PERFORMING MODERN KOREA IN THE U.S.: KOREAN IMMIGRANTS’ THEATRICAL ACTIVITIES IN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAIʻI DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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DISSERTATION
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century. As a result of the fact that Koreans regarded their national territory as tainted by the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), they developed their national identity based on ethnic commonality, and expected Korean diaspora, particularly those residing in the U.S., to lead the construction of a modern Korea by taking advantage of their distance from colonialism as well as proximity to modernity. Though largely overlooked in contemporary scholarship, Korean immigrants in the U.S. produced a variety of nationalistic activities, including theatrical performances. News of these activities was conveyed via newspapers, which were surreptitiously but widely circulated on the Korean peninsula. By using those newspapers as primary sources, this dissertation demonstrates the vibrancy of theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. and their critical significance in the formation of ethnic nationalism in early modern Korea.

This dissertation asserts that theatre was promoted as essential in the building of the modern nation, particularly when providing affective experiences with modernity by incorporating Western cultural elements. By focusing on experiments in theatre genres with which Korean immigrants in the U.S. engaged, this research illuminates the performances produced with hybrid theatrical forms – specifically docudrama, chain drama, and music drama – which facilitated the suspension of disbelief in an envisioned “pure modern” Korea by providing tangible embodiments of the illusory vision. The analysis of the historical significance of hybrid theatrical forms challenges the Korean national theatre historiography that has denounced such forms as aesthetically and politically impure. While enriching early modern Korean and Korean
American theatre histories, this dissertation ultimately contributes to discourses on national theatre historiography by engaging with geographical as well as aesthetic concerns involved in writing a national theatre history.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1938, the Hawai‘i-based Korean newspaper *The Pacific Weekly* (*Taepyeongyang Jubo*) reported that the theatre production of that year, *Modern Life* (*Geundae Saenghwal*), would be really worth attending. According to the article, this theatre production was staged at the Korean Compound School, aka, the Korean Central School (*Jungang Hagwon*) in Honolulu, presenting “our [allegedly modern] daily life” through “many interesting and funny phrases” and “good music.”¹ The newspaper introduced the production as featuring about thirty young adult members of the Christian church, and being notably produced by “Dr. Rhee Syngman.”² Though there is no additional information to attest to the characteristics of this theatre production, the newspaper report implies that it was not rare for early Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i to engage in theatre productions in the 1930s. Syngman Rhee’s involvement also provides a hint of their theatrical activities’ relevance to nationalist movements. Rhee – who later became the first South Korean president after the country’s liberation from Japan – was one of the most influential independence movement leaders residing in the U.S. during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), along with Chang-ho Ahn.³ In fact, several documents, including the California-based Korean newspaper *The New Korea* (*Sinhan Minbo*), attest that Chang-ho Ahn and his followers also engaged in theatre productions in California during the first half of the twentieth century, as this dissertation will investigate in detail.

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¹ The play title – *Modern Life* – indicates that this theatre production presented aspects of modern life.
³ When addressing East Asian names, I use forenames first followed by surnames, although the reverse order is employed in the East Asian convention. I will further clarify the Romanization rule at the end of the Introduction.
Theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century have been minimally discussed in scholarship, not to mention in the public domain. As Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910 and remained a Japanese colony through the end of World War II in 1945, the majority of historians researching early twentieth-century Korea have focused on the Korean peninsula as a site of investigation, while often framing the history as a binary struggle between the colonizer Japan and the colonized Korea. Theatre historians have also engaged themselves predominantly with theatrical activities which occurred only on the peninsula, while tracing back, if not problematizing, Japanese influence on the development of modern theatre in Korea. In Korean American studies, scholars have tended to begin their narratives with a more recent and larger scale of Korean immigrants to the U.S. following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Thus, the literature has overlooked vital, particularly cultural, activities by Koreans who resided in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century, and their significance to the formation of Korean ethnic nationalism associated with nationalist movements. This dissertation readdresses this largely forgotten Korean American history by calling attention to their vibrant theatrical activities.

As I address in more detail later in this chapter, theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. achieved critical significance during the Japanese colonial period for two specific reasons. First, Korean immigrants in the U.S. were considered to be cultivating what I call a “pure modern” Korea with their distance from colonialism and their proximity to modernity, which was considered genuinely Western and at times specifically American, in Koreans’ understanding or expectations of the time. Second, theatre was expected to provide affective experiences in which Koreans could perform, observe, and imagine the ideal nation. As the ideal
nation was envisioned to be modernized following Western models, theatre productions adopting Western elements were specifically promoted as central to the formation of nationalism.

By drawing on the historical understanding of the Korean modern nation as bounded neither to its geographical boundary nor to indigenous aesthetics, this dissertation challenges the enclosure of categorical, disciplinary national theatre historiography based on the present perspective that the nation-state is geographically bound and national aesthetics are free from foreign influences. Specifically, I draw attention to the presence of early Korean immigrants in the U.S. and their theatre productions in hybrid forms; both topics have been historically positioned as central, but nevertheless remained peripheral, if not neglected, in contemporary academia. In doing so, I demonstrate that Korean immigrants in the U.S. actively engaged in genre experiments by borrowing from Western cultural elements – specifically journalism, film, and church music – in producing theatrical performances. In other words, Korean immigrants in the U.S. did not attempt to reproduce, restage, and reinforce the old Korea that they had left behind; instead, they tried to propose, present, and embody their vision of a new modern Korea. Ultimately, this dissertation illuminates that Korean immigrants in the U.S. tried to repackage nationalist contents with new, modern styles as if these virtual hybrids would successfully embody their imagined modern nation. Thereby, this dissertation engages with discourses of colonial Korean studies and Korean American studies, as well as national theatre historiography.

In what follows, I first clarify the expectedly privileged position of Korean immigrants in the U.S. in the landscape of the Korean ethnic nationalism developed under the contested dynamics of colonialism and modernity, especially American modernity. I then discuss the elevated position of theatre as a central activity in the nationalist movement, while analyzing why certain hybrid theatrical forms, even if not produced professionally, would have been
promoted. After providing an outline of the subsequent chapters, I conclude by suggesting that theatrical performances facilitated a suspension of disbelief in envisioning a “pure modern” Korea, although it was a fragile fantasy derived largely from misreading of American modernity, and modernity in general. Theatre performances in the end provided tangible embodiments of the illusory vision of “pure modern” Korea, which thereby rendered the vision as realistic as well as theatrical.

“Custodians of the Nation”: The Significance of Korean Immigrants in the U.S.

A large-scale Korean migration started to occur in the late nineteenth century as the Korean peninsula could no longer sustain its long reputation as the “Hermit Kingdom” after a series of forced openings to the rest of the world. The openings began with signing treaties with Japan in 1876 and with the U.S. in 1882, advanced through the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) – both of which occurred on and over the Korean soil – and finally culminating with the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. The tumultuous situation on the peninsula, even before the official colonization, forced many Koreans into a refugee-status, which eventually led a number of Koreans to leave the Korean peninsula for Japan, Manchuria, China, the Soviet Union, and the U.S. The overseas Koreans developed unprecedentedly organized communities and played a crucial role in the development of ethnic nationalism. Having developed at a time when Koreans regarded their national territory as tainted by Japanese colonialism, those diasporic communities provided an impetus to rethink the spatial definition of the nation, and to adopt, rather, a definition based on ethnic commonality.

That is, Koreans’ understanding of what makes individuals members of a nation developed in the

4 Korea made treaties with Great Brian and Germany in 1883, Italy and Russia in 1884, France in 1886, and Austro-Hungary in 1889. See Young Ick Lew, Early Korean Encounters with the United States and Japan: Six Essays on Late Nineteenth-Century Korea (Seoul: The Royal Asiatic Society, 2008), 8.
colonial context to be based upon “ethnicity and race” – differently from that of Western Europeans normally based on common civic and political elements. Accordingly, Korean ethnic nationalism was produced to affect every Korean without regard to age, gender, status distinctions, or even places of residence: what became known as minjok in Korean.

