

The Origin of Koreanness: Understanding the Gender of Modernity in the Wartime Films of Late
Colonial Korea, 1937-1945

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the popular origins of ethno-cultural subjectivity during the dawn of the cinematic age that, for Koreans, intersected with Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945). More specifically, it looks at films produced during the time of mobilization for the Second Sino-Japanese and Pacific War between 1937 and 1945, with attention to how the complex process of turning the peninsula's human resources into participatory subjects of the Shōwa Emperor (1926–1989) affected Korean productivity and reproductivity. The contradictions of war mobilization of Koreans by the Japanese Empire created common gender representations in late colonial Korean films. Mobilization of adolescent male fantasies, whose aspiration for filial piety and patriarchal restoration, suppressed by colonial discrimination, materialized in queerness. Through the use of gender, culture, and colonialism as analytical lenses, this thesis argues that colonial subjects have come to sustain the system that restrained them, believing instead in the promises of individual mobility.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chapter One: Film in Colonial Korea</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Chapter Two: The Patriarchal Japanese Empire and Anomalous Masculinities</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Chapter Three: Misogyny, Patriarchy, and Dependent Femininities</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>95</i>

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Major Kitamura's house	39
Figure 2: A student-soldier's confusion over imperial oath	42
Figure 3: Yǒngil and Chǒnghŭi's departure, Hǒhun, and Kyǒngsuk	46
Figure 4: Children reenacting a ceremonial circle dance.....	54
Figure 5: Wǒnjin's suicide and Chǒmyong's triumph.....	58
Figure 6: Kinshuku collapses from constantly working	74
Figure 7: Punok's smirk	82
Figure 8: Hyangdan and Ch'unhyang's posing.....	91

Introduction

This thesis investigates the popular origins of ethno-cultural subjectivity during the dawn of the cinematic age that, for Koreans, intersected with Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945). More specifically, it looks at films produced during the time of mobilization for the Second Sino-Japanese and Pacific War between 1937 and 1945, with attention to how the complex process of turning the peninsula’s human resources into participatory subjects of the Shōwa Emperor (1926–1989) affected Korean productivity and reproductivity. Daily lives and senses of belonging came to be articulated by individual roles in the regional and industrial hierarchy rather than one’s role in the patriarchal villages and administrative districts of the Yi or Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910). Through a critical analysis of late-colonial films, I hope to gain insight into how Korean audiences might have adapted to the rapid changes in social relationships that accompanied colonial modernity. A broad reading of the cultural products of Korean filmmakers as well as writers, artists, and intellectuals indicates that nationalist ambitions were expressed predominantly through the promotion of Korean positions within the Japanese Empire.¹ Through the lens of modern media, one could see that colonial subjects might have come to sustain the system that restrained them, believing instead in the promises of individual mobility. These screenplays also highlight the everyday *resilience* of those who came face-to-face with the scale of capitalist domination beyond the factory walls, the gender oppressions of both Neo-Confucian and modernist institutions, and the ethnically perpetuated (self-)hatred that censored behaviors deemed too Korean.

¹ Moonim Paek, Sŭngjin Yu, Sangmin Kim, and Hwajin Lee, *Chosŏn yŏnghwa ran hao: kǎndae yŏnghwa ūi pip’yŏngsa* [What is Chosŏn cinema?: the history of criticism on modern cinema], ed. Moonim Paek et al. (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Changbi, 2016), 259–411; Nayoung Aimee Kwŏn, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015), 28–58; Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch’ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 224–52.

Korean nationalism became one of the most useful ideologies used to persuade working-class Koreans to volunteer their services in an unprecedented scale. During a time of assimilation, Korean media—such as novels, poems, essays, and movies—displayed visions of collective identities that served the interests of Japanese ruling elites. Korean masculinity became the main subject of media that served to indoctrinate audiences with new social norms. At the same time, the struggle for patriarchal voice through the promotion of Korean nationalism re-evoked the importance of masculinity as signifying national virility. Both the Neo-Confucian tradition and the capitalist environment of colonial Korea perpetuated the discursive authority fixed to Korean patriarchy, which was, ironically, defined by submission to an occupying authority that conveniently separated the Korean elites' social statuses from their traditional roles in political service. The ideology of the Japanese Empire, had metamorphosed with the experience of the Koreans who, in attending to their immediate economic needs, maintained their long-term political subordination.²

Portraying class conflict, exacerbated by settler colonialism, was an obstacle to filmmaking in late colonial Korea. Though they are often described in terms of a dichotomy of resistance and cooperation under foreign rule, Koreans complied with the Japanese. The cooperative ones asserted their presence by means of cultural productions, land registration, military force, and finally, war mobilization.³ Japan's imperialist expansion into Okinawa, Hokkaido, and Taiwan in the 19th century culminated with its annexation of Korea. Scholars of colonial Korea agree that the first ten years of Japanese rule were instituted militarily to enable the acquisition of land and the expansion of farm tenancy, administered through the Oriental

² Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 188–206.

³ Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 39.

Development Company.⁴ Scholars agree that Koreans came to resent the discrimination and two-tiered policies the Government-General of Korea (Chōsen sōtokufu, hereafter GGK) subjected them to, and they rose up against the colonial authority in March 1919.⁵ Pae Pyōnguk argues that the propagandistic use of cultural production in the period of cultural rule (*bunka seiji*) that began in 1919, following the March First Independence Movement, must be considered as a calculated effort by the colonizers to governmentalize the policy of cultural assimilation as a celebratory practice of amalgamation and exchange. In the context of settler colonialism, cultural rule began after the GGK finished its survey of the land, effectively commercializing the agricultural economy and turning the colony into a “rice basket” for exports.⁶ Meanwhile, the majority of the population owned close to nothing and lacked the means to support themselves under the colonial regime’s export-oriented agricultural policy, which favored large-scale commercial farming and benefited upper-class landlords while disenfranchising the masses of smallholders, semi-tenants, and landless peasants. Left-wing activists and Korean nationalists competed for cultural representation in the 1920s and failed to transform the growing number of labor strikes into an aesthetic form in the 1930s. The Japanese Empire’s expansion into China halted the revolutionary momentum whilst Korean filmmakers accessed resources and equipment

⁴ Eckert, *Offspring of Empire*, 7–26; Sōkman Pae, “Samil undong kyōngje paekyōng sōsul ūi pyōnhwa kwajōng” [How historians’ depictions of the economic background of the March 1st Movement changed over the years], *Yōksa wa hyōnsil* [Quarterly review of Korean History] 108 (2018): 147–48.

⁵ The March First Movement has been commemorated nationally in both Koreas as a day of asserting national sovereignty against Japanese colonialism. See Mark Caprio for more information about the two-tiered treatment of Koreans by colonial education policies and the political discussions introduced and circulated by Japanese authorities. Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 82–85; 92–97; 117–18, 139.

⁶ Sunyoung Park also writes, “Japan’s agricultural policy of promoting large-scale farming drove an increasing number of small-scale farmers and peasant into bankruptcy, the women of impoverished rural households flowed into cities in search of employment.” Pyōnguk Pae, “1920nyōndae chōnban Chosōn ch’ongdokpu ūi sōnchōn yōnghwa chejakkwa sangyōng” [The production and screening of the Japanese government-general propaganda films in Chosōn in the first half of 1920s], *Chibangsa wa chibangmunhwa* [Journal of Local history and culture] 9, no. 2 (2006): 189–95. Sunyoung Park, *The Proletarian Wave: Literature and Leftist Culture in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 205.

through the GGK's amalgamation of the film industry. Portraying class conflict was an obstacle to filmmaking in late colonial Korea due to the repression of left-wing politics.

That the first Korean films were made under Japanese rule warrants attention to the people who made them. Most were educated in Japan and had professional experience in the technical aspects of filmmaking.⁷ Career advancement was limited in the Japanese film industry that kept Korean apprentices at arm's length. As a result, Korean filmmakers faced a chronic lack of capital investment and political support.⁸ Yi Ch'angyong, cinematographer for Na Un'gyu's *Arirang*, and Choi Namju, the son of a mining magnate, each founded the Koryŏ Film Association (1937–1942) and the Chosŏn Film Corporation (1937–1942).⁹ Taking advantage of their cultural capital, they were able to leverage their landed wealth from the Chosŏn dynasty for positions of influence in the Japanese Empire. However, their filmmaking in the times of cultural freedom in the 1920s and war in the 1930s could only mean the liberalist promotion of film as a discursive art form, which branded itself as delivering the “essence” of Korea on the market.¹⁰ The advent of the film industry in Korea came with the task of extracting the “essence” of the nation to assist in the total mobilization of the Japanese Empire.¹¹ The film industry's emergence, which began with the Ordinance of Korean Cinema (K. Chosŏn yŏnghwaryŏng; J.

⁷ Hwajin Yi, “‘Taedonga’rŭl’ kkumkku ŏttŏn singminji ũi yŏnghwa kiŏpka, Yi Ch’angyong” [Yi Ch’angyong, the film entrepreneur of colonial Korea who dreamt ‘the great Asia’], in *Koryŏ Yŏnghwa Hyŏphoe Wa Yŏnghwa Shincheje 1936-1941* [Koryŏ cinema corporation and new government organization, 1936–1941], ed. Korea Film Archive (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Korea Film Archive, 2007), 196–209; Hyeeseung Chŏng, “The Korean Valentino: Jin Yan (Kim Yŏm), Sino-Korean Unity, and Shanghai Films of the 1930s,” *Korean Studies* 37 (2013): 150–70.

⁸ Sunjin Yi, “Kiŏphwa wa yŏnghwa sinch’eje” [Corporatization and new cinema organization], in *Koryŏ yŏnghwa hyŏphoe wa sinch’eche, 1936–1941* [Koryŏ cinema corporation and new government organization, 1936–1941], ed. Korea Film Archive (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Korea Film Archive, 2007), 228.

⁹ Sunjin Yi, “Kiŏphwa wa yŏnghwa sinch’eje” [Corporatization and new cinema organization], 223.

¹⁰ Aimee Nayoung Kwon calls the application of Korean culture as a product within the expanding empire a colonial kitsch. The more the Japanese authority sought unity among the members of the Asian sphere (Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and China) in the mobilization towards the war against the West, ornamentalization of culture as a regional product became more explicit as an outcome of the colonial order. Kwon, *Intimate Empire*, 158–66.

¹¹ Chonghwa Chŏng, *Chosŏn yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae* [A modernity called Chosŏn cinema], (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Pakichŏng, 2020), 330–5.

Chōsen eigarei) in 1940, was followed by the establishment of the Korea Film Production Company (K. Chosŏn yŏnghwa chejak chusikhoesa; J. Chōsen eiga seisaku kabushiki kaisha) in 1942. Under the provision of the Korea Film Council (Chosŏn yŏnghwagebal hyŏphoe) in late 1942, the company began producing feature-length films in 1943.¹²

Films of late-colonial Korea transferred emotions onto imperial subjects through the invention of images, imbuing individuals with senses of collective identity. For the millions of Koreans drafted for labor abroad for the first time, their emotional connection to other ethnic Koreans and a homeland was a crucial ideology for survival. At the same time, it should be noted that identification between the ethnic discourse of Koreanness and the colonial discourse of imperial subjecthood was not a definitive one, as prominent colonial writer Yi T'aejun ponders the relationship between Koreans living on the peninsula as opposed to those working elsewhere in the Japanese Empire such as Manchuria or Vladivostok.¹³ People shaped their identities through migration which changed their relationship with land and state. The lack of Japanese characters and the careful modulation of class conflict in Korean language literature enabled ethnic expressions despite increasing censorship.¹⁴ Yi Kwangsu's *Theory on Ethnic Modification* (1921), Kim Hang argues, depoliticized Korean identity by bracketing it in the nationalistic trend

¹² Irhe Sohn, "Enterprises of the Feeble: The Makings of Cinema in Colonial Korea" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2018), 84–6; Chŏng, *Chosŏn yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae* [*A modernity called Chosŏn cinema*], 322–23.

¹³ Janet Poole writes that Yi T'aejun scolded Kim Saryang at a roundtable discussion after liberation in 1945 for the writings published in Japanese during the 1940s. This is a classic case of ethnic nationalists taking over the discourse of national identity. Janet Poole, *When the Future Disappears: The Modernist Imagination in Late Colonial Korea* (New York, NY: Columbia University, 2014), 197–8.

¹⁴ Scholars such as Hang Kim, Hyeryŏng Lee, and Minho Pang point out the twists and turns in the application of nationalism in the work of colonial writers who sought nationalism beyond ethno-linguistic puritanism. Hyeryŏng Yi, "Yangban ŭn malhae chilsu itnŭn'ga" [Underrepresentation of yangban in the colonial modern literature: a limit of social imagination, status systems], *Minjok munhaksa yŏn'gu* [Journal of Korean literary history] 62 (2016): 79–119; Minho Pang, "Ilche malgi munhakintŭl ŭi taecil hyŏmnyŏk yuhyŏnggwa ŭimi" [Forms and meanings of writers' collaboration with Japan during the 1940s], *Han'guk hyŏndae munhak yŏn'gu* [The journal of Korean modern literature] 22 (2007): 231–79.

where individual and collective minds (maŭm) managed themselves.¹⁵ Kim continues that the acquisition of Korean consciousness required the forgetting of statelessness in colonial modernity. Highlighting Yi Kwangsu's adoption of Gustave Le Bon and Minobe Datsŭkichi to (de)contextualize his theory from the dominant nationalist framework, Kim challenges the analyses of ethnic-national formation in colonial Korea as a product of either imperialization (K. hwangguksinminhwa; J. kōminka) or ethnic regionalism. Rather, Kim underscores how notions of national identity shifted from landed to cultural property.¹⁶ The emergence of cinema in late colonial Korea was influenced by these intersecting perspectives. Though ethnicity did not unite uniformly, wartime films indicate that Korean patriarchy endured. Rather than cut off, communities of Koreans were moved and reshaped by the modern processes of mobilization and management. In creating images of ethnic unity between Japanese and Koreans commissioned by colonial authorities, filmmakers objectified their fellow Koreans. They also did so to enhance their own social mobility. But, due to the complex hierarchies of power relationships in the empire, they were often unable to gain full subjecthood, becoming, in the end, like the colonized masses they portrayed in motion pictures.

Military Statism and the First Talkie

Korea's first talkie, *Tale of Ch'unhyang* (Ch'unhyangjŏn), was produced in 1935.¹⁷ It was a part of a coordinated marketing strategy to re-establish the territory of the Japanese Empire by

¹⁵ Hang Kim, "Kaein, kukmin, nanminsai ũi minjok" [The 'nation' between individual, national, and refugee: re-reading Yi Kwangsu's minjok kyejoron], *Minjok munhwa yŏn'gu* [Korean cultural studies] 58 (2013): 192–5.

¹⁶ Kim, "Kaein, kukmin, nanminsai ũi minjok," 198.

¹⁷ Hagiŏng Shin, "Ilche malgi chosŏnbumgwa singminji yŏnghwain ũi yongmang" [Chosŏn boom and the desire of filmmakers of Chosŏn, a study on 'the Spring of the Korean Peninsula], *Asia munhwa yŏn'gu* [Asia cultural studies] 23 (2011): 82.

subsuming and diversifying territorial regionality through literature, tourism, plays, and films.¹⁸ Two years after the release of the popular film, the Japanese Army began occupying China's mainland, igniting the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The conflict put into effect the National Mobilization Law in 1938 to make military service mandatory for Japanese men. As the war required more bodies and labor, new laws were introduced in 1938 to accept Koreans as volunteers in the Japanese Imperial Army. In 1939, Koreans were forced to change their names into Japanese styles and the imperialization movement as well as programs promoting ideas of *naisen ittai* (unity of the mainland and Korea) went into a full effect as Koreans were forced to observe Shintoism. The production of the first talkie and the institution of military conscription was no coincidence. Contextualized with the rapid implementation of the measures that followed, the production and distribution of Korea's first talking film was a carefully monitored decision to invest in the making of wartime propaganda.

There was no consensus on what constituted a Korean film. Just as Yi Ch'angyong stressed that "presenting the good and the beauty of Chosŏn to Japan proper would bring unity between the two," Kikuchi Morifumi, a Japanese film editor in *Military Train* (dir. Sŏ Kwangje, 1938), claimed that "Korean cinema was not necessary at the present moment."¹⁹ Additionally, Karashima Takeshi, a professor at the Keijō Imperial University, credited the existence of Korean cinema to its struggle of self-determination.²⁰ By the end of the 1930s, the GGK made

¹⁸ There are two sides to a story about the colonial period: "*Ch'unhyangjŏn* was one of the few Chosŏnesque texts that the Korean nationalists under fascist censorship could safeguard against the Japanese empire." Shin, "Ilche malgi chosŏnbumgwa," 87; Nayoung Aimee Kwŏn writes, "the colony as a whole was fetishized as colonial kitsch, as a reified and devalued object of quick contemplation and indiscriminate consumption, and its traditions were being appropriated and exoticized as objects of a popular consumer trend sweeping through the empire." Kwŏn, *Intimate Empire*, 108–122.

¹⁹ Sunjin Yi, "Kiŏphwa wa yŏnghwa sinch'eje," 228-9; "Chosen eiga no genjo" [Talking about the whole of Chosŏn cinema], *Eiga Hyoron*, July 1941.

²⁰ "Particularity of Korean Cinema," *Eiga Junpo*, July 1943.

clear its intention to assimilate Koreans as subjects of the Shōwa Emperor.²¹ It did so by implementing policies like the conversion of Korean names to Japanese ones, the termination of Korean-language instruction in public schools (1943) as well as the closure of the vernacular press (1940), the establishment of various labor volunteer systems, and finally, conscription into the Japanese Imperial Army (1943). Martial law forced Korean elites to renounce their authority over nationalist discourse.²² With the Japanese territorial expansion into China and the formation of the Greater East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, Korean cultural production focused on the mobilization of labor and resources for the imperial war.

Civic Nationalism and Colonial Subjectivity

The very subjectivity called for during wartime mobilization gave filmmakers opportunities for collaboration. Filmmakers, glossing over internal differentiations, reveled in

²¹ Carter J. Eckert documents the politics within the military academies in Japan proper and in Manchuria and explains how the culture resulting from the politics of the military academies came to dominate the culture of war mobilization. Carter J. Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea: The Roots of Militarism, 1866–1945*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 161–8.

²² In the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Koreans in Japan utilized publication to advance ethnic interests on the topics of labor disputes and ethnic discrimination. They pushed back on demonization of Koreans around the discourse of the earthquake through publications like *Sin'gwang*, *Chosŏn tongch'ang hoeji*, *Hwangin siron*, *Chosŏn ilbo*, and *Ch'ŏkhudae*. However, media campaigns to silence ethnic Koreans, along with incarcerations of labor activists and Marxists, served as a ground for religious groups, such as *Ch'ŏndogyo* and the Korean Buddhist Association, to capitalize on commemorating the mass-killing of Koreans that took place in the days following the earthquake. Persistent repression by the Japanese state should be noted as the political condition in the time of free cultural expression. Chaepong Yi explores the possibility of anti-colonialist movements in the middle of war mobilization by examining publications on the Nodai incident that took place in Pusan in 1940. Lee considers the political potency of the slogan 'Chosŏn tongnip manse' (hurray to Korea's independence) that filled the air after Colonel Nodai Kenji's interference in a competitive sport match. Reading between the lines of publications on the Nodai incident as a product of censorship and self-censorship, Lee paints a "liberated space" in the slogan that served as symbolic resistance against the colonial marking of ethnic subordination. Indŏk Kim, "Kwandongdaechichin Chosŏnin haksal kwa Ilbon nae undong seryŏk ūi tonghyang" [The massacre of Koreans during the Great Kanto Earthquake and trends in the movement of power], *Tongbuga yŏksa nonch'ong* [Northeast Asia history] 49 (2015): 420; 425–6; 432–3; Chaepong Yi, "1940nyŏn, Pusan ūi singminsŏnggwa pansingminsŏng" [Colonialism and decolonialism in 1940, Pusan], *Hanguk munhak nonch'ong* [Theses on Korean literature] 68 (2014): 527–9.

projecting stereotypical images of Koreanness.²³ Though the colonial state commissioned wartime films to inspire volunteers, those whose participation was premised on “free” choice, filmmakers—to protect their social privilege—perpetuated images of the colonized masses as driven by instinct, not reason. It is arguable that these films, by underscoring the 'backward' traits of the working classes and women, worked to uphold Korean patriarchy while subverting the ambitions of the Japanese to transform Korea into a partner of its imperial war.

Women in colonial Korea have been seen as doubly oppressed, but Sungyun Lim argues that Chosŏn Neo-Confucian customs were more damning to women than Japanese civil law because they did not recognize the inheritance rights of women. The GGK gradually moved to dismantle Korea’s communal customs and agreements to only recognize government-registered documentation in cases of land disputes and family inheritance. Cases of concubinage, adoption, and widow’s inheritance rights became the pivots with which the GGK started reforming Korean families to be more like the Japanese family unit. In this modernist transformation, the women who were judicially defined as widows, daughters, concubines, and wives became placeholders for male heirs. The civil infrastructure gave female litigants temporary victories on individual cases, but had its eyes firmly on assimilating the colony’s population.²⁴

The Japanese state registry of Korean families illustrates the transformation of “the definition and boundary of the family....It privileged the definition of family that centered

²³ Mark Caprio notes, “to the pro-Japanese Korean, Japanese rhetoric nurtured an expectation that eventually they would stand shoulder to shoulder with Japanese as equals.” Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 207–8.

