3. Social Education in Korean Theaters

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 See ibid., 49–80.

6 See ibid., 86–92.

7 Ibid., 92.

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

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

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

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

8 Ibid., 84.
9 See ibid., 92–100.
10 Ibid., 100.
11 Ibid., 101.
12 Ibid., 105–10.
13 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 4.
14 See Daniel Pieper, "Korean as Transitional Literacy: Language Policy and Korean Colonial Education, 1910–1919," *Acta Koreana* 18, no. 2 (2015), 393–421; refer to 414–16.
15 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 6.
16 Ibid., 99.

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

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

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

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

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

17 See ibid., 97–113.

18 Mun, "Custom Control," 362–64.

19 Ibid., 363.

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

3.1 Theater's Role in Colonial Social Education

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

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

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

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

22 Thomas, *Learning Democracy*, 4.

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

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

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

26 Satō, "Social Education 1," 131.

27 Ibid., 135.

28 Ibid., 137.

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

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

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

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

29 Satō, "Social Education 2," 140.

30 Satō, "Social Education 1," 131.

31 Satō, "Social Education 3," 145.

32 Ibid., 144–45.

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

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

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

36 Satō, "Social Education 5," 108.

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

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

Satō explains how differently the same concept of social education was interpreted by two prominent figures of the Japanese discourse, namely, Yamana Jirō and Satō Zenjirō.[43] While the former regarded society as an agent of education with formative power, the latter saw the society as the target of educative measurements.[44] Furthermore, Yamana viewed social education as having a different function from school education, while Zenjirō argued that both school and social education shared one goal: the formation of the state.[45] Satō sees a clear connection between Zenjirō's understanding of social education and the burgeoning idea of an imperialist state after Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.[46] Considering society as "a kind of organism,"[47] Zenjirō accentuated that an individual's happiness cannot be anything else but what benefits the nation and the state. In this context, Zenjirō advocated the "education of public sentiments" and "regulation of the society"[48] via social education as a means of cultivating a healthy, functioning, imperial body.

37 Ibid., 109.

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

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

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

41 Satō, "Social Education 5," 111.

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

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

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

45 See ibid., 114.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 114–15.

48 Ibid.

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

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

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

The term "social education" was introduced to the Korean discourse in 1906 through two routes. Ōgakī Takeo (1862–1929), a Japanese journalist who lived in Korea, first used the term in the Korean context on May 19, 1906 in a lecture titled "The Effects of Education," which he held at the third meeting of the Korean Self-Strengthening Association (*Taehan Chaganghoe*) with 67 attendees.[50] This speech was published in the *Hwangsŏng Shinmun* in two segments in May 1906 and re-published in the first issue of *Taehan Chaganghoe Wŏlbo* (*The Monthly Magazine of the Korean Association for Self-Strengthening*) in July 1906.[51] In August of that same year, Ch'ae Kyubyŏng published an article titled "Social Education" in the journal of the Great Korean Learning Group (*T'aegŭk Hakhoe*), an enlightenment-oriented Korean students' association in Tokyo.[52]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

mon in the Korean enlightenment-oriented intellectuals' discourse, who sought to overcome the national crisis through education between 1900 and 1910.[56]

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

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

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

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

---

56 The frequent usage of the term "social education" by members of *T'aegŭk Hakhoe* indicates the popularity of the concept in the Japanese academic discussions of that time. See (selected), Kim Pohyŏn, "Kongha T'aegŭkhakhoe Ch'anglip [Celebrating the Founding of T'aegŭk Hakhoe]," *TH* (December 1906), 8; Yi Tongch'o, "Chŏngshin chŏk Kyoyuk ŭi P'iryo [The Necessity of Mental Education]," *TH* (June 1907), 5–10; "Kohaksaeng ŭi Chŏnghyŏng [Self-Supporting Students' Feelings]," *TH* (July 1907), 50–54.

57 Ōgakī, "Effects of Education," 46–47.

58 Ibid., 46.

59 Ōgakī Takeo, "Widae han Kungmin enŭn Samgae T'ŭksŏng i Yuham ŭl Kyŏnham [Great Nations Share Three Characteristics]," *TW* (August 1906), 1.

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

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

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

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

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

60 Ōgakī, "Effects of Education," 46.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

68 Ibid., 150–54.

69 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 349.

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

71 See Yi, "Cultural Strategy," 160.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matsui Shigeru's idea of social education and civic morality was very likely related to the control of audiences' conduct in Korean theaters that began shortly before 1910 and continued after colonization in 1910.[83] As discussed later in chapter 3.3, the colonial police and media began focusing on each individual's behavior and disciplining the audiences. In other words: Colonial police control of Korean theaters and the discourse of theater improvement targeted not only the stage but also the auditorium. In this regard, Ōgakī and Matsui contributed to the dual control of Korean theaters by highlighting various aspects of theater as a means of social education: the former considered theatrical plays as a kind of teaching material for the audience, while the latter regarded the theater

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

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

80 Ibid., 833.

81 Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 41.

82 Satō, "Social Education 5," 108.

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

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

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

Seoul's entertainment business during the 1910s underwent several structural changes. Firstly, three Korean playhouses that enjoyed popularity during the 1900s, including Soch'undae, Yŏnhŭngsa, and Chang'ansa, stopped operating in this era.[85] Secondly, Kwangmudae, the HEC's former garage theater, found a new home at an amusement park in the middle of the capital and attracted audiences with traditional plays and motion pictures.[86] Thirdly, the town's early cinephiles would welcome the first Korean-only movie theater named Umigwan in 1912 and the grand reopening of Tansŏngsa as a movie theater in 1918.[87] Han Sang'ŏn, the Korean cinema historian, notes that these changes were closely related to the changes brought by Japan's colonization in the Korean economy. Megata Tanetaro's financial reform, which took place between 1905 and 1908, led to the bankruptcy of Korean patrons of playhouses.[88] After the annexation, colonial banks refused to give loans to Korean businesspeople. Thus, they did not have financial backups for risky business models such as that of a playhouse.[89] Furthermore, the Government-General stopped permitting Koreans to open theaters allegedly due to "public security and hygiene reasons"[90] after 1913. As a result, only three Korean theaters—Umigwan, Kwangmudae, and Tansŏngsa—survived the 1910s, all owned by the Japanese.[91]

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

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

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

86 Ibid., 45.

87 Ibid., 159–62.

88 Ibid., 93–94.

89 Ibid., 95.

90 Ibid., 96.

91 Ibid., 95 and 159.

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

94 Liu, "Paris and Quest," 60.

95 Ibid.

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

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

98 Ibid., 15.

99 Ibid., 14–16.

100 Ibid., 16.

Eventually, *kabuki* lost the politicians' support to be established as the national theater to *shimpa*. According to Liu, the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese officials' pursuit of masculinizing the state's representation played a pivotal role in deciding the fate of these competing genres. As the Sino-Japanese War broke out and several theater companies sought to handle the war onstage, the censors endowed Kawakami Otojirō's *shimpa* group with an exclusive right to stage the war, in the belief that "only this realistic theatre with educated actors would appropriately 'inspire the military with its valor and excitement' unlike the effeminate *kabuki* actors."[101] What distinguished Kawakami from other *shimpa* makers was that he founded a more Western-leaning branch of *shimpa*: he excluded *onna gata*, female impersonators, and continuous background music after his study trip to France in 1893.[102] With the political support, Kawakami's branch of *shimpa* emerged as the "relevant, national form"[103] of theater that convincingly represented the *masculinity* of the militarizing country.

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

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

101 Liu, "Paris and Quest," 64.

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

103 Liu, "Paris and Quest," 64.

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

105 Yang Sŭngguk, *Han'guk Shin Yŏn'gŭk Yŏn'gu* [A Study on Korean New Theater] (Seoul: Yŏn'gŭk kwa in'gan, 2001), 92.

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

107 Ibid., 97.

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

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

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

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

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

Soon after the debut at Tansŏngsa, Hyŏkshindan toured in Chemulp'o and began staging plays on a daily basis at Yŏnhŭngsa upon returning to Seoul.[113] Between February and September 1912, Yim Sŏnggu staged 41 Japanese *shimpa* pieces in the Korean language at Yŏnhŭngsa with only nine days of break.[114] During this period, Hyŏkshindan staged military plays and criminal plays such as *Musa chŏk Kyoyuk* (*Educating the Warrior*), *Ch'in'gu ŭi Hyŏng Sarhae* (*The Murder of a Friend's Older Brother*), and *Yuk'yŏlp'o Kangdo* (*The Burglar with a Six-Shooter*).[115] Doing so, Hyŏkshindan played a significant part in popularizing the Japanese genre in colonial Korea. Inspired by Hyŏkshindan's success, other Koreans started playing *shinp'a*, too. Yuiltan (The Only Group) in Kaesŏng, Hyŏkshin Sŏnmidan (The Innovation and Clear Beauty Group), and Munsusŏng (The Star of Excellent

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

110 "Hyŏkshindan ŭi Ŭimu: Hyŏkshindan ŭi Kong'ik Ŭimu [Hyŏkshindan's Duty: Hyŏkshindan's Duty for the Public Good]," *MS*, April 6, 1912, 3.

111 "Hyŏkshindan's Duty," *MS*, April 6, 1912, 3.

112 "Songja ŭi Yŏn'guk Kwallam [Mr. Song Watched Play]," *MS*, January 6, 1912, 2.

113 Hyŏn Ch'ŏl, "Nunmul ŭi Mudae rŭl Papko Kan Idŭl [Those Who Stepped on the Tearful Stages]," *Chogwang* 2 (December 1935), 91.

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

115 Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

116 See Yu, *New History* 1, 316–20.

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

118 Paengmyŏnsaeng, "Yŏn'gŭkkye [The Theater World]," *MS*, February 28, 1912, 3.

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

120 Hyŏkshin Sŏnmidan, "Kwanggo [Advertisement]," *MS*, February 15, 1912, 3.

121 "Munsusŏng u Ch'urhyŏn [Munsusŏng Also Appears]," *MS*, March 27, 1912, 3.

122 See Yun Paeknam, "Chosŏn Yŏn'gŭk Undong ŭi 20-nyŏn chŏn ŭl Hoego Hamyŏ [Looking Back on the Korean Theater Movement 20 Years Ago]," *Kŭk Yesul* (April 1934), 19–21; refer to 21. According to Yang Sŭngguk, Yim might have been influenced by *naniwabushi*, a subgenre of *shimpa* played in Seoul from the Summer of 1911 onwards. *Naniwabushi* adopted *chōbo*, the narration with strong intonation in *kabuki* plays, which was considered obsolete at that time. See *Korean New Theater*, 70–74.

123 Hyŏkshindan's first Korean *shinp'a* play was known to be an adaptation of Japanese military play, either *Educating the Warrior* or *Kunin ŭi Kijil* (*A Soldier's Quality*). See Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 66. For programmes of Korean *shinp'a* groups, see Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 281–86. See also "Yŏnyegye Chŏnghwang [Recent Affairs of the Entertainment World]," *MS*, March 31, 1912, 3. For the analysis of Munsusŏng's debut see chapter 3.2.

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

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

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

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

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

125 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 102.