Diasporic communities were increasingly displayed as models for the peninsula; and those in the U.S. appeared particularly promising with their privileged position in achieving modernity, as I will articulate after providing a brief history of Korean immigration to the U.S. The Korean immigration to the U.S. started in the late nineteenth century when a Korean diplomatic mission, political refugees and students, and a small number of ginseng peddlers landed in the U.S. Fewer than fifty Koreans resided in the U.S. until 1903, when approximately one hundred Koreans – as the first officially sanctioned immigrant group in the Korean history – arrived in Hawai‘i that year. Upon the annexation of Hawai‘i by the U.S. in 1897, Hawaiian plantation owners, who could no longer import Chinese workers due to the Chinese Exclusion Acts enacted on the mainland in 1882, soon suffered from labor shortages as well as frequent Japanese strikes enabled by their dominant numbers in the labor force. Plantation owners thus

6 The Korean word for nation, minjok, was a neologism first employed by Japanese scholars to translate a Western concept and then appropriated by Korean nationalists in the early twentieth century. See Henry H. Em, “The National as Democratic Imaginary” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995). According to Chan-seung Park, the word gungmin, meaning “members of a state” as opposed to members of a nation, was more widely used than minjok until around 1905. However, as Korea lost its own state by being subjugated into a Japanese protectorate in late 1905, the concept of gungmin became unsustainable. Thus, the concept of minjok was suggested and developed as a substitute for gungmin. Chan-seung Park, “The Formation Process of ‘Minjok’ Concept in Korea,” Gaenyeom-gwa Sotong (June 2008): 79-120.
7 Although there had been Koreans who left the Korean territory for Russia, Manchuria, and China beforehand, they did not seek governmental approval for their departure. Thus, the first shipload loading 121 Koreans to Hawai‘i has been well accepted as the first official immigration. Twenty Koreans in the group failed their physical examination performed at Kobe in Japan; and eight Koreans were barred from landing in the Hawaiian harbor. Therefore, the exact number of the first official immigrants was 93. Bong-Youn Choy, Koreans in America (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 75.
8 According to Bong-Youn Choy, it was estimated that in 1902, the Japanese population in Hawai‘i was 31,029, which constituted 73.5 percent of the total workforce (92).
sought Korean workers as replacements for the banned Chinese and as an offset to the Japanese labor monopoly, manipulating Koreans as strikebreakers by consciously taking advantage of the historic animosities between Korea and Japan. Approximately 7,000 Korean workers moved to sugar plantations in Hawai‘i up to the time when the Korean government was forced to terminate the emigration policy upon becoming a protectorate of Japan in 1905. Many of those workers in Hawai‘i (slightly over 1,000) eventually moved to the West Coast.\(^9\) Subsequently, only about 2,000 more Koreans – consisting mostly of “picture brides” and a small number of political refugees and students – immigrated to the U.S. before the U.S. Congress completely barred immigration from Korea and other Asian countries with the passage of the national-origin quota system in 1924. As immigration resumed only after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, fewer than 10,000 Koreans lived in the U.S. and its territories during the first half of the twentieth century.\(^{10}\)

Korean immigrants in the U.S. promoted themselves and were accepted by peninsular Koreans as “custodians of the nation,” as Andre Schmid elaborates, with their allegedly privileged position as proponents for Korea’s future as a modern nation.\(^{11}\) In other words, the significant position of Korean immigrants in the U.S. in the early twentieth century was related to Koreans’ seemingly paradoxical national consciousness that “the [spiritual] nation could exist only outside of the [geographical] nation” – one constructed out of the particular historical

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\(^9\) 7,226 Koreans arrived on the Hawaiian Islands via 65 different ships between 1903 and 1905, but only 6,747 could enter Hawai‘i after passing their physical examination. Bong-Youn Choy, 76.


context. I will briefly discuss the historical context out of which Koreans’ national consciousness – what constitutes a nation and what would improve the nation – was constructed significantly differently from a contemporary perception of the nation, which is often defined by its geographical boundary and cultural distinctiveness. This discussion will underline the significance of this dissertation’s focus on Korean immigrants in the U.S., while calling for contemporary historians to look beyond the boundary of the Korean peninsula for a clearer understanding of the genesis of modern Korea.

The long history of political, linguistic, and geographical continuity in Korea, as John Duncan cautiously explains with the term “proto-nationalism,” could have already prepared a strong base for the emerging modern sense of Korean nation. Nonetheless, Koreans of the time were observing that China, as an old empire which the Korean “proto-nationalism” modeled itself after, was seriously declining, whereas Japan as a new empire was ascending in an unprecedented way by adopting new knowledge from the West. The Chinese culture and its long legacy in pre-modern Korea thus appeared as a target for expurgation. In contrast, the West emerged as a new model. In experiencing tectonic shifts in the geopolitics of East Asian countries imposed by the West, Korea, as Andre Schmid notes, after all “needed to be reconfigured, even retrofitted, in line with the new knowledge of the West.” The new knowledge of the West was believed to lead the nation to “civilization and enlightenment,” which represented modernity at large based upon Western definitions and claims to the

12 Andre Schmid, 225.
14 Andre Schmid, 19.
universality of these notions. In this sense, the Korean nation, as many scholars of nationalism argue, was to be “invented,” “constructed,” or “imagined” as a modern phenomenon.15

Focusing on the constructedness of Korea as a modern nation, the seminal study on Colonial Korea, Colonial Modernity in Korea, edited by Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson, questions the nationalist paradigm, which presupposes an unproblematized sense of the Korean nation. While looking at the period in the context of the complex dynamics of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism, Shin and Robinson seek to challenge a predominant nationalist historians’ understanding of the colonial period based on a simple dialectic of Japanese repression/exploitation versus Korean resistance. In their view, those nationalist readings underlie an essentialist understanding which looks at modernity and colonialism as exclusive and oppositional. Nevertheless, “colonialism’s merger with modernity,” Shin and Robinson state in the introduction, “facilitated negation and modification of old identities and construction and reconstruction of new identities.”16 As the essays included in this anthology illuminate, various aspects of modernity emerged in the colonial context with Japanese engagements that facilitated the Japanese hegemonic rule over Korea. At the same time though, they provided Koreans new spaces for political resistance and cultural expression. Therefore, most Koreans did not consider their involvement with modernity as anti-nationalistic. Furthermore, it should be noted that achieving modernity in and of itself was viewed as nationalistic since “from the inception of Korean nationalism, internalizing the idea of the nation-state meant counterpoising a ‘backward’ traditional society with aspirations to create a ‘modern’ Korea.”17 In other words, Koreans’

17 Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson, 12.
understanding of modernity was shaped by a set of modern Western ideas, representatively including Social Darwinism. Having produced and developed in conjunction with their imperialistic practices, those Western modernist discourses, in Homi K. Bhabha’s words, “[opposed] cultural pluralism and cultural relativism” but “[justified] cultural hierarchy,” placing the West in a high position based upon its degree of modernization. 18 Although Japanese colonialism intervened in Korea’s reception and path to modernity, modernity was in the end a Western phenomenon. In incorporating modernity, many, though not all, Koreans believed that they would be able to integrate their nation into the global order claimed as universal by Western powers. 19

An examination of two major channels through which Koreans gained exposure to modernity – Japanese colonialists as well as American missionaries – clearly explains why Koreans perceived modernity as essentially Western, even while experiencing it under the Japanese colonial domination. With regard to Japanese colonialists, as Peter Duus posits, Japanese colonialism was developed under the strong influence of Western imperialism. Having been exposed to Western imperialism earlier than other East Asian territories and countries with the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s gunboats in 1853, Japan approached modernization as an indispensable process for survival. Accordingly, the Japanese incorporated – arguably with a frenzy – not only imperialist practices but also cultural and institutional structures of the Western, specifically British modernization. 20 Having successfully reshaped