²⁴ According to Sŏngyun Lim, “A household system where economic rights were ideally concentrated in the hands of the household head required that other members of the household lack economic rights. One perverse consequence was that a wife’s gainful employment (against the husband’s will) could be used against her in divorce lawsuits...Behind the growing attraction of companionate marriage were the harsh socioeconomic conditions of colonial Korea. It was not only cultural expectations that kept women from employment; the Korean economy provided little opportunities for women to achieve economic independence through employment.” Sŏngyun Lim, *Rules of the House: Family law and Domestic Disputes in Colonial Korea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 92.

around consanguinity...of patriarchal hierarchy.”²⁵ The development of a family registry system—the collection of household registers in 1913, the Common Law (Kyōtsūhō) in 1918, and the Household-Registration Law (Kosekihō) in 1922—reflects the bureaucratic effort to reform the Korean family after the Japanese one.²⁶ But the registers collected evidence on households with mixtures of wives and concubines, those with *tsureko* (children from a wife’s previous marriage), those headed by widows living with daughters and sons-in-law, those composed of monks, and those made up of unrelated people who shared a residence and resources. The legal boundary imposed by the Japanese was “an abstract legal concept imposed on the lived reality.” The concept of the household first infiltrated the country, “even before Korea was formally colonized.”²⁷ Throughout the colonial period, Lim writes, “the conjugal-family ideal functioned as a convenient mode of familial relationship that encompassed both Korean desires for family customs reform and the colonial state’s desire for family law assimilation. The ‘age of love’ was in fact a palatable façade of the age of assimilation.”²⁸

Against the backdrop of changes in the family law that redefined and reassigned women in patriarchy throughout the colonial era, the GGK began constructing the legal framework for mobilizing film as a propaganda tool.²⁹ *Sweet Dream (Mimong: Chugŭm ũi chajangga*, dir. Yang Chunam, 1936), for example, portrays a female protagonist as an unlikely target of the patriarchal restraints brought by wartime reforms. This early talkie filmed in Korean represents a woman who is unconstrained by her lack of economic and political rights within the imposed

²⁵ Lim, *Rules of the House*, 43; 56.

²⁶ Lim, *Rules of the House*, 43.

²⁷ Lim, *Rules of the House*, 43.

²⁸ Lim, *Rules of the House*, 93.

²⁹ Chonghwa Chŏng, “Singminjigi Chosŏn ũi munhwa yŏnghwa kaenyŏm hyŏngsŏng e kwanhan yon’gu” [A study on the formation of the concept of cultural film in colonial Korea], *Yŏnghwa yŏn’gu* [Film studies] 61 (2014): 291.

patriarchal structure. The wartime regime commissioned late-colonial films to mobilize the masses, but they did not need to uphold Korean patriarchy.

Not everyone, however, was willing to embrace a new order of wartime fascism without reservation. According to Janet Poole, the writings of Korean novelists and essayists produced during the late colonial era display a range of oscillating emotions.³⁰ With no vernacular press and heightened censorship even in Japanese, the disappearance of the space for intellectuals to explore their subjectivity as the colonized might have meant the abandonment of cultural production, which would have confirmed that there was an “essential” Koreanness to be lost. In the late colonial era when cinema supplanted the censored space that the vernacular press had occupied, the embodiment of Koreanness offered Koreans a slow death, with a remote possibility of becoming a second-tier subject of the Shōwa Emperor.³¹ Koreans could, however, adopt Japaneseness to avoid feeling ashamed of their loss projected on screen. For comparison, The Japanese had a market for consumers of “masculine heroism,” “virtuous adventure,” and the *blues* of jokyū (café waitress).³² The Japanese jokyū, Miriam Silverberg writes, expressed the “confidence in her ability to ‘play’ with sentiments of love” that emerged in the already eroticized discourse of femininity.³³ Sexualized entertainment in Europe and the United States such as cabaret, vaudeville, and burlesque buttressed the reproduction of the social relations mediated by sexual forms of exchange, which Korea imitated during the colonial era.³⁴ The disappearance of the space to explore a subjectivity resorted Koreanness to adhere to

³⁰ Poole, *When the Future*, 115–200.

³¹ A relief, instead of thriving, in and from “the structural conditions of a collective failure to thrive” is a form of resistance against pervasive deployment bio-politics over bodies. Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency),” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 779–80.

³² Jason G. Karlin, “The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 68–75.

³³ Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 65–71; 81–2; 92–3.

³⁴ Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, xvi; 182–3

Japaneseness, removing the appeal of “essential” Koreanness from the exploration of a subjectivity that neglected a range of emotions. This stiffened the range of emotions in film representations of Koreanness. Nevertheless, the ethnic difference marked by discursive practices continued to promote the racial prejudice that the Japanese practiced to dissociate themselves from the filth, laziness, and inferiority of Koreanness.³⁵

In *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon notes that colonial subjects attempt to embody consciousnesses imported from the empire.³⁶ For colonized people, though, the result was not self-determination founded on imported ideologies, but the institutionalization of colonial consciousness. As in other colonies where nationalism emerged in response to imperial sovereignty, in Korea, it arose in reaction to Japanese occupation. Whether colonialism aided or hindered Korean nationalism in film has been debated, but recent scholarship has opened new paths for interpretation. For example, Han Sangön’s empirically rigorous work on early Chosŏn cinema uncovers implicit assumptions among the first and second generations of postcolonial Korean film historians. Han argues that these scholars including Yi Yŏng-il and Yi Hyo-in used sources selectively to advance a nationalistic narrative of the origins of Korean cinema.³⁷ In contrast to those who traced its origins to the 1920s, Han unearths the cosmopolitan beginnings of Korean filmmaking to even earlier decades. The Kyŏngsŏng kodŭng yŏnyaekwan (Seoul Higher Entertainment Hall), founded in Seoul in the 1900s, was part of the entrepreneurial journeys of Kanehara Ginzo and Watanabe Tomoyori who also founded film production and

³⁵ Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 158-66, 205-7; Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (London, England: University of California Press, 2013), 35-9.

³⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), 55-100.

³⁷ Chonghwa Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean Cinema in the Japanese Empire: From the Silent Era to the Talkies, 1923-1939,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 5 (2012): 138-40.

distribution in Thailand.³⁸ Han scrutinizes the paucity of film production in Korea by pointing out the exchange of capital, workers, and film equipment between Thailand, Tokyo, and Seoul. In the 1930s, Koreans worked as actors, directors, and writers in Shanghai and became significant figures in late colonial Korean films. Gaps and fissures about Shanghai and Tokyo, Han and a new generation of scholars argue, have remained peripheral issues as discussions of colonial films have focused on the roles of the colonizers and the colonized.³⁹ Han and other scholars also argue that Korea's cinematic past should not focus on getting history right but refer to history to uncover the intentions embedded in aesthetic and discursive forms, which I agree to.

National Cinema

There have been a plethora of scholarships on national cinema in relation to the formation and evolution of modern, capitalist nation-states. Maite Conde contextualizes Brazilian cinema in close association with the rise of nationalism and capital expansion.⁴⁰ Using archival methods, she observes how film helped shape new perceptions of time and space central to the onset of capitalist modernity. Similarly, Ana Lopez's chapter in Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's anthology shows that modernity emerged with the exchange of capital in various parts of Latin America

³⁸ Sangŏn Han points out the peculiar prolongation of "the era of only appreciation" in Chosŏn cinema and argues for the need to approach cinema history "beyond a national boundary." The 'paucity' of film production for Koreans during this period presents avenues for exploration as a critical perspective against post-colonialist scholarship. Sangŏn Han, "Kyŏngsŏng kodŭng yŏnyegwan yŏn'gu" [A study on Kyŏngsŏng entertainment hall], *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* [Film studies] 59 (2014): 412; 423.

³⁹ Sunjin Yi, "Kiŏphwa wa yŏnghwa sinch'eje," 222–29; Hwajin Yi, "'Taedonga'rŭl' kkumkku ŏttŏn," 196–209; Chonghwa Chŏng, "Singminjigi Chosŏn ũi munhwa yŏnghwa kaenyŏm hyŏngsŏng e kwanhan yŏn'gu" [A study on formation of the concept of cultural film in colonial Korea], *Yŏnghwa yŏn'gu* [Film studies] 61 (2014): 271–96; Yŏngjae Yi, "T'uraensŭnaesyŏnal yŏnghwa wa pŏnyŏk: wae oep'aliga yŏgichŏgisŏ tora onŭn'ga" [Transnational cinema and translation: why does one-armed man come back from all over the place], *Asea yŏn'gu* [The journal of Asiatic studies] 54, no. 4 (2011): 86–114; Chunhyŏng Cho, "Han'guk yŏnghwa kŏmyŏlsa ũi myŏkkachi chuje e taehan sironjŏk yŏn'gu" [An exploratory study of the history of Korean film censorship], *Han'guk kŭk yesul yŏn'gu* [The journal of Korean drama and theatre] 59 (2018): 52–60.

⁴⁰ Maite Conde, *Foundational Films: Early Cinema and Modernity in Brazil* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 23–33.

from Buenos Aires to Lima to Mexico City. Lopez describes the reception of film in the continent and argues the shared language in the age of cinema enabled filmmakers in Central and South America to promote their own stories by copying European film tools as early as the 1900s.⁴¹ The continental colonial lineage was described as the major force of narrative development in national films, as their forms took on the styles of French and Italian cinema in the 1910s and 1920s. In the context of colonial Taiwan, Laura Jo-han Wen debates whether the first showing of electrical moving lanterns, or motion pictures, was a factual event. Wen probes the colonial hierarchy in movie-going practices using ethnic segregation as an analytical lens.⁴²

Chung Chonghwa's archival work on the Korean filmmakers who collaborated with their Japanese counterparts to take advantage of their technological and capital monopoly offers a methodological framework that is not reined in by the postcolonial impasse.⁴³ Similarly, Matthew Johnson explains the emergence of Chinese cinema as a national response to Hollywood's increasingly aggressive promotion of films that depicted the Chinese as barbaric and exotic. Johnson's work establishes the context for a broader examination of the historical site of many changes such as the expansion of imperialism into China. This analysis moves away from contentious concepts like national cinema and nationalism and locates the site of the research in archival work. Johnson cross-examines the political and economic circumstances of both China and the United States while evading Cold War frameworks that circumscribe

⁴¹ Ana Lopez, "'Train of Shadows': Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America," in *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media* (New Jersey, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 99–127.

⁴² Donghoon Kim similarly observes that Korean spectators of early cinema viewed Hollywood films and their phantasmatic roles as an alternative to Japanese productions. Donghoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema: The Film Culture of Colonial Korea*, (Edinburgh, Scotland, UK: Edinburgh University, 2017); Laura Jo-han Wen, "Magic Lantern Shows and Screen Modernity in Colonial Taiwan," in *In Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Republican China: Kaleidoscopic Histories*, ed. Emilie Yueh-ye Yeh (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 51–70.

⁴³ Chung, "Negotiating Colonial Korean," 146–9.

research into regional studies and media studies.⁴⁴ His work illustrates how early cinema influenced and shifted national consciences in the United States and China through the exchange of cultural representations as forms of entertainment. Similarly, Gábor Gergely's book on Hungarian cinema between 1929 and 1947 argues that "it is never possible to define the provenance of a film with any degree of certainty. Thus, the nation being unknowable, and the nationality of films remaining an undetermined mystery."⁴⁵ There are limitations to framing cinema studies on nationalistic agendas because it overlooks foundational notions such as class, gender, and kinship in shaping the rationale for discipline and affect through representation. Appealing to ultra-nationalistic values, a national cinema framework hinders contextualizing expressions of socio-political and geopolitical developments.⁴⁶ Such a truncated approach to understanding the relationship between representation, biopolitics, and government perpetuates the ethnocentric status quo by exaggerating the power of culture in determining practice.

Cinema, Biopolitics, and Double Standard in the War Expansion

Debates about the difference between literature and cinema grew in the late 1930s in Korea when *Sweet Dream* (1936) was produced along with the literary adaptations of *Arirang Hill* (dir. Hong Kaemyōng, 1935), *The Tale of Changhwa and Hongnyōn* (dir. Hong Kaemyōng, 1936), *The Tale of Hong Kildong—the Sequel* (dir. Yi Myōngu, 1936), and *Omongnyō* (dir. Na Un'gyu, 1937). The recurrent point of tension in the debate was on cinema's objectivity and literature's subjectivity in their techniques that were heading in opposite directions in the state

⁴⁴ See Bruce Cummings, "Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies During and After the Cold War," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29, No. 1 (1997), 6–26.

⁴⁵ Gábor Gergely, *Hungarian Film 1929-1947: National Identity, Anti-Semitism and Popular Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 40.

⁴⁶ Kaehwa Pae, "Chugūm ūi kongdongch'erosō ūi kukka" [A community of death: a feature of Japanese Empire reflected on *kokumin bungaku* during the total war period, 1938–1945]. *Hyōndae sosōl yōn'gu* [The journal of Korean fiction research] 69 (2018): 235–38.

organization that targeted the mobilization of the masses and the amalgamation of diverse ethnicities. Writers and filmmakers such as Yi T'aejun, Ch'ae Mansik, Sö Kwangjae, Pak Kich'ae, and Oh Yöngjin agreed that cinema was able to express feelings and lacked ideology whereas literature was ideological and artistic (“munye”).⁴⁷ What this discourse that frames cinema as an objective form alludes to in the context of war mobilization in the late 1930s is the instrumentalization of media as a propaganda machine. The difference between literature and cinema connoted in these debates, published under formidable state censorship, facilitates the introduction of a new society where objectivity and un-ideological modes of reception located in spaces of mass mobilization, such as cinema, factory, and military, triumph over the individualistic art of literature. Thus, Paek Ch'öl defines the break between the two media as an *artistic direction*: “literature, whether modern or contemporary, always shapes individual problems against society, whereas cinema, in contrast, objectifies the triumph of society over an individual.”⁴⁸ *Sweet Dream* typifies a film that balances the state's direction to promote films as instruments for cultural transition to public education through image and sound and the cinematographer's desire to make films.⁴⁹

The proto-nationalist stage (1905–1938) in Korea generated the proliferation of femininity and masculinity across different artistic genres.⁵⁰ Writers used the term *modern girl* to denote the imagery of high-heel wearing, bobbed-haired women as the tropes of social and moral

⁴⁷The following book chapter features newspaper articles and a discussion from a roundtable attended by filmmakers and writers Yi T'aejun, Sö Kwangjae, Pak Kich'ae, Paek Ch'öl, Ch'ae Mansik and Oh Yöngjin. The articles were published in Chosön Ilbo and Donga Ilbo between 1938 and 1939. Moonim Paek et al., “Munhakkwa yönghwa üi kyosöp kürigo sinario” [The negotiation of literature and cinema, and scenario], in *Chosön yönghwa ran hao: kündae yönghwa üi pip'yöngsa*, ed. Moonim Paek et al., (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Changbi, 2016), 414–71.

⁴⁸ Paek et al., eds., “Munhakkwa yönghwa,” 467. My translation.

⁴⁹ *Sweet Dream* was produced with support by Kyönggi Police Department as part of a public campaign for motor vehicle safety. The range of facial expressions and voice acting in the film and *Ch'öngchun üi sipcharo* [Turning point of the youngster], which was produced two years before *Sweet Dream* in 1934, are remarkable in comparison to wartime films.

⁵⁰ I chose the period to connote the years of Korean publications during the colonial era.

bankruptcy.⁵¹ As a modernist project, that peculiar icon of femininity served to advance a national consensus that excluded women and children from decision-making processes. The fact that these terms started appearing in newspapers and magazines alongside continued practices of Neo-Confucian filial piety, androcentric inheritance and marriage laws, and regulations on prostitution by provincial police bureaus proves to be another site of social tension.⁵² An essay in *Pyölgeõn 'gon* (1926-1934) described that “the majority of *modern girls* are harlots and prostitutes, and *modern boys* are sons of capitalists and bourgeois.”⁵³ Reflecting the fear of foreign encroachment held by the traditionalists they abhorred, progressive nationalist elites hastily degraded women as disheartened corruptors of society.

Filmmakers produced more movies under wartime guidelines, illustrating the increasing collaboration of industry and state under the banner of Shōwa statism or Japanese fascism.⁵⁴ In 1939, the Ministry of Culture in Japan instated the category of cultural films, followed a year later by the GGK’s placement of cinema under the state propaganda office. Chung explains that the law encouraged the “‘compulsory screening’ of films produced in the Japanese Empire by delimiting the number, type, and length of screenings for films approved by authorities.”⁵⁵ The Ordinance on Korean Cinema in 1940 bolstered the colonial state’s power in the industry by allowing the GGK to order the production and screening of the films of its choosing.⁵⁶ Underlined by the exceptional treatment given to cinema by Japan in the 1930s and the 1940s, movie-going became a part of how the Japanese Empire expanded into China and beyond.⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Modern Boy* was also used as a descriptive term for men that dressed to impress, denoting the material exteriority of consumption.

⁵² Youn-ok Song, “Japanese Colonial Rule and State-managed Prostitution: Korea’s Licensed Prostitute,” *Positions* 5, No. 1 (1997), 173–5; Lim, *Rules of the House*, 31; 34–6.

⁵³ Donghoon Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema*, 193–4.

⁵⁴ Chõng, “Singminjigi Chosõn ùi munhwa,” 279.

⁵⁵ Chõng, *Chosõn yõnghwaranũn kũndae*, 321.

⁵⁶ Chõng, “Singminjigi Chosõn ùi munhwa,” 282.

⁵⁷ Chõng, *Chosõn yõnghwaranũn kũndae*, 320.

Observers have described wartime cinema in colonial Korea as lacking semiotic transparency and thereby showing the total control of the empire's policy over its subjects.⁵⁸ In contrast, I argue that the narrative films of the 1940s were the manuals from which the pleasure of entertainment and the hope for upward mobility came together among the empire's subjects. A possibility of social mobility made its way into the public discourse in the colony as wartime policies of the Japanese state redefined the role of Koreans as an ideological bulwark against the 'threat' of the West's influence. The Japanese state organized the Conference of Writers in the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere (Taedonga munhakja taehoe) annually between 1942 and 1944, hosting upwards of hundred and twenty-five writers from Japan, Korea, Manchukuo, Taiwan, and Mongol.⁵⁹ The conference exposed the contradiction of the unity between the colonizers and the colonized despite its design that reinforced ethnic hierarchy in the broader network of the Japanese Empire. Its promotion of 'East Asian co-prosperity spirit' provided a space for writers to reflect about revolutionizing the hierarchical structure of the Japanese literary scene which included multiculturalism.⁶⁰ Many Korean writers rallied for the multicultural Japanese Empire to pursue their work.⁶¹

War efforts, such as the Conference of Writers in the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, served as an opportunity to call for cultural autonomy through civic assimilation. But, in

⁵⁸ Maite Conde underlines the pivotal role the native elites play in the nation-building project. She argues that native elites utilized cinema to transform the republic in exchange for their integration into the global economy. Conde, 2.

⁵⁹ Miran Yun, "Taedonga munhakchadaehoe e ch'amsökhan ilbon munhakka üi Chosön ch'ehömkwa munhak: SphereTakeo Katō, Kikuchi Kan, Ki Kimurarül chungsim üro" [The impression of Chosön written in the literature of Japanese writers who attended the Conference of Writers in the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere: focusing on Takeo Katō, Kikuchi Kan, Ki Kimura], *Han'gukhak yön'gu* [The journal of Korean studies] 62 (2021): 118–19.

⁶⁰ Miran Yun argues that Japanese writers responded differently to the contradiction in 'East Asian co-prosperity spirit' by assimilating, criticizing, and rejecting the Japanese state's design to subordinate writers for war mobilization. Yun, "Taedonga munhakchadaehoe e ch'amsökhan," 125–35.

⁶¹ Saryang Kim, Hyökchu Chang, Chaesö Ch'oe namely.

the new multicultural world, Koreans came to worry about their Koreanness because wartime state policies bifurcated the Korean psyche in the cultural hierarchy between Koreanness and Japaneseness. The illusion of choice and mobility between cultures in the Japanese Empire created a dilemma within the multicultural world.

Koreanness constructed a spatio-temporality that both aided and confined the imagination of the future unrestricted by colonial memories. The aesthetic tendency relied on Neo-Confucian patriarchy to define the scope of the imagination as a mediator between past practices and new state policies. Han Minju sees the generational gap as the framework for understanding the clash of aesthetic focus in the late colonial period: “the criteria for the generational division in late colonial period is made in the thirties, which divides those who are under the influence of the vast socialist tendencies in the 1920s and the ‘new generation’ that faced the ‘new event’ which had culminated in ‘the century of real.’”⁶² Looking at the novels of late colonial Korea, Han argues that the unachievable attraction of modernity to the by-gone generation was bestowed to the new generation through fascism that encouraged self-motivated mobilization for imperialist modernity.⁶³ “The century of real” refers to the linear realization of modernity by the new generation. If we follow her logic, not only do late colonial films construct a modern Korean subjecthood that benefits the wartime state but they also proclaim a collective identity for Koreans as individuals who have the autonomy to act upon their desires. Through the carefully constructed self, previously disenfranchised colonial subjects found a place in something bigger and stronger than themselves. Propagating new purpose to figures previously treated by Japanese authorities as useless and idle required consistent and yet contradictory representations of the

⁶² Minju Han, “Ilche malgi sosöl yŏn’gu p’ashijŭm ūi sosŏlchŏk hyŏngsanghwarŭl chungsim ūro” [A study on novels of the latter Japanese imperialism: focusing on the novelistic formation of fascism], (PhD thesis, Sogang University, 2004), viii.