126 See Pak Chinyŏng, "Iljae Cho Junghwan kwa Pŏnan Sosŏl ŭi Shidae [Cho Chunghwan and the Age of Adapted Novels]," *Minjok Munhaksa Yŏn'gu* 26 (2004), 211.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

133 Ibid.

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

135 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 44.

136 "Hyŏkshindan Yim Sŏnggu Tonggyŏng Yuhak Soshik [The News of Yim Sŏnggu's Study Trip to Tokyo]," *MS*, June 17, 1914, 3.

137 Ch'oe T'aewŏn, "Pŏnan Sosŏl, Midiŏ, Taejungsŏng: 1910-nyŏndae Sosŏl Tokcha ŭi Munje rŭl Chungsim ŭro [Adapted Novels, Media, and Popularity: Focused on the Question of the Readers in the 1910s]," *Han'guk Kŭndae Munhak kwa Ilbon* [*Modern Korean Literature and Japan*], ed. Saegusa Toshikatsu (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2003), 23–37; refer to 27.

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

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

138 Ch'oe, "Adapted Novels," 28; Yi Yŏng'a, "1910-nyŏndae Maeil Shinbo Yŏnjae Sosŏl ŭi Taejungsŏng Hoektŭk Kwajŏng Yŏn'gu [A Study on the Popularization of *Maeil Shinbo*'s Serialized Novels during the 1910s]," *Han'guk Hyŏndae Munhak Yŏn'gu* 23 (2007), 43–81; refer to 48.

139 Han Wŏnyŏng, *Han'guk Kŭndae Shinmun Yŏnjae Sosŏl Yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ihoe Munhwasa, 1996), 68, as cited in Yi, "Popularization of *MS* novels," 48.

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

141 See ibid., 49–53.

142 See ibid.,61-62.

143 Ibid., 64.

144 Ibid.

145 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 243.

146 Yang, *Korean New Theater*, 102.

147 Pak Chinyŏng, "Pigŭk chŏk Sarang ŭi Pŏnyŏk kwa Saeroun Shidae ŭi Kkum [A Translation of a Tragic Love and a Dream of the New Era)," in Cho Chunghwan, *Puryŏgwi* [*The Cuckoo*], ed. Pak Chinyŏng (Seoul: Pogosa, [1912]2006), 291–307; see 294.

and *Pibongdam* (*The Pond of Flying Phoenix*, 1914).[148] As Pak argues, "it was no coincidence that the unrivaled success of his novels, the heyday of *shinp'a*, and the expansion of *Maeil Shinbo* all occurred between 1912 and 1914."[149]

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

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

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

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

---

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

149 Pak, "Translation of Tragic Love," 294.

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

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

152 Ch'oe, "Adapted Novels," 33.

The Cuckoo: Enforcing the Cultural Technique of Beholding

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

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

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

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

153 See Chŏng, *Watching Movies*.

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

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

156 See ibid., 99–121.

157 See ibid., 114–17.

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

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

Munsusŏng's ambitious debut performance of *The Cuckoo* in March 1912 demonstrates that Korean audiences of *shinp'a* plays were not acquainted with the latest genre. *The Cuckoo* was based on Tokutomi Rōka's best-selling Japanese novel *Hototogisu*, which tells the tragic love story of Namiko, who gets divorced under the pressure of her mother-in-law and dies from tuberculosis.[159] At the time of its premiere in Korea, this novel was unknown to most audiences because it was published later, in August 1912.[160]

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

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

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

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

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

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

161 "Recent Affairs," *MS*, March 31, 1912, 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

163 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 151.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

168 See Chŏng, *Watching Movies*, 157

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Tears: Disciplining Female Audiences

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

175 Ibid.
176 Somunsaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, May 11, 1915, 4.
177 Mokkyŏkja, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, September 17, 1914, 4.
178 Kajŭngsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 26, 1913, 3.
179 Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

180 For the biographic information of Yi Hŏn'gu, see Yun Pyŏngro, "Yi Hŏn'gu," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0046471.

181 Yi Hŏn'gu, "Chosŏn Shin'gŭksa Sang ŭi Kŭkyŏn ŭi Chiwi [The Status of Theater Art Research Group in the History of Korean New Theater]," *Kŭk Yesul* (April 1934), 2–9; refer to 4.

182 Yi, "Theater Art Research Group," 3.

183 "Rumors," *MS*, March 27, 1912, 3.

184 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 86–88.

185 "Yŏnhŭijang ŭl Kaeryang Hal Kŏt [Improve the Playhouse]," *TMS*, July 12, 1908, 1.

186 "Improve Playhouse," *TMS*, July 12, 1908, 1.

plishes "*catharsis* (purgation)" of spectators' emotions, such as "pity and fear."[187] As the classicist Stephen Halliwell points out, the feeling of pity and fear and their *catharsis* are "an experience which deeply fulfills and enhances the whole mind"[188] for spectators. It is assumable that the outline of Aristotle's theory was transmitted to Korea via Japan, where *Poetics* had been translated and discussed from 1887 onwards.[189]

While Aristotle and the anonymous writer of the 1908 editorial considered historical characters' heroic deeds as the proper materials of tragedies and sad plays, the adapted novels of the *Maeil Shinbo* told stories of contemporary people who suffer from everyday challenges, such as poverty, sexual threats, and conflicts in the family. In other words, the adapted novels of colonial Korea during the early 1910s represented the tragedy of the common people.[190] The introduction of a contemporary *shinp'a* tragedy as an educational piece for the Korean audience and for women in particular, along with instructions on how to emotionally engage with this new genre, is depicted in the media discourse of *The Tears*.

The Tears was an adaptation of Watanabe Katei's 1905 newspaper novel *Kichijōji*.[191] When it was serialized in the *Maeil Shinbo* between July 16, 1913, and January 21, 1914, this work of fiction proved to be sad *shinp'a* play material that would appeal to the Korean audience. Announcing the dramatization of the novel's first segment by Hyŏkshindan, the newspaper wrote that "dozens of letters that praise the novel reach our company every day" and that the novel might have set "a new record for a novel published in a newspaper [in terms of] the ovation and agreement, which reached a peak."[192] Likewise, photographs of the fully-packed auditorium during performances of *The Tears* in October

187 Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *The Loeb Classical Library: Aristotele Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell (Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA, 1995), 27–141; the quote is from 47.

188 Stephen Halliwell, "Introduction," in *Loeb Classical Library*, 3–26; the quote is from 19.

189 Hisamatsu Sadahiro's 1887 book *The Outline of German Drama* (*Doitsugikokutaii*) introduced Aristotle's *Poetics* in detail. *Poetics* was fully translated from Russian into Japanese by Futaba Teīshimeī between 1888 and 1892 in five segments. Mori Ogai, who studied medicine in Berlin, introduced among others Aristotle's theory of tragedy to the Japanese society. Furthermore, Raphael von Koeber (1848–1923), who lectured at Tokyo Imperial University from 1893 onwards, taught *Poetics* and ancient Greek, which resulted in Plato's translation into Japanese and establishment of philology of Latin and Greek in Japan. For an overview of German influence on the Japanese reception of Greek tragedy and Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Kim Saryang, "Kŭrisŭ Pigŭk ŭi Ilbon Ch'och'anggi Suyong Yŏn'gu [A Study on the Early Reception of Greek Tragedies in Japan]," *Kong'yŏn Munhwa Yŏn'gu* 28 (February 2014), 409–48.

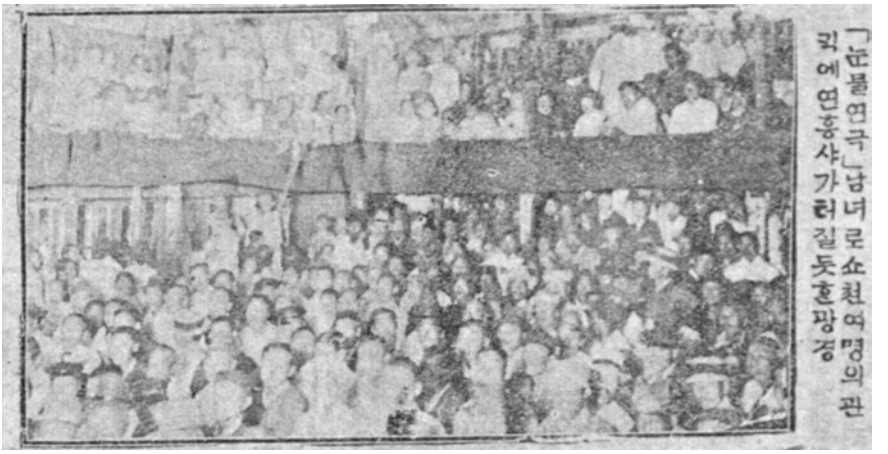
190 Yi Yŏngmi, *Han'guk Taejung Yesulsa, Sinp'asŏng ŭro Ikta: Changhanmong esŏ Morae Sigye kkaji* [*Reading the History of Korean Popular Arts through the Shinpaness: From A Long Heartburning Dream to The Hourglass*] (Seoul: P'urŭn Yŏksa, 2016), 47.

191 *Kichijōji* was serialized in *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* between May 18, 1905 and October 13, 1905. Ch'oe T'aewŏn, "Iljae Cho Chunghwan ŭi Pŏnan Sosŏl Yŏn'gu [A Study on Cho Chunghwan's Novel Adaptations]," PhD Diss., Seoul National University (2010), 132.

192 "Hyŏkshindan ŭi Nunmul Yŏn'gŭk [The Play *Tears* by Hyŏkshindan]," *MS*, October 25, 1913, 3 and "Nunmul kŭk ŭi Nunmul Chang [Collective Crying During the Play *The Tears*]," *MS*, October 28, 1913, 3.

1913, January 1914, and February 1914 showed that the dramatization of the novel was a commercial hit (see figure 3).[193]

Figure 3: Yŏnhŭngsa was "about to explode because of approximately 1,000 spectators" attending The Tears.



Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, October 28, 1913, 3. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

The Tears depicts the hardships of a virtuous Korean noblewoman, Mrs. Sŏ, in contemporary Seoul.[194] She marries the aspiring banker Cho P'ilhwan, the one her father trusts the most. However, after having an affair with a *kisaeng* woman called Mrs. P'yŏng'yang, the husband and his lover plot against Mrs. Sŏ: Using a faked love letter to her, Cho charges her with unfaithfulness and kicks her out of the home. Although the accusation was wrongful, she remains silent and stays at her parents' home in Kaesŏng because she fears disgracing her husband and father. However, having yearned to see her son Pongnam for several years, she dares to visit him secretly against her father's will. As she witnesses how Mrs. P'yŏng'yang mistreats Pongnam, she promises to rescue him the next day. But the son mistakes another woman for Mrs. Sŏ and disappears with her before Mrs. Sŏ arrives. In despair, Mrs. Sŏ attempts to kill herself but is rescued by a stranger and becomes housekeeper of her savior. Meanwhile, her husband is robbed of the whole family fortune by Mrs. P'yŏng'yang and her other lover. In the end, Mrs. Sŏ finally rejoins her son and her husband, while Mrs. P'yŏng'yang repents of her sins after the betrayal of her new lover. With a Western missionary's guidance, Mrs. P'yŏng'yang returns the family the robbed fortune and becomes a social reformer.