19 Certainly even at the time Koreans did not have a uniform and homogenous ideology. In this regard, Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson cautiously state that “during the colonial period, there were a number of alternative narratives of political community that rejected modernity, [or] denied the nation-state form” (13). Nevertheless, many Korean intellectuals and leaders, particularly those engaged in various cultural activities, sought to modernize the nation by adapting the Western model.
itself through the Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan portrayed its image as “an outpost of Western civilization.” Western nation-states furthermore accepted Japan’s self-proclaimed new position, as manifested in writings by two influential late-nineteenth-century American writers on Meiji Japan, William E. Griffis (1843-1928) and Alfred T. Mahan (1840-1914). Those authors identified Meiji Japan as having become “the nearest Western neighbor” and “Anglo-Saxon proxy” respectively. That newly accepted position of Japan in the global order also served as grounds, or a pretext, to legitimize its subjugation of Korea in 1910. Japan presented its annexation of Korea as part of a larger global trajectory of the time toward the modern as defined by the West. After all, the West, as Tu Wei-ming points out, was the impetus and model for the development of modernity in East Asia, although East Asian nations did not necessarily take a path to modernity identical to that of Western nation-states, as seen from the Japanese promotion of “pan-Asianism” in preparation for a full-scale war against Western imperial powers in the 1930s.

Another major source for Koreans’ access to modernity came from Protestant missionaries, the majority of whom were American. American missionaries began to arrive on the Korean peninsula following the U.S.-Korea Treaty of 1882. In 1884, Horace N. Allen of the Northern Presbyterian mission arrived in Korea, followed the next year by Horace G. Underwood of the same denomination and Henry G. Appenzeller of the Northern Methodist mission. Thereafter representatives of many other Protestant sects joined them, increasing in

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number to approximately 300 by 1905. The number of Korean converts also grew significantly and reached 10,000 by 1905, and 200,000 by 1910, entailing American missionaries’ proud review of Korea as being “the best and most satisfactory missionary station” in the world.²⁵ However, it should be noted that such a miraculous success of Protestant evangelism by American missionaries in Korea was enabled by a strong secular image of Protestantism related to power and wealth. According to Young Keun Choi, American missionaries had mostly come from predominantly White middle-class backgrounds and “shared the idea of ‘Manifest Destiny’ in the era of American expansionism, entwining strong confidence in American culture.”²⁶ In relating Christianity with modernization and Western civilization, American missionaries promoted the idea that Christianity was an inner strength of Western civilization that would bring about power and wealth to Koreans, as it had for Americans. American missionaries engaged in a wide variety of educational and humanitarian activities, including establishments of more than two dozens of hospitals and hundreds of modern educational institutions. In experiencing Protestantism in various sectors, Koreans absorbed not only its religious messages but also American views and ideals, such as capitalism, democratic republicanism, and journalism, along with modern education and medicine.²⁷

American missionaries – particularly Horace N. Allen – facilitated Koreans’ immigration to the U.S. Allen secured his entry to Korea as a physician, immediately winning the approval of King Gojong and Queen Min after successfully treating the queen’s nephew, who was gravely wounded during the Gapsin Coup (i.e., the failed three-day coup d’état led by pro-Japanese leaders). The king kept close company with Allen as an unofficial counselor, and in 1885,

²⁷ Young Ick Lew, 17-19.
offered royal permission to open the first Western modern medical institution in Korea, *Jejungwon* (meaning “House of Civilized Virtue”). Allen then left for the U.S. with a Korean delegation in 1887, and returned to Korea in 1890 as a missionary but almost immediately became the Secretary of the American Legation. As a diplomat, he further strengthened his relationship with the king by craftily manipulating the Korean court, which had suffered from an unprecedented political predicament following the assassination of Queen Min by the Japanese in 1895. Allen conspired with pro-Russian officials and others on a plan of moving the king out of the Japanese-controlled palace into the Russian legation. As the plan succeeded, Allen acquired absolute trust from the king as well as a stream of the most lucrative concessions available in the country, including a gold mine franchise, railroad and trolley lines, and the electricity system. The missionary turned entrepreneur-diplomat then played an important role in processing the immigration of Koreans into Hawai‘i. Allen not only persuaded King Gojong to approve the immigration, but also met with representatives from the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association and hired intermediaries to recruit applicants.\(^\text{28}\) Many other American missionaries – representatively including the Reverend George Heber Jones, Horace G. Underwood, and Henry G. Appenzeller – also actively encouraged Koreans to leave for Hawai‘i.\(^\text{29}\) In the end, American missionaries played a critical role in the process of modernization in Korea in various dimensions. They induced Koreans to link modernization not only with Christianization but also with Westernization, more specifically Americanization, as well as practically channeling Koreans’ move to the U.S.


\(^\text{29}\) Bong-Youn Choy, 73.
Sun-Young Yoo draws attention to the seemingly anachronistic phenomenon of Korea’s Americanization under Japanese rule. According to Yoo, the U.S. offered colonial Koreans signifiers and images of Western modernity with a relatively better stability than other Western nation-states, and in doing so had a strong impact on the daily lives of Koreans. While mentioning the aforementioned miraculous success of Protestant evangelism by American missionaries, Yoo, as a cinema historian, also underscores that Hollywood movies and their accompanying jazz music – as the most favored entertainment – provided symbolic and visual images of Western modernity that filled the visual-and-aural landscape of colonial Korea. Furthermore, she demonstrates that such momentary, sensual, and fragmented experiences with American modernity came along with idealized and fictional views of the U.S. Yoo cites various phrases from Korean newspapers of the time, and concludes that the U.S. was viewed as “the richest nation in the world as well as a gentleman-like brotherly nation that had no intention to occupy, but rather help weak countries to achieve independence.”

Though not explicitly stated in Yoo’s discussion, such understanding was rooted in the Korea-U.S. Treaty of 1882. The treaty’s clauses portray the U.S. as such, as exemplified in Article 1 guaranteeing “perpetual peace and friendship between Korea and the United States and [provision] of ‘good offices’ of either government in the case of oppression by a third power.” At least partially based on their diplomatic relationship with the U.S., Koreans looked to the U.S. as the authentic source of modernity and therefore as the ideal model for the construction of their modern consciousness and identity. However, under the colonial context, Koreans could never enjoy American

31 Young Ick Lew, 6-7.
modernity as much as they wished; ironically, what this void accomplished was that Koreans further nurtured their imagined view of the U.S.\textsuperscript{32}

Koreans’ expectation of the nation becoming modernized, modeled after that of the West, more specifically, American modernity, surely privileged the position of Korean immigrants in the U.S. Given that the two channels through which Koreans received modernity – Japanese colonialists and American missionaries – could not help but introduce either a shadow of the Western original or its fragments, Korean immigrants in the U.S. would seem to have an advantage in that they could directly experience, introduce, and incorporate the original whole of American modernity. In fact, Korean peninsular newspapers, as Andre Schmid notes, increasingly described Korean immigrants in the U.S. as the Korean compatriots who entered to “a more enlightened realm” and lived “closer to the source of civilization” than the Korean peninsula.\textsuperscript{33} The newspapers, moreover, proclaimed those compatriots as having created “a new Korea in North America.” This “new Korea,” according to Schmid, was “what [those Korean leaders engaging in newspapers] hoped for on the peninsula, demonstrating how deeply their hopes for the nation were embedded in notions of civilization.”\textsuperscript{34} Under this logic, Korean immigrant communities in the U.S. came to serve as one of hortative models for modern Korea, based on which nationalism was developed and realized.