⁶³ Han, “Ilche malgi sosöl yŏn’gu,” viii.

bodies that constructed harmonious relations between the collective and the individual, female and male, old (traditional) and new (modern), and the urban and the rural spheres of life.⁶⁴ As an example of the contradictory representations, films produced during late colonial Korea upheld the principles of Neo-Confucian patriarchy. The collaboration between the avant-garde technology as a vanguard for war mobilization and the ideology of the Chosŏn Dynasty shows the reinforcement of the traditional. The Japanese assimilationist policy of the 1940s spearheaded the construction of Koreanness that came to serve as the hegemonic reference for masculinity and femininity for years to come. Together, they remasculinized men with a voice against the injustice of the status quo of past practices while crushing down on the agency of women. They also represented Korean men as agents of change for the making of the multicultural Shōwa Empire.

Late colonial writers opted to submit to, rather than subvert, wartime policies by representing individuality and self-determination in their narratives. Considering the increased pressure from colonial authorities to oversee Korean cultural production as a state apparatus, the agency that the writers and filmmakers represented conveyed a double-standard. They created impressive image of Koreans that are capable of initiating actions and shaping their own fates just to meet disappointing ends. The characters circles from one failure to another, containing a hope to emerge. This parallels the case of the underwhelming performance of the special volunteer soldier system in Korea, whose inefficacy turned away a high volume of applicants despite the fair presentation of many Korean soldiers in Japanese armies in wartime cinema.

Statistics on recruitment and enlistment in the Korean Army Special Volunteer (K. Chosŏn yukkun t'ŭkpyŏlchiwŏnbyŏng; J. Chōsen rikugun tokubetsu shigan-hei) during the

⁶⁴ Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 8–9; 103–4.

Second Sino-Japanese War illustrates this inconsistency. Applications increased exponentially, from 2,946 in 1938 to 303,294 in 1943. However, only 406 were enlisted in 1938 and 6,300 in 1943.⁶⁵ A 1941 survey by the GGK shows that Korean men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five were the targets of the volunteer program.⁶⁶ The number of Koreans applying for military service increased across all income levels. Young men from farming backgrounds were the most likely to apply and the least likely were those with employment backgrounds in supervisory work, which puts into perspective how becoming a soldier was perceived as a means for making money.⁶⁷ Trainees were selected after rigorous screening stages which included checks on one's family background, spirituality, and education.⁶⁸ Between 1938 and 1942, there were 11,364 trainees in the Korean Army Special Volunteer Unit. In view of the 460,000 that comprised the Imperial Japanese Army in 1941, such a small proportion of Koreans indicates that volunteering for the military was not a widespread path to assimilation or imperialization.

The increasing volume of Korean army volunteers was emphasized by writers to highlight the success of war mobilization.⁶⁹ However, what is more interesting about the evidence of Korean support for Japan's imperial war is the degree of discipline and organization involved in inducting Koreans into the Japanese Empire. Scholars have framed the policy change in late colonial Korea as a transition from a regional to a wartime economy. However, whether the interaction between colonial authorities and the colonized determined social relation is uncertain. For example, Leo Ching argues that the assimilation to become Japanese was "a

⁶⁵ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 247.

⁶⁶ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 245–51.

⁶⁷ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 264.

⁶⁸ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 265–8.

⁶⁹ Fujitani points out that historians Ch'oe Yuri and Miyata Setsuko, in "their rush to debunk the colonial authorities' inflated claims of Korean patriotic fervor...oversimplified the subjectivities of the colonized." Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 245–50.

general progression of colonialism.”⁷⁰ Pointing to the difference in the patrilineal systems in Korea and China from the Japanese one, Ching highlights the practices in Taiwan and Korea that withstood assimilationist policies. This inconsistency calls for a nuanced reading of the representations of colonial subjectivity because, although the GGK expanded the subjects of wartime economy to a broader population, Koreans in the colony were not going to gain the same status as the Japanese or forego their ties to the land that they did not have the right to reform.⁷¹

The cinematic space of late-colonial Korea has been a site of political contention. On the one hand, Hong Sönyöng argues that the cultural milieu was a harmonious one where the divisions and differences of classes and ethnicities coexisted. Hong attributes this to *yose*, a Japanese-style vaudeville that spread to Korea, which blurred the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow in the 1910s.⁷² On the other hand, Miriam Hansen and Janet Poole are skeptical of the view that the mixture of highbrow and lowbrow entertainment in the same theatre space was an organic and harmonious development. Instead, Poole calls such views narcissistic projections of liberal atmospheres onto the past.⁷³ The various contentions in the evolution of imperialism, colonialism, and multiculturalism as a modernist project are ignored in Hong’s supposition. Reflecting on the liberal assertions of modern intellectuals in the 1930s and the 1940s who believed in unity as the end goal is Kim Namch’ön’s *One Morning*, written in 1943, about *happy* children growing up only inhabiting the language of fascism, as Poole observes.⁷⁴ Similarly,

⁷⁰ Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 100–8.

⁷¹ Hang Kim, “Kaein, kukmin, nanminsai üi minjok,” 198.

⁷² Sönyöng Hong (Seon-yeong Hong), “1910nyön chönhu söul esö hwaltonghan Ilbonin yöngükkwa kükchang” [Japanese plays and theater in Seoul around 1910], *Ilbon hakpo* [Korean Journal of Japanology] Vol 56 (2003), 252; Kim, *Eclipsed Cinema*, 112.

⁷³ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5–11, 129–36; Poole, *When the Future*, 7–9; 188.

⁷⁴ Poole, *When the Future*, 190–01.

Takashi Fujitani reflects on a post-war anecdote from the Marxist writer Nakano Shigeharu as a commentary on the outcome of the intense military statist campaign during the war.⁷⁵ In it, Nakano observes a certain ominousness in the optimistic return of the “far purer” Korean volunteer soldiers, who would inevitably face “memory crisis” without an authority figure after the war.⁷⁶ Similarly, Miriam Hansen’s view of the association between spectatorship in the American silent film era and an ethos “that blurred all class and ethnic distinctions” highlights the potential of understanding the cinematic as institutional.⁷⁷

The transformation of filmmaking as a government-led industry (kukch’aek sanŏp) obscured the lines between the private and the public as demarcated in the economy of kinship to privilege the collective interests of the state. Cinema together with other institutions and systems gave birth to a national family. However, the cinema of 1940s Korea emerged with the aim of subordinating the organic public by the imagery that spoke for all Koreans. The Korean ethnicity in the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (K. Taedonga kongyŏnggwŏn; J. Daitōakyōeiken), much like race in the United States after the Civil War, became an identifier through which belonging in a new society was mediated by the forgetting and remembering of past regimes of knowledge.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Poole, *When the Future*, 190–01; Also, Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 375–7.

⁷⁶ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 376–7.

⁷⁷ Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 115.

⁷⁸ Benedict Anderson elaborates on how European expansionism created “self-conscious” indigenes through the rituals of “remembering” enacted by those who practiced nationalism on behalf of the past generation. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 187–99.

Chapter One: Film in Colonial Korea

Films in colonial Korea were the result of collaboration and negotiation between Korean and Japanese filmmakers.⁷⁹ Korean cinematographers studied and were apprenticed in the Japanese film industry because Korean cinema lacked funding, distribution rights, technologies, and production equipment.⁸⁰ Furthermore, most Korean filmmakers received training and worked in Japan before returning to the peninsula.⁸¹ Nevertheless, producing Korean films proved impossible until Japanese authorities introduced the Domestic Film Screening Regulation in 1934 that guaranteed screening time for domestic films, including Japanese ones, while barring the showing of foreign ones, namely American and British films.⁸² Oversight by Japanese companies was mandatory in Korean film production until the establishment of the Korea Motion Picture Production Corporation in 1942, which merged all the film production companies in colonial Korea.⁸³ These developments created a favorable condition for filmmakers because they provided the political and material basis to produce films that reflected the tastes and interests of Koreans.⁸⁴ The imperial incorporation of cinema after thirty years of colonization invites a question: where were Koreans going via the projection of “a promise and delusion in

⁷⁹ Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean,” 136.

⁸⁰ Chonghwa Chung suggests that films produced in Korea between 1910 and 1948, from Japan’s annexation of Korea to the establishment of the Republic of Korea three years after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, be called Chosŏn cinema or Chosŏn yŏnghwa to indicate the conditions of production. Cooperation between Japanese and Korean filmmakers was crucial to the production of Korean cinema throughout the first half of the 20th century. Chosŏn cinema expresses “the sociopolitical contexts of the colonial situation,” not the historiography of post-liberation state-building in South Korea. Chonghwa Chung, “The Identity of ‘Joseon Film’: Between Colonial Cinema and National Cinema,” *Korea Journal* 59, no. 4 (2019): 30–42.

⁸¹ Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean,” 154–9.

⁸² Ch’ungbŏm Ham, “1940nyŏndae singminji Chosŏn esŏ ūi yŏnghwa sangyŏng chedocho̅k kiban yŏn’gu” [A study on the new system of screening in colonial Chosŏn in 1940s], *Inmun kwahak yon’gu nonch’ong* [Journal of humanities] 38 (2014): 145.

⁸³ Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean,” 163.

⁸⁴ Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean,” 141–63.

one . . . a collective forum for the production of fantasy, the capability of envisioning a different future?”⁸⁵

The success of late colonial Korean films, however, depended on delivering a nuanced portrayal of regional essence as a prerequisite for imperial inclusion. It was a colossal task for filmmakers, who faced the challenge not only of defining a sense of direction within the disciplined norms of colonial subordination, but also propagating wartime slogans convincingly. In this regard, we can appreciate Miriam Hansen’s interpretation of American cinema in the 1910s, which promised mobility to immigrants whose social identity seemed fixed to lower stratum.⁸⁶ Film in late colonial Korea presented a society in harmony with the goals of imperial expansion.⁸⁷ However, a closer examination of Chosŏn cinema reveals that these films were the outcomes of negotiation for war mobilization that caused uncertainty in the colony.

Temporality was a popular subject among writers and critics in late colonial Korea. The wartime promotion of the country as a region (K. *chiyōk*; J. *chihō*) of the Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere defying the threat of the West prompted many writers to interpret adherence to tradition and nostalgia as forms of belonging.⁸⁸ At the same time, wartime integration policies, censorship and suppression of Korean publications, and the prohibition of the Korean language in curricula, made the future of Korean print culture uncertain. The biopolitics of including

⁸⁵ Hansen writes, “what remains difficult to ascertain is the pace at which these new structures and media of publicity were effective in implementing the ideological and economic tenets of consumer capitalism, or, conversely, the extent to which they were used in ways that enabled and prolonged an autonomous organization of ethnic working-class experience.” Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 112–3.

⁸⁶ Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 112.

⁸⁷ Hansen argues that spectatorship offered an experience that blurred “any class divisions among its patrons, offering them participation in an ostensibly classless, Americanized, community of leisure.” Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 61.

⁸⁸ Janet Poole describes the tension within the worldview fashioned by late colonial Korean writers. Highlighting the historical philosopher Sō Insik’s (1906–?) work, Poole links nostalgia, decadence, and capitalist contradictions as the attributes of temporality in late colonial Korea. Poole, *When the Future*, 53–73; Kwōn, *Intimate Empire*, 159–62.

Korean people while excluding the Korean language led to a sense of transition, which appeared in novels and films, as a way to salvage vanishing cultural distinctions. Writers retreated to a linear, rather than a dialectical, progression of time. This representation of time aided war mobilization by justifying assimilation as progressive, as was a shift in identification from Korean regionalism to Pan-Asianism. However, the linear perspective was insufficient for anticipating the outcome of the colonial relationship, coming as it did in the compressed period of war mobilization.

Films in late colonial Korea utilized the new wave (K. *sinp'a*; J. *shinpa*), a popular Japanese genre that encompassed political and military dramas, and tragedies of families and women entertainers, to guide Korean assimilation.⁸⁹ The state's interest in Korean films was for the propagation of *naisen ittai*, while filmmakers saw an opportunity to realize their professional ambitions by accessing the resources consolidated by the Japanese military state.⁹⁰ Intellectuals too, engaged with the emerging Korean film industry by adopting the expansionist tone, such as An Sōgyōng who encouraged filmmakers to join the war effort by “uniting the ideology as imperial people (*hwangguk sinmin*)” against the “toxic influence of Yankee movies.”⁹¹ Pointing out the lack of movie theaters in the rural areas where eighty to ninety percent of the population were excluded from the film experience, writer Oh Yōngjin argued that there is an irony in designating Korean films as a “cultural artifact of the Korean people.”⁹² Building on the star filmmaker Na Un'gyu's argument that cinematography of the early 1930s served ethnonationalism as opposed to international socialism, films in late colonial Korea represented

⁸⁹ Yi Hogōl discusses how the new wave sought to indoctrinate Korean society by mediating between traditional modes of representation and modern ideologies. Hogōl Yi, “*Sinp'asōngiran muōshin'ga: kujo, chōngch'i, yōksa*” [What is new-wave?: structure, politics, and history] (paper presented at *Han'guk yōnghwa hakhoe 2005nyōn ch'ugye semina*, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 2005), 70–4.

⁹⁰ Chung, “Negotiating Colonial Korean,” 138.

⁹¹ Paek et al., eds., *Chosōn yōnghwa ran*, 572–84.

⁹² Paek et al., eds., *Chosōn yōnghwa ran*, 587–96.

an ethnic nation through its support for Japanese military expansion.⁹³ Korean audiences watching late colonial Korean films participated in what the Hungarian film scholar Gábor Gergely calls “the Mobius strip of nation-cinema-nation” by which “the nation is the product of that which it produces.”⁹⁴

The cinema of late colonial Korea was the outcome of the GGK’s incorporation of the film industry, which culminated in *naisen ittai* becoming a potent force for political mobilization directed at the invasion of China. As war mobilization required major recruitment and propaganda efforts throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, a series of carefully gauged and channeled government initiatives had to be implemented to obtain a balance of concessions to and bargains with the subjects of the Shōwa Emperor. Set in cities, fishing towns, and inside buildings and trains, war mobilization films displayed comprehensive images of Korea according to imperial mapping.

Late colonial Korean films have scenes disparaging the social mores of Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, and Christianity to promote exclusive allegiance to the Japanese Empire. This message presented a dilemma for individuals positioned between the customs and habits of the past and the present. Actions made to promote oneself like enlisting in the Japanese Imperial Army (*Volunteer*, dir. An Sōgyōng, 1941) and starting a charitable enterprise (*Angels on the Streets*, dir. Ch’oe In’gyu, 1941) came at the cost of disregarding established norms in Korea. For example, “good” Koreans, Yōngil and Chōnghŭi, in *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* (dir. Yi Pyōngil, 1941), betrayed patriarchy to gain opportunities for upward mobility, leaving the colony for Tokyo. Insun in *Fisherman’s Fire* (dir. An Ch’ōlyōng, 1939) broke her chastity and defied filial piety for her own benefit. Similarly, Chōmyong and Sunhŭi in *Military Train* chose to take

⁹³ Paek et al., eds., *Chosŏn yōnghwa ran*, 223–6; 572–95.

⁹⁴ Gergely, *Hungarian Film*, 41.

part in war mobilization at the cost of their loyalty to Chōmyong's sister. According to Takashi Fujitani, at play was Foucault's governmentality as "a positive operation of power" aimed at constituting "formally free and responsible subjects while guiding them toward normative choices."⁹⁵ Late colonial Korean films vanquished debates over the future of the colony rooted in cultural particularity and class struggle. Representations of Korean life in these films downplayed the competitive job market and the harsh material conditions for upward mobility.

Films in late colonial Korea sustained gender hierarchies to alleviate colonial discontent and promote self-determination. The practice provided a pivotal connection between Shinto state ideology and local practices of patriarchy, and it subjected Chosŏn ideals to colonial, wartime reform. Meiji Japan (1868–1912) elevated Shinto and used the concept of *kokutai* (nation-body) to emphasize the Confucian idea of order between the emperor and his subjects. This convergence of philosophies reinforced filial piety as well as social and political control by patriarchy, which included strict regulations placed on women in Korea.⁹⁶ Familial pedigree was also an important mark of distinction. However, an increase in enlistment numbers along with the growth and diversification of employment opportunities for women hindered the colonial state's persistent efforts to use Shinto to strengthen patriarchy.⁹⁷ Total war opened new channels of opportunity for "previously obscured people" and increased women's participation in the labor force.⁹⁸ Accordingly, Neo-Confucian gender roles were not specified in late colonial Korean films. Although primitive accumulation in the colony supported war mobilization in due

⁹⁵ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 27.

⁹⁶ Midori Wakakuwa, "The Gender System of the Imperial State," trans. Shiyang Paskowitz and Tom Paskowitz, *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* (English Supplement), no. 20/21 (2001): 44; Yŏnghun Yi, "Sŏngnihak chŏnt'ong e pich'in taehanmin'guk ūi kŏn'guk" [Foundation of the Republic of Korea from the perspective of the traditions of Chosŏn Confucianism], *Han'gukhak* [Korean studies quarterly] 32, no. 2 (2009): 48–51.

⁹⁷ Halen Hardacre points out the assumptions behind the term State Shinto. Helen Hardacre, *Shinto: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 356–8.

⁹⁸ Kim, *To Live to Work*, 145.

course, its cinematic elaboration was unsteady. This was due to contradictory views of women's participation in the labor force. Films extolled Confucian virtue, emphasizing the masculine mantra of "rich nation, strong army" in addition to "good wife, wise mother." This characterization of womanhood is notably different from that of *Sweet Dream* (1936), where the protagonist Aesun abandons her husband and young daughter to seek pleasure in consumption and infidelity. Paradoxically, many other films portrayed Korean men as undeserving of women's dedication and sacrifice.

Wartime mobilization renewed the legitimacy of Neo-Confucianism, Chosŏn Dynasty's state ideology, which was undermined in earlier colonial novels and short stories. Neo-Confucianists promoted "practicality" against the abuse of power by the predecessor Koryŏ Dynasty's Buddhist regime, which shaped Chosŏn's governance. Their practicality was based on metaphysical understanding that preached harmony between social actors, including hierarchy in patriarchal households, modesty, filial piety, and virtuous women. Ch'ae Mansik's *Ready-made Life*, a short story written in 1934, showcased the dilemma of representing the ambivalence of social mores through colonial literary formation. The protagonist P struggles with unemployment despite having received higher education in the Japanese metropole. He has a nine-year-old son, Ch'angsŏn, from a previous marriage. After an unsuccessful job interview at a newspaper company, the pessimistic P receives a letter from his brother informing him that Ch'angsŏn will soon join him in Seoul so that P's son can receive a formal education. This news does not stop P from making bad financial decisions. He pawns his books for cash that he uses to drink, and instead of sending his son to school, he sends him to work in a printing factory. Demonstrating the disavowal of his patriarchal responsibility, P cynically remarks, "Finally, a ready-made life

was sold off to the right owner.”⁹⁹ This last word inculcates the ambivalence of social transformation experienced by a capitalist subject as its decisive tone contrasts P’s anxiety exemplified by impoverishment, intoxication, and prostitution. P deals with the anxiety by delegating the responsibility of embodying messy, capitalist subjectivity to Ch’angsŏn. P’s determination for Ch’angsŏn’s life juxtaposes his own indecisiveness, ending the story on an ironic note as the conclusion introduces a conflict. The commodification of the body determines P’s projection for the next generation, which is based on a lack of opportunity in colonial Korea, despite Ch’ae’s reluctance to embrace capitalism. The short story, written amid the economic depression of the 1930s, rendered a society of dissolving Neo-Confucian mores into championing a capitalist one. P disregards both filial piety and education, revealing the bleak social condition of colonial Korea. Kim Tongin’s *Potatoes* (1925), Kang Kyŏngae’s *Human Problem* (1934) and Yi Sang’s novel *Wings* (1936) similarly undermined Neo-Confucian values by creating the narrative of social disintegration. Even so, late colonial Korean films brought Neo-Confucian values back to the viewing public to promote war mobilization as the recuperation of Korean culture. Bestowing a patriarchal presence to the Shōwa Emperor motivated the renewed representation of Korean culture.

Debates about social mores in literature were constant throughout the colonial period despite three major shifts in policy by the colonial state. One that served as the impetus for print culture was cultural rule, which focused on maintaining public peace, spreading education, developing industry and transportation, and improving health.¹⁰⁰ The Korean script, han’gŭl, also received positive government attention for the first time in 1919, in contrast to its previous scornful treatment by *yangban* elites during Chosŏn period, who derided the language as

⁹⁹ Mansik Ch’ae, “Nedi meidŭ insaeng” [A ready-made life], *Sin Donga*, May 1934, 232.

¹⁰⁰ Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 126.

vulgar.¹⁰¹ Under this policy, vernacular newspapers were published for the first time.¹⁰² While cultural rule (1920–1937) endorsed print culture to mandate Korean expression, the Second Sino-Japanese War tasked cultural production with shaping public opinion for war mobilization. The colonial structure conditioned writers to utilize social mores to serve as the vessel of government policies. However, delivering the policies to a broad category of social actors abounded debates about social mores in Korean print culture.

The colonial state's nationalization of film industry and the booming war economy prompted Korean films to begin emphasizing Korean ethnic particularity in a different way. Men's dominance of women, filial piety, and chastity became important film devices. They also utilized gender roles to legitimize the amalgamations of people, class, and gender as a twentieth-century norm. The call of the time to see "poetry in shooting a gun" contained the rationality of individualism and deviation from Confucian ideals.¹⁰³ The rules expressed by late colonial Korean films affirm the same relations of production as the print culture during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In other words, print and film media depicted capitalism as a fair, liberating socioeconomic system where risk-taking promises self-realization. However, cinema expanded its depiction of the modern *relations* of subordination under the colonial structure where Korean culture was a product of the Japanese Empire. The Korean film industry reinforced the ethnic hierarchy of the Japanese Empire by overlooking the subordination that resulted in individuals being motivated into low-paying jobs with a greater risk of injury associated with statelessness.