193 "Nunmul Yŏn'gŭk [The Play *Tears*]," *MS*, October 28, 1913, 3; "Karyŏn han Sŏssi Puin … [The Poor Mrs. Sŏ …]," *MS*, January 28, 1914, 3; "Nunmul Yŏn'gŭk ŭi Puinhoe Sŏnghwang [The Success of the Play *Tears* for Female Audiences]," *MS*, February 2, 1914, 3.

194 The following summary of the novel is based on Yi Sanghyŏp, *Nunmul* [*The Tears*] (Seoul: Ŭlyu Munhwasa, [1914]1966).

The theater production of *The Tears* became a major commercial success. Between 1913 and 1916, there were at least six productions of *The Tears* (see table 3).[195] The aggressive marketing using 50 percent discount coupons, photographs of audiences, and reports about renowned people's attendance culminated with six sold-out shows in a row in January 1914, where Hyŏkshindan played the complete story.[196] Recording sold-out shows every night, this production was extended to ten days, while *shinp'a* plays usually ran no longer than five days.[197]

Table 3: Stage productions of The Tears during the 1910s.

Date	Venue	Group	Notes
Oct. 25–29, 1913	Yŏnhŭngsa, Seoul	Hyŏkshindan (led by Yim Sŏnggu)	Only the first part of the novel was staged.
Jan. 26–31, 1914	Yŏnhŭngsa, Seoul	Hyŏkshindan (led by Yim Sŏnggu)	The novel was performed in full length.
May 1–3, 1914	Yŏnhŭngsa, Seoul	Munsusŏng	Exceptional performance held during the daytime on Buddha's Birthday and for housewives.
The end of June–beginning of July, 1915	Chinju, Kyŏngsangnam-do province	Hyŏkshindan (led by Yim Sŏnggu)	
Dec. 19–20, 1915	Tansŏngsa, Seoul	Hyŏkshindan (led by Yim Sŏnggu)	
Feb. 24–25, 1916–25	Tansŏngsa, Seoul	Hyŏkshindan (led by Yim Sŏnggu)	

Source: Data from *Maeil Shinbo*.

The play marked a watershed in Korean women's spectatorship, too, because Korean housewives were actively encouraged to attend a play for the first time. In promoting the play, the *Maeil Shinbo* emphasized that the drama was based on a pedagogical novel, particularly apt for women.[198] At the peak of the efforts to attract housewives was an

195 Using keyword search, I could find articles about six different stage productions of *The Tears* published by *Maeil Shinbo* during the 1910s.

196 "Ŭmnyŏk Saehae Ch'ŏt Mŏri e *Nunmul* Yŏn'gŭk [The Play *Tears* at the New Year's Begin after the Lunar Calendar]," *MS*, January 25, 1914, 3; "Che 1-il ŭi *Nunmul* Kŭk Sŏnghwang [Success of the Play *Tears* on the First Day]," *MS*, January 28, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kŭk kwa Myŏngsa Manjwa [The Play *Tears* and Celebrities Filling the Auditorium]," *MS*, January 31, 1914, 3.

197 Ch'oe, "Adaptation, Media, Popularity," 30.

198 See "Play *Tears*," *MS*, January 25, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kŭk ŭi Kŏil Iksŏng [Greater Success of the Play *Tears* Yesterday]," *MS*, January 29, 1914, 3; "*Nunmul* Kŭk ŭi Tae Sŏnghwang Puin Kwallamhoe T'ŭksŏl [Huge Success of the Play *Tears*: A Special Performance for Ladies]," *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

extra night of performance only for female audiences on January 31, 1914. The newspaper announced that this event was planned because "many families still stick to the old family [inside-outside] rule. Thus, ladies cannot go to the theater where there are many men."[199]

The communications organ of the Government-General knew that the event was not only about female audiences but particularly for women who did not frequent any public space due to their social status. The newspaper added: "Responding to many ladies' wishes, we open ladies' theater on January 6 according to the lunar calendar. On that day, we will make *pure ladies* (*sunjŏn han punyŏ*) see the play with satisfaction and pleasure by prohibiting any man from entering [the theater]."[200] In other words, the target audience was very likely neither in school education nor in other public institutions, where they could learn to adapt themselves to the rules that the Government-General enforced, becoming a reliable subject of colonized Korea. The newspaper interpellated these women as "ladies (*puin*)," "lady audience (*puin kwan'gaek*)," and "pure ladies," which silently excluded *kisaeng* women, who frequented theaters as audiences.[201] By calling a group which had been difficult for the colonial power to reach, and encouraging them to attend the play, the *Maeil Shinbo* contributed to the Government-General's effort to broaden the colonial politics of cultural assimilation.

The daily newspaper announced that the event was decided spontaneously. However, "hundreds of purses for ladies and the tasty cigarettes"[202] given to female audiences as gifts clearly show that it was a thoroughly planned promotional event—for both cigarettes and *modern* theater. At this event, female audiences themselves became a media spectacle. As the description "lady audience" implied, these women drew public attention not only because of their gender but also their social stratum. Korean society had already witnessed groups of *kisaeng* women attending charity shows since the first decade of the 1900s, who were also consumed as a spectacle. However, the sight of housewives at theaters was scarce.[203] Describing the photograph, the *Maeil Shinbo* highlighted the diversity of the gathered crowd through the colors of their garments, related to their social status, and their hairdos (see figure 4):

> [This photograph shows] The situation of the performance of the play *The Tears* for the female readers, presented by our newspaper at Yŏnhŭngsa of Sa-dong on January 31. Little children, boys, ladies, yellow, red, blue, and white dresses, fur-lined hoods, winter caps, bonnets, pompadour—it was a colorful land of women where all were mixed in a place and cried, laughed, talked, and smoked together.[204]

199 "Huge Success," *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid. *Kisaeng* women were frequently mentioned by their artist names along with the name and location of their association, while non-*kisaeng* women were seldom called by name.

202 "Huge Success," *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

203 There are indications that women who organized charity events also attended performances as audiences, yet they did not stand in spotlight of the media. See chapter 2.3.

204 "Nunmul Yŏn'gŭk ŭi Puinhoe Tae Sŏnghwang [Successful Performance of *The Tears* for Ladies]," *MS*, February 2, 1914, 3.

The strong sense of community that the photograph's caption conveyed mirrored reports and readers' letters about female audiences who attended *The Tears*. In particular, the colonial newspaper highlighted how the lady audiences expressed their sympathy for Mrs. Sŏ's fate through crying in public. Reporting on a regular show of *The Tears* with a mixed audience, the newspaper recounted that the women's section was "a site of collective crying and sobbing," where "many flowery young ladies whimpered with reddish faces."[205] According to another article, audiences were deeply absorbed in the play: "the whole auditorium was silent, and the only things that moved were the handkerchiefs that dried the tears in the women's seats and reflected the light."[206] A woman reproached another woman sitting next to her for not crying at the tragedy, and some accused men (who attended a mixed-audience performance) of heartlessness because they smiled instead of crying.[207]

Figure 4: Female audiences of The Tears *on January 31, 1914.*

Source: *Maeil Shinbo*, February 2, 1914, 3. Courtesy of the National Library of Korea.

205 "Collective Crying," *MS*, October 28, 1913, 3.

206 "Huge Success," *MS*, January 30, 1914, 3.

207 "*Tears* and Celebrities," *MS*, January 31, 1914, 3.

These reports represented Korean female audiences, called lady audiences, as champions of cultural assimilation. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, they perfectly deciphered the yet unfamiliar aesthetics of *shinp'a* and echoed the sad emotions that the play was supposed to convey. The consecutive and repeated depiction of female audiences' tears in the Government-General's press organ also accentuated emotional receptiveness and crying as a distinctive characteristic of women compared to those who did not cry, particularly men. On January 31, 1914, the all-female attendees marked the climax of the tearful Korean female audiences' imagery when,

> In the third act, as Mrs. Sŏ was driven out, thousands of ladies who filled the playhouse cried tears like rain from their thousands of eyes. Even the splendid flag hanging from the ceiling seemed long faced by the sight of the fluttering towels wiping the tears. At the scene of Pongnam's mistreatment and reunion with Mrs. Sŏ, a sense of pity tortured [the audience] and got stuck in [their] heart. The whole house was silent and not noisy, except for some sniffles from the crying.[208]

Meanwhile, the distinctions between "ladies" and *kisaeng*, as well as women and men, were partially mended in the pathos-driven auditorium where everyone cried. The *Maeil Shinbo* published a letter from a spectator of *The Tears* in October 1913: "Watching the play *The Tears* indeed made people shed tears. In the women's section, people cried at the same time as if they had promised each other to do so, and although I am a man, I cried, too."[209] Another man shared his observation of how a *kisaeng* woman participated in the public crying: "How she cried at the play *The Tears*. That girl was so kindhearted. People say that women of demimonde have little mercy, but when you look at Pohwa, that is not true."[210] The crying audience and readers across the gender- and stratum boundaries may seem to have built "an emotional community,"[211] yet at the same time, this spectacular audience represented culturally assimilated colonized Koreans in the eyes of the colonial power.

Taking these media representation at the face value, theater historian Woo Sujin asserts that *shinp'a* dramas, including *The Tears*, brought into being a community based on sentimentality in playhouses.[212] However, it is doubtful that *The Tears*' female audience had actually shown their sympathy to the degree that the newspaper described—because there was a contradictory observation, which indicates difficulties related to watching and understanding *shinp'a* for untrained spectators. In June 1914, the *Maeil Shinbo* published a Japanese woman's review of the play initially featured in a Japanese magazine. The woman, who attended one of the performances for mixed-gender audiences, complained mostly about Korean women's disturbing behaviors in the ladies' seats. According to her, they were mostly chatting and laughing even at tragic scenes:

208 "Puin Aedokja Nunmul Kŭk Kwallamhoe Tae Sŏnghwang [Big Success of *The Tears* Performance for Lady Readers]," *MS*, February 1, 1914, 3.

209 Tajŏngsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 26, 1913, 3.

210 P'ungnyurang, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 29, 1913, 3.

211 Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 228.

212 Ibid., 231–32.

> At the scene where she [Mrs. Sŏ] apologizes to her husband, bears a grudge, and hesitates to part from her son, we [she and her Japanese companion] cannot help but cry tears even though we do not understand a single word. Nevertheless, the spectators (especially in the ladies' seats) still chatter and even laugh at the crucial part.[213]

> The fourth act takes place several years later. Pongnam, the son the woman thinks of day and night, is abused by his stepmother every day, even though he is at the adorable age of nine. The mother who cannot stand the longing for her son comes to him and cries while she lifts the child, who was beaten up right in front of her. And those in the ladies' seats laugh once again. What is so funny about it, I thought to myself with anger.[214]

Although this review was contradictory to the previous reports, the *Maeil Shinbo* did not correct them. Instead, the newspaper turned the review into a lesson instruction for the ill-mannered Korean audience in general, as a short preface revealed: "We translated the original text without a single alteration, as the discussion contains a few things that Chosŏn people should go through, who are not familiar with theater viewing."[215] While this essay contradicted the former reports, publishing this essay with the critical commentary had the same goal as praising crying female audiences. Namely, both depictions contributed to the establishment of focused viewing, instead of playful watching, of *shinp'a* performances.

