

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 (*ūibiyōng*)," 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 *Hwangssōng*

1 Ch'oe Changja, "Chasōn Puin ūi Tamhwa [A Discussion of Philanthropic Women]," *Chasōn Puinhoe 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, "Kyōngsōng Kuk Palshin Shinmun Chōnbo 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 signalized 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 Chiyöng, "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'uryöng [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 "Chasöñ Yönuhoe [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 Hyŏmnyulsa'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 Yŏnghwan (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 Hyŏphoe*).¹⁶ The monument, called Independence Arch (*Tongnip-*

11 See Yu, *New History* 1, 96–99.

12 Ibid., 125.

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

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

15 Han Sanggu, "1907-nyŏn Kukch'ae Posang Undong ūi Chŏn'gukjŏk Chŏn'gae Yangsang Yŏn'gu [A Study on the Nationwide Development of Government Bond-Repayment Campaign in 1907]," *Inmun Yŏngū* 75 (2015), 121–56; refer to 129.

16 Shin Yongha, *Kabo Kaehyŏk kwa Tongnip Hyŏphoe Undong ūi Sahoesa [The Social History of Kabo Reform and the Independence Club's Movement]* (Seoul: Sŏul 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 ŭi Chenosaidū Chakchŏn [The First Genocide-Operation of the Japanese Army]," in *Tonghak Nongmin Chŏnjaeng kwa Ilbon: Tto Hana ŭi 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]," *Shin'yŏn 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'ŭi [Loyalty and Integrity of a Poor Woman]," TMS, February 26, 1907, 2; "Ch'abu Chur'ui [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 Shibai 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 *Hwangsŏng 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 *Hwangsŏng 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 *Hwangsŏng 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 “Deploping 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 “Tansǒngsa as well as Hyǒmnyulsa.”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 *Hwangśōng 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 *Hwangśōng 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 nŭn 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 ŭi 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, “Yŏhaksaeng 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 *Taeahan 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 (*ūmbu t'angja*)," Korean newspapers branded playhouse visitors per se as a threat to public morals. *Ūmbu t'angja* was not a clearly defined term but rather filled with images of decadence. Satirical lyrics published in the *Taeahan 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 "Hwaltong Ŭigūm [Motion Pictures Should Be Banned]," *HS*, May 5, 1906, 3.

93 "Ch'aek Kyōnggwān [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'uk Hyōngsōng Kwajōng ŭi P'ungsok T'ongje wa Orak Tamnon Koch'al: Kūndae Ch'ogi Konggong Orak Kigwan ūrosō ŭi Kūkchang ŭl Chungsim ūro [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 “Yŏnjang 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 “Tansŏngsa ūi P'ungsok Koeran [Decay of Public Morality at Tansŏngsa],” *MS*, April 7, 1911, 2.

99 “Yŏn'gŭkkye: Kangsŏllu ūi Sŏnak Ilp'yŏng [Theater World: A Comment on the Good and the Bad of Kangsŏllu],” *MS*, April 30, 1912, 3.

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

101 For further analysis of this topic see chapter 3.

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

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

104 See “Kŭri 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, Hyŏmnyulsa (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, Hyŏmnyulsa 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 *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* and the *Taehan Maeil Shinbo*, two severe critics of Hyŏmnyulsa, for four consecutive days between April 4 and April 7, 1906. The humanitarian organization thanked the playhouse for its generous donation through this advertisement:

Hyŏmnyulsa 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 Hyŏmnyulsa's Spectators," *TMS*, March 16, 1906, 2.

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

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

The April 7, 1906 issue of the *Taeahan 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 Hyömnnyulsa” 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 Hyömnnyulsa’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 Hyömnnyulsa],” *TMS*, April 7, 1906, 1.

111 Cho Yönggyu traces how Hyön Yöng’un may have instrumentalized charity concerts to enhance Hyömnnyulsa’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 Hwaltong e kwanhan Yesulsa chök Yöngu: 1910-nyön-1918-nyöndae Kkaji üi Chönt’ong Kong’yön Yesul üi Chungsim üro [A Study on the Performing Art History in the Tansöngsa Theater-Focused on Performance during 1910–1918],” *Han’guk Ümaksa 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, Yönhöngsa, 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 Yönhöngsa, 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]," *Hyangt'o 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	Sochundae	Hyŏmnyulsa / 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 / Kyŏngsŏng 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 / Kyŏngsŏng 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	Sochundae	Kwangji Kyeok, Yŏnhwa, Kŭmhwa, Chukyŏp, Kyesŏn, Aengmu, Chaeryŏn/ Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Jesters from P'yŏngYang, slides, pansori, gymnastic stunts, Buddhist dance, sword dance, flower dance, boat dance, Xiang Yu dance, ball dance, drum dance (mugo), hyang'ung yŏngmu,* drum dance (pukchum), lion dance, crane dance	Hyŏn Yŏng'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	Tansŏngsa	Unknown / Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage	Unknown	Korean and Chinese men, kisaeng women	Full list	TMS, Jan. 7, 1908
6	June 1908 (three days incl. June 24)	Sochundae	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	Yönhüngsa	Former government officials, managers of Yönhüngsa and yegi association, yegi women, / PWA (Home for Children's Famine Relief)	Dancing children, yegi's songs, playgroup from P'yöng'yang, Ch'ünhyangga, 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	Chang'ansa	Approx. 100 Kwariñgi women / Kyöngsöng Orphanage	Kwariñgi women's performance (program uncertain)	Nearly 1,000 visitors on the night of July 13, 1908	Partial list (gentlemen and kwariñgi women)	TMS, July 11, 1908; HS, July 14, 1908; TMS, July 15, 1908.
10	Aug. 7-14, 1908	Chang'ansa	Unknown / School of Engineering and Mathematics	Unknown	Korean officials incl. Yi Chunyong, Yi Chiyong, Cho Minhüi accompanied by kisæng 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>miguk</i> *, <i>puguk</i> *, comedy, <i>oehapguk 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	Sochiundae	Hansŏng Kisaeng Association (HKA) / Famine in Munch'ŏn-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 Wōngi	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>Hanil Puinhoe</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 Chuison dawŏn	Ladies / Women's Common School (<i>Yŏja Pohak-wŏn</i>)	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 *Taeſhan 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’gu [A Research on the Philanthropic Women’s Association in the End of the Chosŏn Dynasty],” *Ehwa Sahak Yŏn’gu* 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'ön-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; *Chasöñ 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 Chasöñ Yönuhoe Suipkü'm 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 Chasöñ [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 Yŏnhoe 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 ŭro [An Analysis of Articles about Korean Performing Arts in Japanese Daily Newspapers *Keijō Shinpo* and *Keijō Nippo*]," *Kugak Kyoyuk Yŏngu* 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 won 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 Tansôngsa 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 Puinhoe 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 *cha'in* 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 (*ilp'ae*), 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 Ttarŭn 1910-nyōndae Ch'um Yōnhaeng ūi Pyōndong Yōng'u: 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 (*ch'anggi*), 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: Kūndae Kisaeng ūi Hyŏngsŏng ūl Chungsim ūro” [Singing, Dancing, and Organization of twentieth century Kisaeng: Focusing on the Formation of Modern Kisaeng], *Han'guk Ŭmak Yŏngu* 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 *Taeahan 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 *Taeahan 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 ŭl 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 P’yŏngnon [Comments on Current Affairs],” *TMS*, December 18, 1908, 2.