¹⁰¹ Officials of Chosŏn Dynasty used Chinese characters, not han'gŭl.

¹⁰² Chosŏn ilbo and Tonga ilbo are examples of vernacular newspapers during the cultural rule. First published in 1920, their human resources and funding are a testament to shaping public opinion through print culture. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 127–8.

¹⁰³ Poole, *When the Future*, 182.

The imperialization movement provided filmmakers with an opportunity to represent a society with rules that could resolve the contradictions of capitalism and colonial assimilation. Promulgated in Korea in 1937, the imperialization movement was an ideological state apparatus that legitimized Japaneseness as a teleological objective for colonized subjects. It extolled modernity through the sequential colonization of Ryūkyū, Taiwan, and Korea, which indicates that ethnic hierarchy and constitutional superiority were the Japanese Empire's ideological bulwark against the West.¹⁰⁴ Promoting a shared interest between the filmmakers and the colonial state to inaugurate Korean cinema as an imperial institution, late colonial Korean films portrayed a society where individuals competed and cooperated within ethno-nationalist categories. The portrayal of ethno-national individuality, according to Leo Ching, problematized imperialization because of its accentuation of assimilationist policies (*dōka*), which were “neither random nor distinct, but indices of a general progression of colonialism.”¹⁰⁵ Ching contends that government policies were not the driving force of colonial identity formation because they were the outcome of the governance negotiated between the Japanese Empire and the colonized. In a more polemic tone, Takashi Fujitani frames the transformation of individuals from colonial to imperial subjects in the transition from “vulgar” to “polite” racism.¹⁰⁶ The state's right to declare the worthiness of subjects, Fujitani argues, determined the rationale for participation in the Second Sino-Japanese War, which “attempt[ed] to constitute [subjects] as self-reflexive and knowledgeable ... in their own regulation.”¹⁰⁷ Probing the contradictions of biopolitics in the

¹⁰⁴ Travis Workman evaluates the imperialization movement's radical influence on literature. Examining the correspondent poems between socialist critics Nakano Shigeharu and Im Hwa, “Shinagawa Station in the Rain” (1929) and “Opening an Umbrella on Yokohama Pier” (1929), Workman reveals the “divide between imperial and colonized subjectivities.” Travis Workman, *Imperial Genus: The Formation and Limits of the Human in Modern Korea and Japan*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 102–08.

¹⁰⁵ Ching, *Becoming “Japanese,”* 98–101; 125.

¹⁰⁶ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 25.

expanding Japanese Empire of the first half of 20th century, both Ching and Fujitani problematize inclusivity.¹⁰⁸ As such, lateral social mobility and unity based on ethno-cultural distinctions, such as the Korean language, equalled the upward social mobility made possible by adopting Japanese ways. Representing Korean distinctions and capitalist system in a paradoxical relationship, late colonial Korean films convey tensions in the relationship between wartime policies and the people governed by these policies.

The Neo-Confucian social conventions promoted by late colonial Korean cinema perpetuated gender distinctions. The gender narrative on screen undermined the enlarging, evolving, and diversifying female labor force throughout the first half of 20th century and instead emphasized docility and dependency on men as women's primary virtue.¹⁰⁹ The disparity between the misogynistic narrative and the increasing value of women's labor for mobilization reveals the Korean elite's stake in appropriating and idealizing gender roles.

Japanese authorities had to treat the colony differently from the metropole. However, the responsibility for this disharmony did not lie solely with them. Korean elites enjoyed demonstrating their refinement and took advantage of the opportunity to represent Korea in its transition into the Japanese Empire. Pae Kaehwa highlights the relationship between Japanese authorities and Korean elites by examining the propagandistic role of national literature in fostering "a community of those who have the honor of dying for sovereign."¹¹⁰ While Koreans reasoned that cooperation in war mobilization was in exchange for Japanese citizenship, the Japanese maintained their opposition to suffrage in the colony until the end of the war. The

¹⁰⁸ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 29; Ching, *Becoming "Japanese,"* 125.

¹⁰⁹ Kim, *To Live to Work*, 69–70; Both Yi Yŏngjae and Takashi Fujitani argue that late colonial films and novels portrayed women's subjectivity as "mediated" by their relationships with soldiering men. Yŏngjae Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang, wae pyŏngsaga anira kŭnyŏga chungnŭn'ga: Chosŏn haehyŏp, kidarim ūi mellotŭrama" [The imperial soldier's love, why not a soldier but she who died?: Straits of Chosŏn, melodrama of waiting], *Yŏsŏng munhak yŏn'gu* [Feminism and Korean literature] 25 (2012): 217–8; Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 370–01

¹¹⁰ Pae, "Chugŭm ūi kongdongch'e," 239.

Japanese, Pae argues, insisted that Korean conscription was a privilege, not a duty, leading to the ambivalence of subjecthood in late colonial Korean films.¹¹¹ To this effect, Pae stresses, “the Japanese Empire never gave the right to vote to Korean volunteer soldiers.”¹¹²

Masculinities in late colonial Korean films emerged out of the state’s need to provide a convincing narrative to encourage men to join the war effort. However, they were continuations of masculine portrayals in novels and films prior to war mobilization that raised the status of Koreans as imperial subjects. Late colonial films assimilated Korean masculinities into roles characterized by opportunistic, compliant, sacrificial, but still convincing clichés. Authorities could entrust these sorts of men to take the righteous path toward imperial loyalty.

Korean femininities presented a spectrum of industrious individuals that took advantage of the opportunities available throughout the empire. Some femininities became targets of disdain while others became exemplary role models. Participation in war by assisting soldiering men or appealing for monogamy, as it will be explored in the next chapters, affirmed self-determination in these femininities. Late colonial Korean films upheld soldiering as the highest value in existence, effectively turning minds and bodies into exploitable objects for victory. Equally important is how wartime gender representations offered a sense of economic mobility for Koreans, whose agency had been unacknowledged before.

¹¹¹ Pae, “Chugŭm ũi kongdongch’e,” 238.

¹¹² Pae, “Chugŭm ũi kongdongch’e,” 238.

Chapter Two: The Patriarchal Japanese Empire and Anomalous Masculinities

Modernization in Korea, by popularizing customs previously reserved for the elite, fostered individualism both as an abstract ideal and in the form of specific practices. During the Chosŏn Dynasty, the *yangban* elite maintained power through patrilineal entitlement and the regulation of sexuality, whereas under colonial rule, the conflation of patriarchy and Korean masculinity pervaded cultural forms produced for mass consumption and re-enactment. In this transition, where the vertical organization of actual power remained the same, images of Korean men, embodying characteristics of the ethno-national community, emerged.

This chapter analyzes the contents of late colonial Korean films. Specifically, it examines how the transference of power materialized in fixed forms of masculine representation in seven portrayals of men in six wartime Korean films. A common thread in these stories is the ambivalence of representing transitions within an ongoing patriarchal order. As such, the films depict the relations between masculinity and patriarchy arbitrarily and project insecurity onto male characters. Such instabilities were the result of wartime inter-ethnic integration, which forced the adjustment of existing social hierarchies for mobilization. However, the effect of the films as state propaganda was ambiguous because they portrayed Korean masculinity as subordinate to the Japanese one. These masculinities, nonetheless, epitomize a society seeking upward mobility. They suggest that opportunities for upward mobility are abundant for those sufficiently determined and disciplined individuals. Matsuda (Songjŏn) in *Portrait of Youth* (dir. Toyota Shiro, 1943) seeks personal gain through duplicity under the Japanese authority, Major Kitamura. Yŏngil in *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* (1941) relies on the sacrifices of women for upward mobility. Sŏngbin in *Angels on the Streets* (1941) evades patriarchal responsibility. He

relies on In'gyu, his brother-in-law, to start an orphanage despite his wife's disapproval.

Constraining filiation and depicting Koreans as less able, these masculinities stress allegiance to the Shōwa Emperor as the only way forward.

The second half of this chapter explores portrayals of the competence of Korean men in wartime films, which I call anomalous masculinity. A competent man in late colonial Korea, as these films suggest, meant a self-made one who could overcome the challenges of the present caused by the past and its traditions. Ch'unho in *Volunteer* (1941) embraces opportunism in war mobilization and gains upward mobility through deceit. The good friends Chōmyong and Wōnjin in *Military Train* betray each other to pursue their individual happiness. Their mutual indifference contributes to the tragic ending where Wōnjin commits suicide. Harukawa in *Story of Big Whales* (1944) displays an aversion to virility, the latter being signified for competence. Finally, Seiki (K. Sōnggi) in *Straits of Chosōn* (1943) joins the Japanese Imperial Army to prove his competence. These masculinities convey self-determination conditioned by dependency, selfishness, and duplicity. They symbolize the thriving individualism the Japanese authorities wanted from their recruits.

Established by the accumulation of material surplus and technological dominance, the medium of film became both a means for and an obstacle to state mobilization. Through secondary plotlines and nuanced roles, filmmakers negotiated state mandates to an extent, but in the end, Korean films of the early 1940s tended to redirect the narrative to accentuate the wastefulness of the *acting* imperialist. Thus, these stories emphasize the responsibility of the masses. The shortcomings of Korean conscripts could result in the defeat of the Japanese Empire, for example. Japanese colonizers hoped that as substitute colonizers, Korean soldiers were to remain unaware of their own subjugation while repressing and dispensing punishments

to the conquered. The normativity of patriarchy in both Japan and Korea functioned as an ideological apparatus for the Shōwa state to reward those who performed the rites of filial piety and punish those who could not. However, the institutionalization of Korean patriarchy was unlikely under the greater hegemony of Japanese imperialism, and the distasteful yet familiar representations by the late colonial Korean films of the Korean family as fatherless highlight the insecurity resulting from colonization. In other words, the storylines of wartime films do not promote the Korean family, despite their overarching emphasis on patrilineality (*Straits of Chosŏn*) and devotion to patriarchy (*Volunteer*, *Military Train*).

Notwithstanding the political conditions and censorship they faced, Korean actors, producers, and writers took the chance to speak for the voiceless collective.¹¹³ As such, representation communicated in the Korean language mattered more than positionality of Koreans. But, because the continuation of this language relied on the success of Japanese expansion due to the censorship of Korean publications and cultural productions, colonial nationalism required assimilation.

Matsuda

Portrait of Youth (dir. Toyota Shiro, 1943) presents an alternative vision of Korean masculinity during the years of intense war mobilization and assimilation in the early 1940s. In doing so, the film eschews the practice of relegating Korean men to low statuses. Songjŏn, who goes by the Japanese name Matsuda, is a teacher at a public school in Korea where he recruits students for the Imperial Japanese Army. Despite his respectable status, Matsuda can only perform his task by masking his true feelings about wartime military service, and he therefore

¹¹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25–45.

does the job halfheartedly. He fulfills his role as a subordinate to Major Kitamura, the Japanese military officer who presides over the school as well as Matsuda's marital engagement. In class, Matsuda encourages Yanagi, a Korean student, to defy his parents by telling him that the value of a soldier is greater than that of a medical doctor, a position that betrays his own desire to rebel against the domination of Major Kitamura.¹¹⁴ Exploiting the usual adolescent tendencies of rebellion against parents and physical peer-bullying, Matsuda fuels the flames of the student's confusion and discontent. Soon, viewers learn the contradiction in this policy film that calls for the merger of body and soul under the slogan *naisen ittai*, as Matsuda's persona as an exemplary public figure and his subservience to Major Kitamura accentuate dissonance in his character.¹¹⁵ In doing so, Matsuda deflates the high hopes held by the elites who supported the war at the outset and invested in the Korean subjects of the wartime Japanese Empire. For example, Matsuda visits various sites for his work as mediator between Japanese authorities and pools of Korean candidates for military service. He shuttles between the school and Major Kitamura's house, where "realpolitik" vis-à-vis the clichés of Korean masculinity takes place. Major Kitamura takes Matsuda's desire to climb the social ladder half-heartedly. The Major's body is turned away from Matsuda, who addresses him from a room separated by the frame of sliding doors, distracted from playing the game of go with a colleague. Major Kitamura even asks the same question twice, exhibiting apathy to the Korean intermediary's concerns. Matsuda's agitated body language expresses the political disenfranchisement that reinforced the Japanese Empire's ethnic hierarchy (Figure 1). Nonetheless, Matsuda's Koreanness supersedes that of

¹¹⁴ Matsuda acts oblivious to a family dispute brought to him by a student. The student complains that his parents want him to be a medical doctor as "one of the many ways of serving the fatherland," but he thinks that becoming a soldier is the only way to prove his worth for his "educated" self. Matsuda takes the student's side after listening to him give a long, drawn-out recitation of state propaganda.

¹¹⁵ The relationship between filmmaking and government policy needs to be delineated with more nuance. The word "government policy" (*kukch'aek*) may have meant cooperation that *suggests* subordination and devotion as admirable traits for Koreans, as opposed to a stumbling block for expression and resistance.

other Koreans, underscoring the exacerbation of vulgarity in war, whether in recruitment offices or the frontlines.¹¹⁶

Besides using duplicity to surpass other Koreans, Matsuda can rise through the social ranks because of his gender. We see him boldly lie to Major Kitamura when Kitamura tries to coerce Matsuda into marrying a Korean woman, known by the Japanese name Yoshimura Eiko. The Major expects Matsuda to obediently follow his orders because of his higher rank and Japaneseness. Matsuda, on the other hand, breaks out of this narrative by delivering a backstory from the perspective of a body subjected to the ideology of Korean national difference. In the interior of the Japanese house where its many doors keep Korean concerns at bay, columns of tens of thousands of soldiers mobilized for World War II background Matsuda's increasingly impatient gestures. Not only does Matsuda's privileged Korean masculinity contrast with the armies of men that bathe, march, and die together, but his subjectivity is an excess that conflicts with the zeitgeist of the time (Figure 1). Matsuda's temperance to the Japanese authority and setting posits the resoluteness of ethnic hierarchy that determines Koreanness.



Figure 1: Major Kitamura's house

¹¹⁶ The Shōwa state enacted the National Mobilization Law in 1938 after the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out.

One by one, the narrative places figures of dissent to authoritative figures like Major Kitamura and time-signal siren in sanctioned secondary roles in this movie shot on film stock rationed by the GGK. Matsuda's routines calcify his Koreanness, but he still seeks autonomy from colonial subjectivity by superseding other Koreans. Major Kitamura's apathy finds Matsuda in a dilemma in this social configuration that designates Koreanness under the mercy of the Japanese authority. The film constructed the subordinated Koreanness to manage adolescent male enthusiasm for military statism mostly reserved for Japanese men. After deceiving Major Kitamura about his interest in Yoshimura Eiko, Matsuda visits her at her home. Though she is a stranger to him, he sympathizes with her poverty and the filial piety displayed in her refusal to abandon her father in the absence of her brother, who is in the army. They agree to resist their marriage as sanctioned by Major Kitamura. However, in the next scene set in the Major's Japanese house, Matsuda and his faux fiancé pretend to be engaged. Their acceptance of the Major's order despite reluctance to it confirms the limitless authority of the Major—or the Japanese war machine—even in the most private, intimate realms of life. Despite acknowledging the absurdity of his reach, the Korean characters, in pursuing their individual interests, perpetuate their own subordination. The forceful imposition of the colonizer made it impossible to imagine a scenario beyond their control.

Complete with a glorious finale featuring a rescue and an affirmation of brotherhood on a snow-covered mountain, *Portrait of Youth* is a film conceived out of a zealous allegiance to the promises of patriarchy and modernism. Here, on the fringes of the Japanese Empire, the self takes refuge in the bodily sacrifice and psychological singlemindedness required by war mobilization. The critical gestures in *Portrait of Youth* aimed to increase the confidence of the enthusiastic, inquisitive audiences whose colonial condition justified their unrelenting desire for

self-determination. Nevertheless, *Portrait of Youth* slips in a few frames of deviating student-soldiers. When a loud siren prompts Japanese imperial subjects to vow to Shōwa Emperor suddenly, people of all social positions stop their activities. Streets, people's homes, military training centers, offices, and hospitals become united in the imperial salutation (Figure 2). While the montage of these scenes re-presents a static imperial formality that subjected Korean bodies, the sequence ends on an ambivalent note when a student-soldier is unable to synchronize himself in the salutation. He shifts back and forth to convey confusion about the allegiance that others enact automatically. This scene shows the indeterminable sociopolitical condition that filmmakers and writers found themselves in late colonial Korea. Its brief, unaddressed placement on the fringes of the storyline may suggest the subversiveness of representing self-determination as the leverage for war mobilization in the colony. In equal measure, the persistence of censorship substantiates the importance of submissive Korean masculinity for maintaining ethnic hierarchy in the Japanese Empire.



Figure 2: A student-soldier's confusion over imperial oath

Korean audiences might have mocked how cinema represented them. Colonial films downplayed the torment of exhausted Korean bodies and restless minds. The cinematic representations of wartime spatio-temporality tend to transcend discursive definitions of the nation by framing Koreanness as performative and transactional.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, these

¹¹⁷ Mark Caprio attributes the Imperial Japan to assimilate Koreans to a lack of empathy from the GGK. He argues that Japanese arrogance throughout thirty-five years of colonization hindered the integration of Koreans into modern statism. Instead, Koreans experienced the modern state through discrimination, which defined them as

representations fail to portray the double bind of modernist self-determination. While the war boom offered opportunities for individuals who discarded their Koreanness and adopted Japanese ones, most could not seize the rewards of social mobility that required the rejection of their past practices.¹¹⁸ Representations of Korea in 1940s films, then, can't disconnect the myth of an autonomous ethnic nationalism from the imperialist imagery that enables it. Together, they portray the body of the nation as an invention rather than a representation. In the same vein, however, one could ask whether the characteristics of Japan, whether imperial or modern, were also rhetorical rather than real.

Yŏngil

In the films of the early 1940s, colonial Korea is not only a place where people behave in specific ways but also a time firmly in the past. More importantly, the films depict the corporeality of those left behind in the colony while exempting from representation others who earn upward mobility. And, liminal spaces such as train stations (*Straits of Chosŏn, Military Train, Spring on the Korean Peninsula*), docks (*Angels on the Street*), and seashores (*Fisherman's Fire, Straits of Chosŏn*) serve as settings where laboring bodies, their movements, and their relation to symbolic regime are in flux.

Spring on the Korean Peninsula (1941) is a story about industrious young adults who struggle to produce a film based on the narrative of *Ch'unhyangjŏn*, a popular Korean tale with themes of Neo-Confucianism and fidelity. Yŏngil collaborates with the director Hŏhun to

backward. The cinematic representation of Koreanness ignored this systemic condition by framing it in performativity and transactionality. Koreans were subjected to deficient public education that reinforced their segregation. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation*, 200–01.

¹¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann. (London, England, UK: Pluto Press, 2008), 175; 178–81.

finance the film, but they are unable to find willing investors. As a result, Yǒngil resorts to embezzlement and goes to jail, while the film production continues to struggle. Chǒnghŭi is an aspiring actor from P'yǒngyang, who, in a bid to find acting work in Seoul, makes the acquaintance of Yǒngil with help from her brother. However, the lack of opportunity in the film industry prompts Yǒngil to introduce her to Han Kyesu, the director of a record company. Chǒnghŭi then meets the resourceful Kyǒngsuk, and the two become roommates. Chǒnghŭi eventually grows enamored with Yǒngil, foreshadowing her rivalry with the femme fatale Anna who plays the main character Ch'unhyang in *Ch'unhyangjŏn* and is Kyesu's former lover. Chǒnghŭi replaces Anna in the role and does well, but the production's struggles continue. The GGK's authorities finally come to the rescue by hiring all the filmmakers to work in a state-run production company. Anna bails Yǒngil out of jail and nurses him back to health, but it is Chǒnghŭi and Yǒngil who achieve union in the end. They leave for Tokyo while Hǒhun, Kyǒngsuk, and Anna bid them farewell.

Spring on the Korean Peninsula describes social hierarchy in late colonial Korea. Yǒngil's polite masculinity raises his social status while Hǒhun's rugged masculinity confines him to lateral movement. Yǒngil's pitiful situation earns the affection of Chǒnghŭi and Anna, promoting behaviors that were considered virtuous for women. A patriarchal undercurrent pervades the film. Chǒnghŭi's sacrifice and devotion match Yǒngil's polite masculinity while Anna's audacity earns a slap from Hǒhun. The reinforcement of Neo-Confucian gender roles, however, complements social diversity, since the film represents Koreans in a constantly changing milieu where various life trajectories and beliefs coexist. An example of this diversity is the Madonna (a painting of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus) in Kyǒngsuk's home. The painting signifies Kyǒngsuk's social status by alluding to her affiliation with the formidable

P'yŏngyang Christians who were so influential throughout the colonial period. Chŏnghŭi joins Kyŏngsuk after travelling from P'yŏngyang, highlighting the stream of migration to Seoul. The combination of references to religion, migration, and gender identity shapes social mobility and decisions the individuals take informed by economic opportunities. Kyŏngsuk and Hŏhun represent industrious workers without desirable attributes for romance. Anna embodies the modern girl who resists conforming to traditional feminine roles while Han Kyesu, with a penchant for infidelity, represents someone with considerable social power. Their cooperation captures how Shōwa authorities, by dividing communities, transplanting individuals, and institutionalizing life through the Japanese language, sought to assimilate the whole of Korean society into the Japanese Empire.