As a community, Korean immigrants in the U.S. produced a diversity of activities. They furthermore conveyed, disseminated, and circulated news about their activities into the Korean peninsula via mass vernacular newspapers, which Benedict Anderson’s landmark study of nationalism identifies as a main medium with which an imagined sense of modern collective

\textsuperscript{32} See also Sung-Young Yoo, “Daehan Jeguk Geurigo Ilje Sikminjibae Sigi Migukhwa [Americanization in Great Korean Empire and Colonial Korea],” in Americanization, eds. Duck-ho Kim and Yong-jin Won (Seoul: Pureun Yeoksa, 2008): 50-84.
\textsuperscript{33} Andre Schmid, 242-243.
\textsuperscript{34} Andre Schmid, 246.
identity is constructed. More than forty newspapers were published in the U.S., and more than half of them were surreptitiously but widely circulated inside the peninsula. The most representative one was the California-based newspaper The New Korea (Sinhان Minbo), which began as The United (Gongnip Sinbo), an organ of the United Korean Association (Gongnip Hyeophoe) that Chang-ho Ahn established in 1905. As the association developed, its title changed in 1908 into the Korean National Association (Daehan Gungminhoe) that served the governmental role for Korean diaspora not only in the U.S. but around the world until Korean liberation from Japanese rule. Serving for the transnational association, the newspaper was circulated all over the world. For instance, in 1908, The New Korea distributed five hundred copies in the U.S., one hundred copies in Hawai‘i, and three thousand copies inside the peninsula. Concerning its tremendous influence on the peninsula, the Japanese Governor-General enacted a press law to censor all Korean vernacular newspapers in 1907 and expanded the law to apply to The New Korea and other overseas Korean media in 1908. Nonetheless, the numbers of copies collected by the Japanese indicate how ineffectually this law worked for weakening the influence of diaspora newspapers. A number of copies of diaspora newspapers were frequently intercepted, as many as 254 times in 1928 and 274 times in 1929. Ultimately, diaspora newspapers could freely utter any words that could not be said on the peninsula and furthermore circulated those words on the peninsula. Thus, overseas Koreans, particularly those

35 Benedict Anderson.
37 Andre Schmid, 247.
38 Bae-geun Cha et al., 126.
in the U.S., could self-proclaim their privileged status, fostered by both the distance from Japanese colonial censorship as well as proximity to Western modernity. In that way, the diasporic newspapers contributed to shaping, directing, and reflecting the growing sentiment of nationalism.

Theatrical activities received extensive coverage in Korean newspapers published in the U.S., particularly in The New Korea. Not only did The New Korea occasionally inform the public about theatre productions by Korean immigrants in the U.S., but it also published serially numbered play scripts. Considering that their self-proclaimed role was to produce and reproduce Korean nationalist voices devised in a modern narrative outside the reach of Japanese colonial power, the newspaper’s choice to cover theatrical activities indicates that theatre appeared to Korean immigrants in the U.S. not as an insignificant entertainment but rather as a central activity related to nationalist movements. In the next section, I give a brief review of the extensive literature that documents that theatre was a vibrant cultural activity that Korean immigrants in the U.S. engaged in. I then examine why theatre would have been considered central and even essential to the formation of ethnic nationalism and what types of theatrical performances were particularly promoted. In so doing, I justify the historical significance of the hybrid theatrical forms on which this dissertation focuses, in the process challenging a prevalent but unwarranted insistence on hierarchy of theatrical forms in theatre historiography. The tendentious emphasis on “pure” forms, I will argue, developed in relation to the influence of the Japanese colonial censorship on performing arts in the Korean context.
“A Realm of Active Emotion”: The Significance of Theatre in Performing Nationalism

Theatre was the most vibrant activity in Korean communities in the U.S., according to Kyu-ick Cho, who has conducted pioneering research on cultural, though mainly literary, activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the Japanese colonial period. In 1999, Cho published six volumes of anthologies that include all different genres of literary works produced by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century. The last volume reprints ten plays published between 1915 and 1940 in The New Korea, many of which I will examine throughout this dissertation. Cho also discusses theatrical activities, while taking some, albeit limited, numbers of newspaper articles about theatre productions into consideration in the first volume. He divides the period into two discrete epochs by taking the massive nationwide uprising of the March First Movement of 1919 as the watershed moment. At the same time, Cho argues that there was no really critical or sharp change in the plays’ main theme of strong patriotism; rather, only dramaturgical strategies shifted from directly condemning the Japanese annexation to speculatively depicting Koreans’ poverty and pain under colonial rule. Cho concludes that theatrical activities served a nationalistic role, as an effective tool to reform and elevate national consciousness.

All of the research that has followed Cho, though critically limited, echoes Cho’s argument. Hong-woo Lee published three articles, all of which discuss plays included in Cho’s anthologies. Lee’s argument, cited from one of his articles’ English abstracts, is that “[Korean immigrants in the U.S.] mainly have had theatrical activities in the direction of a religion and love of country. They usually recognized plays as ‘loyalty and courageousness’ or a means of the purification of consciousness. And they put a play on stage as a part of the event of church and ‘a

Keum-sun Yeun’s monograph on theatrical activities by the Korean diaspora during the colonial period also supports the idea that diasporic theatres of the time were nationalistic. Unlike Cho and Lee, Yeun explores Korean communities not only in the U.S., but also in China and Russia. Furthermore, she analyzes not only plays but also newspaper articles about productions, and argues that the Korean diaspora produced a wide repertoire of realistic, historical, classical, and religious plays. Nonetheless, her rich account concludes decisively with a simple hypothesis that theatrical performance was “a type of nationalistic movement,” without providing any explanations as to why that should have been the case.\footnote{Hong-woo Lee, “The Study of Play on The New Korea (Sinha-Minbo) in America of 1910s,” Hanminjok Eomunhak 45 (2004): 579-634, at 580. See also Hong-woo Lee, “The Study of Dongpo on The New Korea (Sinha Minbo),” Huiog Munhak Yeongu 2 (1994): 191-5; “1910 Neondae Jaemi <Sinha Minbo> Sojae Huiog Yeongu [The Study on Plays Published by the U.S.-based Newspaper The New Korea during the 1910s],” in Hanguk Drama-ui Wisang [A Study of Korean Dramas’ Status], ed. Ok-geun Han (Seoul: Pureun Sasang, 2011): 237-287.} \footnote{Keum-sun Yeun, 262.}

Many narratives on national theatre histories point to the efficacy of theatre in the formation of national identities and sentiments. Contributors to an anthology on theoretical and practical issues in writing national theatre histories in various sites around the globe, Writing and Rewriting: National Theatre Histories, astutely comment that writing histories of a national theatre involves a formidable task of identifying what is to be understood as nation and theatre, as both have evolved in constant flux. Nevertheless, most of the essays included support an idea of nation being a useful organizing category for writing theatre histories. Furthermore, the contributors make clear that nationalism has affected the performance and reception of theatre as well as its historiography, while allowing for the probability that the opposite process occurred: that theatre has affected nationalism. For instance, Frank Peeters highlights that Belgian intellectuals and leaders assigned theatre a vital role in establishing Belgium as a distinctive nation-state right after Belgium’s independence from the Netherlands in 1830. Specifically,
Peeters cites a French-Belgian poet-writer, Charles Potvin (1818-1902), who advocated using theatre for provoking a sense of belonging to the Belgian nation by stating that “[t]he theatre is the only literary form accessible for the masses, for the illiterate public, and the prestige of the stage, the emotion that art itself produces, makes the theatre more powerful than any other tribune.”43 This remark suggests that promoting theatre as one of the most effective mediums of developing nationalism is likely premised on an understanding that both theatre and nationalism center around emotion.

In considering whether such a premise would have applied to the colonial Korean case, I will briefly review how the centrality of emotion to nationalism and theatre has been understood in discourses of nationalism and theatre studies. Then I will specifically examine the ways in which Koreans perceived the emotional attributes of theatre and nationalism, and emotion itself in the context of their aspirations for the formation of Korea as a modern nation. Emotional expression had not been encouraged under the Confucian doctrines that value stasis and quietness, which dominated in the half-century of the Confucianism-based Joseon Dynasty that immediately preceded the colonial period. Thus, if emotion was viewed positively in colonial Korea, a new understanding about emotion meant to have emerged.44 Such new validation of emotion could have indeed proven critical in the promotion of theatre, considering that theatre’s strong association with emotion had served as one of the grounds for what Jonas Barish calls “the anti-theatrical prejudice” in pre-modern Korea, just as in many other historical contexts.45

44 Sun-Young Yoo (2007), 228.
Moreover, the emergent emphasis on emotion as legitimate expression could have helped determine what particular types of theatrical performances should be produced.