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

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

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

154 “*Kisaeng* Koŭi [*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 *Hwangsoṅg 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 Kyŏngsŏng 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 Kyŏngsŏng 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'ui 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, "Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage," 188–89.

166 Ibid.

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

Luckily, the older brother Yi Woohyŏn [who managed the orphanage with his younger brother] was connected to [the pro-Japanese group] Ilchinhoe. Thus, he decided to turn to Shich'ŏn'gyo, a religion that many members of Ilchinhoe believe in, and bring the orphanage under the auspices of Shich'ŏn'gyo, in order to cut all connection to the Christian church. On September 2, Yi Woohyŏn met Pak Hyŏngch'ae from Shich'ŏn'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 Kyŏngsŏng and its suburbs, Kaesŏng, Suwŏn, Ansŏng, Ch'ŏngju, Anju, P'yŏng'yang, 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 wŏn 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 "Kyŏngsŏng Koawŏn ūi Naehong [The Internal Conflict of Kyŏngsŏng 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, "Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage," 188–89.

168 Miura Yagorō, "Kidokkyo P'ogyo Sangt'ae Chosa rŭl Wihae Ch'uljang Ch'ido Kŏn [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 Yŏnghwan 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, “Pogyo Saōp Ch’uijosa rŭl wihan Ch’uljang Kŏn [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 “Idŭng 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 *Taeahan Maeil 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'un-dae)	The stone attack during the play <i>Chönninbong</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 *Hwangsöng Shinmun*.

Stone-throwing targeting playhouses first began in a dispute between a Japanese performer and a Korean audience member at Tansöngsa. 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, Tansöngsa 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 wön in donations to an educational project as he had promised.¹⁸⁶ Through these mishaps, Tansöngsa 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 Tansöngsa 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 Kakhyön, the head of the Food and Festivity Council (*chönsönsa*), 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 Sö Ch’angbo’s House in December 1909 was a clear sign of hostility against Korea’s annexation to Japan. Sö became a target of attacks after he publicly consented to and signed the pro-Japanese group Ilchinhoe’s open letter

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

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

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

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

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

188 See table 2.

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

190 “Hyöpsa 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 *Taeahan 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 Wihaesö [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 Yöngu* 9 (1980), 283–96; Kim Hara, "Chosön Yösöng üi Irüm e Taeahan 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 Yöngu* 27 (2013), 83–120.

198 Woo, "Life of Kisaeng," 21.

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

Figure 2: An advertisement with names of kisaeng women as organizers (fifth column).

(三) 號四十六百六千二第 聞新報星 期火日四廿月二十年元歷帝國大 (可認物便郵信三第)

文明錄

謝德氏 二一七八八號
同慶氏 二一七八八號
趙王氏 二一五八四號
金福氏 二一五八四號
金福氏 二一五八四號
金福氏 二一五八四號

社告

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新刊書籍廣告

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大東學會

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歲暮有福

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谷香合資會社

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Source: *Hwangsong Shinmun*, December 24, 1907, 3. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

Making a generous donation was another way to earn fame at charity concerts. In the Autumn of 1907, two *kisaeng* women named Ch'aeryŏn and Yŏnshim put their names on the donor list published by Kyŏngsŏng Orphanage alongside male politicians including

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 *kwang'i* 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 *kwang'i* 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 *kwang'i* and *yegi* women; I cannot dare to compare PWA's level of knowledge [to mine] and commend the group. However, *kwang'i* 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 *kwang'i* 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 Mumyōngssi, "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 Puintūl i Ch’ungae Chishim i Kyōkpal 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 Chasōnhoe esō ... [The Japanese Women’s Philanthropic Association ...],” TS, November 6, 1897, 3.

211 “Kohaewōn 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’ŏngyŏng 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 hesitance, 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'ongyŏng, "Ch'ong Ŏpnŭn Kŏt to Ch'ŏ Irwŏl lo, Pan'gaun Kŏt to Ch'ŏ Irwŏl Ira [The Time Is Merciless, Yet Also Promising]," *PWA Magazine* 1, 11.

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