Yŏngil gains upward mobility when Chŏnghŭi nurtures him. The submissively feminine Chŏnghŭi replaces the arrogant modern girl, Anna. Her loyalty to Yŏngil's pursuit of success is emblematic of how women risk their livelihoods by sacrificing the body (Anna) or the mind (Chŏnghŭi). The last scene of *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* proposes a meaning for collective desire. Yŏngil and Chŏnghŭi receive a farewell from everyone at the film company before boarding the train to Tokyo (Figure 3). The frame zooms in on Hŏhun, the film director, after a brief shot of the female character Kyŏngsuk, redirecting the source of jouissance left absent by the couple's departure. However, the solitary figures of Hŏhun and Kyŏngsuk in separate frames



Figure 3: Yǒngil and Chǒnghŭi's departure, Hōhun, and Kyōngsuk

lack the reproductive potential of Yǒngil and Chǒnghŭi's union. The film proposes marriage and a chance to live and work in Tokyo as collective desire by juxtaposing the good Koreans and the bad Koreans. However, the criteria that made the good Koreans deserving of marriage and the Tokyo trip are arbitrary, making it easy for the audience to identify with the good Koreans and reject the bad Koreans. The film encourages the audience to idealize opportunism in rejection of camaraderie and labor.

Sōngbin

Angels on the Streets (dir. Choe In'gyu, 1941) is another film that conveys what it meant to be Korean in the last—most austere, authoritarian, and militant—phase of Japan's thirty-five-year colonial rule. Pang Sōngbin is a poor but good-hearted patriarch who is married to Maria. Despite her modest demeanor, Maria enjoyed an affluent upbringing along with her brother, An

In'gyu, a physician trained in Germany. The couple has a pre-adolescent daughter named Ana and a son, Yohan, who is never shown, but Söngbin dreams of starting an orphanage to assist children on the streets. Although his masculinity equips him for patriarchy, Söngbin lacks the means to launch such an endeavor because of financial scarcity. Not only does Söngbin ask In'gyu, Söngbin's brother-in-law, for a property to start the orphanage, the story ends with In'gyu, arriving to rescue the orphanage as a *deus ex machina*. Delivering the imperial oath under the Japanese flag, In'gyu reconstructs the household that Söngbin mismanaged.

In'gyu's constant oversight of Söngbin's family is an allegory for how the all-compassing authority of Koreanness subordinated individual patriarchs. Neither Söngbin nor In'gyu embody the "ideal" of patriarch. As a father without power, Söngbin is on the fringes of his own family, and thus the peripheries of the frame emphasize his movements. In'gyu, by contrast, is front and center. Nevertheless, without a wife and children to legitimize his authority, In'gyu's behavior appears pretentious. Though deficient individually, the two men work together to provide for the household, at least temporarily. In the end, however, Söngbin leaves his problem-ridden home with In'gyu's blessing, signifying that he evades patriarchal responsibility. What audiences, particularly young Korean men, took away from films such as *Angels on the Streets* must have been contradictory directions and models of behavior.

Ch'unho

One of the most intriguing characters in the late colonial films of 1940s Korea is Ch'unho, the young, male protagonist of *Volunteer* (1941). He torments his body and soul to determine his future by resembling what Tani Barlow calls "vernacular sociological truism."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Barlow delineates the emergence of modern subjectivity as a result of the convergence of advertisement technology and print culture in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1930s. This convergence led to the creation of

Ch'unho's heart is firmly set on maximizing his value in a modernizing society that was also redefining its Koreanness in the multiethnic Japanese Empire. Employing first-person narratives, cinema gave life to an archetypal self. Grappling with a particular set of expectations for a mythic society in the making, Ch'unho struggles to find himself. While he, in relaying the messages of the Shōwa Emperor, must project loyalty to the collective, the film also portrays him as deceptive, cruel, and driven by self-interest. A modernist by choice, Ch'unho curates his subjectivity as a source of capital generation similar to P's rejection of the ambivalent capitalist subjectivity in *Ready-made Life*'s finale. The self Ch'unho desires to become inhibits him from treating others as equals, denoting a new subjectivity that sets him apart from the other Koreans. He privileges his rational, determinist self against the masses of erratic, worthless Koreans and succeeds in making himself Japanese in opposition to the Korean other. Mirroring the hierarchies of power and relations of production around him, Ch'unho becomes himself by becoming someone else.

Critics have described *Volunteer* as a paean to Japanese expansionism and Korean co-operation.¹²⁰ A careful and critical analysis of the film, however, suggests that Korean men did not collaborate with colonial authorities without great reluctance—enlistment in the imperial

classes, sexes, and other social scientific categories that were used to define the concept of the "self" as a "vernacular sociological truism." Tani E. Barlow, "Buying In: Advertising and the Sexy Modern Girl Icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 301–05; Poole, *When the Future*, 4–6.

¹²⁰ Ch'unghöm Ham, "1941nyön Chosön yŏnghwa esŏ ūi ijung ōnŏ sok ilbonŏ: *Chiwŏnbyŏng, Chipŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa, Pando ūi pom ūl chungsim ūro*" [A study of the Japanese in 1941 bilingual Chosön cinema: focusing on *Chiwŏnbyŏng, Chipŏmnŭn ch'ŏnsa, Pando ūi pom*], *Asea yŏn'gu* [The journal of Asiatic studies] 56 (2013): 240–43. Chŏng, *Chosön yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae*, 368–69; Yŏngjae Yi, *Cheguk Ilbon ūi Chosön yŏnghwa: singminji mal ūi pando* [Chosön cinema in Japanese empire: the Korean peninsula in late colonial era] (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu, 2008), 58–72; Hwajin Yi, "Sadanpŏbin Chosön yŏnghwajusik hoesa ūi yŏnghwa tŭl" [Films of the Chosön film corporation], in *Chosön yŏnghwa ran hao: kŭndae yŏnghwa ūi pip'yŏngsa*, ed. Moonum Paek et al., (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Changbi, 2016), 616.

army was a secondary option for him at best. The film also conveys a melodramatic apology to Korean patriarchy, explaining one generation's treachery as a final act of filial piety.

Ch'unho is a complex character, as the motivation behind his routine glorification of state ideology is not devotion to the empire but extreme self-interest. He switches personalities according to his audience: pastoral or urban, young or old, female or male. This multiplicity affects his personal life as Ch'unho courts Punok in the countryside and flirts with Yŏngae, his boss's younger sister, in the city. In contrast to the conscientious relationships between Ch'unho's mother, sister, and Punok, Ch'unho's tour of the countryside with Yŏngae projects the nefarious potential of Korean masculinity. Ch'unho's schizophrenic identity reflects the contradictions of achieving upward mobility through colonial collaboration. One can argue in the same vein that the film calls for the merging of individual desire with the collective, but the film's value lies in its offer of a space for the interpretation of Ch'unho's opportunistic masculinity. While he feigns loyalty to Emperor Hirohito to impress Yŏngae, Ch'unho demands absolute loyalty from Punok and his childhood best friend Ch'angsik, who become closer to each other while he is away in the city. Ch'unho's mood alters from possessiveness to self-righteousness, however, when he visits his boss Pak Ch'anggi in the city to appeal against dismissal of him as the manager of a plot of land in the countryside.¹²¹ Contingent on the totality of Japanese imperialism, Ch'unho's Korean patrimony materializes in and through conformity with the Japanese military state. Scripted as a role-model for upwardly mobile Korean audiences—to present self-determination as possible—others who are economically dependent and politically colonized share Ch'unho's lack of conviction.

¹²¹ The absence of fathers for both male characters, regardless of their class, contributes to creating the background for a Koreanness that is perpetually vulnerable, unstable, and unaccountable.

Ch'unho's mother is oblivious to his contradictory dealings with others. Unaware of his motivations, she tells Yöngae of Ch'unho's engagement to Punok. Although observers expose his duplicity, he remains unaffected. Instead, he audaciously identifies Punok, who is too ashamed of Ch'unho's infidelity to confront him, in the presence of the woman he has been courting. Like his interest in Yöngae, his mother brushes aside his distress over losing his job, explaining that they can survive with the staples left behind by his deceased father. The mother's obliviousness accentuates Ch'unho's complexity because her simplicity mirrors the disingenuousness of his actions. The stern indifference Ch'unho displays towards others confirms his character as a mysterious figure more than the war hero he is cast to symbolize.

The people who interact with Ch'unho remain unaware of his aspirations in life, as he is in a colonial trance, citing imperial subjecthood as his *raison d'être*. When Ch'angsik asks his opinion about a lecture on *naisen ittai* that they attended, Ch'unho offers generic rationales such as duty. The friendship falls apart as they do not share each other's feeling, and they betray each other over their competing desire for Punok. Ch'unho's allegiance to the state establishes his subjectivity. Though depicted as an embodiment of colonial co-operation and imperial expansion, Ch'unho's support for the emperor turns out to be a device through which he plans to seek profit in a new world of opportunities. As he drifts in and out of spaces arising from the "fissures" between the countryside and the city, the colonial and the imperial, and the sovereign and his subjects, his repeated assertions of inspired imperial subjecthood grow dull against the spontaneous changes in his personality from scene to scene.

Ch'unho exposes his duplicitous character when he becomes enraged with Punok after catching her alone with another man, even though he had downplayed his engagement with her

on more than one occasion.¹²² Ch'unho's anger reveals his narcissism, showing that his self-importance is such that it cannot be undermined by others. Despite his persistent snobbery, evident in his refusal to converse with others on the same level, Ch'unho finally reveals his true self. He is not, as we come to find out, a model imperial subject or anything else he presents himself to be. He deeply immerses himself in studying imperial subjectivity to create a path for himself. He is an object of his desire, which is his human capital. Only after exhausting all the other resources that could benefit him materially, he finally joins the army. The act of becoming a man—a soldier—oddly positions him to the words of the solemn imperial oath he recites throughout.

Paradoxically, Ch'unho's absence is what ties his hometown community together. Here, the relationship between time and space becomes antagonistic as Ch'unho's presence in the plot evaporates asynchronously. He must leave the farm, the place where he belongs, and go to the frontlines to help fight a war for his country's colonizers. Indeed, his time belongs neither in the past nor the present, but in the future where he can find hope in his imagination, yearning for happiness in the collectivity of the imperial war machine. He surrenders his mind and body to the community of state supporters so that they can achieve belonging in the new Japanese Empire. Volunteering for the army, Ch'unho stifles his intense desire to be self-made, for upward mobility through hypergamy, recovering his patrimony, and marrying out of his class. Even if these things were achievable, no other option could safeguard his selfhood except joining the Imperial Japanese Army.¹²³

¹²² Ch'unho tells Ch'angsik that Punok has a future of her own without him and that she should find it by herself.

¹²³ He joins the military only after all the options for maintaining his position as a Korean man run out.

Inevitably, he must resist subordination to take his place in a future that imperialist hegemony will form. Indeed, the film illustrates how wealth is more beneficial for Korean men when they transport but do not manage it, since they lack the means to invest it. Although they are mere transporters, men in uniform represent other Koreans, so Ch'unho learns to express himself only within the confines of this identity. To do so, he conceals his desire to be Japanese, American, or any other nationality, homing in on the state ideology of the unity between the mind and body in connection with the land. Paradoxically, working-class Korean masculinity depends on Ch'unho upselling the value of his own Korean body. *Volunteer* is, then, an example of how films that promote government policies redefine the ideology of the unity of the mind and body.

Fisherman's Fire: Ambivalent masculinities

Peculiar male representations that appear throughout the above-mentioned films emerge not in the characterization of the protagonists but at the fringes of the main plots. *Fisherman's Fire* (1939) is road movie about a young woman, Insun, from a fishing village who moves to the city. After her fisherman father goes missing at sea, Insun joins Okpun in Seoul to work and pay off her father's debt, not before Ch'ölsu, the creditor's son, takes her virginity by manipulation. In the end, Insun resumes her life in the country, unable to find a secure job in the city. Accompanied by Ch'önsök whose fidelity remained sturdy throughout, the plot ends on a high note where children of the village dance ceremoniously. The lesson here is "know your place."

In the film, Mansu, Insun's younger brother, plays the role of the buffoon, presaging the future of the Korean nation. He walks in and out of the frame as he wanders throughout the film. He tags along after Ch'ölsu's impromptu date with Insun. He sits nonchalantly beside Okpun to

peek beneath her skirt. He whistles at passing women. He bows passionately to the deceased at an ancestral ritual. He complains about his household's hardships and begs for money from Ch'önsök. Mansu's distorted voice suggests naivety. Such expendable figures, with impaired and impotent bodies, interrupt plot arcs heading toward theatres of war, factory work, and busy city life. Mansu serves as comic relief in the plot of *Fisherman's Fire*, but the scenes dedicated to his unruly behavior suggest that his role is cautionary.

The contrast between Ch'ölsu and Ch'önsök suggests ambivalent masculinity as a cultural expression in late colonial Korea. Representing men as vulgar and polite others in a spectrum of masculinities, the film depicts a liberal society where self-determination is an individual achievement. The extent of these masculinities, however, refutes Neo-Confucian social mores that remained the regulatory principle throughout the Chosön dynasty and the colonial era. The film stresses individualism to promote a new social norm where the past is divorced from the present. What does the film achieve by exalting individualism in a society discouraging volition? Positioning gender at the center of wartime social organization allows a synthesis between the ambivalent masculinities of Ch'ölsu, Ch'önsök, and even Ch'unho in *Volunteer*. In *Fisherman's Fire*, the female protagonist sets her boundaries with men in a Neo-Confucian manner. Ch'ölsu womanizes Insun, while Ch'önsök looks after her prudently, but Insun has an imperative to comply and repair her relationship with these men. Insun's dependency and naivety expose her to manipulation in the city, yet Okpun, Insun's female aide in Seoul, is more resilient. Okpun urges Insun to persevere. She tells Insun, "You will further wreck your body to stay defeated only because you were squashed by a man once" if Insun does not persevere. This statement vindicates Ch'ölsu's dishonesty by placing the blame on Insun's

substandard resolve. What had been persistent attempts at upward mobility for Ch'unho results in mishaps for Insun.

Unlike *Volunteer* where social mobility motivates the protagonist, *Fisherman's Fire* eliminates enlistment as the ultimate solution. Screened a year after the 1938 implementation of the voluntary army program, *Fisherman's Fire* is an attempt at gender parity by portraying Insun, a female protagonist, as a self-determined individual. However, we can infer from Insun's dreadful venture that self-determination carved out a different path for women vis-à-vis men. Although Ch'ölsu and Ch'önsök's masculinities are ambivalent like that of the Ch'unho's displayed in *Volunteer*, Insun's failed attempt at upward mobility is no surprise. A close examination of gender representations reveals that the film portrays the idleness and misfortune of women to legitimize dishonest masculinities. *Fisherman's Fire* ends with bucolic scenes with groups of children reenacting a ceremonial circle dance (*kanggangsulae*), connoting the cultural 'backwardness' of the fishing village to which Insun returns (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Children reenacting a ceremonial circle dance

Military Train

Military Train portrays the promotion of the Korean nation as an allergy. A minor character in the film, a train conductor, has a visceral reaction to the sight of people showing affection to each other, and as a result interrupts romantic overtures between various men and

women. These episodes illustrate the uneasiness of representing procreation in late colonial Korea, when “Japan’s colonial governmentality and its political calculation and biopolitical management of the Korean population” directed the film’s narrative.¹²⁴ The interruption of socio-sexual conventions, in fact, signifies the urgency of the new mission that the war required in suppressing reproductivity while maximizing the labor-power of the colonized for industrial and military purposes.¹²⁵

Portrayals of Japan’s vision of a new East Asian order negate emotions through omission and repression. *Military Train* depicts the uneasy relationship between the bodies and sensibilities of the different ethnic groups involved in promoting Japanese imperialism. The film does not subscribe to brainwashing Koreans into subjects of the Japanese Empire but to carving out a space for the Korean community to prosper in a period of rapid growth. Finally, *Military Train* show anxiety about Korea without the presence of patriarchal families. The film seeks to perpetuate patrilineage in the absence of filial sons, and the men in the film, including the protagonist Chōmyong and the unemployed Wōnjin, appear indifferent to the loss of patriarchal family foundation. Using montage to codify comic relief, scenes of Ch’ōl Ch’oe, a minor character, sneezing force the audience to titter and make light of the propaganda’s consequence. Ch’ōl’s sneeze presages courting between Chōmyong and Sasaki Nobuko, which seeks confusion from the spectators by asserting oddity to the trope. Sneezing, sociologist Ruri Ito illustrates, was a signifier of the everyday consequences of asserting class and social ascendancy between Japanese descendants, Ryukyuan, and yamatunchus in dōka.¹²⁶ In Ryukyu (Okinawa)

¹²⁴ Jinkyung Park, “Bodies for Empire: Biopolitics, Reproduction, and Sexual Knowledge in Late Colonial Korea,” *Korean Journal of Medical History* 23, no. 2 (2014): 230.

¹²⁵ Park, “Bodies for Empire,” 206.

¹²⁶ Ruri Ito, “The ‘Modern Girl’ Question in the Periphery of Empire: Colonial Modernity and Mobility among Okinawan Women in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 241–49.

girl's schools, students from different economic and cultural backgrounds encountered each other due to migration and Japanization. The girls used sneezing to indicate other classmates' inferiority as they competed to assimilate modern distinctions such as fashion, manners, and language. Such assimilation to Japanese culture and way of life was to make a "dramatic shift from their traditional religious roles to active participants of the modern 'good wife, wise mother' project" in Okinawa throughout the first half of the 20th century.¹²⁷ Japanization at women's schools in Okinawa accelerated "a different sense of social distinction...to replace the previous hierarchy of feudal statuses."¹²⁸ In *Military Train*, Ch'ol's sneeze conveyed ambiguity about assimilation to the audience which reflects the government's cautious approach to overseeing Korean reproductivity. Disparaging the presence of patriarchal families delivered this aim. Inter-contextualizing sneezing as a result of social ascendance reveals the extent to which the accelerated assimilation affected minds and bodies in harming ways among Koreans.

Military Train demonstrates colonial authorities' desire to transplant the practice of ethnic hierarchy and class discrimination into a cautionary tale about reproductivity in late colonial Korea. As a result, the film erased ethnic rivalries, miscegenation, and class distinctions which allow Chōmyong's obliviousness to his triumph over others including Wōnjin who commits suicide.¹²⁹ The film's juxtaposition of "good" and "bad" Koreans represents two sides

¹²⁷ Ruri Ito, "The 'Modern Girl' Question," 244.

¹²⁸ A quote from *Naha Onna Ichidaiki* (Biography of Naha Women) by Kinjō Yoshiko has pertinence: "Japanization was top priority, the Japanese descendants were our suitable target of competition. We did not 'sneeze as the people of other prefectures do' but when those *yamatunchu* sneezed with a Kagoshima accent, we would sneeze back with a Tokyo accent. That was the kind of spirit we had. Ito, "The 'Modern Girl' Question," 242–46.

¹²⁹ Migration shaped the geography of the Japanese Empire and there were more of it during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Korean newspapers dealt with migration by contributing to a hate crime against Chinese immigrants in Korea in 1931. However, *Military Train* limited its scope of demographic to censure how Koreanness was being shaped. For data on the demography of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants between Japan, Korea, and China during the colonial period, see Kyōngsōn Kwōn. See Sanggyōng Yi and Pyōnguk Chōng for analyses of the newspaper publications against the Chinese migrant workers in Korea. Kyōngsōn Kwōn, "Kūndae tongbugasia yōngnae in 'gu idong koch'al: Ilbon chegukchuūi seryōkkwōn nae in 'gu itong ūi kyūmo, punp'o, kusōng ūl chungsim ūro" [Migration in modern Northeast Asia: focus on migration in 'empire of Japan'], *Hehang toshi munhwa kyosōphak* [Cultural interaction studies of seaport cities] 25 (2021): 90, 105; Sanggyōng Yi (Sanggyōng

of the human body's potential, which culminates in Chōmyong operating a military train.¹³⁰ The good Koreans, Chōmyong and Sunhūi, go about their days unaffected by the desperation of the circumstances of the bad Koreans, Wōnjin and Yōngsim. At the center of the drama is Chōmyong, whose cluelessness and cynicism earn him the right to patrilineal succession. Through this individuation, *Military Train* celebrates the bad Koreans' mortality and rationalizes necropolitics. The good Koreans are employed, selfish, loyal, and have a monogamous relationship and the bad Koreans are unemployed or underemployed, idealist, and dependent on others for financial and emotional support. In *Military Train*, those who evade conscription die a "deserving" death (Figure 5). But those who blur gender roles or disrupt processes of reproduction, Ch'ol and Yōngsim, by inference, relay to audiences the confusion felt by those living with an uncertain fate as colonized subjects at war.

Lee), "1931nyōn ūi 'pachwa sagōn' kwa minjokchuūi tamnon" ['Pachwa incident' and ethno-nationalist discourse in 1931], *Manchu yon'gu* [Journal of Manchurian Studies], no. 11 (2011): 87–93; Pyōngguk Chōng, "Singminji Chosōn ūi panjunggugin p'oktonggwa toshi hach'ūngmin" [The anti-Chinese riot of 1931 and lower working class in colonial Chosōn], *Yōksa wa tamron* [History and discourse], no. 73 (2015): 337–39.

¹³⁰ Foucault describes the body as a machine and equates docility to usefulness in the organization of the sovereign state. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 139.