The Japanese woman hints that the *shinp'a* acting was an obstacle rather than an invitation to feel the tragic pathos that actors tried to embody. Mainly, the combination of contemporary Korean tragedy and the Japanese-styled acting did not seem to fit together very well. The Japanese woman noticed that the female impersonator, who played the part of Mrs. Sŏ, mimicked the Japanese method of crying instead of the Korean one[216]:

> In real life, she would have cried *aigo*, but she squeezed out a whine in a Japanese manner in the play. As she lacked a facial expression, it was not really moving, but the bending and stretching as well as the strength and the weakness in her voice let me guess the actor's study, so I became sad.[217]

---

213 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Nunmul Yon'gŭk ŭl Kyŏn Han Naeji Puin ŭi Kamsang 2 [A Japanese Woman's Impression of Attending the Play *Tears* 2]," *MS*, June 27, 1914, 3.

214 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "A Japanese Woman's Impression of Attending the Play *Tears* 3," *MS*, June 28, 1914, 3.

215 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 1," *MS*, June 26, 1914, 3.

216 Even after Kawakami excluded female impersonators from his *shimpa* productions, Korean *shinp'a* groups used to hire *yŏhyŏng paeu* (literally 'feminine-shaped actors') for female roles due to lack of actresses in the 1910s. In students' plays, it was common for male students to play women's parts even in the 1920s. See Yi Hwajin, "Yŏpaeu ŭi Tŭngjang: Kŭndae Kŭkchang ŭi Shinch'e wa Seksyuŏlit'i [The Appearance of Actresses: Bodies and Sexuality in Modern Theaters]," in Yi Sangwoo et al., *Wŏlgyŏng Hanŭn Kŭkchangdŭl: Tong Asia Kŭndae Kŭkchang kwa Yesulsa ŭi Pyŏndong* [Theaters Crossing Borders: Modern Theaters in East Asia and Changes of the Art History] (Seoul: Somyŏng Ch'ulp'an, 2013), 270–307.

217 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 2," 3.

This statement includes a powerful example of a disciplined audience, who understood what the unskillful acting was supposed to convey and responded to the intention, fulfilling the role expected of her by the actor and the cultural discourse of the *shinp'a* audience. Such vocal skills were one of the acting techniques taught by the Japanese actor Komatsu to actors of Hyŏkshindan.[218] However, as the complaints about this specific whining sound attested, many Korean audiences found it rather disturbing.[219] As the play, if not the genre, pivoted around the pathos and excessive crying on stage, the Japanese way of crying in *shinp'a* plays must have been an emotional obstacle for many Korean spectators. Furthermore, as the housewives seldom went to theaters, they were even less familiar with this new way of acting than their male compatriots and *kisaeng* women, which makes it comprehensible that they laughed even at tragic scenes.

Additionally, the Korean *shinp'a* actors were wildly experimenting with their visual presentation on the stage. For example, the Japanese reviewer implied that Mrs. Sŏ's makeup was colliding head-on with her character. Instead of embodying the conservative and plain lifestyle of the Korean noblewoman, the female impersonator was wearing "pompadour with a decoration made with the seven treasures, so that she looked like [someone from] the street advertisement."[220] In fact, Hyŏkshindan used to focus on making a strong visual impression than on creating a convincing theatrical reality for Korean audiences. For instance, in another play, Yim Sŏnggu wore an expensive silk garment, although he played the role of a ricksha-man.[221]

Meanwhile, Hyŏkshindan presented a transformation of the old-styled protagonist into a modern woman at the end of *The Tears*. According to the Japanese reviewer, Mrs. Sŏ appeared in a completely different costume and posture in the last scene, where all characters celebrated their family reunion. "The lady [Mrs. Sŏ] seemed like a completely different person in the brown-colored Western dress, Western hat, and with her hands on her waist, whereas she had looked only at the ground when she wore Chosŏn attire."[222]

Such a change of appearance and personality was not mentioned in the novel. The reason behind this alteration would remain undisclosed. The female impersonator might likely have chosen the most impressive costume for the grand finale. Nevertheless, Mrs. Sŏ's new appearance and posture, which signalized her westernization and newly developed self-confidence, could also have impressed the Korean female audience. Mainly, for those women who could visit the theater only on the occasion of women-only performances, Mrs. Sŏ's transformation might have been an eye-opening experience suggesting that they, too, could transform themselves into modern subjects, just like the once old-fashioned protagonist vividly showed on the stage.

The promotion of *shinp'a* in the early 1910s aimed to assimilate colonial Korean spectators culturally. However, to decipher *shinp'a* dramas, the audience needed to know the

218 Pak, "Thoughts on Plays," 95 as cited in Woo, *Modern Korean Theater*, 177–78.

219 "But I wished Yim Sŏnggu and Ko Such'ŏl, who played westernized women, made the less of the whining sound. I really don't want to listen to it." "Rumors," *MS*, March 27, 1912, 3.

220 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 2," 3.

221 Yi Sŏgu, "Han'guk Yŏn'gŭk Undong ŭi T'aeagi Yasa [Behind Stories from the Beginning of Korean Theater Movement]," *Shin Sajo* (January 1964), 85.

222 Hach'ŏn Yakch'onyŏ, "Japanese Woman's Impression 3," 3.

plot and connect it to the stage performance, which was unfamiliar to most contemporaries. Despite the publication of novels and explanations before the play, the colonial Korean audience frequently reacted improperly in the eyes of the *Maeil Shinbo* and other advocates of the *shinp'a* genre. The media organ of the Government-General propagated focused and empathetic spectatorship as a new, normative way of watching for theater audiences, yet it was a cultural technique that had to be learned.

In this context, the depiction of crying female audiences at *shinp'a* plays symbolized highly assimilated colonial subjects. Due to its tragic plots, depiction of women's hardship, and emphasis on motherhood, the *Maeil Shinbo* regarded *shinp'a* as an excellent means of social education—in the sense of cultural assimilation—for Korean housewives, who were rarely schooled. However, this population group had few opportunities to learn and to practice focused watching at plays and may have been somewhat familiar with the playful watching of Korean plays that took place outdoors during festivities. The disclosure that Korean women laughed loudly at tragic scenes of *The Tears* in the mid-1910s indicates that diverse ways of watching and cultural techniques were competing behind the representation of successful cultural assimilation, creating a moment of audience publicness.

3.3 How to Behave in Theaters: Discipline and Negotiation

Foucauldian Concepts of Discipline and Subjectification

Foucauldian thinking provides the means to discuss allegedly trivial regulations in colonial power relations, which is explored in detail in this chapter. According to Michel Foucault, "an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future," or "the conduct of a conduct,"[223] is core to a power relation. As the use of the "infinitely small of political power" onto the "minuteness of the details"[224] through the police is one way in which the state controls the mechanisms of discipline, an analysis of the police intervention into the auditorium can proffer new perspectives on the process of colonial subjectification in an everyday context. Additionally, Foucauldian concepts of discipline and the relevance of gaze to this concept bring together self-governance and colonial subjectification in the cases of the Korean audience's complaints about others in the auditorium. Adopting these concepts helps us understand the discourse about female spectatorship in the colonial period related to gender, colonial politics, and Confucian social order.

In his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault analyzes the disappearance of public torture and the emergence of "a new strategy for the exercise of the

223 Foucault, "Subject and Power," 789. The expression "the conduct of conduct (*conduire des conduits*)" is omitted in the English translation of the text originally written in French. See McCall, "Conduct," 68.

224 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 213–14.

power to punish."[225] According to him, physical punishments have been used as a tool to gain control over subjects by exercising power onto their bodies. In this sense, he calls state control of "the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" as activities of the political economy of the body, which aims to make the body into "useful forces"[226] by subjectifying it and turning it into labor power.

Foucault argues that strategies of the political economy of the body changed in line with the development of the capitalist economy.[227] As the capitalist economy grew from the seventeenth century onwards, the target of crimes altered "from the attack of bodies to the more or less direct seizure of goods," while its organization took the form of "marginal criminality" rather than "mass criminality."[228] Concurrently, lawmakers began regarding property rights as more important than before. Therefore, penal reformists of England, France, and the United States designed laws and institutions "to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body"[229] in the eighteenth century, which led to a reinforcement of discipline.

According to Foucault, discipline means "the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility."[230] Through discipline, the state and other authorities could "increase[] the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminish[] these same forces (in political terms of obedience)," turning the subjects into the "docile body"[231] that is useful and not threatening. In this sense, Foucault says that "discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise."[232] Although discipline had always been in "monasteries, armies, workshops," Foucault argues that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century marked a watershed because, during this era, discipline became "general formulas of domination"[233] in Europe. He summarizes the mechanism of discipline as follows:

> To sum up, it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality, or rather an individuality that is endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so, it operates four great techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly, in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges 'tactics.' Tactics, the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the vari-

225 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 81–82.
226 Ibid., 25–26.
227 See ibid., 76–87.
228 Ibid., 76. Foucault sums it up as "the economy of illegalities was restructured with the development of capitalist society." See ibid., 87.
229 Ibid., 82.
230 Ibid., 137.
231 Ibid., 138.
232 Ibid., 170.
233 Ibid., 137.

> ous forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice.[234]

Foucault counts observation, normalizing judgment, and examination as three quintessential means of exercising discipline.[235] While he takes the military camp, school, hospital, orphanage, and workshop in eighteenth-century France and Prussia as exemplary institutions that employed these methods, his analysis of disciplinary institutions can be applied to colonial Korean theaters and newspapers as well.

Korean society was already familiar with Western-style drills and discipline by the 1910s. Korean historian Vladimir Tikhonov found that from the end of the nineteenth century onward, the Korean Empire's officialdom hired English and Russian soldiers as teachers and introduced military drills and gymnastic exercises to public schools as "modern"[236] education. Such training was believed to give birth to a new kind of masculinity and to nurture "the national vigor (*kungmin ŭi wŏn'gi*),"[237] which was thought to be essential to survive the imperial expansion of Western and Japanese nations. Through demonstrations and sports festivals, the image of a disciplined body became an essential element of the Western-oriented modernity on the Korean peninsula.

To be clear, Korean theaters were different from Western-style schools in terms of accessibility and the aim of the discipline, although they increasingly counted as a pedagogical institution. Tikhonov points out that military drills and Western gymnastics were only accessible to men of noble and middle-class lineage for a long time; thus, the poor, the lower class, and women were excluded from this specific type of subjectification.[238] In other words, the imagery of the national body that could symbolize modernity and the nation's competence was primarily embodied through men.[239] In contrast, a theater was more easily accessible to the broader public. Furthermore, the aim of discipline in everyday settings such as theaters after colonization was not to strengthen Korean theatergoers' national vigor but to turn them into loyal subjects of colonial rule.[240]

---

234 Ibid., 167.

235 Ibid., 170.

236 Vladimir Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation: Gender Ideologies in Traditional Korea and in the 1890s-1900s Korean Enlightenment Discourse," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 4 (2007), 1029–65; see 1049.