Scholars who analyze nation and nationalism as modern phenomena have clearly underscored emotional attributes of nationalism. As a well-known scholar of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, for instance, elaborates on the role of nationalism in comparison to religion. After dividing human progress into three phases, including pre-agrarian, agrarian, and industrial, he argues that each one had its own normative orientation, and nationalism is the functional equivalent of the animistic cults of pre-agrarian societies and the world-religions of agrarian polities. As such, nationalist sentiment, Gellner states, “is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one activated by a sentiment of this kind.”

With a more positive attitude toward the centrality of emotion to nationalism, Benedict Anderson states that “[t]he nation is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much willing to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings.” In this way, Anderson’s often-quoted definition of nation discloses not only the imaginative characteristic of nation and nationalism but also their sentimentality. Furthermore, he finds the nationalism’s positive value in its sentimental attributes. While scholars of modern nationalism have used the terms “sentiment” and “fraternity” in analyses of how the nation was formed, Lauren Berlant has instead asked in which ways the nation is experienced, felt, and lived, to argue that the nation is a

46 Ernest Gellner, 52.
47 Benedict Anderson, 7.
fragile entity in which sentiment glues fragments of identity. She thereby clarifies that emotion is central not only to the formation of nation but also to its maintenance.48

The centrality of emotion to theatre has been widely acknowledged. In her discussion of immediacy of feeling to theatre, Erin Hurley defines theatre as “a realm of active emotion.”49 She first draws attention to intensified emotional experiences – what she calls “feeling labor” – that theatre performances provide to actors as well as spectators, and then asserts that the feeling labor is “theatre’s reason for being” as well as “what is most consequential about theatre.”50 At the same time though, she does not dismiss the fact that the emotional attributes have also elicited disdain for theatre, particularly for the so-called popular entertainment aimed at providing the audience amusement rather than educational enjoyment. Hurley argues that such perceived hierarchy among theatrical forms relates to a new understanding about emotion, which modern scientific discourses – representatively including Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theories – introduced. Considering that Koreans’ aspirations for constructing a modern nation was influenced by Western modern world-views framed with Social Darwinism, it is highly likely that Koreans’ understanding of emotion was being modified under the influence of Western modern discourses. Emotion was indeed one of the significant issues in Western modern discourses, as its understanding was undergoing a tremendous shift along with the development of neuroscience and psychology.

The first scientific approach to emotion was made by Thomas Willis (1621-1675), an English doctor who pioneered the research on the anatomy of the brain, nervous system, and muscles, and ultimately coined the term neurology. Willis suggested that human consciousness is

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50 Erin Hurley, 9.
just a bundle of sensations transmitted between five senses and the brain through the nervous system. In so doing, he dismissed preexisting views on human – both a Platonic homo rationalis and a Christian original sinner – and instead assigned the brain a definitive role in controlling the expression of emotions. This scientific thesis was further developed into a social philosophy by John Locke (1632-1704), who posited that the human mind is born as a blank slate, or tabula rasa, determined by experience, which is perceived first through the senses.\(^5\) That is, human identity was perceived as formed through intricately interrelated thoughts and feelings. While early discourses suggested the significance of emotion in general, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) insisted that each emotion has differential significance. Darwin discussed extensively how his theories of evolution and natural selection pertained to human emotions in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), which followed the publications of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). In this book, Darwin posits that different emotional expressions developed at different moments in the evolution of the human being. Specifically, he positions certain allegedly exclusive human emotional expressions – such as shame, grief, or suffering – higher on the evolutionary ladder than others emotional expressions that human and animals have in common – such as disgust or sexual excitement. The evolutionary approach to feeling has grafted a division and hierarchy among different dimensions of emotional expressions.\(^6\)

Much influenced by Western scientific discourses, the concept of emotion, according to Korean literature scholar Dong-sik Kim, was changing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Korea. Whereas emotion in traditional Korea was understood as individual, unstable, and

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asocial, its power potentially to achieve social changes began to interest Korean intellectuals and leaders. Most Korean intellectuals and leaders acknowledged the crucial necessity of reforming the nation, and suggested diverse ways to achieve that aim. Although not the sole direction Korean intellectuals suggested, the path of modernity though Westernization was the predominant discourse among those concerned with the fundamental reformation of Korea culture. Those cultural reformists paid attention to emotion. For instance, Syngman Rhee criticized the highly bureaucratic state in pre-modern Korea for having treated its people merely as objects of governance and, as a consequence, reduced common people of Korea to “dolls made of woods and grass.” According to Henry H. Em, this kind of “poetics of degeneration” was well established as a rhetoric for critiquing ideologies that held that “[common people’s] minds had no feeling or movement.” As Korean intellectuals believed that Korean populaces would become the foundation of the nation once their minds reactivated, emotion was highlighted not only as “a spontaneous expression of self-actualization” but also as a “powerful agent of social change.” In other words, emotion was viewed as a driving force for individual and social change.

With regard to theatre, as theatre historian Su-jin Woo notes, Korean intellectuals discussed how to reform theatre based on the new understanding of emotion, and in the early 1900s developed the theatre reformation discourse (Yeongeuk Gaeryangnon). Those engaged in the discourse used various terms highlighting active characteristics of emotion, such as gamheung (emotional excitement), gambal (emotional occurrence), and gamdong (emotional

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54 Henry H. Em (2013), 73.
movement), and argued that people gathered together in a theatre space, including performers and spectators, would experience an identical emotion. The identical emotion was viewed as potentially serving as a platform for the formation of a shared identity among performers, spectators, and more broadly Koreans.\textsuperscript{56} Newspapers discussed theatre reformation in its connection to “emotional excitement of patriotic thoughts” or “of national loyalty,” and “evoking national feeling and reflection.”\textsuperscript{57} The theatre reformation discourse, in sum, justified theatre’s efficacy by highlighting its power in forming, provoking, and sharing national sentiments.

A new understanding about the critical position of emotion in the formation of identity seems to have served as basis for revisiting theatre’s position in society. In other words, theatre as (in Erin Hurley’s term) the “realm of active emotion” began to gain social value. Simultaneously, however, the hierarchical view on different types of emotions suggested by Darwin – and embedded in Social Darwinism highlighting hierarchy of cultures – would have influenced a selection of theatre productions. The question would have been thus: what kinds of theatre productions should be produced to provoke emotions in a higher standing on the evolutionary ladder? In this regard, Hurley posits that the hierarchical view on different types of emotion led to the valuing of theatre for education over theatre for amusement, that is, popular entertainments that have been considered as belonging to low culture.\textsuperscript{58} Commenting on national theatre histories, S.E. Wilmer also points out that it was a general tendency that “national theatre histories written in the emergent nations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlighted [“high culture” genre], as it was considered more worthy of discussion and

\textsuperscript{57} Newspaper for Ten Thousand Generations (Mansebo), May 21, 1907; The Imperial Capital Gazette (Hwangseong Sinmun), May 5, 1908; and The Korea Daily News (Daehan Maeil Sinbo), July 21, 1908, recited from Su-jin Woo, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{58} Erin Hurley.
examination, […] and ignored more popular (“low culture”) genres.” Wilmer also reminds one that professional theatre rather than amateur performance has been privileged in national theatre histories.