Figure 5: Wŏnjin's suicide and Chŏmyong's triumph

Story of Big Whales and Seiki

Similarly, in *Story of Big Whales* (dir. Pang Hanjun, 1944), the eldest daughter of a deceased fisherman, Akiko, threatens the patriarchal order and gender norms by abruptly declaring her wish to be a man.¹³¹ She makes advances towards her fellow fisherman Harukawa.

¹³¹ Tsukuda Tsunao, “Kŏgyŏngjŏn” [Story of big whales], trans. Yŏnhi Pak. in *Haebangjŏn (1940–1945) Sangyŏng Sinarioch’ip* [A collection of pre-liberation screenplays], eds. Yi, Chaemyŏng., Sŏkchin Yun, Chaewŏn Hyŏn Myŏnghwa Kim, T’aewŏk Song, Hosun Chŏng, (Seoul, Republic of Korea: P’yŏngminsa, 2004), 44–5.

Repelling Akiko, Harukawa confesses that his lovers are the whales he hunts.¹³² This scene complicates the perception that bodies passively enact their gender. Instead, the audience sees the couple as neither normal nor together. Harukawa and Akiko do not spell out the purpose of their reunion, and their dialog only hints at their courtship:

Harukawa: Whales are like humans. It is beyond adorable to see baby whales swimming to suckle on the mother whale.
 Akiko: Since you are an orphan, it must be a scene of jealousy.
 Harukawa: Not at all.

Harukawa then gazes straight into Akiko's face, but Akiko avoids making eye contact. She then looks up again to find Harukawa's eyes thoroughly inspecting her. Embarrassed, she begins hyperventilating and becomes unconscious.¹³³ Nothing but the evasion of sexual contact occurs in this scene. In the following scene, Harukawa sternly rejects the captain's allegation of his romantic relationship with Akiko by saying, "I do not like the types of women who have no fun. I despise them." To which the captain quickly responds, "I feel so relieved to hear that now. The fisherman can rest in peace."¹³⁴ Here, Harukawa conserves his ardor for the job of hunting whales. The 'elephant in the room' of this scene is the supremacy of masculinity even if it is celibate. These ways of expressing Korean perspectives in wartime films were viewed as the key to assimilation because Korean audiences were desperate to learn the new social cues of the modern world. The complexity of Korean expression lost its value in the face of imperialist hegemony, whose dominance dictated the terms of cultural expression for war mobilization.

¹³² Although the film is considered missing its print, the screenplay proves of what it tried to achieve.

¹³³ Tsukuda Tsunao, "Kōgyōngjōn," 45.

¹³⁴ Tsukuda Tsunao, "Kōgyōngjōn," 47.

Straits of Chosŏn (dir. Pak Kich'ae, 1943) is about a couple overcoming the opposition of the young man's conservative father. With only Japanese dialogue, *Straits of Chosŏn* takes place in a middle-class household in Korea. The film begins with a scene in which a wealthy uncle in the place of his father, who has disowned him for his filial failures, scorns the disinherited Lee Seiki. Seiki pleads for support from his uncle. His uncle compares him to his older brother who died in battle. Calling Seiki a flaneur, his uncle berates his lack of achievements.¹³⁵ Another problem for Seiki is that he has a lover, Kinshuku, whom he has impregnated. Hard-pressed by the disapproval of his uncle, who is also a father figure for him, Seiki turns his luck around by following in the footsteps of his late brother. Seiki's enlistment elicits his uncle's praise, and he gradually regains his father's trust. In the end, his father accepts Kinshuku as the *mother of his grandson*.¹³⁶ Resourcefully soothing the quarrel between the father and the son's "undeserving" lover is Kiyoko, Seiki's younger sister, who substitutes Seiki's position while he is at the war's frontlines. Even more diligent about keeping peace in the family than Kiyoko is Seiki's wife, Kinshuku, who lives alone. She ekes out a living by sewing tirelessly, first making cushions for the military from home and later working on the shop floor of a garment factory. Despite sacrificing her career as a nurse to make amends for Seiki's absence, Kinshuku receives

¹³⁵ The film opens with a scene that places the brother's shrine in the centre of the frame, implying the importance of the family as a unit of state organization. This opening montage, Yi Yŏngjae argues, simulates the abject father-son relationship after the 1943 announcement of Korean conscription: "The exchange of faces from the dead to the living signifies that the living must be *already* dead. Put differently, the living, whose back appears first, can show his face by taking on the form of the dead." Yŏngjae Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang," 199–200; 210.

¹³⁶ The plot places Kinshuku in the state-sponsored social position of a wife and mother. Myunga Kwon explores the discourse of what Elizabeth de Cacqueray calls home-front women (*ch'onghu puin*) in the United Kingdom during the Second World War and argues that the redefinition of "old women" (*kuyŏsŏng*) and "new women" (*sin'yŏsŏng*) in late colonial Korea played a crucial role in legitimizing the discourse of home-front women. And this discourse also gave women a sense of entitlement and liberation from their mothers-in-law and husbands. Myunga Kwŏn, "Ch'onghu puin, sin'yŏsŏng, kŭrigo sŭpai" [The women in rear guard, the new women, and the spy: a study regarding narrative of ch'onghu puin in 1935–1945], *Sanghur hakbo* [The journal of Korean modern literature] 12 (2004): 271–72; Songhi Yi (Song Hee Lee), "Ilche kangjŏmgi Pusan chiyŏk ūi yŏsŏnggyoyuk: Han'gukin'gwa Ilbonin ūi yŏsŏng kyoyuk" [Education for Pusan women in Japanese colonial time: in comparison with Japanese women], *Yŏsŏng yŏn'gunonjip* [Journal of women studies] 24 (2013): 126.

occasional visits from a Japanese friend who looks after her. The sisterly camaraderie relieves the patriarchal failure to protect Seiki from certain death as a soldier by relying on women's sacrifice. However, Kinshuku's devotion to bearing and raising her child on her own, all the while working to pay her bills, results in the exhaustion of her body.

The sensual deprivation and the appreciation for an absent other, Seiki, that validates the self in Kinshuku—her Koreanness—justifies the unrelenting love for assimilation that many believe the film portrays.¹³⁷ Submission to the militarist mobilization of the Shōwa Empire corresponded with Korea's long tributary relationship with China, adhering to the philosophy of serving the greater (*sadae chuī*).

Men without Women

I have highlighted how fragile, capricious, and misogynistic Korean masculinities conserved patriarchal hierarchy during what Fujitani views as the time of Korean inclusion in the Japanese Empire by way of war. Rather than upgrading all Koreans, wartime films show that the amalgamation of Neo-Confucianism and totalitarianism bestowed agency only to Korean men. Since “imaginary equalities existed within and not across gender categories,” late colonial films promoted patriarchy as the ethos.¹³⁸ Still, an unprecedented number of women were making their way into waged labor.¹³⁹ Thus, the emergence of unorthodox gender relations in films begs the question whether and how these unrealistic representations of patriarchy promoted imperial inclusion via Koreanness. The next chapter examines female representations in late colonial

¹³⁷ Park Chung-hee, the previous Korean military dictator, who advocated for his promotion as an officer in the Academy of the Imperial Japanese Army in Manchuria, no doubt observed the way of assimilation shown in these and other films.

¹³⁸ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 370.

¹³⁹ Kim, *To Live to Work*, 164–72.

Korea by illustrating the irony of gender oppression in a time of unprecedented socio-economic opportunities for women.

Not all women were vulnerable financially and socially, which made the representations of women's subordination unconvincing. However, the wartime films insisted that Korean women, to be worthy of social belonging, needed men. Yōngjae Yi argues that equilibrium between women and men was the social foundation of the time.¹⁴⁰ While such a neat summation might be desirable, marriages were matters of familial and individual survival that involved compatibilities of class, gender, and ethnicity. In this regard, one can argue that strict monogamy was a trap set-up by the filmmakers to promote common sense against local marriage and sex practices. Matchmaking within a close network of family friends, concubinage, children from the relationship with concubines were popular practices of marriage and sex practices even though films of late colonial Korea omit them. Local practices continued to guide how Koreans planned, lived, and died from the Chosŏn Dynasty's Neo-Confucian mores. Class, profession, and inheritance rights determined how locals exercised power.¹⁴¹ The next chapter delves into local marriage customs, providing further context to the portrayal of courtship in late colonial Korea. Extending Fujitani's analysis, I would argue that the polite displays of misogyny disenfranchised the Koreans as much as the vulgar colonial institutionalization did, by obliterating the foundation of social relations based on family. In no way am I arguing that Neo-Confucian patriarchy

¹⁴⁰ Yōngjae Yi argues that women became national subjects through men, and men's soldiering meant nothing without women. I am pointing out that these two arguments are contradictory. Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang," 213; 233.

¹⁴¹ According to Kahyu Yu, during the colonial period, marriage was seen as a family decision. Despite the increase in discussions about marriage as an individual choice, the socioeconomic structure in colonial Korea has remained the same as during the Chosŏn Dynasty. Yu rightly assumes that if the socioeconomic structure were to change, individuals would have the freedom to choose their own marriage practices. Kahyo Yu, "Ilchesidae kyŏlhon kyŏlchŏng kwachŏng ūl t'onghaesŏ pon kyŏlhon munhwa ūi pyŏnhwa" [Changes in marital culture of Korea through mate selection process in Japanese colonial era], *Han'gukhangnonjip* [Journal of Korea studies] 36 (2008): 423–45.

constituted a less misogynistic regime but the colonial authority's equally detrimental measures on the Korean society should not be overlooked.

Chapter Three: Misogyny, Patriarchy, and Dependent Femininities

If the biases of neo-Confucian gender relations were reproduced in Japanese-Korean associations, how did films during the colonial era portray the dynamics between Korean men and women? Did Korean women embody more masculine, or feminine traits? In general, women were portrayed as the supporters of Korean patriarchy. Though women's position in films was marginal, representations of Korean society in films fell apart without the presence of women. The films of 1940s Korea suggest that patriarchy was materialized through the annihilation of the self and disdain towards the other, which was most often shown in the interactions between men and women.¹⁴²

What characterizes life in late colonial Korea is the absence of the patriarch, either fighting for or lost to Japan's war against China. This absence threatened Korean patriarchy subordinated under the auspices of assimilation and war mobilization. Punok, Yöngsim, Kinshuku, and Akiko all mourn the loss of their male counterparts but differ in their responses: Yöngsim, after learning of her fiancé's death, turns to another man, her brother, Chömyong, for advice and support; Punok seizes her opportunity to take center stage; Kinshuku dedicates her body and soul to the empire, becoming a sacrificial, substitute head of a single-parent household; and Akiko questions gender altogether as patriarchy prohibits her from adopting an anomalous masculine role. At play here is the relationship between the sexes in each other's absence. These feminine traits, nevertheless, serve as a point of departure for the behaviors of a generation. Paradoxically, these models of Korean femininity and masculinity do not acknowledge the need—both affective and physical—for the copresence of a member of the other sex to perform

¹⁴² Vivek Chibber, "Capitalism, Class and Universalism - Escaping the Cul-de-Sac of Postcolonial Theory," *Socialist Register*, 2014, 63–79.

their gendered social roles. The masculine self is represented as being not merely deprived of a community of Koreans; his relocation from his hometown and his separation from his gendered other accentuates a sense of intense yearning. However, female characters upheld patriarchy constantly, as women pledged their bodies and minds to the men whose self-interests contributed to perpetuating gender oppression. Hence, women relied on static images of Korea's incompetence which took their sacrifice for granted, while men were recognized as society's champions.

Class Demotion and Dependent Femininity: Yǒnggae, Maria, and Akiko

Late colonial films portrayed gender norms that worked against women's best interests. For example, Yǒnggae and Maria relinquish their inheritances because of the men they associate with and marry. The contempt and belittlement they receive from their brothers and husbands promote celibacy as the lessons to be learned. In *Volunteer*, Pak Ch'anggi, Yǒnggae's older brother, says to her "carrying a bag is enough for your concern," following the Neo-Confucian practice of *ch'ulgaoein* (married daughter is an outsider to the family), emphasizing that she will marry out of the household. This representation of gender roles asserts that the first-born male assumes authority over the family estate. Yǒnggae challenges Ch'anggi's dismissive attitude by saying, "Why can't a sister change the manager of a land registered under the family name?" but she is hastily silenced. While it is a story of the sibling rivalry, the plot also shows how Yǒnggae's right to the family estate is undermined as she relinquishes her socio-economic position for Ch'unho. Maria in *Angels on the Streets* and Chǒnghŭi in *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* follow similar destinies. Maria no longer has decision-making powers when Sǒngbin and In'gyu decide to transform the household into an orphanage. She weeps and whimpers when Sǒngbin ignores

her protests but submits to his reason that she “must come as a mother” to her children, Ana and Yohan. Maria now has to depend on her incompetent husband, having her agency reduced to that of a docile mother whose status within the family hierarchy is below that of her children. This infantilizes women and denies them socio-economic power. In *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* after Yǒngil proposes to her, Chǒnghŭi immediately gives up her promising career as an actress. She seizes the opportunity to embody ‘Japaneseness’ through patriarchal obedience. Chǒnghŭi’s ‘Japaneseness’ serves as commodity fetishism because it is her performance that awards her social mobility over other Koreans.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, Anna and Kyǒngsuk carry on with their work, but with resentment towards the ethnic hierarchy that exists in their society due to Chǒnghŭi’s choice to prioritize her future husband’s wishes over her own aspirations. ‘Japaneseness’ conveys growth and prosperity for the good Korean who earns the exceptionality that allows Chǒnghŭi’s to move within the ethnic-hierarchy while Anna and Kyǒngsuk’s misfortune is connoted by their lack of male companions and lateral mobility. Chǒnghŭi’s silence secures her marriage and increases the value placed on dependent femininity, leading to resentment among women who do not have such compliant dispositions.

Many women in late colonial films become politically invested in their positions as female brides-in-cue whose power is defined by the men they marry. These films often suggest that women’s gender identity can serve as a political leverage for them within a patriarchal society. In theory, it gives women the language to exploit gender roles for their own gain. Choosing the right men was important for women. The practices of finding a son-in-law for the purpose of keeping family wealth (*telilsawi*) and male adoption within a pool of kin for patrilineal succession (*yangcha*) were not uncommon among elite families to avoid the outflow

¹⁴³ Her patriarchal obedience, which is a trait of Koreanness, is a prerequisite for the opportunity to obtain ‘Japaneseness’ as a subject of the Japanese Empire.

of wealth. Choosing the right groom was surely crucial for women, too, although none of the men in the Korean films that I engaged with above was portrayed as worthy.

Yöngsim, Anna, and Kyöngsuk, on the other hand, support themselves and men through their wage labors as entertainers, office workers, and café waitresses. Promoting gender hierarchy as an extension of individual agency, films of late colonial Korea discourage the use of marriage as a pathway for social mobility. The films redefined gender as a personal characteristic, challenging the communal notion of gender identity. This propaganda campaign depicted women's role as that of helpers to men. One might consider gender oppression as a legacy of a Confucianism from Korea's past, but its inconsistent application across different genders displays its selective exploitation. The representations of gender norms in late colonial films affirm that war mobilization served as an opportunity for filmmakers and state authorities to embrace patriarchy for political mobilization in the colony. Femininities represented on screen became the symbols through which adolescent men fantasized about their future feats. If Korean femininity on screen provided a phantasmatic opportunity to restore patriarchal order among Korean men, Japanese femininity offered escapes from it.¹⁴⁴ Chönghui in *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* moves to Tokyo leaving behind the depressing, laborious land of Koreans. Sunhui in *Military Train*, played by the Japanese actor Sasaki Nobuko, remains unbothered and unaffected by Koreans, except for her fiancé Chömyong.

Taken from these Korean femininities, one can deduce that self-erasure, shame, and subordination became the trademarks of a good woman. Yöngae worries if her adoption of an

¹⁴⁴ A rare reflection about Korean colonial psyche that resembles Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytical diagnosis in *Black Skin, White Masks* is painter Kim Pyönggi's statement that in the colonial era: "the ideal life was about having Chinese cuisine for a meal in a western-style house with a Japanese wife." Kyöngae Kim, "Kim Tongin chasöjön e 'hallyang kei'ga paro puch'in Kim Ch'anyöng" [The dilettante in Kim Tongin's autobiography is none other than my father Kim Ch'anyöng], *Hankyöre*, April 19, 2017. https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/culture_general/791434.html (accessed August 19, 2023).

urban lifestyle is imprudent, while Punok admires Ch'unho's unadulterated desire for imperial mobilization. Punok's introverted gestures shows that the female body cannot replace the position of the male body, projecting dependence of Korean femininity on Korean men. However, these portrayals of women's subordination also called for their active patriarchal collaboration.

The assimilationist effort in late colonial Korea stressed class, gender, and ethnicity as palpable identities. Late colonial films connected despairing individuals and incessant Neo-Confucian mores to the aspirations of triumphal individualism and assimilationist militarism. These representations framed assimilating to Japanese literature and culture as progression and upward mobility, as the Korean *raison d'être*. Similarly, references to the Shōwa Emperor gestured an allegiance to the state. Meanwhile, immigration proliferated as the Japanese Empire expanded and accelerated urbanization, not to mention the volume of people crossing the sea between Japan and Korea, and the rivers into Manchuria grew.¹⁴⁵ The expansion of the Japanese Empire's territory necessitated differentiations between groups belonging to different classes, gender identities, and ethnicities to differentiate between the colony and the metropole. And the Korean films' representation of a society shaped by class division, gender discrimination, and ethnic regionalism showed that segregation gained refinement. Despite their rootedness in patriarchy, late colonial films in Korea rarely mention the activity that bears offspring and

¹⁴⁵ Within Korea, Japanese settlers made up one third of the populations in big cities and port cities like Pusan, Taegu, Kusan, Inchön, P'yöngyang, Ch'öngjin, and Seoul. Tracing population movement in 1930s Korea, Chöngsöp Yi finds that the port cities strategized by the Japanese colonial authorities, Ch'öngjin, Sinüiju, Kusan, Mokpo, Chinnamp'o, and Inchön, were made up of more than 70 per cent influx population. Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies*, 152–4; 161. Chöngsöp Yi (Chungsup Lee), "Ilche kangjömgi tosihwa wa in'gu idong" [The urbanization and migration in the period of the Japanese occupation], *Taehan chiri hakhoeji* [Journal of Korea geography studies] 52, no. 1 (2017): 116; 119.

perpetuates lineages, that is, heterosexual intercourse. This exhibits how details decided the message on reproductivity in late colonial films in Korea.

Korean Femininities

Women's options were at an impasse. Yŏngjae Yi argues that Chosŏn films provided an opportunity for social mobility through the introduction of more inclusive gender and ethnic arrangements.¹⁴⁶ But Fujitani reveals that the apparent hierarchy in gender representations reinforced socio-political boundaries between the metropole and the colony and between ethnicities.¹⁴⁷ Was the use of gender hierarchy able to render the paradoxes of assimilation without revealing colonial discrimination at large?

The femininities represented in late colonial Korean films deviated from the government-sanctioned models of woman as 'Good Wife Wise Mother.' Women that appear on films were not necessarily involved in the reproductive tasks because individuals were isolated from the familial foundations. Marriage and giving birth were not only two of the most crucial events in a woman's life, but they also determined her socio-economic status and access to resources. Unsurprisingly, the late colonial system imposed grave risks on Korean women. But, as I will examine in detail, women accepted the risks as collateral damage for seeking social mobility.

The colonial state's promotion of self-determination normalized competition among individuals. Not only did late colonial films rarely show Korean households, but they also represented them as subordinate to Japanese authorities. Women were often portrayed as the heads of households in the place of incompetent sons. Replacing a Neo-Confucian patriarchy with a militarist state, the films offered a peek into the workings of a population under the

¹⁴⁶ Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang," 219; Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 360–70.

¹⁴⁷ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 371.

influence of colonial modernity. They were hardly an image of ordinary Korean society that was mostly based in the countryside.

In late colonial Korean films, women's misfortune conjures up insecurity in the adolescent masculinist fantasy. And this insecurity is resolved by patriarchal restoration in favor of militarist valor enabled by the resentment of less-privileged men. But this masculinist paean must be corrected by late colonial films reminding audiences that women have been the providers to these inept, stranded men many times over. In other words, this adolescent masculinist fantasy flips the Korean social structure at its core by inciting resentment towards women. This leads the colonized to inevitable failure. We can read *Military Train* in this context. Chōmyong's older brother, who abruptly replaces Wōnjin for Yōngsim's guardian in the film's final scenes can be read as an attempt to cater to the disgruntled adolescent male populations disenfranchised by primogeniture. Chōmyong's older brother negates Chōmyong from being the sole male character that carries on the patriarchal duty. In doing so, the film encourages the male audiences to embody patriarchal attitude by leaving the possibility of fulfilling the Neo-Confucian duty open to them. This plot reinforces women's dependence on men as a permanent condition. The wartime film delusionally, yet staunchly, insisted that Korean women were susceptible to anxiety and melancholy by the absence of men. Taken together, the colonial state depicted Koreanness in the worst way imaginable to generate compliance.