237 Tikhonov, "Masculinizing Nation," 1058. Recent archival findings show that already in 1888, the Chosŏn Dynasty had hired three drill instructors from the U.S. to establish the military school named Yŏnmu Kong'wŏn. See Yi Kihwan, "'Pudi Chŏng'yebyŏng ŭro K'iwŏ Chuseyo': Ch'odae Chumi Kongsa ka Mi Kyogwan ege Ponaen P'yŏnji 131-nyŏn Mane Palgul ['Please Train Them as Elite Soldiers': Letters to the U.S. Military Instructor Sent by the First Korean Embassador in the States Was Found After 131 Years]," *Kyŏnghyang Shimun*, September 17, 2019, http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201909170800001&code=960100&fbclid=IwAR13NCCfs38WAdSoojzjigeYZNkbNR-sxZoRZegxVACuzrR3yw6CBgKiaRk.

238 See Tikhonov, "Masculinizing Nation," 1060.

239 Tikhonov argues that this specific imagery of the national body in the cultural memories of Koreans was exploited by the Japanese Empire during the Pacific War and later by authoritarian regimes in both North and South Korea after the end of World War II. See ibid., 1061.

240 See Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 4.

As a superimposed space between the call for social education and the need for entertainment, Korean theaters were operated in such a way that they could be easily used for discipline. However temporarily, the audience was enclosed in one space and allocated to specific sections of the auditorium depending on their gender and economic power, while the colonial police safeguarded this segregation through on-the-spot interventions. The timetable of theaters, too, disciplined Koreans to adapt themselves to the given order regardless of one's social rank.[241] Above all, the colonial police relentlessly observed the auditorium based on the unequal power relations between the colonizer and the colonized, and the *Maeil Shinbo* disseminated moral judgment about misconducts of Korean audiences.[242] Additionally, fellow audience members also practiced observation and judgment. Their comments in the letters sent to the daily newspaper defied the realm of curiosity and personal exchange of opinions. Through their publication, complaints about other members of the auditorium became a means of public shaming and an invitation to colonial police control over Korean theatergoers' conduct.

In this way, the theater became a space where visitors were taught to internalize the gaze and change their behavior to meet normative expectations expressed by the authorities, journalists, and their compatriots. The mutual observation between members of the audience cannot solely be explained by the expansion of the colonial power relation. As exemplified later in this chapter, some audiences grounded their complaints with the social norms of the Chosŏn era, which could be read as a pursuit to maintain the Confucian behavioral codes under Japanese colonial rule. Foucault's explanation that "the overthrow of these 'micro-powers' does not, then, obey the law of all or nothing; it is not acquired once and for all by a new control of the apparatuses nor by a new functioning or a destruction of the institutions"[243] can be applied to the inside-outside-norm. Although the Chosŏn Dynasty, which coerced gendered segregation and regulation of women's bodies, disappeared, the notion and practices of the inside-outside norm outlived the political entity.

However, the Korean audience's anonymous complaints about other theatergoers published in the *Maeil Shinbo* simultaneously contributed to the exercise of another micro-power aimed at making reliable colonial subjects. The police interventions, reports by journalists of the colonial newspaper, and anonymous readers I examine later in this chapter constituted "bits and pieces" of "the political technology of the body,"[244] as Foucault calls it.

---

241 Horace N. Allen (1858–1932), who came to Korea as a Protestant medical missionary and cooperated with both American and Korean governments, shows how the new railway system changed the custom of social ranks, and introduced the concept of punctuality to the Korean population. He wrote: "The railway soon became *a great educator*. The trains would not wait even for a noble. If one such sent word he was coming and arrived in the afternoon for a morning train, he would invariably find it had gone off and left him. Trains have even pulled out on schedule time with some great yangban coming down the street with his chair men on the run and his attendants well ahead shouting "yahbo, yahbo come on yeetso" (say! say! wait a little), to all of which the engine seemed oblivious (emphasis added)." *Things Korean*, 133.

242 For detailed analysis of the police control targeting the Korean audience see chapter 3.3.

243 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

244 Ibid., 26.

The Penetrating Gaze: *Maeil Shinbo*'s Role in Disciplining Process

As observed in chapter 2.2, Korean newspapers before the annexation in August 1910 used to depict the members of the audience as an anonymous mass, often using the cliché that "people gathered like clouds" in theaters.[245] Individuals whose identity and conduct were reported were usually influential people such as high-ranked politicians, businessmen, and members of the Korean royal family.[246]

After the annexation, however, critical comments on the government officials disappeared from the public debate, as regime-critical Korean newspapers were abolished.[247] Instead, under the new name and ownership, the *Maeil Shinbo* began to expose names, addresses, and affiliations of people who were not public officials. The editorial entitled "Play and Female Student" from April 9, 1911, exemplifies this tendency. Pointing out that an increasing number of students went to theaters despite the school and police ban, the anonymous author made the name, affiliation, and address of a female student and her sister public:

> On the day before yesterday, a certain Mr. Chŏng, who lives in Tonggok, Chung-bu and whose full name is unknown, went to Chang'ansa, accompanied by his wife Pak Chŏngja and his sister-in-law Pak Ch'isun, a student of Yangsim Women's School. Each of them took a seat and watched diverse plays. As their conduct was very sordid and rude (*pip'ae*), criticism was rampant among the general audience.[248]

Remarkably, the attending police officer did not intervene in the family's alleged misconduct despite the criticism "among the general audience." Nevertheless, the organ of the Government-General took corrective action by reporting on them, which was a de facto punishment. Because Neo-Confucian custom still had a hold on Korean society in the early 1910s, being publicly known by name itself was a public disgrace, particularly for women except for *kisaeng*. Furthermore, it is very unusual that the man remained anonymous while the women were exposed to the public, a fact which must have added even more shame to the family. This article indicates that the *Maeil Shinbo* began to function as a control organ of the general public's misconduct after the annexation.

Another article from April 9, 1912 handled a man who trespassed into the women's section. He was punished twice—first by the police, then by the newspaper. His identity, too, was published:

> At around 11 p.m. the day before yesterday, a prodigal man sat next to women's section in Yŏnhŭngsa at Sa-dong, Chung-bu. As he restlessly chatted with a girl and disturbed the order, a clerk of the theater prohibited this sordid and rude behavior, but the man, in the misconception that [he] did a good thing, blamed the clerk and was about to

245 For instance, the following articles used the cliché "people gathered like clouds": "Ryulsa Pŏnhwa [Flourishing So'chundae]," *TMS*, March 4, 1906, 2; "Mudo Kŭkchang [A Theater without Morality]," *HS*, May 14, 1906, 3; "Yŏnhŭijang Soshik [News from Playhouses]," *TMS*, December 29, 1907, 2.

246 See chapter 2.2.

247 Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*, 101.

248 "Yŏn'gŭk kwa Yŏhaksaeng [Play and a Female Student]," *MS*, April 9, 1911, 3.

> make trouble. An attending police officer called him in and investigated his name and profession. According to the man, he was Lee Wŏnyong living in 31-tong 10-ho, Sangma-dong, Chung-bu, 26 years old, and used to work as an assistant police officer at the Nam-bu police office but had no profession since he was fired. The police officer gave him a strict scolding, told him not to do such sordid things again, and sent him off.[249]

Without such reports, the police officer's intervention would have remained a one-time happening, and its impact could have been restricted to the people attending the performance that night. However, the daily newspaper, the new media of that time, expanded the spectatorship of this crackdown to several thousand people across the country by reporting it. *Maeil Shinbo* reports on the colonial police's intervention into audience interactions can be brought together with the Foucauldian statement that "a secret punishment is a punishment half wasted."[250] As the mouthpiece of the Government-General, the *Maeil Shinbo* made the one-time punishment into "an ever-open book"[251] for a broader public. Through such reports, the newspaper intended not only to criticize "past offense" but also to prevent "future disorder."[252]

For Koreans, it meant that they could not always remain anonymous in theaters anymore. Instead, there was always the possibility that police officers, other audience members, or a journalist would pillory them for their misconduct. In effect, the *Maeil Shinbo* induced Korean audiences to change their behavior in the public space by internalizing the colonial police's and the media's observant gaze.

To be clear, observing and disciplining others' conduct in public was not entirely unknown to Koreans of the time. People paid close attention to others' behavior and gaze in public, and such behavioral control was particularly effective in regulating aristocratic women's bodies and sexuality.[253] Nonetheless, the possibility of anonymously blackmailing someone using the newspaper was new. Some Koreans would quickly get acquainted with the idea and practice of everyday surveillance aimed at ordinary people that the *Maeil Shinbo* boosted through reports on Korean theaters.

The correspondence column offered an outlet for Korean audiences' own experiences in theaters. Thereby, it is crucial to critically question the authenticity of these readers'

---

249 "Kŭkchang Kyŏlbi Sangjung: Kŭgŏt i Musam Haeng'wiya [A Theater Is Not a Mulberry Field: What a Behavior]," *MS*, April 9, 1912, 3. Mulberry fields became a synonym for a place of secret sexual encounter since a poem titled *At the Mulberry Field* was published in *Book of Songs* (*Shijing*), known to have been edited by Confucius. For the etymology of mulberry fields, see Kan Hoyun, *Saero Palgul Han* Chusaeng Chŏn, Wisaeng Chŏn *ŭi Charyo wa Haesŏk* [*Newly Found Materials of* Tale of Chusaeng *and* Tale of Wisaeng *and Their Interpretations*] (Seoul: Pagijŏng, 2008), 232.

250 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 111.

251 Ibid.

252 Ibid., 93.

253 Jung Ji-young's 2005 study offers an overview of public debates over aristocratic women's conducts in public spaces documented in *Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*. According to her study, the Chosŏn Government imposed laws to control aristocratic women's visibility and conduct, which encompassed the design of the sedan chair, horse riding, public spectating, picnics, and participation in Buddhist rituals in the mountains. Such controls were initiated by rumors and observations of aristocratic women's behavior in the public. See Jung, "Escaping Inner Room," 149–81.

letters. In general, the possibility that colonial authorities intervened in the editorial work of the *Maeil Shinbo* cannot be entirely dismissed, especially concerning the selection, editing, or even fabrication of these short, anonymous texts. For instance, censors might have pressured editors to feature only opinions aligning with colonial policies. Alternatively, journalists could have fabricated stories to advance the newspaper's agendas. While the authenticity of all letters published in the colonial newspaper cannot be guaranteed, one thing is certain from the perspective of historical discourse analysis: the daily newspaper decided to publish *these specific utterances and not others* in the form of readers' letters, creating the impression of colonial publicness and giving space to unidentified rumors. The *Maeil Shinbo* published numerous brief comments on shows,[254] complaints about theaters' inadequate sanitary facilities,[255] or about clerks who talked loudly during plays.[256] Through these letters, the writers demanded improvement of theater operations and insisted on paying guests' rights. The newspaper used the correspondence column to amplify criticisms of Korean theatergoers and to call for investigations as well. People behind these letters were aware that such critical reports about individuals worked as a punishment:

> There are many offenses against public decency in theaters these days, so why doesn't your newspaper take *disciplinary action* [*chinggye*] against them based on that fact? Maybe you will take *a big disciplinary action* after fully looking into the cases (emphasis added).[257]

> There has been a dirty rumor going around about a theater these days, and according to the rumor, [the theater] has not one or two problems. Hasn't your company heard of anything about it? What is the matter with you that you have not said anything?[258]

Although the *Maeil Shinbo* did not immediately report such rumors in the form of articles, the periodical enacted disciplinary power by publishing such letters and setting off a warning signal. While some readers demanded that the newspaper discipline wayward behaviors in theaters, others took the initiative themselves. For instance, an "Evaluator (*P'ump'yŏngja*)" complained about the luxurious attire of a female audience and problematized her lack of decency:

---

254 "I heard the rumor that Hyŏkshindan's new play at Yŏnhŭngsa, Sa-dong, is very good. But I didn't have time to watch the play, because I was busy doing chores. The day before yesterday was the Great Full Moon Festival, so I went to spectate, but holy cats! How many people there were! I almost got trampled to death. The play was indeed very good. But it was so noisy that I could not pay close attention." Il puin, "Rumors," *MS*, March 5, 1912, 3.

