],” trans. KWP-Saeng, *DI*, December 1, 1929, 4.

273 Kollontai, “Views on Love 1,” *DI*, December 1, 1929, 4.

is not "liberation" if she escapes only to starve or freeze to death on the street. Thus, if one is not economically liberated, liberation has no meaning. A woman like Nora is either an empty idealist or not, in fact, truly liberated. In contrast, as described above, Vasilisa is completely liberated, isn't she?²⁷⁴

While criticizing Nora's choice, Chŏng shows some understanding of how Korean women had little room to make their own decisions, which distinguishes her from Korean male socialists. When the journalist asked her if she would choose social activism despite her husband's threat to expel her, Chŏng pointed out the precarity that awaited divorced women without economic power:

But when such a thing happens under Korean circumstances, women typically do not have the means to support themselves or provide for their own basic sustenance. Therefore, women should work for society but only to the extent that their husbands would not abandon them. I believe that women can maintain a balance between domestic and social duties without creating conflict if they work on it daily.²⁷⁵

As Pak Wŏnhŭi and Chŏng Ch'ilsŏng's critiques illustrate, Korean socialist women expressed strong skepticism about Nora's suitability as a symbol of women's emancipation in the second half of the 1920s. They were pessimistic about Nora's final decision due to the lack of material basis to support herself after leaving her home. Notably, Chŏng's question—"Where could she go and what resources did she have to support herself?"—was actively explored in the 1930s in novels written from a socialist perspective by Chae Mansik and Shim Hun, which will be discussed in the following section.

Nora's Awakening as a Socialist (1): *Why She Left the Doll's House*

Why She Left the Doll's House, serialized by the daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* from May 27, 1933, to November 14, 1933, depicts Nora's fate after leaving home under a scenario in which she is a Korean woman of that time. By adapting the drama, Ch'ae Mansik tried to overcome the limitations of Nora's choice in *A Doll's House* from a socialist perspective. He wrote:

When a middle-class wife abandons her home and runs away with bare hands, it could be a step for women's liberation, but not yet its completion. In her idealistic mind, Nora left her home for the sake of freedom and liberation, but, indeed, the world would not have moved as she ideally wanted it to. Therefore, which path should she have taken to eliminate the petite-bourgeois meaning she had in life and find a path to true emancipation? In other words, [my novel depicts] a dialectical development process of women's liberation where the freedom, once affirmed, is repeatedly denied, and then reaffirmed.²⁷⁶

274 Chŏng Ch'ilsŏng, "Critique on *Red Love*: Kollontai's Sexual Morality," in Choi, *Sourcebook*, 105–08; refer to 108.

275 Chŏng, "Critique on *Red Love*," 106.

276 Ch'ae Mansik, "Inhyŏng ū Chip ūl Nawasŏ rŭl Ssŭmyŏnsŏ [On Writing *After Leaving the Doll's House*]," *SL* (September 1933), 77. Based on the novelist's notes, the Korean literary historian Pang

The novelist regarded the liberal feminist agenda in *A Doll's House* as imperfect because Nora's notion of liberation was bound to her class, and the world outside her home would defeat her. Nevertheless, he is more interested in exploring a way to "true emancipation" in the Korean context than defaming middle-class women.

To this end, Ch'ae transplanted the fictional world of *A Doll's House* into colonial Korean society, simply replacing the Norwegian nationality, names, geographic and institutional names with Korean ones while keeping the characteristics and conflicts from the original drama. Nora Helmer becomes a Korean woman named Yim No-ra and her husband Hyön Sökjun, a Korean lawyer and banker. Through this bold localization, the author depicts what a Korean woman would undergo if she left her husband and children behind just as Nora did.

Ch'ae Mansik represented early 1930s colonial Korean society as a precarious place, especially for women without economic means. After leaving her husband and children, No-ra struggles to make a living and tries to support herself through wage labor. To be free from her husband and bring her children back to her, No-ra first needs to earn her own living. However, all she can get are insecure jobs that threaten her economic stability and her sexual self-determination.

No-ra finds occasional jobs as a private tutor, street vendor for cosmetics, and waitress at a café, where she experiences humiliation and sexual violence. No-ra is guaranteed housing and a stable salary as a private tutor, but she quits her job after being molested by the son of the wealthy *yangban* family.²⁷⁷ After earning little money as a cosmetic salesperson, she starts working as a waitress at Café Satan, naïvely believing in the false promise that she could quickly earn a lot of money. At work, No-ra, who goes by the pseudonym Yuriko, is constantly exposed to sexual harassment yet must invest in expensive dresses to attract even more male customers and maintain her living. In doing so, she falls into a vicious cycle of poverty and sex work. Eventually, Yuriko tries to kill herself after being made drunk and raped by a customer. She survives her attempt, but as the commotion surrounding her suicide is featured in a newspaper with a photograph of her face, her social reputation is damaged, and she sees no chance of finding any job.²⁷⁸

Ch'ae Mansik summarizes what No-ra learned from being outside of the doll's house through No-ra's suicide note addressed to her friend Hyegyöng, equivalent to Mrs. Linde in *A Doll's House*.

I left home and my husband, who considered his wife a doll and slave, to become a free human instead of a slave. [...] I, a woman called Yim No-ra, have once become a free human being who can live without any hesitation. But what cost did I pay for obtaining

Minho discovered that Ch'ae planned numerous alterations of the serialized novel, including the title. This study uses the title *Why She Left the Doll's House* as the novelist planned to do so. See Pang Minho, "Hüigwi han Munhak Yusan, Ch'ae Mansik Kyojōngbon Inhyōng üi Chip üi Naon Yōnyu [A Rare Literary Legacy, Ch'ae Mansik's Revised Version of *Why She Left the Doll's House*]," in *Inhyōng üi Chip üi Naon Yōnyu: Chōja Kyojōngbon Ch'ae Mansik Changp'yōn Sosōl [Why She Left the Doll's House: Ch'ae Mansik's Novel Based on the Author's Recension]*, ed. Pang Minho (Seoul: Yeok, 2009), 512–27; refer to 523–26.

277 Ch'ae, *Why She Left*, 415.

278 *Ibid.*, 505.

this freedom? From the first day of freedom until today, I was only under pressure to support myself. If I had enough money, I could have enjoyed the freedom that I had already gained. But I could not savor the freedom because I was busy earning my daily meal. [...] Eventually, as even this [selling cosmetics] was not enough to avoid famine, I walked into the crowd of prostitutes and got to sell my face and smile just like them. [What I had was] A freedom to sell my smile and flirtation! [...] Well, have I not paid too great a price to earn empty freedom, the false freedom that I cannot fully enjoy? Freedom to starve, a freedom to be lonely, a freedom to become a slave to have food, freedom to sell smiles, flirtation, and chastity! And freedom to violate moral laws of family relationships! Dear Hyegyöng, do you think it is freedom? Nothing of the kind!²⁷⁹

Meanwhile, Ch'ae made it clear that No-ra's ordeal was not just the specific case of an ingenious New Woman. Other female characters such as Oksun, a traditional young woman abandoned by her husband, and Sönghüi, dependent on her abusive patron, exemplify other paths that lead Korean women to precarity.²⁸⁰ By carefully examining the different paths that the lives of women from various economic and educational backgrounds took, the novel enriches the Norwegian drama, which solely focused on Nora, a middle-class woman.

This pessimistic outlook is very similar to that of Kim Tong'in's short story *The Wife of the Incompetent Man*, which was analyzed earlier. However, Ch'ae Mansik took a step further from the spot where Kim finished with cynicism and related how No-ra starts a new life as a factory worker. In other words, he presented socialism as the synthesis of the "dialectical development process of women's liberation," which allegedly overcame the limits of the liberal pursuit of individual freedom and the patriarchal and capitalist society that exploited her.

Instead of passing moral judgment on her, Ch'ae Mansik uses No-ra's experience of precarity and sexualized work as a vehicle for her transformation into a socialist feminist worker. She first goes to the printing plant out of necessity after the suicide attempt and naïvely idealizes the physical labor, calling it "sacred."²⁸¹ However, through her neighbor and co-worker Namsu, who introduces her to the job, she becomes aware that in the factory, too, were struggles between the ones who "invest money and take advantage from profits" and the workers who "generate the profit through labor."²⁸² In other words: a class struggle. No-ra, who began using her childhood Korean name Suni upon entering the factory, learns about the necessity of strikes from Namsu.²⁸³ Only then can she finally understand August Bebel's *Puinron* (G: *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, E: *Women under Socialism*), which she received from her childhood friend and underground socialist activist Oh Pyöngt'aek at the beginning of her departure from home.²⁸⁴

279 Ibid., 481–83.

280 Ibid., 388 and 410.

281 Ibid., 507.

282 Ibid., 508.

283 Ibid., 509.

284 Ibid., 327.

Written by the German Social Democratic Party founder, *Woman under Socialism* was translated into Japanese three times in the 1920s.²⁸⁵ First appearing in German in 1879, *Woman under Socialism* quickly became a very influential book within about 20 years with 33 editions. Encompassing women's history in the West from the era before Christ to the future, Bebel criticized capitalism as the root of discrimination against women and presented socialism as the path women should take to liberate themselves.²⁸⁶ In colonial Korea, the member of the Korean Communist Party Pae Söngryong (1896–1964) translated some excerpts of the book and published them under the title *Puin Haebang kwa Hyönshil Saenghwal* (*Women's Liberation and Real Life*) in 1925.²⁸⁷

Figure 15: An illustration of Nora reading Bebel's *Woman under Socialism*.



Source: *Chosun Ilbo*, November 12, 1933, 7. Courtesy of Chosun Ilbo.

As No-ra, a middle-class woman who just left her home without any experience with wage labor, she could not understand a single phrase of the book.²⁸⁸ As she becomes a factory worker named Suni and tries to read the book once again (see figure 15), she is

285 There were three Japanese translations of Bebel's *Woman under Socialism*: Yamakawa Kikue's 1923 translation, Kusama Heisaku's 1927 translation, and Kato Katsuo's 1928 translation. All three versions were published under the title *Fujinron* (*On Women*) which was the Japanese equivalent to *Puinron*. Most likely, the Korean translation, published in 1925, was based on Yamakawa Kikue's Japanese translation. See Pang, "Rare Literary Legacy," 517.

286 August Bebel, *Woman under Socialism*, trans. Daniel De Leon (New York: Labor News Company, 1904).

287 "Pae Söngryong," in *Han'guk Sahoe Chu'i Inmyöng Sajön* [The Biographical Dictionary of Korean Socialism], ed. Kang Man'gil and Söng Taekyöng (Seoul: Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yöngsa, 1996), 223.

288 Ch'ae, *Why She Left*, 328.

struck by “a phrase that entered her head and made her eyes open wide.”²⁸⁹ This moment marks Suni's second self-awakening as a socialist and feminist worker of colonial Korea that would replace the first one that led to “false freedom.” Ch'ae Mansik quoted:

Namely, the question concerns the position that woman should occupy in our social organism; how she may unfold her powers and faculties in all directions, to the end that she becomes a complete and useful member of human society, enjoying equal rights with all. From our viewpoint, this question coincides with that other: —what shape and organization human society must assume to the end that, in the place of *want and misery* in manifold forms, there shall be physical and social *progress* on the part of the individual and of society. To us, accordingly, the woman question is only one of the aspects of the general social question, which is now filling the brains of all people of thought and *setting all minds in motion*. *Omission* (emphasis added).²⁹⁰

The quote is included in the newspaper version of the novel, but Ch'ae removed the whole citation as he prepared for the book's publication. Regarding the frequent deletion of terms related to socialism in the novel, it is very likely that he had to remove the quote due to the colonial censorship.²⁹¹ Meanwhile, I found that the quote in the newspaper version already contained alterations of Bebel's text reflecting the colonial Korean situation.²⁹² Firstly, the Korean translation omitted “oppression (*Unterdrückung*)” and “exploitation (*Ausbeutung*)” and mentioned only “want and misery in manifold terms” as the social problem. Secondly, instead of “physical and social health (*physische und soziale Gesundheit*),” the Korean translation used “physical and social progress.” Thirdly, while Bebel ended the paragraph with a political claim that the social question “can find its final solution only in the abolition of the existing social contradictions, and of the evils which flow from them (*sie kann daher ihre endgültige Lösung nur finden durch die Aufhebung der gesellschaftlichen Gegensätze und Beseitigung der aus diesen hervorgehenden Übel*),” this is omitted in the Korean version. Notably, this is indicated by the word “omission” at the end of the sentence. While the change from “health” to “progress” reflected the zeal for modernity in colonial Korea, the first and the third alterations evoke the impression that they had to be changed due to the subversive and regime-critical undertone, which might have provoked the colonial censorship. Through these alterations, Bebel's call for the system-changing revolution vanished, and emphasis was put on the woman question as one part of a *bigger* social problem.

Combined with her own biography, this passage makes No-ra rethink her ordeal from a different—socialists would say *broader*—perspective: that it is rooted in the capitalist economic system. This recognition offers her an explanation for her hardship

289 Ibid., 509.

290 Ch'ae, “Why She Left the Doll's House 149,” *CI*, November 12, 1933, 7, as cited in: Pang, “Rare Literary Legacy,” 526. For the English translation of Ch'ae Mansik's Korean citation I refer to Daniel De Leon's 1904 English translation. See Bebel, *Woman under Socialism*, 1.

291 Pang, “Rare Literary Legacy,” 526.

292 For the comparison, I consulted the following German edition: August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*: 136. bis 140. *Tausend nach der Jubiläumsausgabe unverändert* (Stuttgart: Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz nachf. G.m.b.H. 1913), 1.

and a new goal at the same time. From now on, No-ra aims to fight against capitalism as factory worker Suni instead of the gender norms that forced her to play the part of a mother and wife.