Women in both rural and urban settings viewed kinship as their agential foundation. They worked in agriculture, handicrafts, and factories to contribute to the family's income. Hiring out daughters and second- and third-born sons as domestic servants for wealthier households from ages as young as five was not uncommon. Kinship remained the driving force of social and individual organization, inculcating filial piety despite the diversification of work and living

arrangements that were fomented by industrialization and commercialization. Individuals usually contributed their income and labor to their natal families' incomes until marriage. After marriage, women were expected to perform reproductive labor that prompted them to contribute to their family economies. They also worked in agricultural cooperatives and household industries. Women employed in light and heavy industries comprised over a third of the rural labor force in Korea.¹⁴⁸

State authorities castigated traditional perceptions of class, self-determination, and the family in order to create a sense of novelty in individual choices. Representing absurd social relationships, colonial wartime films asserted corporeal malcontent to leverage dissent in the minds of the adolescent audience. Women's self-determination established in everyday practices and buttressed by communal expectations contrasted with the state authorities' provocation of individual dissatisfaction against collectivism. At the same time, the wartime propaganda's inclusion of anomalous, fleeting Korean individualism reveals the state authority's desperation to expunge a sense of preservation and continuation. Rather than through persuasion, wartime assimilationist rhetoric mobilized colonialism through the Korean representation that restricted imagination in the impasse between commodity fetishism vis à vis abstinent Koreanness.

Controversy around Kinshuku's Death

Reviewing *Strait of Chosŏn*, writer Ch'unin Yi questioned if the elimination of the heroine, Kinshuku, was a justifiable decision for the highly anticipated first feature film by the Korea Film Production Company.¹⁴⁹ Yi's discontent was the lack of empathy for the female

¹⁴⁸ Kim, *To Live to Work*, 118–20; 52–69.

¹⁴⁹ Ch'unin Yi, "Kakpon, yŏnch'ul, yŏn'gi: Chosŏn hyehŏp ūl pogo" [Screenwriting, directing, and acting: Impressions from *Strait of Chosŏn*], *Chogwang* 9, no. 9 (September 1943): 82.

character that celebrates the conscription of Korean men. Yi, like others who wrote in the magazine *Chogwang* (1935–1944), criticized the imperial adoption of more Korean stories to the Japanese cause for their poor quality. Calling the film “embarrassing” and “unpresentable,” Yi concluded the article by praising Japan’s robust film industry and talented filmmakers.¹⁵⁰ In the article that supposes Koreans to be equal contributors to the Japanese Empire, serving death to an industrious woman like Kinshuku appeared peculiar for a colonial elite like Yi.¹⁵¹ After all, Kinshuku epitomized the body and mind of a person that the Japanese military state purportedly sought out. If selfless devotion to the war effort resonated in the film for total mobilization, Yi asked, why show the death of the loyal supporter? Corroborating Yi’s argument, a brief survey of publications on late colonial Korean films indicates that self-determination and social mobility guided the GGK’s cinematic representations of women. Instilling comfort in self-annihilation by replacing self-determination with socio-economic relations commodity fetishism, that is Kinshuku’s death, conveyed a new subjectivity where the female body could be objectified for the individual, female realization of birthing and dying.

The collusion between colonial authorities and elites advanced their interests through the introduction of ultra-conservative patriarchy. Although that meant defying the imperial decree for the equality between ethnic groups, war films exhibited the desire to devastate the socio-economic foundation of the working-class by antagonizing kinship, inducing fear of dispossession, and inciting self-loathing. These ambivalent exchanges over women’s bodies reveal that the degree of psychological exploitation that the film apparatus sought was unfathomable for an ethno-nationalist critic like Yi whose confidence was founded on patriarchy.

¹⁵⁰ Paek et al., eds., *Chosŏn yŏnghwa ran*, 634–42.

¹⁵¹ Articles state that Kinshuku dies in original screenings in Korea, which is inconspicuous in the accessible version made available by the Korean Film Archive. Yi, “Hwanggun ūi sarang,” 213–15.

Instead, Yi's apprehension emphasizes a paradigmatic shift in the wartime authorities to take control of human resources. Death became a private event that negated the ethno-nationalist's plea for the body to be communal capital. Here, one can observe that colonial authorities seized the opportunities of war mobilization and state incorporation. The opportunistic promotion of the unity between Japan and Korea coincided with the emergence of vulgar Korean masculinity, demonstrating the hypocrisy of soldiering without suffrage.¹⁵² In view of the youthful male audiences then, Seiki arrives at a fantastic feat as Kinshuku's childbirth fulfills *his* filial piety. And *his* honorable discharge earns him the undivided attention of a Japanese nurse. In this regard, we can view Kinshuku's death as an ideological trick that enables Seiki to lose all ties with Koreanness, including his parents and his fiancé. His uninhibited appeal for self-determination at the expense of Kinshuku's life affirms the state's desire to promote the fantasy of Korean men's autonomy at any cost.

¹⁵² The auxiliary nature of conscription in Korea is reflected in the time and place of the deployment. "On December 1, 1944, the first coterie of 45,000 Korean conscripts entered the Imperial Japanese Army, and 10,000 entered the Imperial Japanese Navy. Another 45,000 soldiers and 10,000 sailors entered on May 1, 1945...the majority of Korean soldiers in the army (63 percent) remained in Korea or went to Japan proper, where they served as support troops." Brandon Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy: Koreans in Japan's War, 1937-1945*, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2013), 125.

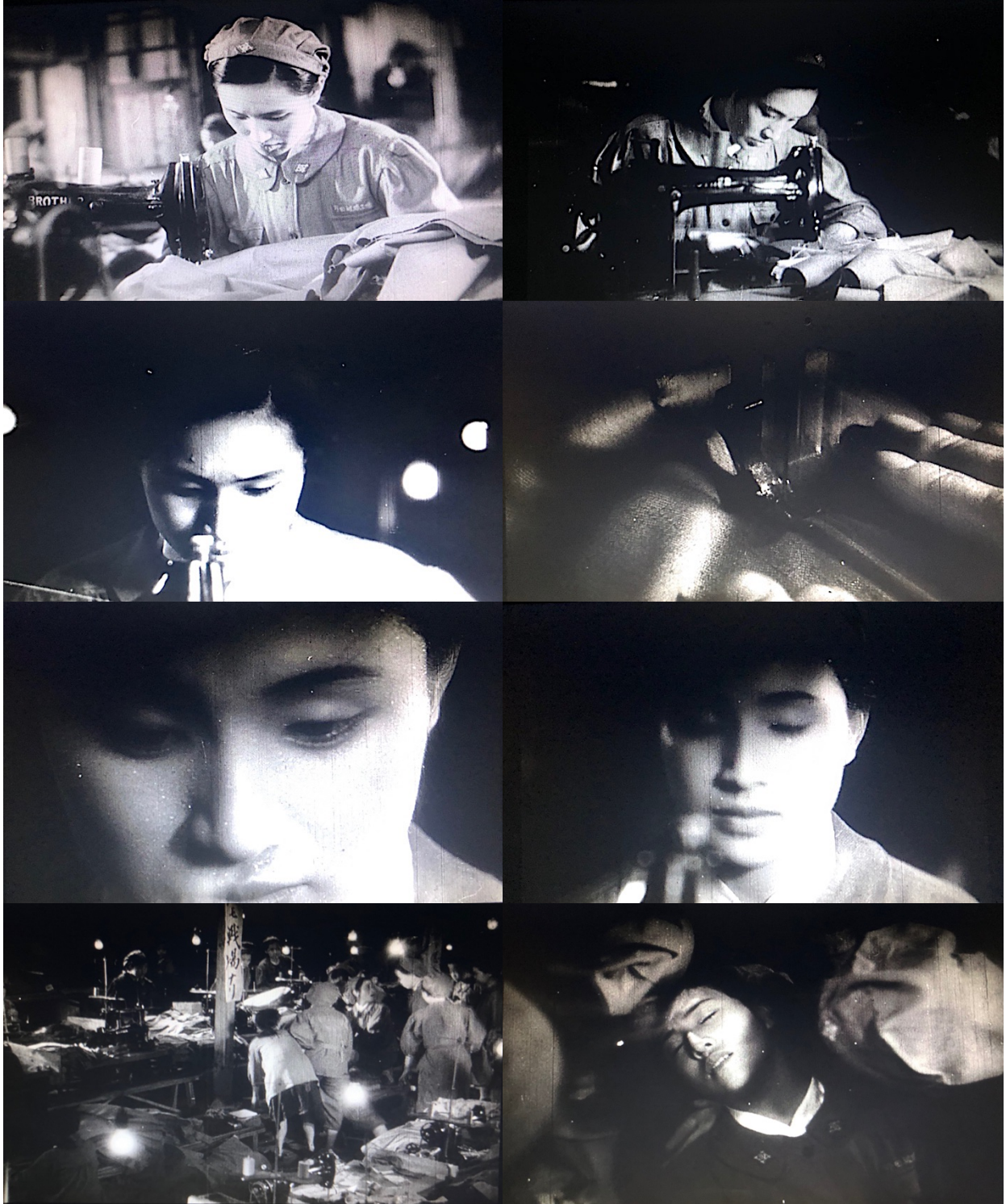


Figure 6: Kinshuku collapses from constantly working

The transfer of patriarchal power to the Shōwa Emperor reflects the position of colonial authorities that undermined the role of marriage and reproduction in the Korean psyche. All of

the wartime films examined for this study of late colonial Korea shared the task of promoting pernicious gender relations. Punok's acceptance of her fiancé's conscription in *Volunteer* and Akiko's melancholy over the masculinist domination of whale hunting in *A Story of Whales* are examples of the colonial authorities' desire for "soft" eugenics in Korea. These female representations conveyed antagonism that blamed personal frustrations on the members of the opposite sex. These films presented to a generation of Koreans that filial piety was a negligible affair. The suppression of the collective like kinship and the agrarian economy through an emphasis on individuality and opportunism dismantled the communal responsibility inherent in Korean customs. This modernist rift indicates a sharp socio-political tension between colonial authorities and the subjects they governed.

Examining the contention around Kinshuku's death in *Straits of Chosŏn*, Yŏngjae Yi engages with Mary Anne Doane's reading of melodramatic genre as the "reproduction of masochistic feminine scenario" and asserts that "women become citizens *through* men...by playing the role of the one who waits for the man."¹⁵³ Identifying "women's films" (yŏsŏng yŏnghwa) as the genre that deals with such women's experience as Kinshuku's suffering, Yi argues that total war mobilization and the 1943 conscription lifted Korean women to the same social status as Japanese women.¹⁵⁴ But persistent practices of ethnic discrimination at schools and workplaces, and the lack of opportunity for career advancement for female factory workers – symbolized by Kinshuku's death, for example – meant that there is not much "hope that they can escape the state of exception of being the colonized."¹⁵⁵ If Korean women were treated as

¹⁵³ Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang," 215; 218.

¹⁵⁴ Mary Anne Doane defines 'woman's films' as a genre of Hollywood films produced from the silent era to the early 60s but most popular in the 1930s and 40s. The films deal with a female protagonist and "often appear to allow her significant access to point of view structures and the enunciative level of the filmic discourse." They treat problems defined as 'female' and are directed towards female audiences. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*, (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987) 1–13.

¹⁵⁵ Yi, "Hwanggun ūi sarang," 230.

sovereign by the colonial state, especially as the last defense line of the Japanese Empire, rear-guard women (ch'onghu puin), could we not help but consider Kinshuku's death as an aberration? Whereas Korean women were appropriated within the modern state-building project and preclude gender as a means to an end by crediting Asiatic values, rear guards, and reproductivity, I argue that Kinshuku's death is a telos of Koreans in wartime expressed through a woman's body. As such, the ethos needs to be contextualized through the relations of production under the backdrop of masculinist glorification.¹⁵⁶

Myōnga Kwon observes the inception of modern subjectivity as a class struggle. She writes, "the modernist enlightenment project completes itself by universalizing and fantasizing equality in the subjective particularity resulting from class repression and segregation."¹⁵⁷ Kwon argues that the imperialization movement utilized gender relations to diversify the politicization of ethnicity.¹⁵⁸ A large number of publications emphasized the importance of women's involvement in nation-building under the imperialization movement. Problematizing gender as a part of fascist politics, Kwon insists that war mobilization structured social hierarchy with Emperor Hirohito at the top, followed by male youth, rear guard women, and children at the periphery. Representations of dependent femininity in wartime films established their colonial exploitation as the norm.

¹⁵⁶ Kwōn, "Ch'onghu puin, sin yōsong, kūrigo sūpai," 259–63, 266–7; Myōngjin Pak, "Ilche p'ashijūm sigi sinario e nat'anān yōsōnggwa kukka imiji" [Study of the images of families, states, women in scenarios during imperial Japanese fascism: focusing on the later period of Japanese rule], *Yōsōng munhak yōn'gu* [Feminism and Korean literature] 16 (2006): 149–52.

¹⁵⁷ Kwōn, "Ch'onghu puin, sin yōsong, kūrigo sūpai," 252–82.

¹⁵⁸ Kwōn, "Ch'onghu puin, sin yōsong, kūrigo sūpai," 274.

The Audience Demographic

What does the promotion of anomalous masculinities and dependent femininities have to do with Korean films? The minuscule position occupied by Korean films in the Japanese film industry reveals that anomalous and misogynistic masculinities were tropes for the preservation of the colonial status quo. Although a 1941 survey in *Maeil sinbo* states that 83.25 percent of the movie audience was male, approximately half of which were under 25 years old, audience demographics have not been a subject of serious exploration.¹⁵⁹ From 1942 to 1945, there are no reliable records of the number of film admissions and publications. Censorship of publications also makes government sources at that time unreliable. Some writers and critics claimed that cinema was popular in Korea with an estimated 25 million annual admissions equivalent to the total entire Korean population.¹⁶⁰ Of that, 8 to 10 million admissions, or forty percent, happened in Seoul (K. Kyōngsōng; J. Keijō).¹⁶¹ The question of the audience during the war mobilization remains unresolved as Hiyōng Pak observes that the proportion of the Korean population who could attend screenings was low.¹⁶² But contemporary writers' contradictory claims about the formidable number of Korean film audiences suggest that wartime films were viewed by student populations.¹⁶³ Scholarship on colonial films has downplayed the fact that approximately

¹⁵⁹ Discrepancies in primary sources and inaccurate responses rendered this number unreliable and even misleading. Migration, draft, and low survival rates for newborns contributed to the inaccuracy. Hiyōng Pak, "Chōnsich'echegi ilche ūi yōnghwat'ongje wa sōnchōn yōnghwa ūi sōnggyōk" [The restrictions of films by Japanese colonial during the wartime period (1938–45) and the characteristics of propaganda films] master's thesis, (Jeju National University, 2016), 24; Hyun Hee Park, "Tears in the Imperial Screen: Wartime Colonial Korean Cinema, 1936–1945," PhD diss., (University of Chicago, 2017), 221–22; *Maeil sinbo*, July. 13, 1941.

¹⁶⁰ The aggregation was published on pages 7 and 55 in the 87th volume of *Yōnghwa sunbo* (1941–1943). Korea Film Archive, *Ilbonō chapchiro pon Chosōn yōnghwa* [Looking at Chosōn cinema through Japanese magazines 4], (Seoul, Republic of Korea: Hyōnsil munhwa yōnku, 2013), 208–09.

¹⁶¹ Chonghwa Chung uses the data from *Yōnghwa sunbo* in 1941 which recorded the total population of 22.8 million and 21 million admissions. Chōng, *Chosōn yōnghwaranūn kūndae*, 324.

¹⁶² Hiyōng Pak, "Chōnsich'echegi ilche ūi yōnghwat'ongje," 24

¹⁶³ Im Hwa's article "Chosōn Film Theory" in *Maeil sinbo* concerned the prolonged period of film industry's depression in 1942. Paek et al., eds., *Chosōn yōnghwa ran*, 576–83; Hiyōng Pak, "Chōnsich'echegi ilche ūi yōnghwat'ongje," 24.

700,000 Japanese residents in Korea composed a considerable portion of the annual film admissions while ordinary farmers, domestic workers, and factory workers rarely attended film screenings.

Yŏngjin Oh illustrates the condition of moviegoing in 1942 with a satirizing paean about the Japanese control of cinema in Korea:

Although cinema in the Japanese Empire has the second largest production in the world [second to the U.S.A.], the total number of productions is one-sixth of what it used to be with 72 feature-length films in Japan and 6 in Korea annually....Thanks to the planning by the Film Distribution Corporation's 'red and white program,' a cinephile like me can only enjoy movies twice a week now.¹⁶⁴

Oh's impression of the wartime film apparatus is the latter's idleness. He warns of the "injurious deed" done to the population in rural areas by urban audiences that the films were geared toward.¹⁶⁵ Not only does Oh's criticism reveal bourgeois disdain for state intervention, but it contextualizes Korean films from the audience's perspective that consider the cinema as a worthy part of "life, education, health, and even to some degree of happiness."¹⁶⁶ An annual average of 5.4 productions of Chosŏn films during the war period (1937–1945) reveals the dominance of Japanese films in Korea. Additionally, film rationing, which limited the number of film distributions to six per month with two film prints for each movie, covering 242 screens throughout Korea, limited the impact of Korean films.¹⁶⁷ Considering that the most popular Chosŏn film *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower*'s (dir. Imai Tadashi, 1943) combined admissions from Kyŏngsŏng, P'yŏngyang, and Pusan were 102,394 in 1943, one can conclude that

¹⁶⁴ From "Ōnŭ yŏnghwain ege ponanŭn p'yŏnji" [Letter to a filmmaker] in *Sinsidae* in August 1942. Paek et al., eds., *Chosŏn yŏnghwa ran*, 585–90.

¹⁶⁵ The injurious deed that Yŏngjin Oh referred to is the alienation that the quintessential image of Korea catered to urban audiences imposed on rural audiences.

¹⁶⁶ Paek et al., eds., *Chosŏn yŏnghwa ran*, 588; Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Hiyŏng Pak, "Chŏnsich'echegi ilche ŭi yŏnghwat'ongje," 22; Chŏng, *Chosŏn yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae*, 325–28.

enthusiasm for the film was exaggerated.¹⁶⁸ This evidence demonstrates the arduous task of transforming Chosŏn cinema into a war apparatus because of the disparity between the praise of Korean cinema's popularity and the logistical obstacles that suggested otherwise.

In the same vein, one can affirm that representations of masculinity and femininity were the result of class restructuring that propped up a sense of empowerment for young, less-privileged male adolescents disenfranchised by patriarchy. Late colonial representations of Korean masculinities were targeted for male audiences, and appealed to adolescent self-determinism. Indeed, late colonial Korean films, by enmeshing the themes of teenage angst—love affairs, choosing vocations, and setbacks—in their plots were designed to persuade the youth. Nevertheless, due to the relative lack of Korean soldiers in the Japanese Imperial Army and the small proportion of Korean films produced under the Film Law, it can be questioned whether targeting young men was an effective tactic for uniting the colonized under a banner of total mobilization by a militarist state. In sum, the exclusivity of their subject matters encapsulates the propagandistic significance of these films. Manipulating the discontent of less-privileged adolescent males, colonial authorities promoted the illusion of totality and inclusiveness. Downplaying women's participation in this new order, the masculinist fantasy incited a culture war against the foundation of Korean society, the family.

Yŏngsim the Phantasmatic Women: Feminist Bereavement in the Patriarchal Psyche

In colonial films, Korean women's misery and their socio-economic deterioration, which contradicted their wartime mobility, paralleled the idea that social ascension was the raison

¹⁶⁸ *Suicide Squad at the Watchtower* ranked 29th at the box office among the 68 domestic films produced in 1943. *Straits of Chosŏn* had combined admissions of 138,705 from Kyŏngsŏng, P'yŏngyang, and Pusan. Chŏng, *Chosŏn yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae*, 342–56.

d'être of Korean masculinities. In other words, the representations of women's dependence increased the valor of men. For example, in *Military Train*, in Wŏnjin's interior monologue, Yŏngsim asks him to pay off her loan: "Please save me Wŏnjin. My life is sustained by you alone. Please Wŏnjin." Aside from the fact that a phantasmatic feminine voice drives his anguish, his misogyny is buttressed by his shaming Yŏngsim's vocation as a *kisaeng* (entertainer). Meanwhile, this masculinist fantasy overlooks Yŏngsim's income that allowed Chŏmyong, her brother, to become a train conductor. More ironic is the fact that it is her helplessness that prompts Wŏnjin to assist in sabotaging military logistics. Although Wŏnjin is considered a bad Korean because of his incompetence, his misogynistic attitude towards Yŏngsim and shame-ridden suicide are seen as acts of recuperating his honor. This masculinist delusion begs the question of whether Yŏngsim's dependent femininity had similar effect as anomalous masculinities had on adolescent male audiences that extolled war fever as self-determination.

Yŏngsim embodies the enduring ethos of femininity in Korean cinema. The wartime films' treatment of women stifled women's self-confidence by distancing expectation and reality. If Yŏngsim displayed infantilism and omnipresence as feminine traits, Punok's smirk symbolizes social catastrophe as an opportunity for women's agency. The various depictions of women is related to the emotional impact of war mobilization. The range of feminine traits, from dependency to opportunism, inspiring equality and self-determination, expressed the subjectivities of the Showa Empire. This promotion, however, came with a twist. Implying that *chayu yŏnae* (courtship by choice) was standard practice, colonial films conveyed to women that possessing men gave women security. Nonetheless, this collective crisis alludes to the GGK's

intention to subordinate the family to the state economy by disintegrating customs tied to feudalism and patrilineage.