255 "I hope that theatres' toilets will be improved. Leaving a toilet so dirty in places where a large gathering takes place hinders the public health a lot, so I hope theater businessmen would pay some attention." Chuŭisaeng, "Readers' Club," April 2, 1913, 3.

256 "Kwangmudae does present interesting plays, but I can hardly watch them because of people talking loudly. Clerks seem to be louder than anyone else." Kwŏn'gosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, September 14, 1913, 3.

257 Kalmangsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, April 27, 1913, 3.

258 T'apboja, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 17, 1913, 3.

> The other day, a young girl took a seat in the high-class section of a theater all by herself. I do not know how rich she was, but she decorated herself with pure gold all over her body, dazzling viewers' eyes. It is her fault to be so extravagant with her wealth, and whoever her husband was, he was not even half discreet.[259]

The anonymous reader asserted that flaunting wealth was inappropriate, and more so for women. She neither misbehaved nor broke the law, yet her attire went against the writer's sense of decency. The *Maeil Shinbo* tacitly agreed with him by publishing the letter without any critical comment. This letter reinforced an unwritten rule that frowned upon luxurious dresses, not to mention the patriarchal belief that a husband might be responsible for his wife's conduct.

By sending letters to the colonial newspaper, numerous observers aimed to correct the behavior of others. Like the *Maeil Shinbo*, these observers, too, used the public disclosure of others' identities as a means of threatening and disciplining them.

> A student at a school in the Pak-dong district went to theaters every night instead of studying. Eventually, he failed an exam this time. While some students have a hard time due to lack of money and cannot study, how can this one fail the exam just because he idled away in theaters? It is sad. This time, I will forgive him, but I will write his name and send it to the newspaper when this happens again.[260]

> Certain persons of a particular theater, you should better come to your senses. [You] think people would not know about it, but people eventually find out. Recently, many people are paying attention to [you] because the ugly rumor is correct and precludes all doubts. Everyone in the theater industry knows [what I mean] when they think about what they do. Keep your hands still, both men and women. Otherwise, a slight movement can cause you [big trouble].[261]

The threat to disclose personal information was an attempt to intervene via public shaming, an area of action in which police did not interfere. Appalled by a recent tendency for some female and male students to sit side by side and have dates in theaters, another observer, too, menaced: "If the situation remains this bad, I am going to look into the students' name and the school's names as well and publish it to the world."[262] In doing so, the anonymous observers tried to force students to focus on their learning and control their sexuality, too.

Meanwhile, the second letter was meant to trigger a moment of self-discipline among "everyone in the theater industry" by urging them to "think about what they do." Before and after the letter's publication, there was no media report about any scandal related to employees of Korean theaters.[263] Thus, it is impossible to know what the author of the letter problematized. However, if the lack of incidents were related to the

259 "Samyŏn P'albang [All Around the World]," *MS*, October 9, 1912, 3.
260 T'onghansaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, December 27, 1914, 4.
261 Kyŏnggyeja, "Rumors," *MS*, July 4, 1912, 3.
262 Kaet'ansaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, September 5, 1913, 3
263 I investigated reports between June 1912 and August 1912.

letter, the writer might have achieved what they intended, namely, inducing the clerks to internalize the eyes of surveillance and discipline themselves.

Shortly after the annexation, the *Maeil Shinbo*'s focus changed from government officials to ordinary citizens. The mouthpiece of the Government-General influenced the audience to internalize the colonial power's gaze and become a modern subject that governed itself, as the newspaper reported misconduct of spectators and police intervention cases with personal information. Following this approach, it seems that some audience members and readers voluntarily shared their observations on audiences and clerks of Korean theaters, exercising disciplinary power over them as well. In this way, the daily newspaper contributed to the expansion of the colonial power's control of the conduct of the colonized, and the audience became both the subject and object of the everyday surveillance.

Negotiating Social Norms (1): Gendered Segregation

Besides the *shinp'a* drama and the rebuking newspaper articles, house rules, too, induced Korean people at playhouses to accept certain norms. Notably, the seating plan corresponded with the preexisting understanding of the social order and one's place in society. That is to say, the separation between the "ladies' seats (*puinsŏk*)" and "men's seats (*namjasŏk*)" perpetuated the Confucian norm of inside-outside (*naeoe*), which strictly prohibited contacts of any kind between women and men.[264] Ladies' seats exemplify how the social practice of *naeoe* defined the modern institution even during Japanese colonial rule.

The gendered segregation in Korean theaters was first confirmed by a 1908 report in the daily newspaper *Hwangsŏng Shinmun*.[265] The newspaper reported that, as a part of Tansŏngsa's upper floor collapsed on July 3, 1908, only women were injured because the accident happened in the women's section.[266] It should be noted that during the years 1907 and 1908, Seoul's theater business became competitive due to the opening of three Korean theaters in the northern part of the city.[267] When competition among Korean theaters in Jongno was in full swing, setting up women-only seats might have been one of the essential means to include more Korean women in mixed-gender public spaces. Concurrently, the women's section was also useful for Korean women who wanted to enjoy entertainment and participate in public life.

During the early 1910s, the women's section became an integral part of Korean theaters in Seoul. Interestingly, Korean theater buildings were not built as per the custom of gendered segregation; as a result, theater operators had to come up with a makeshift

264 Accounts mentioning ladies' seats are, among others, as follows: Kukyŏng Han Cha, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 26, 1913, 3; Puin Kwallamja, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, March 15, 1914, 3; Kugyŏngkkun, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, May 16, 1915, 4. Men's seats were seldom mentioned during the 1910s. See Ttŏkgage, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 13, 1913, 3; Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 19, 1913, 5.

265 "Tansŏng Naksang [Hurt from Falling at Tansŏngsa]," *HS*, July 5, 1908, 2.

266 "Hurt from Falling," *HS*, July 5, 1908, 2.

267 For the formation of Korean theater district in Seoul see chapter 1.2.

solution. A reader's letter from 1912 reveals that Yŏnhŭngsa installed curtains to segregate women's seats from the rest.[268] Parts of the seats in Kwangmudae, Chang'ansa, and Tansŏngsa, too, were designated as women's seats, yet there is no clear evidence as to whether these theaters used curtains as well.[269] Curtains had already been used to maintain the inside-outside norm in other new institutions such as churches and schools.[270] The makeshift characteristic of gendered segregation in modern buildings signalizes that the spatial separation between women and men in public spaces was an eroding yet tenacious practice in Korea.

With or without the visible and physical dividing elements, the women's section drew public attention. Notably, some male spectators upset the public by staring at the female audience or even trespassing into the women's section. Other visitors who closely observed such behavior were possibly the ones who sent letters to the *Maeil Shinbo* to criticize them or urge authorities to investigate the intruder:

> Whose son is the guy that shamelessly stared at the women in the women's section instead of watching [the play] in a particular theater the other night, whispered with illegal prostitutes before and afterward, and walked up and down without noticing that others were paying attention to him and cursing him? [He was] Wearing a full-length hemp cloth coat, a white sports hat, and pockmarked. He looked hideous. Do you know who he is? If I were a police officer, I would cause a bolt of lightning right now.[271]

> The other night, as I went to Yŏnhŭngsa to see Hyŏkshindan's play, a person stood between the men's and women's sections and watched how ordinary women [*ilban yŏin*] spectated the play over the curtain instead of watching [the play] as if he were inspecting something. As his conduct was severely despicable and ill-mannered, there was a torrent of abuse from every side. Sure enough, the attending police officer caught him and carried out a rigorous investigation on charges of disturbing the order and morals. He turned out to be Paek Raksŭng, who lived in either P'aju or Yangju and was a younger brother of Paek Rakso, who lived in Kamtujŏn'gol, Chung-bu. How refreshing it was [to see him contained]![272]

> Recently, there are all sorts of [wayward] people in theaters. I cannot stand the sight of the three jerks wearing a headband, skullcap, and horsehair hat going to theaters in groups every night, looking only at the women's section and making remarks. [They keep doing it because] Maybe they have not burned their fingers yet.[273]

These letters reveal the complexity beneath the seemingly unilateral concept of social education. As some Koreans appropriated the theater space to satisfy their voyeuristic desire, it was not always the colonial police that disciplined them. There were other Koreans,

268 "Not Mulberry Field," *MS*, April 9, 1912, 3.
269 Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, August 8, 1912, 3.
270 See Yun, *Learning ABC*, 59–61.
271 T'ongmaesaeng, "Rumors," *MS*, July 25, 1912, 3.
272 Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, August 8, 1912, 3.
273 Pimokja, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, October 8, 1914, 4.

presumably conservative people with a Neo-Confucian leaning, who contributed—with or without intention—to reinforce the colonial police's intervention. As they detected a vacuum in the disciplinary power that maintained social order, which was formerly rooted in Neo-Confucianism, they tried to uphold the inside-outside norm in the new political and spatial setting. In this vein, they turned to colonial police intervention to make up for the vacuum in the patriarchal disciplinary power.

Meanwhile, female theatergoers celebrated their newly gained access to the public space by taking off their covering clothes in theaters despite harsh criticisms by contemporaries during the 1910s. In this way, the shift in the inside-outside norm and related practices took place. While the Confucian moralists insisted upon hiding women's bodies and faces from the gaze of others, Korean women appropriated the spatial characteristics of a theater—it had a roof and walls, thus it was still "inside"—to justify their choice not to wear covering clothes in theaters, pushing the boundaries of their freedom a little further. A reader's letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* shows how Korean women experimented with their presence in public and their sexuality:

> The total number of female audiences in each theater is more than 1,000 every night, and most of them show their faces, look around at the men's section, and make gestures with fingers and lips in the playhouse; yet, why do they cover themselves when they go outside? […].[274]

Some contemporaries were unsettled to see how some Korean women actively expressed their interest in men in theaters. A witness wrote to the *Maeil Shinbo*: "How bizarre that a woman from the ladies' seats looked over men's seats, gestured at them and laughed."[275] Another audience member even disclosed the whereabouts and the name of a woman who darted a glance at men's seats: "The night before yesterday, Albong'i from Yong-dong neighborhood went to a theater. The sight of her darting a glance at men from each level and smiling was so disgusting that I could not bear it."[276] In this way, women's active pursuit of sexuality was marked as "bizarre" or even "disgusting."

Concurrently, visiting the theater was closely related to the experiences of sexual threats and public humiliation for some women. A woman complained in a letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* that men's persistent gaze and audible judgments toward female audiences made her hesitant about going to theaters.