Ch'ae Mansik's novel adopts the famous final scene of *A Doll's House* in the final part. While the last conversation between Nora and Helmer in the play exposes the patriarchal oppression of women, the last conversation in the Korean adaptation reveals the contradictions and conflicts contained in Korean colonial capitalism in the 1930s. Yim No-ra, the Korean New Woman, is portrayed as a symbolic figure reborn as a socialist worker through a dialectical process and experiences of precarity as a female wage worker. Sökjun, who became a bank manager, runs into No-ra at the printing factory; it turns out that the factory is under the supervision of his bank.²⁹³ This time, the dialogue takes place in the conference room of the factory instead of the living room, as they represent the agents of colonial capitalism and the colonized laborers.

"Oh, you are good at talking. But what a beggar you became although you were so vigorous, and you even came back under my control in the end—that is a sight."

No-ra was about to cry bitter tears at Hyön's triumphant sneer, but she fought back the tears and gave a bold answer.

"Right, you are right. I ran away from your home as I did not want to be your slave, and now I'm dependent on you again. You may find it delightful as if you won, but the fight between you and me is from now on. Although I do not know it yet thoroughly, people say that [living in] the world means a fight. And I think they are right. So, let us fight against each other."

After saying this, No-ra left the conference room.

The machine makes a loud beating sound in the machinery room. No-ra felt the pulse of her vessels where her hot blood flows following the sound of the machine.²⁹⁴

As Sökjun laughs at her economic downfall as her husband, No-ra responds as a worker. This way, the conflict between the two leaves the marital realm and enters the socioeconomic dimension. No-ra is determined to fight against a male beneficiary of the gendered and colonized economic system as a woman who is constantly exposed to the dangers of economic and sexual exploitation. Given that the banking business was under strict control of the Government-General and the high-positioned bankers collaborated closely with the Japanese colonizer, No-ra's last declaration of the fight can be read as an anti-colonial announcement under the cover of marital and anti-capitalist conflict. In this sense, Ch'ae Mansik, too, regarded the women's liberation movement as a path leading to anti-colonialism, which is in line with Yi Sangsu's view as revealed in the preface of *A Doll's House*.

Certainly, No-ra's fate is as precarious as it was after she first ran away and her struggle against her powerful husband is likely to fail. Forty-three years later, the Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek wrote a play that looked like a follow-up to Ch'ae Mansik's novel. *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* (*What Happened after Nora Left Her Husband or Pillars of the Society*) tells the story of Nora, who

293 Ch'ae, *Why She Left*, 509.

294 *Ibid.*, 510–11.

has become a factory worker like No-ra yet returns to her husband as she cannot endure life as a laborer.²⁹⁵ However, in Korean society in the early 1930s, when there was a belief that socialism was an ideology that could counter the totalitarian system of colonialism, No-ra's second awakening as a socialist possibly sent a strong message to New Women of the time, who were despised as the Noras of Chosŏn, as well as to the so-called unawakened readers and spectators.

Nora's Awakening as a Socialist (2): *Vega*

Meanwhile, Shim Hun's novel *Vega* depicts the life of a Korean woman who forms an alternative community under the influence of socialism after divorcing her husband.²⁹⁶ While Ch'ae Mansik focused on the fate of Korean New Women who enjoyed Western-style marriage life, Shim Hun demonstrates that Korean marriage custom and family concepts, too, turn old-fashioned women into voiceless dolls in their own ways. Yim No-ra seeks to establish economic independence outside the family, yet the protagonist of *Vega* re-enters another home where domestic work and child-rearing are considered social labor.

The protagonist Yi Insuk is compared to a doll (*inhyŏng*) from the start because she gets married only for her parents' satisfaction. At the age of fourteen, Insuk is forced to marry a twelve-year-old boy called Yun Ponghwan by an agreement between the fathers of the two families. Her doll-like state is visually highlighted through the wedding scene. On the wedding day, she looked "undoubtedly like a doll" due to "a large decoration on her head, a bucket full of powder that covers [her face], red rouge on her cheeks and forehead while [she] sat finely with eyes closed in a long and wide-sleeved bridal robe."²⁹⁷

By identifying Insuk with Nora from *A Doll's House*, Shim Hun rehabilitates Nora of Chosŏn as a name for Korean women who were expected to be submissive to their in-laws and husband. Having learned traditional women's duties such as sewing, cooking, preparing rituals, and reading Confucian books on women's virtues, Insuk serves the Yun Family as the daughter-in-law who values tradition for more than a decade. Poksun, an incognito socialist activist who works as Ponghwan's tutor, compares Insuk to Ibsen's Nora. As she sees Insuk wearing a married woman's hairdo and playing the role of a daughter-in-law and wife, Poksun thinks to herself: "How young the person is to be married and to serve her in-laws. You, too, are Nora's reincarnation."²⁹⁸

Vega, which handles the ordeal of "Nora's reincarnation" in colonial Korea, serves as an affirmative literary commentary on *A Doll's House*. *Vega* follows in the Norwegian drama's criticism that women are under oppression based on gender differences in marriage. Shim Hun creates a powerful reality by constructing Insuk's story using narratives of Korean women's ordeals, encompassing early marriage and being abandoned and infected

295 See Jelinek, "Was Geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte, oder Stützen der Gesellschaften," in *Theaterstücke* (Reinbek: Rororo 2001), eds. Ute Nyssen et al., 5th edition, 7–78.

296 Shim Hun, *Chingnyŏsŏng (Sang)* and *(Ha)* [*Vega* vol. 1 and 2], ed. Kim Chong'uk and Pak Chŏnghŭi, *Shim Hun Chŏnjip 4* [Complete Works of Shim Hun 4] (Seoul: Küllurim, [1935]2016).

297 Shim, *Vega* 1, 81.

298 *Ibid.*, 201.

with STDs through their husbands, which circulated through newspapers and magazines. As *Vega* was serialized in the daily newspaper *Chosŏn Chung'ang Ilbo*, readers could have even more easily drawn the connection between Insuk's story and Korean women's hardship of that time.

Shim Hun shows how marriage and sexuality reform added a burden to Korean women socialized in a conventional manner. Thereby, Shim Hun takes a critical stance towards Seoul's demimonde as a byproduct of Japan's imperial capitalism, which morally corrupts Korean men and exploits impoverished women as sex workers.²⁹⁹ New urban culture and lifestyles, such as movie watching, studying abroad, and cruising through cafés, offered Ponghwan an unprecedented variety of sexual outlets, which estranges him from the marriage. The novel sheds light on the other side of urban culture praised as symbols of modernity.

Vega depicts the clash between the capitalist entertainment industry that created the space to explore and consume sexuality and the rigorous restriction of sexuality. Ponghwan becomes sexually active by watching "a disgusting scene where [a man] dances tightly with a Western woman in a thin robe that reveals her white and glossy flesh" in a movie and how "they hug, rub, and kiss each other."³⁰⁰ He begins to regard Insuk as "a partner to practice [things] that he saw in the motion picture."³⁰¹ However, by the customary rule that dictates that the family's elders decide if and when the youngest married couple can sleep together, Ponghwan's mother forbids him from spending time with his wife. Ponghwan finds a sexual outlet in the sex industry that flourished under colonial rule, which eventually leads to the economic and moral bankruptcy of the Yun Family.³⁰²

The novel thematizes Insuk's helplessness originating from her duties as a wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law. Despite her husband's repeated affairs and sexual threats, she cannot decide over her own body and sexuality. Outraged by Ponghwan's affair, Insuk eventually runs back to her mother, who begs her to return to her family-in-law and persevere.³⁰³ What awaits her at the Yun Family is her mother-in-law's decision to make her sleep with Ponghwan. Disgusted by his approach, Insuk pushes him away, which gives him excuses to torture her emotionally. He purposefully neglects her for dozens of days and finds support in his family. Feeling guilty, Insuk finally seeks to soothe him by complying with his sexual desire.³⁰⁴

Shim Hun reveals the problem of gendered repression inherent in Korean marriages by showing how Ponghwan, also a victim of the early marriage system like Insuk, abuses her. As the two innocent children grow up, they each take a completely different course of

299 For descriptions of Seoul's cafés, restaurants, and streets in the night see the chapter "Human Hell [In'gan Chiok]," particularly 425–44. "Human Hell" was erased and modified by the colonial censors as the novel was published as a book. For analysis see Kwŏn Ch'ŏlho, "Shim Hun ūi Changp'yŏn Sosŏl Chingnyŏsŏng Chaego [Rethinking Shim Hun's Novel *Vega*]," *Ōmun Yŏngŭ* 43, no. 2 (2015), 357–85; see 373–77.

300 Shim, *Vega* 1, 222.

301 *Ibid.*, 222–23.

302 *Ibid.*, 223.

303 See *ibid.*, 224–32.

304 See *ibid.*, 233–56.

development and power position in their relationship mainly because of the entitlements and roles unequally given to each of them. Pampered by the elders, Ponghwan grows into a ruthless man solely driven by desire, while Insuk is strictly taught to be submissive to her husband. The bleakness of this inequality becomes most apparent when he rapes her while she sleeps. Doing so, he not only makes her pregnant against her will but also infects her with gonorrhoea, which he acquired from his Japanese lover during his art study in Tokyo.³⁰⁵

Unlike in *A Doll's House*, the Yun Family throws Insuk out of their home in the misbelief that she became pregnant through adultery.³⁰⁶ This defamation is Ponghwan's intrigue to divorce her and to marry his new lover. To protect herself and their son Ilnam, Insuk refuses to divorce. However, Ponghwan physically attacks her and their three-month-old son and runs away. Chasing after him through a cold winter night, Insuk forgets about Ilnam's presence on her back, leading to the infant's tragic death. Deep in sorrow, Insuk attempts to commit suicide in the Han River.³⁰⁷ All of this seems to be a painful realization of a phrase from an old poem that her mother once told her: "Do not be born into the body of a woman. A woman's sadness and happiness of life are in the hands of others."³⁰⁸

Like in *Why She Left the Doll's House*, Insuk's life takes a rapid turn after being rescued from the river. Although her new life takes solid shape after divorcing Ponghwan, the means to change her life is offered by other women engaged in socialism and evades the normative family model. Poksun is the crucial figure who introduces Insuk, "an old-fashioned woman who did not know the world outside the walls, to the new ideology and the changing zeitgeist."³⁰⁹ A daughter of the despised stratum and an unmarried socialist woman, Poksun explains to Insuk about socialism, current discussions on *yŏnae* and marriage reform, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, and Ellen Key.³¹⁰ Like Yim No-ra from *Why She Left the Doll's House*, Insuk, too, does not understand much about the feminist and socialist agenda at first. Blaming Nora for abandoning her children, Insuk has even more sympathy for Helmer than Nora: "What a cruel mother she is. Even animals cherish their babies."³¹¹

However, Insuk's growing knowledge in socialism and feminism gives her the language and concepts to understand the ordeal she undergoes. Particularly, the feminist agenda of the early 1930s is essential for Insuk to recognize the forced intercourse by Ponghwan as rape in the marriage.³¹² Having heard of feminist claims such as "at least

305 See Shim, *Vega* 2, 160–63.

306 See *ibid.*, 172–79.

307 See *ibid.*, 172–79 and 303–65.

308 *Ibid.*, 364.

309 *Ibid.*, 363.

310 Shim, *Vega* 1, 209.

311 *Ibid.*

312 See Shim, *Vega* 2, 163. The radicalness of this claim in the Korean context of the 1930s might become comprehensible in light of the fact that the Supreme Court of Korea recognized non-consensual sex in marriage as rape for the first time in 2013. See Korean Supreme Court, 2012 To 14788, https://file.scourt.go.kr/AttachDownload?file=1369037623205_171343.pdf&path=001&downFile=2012%B5%B514788.pdf.

after the marriage, men, too, should remain chaste”³¹³ from Poksun, Insuk becomes not only furious about her husband but also the structural injustice underlying her dependence on him, namely economic inequality based on sex:

‘Is it acceptable when a cultured and clean woman’s individuality is neglected, and even her chastity is violated by a venereal disease patient under the name of marriage? Oh, is this what the conjugal system is about? Is this what marriage is about? Is this [the fate of] Chosŏn women concealed in a jail named home that she cannot complain about it even after being degraded this way?’³¹⁴

‘Why can’t a woman live on her own? Is it absolutely impossible to support oneself without becoming a man’s parasite?’ the question arose anew. ‘With or without love, am I not utterly silenced while being humiliated by someone else, just because I am relying on [my husband] to get clothed and fed? Isn’t it because I am not able to be economically independent?’ As she repeated what she read in books and heard from Poksun in her mind, she regretted again and again: ‘If only I persisted in going to school.’³¹⁵

Other socialist women help Insuk to prepare for a new life after the divorce, too. Hŏ Chŏngja, a medical doctor and Poksun’s friend, cures Insuk of the harm that Ponghwan caused: she remedies Insuk’s gonorrhoea, helps her with the delivery and tries to save Il-nam’s life without claiming medical expenses.³¹⁶ As a woman who supports herself and has social contacts, Hŏ Chŏngja is a role model for Insuk and helps her establish an independent life of her own. As Insuk decides to become a kindergarten teacher after her divorce, the doctor arranges her admission to a nursery school.³¹⁷

Meanwhile, Ponghŭi, the younger sister of Ponghwan, who increasingly accepts socialism through her lover Sech’ŏl, plays a role as an ambassador for Insuk in the conservative Yun Family. She supports Insuk’s first school education and enables her to take the first step out of the domestic realm.³¹⁸ Furthermore, Ponghŭi and her socialist husband, Sech’ŏl, build a new home against the wishes of the elders of the Yun Family and offer Insuk and Poksun to join their community.³¹⁹ As a result, Ponghŭi and Insuk rejoin as members of an alternative family based on their shared political ideals.

Shim Hun demonstrates the alternative family as the smallest unit of a socialist community. As such, Insuk, Poksun, Ponghŭi, and Sech’ŏl aid “nearly two hundred proletarian children”³²⁰ and run a school and a kindergarten for them with their loans from other jobs. Instead of conventional family roles, they define and fulfill their functions on political terms—“as if they were running a small country:”

313 Shim, *Vega* 1, 240.

314 Shim, *Vega* 2, 163.

315 *Ibid.*, 165.