In a similar vein, most Korean theatre historians have developed their historiography with a binary lens of high culture and low culture, while privileging “purely artistic modern drama” over “hybrid commercial entertainment.” Notably, however, such a historiography seems to have been shaped by the Japanese colonial censorship on theatre and its legacy on post-colonial Korea. The Japanese colonial regime regulated theatre productions by applying security laws or sanitary rules without enacting specific, centralized regulations exclusively concerning theatre that applied to all provinces of the Korean peninsula throughout the colonial period. However, the absence of an all-Korean theatre censoring law does not mean that the Japanese colonial regime took a lenient attitude toward the Korean theatre. Rather, the Japanese governor-general seems to have recognized how differently a theatrical performance could be presented based on its context, as reflected in its more strict application of the censorship to seemingly non-artistic amateurish performances than on professional performances.

The amateurish performance, called soingeuk in Korean, critically increased since 1919 when the Japanese colonial regime altered its style of governance of Korean from “martial rule (budan seiji)” to “cultural rule (bunka seiji).” Stunned by the massive scale of the carefully orchestrated uprising of the March First Movement of 1919, the Japanese colonial regime shifted towards a more liberal and insidious policy of assimilation by providing more opportunities and a greater degree of autonomy for Koreans. Subsequently, an increasing number of societal

60 Su-jin Woo, 277-279.
gatherings took place, and many of them included theatrical performances in their programs. Those theatrical performances potentially serving non-artistic, socio-political purposes then signaled a need for a comprehensive form of regulation, especially to police officials in cities due to the urban concentration of Korean cultural expressions. The Japanese administrators of Gyeonggi province – a province currently only surrounding but then including Seoul – enacted in 1922, and revised in 1923, detailed regulations for popular arts through the Provincial Government Law No.2, which specified grounds for censorship of theatrical performances, such as public security, as well as issues of theatre hygiene, ticket pricing, and hours of operation. More critically, this law completely prohibited all forms of performances that had not obtained permission in advance. Although theoretically applied only to Gyeonggi, this provincial law in practice served as a standard for imposing theatre censorship throughout the Korean peninsula.  

Theatre artists in colonial Korea needed to develop astute means of bypassing the censorship to succeed in staging their works. As the censorship applied critically to supposedly non-artistic, amateurish theatre productions, Korean theatre artists sought to avoid being perceived as amateurs by either commercializing or aestheticizing their creation to the extreme. In this context, those of who attempted to accomplish artistic achievements, as highly educated elites, promoted a new drama (singeuk) movement, creating strictly realistic dramas following Western modern dramatists such as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and Gerhart Hauptmann in the 1920s and 1930s. In the process, they promoted their projects as purifying the Korean theatre dominated by what they believed vulgar commercial entertainments. Nevertheless, as Seung-hee Yi notes, they had no ability to transform the Korean theatre topography shaped by the Japanese colonial censorship. Furthermore, their promotion of aestheticism resulted in making Korean

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theatre artists internalize the censorship by attributing “purely artistic modern drama” not projecting any socio-political ideology to “high culture.”\textsuperscript{63} Despite it having such a complex role in colonial Korea, the “purely artistic modern drama” has come to occupy a central place in a simplified Korean theatre historiography, for many of its promoters went on to lead the post-colonial Korean theatre, claiming that they have formed an authentic lineage that passes through modern Korea.

Without Japanese colonial censorship, “high culture” – that being after all an illusory concept – would have meant something completely different for Koreans. As previously noted, in early modern Korea, Western discourses justifying cultural hierarchy based on its degree of proximity to civilization served as the foundation for a dominant value system applied to various activities in general and national activities in particular. This served to position Western culture as a model for a new Korea. Thus, theatre following Western models or featuring Western cultural elements would have been expected to provoke heightened emotions suitable for the construction of Korea as a modern nation. Notably, Daphne Lei demonstrates that this was the case in early modern China. She posits that “Westernness became the norm in a new representation of Chineseness,” while discussing the ways in which Chinese Opera responded to imperialism in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{64} It is noteworthy in this context that the idea of “high culture,” as further elaborated by Edward Said, was developed in its collusion with European imperialism. European’s high culture literary and artistic canons provided imperialists with a sense of superiority over others, specifically to non-European nations, justifying their practice of empire. The expansion of its political power in return granted a myth of transcendence and

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\textsuperscript{63} Seung-hee Yi, 531-539.

\textsuperscript{64} Daphne Lei, Operatic China: Staging Chinese Identity across the Pacific (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 103.
universality to the Western high culture. In other words, “high culture” did not necessarily entail its contemporary connotations – such as highly trained or educated artists, their exceptional artistic achievements, and unpopular elitism – under the early modern value system dictated by Western imperialists and embraced by those who were under their influence, including Koreans. Rather, cultural products or expressions having incorporated Western elements would have been viewed as facilitating the construction of a “high culture” of a new modern nation, even if this view was being simultaneously modified under Japanese colonial censorship. In examining uncensored Koreans’ theatrical activities, I thus pay attention to theatrical forms hybridized with Western elements produced by amateurish playwrights and performers in order to better understand the role of theatre in the formation of Korean nationalism.

Stuart Hall comments that the diaspora experience is defined “not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of hybridity.” However, I use the term “hybridity” not exclusively in its relation to the diaspora experience Korean immigrants experienced in the U.S. Rather, I posit that the “hybridity” was derived from the liminal status that not only Korean diaspora but early modern Koreans in general occupied in their path to modernity. Theatrical forms discussed throughout the dissertation, as explained in the following chapters, have also appeared on the Korean peninsula. However, they have been overlooked in Korean theatre historiography due to the traces of Japanese colonial influence on their development, as well as their low position in the contemporary epistemological hierarchy of high and low cultures. Thus, my project critically steps aside from mainstream scholarship that has repeatedly reproduced the binary lens of high

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culture and low culture. Drawing from a historical understanding, my dissertation aims to contribute to discourses on Korean theatre historiography as well as national theatre historiography in general by engaging with socio-historical and aesthetic, as well as geographical, issues involved in writing a national theatre history.

**Suspending Disbelief in the Fantasy of Pure Modern Korea: A Preview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation investigates how Korean national theatre developed outside of its common geographical designation, through a range of hybrid theatrical forms produced in an amateurish way. Given that theatre productions produced by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century have not been extensively researched, it is critical to provide comprehensive archival research. However, my dissertation does not intend to be comprehensive. Given that remaining materials are merely fragmented, it would be, as Erika Fischer-Lichte posits, just a “deceptive hope” to believe that “it could be possible to completely reconstruct the theatre of a period ‘as it really was.’” Instead, I am taking “a problem-oriented approach” suggested by Fischer-Lichte, and focus in each chapter on a distinctive theatrical form.67 Moreover, I am not organizing the chapters by decades or other fixed intervals of time, even though following a chronological order in general. In Chapter 1, I discuss theatrical productions of the 1910s that Hawai‘i- and California-based newspapers reported on but for which no scripts were evidently published. That chapter provides a broad assessment of theatrical productions by Korean immigrants in the U.S., in terms of their themes, contexts, and producers, and introduces various aspects of ethnic nationalism they staged. The subsequent three chapters examine three distinctive hybrid theatrical forms – Docudrama in Chapter 2,

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Chain Drama in Chapter 3, and Music Drama in Chapter 4 – by analyzing plays published in the California-based newspaper *The New Korea* between the 1910s and the 1930s. In these three chapters, I focus on the ways that Western cultural elements – journalism, film, and church music respectively – were adopted to embody modern Korean national identities and sentiments. This “how of the telling” as much as “what of the telling,” as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha, is “tied up with the way a nation sees itself and projects itself to others.”  

In Chapter 5, I highlight the historical significance of incorporating modernity in Korean theatre by demonstrating that even elements of Korean heritage and tradition were significantly modified, or modernized, when incorporated into theatrical performances in Hawai‘i during the 1920s and 1930s.