Punok's Smirk: the Korean Femme Fatale

In *Volunteer's* final scene in which a flag-waving crowd fanatically cheers on the soldiers boarding a train, Ch'unho leaves behind on the train track a piece of scrunched up white cloth resembling the flag Punok is holding. Clutching onto the flag with both hands, the Japanese emblem repairs her fallout with Ch'unho by sublimating Punok's disheartened body into her clasping hands. Punok gazes at the vanishing train and slyly smirks into the camera (Figure 7). Through the display of resolute unity between the body and mind, the film tries to deter Korean women from claiming the void left empty by soldiering Korean men. However, its effect is uncertain as the object of her anger and disappointment oscillates between Ch'unho, the individual, and the colonial system, the collective. A smirk is an appropriate human response at the moment of such uncertainty. Especially when Ch'unho means the world to Punok, what is she hiding from the audience? What is Ch'unho, with his ambition to surpass social expectations, also concealing? Maintaining composure under pressure, Punok strikes a guise that conveys her comprehension of Ch'unho's choice, making her a femme fatale.¹⁶⁹

Punok's smirk at the end of the film, then, subtly breaks the circuit of normative patriotism to the Japanese Empire by holding a space where Ch'unho's erratic character gains

¹⁶⁹ Chinsuk Chu notes "Unlike male audience, the position of autonomous, active, and pleasure-seeking female audience is limited to 'masochistic over-identification or narcissism which includes becoming one's own subject of desire.'" See Söngnyul Kang and Yöngjae Yi for different takes on Punok's smirk. Chinsuk Chu, "P'eminijüm yönghwa pip'yöng üi ironjök chönhwan e taehan yön'gu" [Study of the theoretical shift in feminist cinema criticism] *Yöngghwa yön'gu* [Film studies] 13 (1997): 108–9; Söngnyul Kang, "Ilche kangjömggi Chosön yönghwa e nat'anan kajok tamnon yön'gu" [A study of family discourse in Korean cinema during the Japanese colonial period], *Yöngghwa yön'gu* [Film studies] 58 (2013): 14, 16; Yi, *Cheguk Ilbon üi Chosön yönghwa*, 74–81; 102–3.

approval. Behind the façades of masculine toughness and feminine dependency emerges acknowledgement of the futility of upward mobility. Punok's smirk conveys that the unruliness of Korea is to be tolerated and even comprehended. The smirk may have resonated with the audience who was doubting their own commitment to the ideology of the empire. Punok's smirk addresses the absurdity of women's roles as silent witnesses to the journeys of Korean men who volunteer to fight their colonizer's war. What is more interesting is how the image of the femme fatale sums up the absurdity of the narrative with a quiet snicker.



Figure 7: Punok's smirk

But we see that neither Ch'unho nor Punok wants to participate in their normative roles for the contentment of the Shōwa Emperor. This way, neither the man nor the woman achieves the fantasy of the merger between the mind and body. Instead, they accept the role that the war

requires. The femininity the films portray is infantile, and dependent, and this is the project of the camouflaged desire of ethnic patriarchy and the institutional chauvinism. The smirk, however, suspends the subjectification of the woman's body as a mere receptor of male fantasy. Women assume their pivotal role as judges. However symbolic the portrayal of Punok is in the film, she is given a role in the political arena.

But, Punok's resolute posture on the empty train track amidst the absence of soldiering men cloaks the tragic fate of a forsaken woman in Neo-Confucianist society. The Korean woman transforms into a *femme fatale* by transcending the traditional rearguard discourse of women and the image of the new women that contrasts it.¹⁷⁰ Confounding the patriarchal crisis with the opportunism of war mobilization, Ch'unho's absence seems to commit Punok to patriotism to Japan as the solution to her own insecure status as an unmarried woman. Her clutching hands hold the Japanese flag as a solace to the disappointment of the breakup.

Punok anticipates Ch'unho's disloyalty when his opportunity for social mobility presents itself. She ardently waits for Ch'unho who is too enamored in the agitation of war and Japanese nationalism to marry her. Punok speaks in one of the first sequences, "there will be a day that you will roar loudly, and a meagre [girl] like me is unsuitable for you." In her placement to the male protagonist, Punok takes up the peripheral position of the female gender in the Japanese Empire. Ch'unho expresses doubt in himself because of his interrupted schooling, despite his fervent support for Japanese slogans such as *naisen ittai*. Here we learn that he, too, is a passive drifter whose chauvinistic individualism begs for affirmation. As a result, the potency of the Korean nation, as implicated by the relationship of the protagonists, is jeopardized. Ch'unho's movement from the position of "a farmer's offspring" (*nongbu ũi chasik*) to a career soldier that

¹⁷⁰ Kwŏn, "Ch'onghu puin, sin yŏsong kŭrigo spai," 257–82.

“protects the nation” (naraŕŭl chik’inŭn), at once, expedites the process of Ch’unho’s assimilation into Korean society as part of the Japanese Empire.

Hardly decipherable is the subtle memo passed between the veils of gender expectations, yet it is one of the many critical observations that spearheads “the laboring body...seen as an internal relation of the historically and geographically achieved processes of capital circulation.”¹⁷¹ *Volunteer* captures the dilemma of the colonized that culminated in the representation of the capitalist subjects under a military state. Punok’s co-operation with Ch’unho does not advance a position of her own, but her quiet acknowledgement of the futility of Ch’unho’s soldiering hints at a sense of meaninglessness in her own subjectivity as a mother/wife. Here, she remains a figure of the subordinated gender in the masculinist epic, left behind by the heartless fiancé, unable to make a life of her own by becoming a soldier. At last, in this dénouement, Punok’s self-hating speech about good-for-nothingness in the opening sequence of the film comes in full circle to prioritize ethnic, over civic, nationalism:

Punok: I know what I am. You’d told me before that even a female with only an elementary school education has no place in society right now. I am no use for nothing.

Ch’unho: Not really. I only finished middle school.

Punok: Not at all. I know that you are holding a sickle for now, but I can see your heart wanting more than that. When the day comes that you throw away the sickle, you won’t even lay an eye on me.

Ch’unho: Why do you say such things? I know who I am, the son of a farmer. A farmer’s son only becomes a farmer.

Punok: Not at all, the day will come that we will hear your roar. I think, I am no good to you.

Ch’unho: What a preposterous statement! When I become successful, that means you, too, are successful.

Punok: Just, please become successful. That is my wish.

¹⁷¹ David Harvey, “The Body as an Accumulation Strategy,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16 (1998): 419–20.

The scene validates Ch'unho's deceptive words and actions, Punok's willingness to accept trickery as the way of the modern man, and the collective failure of living to hear the roar. Ch'unho becomes muted into the façade of an armed soldier in a flock of uniformed bodies, hiding behind the figure of the Shōwa Emperor. His roar turns out to be directed at Punok, as opposed to the bourgeoisie, which he covertly tries to assimilate into. As the tale of ethnic nationalism intertwines with their romance, Punok falls victim to Ch'unho's narcissism.¹⁷² The film maintains this unconsummated relationship as the source of 'Korean' jouissance.

Akiko and Patriarchal Ethos

In the *Story of Big Whales* (dir. Pang Hanjun, 1944), labor-hardened whale-hunters choke on their own tongues with their prospective female companions. Crying and stuttering before gathering up their feelings said in decipherable forms, they fail to promote themselves despite the carnal nuances hinted at by the other fisher. For example, Harukawa, confesses to Akiko—the prospective partner who beats around the bushes to solicit romantic reassurance from him—that his lover is none other than the whales he hunts for living. Here, Harukawa's awkward interaction with a woman seems to be aimed at evading courtship that would cement his gender identity. He acts as if he has to be discreet and remain oblivious about being viewed as a masculine figure:¹⁷³

Akiko: I (after a long pause) will get going now.

Harukawa: Umm...umm...

Akiko: Bye now (gets up to leave).

Harukawa: Umm...umm...

¹⁷² The need to expand beyond the masochistic identification (Mary Anne Doan) or transsexual voyeurism (Laura Mulvey) as the position of female audiences is shared by a generation of scholars who wanted to highlight the contradiction and complexity of female audiences. Chu, "P'eminijūm yōnghwa pip'yōng," 112.

¹⁷³ Tsukuda Tsunao, "Kōgyōngjōn," 46.

Akiko returns where she came from. The look of her leaving seems pathetic. Harukawa gazes at her back as she gains distance away from him.

The film goes further with the theme of pseudo-masculine negation by having Akiko question the superiority, if any, of masculinity over femininity to which Harukawa has no answer. Akiko states that being man is superior to being a woman because whale-hunting, monopolized by fraternal kinship, prohibits her from inheriting her father's trade. She wants to be a man to be able to do what women cannot.

Akiko's inquisition threatens the authority of masculinity given to men by the state authority because it leads to the heart of Harukawa's avoidance that there is no patrilineal privilege. There is, however, a desire of the state authority to promote patriarchy through Harukawa's queerness. The breakdown of the patriarchal narrative accentuates the obliviousness of Harukawa's masculinity.¹⁷⁴ In this sense, Akiko's presence unsettles Harukawa's avoidance of the masculine role that he is set up to represent.

Pangja and Queerness

In consideration of adolescent male fantasy as the laboratory of colonialism, we can appreciate a paradoxical, 'queer,' secondary figure introducing the topic of sex in an age-old story turned into a film, *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* (1941). The protagonist's acknowledgement of sexual intercourse as a part of what it means to be an autonomous individual in a community of likeminded others finds a common theme in the films examined in this analysis. More importantly, this common theme emerged from the mobilization of

¹⁷⁴ Chinsuk Chu summarizes Laura Mulvey's seminal work on the patriarchal structure of cinematic language: "The threat presented by the image of femininity is neutralized by punishment, forgiveness, and salvation. Secondly, the [male-gaze] denies the gender difference of the female body by fetishizing women." Chu, "P'eminijum yonghwa pip'yong," 104-5.

adolescent male fantasies, whose aspiration for filial piety and patriarchal restoration, suppressed by colonial discrimination, materialized in queerness. Sexual ambivalence demoralized the maternal sphere, by curtailing the foundation of reproductive and domestic labor as much as propagandistic misogyny did by promoting male dominance over women. However, considering the increasing importance of women's work throughout all sectors of society, domestic work must have been an equally desired proposition for young women who dreamed of hypergamy through their hard labor. But who is to judge these women who tried to work their way into a better life even if that meant suppressing their desires altogether?

Within the narrative of *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* is the classic *Tale of Ch'unhyang* (*Ch'unhyangjŏn*), a story of forbidden love between a courtesan and a scholar. The protagonist, Yi Mongnyong, is a magistrate's son and a model of propriety who falls in love with Ch'unhyang, the daughter of a kisaeng. Although a love story, there is little intimacy suggested in the script. It is only when boy-like Pangja mentions Mongnyong's overnight stay at Ch'unhyang's quarters that sexual relations between the two main characters are confirmed. Yŏngil and Hŏhun's film company is adapting the tale into film which creates frame-within-a-frame narrative structure. This makes *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* a story about Koreans making a film about Koreanness as much as about the success story of Chŏnghŭi and Yŏngil as good Koreans. The film's narrative structure stresses the theme that ethnic identity is an object of commodity fetishism similar to that of Chŏnghŭi's 'Japaneseness,' highlighting the reification in mobilizing Korean identities for Japan's war. The narrative structure arranges Pangja's queerness as the reflection of a repressed reproductivity. Interestingly, Pangja is the only character who embodies libidinal traits in the representation of Korean gender relations in all of the accessible feature-length films shown in the late 1930s and the first half of the 1940s. Pangja's exaggerated

role in *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* hints at a repressed reproductivity in Korean bodies that the expansion of the Japanese Empire required. The irony of bestowing the role of a truth-teller to the most trivial character parallels the absurdity of using the representations of ‘Koreanness’ and patriarchy to support the capitalist expansion of the Japanese Empire. Pangja’s insight becomes a trivial satire through the narrative structure that makes light of suppressing the desires. The embedded narrative allows the film to highlight the inequalities of the social system in precolonial Korea. And, through Pangja’s unconscious and carnal exploits, the state’s desire for eugenics is revealed. In this regard, the bestowing of self-reflexivity to the queer subject, Pangja, speaks to the type of colonial Korean the war authority most desired. Thus, the film’s Hamlet-like frame-within-a-frame set-up is a conscious effort of the filmmakers to solicit what Takashi Fujitani calls a ritual of free consent, or the “active participation as self-reflexive subjects” to govern the self-governing.¹⁷⁵ The dual usage around Pangja’s appearance acknowledges the empire’s ambivalence in buttressing the correlation between gender, colonial Korea, and wartime ethnic integration. It is noteworthy that Pangja’s triviality in juxtaposition to the seriousness of gender relations accentuates the obstructiveness of reproductivity in view of war mobilization. His position as both colonial and essential is crucial in clearing the ambivalence about the direction of Korean subjects. Irony permeates the scene as self-reflexivity is bestowed on the minor character whose queerness suspends the plot’s teleological finale towards masculine restoration through war mobilization.

While Koreans were mobilized for the war, colonial discrimination continued. The absence of suffrage continued for Koreans by utilizing the debate around the role of culture as the supreme assimilationist apparatus. An examination of female representations in the films of

¹⁷⁵ Fujitani, *Race for Empire*, 27.

late colonial Korea indicates that an ethno-national particularity was crystalizing. As Korean elites advocated for the establishment of Korea's own cinema industry, which supported the campaign to promote multiethnic imperialism as a hallmark of modernity, female representations in films reflected the evolution of imperial domination in thirty-years of colonial rule to promote an ethnic identity guided by the interest of the regional politics.¹⁷⁶ This compelled class and ethnic "malcontents" to buttress the totalitarian zeitgeist through what Nikolas Rose describes "a certain way of striving to reach social and political ends by acting in a calculated manner on forces, activities, and relations" of individuals that constitute a population.¹⁷⁷ Thus, reshaping the human minds and bodies to create a labor condition where ethnicity, gender, and culture reflected the colonial institution, the responsibility of embodying Koreanness was placed on those who took the opportunity to exploit these broader changes that war mobilization created, which included the increasing participation by women in all sectors of the economy. The individuation created the several typologies of womanhood that evolved around kinship and marriage to place men at the center of the totalitarian imagination under the auspices of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This brought the psychic bifurcation of Korean women who were increasingly compelled to work in male-dominated spaces and take on more masculine roles, challenging the state authorities to create characters that reflected their desires in films of late colonial Korea. The films, caught between the demand to represent the reality of collapsing gendered division in the labor market and the appeal of baiting masculinist fantasy with patriarchy, resorted to queerness to mobilize the industrious bodies and the patriotic minds.

¹⁷⁶ Hagiŏng Shin points out a defiance in the GGK regarding the name-changing policy as evidence of imperialist contradiction. Hagiŏng Shin, "Ilche malgi Chosŏnbumgwa singminji yŏnghwain ūi yongmang" [Chosŏn boom and the desire of filmmakers of Chosŏn, a study on 'the Spring of the Korean Peninsula'], *Asia munhwa yon'gu* [Asian Cultural Studies] 23 (2011): 102; Chŏng, *Chosŏn yŏnghwaranŭn kŭndae*, 331–33.

¹⁷⁷ Palmer, *Fighting for the Enemy*, 151–79; Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London, UK: Free Association Press, 1999), 4–5.

Conclusion

In the middle of *Spring on the Korean Peninsula* the gaze of the frame returns to a scene in *Tale of Ch'unhyang* where Mongnyong and Ch'unhyang bid farewell. In this heart-wrenching moment appears Pangja, who interrupts the melodrama to resuscitate the plot into motion. The act takes the subplot to the center stage of the narrative via the means of the mis-en-scene, catapulting the ancillary Pangja onto the screen! Zeroing in on the only character less relevant than himself, Hyangdan, Ch'unhyang's female servant, who is embodying melancholy to her best ability Pangja shouts, "Look at this human stock! You, too, want a romantic farewell—just like a copy of the highnesses!"

The embedded tale awkwardly pushes itself into the main plot of a struggling film crew where performances of Koreanness, movements of Korean bodies, and spoken Japanese overlap to construct a pseudo-climactic act where the voice of a down-and-out-all-about-the-body takes the center stage. Hyangdan continues to hold the melodramatic pose of her patron, which doubles down as Ch'unhyang comes into the frame in the background. This feminine sphere validates Pangja's positionality, establishing the particularity of Korean masculinity. The peculiar scene of two women in the same pose—striking a feeling of female chastity—discreetly connotes the socio-political stances of the women whose position in the institution of propaganda is pretentious.



Figure 8: Hyangdan and Ch'unhyang's posing

Mongnyong and Pangja, as tokens of colonized, Korean masculinity, rely on the loyalty and passivity of Ch'unhyang and Hyangdan, models of Korean femininity, for self-validation. Nevertheless, the fact that such individual subjectivities were churned out by capitalist expansion is an irony unmissed by the filmmakers. As the camera slowly zooms out from the two women in melancholic pose, the frame reveals none other than Pangja holding a reflector as a member of the production staff. As the frame zooms out further, interjecting the scene are cheerful murmurs

in Japanese that celebrate the *successful* representation of the *quintessential* tale of Koreanness, *Tale of Ch'unhyang*.

Once those adhering to the imagery are rewarded in the relations of production, the body seeks self-improvement or to better conform to the norm. This contract, both material and moral, keeps bodies in complicit motion. Nevertheless, as Han Sangön and Kang Söngnyul point out, the films of late colonial Korea construct the family centered around, not the father, but the Shōwa Emperor.¹⁷⁸ Since Japanese imperialism required the subordination of the emperor's male subjects, Korean masculinity, while determinable, was more clearly defined by its limitations.

Anomalous masculinity permeated colonial Korean representation throughout the course of Japanese rule.¹⁷⁹ This relationship between the state, private enterprise, and the making and showing of motion pictures indicates that film was not a reflection of culture but a biopolitical laboratory designed to shape demographics. As such, the popular culture glimpsed in the films made for the mobilization of Koreans include as much disdain as fascination towards the state of capitalist expansion and global competition.

Korean society was transformed into a labor reserve during the war, resulting in a flexible approach to gender relations. The films of the time instrumentalized gender representations to transform Neo-Confucian social organization to fit state agendas for Korean eugenics and the population's desire for social mobility. As a result, the concept of Koreanness suppressed virility and repressed reproductivity, promoting misogyny, absenteeism, betrayal, shame, and apathy as the hallmarks of total mobilization. Wartime films encouraged 'good Koreans' to condemn

¹⁷⁸ Sangön Han, "Ilche malgi t'ongje yöngghwasa üi paeu e kwanhan yön'gu" [Study on the actors of Chosön film production corporation at the end of colonial period], *Hyöndaeyöngghwa yön'gu* [Contemporary film studies] 5, no. 1 (2009): 98; Kang, "Ilche kangjömggi Chosön yöngghwa e nat'anankajok tamnon" [A study of family discourse in Korean cinema during the Japanese colonial period]: 23-4.

¹⁷⁹ Poole, *When the Future*, 190-200; Park, *The Proletarian Wave*, 89-94; Pang, "Ilche malgi munhakintül üi taeil hyömnnyök yuhyönggwa üimi" [Forms and meanings of writers' collaboration with Japan during the 1940s]: 233-6, 275-6; Chöng, *Chosön yöngghwaranün künde*, 309-401.

individual volition, emigration, and social mobility associated with Japaneseness, while those who did not were considered 'bad Koreans.' Koreans who practiced celibacy and docility were awarded the privilege of mobility and could even migrate to Japan as contributing members of the empire.

Gender representation became increasingly valuable to propagandists in the modern Japanese Empire. By manipulating the prejudices and discontent of underprivileged adolescent males who were disenfranchised by primogeniture, Japanese authorities propelled the militarist state.

Late colonial Korean films represented weak (Yǒngil), selfish (Ch'unho), effeminate (Harukawa), dependent (Wǒnjin and Chǒmyong), and absent (Seiki) men as tropes of adolescent masculinist fantasies. These anomalous masculinities shaped the Korean ethos during wartime by problematizing the absence of the patriarch, either fighting for or lost to Japan's war against China and the West. The films, through Kinshuku's death, Yǒngsim's infantility and phantasm, Punok's smirk, Yǒnggae, Sunhŭi, Chǒnghŭi, and Maria's abandonment of their socio-economic statuses, Anna and Kyǒngsuk's resentment towards ethnic hierarchy, and Akiko's frustration about patrilineal succession in whale hunting, urged women to tolerate anomalous masculinities. These female characters show the dilemma the colonial authorities faced with modernist edification: it recognized women's labor in transforming society while promoting tight control over their bodies.

Although the restoration of patriarchal values influenced these gender representations, their diversity reflects the modernist tropes present in rhetoric of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. The patriarchal restoration fueled misogyny, driving a wedge between male and female spheres. It threatened the foundation of the family economy, which determined

women's socio-economic status and access to resources through marriage and childbirth. In the end, the gender representations in late colonial Korean films subjected women to increased surveillance, but they accepted the risks as collateral damage for seeking social mobility. As a result, ambivalence permeates their gender representations as the state's desire to control the female body exposed the modernist rift between the colonial authorities and their subjects. Femininities offered a new subjectivity where the female body could be objectified for the individual realization of birthing and dying. These femininities expressed an ethos of Koreans in wartime through the woman's body, transforming social relations, rearranging gender dynamics, and challenging the status quo in the course of their undertaking.

National cinema has been the vanguard of the senses that organize the bodies and souls to acknowledge each other in the Korean consciousness. The late colonial Korean films used betrayal, contempt, disappointment, confusion, and despair to embolden the state during war mobilization. Individuals suppressed their desires for socio-economic opportunities in expanding the military state, neglecting the continuation of Korean patriarchy for individual gain. However, this mobilization strategy resulted in a sense of restlessness among the people who felt disconnected from their bodies and minds. Against this backdrop, Korean cinema acted as a deceptive source of inspiration, helping to organize and energize people's spirits.

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- Yang, Chunam, dir. *Mimong: Chugŭm ūi chajangga* [Sweet Dream]. 1936; Seoul, The Republic of Korea: Blue Kino, DVD 2011.
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