316 See *ibid.*, 190–200, 279–85, and 347–60.

317 *Ibid.*, 409.

318 Shim, *Vega* 1, 305.

319 Shim, *Vega* 2, 413–14.

320 *Ibid.*, 412.

[...] as if they were running a small country, they decided that Poksun represents this joint family as a diplomat, Insuk is responsible for the household and childrearing, and Ponghŭi plays the part of a treasurer; as Sech'öl is so busy that he wished he had several bodies, they established a constitution and made him a secretary, who takes care of things in general.³²¹

The cohabitation of the four people, who “came together under the same mind and ideology despite their uniqueness,” represents a utopian community that defies the “old morals, tradition, and concepts”³²² such as social stratum and economic class. Shim Hun idealizes this form of living as a community without any internal conflict.

Vega functions as an affirmative socialist commentary on Ibsen's *A Doll's House* by showing the development of “Nora's reincarnation” as an independent socialist woman. Instead of an educated New Woman, Shim Hun depicts how a conventional woman like Insuk leaves her family and becomes a social worker living in a socialist community. Instead of leaving home for good, the novel's protagonists broaden the notion of home and build an alternative version. In this socialist community, childrearing and chores are classified as a profession outside the family structure. As *Vega* implies the reconceptualization and restructuring of home as the starting point of the regional socialist movement under the Japanese colonial rule, this novel can be read as a commentary of *A Doll's House* with a subversive subtext.

Despite its concept of a rebellious home, it is questionable if *Vega* went so far as to destroy the maternal ideal. Although *Vega* declares the household is also a profession, this specific profession is still imposed on women. The fact that Insuk, once compared to “Nora's reincarnation,” appears at the end of the novel as “the Holy Mother”³²³ hints that even under the socialist utopia, the roles each member takes would be influenced by their gender and the deep-rooted images attached to it. Regarding this, it is conceivable that Insuk would need to open the door and leave her community again to become someone other than the Holy Mother.

5.5 Feminist Commentaries

A Gendered Silence Surrounding *A Doll's House*

Feminist commentaries of *A Doll's House* appeared ephemerally yet continuously in the 1920s and 1930s, forging a space for an alternative audience publicness. By feminist commentaries, I refer to such texts and traces that foregrounded criticisms of patriarchal suppression of women and gender inequalities instead of sidelining them to advocate other political agendas, such as nationalism and socialism. As discussed above, even commentators who called for the improvement of Korean women's precarious situation often considered this problem to be inherently subordinate to *more significant* political

321 Ibid., 421.

322 Ibid., 422.

323 Shim, *Vega* 2, 425.

questions, including the nation's competitiveness or problems of capitalism in colonial Korea when they discussed the Norwegian drama. These commentators tended to affirm *A Doll's House's* emancipatory message if it contributed to addressing other political problems. Furthermore, the late 1920s witnessed the backlash of anti-feminism, which had also influenced commentaries about *A Doll's House*, as some of texts—including Yi Kwangsu's "To Nora" and Kim Tong'in's *The Wife of the Incompetent Man*—exemplify.

Korean women seldom mentioned the drama in their writings about women's issues, not to mention literary treatises. The sparseness of the commentaries written by women can be regarded as a silence requiring decipherment given the following two facts: firstly, there are indications that Korean women were silent on particular issues, including the Norwegian drama. As the drama was translated into the Korean language and vigorously discussed from the early 1920s to the late 1930s, the number of publications written by women increased rapidly. As the so-called cultural rule of the Government-General eased the conditions for Korean media, at least seven novel women's magazines were launched in the first half of the 1920s alone.³²⁴ Newly established Korean daily newspapers such as the *Chosun Ilbo* and the *Dong-A Ilbo* had an extra segment for female readers. Literate women who were amateur writers and readers expressed their ordeals in everyday life, opinions on social issues, and published their literary creations in this new print medium. It is possible that even for Korean women who actively spoke out about their opinions, it was hard to discuss *A Doll's House* openly. Publishers might have regarded the drama as unsuitable for their magazines as most women's magazines and their female writers tried to represent Wise Mothers and Good Wives as role models for their female readers.³²⁵

Secondly, even if the scope is narrowed down to writers and critics, the silence of women is noticeable. Male intellectuals of the same period vigorously published treatises, articles, and reviews on *A Doll's House* or Henrik Ibsen concerning Western literature in general or Western philosophies. While Korean male authors contributed to the interpretation and construction of the drama's meaning by writing literary works of various genres, female writers did not. Except for Na Hyesök, female writers of that time did not actively use *A Doll's House* as literary material.

324 These include *Yöja Shiron* (*Women's Timely Discussions*, established in January 1920), *Shin Yöja* (*New Women*, established in March 1920), *Kajöng Chapchi* (*Home Magazine*, established in May 1922), *Puin'gye* (*Women's World*, established in February 1923), *Söng'ae* (*Sexual Love*, established in March 1924), *Punyö chi Kwang* (*Women's Light*, established in July 1924), and *Puin* (*Women*, May 1925). See Oh Yöngsik, "Yösöng Chapchi Yöng'inbon Haeje [Introduction to the Photoprint Edition of Korean Women's Magazines]," in *Collectanea: Women's Magazines* 1, ed. Adan Mun'go (Seoul: Somyöng Ch'ulp'an, 2014), 6–46.

325 Examining Korean women's magazines' role in constructing the ideal womanhood in the 1920s and 1930s, Kim Kyöng'yön's 2017 study found that "in the 1920s and 30s, women's magazines became the main discourse space that formed 'woman' as a 'group' or 'category,' as the discourse that imposed the duties and roles of women became dominant while women's subjective awakening or self-discovery was negated." See *Kündae Yösöng Munhak üi T'ansaeng kwa Midiö üi Kyot'ong: 1920–30-nyöndaeyösöng Munhak üi Hyöngsöng kwa Yösöng Chapchi üi Chendö Chöngch'i* [*Women's Magazines in the 1920s-1930s and Their Effect on the Formation of Modern Women's Literature in Korea*] (Seoul: Somyöng Ch'ulp'an, 2017), 123.

Taking this as a whole, one can see that commentaries about *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea were made under women's silence, which prevailed in the male-dominated literary criticisms and even in literary publications where women actively participated. The very rareness of accounts written by women proves that the rarefaction of participants took place in the discourse of the drama.³²⁶ In this regard, the reception and the interpretation of *A Doll's House* should be analyzed in terms of the gendered power relations surrounding these cultural activities. In this section, I suggest reading feminist commentaries of Ibsen's famous drama as proof that female recipients defied the mainstream debate. Through the analysis, I propose to consider non-feminist commentaries that are handled in other subsections as attempts to intervene into the feminist understanding of *A Doll's House* as an emancipatory drama.

Reenacting Nora's Declaration: Na Hyesök's Emancipatory Commentaries

The painter Na Hyesök (1896–1948) belonged to the first generation of Korean New Women. She published six short stories, seven poems, and nearly eighty essays in addition to the paintings she created during her lifetime.³²⁷ The conflict between her self-understanding as an individual and the social expectations placed on her as a wife, mother, and elite woman of the nation was an essential topic in her writing, and Nora served as a pivotal figure in her publications. Some of her prominent commentaries about Ibsen's drama include the 1914 essay "The Ideal Woman" and lyrics titled "A Doll's House (1921)" and "Nora (1922)," written from Nora's perspective.³²⁸ Meanwhile, her 1934 essay "A Confession About My Divorce: To Ch'önggu" may not seem to be a commentary about Ibsen's drama on its surface.³²⁹ However, as an unprecedented performative speech act, the publication of the essay did share essential qualities with Nora's taboo-breaking utterance in the last scene of *A Doll's House*. Before elaborating on this argument later, her earlier texts on Ibsen and Nora need to be examined closer.

326 In *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explains how discourses are made inaccessible to certain people by coining the term rarefaction as follows: "[...] it is more a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else. This amounts to a rarefaction among speaking subjects: none may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. More exactly, not all areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable [...]." Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 224–25.

327 Number based on the works included in *Wönbon Na Hyesök Chönjip* [*The Complete Works of Na Hyesök*], ed. Sö Chöngja (Seoul: Purün Sasangsa, 2013).

328 Na Hyesök, "The Ideal Woman," in *Sourcebook*, 28–29; Inhyöng üi Ka [*A Doll's House*], in *Complete Works*, 251–53; "Nora," in *Complete Works*, 257–58.

329 Na Hyesök, "Ihon Kobaekjang: Ch'önggu Ssi ege [*A Confession about My Divorce: To Ch'önggu*]," in *Complete Works*, 496–512; "Ihon Kobaekjang: Ch'önggu Ssi ege (sok) [*A Confession about My Divorce: To Ch'önggu (continued)*]," in *Complete Works* 513–27. For the English version refer to Hyaewel Choi's translation: *Sourcebook*, 123–38. Ch'önggu was another name of Na's ex-husband Kim Wuyöng. Choi, *Sourcebook*, 137 (see note 17). As Choi's translation omits some parts of the original text, I used both versions.

In her 1914 essay titled “The Ideal Women,” the aspiring painter Na Hyesök introduced Nora as an ideal modern woman who pursued “true love (*yönae*).”³³⁰ She understood that Nora left home primarily because she realized that her marriage was not based on true love. Considering that the heroine did not chose to leave her husband and children to find true love but her Self, Na’s interpretation leans toward the discourse of Love’s Supremacy. Despite the bold claim that leaving home for true love was a quality of an ideal modern woman, Na’s early essay did not cause any heated debates in Korea, as it was published in a magazine run by a Korean students’ circle in Japan.³³¹ Nevertheless, her first commentary about Nora was exemplary for her later publications, which claimed that aiming for one’s individuality was more important than fulfilling the socially expected role of women as mothers and wives.

Upon returning to Korea, Na Hyesök played an essential role in reminding colonial Korean readers of the feminist message in *A Doll’s House*. As the drama was serialized in the daily newspaper *Maeil Shinbo* in 1921, she not only contributed to the boom of the drama with her illustrations but also wrote lyrics titled *A Doll’s House*.³³² The lyrics were published on the newspaper’s front page, with the last segment of the drama on April 3, 1921.³³³ The lyrics were accompanied by a musical score written by the pianist Kim Yöngwan.³³⁴ Because inserting a theme song sung by the main female character of a play had become an essential element for the commercial success of theatrical plays from the late 1910s, literary historian Pak Chinyöng argues that this was a clear indication that there was a plan to produce *A Doll’s House* as a play already in 1921.³³⁵ As the drama was published as a book under the new title *Nora*, Na changed the title and content of the lyrics, too. The fact that a new melody was composed by Paek Wuyöng strengthens the hypothesis that the song was an essential part of the plan to produce a play soon.³³⁶

330 Na, “Ideal Woman,” 28. Chapter 4 offers an extensive analysis how *yönae* became an inevitable part of the reform-oriented discourse in the 1920s.

331 Notably, she preempted the debate over *yönae* already in the 1910s, as she was studying in Japan and familiar with Japanese *renai* discourse and the sensation surrounding *A Doll’s House*. Literary scholar Deng Qian pointed out that Chinese and Korean intellectuals, such as Hu Shih, Hyön Ch’öl, and Na Hyesök, studied in Japan when there was a boom of this drama and played a key role in introducing the Japanese debate to their home countries. See Deng, “Interpellation of Nora,” 43.

332 On Na Hyesök’s illustrations see Ryu, “Reception of Ibsen,” 207–08.

333 Na Hyesök, “Inhyöng üi Ka [A Doll’s House],” *MS*, April 3, 1921, 1.

334 Na, “Doll’s House,” *MS*, April 3, 1921, 1.

335 See Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 21. Including a theme song, particularly sung by female characters, became popular through Geijutsuza’s production of *The Resurrection* in Japan in 1908. *The Song of Katjusha* (*Katsyusha no uta*) was a major commercial hit with over 20,000 record sales, which inspired Yesöngjwa to stage the same piece with a Korean version of the song in 1916. In Korea, too, the song and the play were very successful. For more on the role of theme songs in Western plays during the colonial era in Korea and Japan, see Woo, *Dynamics of Korean Drama*, 150–59.

336 Pak, “Ibsen and Colony,” 21

A Doll's House³³⁷

1
 Like I am joyful
 When I play with my doll
 I became a doll, my father's daughter
 I became a doll, my husband's wife
 A plaything that makes them
 Joyful
 [Refrain]
 Let Nora go
 For the last time, quietly
 From behind the tightly sealed barrier
 Open the door
 That was firmly closed
 Let Nora go

2
 Like the duty towards
 My husband and my children
 I have another holy duty
 To follow the road of my mission
 That makes me a human being
 To become a human being

3
 I know
 That without the true human being
 That is revealed when everything
 Of my heart is broke down
 That I am worthless
 Now I know it

4
 Oh, dear girls
 Look at me
 And devote yourselves
 Though the apparent darkness may be
 rampant
 Some day after the storm
 May true human beings be there who is
 You and I

Nora³³⁸

I was a doll
 A doll, my father's daughter
 A doll, my husband's wife
 I was their plaything

Let go Nora

Let her go quietly
 Tear down high barriers and
 Open up the deep gates
 Let go Nora
 Into the air of freedom

I am a human being
 Before my husband's wife
 Before my children's mother
 Above all, I am a human being

I am a human being
 The restraints have weakened already
 The road of freedom is open
 The power Heaven gave is overflowing

Oh girls
 Wake up and follow me
 Stand up and use your power
 The light of the new day is shining through

Both lyrics were written from the perspective of Nora and provided a summary of the new cognition that she gained in the last scene of the drama. In addition, Nora, the persona of the lyric, encouraged contemporary Korean women to follow her in both versions. Through the editing, Na Hyesök made the emancipatory call for Korean women clearer: the invitation to “look at me / And devote yourselves” in the 1921 version became a more appellative spurring to “wake up and follow me / Stand up and use your power.” Furthermore, using imagery such as “the tightly sealed barrier” and “the deep gates,” synonyms

337 *The Complete Works*, 251–53; first published in the MS, April 3, 1921, 1.