> On a rare occasion I had to go to a theater, I found it humiliating and unbearable how men point and look at [women]. If I went there more often, I would die young due to the poisonous watching and pointing. Not only that. They seem to discuss whose concubine one is, who she is, whether she is pretty or ugly. It is no wonder that my husband prohibits me from going to watch [plays] often.[277]

274 Chososaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 25, 1913, 3.
275 Mokdosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 19, 1913, 5.
276 Inch'ŏn kugyŏngkkun, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 7, 1913, 3.
277 Ttŏkgage, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 13, 1913, 3.

Women became a target of unsolicited sexual advances outside theaters as well. They were followed by strangers after the show or even verbally harassed by young male students gathered behind theaters, which eventually restricted women's spectatorship.[278]

While there were two sections based on the gender binary, there were complex unwritten rules closely related to women's marital status, social rank, and male guardians. Neither the colonial police nor other audience members problematized specific women sitting outside the women's section. For instance, *kisaeng* women could easily cross the gendered border and sit among men as they escorted their male companions or sought a new one.[279] Married women and concubines, too, could sit next to their husbands.[280]

A notable difference between the police and Korean audiences was revealed as some female students began to go to theaters with male students. Instead of turning to the police, people urged schools to discipline them better, indicating that the police were not in charge of controlling female students.[281] In other words, the colonial police did not problematize women in the men's section regardless of their social rank, profession, or marital status during the early 1910s.

What distinguished female students from *kisaeng* women and married women was that they were thought to be sexually inactive. Age played no vital role in discussing their sexuality because there were young *kisaeng* women as well as young married women.[282] While *kisaeng* women and married women were allowed to be sexually active for the sake of their patrons' pleasure or reproduction, female students had no socially approved excuse for being sexually active. As long as women were trained to follow the Wise Mother, Good Wife (*hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ*) ideal, which was the primary goal for women's school education, and child-rearing was expected solely of them, marriage meant the end of school education for women.[283] In other words, female students accompanying male students challenged society's expectation that they had to be sexually inactive and fully focused on their learning. While this was a rare case in the 1910s, the 1920s witnessed an increasing number of female students in movie theaters, which is analyzed in the next chapter in detail.

Despite the separated seats and danger of humiliation, some women and men still engaged with each other. To communicate with strangers across the gender, class, and stratum boundaries, Koreans used children who sold tea and cigarettes in theaters:

278 About a man who chased after women repeatedly, see T'ongjŭngsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 20, 1913, 3. For a female spectator's complaint about male students who harassed women near Chang'ansa, see Il Puin, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, June 9, 1914, 4.

279 See Panggwanja,"Readers' Letters," *MS*, January 22, 1915, 4; Pugajaje, "Readers' Club," *MS*, April 19, 1913, 3.

280 See Han Yŏin, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, September 23, 1914, 4.

281 See Kaet'ansaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, September 5, 1913, 3.

282 About the custom of the early marriage see chapter 4.2.

283 For instance, students of Ehwa Hakdang quit school once they married. It was only in the 1930s that an increasing number of Ehwa graduates maintained their studies or careers after marriage. See Ihwa Yŏksagwan, *Ihwa 110-yŏnsa: Ŏje wa Onŭl* [The 110 Years History of Ehwa: Yesterday and Today] (Seoul: Ihwa Yŏja Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2007), 26 and 78.

> The bad behavior of women and men in the theater is always caused by children making pocket money by selling cigarettes and tea. They are the ones doing all the secret errands before and afterward. The theater director will have to keep his eyes wide open.[284]

> As I always say, all the miscellaneous things in the theater have been caused by children who sell cigarettes. They are doing this and that.[285]

> I wish they would get rid of the kids who sell tea at the theater or not let them cross the aisle. All evil comes from the kids going back and forth.[286]

Colonial police responded to some Koreans' calls for stricter regulation of the public order in theaters from 1914 onwards. For instance, on November 16, 1914, the police raided Kwangmudae to control the so-called *purangja* (tramps) and arrested six Koreans. The *Maeil Shinbo* reported that the police had already been "paying attention to them" because they "frequently visited bars and theaters without jobs, stared at women's seats and commented on [female spectators], and often showed excessive misbehavior."[287] In September 1915, the police announced that it would regulate the segregation between women and men more strictly to fight the corruption of public morals. To ensure the separation, the police separated the audience already at the entrance, which led to "stringent separation of men and women in theaters, too."[288] The police also applied gendered segregation to children under the age of eleven,[289] likely to prevent child vendors from running errands between men and women.

To summarize, the seats in Korean theaters were separated by gender. Some Koreans still crossed the boundary, challenging both Neo-Confucian social order and the colonial police's concept of public morality. Other Koreans called for more active police involvement in cases of resistance against the gendered segregation in theaters. However, there were disagreements between the colonial police and some Koreans, especially over women's violations of this separation. While the *Maeil Shinbo* was accumulating complaints about the disorder in the theaters and the police's inadequate response to various scandals, the police began a raid against the so-called "tramps" in September 1914, enforcing substantial control over the theater space.

Negotiating Social Norms (2): Social Strata and Classes

The theater scholar Dennis Kennedy explains that it was the view of the stage that distinguished the more prestigious seats from others in the European proscenium theater.

---

284 Kyŏnggosaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, October 5, 1913, 3

285 Ch'ŏllian, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, January 13, 1914, 3.

286 Hwaktamsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 30, 1914, 3.

287 "Hwanggŭm-jŏng Punsŏ esŏ Purangja Tae Ch'ŏnggyŏl [Hwanggŭm-jŏng District Police Drives Out Hobos]," *MS*, November 18, 1914, 3.

288 "Kŭkchang P'unggi Ch'wich'e [Regulating the Public Morality of Theaters]," *MS*, September 9, 1915, 3.

289 "Hwaltong Sajinkwan ŭi Ch'wich'e" [Regulating the Motion Picture Places]," *MS*, September 3, 1915, 3.

> In a standard proscenium theatre the best seats for viewing, which are not necessarily the closest seats, are by custom the most expensive, and a clear downward grading is established for those with progressively inferior sightlines. Thus inscribed in the seating plan of large theatres—even those with open stages—is a *scopic hierarchy* that unconsciously replicates an antiquated social hierarchy (emphasis added).[290]

Meanwhile, Korean playhouses followed a different logic from the very beginning. Émile Bourdaret, the French railway technician who worked in Korea for four years, noted this difference after visiting Soch'undae shortly after its grand opening in the winter of 1902 and 1903:

> Tickets are distributed at a less than modest ticket office, and when you enter, you climb a wooden staircase that leads to the first gallery, or rather to the single floor of the theater, gradually leading down to the foot of the stage. The most modest places are downstairs near the orchestra, and what an orchestra! The middle-class ones are above and opposite [of the lowest-class seats], and the high-class seats and the two reserved boxes are on the sides, on a special gallery. *In my opinion, these are the worst places*, but no need to express any critique, [because] that would take us too far. Let us instead note the roofed theater's innovation because until now, the representations and the acrobatics were always given in the wind, the actors being sheltered from the sun or the rain by a canopy (emphasis added).[291]

According to Bourdaret, there were three categories of seats in Soch'undae, namely the low-, the middle-, the high-class seats and boxes on the galleries. To his curiosity, seats near the stage were the cheapest, while other seats, higher than others, were more expensive. He believed that the boxes on the side of the stage might be the "worst places" because from there, one's sight of the stage was restricted. He was aware of what Kennedy called "scopic hierarchy" in European proscenium theaters and wondered why Seoul's first indoor playhouse did not follow this logic.

Yi Ch'angsuk's 2004 study on Chosŏn Koreans' travelogues implies that the seating plan might be influenced by theaters in China. On the rare occasion he went abroad as a part of a mission in 1766, Hong Daeyong (1731–83) went to a playhouse right next to the gate to Peking. Among other things, he documented how ticket prices differed depending on the physical height of the seat's position: a seat on the ground right next to the stage cost only as much as 1/64 of a seat on the upper deck.[292] Other travelogues from the nineteenth century, too, noted that in Chinese playhouses, seats placed higher were more expensive.[293] Both Chinese and Korean playhouse operators shared the idea that

290 Kennedy, *Spectator and Spectacle*, 135.

291 Bourdaret, *En Corée*, 247. I became aware of this text through Cho Yŏnggyu's 2008 study. My gratitude to Kolja Naumann for the translation of the French text into English.

292 See Yi Ch'angsuk, "Yŏnhaengnok Chung Chungguk Hŭigok Kwallyŏn Kisa ŭi Naeyong kwa Kach'i [Accounts on the Chinese Theater in Travelogues and Their Value]," *Chungguk Hakpo* 15 (2004), 71–95; see 80.

293 See Yi, "Accounts on Chinese Theater," 80.

one's position in the social hierarchy needed to be translated into the physical height of the seat in the theater.[294]

In the 1910s, Korean theaters' seating plans were still divided into three price categories and two gender categories. According to the ticket price, seats were called upper-level seats (*sangdŭngsŏk*), middle-level seats (*chungdŭngsŏk*), and lower-level seats (*hadŭngsŏk*). For spectators in colonial Korea, the theater was a space where they could directly experience advantages and disadvantages based on their socioeconomic status. Theaters provided various facilities and services for different levels of seats, which was particularly unpleasant for the lower-class section's audience. An audience member complained about this discrimination in a letter to the *Maeil Shinbo* in December 1913:

> All spectators buy tickets with money as valuable as a piece of gold in order to enter the theater and watch [plays]; while there is no room to sit in the lower-class as seats cost less, [theater operators] tie up rafters with rope, entangled with wire mesh, in fear of [lower-class audiences] going to the middle-class seats. They do not even light a single stove [at lower-class seats] after being so hard on us for every possible reason. Do they think that our money is a mere piece of broken porcelain? While treating people who pay so coldly, they take others with false tickets to the upper-class seats and warm up the fire. What an unequal place it is![295]

The audience member criticized Korean theaters for discriminating against people who could only afford lower-class seats. According to him, theaters did not prepare enough seats in the lower-class section so that the spectators could not properly sit. Moreover, theater operators physically divided the lower- and middle-class using wire ropes, which he recognized as an effort to safeguard the higher-class section from people in the lower-class section with no seats. Theaters did not provide lower-class sections with heating, either. Furthermore, to the writer's frustration, theater operators guided people with invitation tickets to warmly heated upper-class seats, making money spent on lower-class tickets, "as valuable as a piece of gold" for the poor, worthless like "a mere piece of broken porcelain."

This letter is powerful proof that the categorized seats led to discrimination based on socioeconomic status in Korean theaters. The discrimination against people in the lower-class section evoked the feeling of inequality and frustration instead of a strong bond among ethnic Koreans, which was generally presumed by prior studies. Another audience member's response published on the following day indicates that there were other Koreans critically aware of the issue of discrimination against the low-income audience, too.

> The Pulp'yŏnggaek's letter that you introduced yesterday in the Readers' Club was very refreshing. Indeed, it makes me angry that theaters do not light the stoves for the

294 An anonymous critic pointed out in 1925 that the pricing in Korean playhouses complied with the hierarchical social structure of Chosŏn, where the *yangban* stratum were more privileged than other groups of people. He demanded a rearrangement of the pricing system. YK-Saeng, "Urgent Need of Improving Theater," *MS*, September 19, 1925, 2.