All of the chapters depart from the position that Korean immigrants in the U.S. attempted to embody their envisioned “pure modern” Korea through theatrical performances incorporating Western cultural elements. However, I also acknowledge that such attempts belie a seemingly ironic epistemology – all based on illusory concepts – to suggest genuinely *impure* theatrical forms as ideal mediums to embody a *pure* version of the nation. This belief, as I previously stated, was derived from an understanding of American modernity as benign, universal, and pure based on Koreans’ idealized view on the U.S. Given that the U.S. had portrayed itself consistently as a world power armed with righteousness as well as civilization since the Korea-U.S. Treaty of 1882, and the American Protestant missionaries’ rapid expansion only reinforced this image, the Koreans’ idealized view on the U.S. could not be criticized as totally groundless. Nevertheless, such an idealized view should have been thoroughly disrupted by 1905, or soon thereafter, since the U.S. was neither cooperative nor responsive to Koreans’ appeal for their independence from Japanese colonial rule.

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The U.S. supported Japan’s imperialistic ambitions on the Korean peninsula by secretly making the Taft-Katsura Agreement of 1905, through which Washington recognized Tokyo’s right to establish suzerainty over Korea in return for its abandonment of any aggressive design on the Philippines, while, if indirectly, causing the Joseon Dynasty collapse.69 Throughout the Japanese colonial period, furthermore, the U.S. did not at all acknowledge Koreans’ desperate wish for the U.S. to act based on its self-portrayed image of a righteous nation seeking peaceful settlement in world politics. For instance, the American government refused to issue passports for Koreans living in the U.S. who attempted in 1919 to attend the Paris Peace Conference to appeal to President Woodrow Wilson to apply his own principle of national self-determination to the Korean case. Despite Japanese colonial rule ending in part due to the U.S. contribution in World War II, the U.S.’s own hegemonic interest clearly motivated its engagement in Korea; the American intervention was initiated only because Japan attacked its own territory, Pearl Harbor, in 1941. Counter to Koreans’ expectation, it was clear even early in the twentieth century that the U.S. was not an anti-imperialistic nation-state full of righteousness cultivated by its civilization. In other words, modernity and imperialism were neither exclusive nor oppositional.

As Timothy Mitchell insightfully puts it, modernity in and of itself entailed imperialistic characteristic. He argues that “modernity is defined by its claim to universality, to a uniqueness, unity, and universality that represent the end (in every sense) of history. Yet, this always remains an impossible unity, an incomplete universal.”70 In other words, modernity could not realize its grand mission of universality, as its mission of producing the unified, global history required a

series of multiple imitations and representations, if not via a direct colonization. The imperialistic dynamics with which the modern was staged positioned the dream of a pure modernization to be infeasible. Therefore, the envisioned “pure modern” Korea expected to be embodied in theatrical performances would have been nothing but a fragile fantasy.

Nevertheless, I contend that theatrical performances would have facilitated the suspension of Koreans’ disbelief in such a fragile fantasy. Borrowing Thomas Postlewait’s comments on theatrical events, this could have occurred by “[engaging] with possible worlds, the ‘as if’ versions of existence.” By rendering the imagined nation visible and tangible, theatrical performances would have provided a platform on which emotions were provoked personally and furthermore translated to communal sentiments, namely nationalism. Koreans’ desperate desire to respond to the modern system’s requiring a people be global as a prerequisite to being national would have been fulfilled in those “as if” worlds of theatrical productions that they produced, helping to continuously regenerate beliefs in the possibility to realize the fantasy of “pure modern” Korea.

This dissertation maintains that theatrical activities performed by Korean immigrants in the U.S. were critically significant in developing Korean nationalism, which began as an affective imagination. This developed into a bodily enactment and affected other bodies through acts of viewing or reading. At first, theatre productions served as a space where Korean immigrants performed their envisioned ethnic nationalism. It included incorporating American modernity, as well as expressing nationalistic sentiments. When news about these productions were conveyed to Korean readership on the peninsula, they were read as evidence that Koreans were not only observing, or passively learning, American modernity, but rather, were embodying

it without any Japanese filters. While exemplifying how being national can be successfully combined with being modern, global, and therefore universal, they served as a model for affectively imagining a new modern Korea on the peninsula. In doing so, theatrical performances hybridized with Western elements, produced by Korean immigrants in the U.S., critically contributed to the development of ethnic nationalism by facilitating the suspension of disbelief in the possibility of forming a “pure modern” Korea.

Notes

In Romanizing Korean terms, I follow the new revised system that was introduced in 2000 by the Republic of Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism – rather than the McCune-Reischauer system which, as the official system for Korean in South Korea from 1984 to 2000, has been conventionally used in English academia – in order to adhere more closely to Korean phonology. In addressing Korean, and occasionally East Asian individuals, I respect the preferences of individuals in spelling their own names. Nevertheless, I put their forenames first and then surnames, even though the opposite order is the East Asian convention. As a growing number of East Asian scholars publish their work in English (even with non-Western publishers), it would be too confusing to set rules for each different case. In the case of Korean publications cited, I provide Romanized titles along with their English translations. Yet I provide an English title only if the published text has already included its English title, as in many instances academic journals published in Korea require an English abstract to be attached to the end of an article. Quotations from Korean sources are my own translations unless otherwise indicated.
CHAPTER 1

Embodying Western Modernity in the Performance of Korean Ethnic Nationalism: Theatre Productions in Hawai‘i and California (1910s)

In 1914, The New Korea published an editorial entitled “Dramatic Literature is Necessary for Reforming Public Morals and Elevating Sprits.” The author, who chose to remain anonymous, argues that theatre should be the main vehicle for fostering national consciousness and reforming the nation. He compares Western dramatic literature to East Asian performing arts. Dramatists in Western countries, he claims, have enabled Western civilization to flourish by disciplining their populace since the period of ancient Greece and Rome. In reference to British civilization, for example, the author claims that “it was Shakespeare’s preparation that made contemporary British people’s temperament replete with lively attitudes.” He also maintains that the cultivation of dramatists was the very reason “why Germany could have made its people spirited and [even] its army to be the strongest in the world.” While lamenting the “merely licentious” theatre practices in Korea and East Asia in general, the author suggests following the ways in which Western civilization took on theatre. He argues that Western civilization has utilized theatre as part of the “universal education (botong gyoyuk),” while taking advantage of the theatre’s strength in facilitating the process of intriguing and moving the audience, which consequently activates the minds of all people.72

This chapter examines the specific ways in which Korean immigrants in the U.S. utilized theatre as part of their “universal education” of ethnic nationalism in Hawai‘i and California

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during the 1910s. I do this by analyzing newspaper articles documenting their theatre productions. Given the absence of documented and preserved play scripts, I base my discussion on those performances’ themes, contexts, and producers, while providing historical backgrounds in detail. Specifically, I argue that Korean immigrants in the U.S. used theatre to make both cultural and intellectual transformations in the community by embodying Western modernity in their performances of ethnic nationalism. The theatre productions discussed in this chapter clearly demonstrate that the performances of various aspects of Korean ethnic identity ironically entailed an active incorporation of Western ideas and norms. In my analysis, I propose that these theatrical performances facilitated the articulation of an ironically distinctive but simultaneous modern identity by presenting its concrete embodiments. At the same time, those concrete embodiments would have affected the charting of the direction for the development of ethnic nationalism. After all, I argue that theatrical performances not just represented ethnic nationalism as prefixed national sentiments but rather contributed to the formation of ethnic nationalism, that being only in its formative stage.

Alongside its explicit focus on theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S., this chapter also engages substantially with Korean ethnic nationalism in the early twentieth century. Koreans’ understanding of minjok of the time, as I addressed in the Introduction, positioned those theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. as exemplifying what peninsular Koreans desired but failed to realize due to the colonial situation they faced. This chapter demonstrates that what Koreans now consider essentially indigenous elements of their ethnic identity – language, history and myth, and symbol – were actually revived, reinvented, or reframed deliberately for the creation of ethnic nationalism. By revealing that Korean immigrants explored various aspects of ethnic nationalism in theatre, this chapter also manifests
that theatre played a critical role in carrying out such a complicated and potentially controversial process by providing concrete examples that intricately entwine nationalistic sentiments and Western modernity. Specifically, this chapter illuminates the crucial role of theatre in the formation of Korean ethnic nationalism, constructed not only as a passive resistance against an external threat – Japanese colonialism – but more importantly, as an active appropriation of an external influence – Western modernity.