338 *The Complete Works*, 257–58; first published in Ibsen and Yang, *Nora*.

for the inner gate in Chosŏn Dynasty architecture that separated women's boudoirs from the outer world, Na Hyesŏk skillfully invited Korean female readers to see Nora's leaving as a departure from the domestic realm in the Korean context, too. Her lyrics showed "the intellectual influence of Ibsen and how strongly Nora's longing for selfhood and emancipation resonated with readers"³³⁹ in colonial Korea. By writing the poem from Nora's point of view, Na Hyesŏk reenacted Nora's declaration. The song could have been disseminated through the newspaper, book, and eventually through the play and sung by Korean women of the time. In this sense, her lyrics invited her female compatriots to identify themselves with Nora on the level of speech act, too.

According to John Austin, some utterances have a performative nature, while others are "to 'describe' some state of affair, or to 'state some fact'."³⁴⁰ Making an oral pledge, naming, will, and assurance are typical examples of utterances whose "being-spoken-out" itself means an action; Austin called such utterances "performative."³⁴¹ Declaring her independence from her husband with words in a confronting and self-assured manner, Nora's word in the last scene is an exemplary performative utterance. Likewise, Na Hyesŏk broke the taboo of women speaking about their sexuality and the critique of normative roles by publishing them. For instance, her 1923 essay "Thoughts After Becoming a Mother" evoked controversy as she publicly opposed the widespread belief that maternal love might come naturally to any woman. Na Hyesŏk expressed her inner confusion as an aspiring female artist who became unexpectedly pregnant in a language of "momentary intuition that is unconditioned and irresponsible,"³⁴² as she put it.

I needed much time for calm contemplations, study, and actions to educate my Self to prepare the substance required to live humanly, womanly, and individually. However, it seemed that I would never have such time once I had a child, so I thought it [having a child] was useless for me and a big obstacle for my individual development.³⁴³

Although she did not refer to *A Doll's House*, her refusal of the maternal role echoed Nora's decision to leave her children behind as well. Na Hyesŏk contradicted criticisms with an apologetic statement published later:

I am confident. I believe that there are some people whose hearts resonate with my "Thoughts After Becoming a Mother." If a mother denies this [claim], I believe that she would feel an inevitable empathy as soon as her mind's eyes open. And I do hope she feels the empathy. I hope there will be many of them rather than only a few. I know that only with such experience would we step onto the road to a solid life. I hope you believe [me].³⁴⁴

339 Choi, "Debating Korean New Women," 62. Original in English.

340 John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 1–6.

341 Austin, *Do Things with Words*, 5.

342 Na Hyesŏk, "Paekkyŏlsaeng e Tap'am [An Answer to Paekkyŏlsaeng]," in *Complete Works*, 388–89.

343 Na Hyesŏk, "Mo Toen Kamsanggi [Thoughts After Becoming a Mother]," in *Complete Works*, 441.

344 Na, "Answer to Paekkyŏlsaeng," 389.

While her 1923 essay questioned women's role as mothers, the 1934 essay "A Confession about My Divorce: To Ch'önggu" tackled the expectations of women as wives. The essay was written in the form of a letter addressed to her ex-husband, thus formally similar to that of Nora's argument with her husband. At the beginning of the essay, Na Hyesök revealed that she was divorced. Consequently, Na gave a detailed account of her marriage and divorce in chronological order in over 6,500 words. Her confession consisted of two segments and fifteen sections titled "History Before Engagement," "Ten Years of Married Life," "Both Housewife and Painter," "A Tour of Europe and the United States," "Everyday Conflicts with Mother- and Sister-in-law," "Relationships With C.," "Family Fortune in Trouble," "Divorce," "After the Divorce," "Where Should I Go," "Maternal Love," "An Ascetic Life," "Thoughts After the Divorce," "Popular Sentiments of the Korean Society," and "To Ch'önggu."³⁴⁵ To explain why her ex-husband divorced her, she openly talked about her love affair with Ch'oe Rin in Paris and Cologne during the world travels with her husband. Additionally, she depicted how her contribution to the family wealth was ignored, and how her husband decided to keep the children despite her dissuasion.³⁴⁶

There are obvious differences between Ibsen's drama and Na's essay. Unlike the drama, it was Na's husband, Kim Wuyöng, who demanded a divorce.³⁴⁷ The main reason for the marriage crisis was different, too: while Nora tried to help her husband by faking a document, Na pursued love outside the marriage.³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in terms of the performativity, the topic, and the impact on society, Na's essay is comparable to Nora's words in the last scene of the drama. Nora revisits the eight years of her marriage and tells Helmer that she has been handed over from her father to her husband like a doll.³⁴⁹ Her utterance that "before all else I am a human being"³⁵⁰ became an idiomatic phrase widely used in texts discussing women's rights and enlightenment in Korea. Concurrently, the conversation itself as well as Nora's act of declaration were groundbreaking, too, particularly because her act challenged the Confucian norm that a wife must obey her husband, which dictated the mode of conversation in a marriage since the Chosön

345 Na, "Confession about My Divorce," in *Complete Works*, 496–512; "Confession about My Divorce (continued)," in *Complete Works*, 513–27. Hyaewool Choi translated most sections into English, and I cited her translation. See "A Confession about My Divorce: To Ch'önggu," in *Sourcebook*, 123–38.

346 See Na, "Confession about My Divorce," in *Complete Works*, 508–09.

347 *Ibid.*, 508.

348 *Ibid.*, 504–05.

349 Ibsen and Archer, *Doll's House*, 114.

350 *Ibid.*, 116–17. For instance, Kim Wönju urged readers of her magazine *Shin Yöja* that "from now on, we must take off the yoke men have placed on us and be prepared to play a role as human beings in the truest sense" in 1920. Kim, "The Self-Awakening of Women," in *Sourcebook*, 30–31; see 31. Similar statements were made by Im Chinsil: "Young women have developed a stronger faith in gender equality, and all young people support the argument that women are human beings and should be treated as such." Im, "An Observation on the Status of Women," in *Sourcebook*, 37–39; see 38. In the open letter to her ex-husband, Na Hyesök adopted the phrase as well: "I wanted to have a full life as a housewife, a member of society, and a human being." Na, "A Confession about My Divorce: To Ch'önggu," in *Sourcebook*, 126.

Dynasty.³⁵¹ Nora persistently speaks back to her husband—“No, don’t interrupt. Only listen to what I say”³⁵²—and uncompromisingly stands behind her analysis of their relationship:

Nora: [...] I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It is your fault that my life has been wasted.

Helmer: Why, Nora, how unreasonable and ungrateful you are. Haven’t you been happy here?

Nora: No, never; I thought I was, but I never was.

Helmer: Not—not happy?

Nora: No, only merry.³⁵³

The theater historian Woo Sujin identifies the last dialogue between Nora and Helmer as one of the three moments that gave birth to modern theatrical language in the Korean theater.³⁵⁴ According to her, starting from 1908, Yi Injik assigned multiple singers and made each of them play a single role instead of letting a soloist sing and narrate the whole parts, which was common in *p’ansori* pieces.³⁵⁵ Consequently, the early 1910s’ introduction of *shin’pa* theater made players speak, while in *p’ansori* tradition, singers told the stories by singing the lines.³⁵⁶ Woo explains that *A Doll’s House* integrated argumentative speech into the Korean theater, which invited readers and the audience to judge the conflict.³⁵⁷

The Korean audiences of that time considered Nora’s uninterrupted and self-assured way of speaking as a declaration. Sō Hangsōk’s 1936 essay “Ibsen and the Woman Question” addressed the subversive power in Nora’s act of speech by calling it “women’s independence declaration” and “bombshell declaration.”³⁵⁸ The combination of argument and declaration in Nora’s utterance made a powerful impression on Korean readers and audiences ever since the first publication of *A Doll’s House*. Hong Nanp’a’s 1921 novel *The Last Handshake*, which was serially published in the *Maeil Shinbo* right after *A Doll’s House*, serves as evidence. The novelist adopted Nora’s characteristic way of speaking to show the cognitive change of his protagonist.³⁵⁹ After attending the 1934 production of *A Doll’s*

351 *The Book of Rites*, one of the texts of the Confucian canon, defines the relationship between husband and wife as follows: “What are the things which men consider right? [...] righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife.” Legge, *Sacred Books*, 379–80.

352 Ibsen and Archer, *Doll’s House*, 112.

353 *Ibid.*, 114.

354 See Woo, *Dynamics of Korean Drama*, 197–201.

355 *Ibid.*, 198. Although Woo does not mention it, the Korean masked dance (*t’alch’um*) used to engage multiple players.

356 *Ibid.*, 198–99.

357 *Ibid.*, 200.

358 Sō Hangsōk, “Ipsen kwa Yōsōng Munje [Ibsen and Women Question],” *SK* (May 1936), 9–10.

359 Realizing that her lover did not trust her as unconditionally as she did him, the protagonist Hwabong leaves him after declaring the end of their relationship as follows: “So, you have tested me because you were afraid that my feelings would have changed? Until today, I have loved you with all my body and soul, and I have admired you and respected you. I would have killed myself or ran away from here today if you would have told me to do so. Isn’t it proven by drinking this poison? I drank it to die. And you have been testing me out of your suspicion... So, you have loved me only superficially? I lost my virginity to you, physically as well as mentally. It left an in-

House in Seoul, the literary critic Na Ung, too, considered Nora's reflection upon the mode of conversation the most evident sign of her awakening as an individual:

Instead of vanishing away, Nora's words are still creating a stir in my mind.
 "We have been married eight years. This is the first time we two, you and I, man and wife, have talked together seriously."
 "Ever since the day we first met—we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things."
 Oh! What a great truth is lurking behind these ordinary words! Nora, who has been playing a part of a doll, has finally realized. [...] How many of today's Korean women, who have been forced to bear with endurance and extreme humiliation for hundreds of years, are willing to wake up from a long sleep and find out their status and the world? No, how many modern people want to seriously think about the world and themselves before they finish their lives?³⁶⁰

These examples show that Koreans were aware of the impact of Nora's declaration as a performative utterance that brought her existential change into being through the act of speaking.

Na Hyesök not only spread the call for women's emancipation on the level of content but also practiced Nora's taboo-breaking speech act through her publications, which shocked Korean society. An anonymous housewife from P'yöng'yang sent an open letter to the women's magazine *Shin Kajöng* and criticized Na for sharing the details of her marriage and divorce:

I was surprised by the news that you, the representative of modern Korean women, were divorced; as a housewife like you, I had the same nerves and emotions as yours. However, after reading your open letter, I thought it was indeed a misfortune. Nevertheless, I was surprised anew because I could not fully sympathize with you regarding the reason for the divorce and your responsibility for it. Additionally, *I was disgusted by your attitude in publishing such a confession to society.*
 As a housewife responsible for deciding what my children and younger siblings read, I had to cut your divorce confession out and throw it into the furnace. [...] Wouldn't it have been enough if you had just announced your stance in simple and neat sentences? (emphasis added)³⁶¹

delible stain on my life. From now on, I have nothing to do with you. Until the very last second, I was completely your possession. However, this body is different from that of earlier Hwabong's. I don't want to spend any further minute or even second with you, who has committed a great sin against me. I don't need to listen to you or read your words. You are the enemy of my love. In revenge, my love killed itself by drinking the alcohol more poisonous than the poison that you poured into the glass with your own hands. Now, withdraw yourself. I'm leaving." Hong, "Ch'oeheu üi Aksu 39 [The Last Handshake 39]," *MS*, June 6, 1921, 4.

360 Na Ung, "Kükyön che 6-hoe Kong'yön Inhyöng üi Chip üi Pogo 1 [After Watching *A Doll's House*, the 6th Performance by Dramatic Arts Research Group 1]," *DI*, April 27, 1934, 3. The translation of Na Ung's citation, a shortened form of Nora's words, is based on William Archer's 1889 translation. See Ibsen and Archer, *Doll's House*, 113.

361 P'yöngyang Il Yöja, "Nahyesök Ssi ege [To Mrs. Na Hyesök]," *SK* (October 1934), 92–97; the quote is from 92–93.

The housewife pointed out that Na Hyesök, as a public figure, might have felt the necessity to share her divorce with the public, yet she argued that “everything that exceeds necessity is as unnecessary as a snake’s feet.”³⁶² She blamed Na for keeping the habit of writing novels and refashioning herself into a heroine this time.³⁶³ Instead of “a snake’s feet,” however, Na’s confession can be regarded as a consciously outspoken performative utterance. Through her extensive self-disclosure, Na declared her private matter as a public concern in a similar way that Ibsen staged the marriage crisis of Nora and Helmer—not in the sense that she sought the media’s attention, but in that she urged her contemporaries to see the impact of the gender-biased notion of chastity on her fate. The fact that she decided to write the letter four years after the actual divorce and publish it indicates her willingness to make her divorce public. She invited the readers to be audiences to the conversation by publishing the letter in the magazine *Samch’ölli*. In her letter, Na Hyesök questioned the notion of chastity in Korean society, which had led to her divorce. She called readers’ attention to the fact that Kim Wuyöng, her ex-husband, had an affair with a *kisaeng* woman without any moral conflict before they were legally divorced.³⁶⁴ In doing so, she pointed out that men advocated women’s chastity while neglecting their own fidelity:

The psychology of Korean men is absurd. They do not have any concept of chastity for themselves, but they demand the chastity of their wives and other women. Despite their requirement of chastity for any viable partner, they pour their energies into taking the virginity of still more women. Men take pleasure in playing with loose women, but they destroy women’s chastity in doing so. What kind of primitive immorality is this? If men stress the importance of women’s chastity, isn’t it reasonable to expect them to try to protect women’s chastity? If a man doesn’t value chastity in the West and Tokyo, he does not expect others to maintain chastity.³⁶⁵

In short: in terms of the formal characteristics as a performative utterance and the criticisms of gendered norms surrounding marriage and sexuality, Na Hyesök’s “A Confession About My Divorce” shared many characteristics with Nora’s words from the last scene of *A Doll’s House*. Through her writing, Na disseminated the emancipatory idea in the drama and practiced the public disclosure of the private as a way to unsettle the gendered power structure.