295 Pulp'yŏnggaek, "Readers' Club," *MS*, December 4, 1913, 3.

> lower-class seats and block the front with wire mesh or rafters, but what offends me the most is that the employees, who cater to higher-class guests, glare and yell at us when we misbehave a little. If things are like this, how could we take the lower-class seat?[296]

Earlier that year, the Korean theater Umigwan was temporarily shut down by Seoul's northern police due to the corruption of public morals.[297] The police problematized several incidents: for instance, the film narrator Sŏ Sangho not only stared at women's seats and gave a lewd account of films but was also accused of fraud, which brought considerably more notoriety to the already disdained theater business. An incident that "a bestial man and woman were caught in the contemptible act by other audience in a toilette on the second floor"[298] heightened the theater's notoriety even more. Furthermore, the Korean public was furious about a Japanese employee who beat and swore at Korean visitors for minor misbehaviors. Finally, female employees on the second floor, too, discriminated against visitors who wore modest dresses while flirting with rich young men. While the suspension of business was a reaction to all these incidents, the Japanese vendor and female ushers' examples indicate that Korean audiences experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity and class.[299]

Although a person of low social status could sit in the prestigious section through invitation or personal connections, it was a controversial issue. A 1914 reader's letter problematized that a prostituting woman was sitting on a special-class seat:

> The night before yesterday, I was at Tansŏngsa and found that the man-woman order was severely disturbed. A prostituting woman was even sitting in the special-class seats. That should not be happening.[300]

As this letter discusses the prostituting woman, it reads like a critique of "man-woman [dis]order" in the theater. However, there is no account telling such women were "even" sitting in the middle- or an upper-class section. Inherent to this brief letter is a displeasure to see the woman of the lowest social status taking a seat in the auditorium's most prestigious section. She challenged the belief that a person with a low social status should not enjoy benefits granted exclusively to the privileged.

Meanwhile, there was tension between the stage and the auditorium, too, based on the violation of the hierarchical social order. A reader's complaint from 1913 indicates that some Korean audiences felt disturbed when performers, who used to belong to the lowest social stratum in the Chosŏn Dynasty, behaved boldly in theaters: "How *dare* a clown of a certain theater go to upper-, middle-, and lower-class seats without any hesitation with a

296 Tonggamsaeng, "Readers' Club," *MS*, December 5, 1913, 3.

297 "Umigwan e Ka Ilbong: Umigwan ŭi Cheban Akhaeng. Yŏngŏp Hŏga kkaji Chŏngji [A Blow for Umigwan: All the Bad Deeds of Umigwan. Even the Business Is Suspended]," *MS*, May 3, 1913, 3.

298 "Blow for Umigwan," *MS*, May 3, 1913, 3.

299 Ibid. The assault on Korean visitors by a Japanese employee was reported earlier. "Umigwan ŭi Samilgwan [Three Days of Show in Umigwan]," *MS*, April 23, 1913, 3.

300 Kwan'gŭksaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, February 17, 1914, 3.

pipe in his mouth, *no matter how this world has become?* That was a nasty behavior (emphasis added)."[301]

The writer was upset because the performer behaved waywardly according to etiquettes of the Chosŏn era. The performer not only trespassed the domain of the higher social stratum but also smoked a pipe in front of them. As Gilmore observed, smoking in Korea was granted only to people of higher stratum when people of diverse backgrounds were in the same place.[302] By not hiding his pipes and even approaching visitors, the performer painfully reminded some in the audience "how this world has become," namely, a society without an official strata system.

Audiences of that time problematized male performers' jokes and their gazes targeting the women's seats, too. As women of higher status attended plays, male performers' behavior challenged the inside-outside norm that protected noblewomen from communicating with men. Behind the displeasure that spectators at Korean theaters felt about the male performers' flirtatious behavior was the taboo of sexual contact between women of higher social rank and lower caste men during the Chosŏn era.[303] Multiple contemporaries expressed their anger over male entertainers' approach to women in the ladies' seats, sending in comments such as: "I am sick of actors looking at the ladies' seats whenever they come out and explain something. Even if we put aside the shame it brings on us as women, one should take care of one's own behavior in front of everyone."[304] "I do not want to see some clown watching the ladies' seats whenever he enters the theater. What kind of behavior is that?"[305] "I hate a clown of a certain theater who makes bad jokes when he comes out on the stage to sing a *p'ansori* because he wants to talk with the women's section."[306]

A 1913 case of two male performers reveals that the strata system still operated effectively, although there was legally no stratum anymore. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, Chi Tonggŭn, who used to perform acrobatics, and Cho Chinyŏng, known for his repertoire *Song of House Guardian God*, mistakenly believed that an aristocratic woman had ex-

301 Kwallamja, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 3, 1913, 3.

302 "But the servant never smokes in the presence of his master. So the servants about foreigner's houses, if they are caught by the master with a pipe in their mouth, take it out and hide it behind them. Often when going down to the river for swans in the early morning, and taking my soldier along, I would put in my pocket a cigar to cheer him as we waited for the light to come or the fog to lift; but he would never smoke before me. Were we waiting, he would get behind a boat, where he could not be seen, or if we were walking he would come some distance behind me. If a nobleman passes along the street, the common people who are smoking hide their pipes until he has gone by." Gilmore, *Korea from Capital*, 117–18.

303 During the Chosŏn Dynasty, men of higher social strata could take women of lower rank as their concubines, while the sexual relationship between noblewomen and lower caste men was severely punished. *Chosŏn ŭi Seksyuŏllit'i: Chosŏn ŭi Yongmang ŭl Malhada* [*Chosŏn Sexuality: On the Desire During the Chosŏn Dynasty*] (Seoul: Karam Kihoek, 2009), 127–28.

304 Il Puin, "Readers' Club," *MS*, March 29, 1913, 5.

305 Mo Pyŏlsil, "Readers' Club," *MS*, August 5, 1913, 3.

306 Ch'ŏllian, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, September 12, 1914, 4.

pressed sexual interest in them during their show.[307] Misinterpreting her gestures as a sign to follow her, they ran after her rickshaw from Chang'ansa to her house. As she entered her home without noticing the men, they knocked on the door and asked about her intention, only to be scolded. Calling them "ignorant vulgar clowns," the woman warned them that they should not expect to "live their whole lives," which scared them so much that they ran away and took the first train to Pusan, a city on the South Coast, only to be chased by the authorities.[308]

As her words indicate, she was upset not only because the men approached her with sexual interest, which she did not share, but also because they behaved disrespectfully towards her: men of the lowest stratum like the performers were the last persons to be allowed to make such an advance on an aristocratic woman like her. Likewise, it is possible that there was a similar strata imbalance behind another miscellaneous news item from January 1914: "A clown of a theater narrowly avoided severe punishment after sending a letter to a woman he has never seen before."[309]

As a response to these cases, Seoul's colonial police enforced new rules in April 1916 to control public morals in Korean theaters. According to the *Maeil Shinbo*, the new regulation forbade not only mixed seating of women and men but also direct contact between spectators and performers:

> Considering the current situation of theaters and motion picture houses in Seoul, it is not exaggerated to say that there are many harmful incidents. The police station in charge is going to enforce morals through strict regulation of things that harm public morals, such as arousing bad feelings among the audience by doing something cruel or obscene in a play, audience entering rooms for film narrators and other actors, actors or film narrators indiscreetly going to the auditorium, disorder between men's and women's seats and sitting together or film narrators giving explanations that spoil public morality.[310]

The ban suggests that contact between the audience and the performers often took place, and that the police considered it a spoiling of public morality. Against the background that some performers tried to approach female audiences, the ban on "audience entering rooms for film narrators and other actors" can be interpreted as a measure against sexual contact between performers and spectators. Meanwhile, the other ban on "actors or film narrators indiscreetly going to the auditorium" responded to complaints based on social strata.

307 "Sahoe P'unggi wa Yŏnyegye: Sahoe P'unggi wa Yŏn'gŭkchang Ŏttŏk'e Hamyŏn Choŭlkka [Social Morality and the Entertainment World: Social Morality and Theaters. How Can We Handle the Matter?]," *MS*, April 16, 1913, 3.

308 "Social Morality and Entertainment," *MS*, April 16, 1913, 3.

309 Miltamsaeng, "Readers' Letters," *MS*, January 17, 1914, 3.

310 "Kŭkchang ŭi P'unggi Ch'wich'e Palgyŏn Hamyŏn Ŏmbŏl Handa [The Regulation of Public Morals at Theaters: When Caught, Get Punished]," *MS*, April 1, 1916, 3.

The issue of gendered segregation was mentioned again in the 1922 *Rules Controlling Theaters and Plays*.[311] The repeated mentions of the need for stricter separation in theaters reveals that Koreans kept crossing the boundaries of their seats despite the 1916 ban. The social order of Chosŏn society was fully reflected in the allocation of space in the Korean theaters. Thus, even such minor violations and discipline by the colonial power reminded Koreans of the social order based on social strata and gender and triggered its negotiation.

Chapter 3 explored the discourse of Korean theater as a means of social education after colonization, with a focus on the spread of *shinp'a* led by the *Maeil Shinbo* and the control of audience behavior by colonial authorities and spectators. Social education in colonial Korea encompassed the acquisition of knowledge through new media and the learning of public decorum at new public places, contradicting the earlier belief that Korean theater might lead to the moral and economic decline of the Korean nation. *Maeil Shinbo* journalists and *shinp'a* producers endorsed Japanese theater's superiority and encouraged Koreans to learn how to watch this new Japanese genre. These endorsements were driven by the intertwined interests of newspapers, theater businesses, and colonial authorities. Using popular *shinp'a* plays based on newspaper novels such as *The Cuckoo* and *The Tears*, the colonial newspaper actively interpellated Korean women as audiences who were beyond the reach of colonial authorities' assimilation politics. These women were expected to become culturally and emotionally assimilated colonial subjects by learning proper behavior as audience members and understanding *shinp'a* plays to a degree that they would cry while watching tragic fates enfolded. However, these efforts were met with unexpected challenges as Korean (female) audiences often laughed at unfamiliar styles of acting by actors.

In the 1910s, colonial authorities and the *Maeil Shinbo* closely monitored audience behavior in general, too. The press organ of the Government-General publicized stories of violations and punishments, turning Korean playhouses functioned as a disciplinary institution that tried to turn visitors to colonial subjects. Theatergoers were allocated to many different and intersecting subject positions based on their gender, ethnicity, economic power, and social strata. Concurrently, some Korean audience members also observed and reported misbehavior of others to the *Maeil Shinbo*, further expanding the colonial police's disciplinary power. It was not seldom that their intention was, however, upholding keeping the long-standing Confucian values and social hierarchy. Reflecting the conflicting and diverse interests of the colonial authorities, theater operators, and Korean individuals, norms regarding their sexuality, position in the social hierarchy, and proper behavior as colonized subject were negotiated in colonial Korean theaters in the 1910s.

311 "Hŭnghaengjang kŭp Hŭnghaeng Ch'wich'e Kyuch'ik [Rules Controlling Theaters and Plays]," *MS*, March 1, 1922, 3. The impact on the rules on Korean theater business is discussed in the following chapter.