Nora and Ibsen as Role Models for Feminist Activism

Some Korean feminist activists commented that *A Doll’s House* was about awakening as an individual and women’s political activism. Through the publication of short essays in newspapers, these activists advocated for the reading of the drama as an indispensable experience for those involved in feminist causes. In doing so, they embedded an activist subtext into the way Korean women perceived this Norwegian drama. Notable figures

362 P’yöngyang Il Yöja, “To Na Hyesök,” 93.

363 See *ibid.*

364 Na, “Confession about My Divorce,” in *Complete Works*, 510.

365 Na, “Confession about My Divorce,” in *Sourcebook*, 132.

such as the socialist feminist activist Kang P'yöngguk, the poet Kim Ryösun, and anonymous female students of Seoul exemplify a moment of audience publicness through the reading and watching of *A Doll's House*.

In 1925, Kang P'yöngguk published an essay titled "Thoughts on Women's Liberation" in the daily newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo*.³⁶⁶ This essay shows how some Korean women considered Nora's departure a call for women's organized activism to be liberated from the misogynic system. Drawing readers' attention to the custom of bride kidnapping in many different cultures, Kang insisted that "history means nothing but 'women are men's slaves.' It would not be exaggerated to say that today's morality, no, law, is based on this notion."³⁶⁷ In her eyes, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was a sign that women began "preparing acts of revenge against the winners [men] who made women live a life of toil and did what no human should do."³⁶⁸ She summarized the morals she learned from the drama: "If someone treats us, women, as slaves, we should fight them anytime, however poor and powerless we are."³⁶⁹

Kang P'yöngguk's perspective as a socialist was unmistakably expressed when she emphasized that "the matter of women's emancipation cannot be solved through abstract theories but economic emancipation [of women] in a materialist sense."³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, she prioritized the abolition of suppression against women above the socialist doctrine, which made her distinguishable from male socialist intellectuals of her time. As discussed in chapter 5.4, male socialists refashioned women's economic independence from men as a *qualification* to enjoy equal rights from the late 1920s onwards. Meanwhile, Kang sought alliances with Korean women who were not socialists with the aim of achieving women's emancipation from men. As part of such efforts, she founded the Tokyo branch of the Korean feminist organization Künühoe, which strived to overcome ideological differences for the cause of women's rights.³⁷¹ Although Kang identified with socialist ideas, she regarded Nora not as a woman with a restricted view as a member of the petite bourgeoisie but as a symbol of all women who suffered from the patriarchal system.

As discussed in prior part of chapter 5, Nora had a various symbolic meanings in colonial Korean discourses in the late 1920s: a role model for Korean women, a wayward divorcee or a bourgeois woman who did not know the world.³⁷² Concurrently, there are indications that these criticisms did not stop Korean women from reading the book and discovering emancipatory meaning in it. The fact that the second edition of Yi Sangsu's

366 Kang P'yöngguk, "Yösöng Haebang üi Chapkam [Thoughts on Women's Liberation]," *DI*, June 1, 1925, 4, and "Yösöng Haebang üi Chapkam: Sok [Thoughts on Women's Liberation, Continued]," July 20, 1925, 4. The reason behind the gap of fifty days between the publication of the first and second segments is unclear.

367 Kang, "Thoughts on Women's Liberation," *DI*, June 1, 1925, 4.

368 *Ibid.*

369 Kang, "Thoughts on Women's Liberation, Continued," July 20, 1925, 4.

370 *Ibid.*

371 "Künü Tongkyöng Chihoe Söllip Taehoe Iship Il Il e [The Opening Ceremony of Künühoe's Tokyo Branch on the 21st of February]," *DI*, February 1, 1928, 3.

372 See chapter 5.3.

Myōnghūi, as well as August Bebel's *Women under Socialism, Biographies of Famous Women Around the World*, and the biography of *Jean D'arc*.³⁷⁵ The term "transition period" referred to at least two different currents of the time: in the long run, the long-term sociopolitical and cultural changes that Korea was undergoing since the late nineteenth century. In the short term, the phrase referred to the popularization of socialism and socialist feminism from the late 1920s onwards. The list of books captured the broadening spectrum of female readers' interests amid these changes from empowering stories of famous Western women to socialist theories. It seems that despite the growing popularity of Alexandra Kollontai, the symbolic figure of socialist feminism, *A Doll's House* still functioned as an introductory book to feminist issues.

A survey of readers' interests by *Dong-A Ilbo* in January 1936 demonstrated that the conservative backlash and socialist criticisms of Nora could not stop the younger generation of Korean women from reading *A Doll's House* and finding their own meaning in this experience. The daily newspaper asked 44 female students from three women's schools in Seoul about the books they read last week, how they came to read the books, and what they thought about them. By doing so, the newspaper aimed to "investigate the trends of the time and listen to the contemporaries' demand."³⁷⁶ According to the survey, 39 out of 44 female students read books that were not part of the school curriculum. Among them, 13 students read books written by Western authors. The newspaper observed that "equal numbers of female students named Kollontai's *Red Love* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which accounted for the majority of responses."³⁷⁷ An anonymous female student commented on *A Doll's House*, saying that "if there were a woman like Nora in this world, I am confident that the women's movement would be successful."³⁷⁸

Meanwhile, a female poet named Kim Ryōsun stated that she would take Ibsen as her role model and write feminist works. In her answer to a 1932 survey titled "Declaration of War Against Men: Fierce Words of Old-fashioned Women and New Women from Various Fields," Kim criticized Korean men with Western-style education for hypocrisy:

[Against which aspect of men do you declare war?]

I despise men who ignore women's rights because they have the same mentality as old-fashioned men.

[What is the reason?]

Men of this type do not know how vital their responsibility and duty towards their home are. They are ready to sacrifice everything to pursue pleasure at cafés and restaurants through alcohol and prostitutes. The men who claim to understand modernism (*modōnijūm*) only look different from old-fashioned men while insulting

375 See chapter 5.4.

376 "Toksō Kyōngnyang: Ch'oego nūn Sosōl Hūngmi Innūn Tokhu ūi Sogam Tonggi Ch'oego nūn Ch'in'gu ūi Kwōnyu [Reading Tendency: Novels Are the Most Popular. Interesting Reading Impressions. The Biggest Motivation Is Recommendations from Friends]," *DI*, January 26, 1936, 4.

377 "Reading Motivation," *DI*, January 26, 1936, 4.

378 *Ibid.*

women under the same spirit of Honor Men, Despise Women (*namjon yöbi*), just like the old-fashioned men did.³⁷⁹

Kim Ryösun pointed out that the self-proclaimed “modern men” of colonial Korea were as unfaithful to their wives as their forefathers because they pursued extramarital relationships with waitresses and barmaids. Her criticism bespoke a failure of the generation that supported the idea of marriage reform as part of the country’s modernization. Kim pointed out that despite the Western-style school education and bits of knowledge in modern arts, Korean men still tended to look down on women. Based on these observations, she resolved to contribute herself to the women’s rights movement by writing texts—as Ibsen did with *A Doll’s House*.

[What is a concrete way of engagement?]

By writing *A Doll’s House*, Ibsen evoked the spirit of women’s emancipation in his time. A single book of drama can have such enormous power. A woman whose blood is running through her veins and passionate would strive for the cause of the women’s rights movement in every possible direction and field. I think each woman’s critical mission is to fight for individual life and freedom through writing, education, or profession.³⁸⁰

Kim Ryösun’s short commentary on *A Doll’s House* deviated from the tendency of her time to belittle the drama as a story of a self-destructive New Woman or a naïve middle-class woman’s impulsive rebellion. Calling it a text of women’s emancipation, she countered the anti-feminist backlash of the late 1920s and early 1930s.³⁸¹

The lack of documentation makes it hard to reconstruct to what extent she thematized women’s rights in her poems. However, she represented married women’s voices through her contributions to the *Dong-A Ilbo* in the years that followed. In August 1935, for instance, she refuted some Korean male intellectuals who diminished Korean New Women categorically. She wrote: “Reflect on yourselves how you are dominated by prostitutes, who only take advantage of you, while you neglect your wife who loves you and respects you. When you have done that, we will welcome your criticisms and advice.”³⁸²

With time, Kim Ryösun showed solidarity with a broader range of Korean women. In the 1937 text titled “House Maidens Are Also Humans,” Kim partially mended the gap between married women and women of precarious status.³⁸³ She urged housewives, who employed female housekeepers, to show more sympathy towards the housemaids in their

379 Kim Ryösun, “Namsöng e taehan Sönjön P’ogo: Kakgye Shin Ku Yösöng üi Kiyöm 2 [Declaration of War Against Men: Fierce Words of Old-Fashioned Women and New Women from Various Fields 2],” *DI*, January 2, 1932, 11.

380 Kim, “Declaration of War,” *DI*, January 2, 1932, 11.

381 The anti-feminist backlash and the reevaluation of Nora is discussed in chapter 5.3.

382 Kim Ryösun, “Yösöng Shiron 23: Kajöng ül Chonjung hi Yögija [Women’s Opinion: Let’s Respect the Home],” *DI*, August 3, 1935, 3.

383 Kim Ryösun, “1-in 1-ön 5: Shingmo to Saram [A Word per Person 5: House Maidens Are Also Humans],” *DI*, June 9, 1937, 3.

own households and to improve working conditions for them by treating them kindlier and allowing them more time to rest and go out:³⁸⁴

Among all workers, housemaids, inevitable for our home, seem to be the most hard-working and the least paid laborers. Their life, too, is the most wretched. Even when they are sick, they cannot lay down and rest as they wish, and housemaids cannot go out freely even if they wanted to. From dawn till night, they work for us without saying a word of complaint. Some people say that eight hours of labor a day is already too much, yet housemaids work more than 15 hours per day. Nevertheless, when they make a small mistake, some of us scold them until they cry. [...] For a small sum of money, we make them work for us as much as we want. [But] They are humans, too. They have the same emotion and bodies as ours. They miss their parents and the children that they had to leave behind, and they recognize the difficulty of their own lives. They can feel sad about harsh mistreatments, too. Let's show sympathy for those who are working like cows and cannot say a word. Let's pity them. Even if we cannot start a big business in society and pay for charity works, how can we not sympathize with a housemaid? [...] This [treating them better] would be the social work and charity work for us housewives.³⁸⁵

Kim recognized the power imbalance between wealthier housewives as employers and housemaids as employees and came to see it as a human rights problem. Instead of "big business" or charity works, she suggested seeing the housekeepers as equally dignified human beings and implementing simple but meaningful changes to their working conditions.³⁸⁶ This way, Kim offered concrete practices "for the cause of women's rights movement in every possible direction and field,"³⁸⁷ including the household. The fact that she joined a women's organization named Housewives' Association (Kajōng Puin Hyōphoe) in June 1934 supports the assumption that she broadened her feminist activism beyond her study room, too.³⁸⁸

In the 1920s and 1930s, some colonial Korean women recognized their own struggles and injustices in their everyday lives while reading *A Doll's House* and called for feminist activism. Female activists of Korea did not leave lengthy commentaries as their male compatriots did. Despite the confrontational interpretations of the drama and social antipathy towards feminist women, these women brought together the Norwegian drama and Korean women's movement through their short commentaries. In doing so, they maintained a feminist audience publicness, ensuring that the discourse about the drama and women's spectatorship was not fully absorbed into the *broader* political debates, such as the modernization of the nation or the socialist reimagining of the country.

384 Kim, "House Maidens Are Humans," *DI*, June 9, 1937, 3.

385 *Ibid.*

386 *Ibid.*

387 Kim, "Declaration of War," *DI*, January 2, 1932, 11.

388 "Kajōng Puin Hyōphoe Shin Yōkwōndūl [New Members of Housewives' Association]," *Chosŏn Chung'ang Ilbo*, June 8, 1934, 3.

Female Audiences' Applause

On April 18 and 19, 1934, the Dramatic Arts Research Group staged the fourth and final production of *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea.³⁸⁹ A dozen Korean students who majored in European and American literature at Japanese universities initiated this group.³⁹⁰ Hong Haesŏng, who worked as an actor for the Japanese theater company Tsukiji Shōgekijō (The Tsukiji Little Theater) between 1924 and 1929, was the artistic backbone of this group until November 1935.³⁹¹

The emergence of the elite theater group made news in colonial Korean society. The *Maeil Shinbo* reported about the confident young theater-makers, citing their bold aim “to broaden the general public’s understanding of dramatic art, to rescue [Korean theater] from the current that preexisting theater groups created, and ultimately, to establish our own new theater in the truest sense of the word.”³⁹² In the following eight years, Dramatic Arts Research Group and its successor Kūkyōn'jwa organized 26 theatrical presentations based on 36 plays. Among them, 24 pieces were translations from European and American drama, and twelve were written by Korean playwrights.³⁹³

A Doll's House was Kūkyōn's sixth production. Unlike previous productions of the same drama, the 1934 production was accompanied by several commentaries about the play before and after the two nights of stage performances. As the boom of Korean movie and theater magazines between the late 1920s and the early 1930s exemplified, movie and theater critique became an independent genre. Between 1928 and 1932, periodicals including *Munye Yōnghwa* (*Art Cinema*, 1928), *Taejung Yōnghwa* (*Popular Cinema*, 1930), *Yōnghwa Shidae* (*Cinema Era*, 1931), *Shinhūng Yesul* (*New Arts*, 1932), *Yōn'gūk Undong* (*Theater Movement*, 1932), and *Kūk Yesul* (*Dramatic Art*, 1934) appeared.³⁹⁴ In line with this change, daily newspapers, too, featured critiques written by authors or professional critics who gave detailed accounts of directing, adaptation, and acting skills besides synopses and happenings in the auditorium.

Between April 15 and April 18, 1934, the *Dong-A Ilbo* printed a commentary of *A Doll's House* written by Yi Hōngu, a member of Kūkyōn. The commentary explained that “the artistic or humane matter of this piece lies neither in the left- nor right-wing’s criticisms and conjectures, but in the third position.”³⁹⁵ By “left-wing criticism,” he meant the socialists’ reproach that Nora “was only focused on the home while completely lacking an

389 “Last Performance of *Nora*,” *DI*, April 12, 1934, 3.

390 See Yu, *New History* 2, 355–56.

391 See Yi Sangwoo, “Kūk Yesul Yōn'guhoe e taehan Yōn'gu: Pōnyōk Kūk Rep'ot'ori e taehan Koch'al ūl Chungsim ūro [A Study on Kūkyōn: Focusing on Translated Plays in Their Repertoire],” *Han'guk Kūk Yesul Yōn'gu* 7 (June 1997), 95–135; see 99 and 115.

392 “Kūk Yesul Hagi Yōn'guhoe Kūk Yesul Yōn'guhoe esō Ch'ot Saōp ūro Shijak Hae [Dramatic Arts Research Group Starts Off with the Summer School of Dramatic Arts],” *MS*, July 19, 1931, 5.

393 See Yi, “Study on Kūkyōn,” 121.

394 See Adan Mun'go, “Yōn'gūk Yōnghwa Chapchi [Theater and Movie Magazines],” in *Collectanea: Movie and Theater Magazines* 6, xv–xxi.

395 Yi Hōngu, “Kūkyōn Che 6-hoe Kong'yōn Kūkbon Inhyōng ūi Ka Haesōl 3 [Commentary on *A Doll's House*, the Script for Kūkyōn's Sixth Presentation 3],” *DI*, April 18, 1934, 3.

understanding of the ugly and cold-blooded social reality,"³⁹⁶ which referred to the capitalist economy. Meanwhile, the judgment of "old-fashioned moralists, religious persons, and scholars of ethics that denounce Nora's departure as an immoral, selfish, and illegal action that destroys peaceful homes" is categorized as the right-wing interpretation of the piece.³⁹⁷ Yi Hōnggu tried to steer the debate into an alternative direction by foregrounding "the everlasting question of humanity."³⁹⁸ Explaining that one could discover "the world of the individual with a strong will that fights against the hideousness in everyday life to realize one's ideal" in *A Doll's House*, the commentary reiterated the call for individualism prevalent in the early reception of the drama at the beginning of the 1920s as a means of defying socialist and Confucian criticisms.³⁹⁹ Yi Hōnggu asserted that Nora's departure was "one expressive action in the drama, not all [emphasis added]."⁴⁰⁰

Figure 17: Female audiences attending the 1934 production of *A Doll's House* on its first day.



Source: *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 19, 1934, 2. Courtesy of Dong-A Ilbo.

After the performance, the *Dong-A Ilbo* published the critique of Na Ung, a famous actor, in four segments. Taking the form of a dialogue among three male audience members that the author allegedly overheard by accident, the critique encompassed philosophical reflections on the drama, direction, each actor's performing skills, and audiences' reactions. The three men, named A., B., and C., started the conversation with commentaries about the female audiences' enthusiastic applause for Nora's self-declaration and male

396 Yi, "Commentary on *Doll's House* 3," *DI*, April 18, 1934, 3.

397 *Ibid.*

398 *Ibid.*

399 *Ibid.*

400 *Ibid.*

audiences' useless efforts to silence them. Their discussion focused on female audiences' reactions and concluded that the women's behavior was inappropriate.

A.: What was the big deal about Nora's words so that the women had to clap so wildly? Hahaha.

B.: How about the men shushing in the men's section?

A., B., C.: Hahahahaha.

They seem to talk about the atmosphere among the audience members during Nora and [Torvald] Helmer's dialogue in the last scene.

C.: Well, but isn't it a small sign that shows how eagerly they want to escape from men's oppression?

B.: If that were the case, that would be beyond my expectations. It was nothing but a mere protest to show that they felt the same way.

A.: And they bear something different in their minds.

B.: Of course. Although they want to marry someone rich no matter what and want to be pampered deep down in their hearts, on the outside, hahaha... They try to cheat people with shallow tricks.

C.: You might be right in some sense. But you cannot say all of them are like that. Look how suddenly and impulsively they reacted—as if they were waiting for it [Nora's words]. Can't you guess how much they were hoping for it? A big part of it [female audiences' enthusiastic reaction] was due to the lack of truthfulness in the drama. A thoughtful woman would deeply reflect on herself without clapping her hands and begin to ponder even more seriously than Nora did in the play.

A.: You are right. If a play greatly impacted people, the audience would be nervous and examine themselves in earnest rather than clapping frivolously and laughing crudely.⁴⁰¹

The depiction of the three men in this scene was an allegorical representation of debates surrounding the theatrical piece in colonial Korea. Female audiences recognized the emancipatory potential in the drama and enthusiastically expressed their affirmation through the nonverbal act of hand clapping. Through the applause, the female audiences could communicate with actors and other audiences, strengthening the feminist reading of the drama and encouraging others who shared the same point of view. The fact that the male audience, seated separately from women (see figure 17), tried to silence them by making shushing sounds perfectly captured the moment of gendered silencing related to *A Doll's House* and the moment of colonial publicness in theaters.

The three commentators' laughter signaled that they dissociated themselves from the allegedly overheated reactions from both sides of the auditorium. As it becomes apparent through the conversation, A., B., and C. downplayed the feminist reading and the low-key conflict that this reading caused. Although the three figures laughed about female and male audiences, they concentrated on women's reactions as their conversation advanced only to deride them. A. and B. agreed on the assumption that Korean women wanted nothing but to marry rich men, even if they claimed to want women's emancipation. C. disavowed the generalizing and ridiculing comments on women's urge to express

401 Na, "After *Doll's House* 1," *DI*, April 27, 1934, 3.

their approval of Nora's choice. However, he posed a question on the appropriateness of their reaction regarding the play's enlightening effect on the audience and the women's alleged lack of self-reflection. Assuming that "a thoughtful woman would deeply reflect on herself without clapping her hands,"⁴⁰² he implied that the applause was a result of female audiences' thoughtlessness. Eventually, A. and C. concluded that female audiences' applause was an indication that the drama "lacked reality" and the theater company was incapable of making "a great impression"⁴⁰³ on the audience.

Na Ung's commentary on the female audiences dismantled, in effect, the feminist reading of the play. Although it criticized the blunt negation of Korean women's genuineness in their emancipatory claims, the commentary declared women's clapping as evidence of their lacking self-reflection and the drama's inherent flaws. In doing so, Na Ung provided logic and words to the shushing sounds coming from the men's section in the theater, which tried to silence Korean women's critical engagement with the gendered discriminations in colonial Korean society through Ibsen's drama.

A Doll's House challenged the notion of gender roles across the world, including in colonial Korea. While most Korean women remained silent about this controversial drama, male intellectuals expressed both excitement and concern about the drama's influence on Korean women, dominating the media discourse in the 1920s and 1930s. Numerous Korean men published various genres of texts, including book reviews, prefaces, theater reviews, essays, and fiction, revolving around the protagonist's choice at the end of the drama to leave her husband and children in order to pursue her Self. These publications were commentaries in Foucauldian sense because they actively sought to intervene into the direction of the drama's reception among Korean female readers and audiences, often overriding the emancipatory message. Among them, there were affirmative, rejective, and affirmative-critical commentaries. Some welcomed Nora as a symbolic figure of individualism and saw her awakening as a driving force for societal change in colonial Korea. Meanwhile, rejective commentaries were commonly based on anxiety that Nora would agitate Korean women to leave home and denied the necessity of feminist politics. Cho Ch'un'gwang's assertion that *A Doll's House* should not be performed in theaters because Korean women might not be able to understand the true meaning of this drama clearly shows that some Korean men defined and managed the orientation, time, and resources of the so-called "modernization" based on gendered discrimination against women, putting them into another waiting room of history.

While problematizing women's financial dependency on men, some socialist Korean men blamed Korean women for being *parasitic* to men without reflecting on the structural handicap forced upon women in the economic system. Socialist Korean women, too, considered women's financial dependency on men as a problem, yet grasped it as a structural problem and helped other women to support themselves by teaching them valuable skills. Meanwhile, novelists Ch'ae Mansik and Shim Hun adapted the drama and created female characters who realize that they were suppressed by Korean marriage custom and the capitalist economic system, and thus choose socialism as an alternative. As both affirmative and critical commentaries of the drama, these novels recognized women

402 Ibid.

403 Ibid.

as a driving force of societal change while at the same time subjugating feminist politics to socialism.

Last but not least, there were feminist commentaries on *A Doll's House*, which embraced its emancipatory message for women. While Na Hyesök reenacted Nora's declaration of the self through her poems and her essay by adopting her performative mode of speaking in magazines and in newspapers, most feminist commentaries remained marginal. Nevertheless, these short accounts show that Korean feminists took Nora and Ibsen as an empowering example for their own feminist endeavors. Notably, the female audiences' cheers and applause observed at the last show in 1934 tell us that Korean women clearly understood Nora's declaration and walkout as a decisive moment of creating a rupture in the discriminatory marriage system despite derisive commentaries written by male intellectuals. Korean women's non-verbal acclamation forms a symbolic contrast with the silence they were subjected to in the public debate on the play, which was dominated by male intellectuals. The sound of the applause might have been ephemeral, yet its sudden eruption indicates the continuity of female audiences' appropriation of theater as an everyday space for feminist politics, momentary emancipation, and audience publicness.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the public discourse on Korean female spectators in Seoul from the beginnings of the playhouse business around 1900 until the last performance of *A Doll's House* in colonial Korea in 1934. This study started from the observation that Korean newspapers showed great interest in the auditorium in the early twentieth century, and that media representations of Korean audiences—particularly those of women—abruptly changed after Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Using historical discourse analysis as a method, I investigated sociopolitical dimensions of such changes to better understand its impact on audiences and how society imagined and understood them. Mainly, this study adopted two concepts to investigate the politics surrounding Korean colonial audiences: the Foucauldian notion of discourse and other related frameworks on the one hand and Yun Hae-dong's concept of audience publicness on the other. While analyzing the colonial police's intervention into auditoriums and media debates on female audiences as a process of subject making using Foucault's concepts, this study identified moments in which Korean women pursued their own agendas in theater spaces, expanding on Yun's thinking.

The first subsection of the conclusion explains which discourses were relevant to Korean women's spectatorship and Korean playhouses in the early twentieth century. In the second subsection, I will summarize each chapter in detail and discuss my research findings. Based on my research, I argue that Korean female spectators played a significant part in creating political momentums that unsettled colonial and anti-colonial politics as well as patriarchal social norms while launching their own agendas, however ephemeral such moments may appear. In doing so, my research provides evidence of audience publicness, a concept that historian Yun developed to understand the role of media in bringing about political moments in everyday colonial lives. The third subsection contemplates contributions this study can make to the field of Korean history and spectatorship.

Rediscovering Korean Women as Spectators of Colonial Korea

The emergence of playhouses and movie theaters in the capital marks a cultural turning point in Korean history.¹ Theaters, unprecedented on the Korean peninsula, brought up a new business model and accelerated changes in the performing arts, which significantly impacted Korean people's understanding and practices of spectation. From a sociopolitical perspective, theaters facilitated not only interactions between people of different genders, social strata, and classes but also negotiation processes between various interest groups, such as entertainers, businessmen, pro-independence intellectuals, colonial authorities, socialists, and women of diverse backgrounds.

Korean female audiences, who defied the custom of the inside-outside rule, drew public attention, and became a fundamental part of the public discourse about theaters during the early twentieth century.² This study revealed that as theatergoing became increasingly popular among women in the colonial period, the spectrum of sociopolitical issues raised in the public discourse about them broadened, too. Thus, the political dimension of women's spectatorship cannot be fully explained within the dichotomy in existing scholarship between nationalistic politics of anti-colonial resistance and colonial politics of the Government-General.³ My research into various genres of texts revealed that the public discourse on Korean female spectators was directly connected to the discourse of cultural modernization, women's roles and rights, and colonial and anti-colonial politics. Amid the political, societal, and cultural turmoil of the early twentieth century, Korean female spectators became a discursive figure onto which various interests and politics were projected, such as the legitimization of the theater business,⁴ emotional assimilation of Korean women into the Japanese Empire,⁵ or the construction of images and narratives of ideal as well as deplorable womanhood.⁶

There is little documentation of Korean female spectators speaking out about their experiences. However, upon closer inspection, it emerges that they used theaters as a platform to broaden their realm in an oppressive society: they enjoyed their leisure time but also organized charity events at theaters,⁷ fulfilled their romantic or monetary interests,⁸ explored their sexuality,⁹ and dreamed about achieving freedom with respect to discriminatory expectations about them.¹⁰ Thereby, profession, social stratum, and stage of life influenced each female spectator's interests and the agendas that arose in theater spaces.

1 See chapter 1.2.

2 See chapter 1.1.

3 See introduction.

4 See chapter 2.3.

5 See chapter 3.2.

6 See chapters 3.2, 4.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5.

7 See chapter 2.3.

8 See 2.3 and 4.1.

9 See chapters 3.3 and 4.1.

10 See chapter 5.5.

Creating Ruptures in the Gendered Subjectification Process: Korean Female Spectators' Audience Publicness

The analysis of the historical discourse about female spectators during the colonial era demonstrates that their spectatorship was discussed in close relation to their gender. In the Korean context, sharing the darkened interior of the auditorium with people of various genders and social strata violated the centuries-old custom of gendered segregation. Therefore, upon entering the illicit space of theaters, Korean women were exposed to a gaze that viewed them primarily as sexual objects and wayward women.¹¹ By offering ladies' seats and curtains that protected them from other visitors' gaze, theater operators created a make-shift environment so that Korean women could attend plays without having to fear other people's gaze.¹² Nevertheless, male audiences, as well as the Korean media in general, perpetuated the objectivizing gaze at female spectators, particularly after the *Maeil Shinbo*, the media organ of the Government-General, became the uncontested channel after Korea's annexation by Japan in 1910 and started reporting on individual women's behaviors instead of high-ranked government officials and businessmen.¹³

The gendered gaze at women in public was a part of the patriarchal disciplinary power that various political groups wielded over women's conduct and minds.¹⁴ During the early twentieth century, various political concepts, such as nationalism, enlightenment and development, sexual reform, feminism, and socialism, found their way into the public discourse of Korea and influenced debates on women's theatergoing. This study found that ultimately, the discourse on Korean female audiences was a mechanism of spectator subjectification appropriated by different agents including Korean male intellectuals and colonial authorities to realize their own political goals. Therefore, Korean women's spectatorship was discussed in close relation to the political situation and goals of the time.

Meanwhile, this study also questioned the widespread conception of colonial Korean audiences as being passive subjects of Japanese colonial power or patriotic agents of anti-colonial resistance. Instead, it investigated political moments using Yun's notion of audience publicness, which the dichotomy mentioned above could not fully explain. The analysis of the historical discourse about Seoul's female spectators shows that such moments emerged when they expanded their social activities,¹⁵ represented the interests of their groups,¹⁶ persisted in their ways of enjoying plays and motion pictures,¹⁷ and maintained their own interpretation of plays.¹⁸

For instance, in the pre-colonial discourse between 1902 and 1910, theater audiences were regarded as evidence of the national crisis. Under the influence of the nationalist

11 See chapters 2.2 and 4.1.

12 See chapter 3.3.

13 See chapter 3.3.

14 See chapter 3.3.

15 See chapters 1.2, 2.3, and 4.1.

16 See chapter 2.3.

17 See chapters 3.2 and 4.3.

18 See chapter 5.5.

and anti-colonial discourse after the 1905 Protectorate Treaty, newspapers labeled Koreans who went to theaters as morally corrupted egoists who worked against the nation's collective zeal for sovereignty. While the Korean media of this period generally focused on political decision-makers and businessmen in the auditorium, other audience members also were mentioned in the papers. Newspapers categorized them into several groups such as the affluent, male students, and women, and created stereotypical images of them.¹⁹ As outcasts of the Korean nation, Korean female audiences were depicted as lewd and consumerist. These characteristics defied not only Confucian virtues of diligence and sexual abstinence but also the joint effort to regain Korea's economic independence from Japan through the National Debt Repayment Movement.

At the same time, Seoul's female audiences contributed to expanding women's realm in society and changing the visual culture as well, even while women's sightseeing and attendance of public events were still considered a taboo. Analyzing the *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, this study demonstrated how the right to attend spectacular public events was distributed differently depending on the person's sex and social standing.²⁰ Defined as objects of the male gaze, women of higher social standing were not allowed to watch processions on streets from the sixteenth century, and the ban on spectating eventually broadened to women of all social strata by the seventeenth century. The custom of treating women primarily as an object rather than a subject of gaze was perpetuated in a contradictory way. Namely, theater operators set up ladies' seats surrounded by curtains to protect female spectators (except for *kisaeng* women) from men's glaring. While this measure seemed to encourage women's theatergoing, only men were interpellated as spectators in advertisements until the early 1910s.²¹ Nevertheless, Seoul's Korean women kept going to theaters. This might be a banal yet decisive act that played a significant role in redefining Korean women's spectatorship. Above all, the early female spectators, mostly noblewomen and *kisaeng* women, made women's theatergoing a possibility and showed that women, too, could become bearers of the gaze, despite controversies.

Korean women actively appropriated theater space for their personal and collective interests as well. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, Korean women began organizing charity events from 1906 for humanitarian aims such as sending aid to Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage and women's schools. While previous studies considered these events as proof of Korean women's patriotism, a closer investigation into the organizers revealed a complex intertwining of various interest groups behind those charity concerts, including the Resident-General, Japanese settlers in Seoul, theater operators, as well as *kisaeng* women and *kibu* men, the procurers. For the Japanese authorities, supporting charity concerts for Korean beneficiaries was part of a strategy to build an emotional bond to Koreans for their colonial endeavors, which provided opportunities for leaders of the Japanese settler community to cooperate with the authorities. Meanwhile, theater owners utilized charity events to justify running their businesses despite ever-growing public antipathy towards them—a bandwagon that *kibu* men could not miss.

19 See chapter 2.2.

20 See chapter 1.1.

21 See chapter 1.2.

Concurrently, such events were a chance for Korean women to organize themselves and take the lead in charity work that was considered to fit the womanly nature and the modern virtue of benevolence. Seeing this as their opportunity, *kisaeng* women dominated the field as organizers, performers, and donors, which helped them refashion themselves as moral and enlightened artists and enhance their social standing in times of reformatory rhetoric.

Among all cases this study investigated, the charity concerts most evidently showed Korean women's audience publicness. What is remarkable is that women who organized and promoted charity events did not use Korean playhouses primarily as a platform to build a national community or reinforce their cultural identities as Koreans. While previous studies tend to consider Korean playhouses an ethno-nationalistic space, thus restricting the scope of audience publicness to the politics of colonial oppression and nationalistic resistance, charity concerts clearly show that there were alliances across boundaries of ethnicities and social strata in Korean playhouses for other aims as well. Although some of their contemporaries praised their enterprise, others doubted the authenticity of the motivation behind charity concerts, particularly against the backdrop of the National Debt Repayment Movement, which mobilized thousands of Koreans. In particular, stones thrown into the theater during a charity concert reveal ruptures that audience publicness, which emerged in the colonial grey zone, created in Korean society.

In this study, I argued that Korean women's various ways of watching plays and movies were fundamental elements of audience publicness. As Korean women's spectatorship pertained to gender, colonialism, social strata, and class, their spectatorship caused complex controversies. There were cases showing that Korean women persistently adhered to their own viewing habits, and thus disharmonized with cultural politics targeting theaters and audiences.

In chapter 3, I established that Korean women, who chatted and laughed at the newly introduced *shinpa* plays, disrupted the colonial power's plan to achieve their cultural and emotional assimilation into the Japanese Empire through popular culture.²² In the 1910s, the *Maeil Shinbo* and several Korean theater companies that cooperated with the newspaper promoted the Japanese melodrama as a "new theater" superior to the Korean traditional plays. The *Maeil Shinbo* actively encouraged Korean housewives, most of whom were not in school and out of reach for the colonial assimilation politics, to watch *shinpa* plays and to learn virtues from the characters—reflecting Japanese pedagogues' discussions on theater as a medium for social education. Against this backdrop, the newspaper reported about colonized Korean women who, on the one hand, were moved by Japanese-style plays and cried. On the other hand, the Government-Official's media criticized Korean women for laughing about the same play, exposing that the description of tearful female audiences was a way of refashioning them as a case for successful cultural assimilation. The *Maeil Shinbo*'s criticisms of Korean female audiences imply that the colonial authorities utilized their playful watching behaviors as a justification for intervention into, and discipline of, the colonized people.

Despite their disruptive impact on colonial assimilation politics, Korean audiences' disapproval of *shinpa* plays cannot be solely explained by their anti-colonial or anti-

22 See chapter 3.1 and 3.2.

Japanese sentiments. They decided to go to *shinpa* plays on their own, while Koreans with strong anti-Japanese leaning would not have attended such performances in the first place. More likely, Korean women considered playful watching behaviors a proper way of enjoying *shinpa* plays as they were not familiar with the Japanese ways of acting and the Korean actors of that period tended to overdress regardless of the characters they played. Nevertheless, by actively pursuing entertainment and expressing their joy despite criticisms, those Korean women reappropriated theaters that the colonial intellectuals and authorities had appropriated as a locus of social education.

Chapter 4 found that the surge in Korean female students' watching of Western romance films in the 1920s broke not only traditional gender norms and society's expectations but also eugenic biopolitics. By analyzing two silent movies and comparing them with the censorship record, I confirmed that the audience of that time could actually watch the erotic scenes such as hugs and kisses in Western movies due to the arbitrary nature of colonial censorship. Due to this graphic representation of eroticism, numerous Koreans from various social backgrounds expressed their concern that Western movies would corrupt the youth by making them sexually active.

Noticing that particularly schoolgirls were imagined to be at the highest risk in the debate, chapter 4 analyzed popular narratives of sexuality and educated young women in the 1920s and identified eugenics as a vehicle for this specific fear. Medical professionals and educators, who embraced the eugenic perspective, treated schoolgirls as a valuable resource that could contribute to racial improvement. Thus, they were expected to build an exemplary family by marrying well-educated men and giving birth to healthy children.²³ Against this backdrop, Western romantic movies symbolized a shortcut to sexual indulgence and STDs which posed a severe threat to eugenic marriage since they would lead to the moral corruption of young women which would consequently cause hereditary damage to all of posterity. As one rare supporter of female students' moviegoing argued in a magazine article, the concerns about their moral decay through romantic movies underestimated their ability to critically judge the films and learn lessons about relationships. Unimpressed by such claims, Yi Kapsu, a prominent advocate for eugenics in colonial Korea, went so far as to dissuade pregnant women from watching movies in the 1930s, claiming it might cause sudden emotional distress and affect the fetus negatively.²⁴

Chapter 4 found that despite the taboo, the younger generation of Koreans of that time, including female students, went to theaters for a date, imagined film actors as their idealized romantic partners, and used films and film narrators' explanations as references to perform their own romantic relationships. Despite media scandals about them, young people did not cease to express their excitement in movie theaters. In this way, young female spectators' everyday practices of moviegoing were a means of defying biopolitical control of their bodies and sexuality and actively forming a youth culture with their own language and mannerism echoing the discourse of sexual reform of the 1920s.²⁵

23 See chapter 4.2.

24 See chapter 4.3.

25 See chapter 4.1 and 4.3.

Controversies surrounding Korean female audiences in the colonial period often discredited women's abilities to develop their own opinions of plays and movies. Debates on Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* and particularly how Korean women should understand the drama exemplified how this distrust served specific interests, such as maintaining the patriarchal social order or prioritizing other political agendas. By analyzing relevant texts published in the 1920s and 1930s, and resorting to the Foucauldian concept of commentary, Chapter 5 found that Korean male intellectuals, who dominated the discussion, set directions and boundaries for interpreting Ibsen's controversial play even before it was staged. I found that the few affirmative commentaries on *A Doll's House* by male authors tended to foreground political agendas such as Korea's independence from Japan, reform of the nation, and socialist idealism. For instance, reform-oriented Korean men such as Hyön Ch'öl and Kim Ök downplayed the meaning of Nora's emancipatory act—leaving her husband and children—as a surplus of individualism and self-awakening in the 1920s, although they considered these notions necessary for developing the Korean nation's vigor.²⁶ In the 1930s, Ch'ae Mansik and Shim Hun reintroduced Nora as a positive role model for Korean women in their novels, which diagnosed her crisis as a result of the colonial capitalist economic system and Korean family tradition and proposed socialist activism as the alternative.

Meanwhile, renowned Korean male writers, including Yi Kwangsu, Yang Kōnsik, and Kim Tong'in, expressed their fear of Nora's influence on Korean women: they would be agitated by the play and eventually overthrow the conventional gender norms and family expectations by leaving their families as Nora did. In line with the disparaging connotation attached to the popular term “Nora of Chosŏn,” these authors depicted Korean women influenced by Nora as self-destructive characters in a caricature-like manner. Among all texts analyzed in Chapter 5, Korean men's suspicion and anxiety that women would not understand the play in the same way as they did was most evident in texts written by these three authors.²⁷ Before Ch'ae and Shim undertook the reassessment of Nora from the socialist perspective in the 1930s, Korean socialists commonly disdained the play as a story of a naïve bourgeois woman destined to fail because of her economic conditions.²⁸ Overall, the emancipatory message in *A Doll's House* was often sidelined, criticized, or ridiculed in the Korean discourse, and some people even asserted that the play should not yet be played in theaters due to Korean women's alleged lack of cognitive ability.

In this context, the cheers and applause of female audiences at the last scene of the 1934 performance of *A Doll's House* documented in the *Maeil Shinbo* suggest that Korean women, seldom heard in the public discourse, used the theater space to express their endorsement of Nora's choice. Their shared will for emancipation and disregard for negative commentaries is especially apparent given that they voiced their opinions despite male audiences trying to silence them. Although ephemeral, the women in the 1934 production of *A Doll's House* generated a feminist audience publicness in line with a few female writers such as Kim Wōnju and Na Hyesök. Their voices prove that colonial Korean

26 See chapter 5.2.

27 See chapter 5.3.

28 See chapter 5.4.

women could explore alternative readings of plays and movies, although male intellectuals dominated societal discussions of theaters.²⁹

Nevertheless, Korean theaters were not a utopian space for women's alliances. The theater was often a space where the severe social hierarchy of the Chosŏn Dynasty based on gender and social stratum was challenged and reestablished between Korean people.³⁰ Concurrently, women of lower social class and income claimed Korean theaters, which had been stigmatized as an illicit space, as their realm and expressed their hostility towards female students in theaters. The fact that the conflict between women of different social standings evolved further around different modes of play watching shows that Korean women developed various types of spectatorship depending on their sociocultural status and class identities, which in return reinforced their differences and group identities.³¹

Contribution of This Study

In this study, I analyzed the relationship between public discourses on Korean female audiences that have been overlooked in prior studies with various political discourses of the early twentieth century, such as those dealing with nationalism, anti-colonialism, assimilation, modernization, eugenics, and socialism. Furthermore, I identified various moments of the political that Korean female spectators created during the colonial era, thus closing the research gaps surrounding Yun Hae-dong's concept of audience publicness. This study sheds light on the historical process through which Korean women's spectatorship was formed and negotiated in the colonial period and helps to better understand their everyday lives in relation to a broad spectrum of political discourses.

This study argues that Korean women were meaningful actors who forged audience publicness in Korean theaters in the colonial period. Sometimes they devised political moments through organized cooperation like charity events, but more commonly, they created audience publicness by disobeying or not engaging with the disciplinary power targeting them. Korean female spectators' audience publicness was often unintended and sporadic, yet continuous. In doing so, they broadened women's realm in society, represented their interests, and challenged the patriarchal politics of gender—while they pursued pleasure despite the political turmoil in the colonial era. The very banality of playgoing constituted the colonial grey zone that was not fully absorbed by the dichotomy of colonialism and anti-colonialism, creating unexpected ruptures in both realms of politics.

For this study, I collected and examined numerous sources to retrace a discourse spanning between 1900 and 1934 as accurately and extensively as possible. Nonetheless, this endeavor has its limits in that I was unable to investigate firsthand accounts of the subaltern audience, especially women, who are at the heart of the study. Furthermore, discourse about audiences in both Korean and Japanese theaters published in the

29 See chapter 5.5.

30 See chapter 3.3.

31 See chapter 4.1.

Japanese media was left unexamined in this study due to the limited access to sources, which I hope to supplement through future, dedicated research.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I hope that this study can productively contribute to the discussion of the Korean colonial era, which has been dominated by the hypotheses of colonial exploitation and colonial modernization, through the intersectional spectatorship of Korean audiences and their own momentums in theater space. In addition, this study may provide a meaningful historiographic complement to the symbolic and psychoanalytic approaches to the question of spectatorship in the theater and film studies fields. In the context of Korean studies, this study may be helpful to rediscover colonial Korean women's spectatorship on other occasions, such as sports events and mountaineering, which was increasingly observed and documented during the colonial era. Last but not least, I hope this study will be read as an index that points to the silence of social minorities in Korea who remained as a blank in historical narratives.

7. Selected Bibliography

This list includes texts and other sources cited in the main body of the book. Excluded are newspaper and magazine texts due to their sheer numbers, which would have exhausted the bibliography. Additionally, books and other writings that were consulted but not directly cited are not listed below. However, all sources are cited and mentioned with full bibliographic details in footnotes when used for the first time. Frequently cited newspaper and magazine titles have been abbreviated in footnotes and tables. In cases where the Korean title written in Roman letters is long, the English translated title is used. Detailed bibliographic information and URLs are provided below in the list of databases and books. Each online database was accessible as of January 19, 2024. Databases subordinated to Han'guksa Teit'ō Peis'ū (Korean History Database) operated by the National Institute of Korean History are enlisted separately to clarify set of data used for this study.

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8. Glossary (in Korean alphabetical order)

Korean	Romanization	English
3.1 운동	<i>Samil Undong</i>	March First Movement
가기	<i>kagi</i>	singing <i>kisaeng</i> -women
갑오개혁	<i>Kabo Kaehyök</i>	Kabo Reform of 1894
개벽	<i>Kaebiyök</i>	<i>Kaebiyök</i>
개인주의	<i>kaein chuüi</i>	individualism
경성	<i>Kyöngsöng</i>	Kyöngsöng; Seoul
경성고아원	<i>Kyöngsöng Koawön</i>	Kyöngsöng Orphanage
공덕심	<i>kongdöksim</i>	civic morality
공심	<i>kongshim</i>	public conscience
관객성	<i>kwangaeksöng</i>	spectatorship
관기	<i>kwan'gi</i>	<i>kisaeng</i> -women of officialdom
광무대	<i>Kwangmudae</i>	Kwangmudae
구	<i>gu</i>	district
군	<i>gun</i>	county
국민	<i>kungmin</i>	national
국의 향	<i>Kuk üi Hyang</i>	<i>The Scent of Chrysanthemum</i>
국채보상운동	<i>Kukch'ae Posang Undong</i>	National Debt Repayment Movement
군자	<i>kunja</i>	ideal human in Confucian teachings
권선징악	<i>Kwönsön Ching'ak</i>	Encouraging Good and Punishing Evil
근대화	<i>kündaeahwa</i>	modernization
근우회	<i>Künühoe</i>	Künühoe
기부	<i>kibu</i>	<i>kisaeng</i> -women's custodians
기생	<i>kisaeng</i>	<i>kisaeng</i> -women
남자석	<i>namjasökh</i>	Men's seats

남존여비	<i>Namjon Yöbi</i>	Honor Men, Despise Women
남촌	<i>Namch'on</i>	Southern Town
내외	<i>naeoe</i>	inside-outside
노라	<i>Nora</i>	Nora
눈물	<i>Nunmul</i>	<i>The Tears</i>
단성사	<i>Tansöngsa</i>	Tansöngsa
단장록	<i>Tanjangrok</i>	<i>Heart Breaking Stories</i>
대한부인회	<i>Taehan Puinhoe</i>	Taehan Women's Association (TWA)
대한자강회	<i>Taehan Chaganghoe</i>	Korean Self-Strengthening Association
대한제국	<i>Taehan Cheguk</i>	Korean Empire
도	<i>do</i>	province
독립문	<i>Tongnipmun</i>	Independence Arch
독립협회	<i>Tongnip Hyöp'hoe</i>	Independence Club
독자구락부	<i>tokja kurakbu</i>	Readers' Club
독자기별	<i>tokja kibyöl</i>	Readers' Letters
동	<i>dong</i>	small parts of district; neighborhood
모던걸	<i>modan kköl</i>	modern girl
모던보이	<i>modan poi</i>	modern boy
무능자의안해	<i>Munöngja üi Anhae</i>	<i>The Wife of the Incompetent Man</i>
무단통치	<i>mudan t'ongch'i</i>	military rule
무동	<i>mudong</i>	dancing children
문명개화	<i>Munmyöng Kaehwa</i>	Civilization and Enlightenment
문명국	<i>munmyöngguk</i>	civilized country
문수성	<i>Munsusöng</i>	The Star of Excellent Scholarship
문화통치	<i>munhwa t'ongch'i</i>	cultural rule
민족	<i>minjok</i>	nation
편사	<i>pyönsa</i>	film narrator
별건곤	<i>Pyölgön'gon</i>	<i>Pyölgön'gon</i>
병자삼인	<i>Pyöngja Samin</i>	<i>Three Patients: The Drama</i>
봉선화	<i>Pongsönhwa</i>	<i>Touch-Me-Not</i>
부	<i>bu</i>	administrative division
부인	<i>puin</i>	lady
부인관객	<i>puin kwan'gaek</i>	lady audience
부인석	<i>puinsök</i>	Ladies' Seats
불여귀	<i>Pulyögwü</i>	<i>The Cuckoo</i>
비극	<i>pigük</i>	tragedy
비봉담	<i>Pibongdam</i>	<i>The Pond of Flying Phoenix</i>
사랑의각성	<i>Sarang üi Kaksöng</i>	<i>Awakening of Love</i>

사회 교육	<i>K: sahoe kyoyuk, J: shakai kyōiku</i>	social education
사회주의	<i>sahoe chu'ui</i>	socialism
산대회	<i>sandaehui</i>	festive performances
삼천리	<i>Samch'ōlli</i>	<i>Samch'ōlli</i>
삼패	<i>samp'ae</i>	third-class <i>kisaeng</i>
상등석	<i>sangdūngsōk</i>	upper-level seats
상민	<i>sangmin</i>	the commoners
서울	<i>Seoul</i>	Seoul
소춘대	<i>Soch'undae</i>	Soch'undae
식민지	<i>shingminji</i>	colony
식민지 공공성	<i>shingminji konggongsōng</i>	colonial publicness
식민지 근대성	<i>shingminji kūndaesōng</i>	colonial modernity
식민지 근대화론	<i>shingminji kūndaehwa ron</i>	hypotheses of colonial modernization
식민지 수탈론	<i>shingminji sut'al ron</i>	hypotheses of colonial exploitation
신극 운동	<i>shin'gūk undong</i>	New Theater Movement
신분	<i>shinbun</i>	social stratum
신분제	<i>shinbunje</i>	social strata system
신여성	<i>shin yōsōng</i>	New Women
신파	<i>K: shinp'a, J: shimpa</i>	New School
쌍옥루	<i>Ssangongnu</i>	<i>Double Jaded Tears</i>
야금	<i>yagūm</i>	night curfew
양반	<i>yangban</i>	aristocrats
여공	<i>yōgong</i>	womanly works
여성	<i>yōsōng</i>	women
여학생	<i>yōhaksaeng</i>	female student
연극	<i>yōn'gūk</i>	theater; theatrical play
연극장	<i>yōn'gūkchang</i>	theater
연애	<i>yōnae</i>	love; romance
연애극	<i>yōnaegūk</i>	romantic movies
연애지상주의	<i>yōnae chisang chu'ui</i>	Love's Supremacy
연주회	<i>yōnjuhoe</i>	concert, recital
연흥사	<i>Yōnhūngsa</i>	Yōnhūngsa
연희	<i>yōnhui</i>	plays
연희장	<i>yōnhūijang</i>	playhouse
영화	<i>yōnghwa</i>	movies
영화관	<i>yōnghwagwan</i>	movie theaters
예기	<i>yegi</i>	artistic <i>kisaeng</i>
우미관	<i>Umigwan</i>	Umigwan
우생학	<i>usaenghak</i>	Eugenics
우중행인	<i>Ujung Haeng'in</i>	<i>A Passerby in the Rain</i>

원	wŏn	wŏn
원각사	Wŏn'gaksa	Wŏn'gaksa
위생 경찰	wisaeng kyŏngch'al	hygiene police
위안부	K: Wianbu, J: Ianfu	comfort women
유녀	yunyŏ	prostituting women
유일단	Yuiltan	The Only Group
육혈포강도	Yuk'yŏlp'o Kangdo	The Burglar with a Six-Shooter
음부탕자	ūmbu t'angja	lewd women and prodigal men
의병	ūibyŏng	righteous armies
이패	ipae	second-class kisaeng
이혼 고백장	Ihon Kobaekchang	A Confession about My Divorce
인종 개량	injong kaeryang	racial improvement
인형의 집	Inhyŏng ūi Chip	A Doll's House
인형의 집을 나온 연유	Inhyŏng ūi Chip ūl Naon Yŏnyu	Why She Left the Doll's House
일패	ilp'ae	first-class kisaeng
자선	chasŏn	philanthropy
자선부인회	Chasŏn Puinhoe	Philanthropic Women's Association (PWA)
자유연애	chayu yŏnae	free love
자혜부인회	Chahye Puinhoe	Benevolent Women's Association (BWA)
장안사	Chang'ansa	Chang'ansa
장옷	chang'ot	women's covering cloth
장한몽	Changhanmong	A Long Heartburning Dream
재인	chaein	performers
전	chŏn	chŏn
정부원	Chŏngbuwŏn	The Grudge of the Chaste Wife
정신 위생	chŏngshin wisaeng	mental hygiene
제물포	Chemulp'o	(present-day) Incheon
조계	chogyŏ	concession
조선	Chosŏn	Chosŏn Dynasty
조선의 노라	Chosŏn ūi Nora	Nora of Chosŏn, Korean Nora
조혼	chohon	marriage between children
종로	Jongno	Jongno
중등석	chungdŭngsŏk	middle-level seats
중인	chung'in	the middle people
직녀성	Chingnyŏsŏng	Vega
찬양회	Ch'anyanghoe	Ch'anyanghoe (Praise and Encouragement Association)
창기조합	ch'anggi chohap	association of kisaeng women
천도교	Ch'ŏndogyo	Religion of the Heavenly Way
천민	ch'ŏnmin	the "base people"

총독부	<i>ch'ongdokbu</i>	Government-General
취지서	<i>ch'wijisŏ</i>	Letters Explaining Purpose
친경	<i>ch'in'gyŏng</i>	plowing ceremony
친구의 형 살해	<i>Ch'in'gu ūi Hyŏng Sarhae</i>	<i>The Murder of a Friend's Brother</i>
키스/키스	<i>kisŭ/kissŭ</i>	kiss
태교	<i>t'aegyo</i>	prenatal education
태극학회	<i>T'aegŭk Hakhoe</i>	Great Korean Learning Group
통감부	<i>T'onggambu</i>	Residency-General
투석	<i>t'usŏk</i>	stone attacks
판소리	<i>p'ansori</i>	epic chant
풍기	<i>p'unggi</i>	public morals, custom
하등석	<i>hadŭngsŏk</i>	lower-level seats
한성기생조합	<i>Hansŏng Kisaeng Chohap</i>	Hansŏng Kisaeng Association (HKA)
한성전기회사	<i>Hansŏng Chŏn'gi Hoesa</i>	Hansŏng Electric Company (HEC)
한일부인회	<i>Hanil Puinhoe</i>	Korean-Japanese Women's Association (KJWA)
혁신단	<i>Hyŏkshindan</i>	The Innovation Group
혁신선미단	<i>Hyŏkshin Sŏnmidan</i>	The Innovation and Clear Beauty Group
현모양처	<i>hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ</i>	Wise Mother and Good Wife
협률사	<i>Hyŏmnyulsa</i>	Hyŏmnyulsa
형제	<i>Hyŏngje</i>	Brothers
화류병	<i>hwaryubyŏng</i>	venereal disease
활극	<i>hwalgŭk</i>	action movies
활동사진	<i>hwaltong sajin</i>	motion pictures
회색 지대	<i>hoesaek chidae</i>	grey zone
홍행 급 홍행장 취체 규칙	<i>Hŭnghaeng kŭp Hŭnghaengjang Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik</i>	Rules Controlling Plays and Play Venues
홍행 취체 규칙	<i>Hŭnghaeng Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik</i>	Rules Controlling Plays
희대	<i>hŭidae</i>	stage

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