**Insufficiency of Tradition in the Ethnic Identity Construction**

The easiest way to construct an ethnic identity through performance would be to revive tradition and heritage. For instance, S. Sonya Gwak examines the process of young people of Korean descent in the U.S. understanding, embracing, or renewing their ethnic identity through participating in Korean traditional performances in the 2000s. Newspaper reports about performances staged by Korean immigrants during the 1910s imply that Korean traditional folk tales were indeed being revived. For example, *The New Korea* published a photograph with several captions: “A Photograph of Theatre by the Korean Youth Military Academy in 1913,” “Writer Jeong Tae-eun,” and “The Theatre Munje (Subject or Question) July the Seventh.” Although the newspaper did not provide additional explanations than those captions, it is highly likely that a person named Tae-eun Jeong, as Hong-woo Lee surmises, wrote a play based on the Korean traditional folk tale *The Weaver Girl and the Cowherd* (*Gyeon-wu Jingnyeo*), in which the two meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. The play was staged at

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74 *The New Korea*, September 10, 1914. The Korean word for the last caption is “The Theatre Munje July the Seventh.” *Munje* can mean subject, question, issue, or problem based on which Chinese characters are used, but the newspaper did not provide Chinese characters for the word.
75 The historian Seon-ju Bang mentions that a person named Tae-eun Jeong immigrated to the U.S. in 1908, studied at the University of Chicago and De Paul University, and contributed to various Korean communities in the U.S.
the Korean Youth Military Academy in 1913.\textsuperscript{76} In its newspaper edition of February 22, 1918, 
*The New Korea* also published a short description of a scene from the play titled *Bloody Clothing (Pi Mut-eun Ot)*. In the description given, an innocent female is jailed and tortured due to her relationship with a man.\textsuperscript{77} This part, as Keum-sun Yeon points out, invites contemporary Korean readers to link this play to the Korean folk tale of *The Story of Chunhyang (Chunhyang-jeon)*, which includes a similar version of the story in it.\textsuperscript{78} Although I will discuss the Korean Youth Military Academy later in relation to another performance, it would not be productive to speculate more about the aforementioned performances given the insufficient information provided by the newspaper entries. Rather, I will present the historical basis for my argument that tradition and heritage would have been insufficient to rely on as sources for the production of Korean ethnic identity during the 1910s.

An overarching question is whether Korean immigrants identified themselves as “Koreans” before leaving the homeland. Prior to the late nineteenth century, as Carter J. Eckert notes, “there was little, if any, feeling of loyalty toward the abstract concept of ‘Korea’ as a nation-state, or toward fellow inhabitants of the peninsula as ‘Koreans.’”\textsuperscript{79} Instead, “the attachments to their village or region and to their clan, lineage, and immediate and extended family,” Eckert argues, “were far more meaningful.”\textsuperscript{79} In other words, pre-modern dynasties did not develop a homogeneous collectivity with a sense of shared identity, despite Korea having maintained a geographically bounded community with a highly developed central bureaucratic

\textsuperscript{76} As Hong-woo Lee points out, this photo document is a valuable source, considering that photographic records about theatrical activities (not only by Koreans abroad but also by peninsular Koreans during the 1910s) are extremely rare. Hong-woo Lee (2011), 257-258.

\textsuperscript{77} *The New Korea*, February 21, 1918.

\textsuperscript{78} Keum-sun Yeon, 61-62.

state. Related to this point, it should be noted that Korean immigrants in the U.S. were too much of a heterogeneous population to naturally become a unified group.

Korean immigrants in the U.S. consisted of largely two critically different social groups: laborers and their families, and a small number of students and political refugees. The total number of Korean students in the U.S. from 1882 to 1940, according to a report by the Korean National Association of Hawai‘i’s education committee, was about 891. Despite the small number, their influence was strong. Those who arrived as political refugees or students included Jae-pil Seo, aka, Philip Jaisohn (1866-1951), Syngman Rhee (1875-1965), Chang-ho Ahn (1878-1938), and Yong-man Bak (1881-1928), all of whom emerged as leaders in the Korean community and launched national independence movements among Korean immigrants in the U.S. After having failed in government reform movements in Korea, they came to the U.S. for political freedom as well as for advanced education in Western technology and ideologies. Those leaders, according to Bong-Youn Choy, “regarded other Korean immigrants as water and themselves as fish.” In Choy’s interpretation, this metaphor implied that the leaders believed that they were inseparable from others. Still, the leaders, except Chang-ho Ahn, were all originally from the upper middle class and had been educated in colleges and universities in the U.S.; in those ways they differed from laborers who were mostly from the lower class, and had

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80 Although many of those who landed in Hawaiian plantations quickly left for cities in Hawai‘i and the mainland, all of the available jobs – such as railway and mining jobs, agricultural work, general housework, restaurant work, etc. – were underpaid jobs involving hard physical labor.
81 Recited from Bong-Youn Choy, 78.
82 After the failure of the government reform movement in 1884, aka, Gapsin Coup, Jae-pil Seo fled to Japan first and then went to the U.S. the following year. He attended Columbia University Medical School (now George Washington University). After receiving his medical degree in 1892, he married Muriel Armstrong, the daughter of Colonel George Buchanan Armstrong – one of the founders of the U.S. Railway Mail Service and a cousin of President James Buchanan. With this marriage, Seo became the first Korean immigrant to gain American citizenship. He changed his name to Philip Jaisohn. He returned to Korea in December 1895; and organized the Independence Club (Dongnip Hyeoephoe), published The Independent (Dongnip Sinmun), and worked for the construction of the Independence Gate (Dongnip-mun) until he left for the U.S. once again in May 1898. Bong-Youn Choy, 79-80.
83 Bong-Youn Choy, 78.
little formal education. Even if these leaders had opposed the highly feudal pre-modern Korean society, it would not have been an easy task to create a sense of community bonding everyone, due to these apparent differences.

Korean laborer immigrants came from all over the Korean peninsula, whereas Chinese and Japanese immigrants came from only a limited number of places. Mostly coming from cities, the Korean laborer immigrants’ original occupations also varied. The scattered origin and different urban occupations, as Wayne Patterson posits, made the first generation of Korean immigrants hugely heterogeneous. The heterogeneity made it accordingly difficult to sustain organizations among Koreans. Although more than twenty-four Korean organizations – such as village council (donghoe) and sworn brotherhoods – had formed almost immediately after their members immigrated to the U.S., they could not effectively serve their objective of protecting mutual interests among Koreans due to their regionalism. As Chi-ho Yun noted when he visited Hawai‘i in 1905 as vice minister of the Korean foreign affairs, “Koreans in Hawai‘i were divided among themselves.” Thus, it would have been a difficult issue for Korean leaders to overcome factionalism and cultivate a sense of community without regard to local distinctiveness and status distinctions.

The historically contingent context of the external threat, as Gi-Wook Shin posits, was largely responsible for the rise of a new, all-embracing identity of Koreans as a unique ethnic group. Specifically commenting on Korean immigrants in the U.S., Ronald Takaki also states that “a unique ‘necessity’ [that] Koreans in America had to struggle against colonialism in

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85 Wayne Patterson (2000), 45-49.
86 Chi-ho Yun, *Ilgi* [Diary], September 18, 1905, recited from Wayne Patterson (2000), 49.
87 Gi-Wook Shin, 10.
“Korea” was the source for their strong ethnic community. The Korean National Association (Daehanin Gungminhoe), as the first unified Korean association in North America, could maintain its preeminent position only after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. At the same time though, it cannot be assumed that the ominous Korean situation could have consistently sustained a sense of unity. Unlike large immigrant groups, Korean immigrants in the U.S. could not build their own separate economy and instead had to commingle with other ethnic groups due to their small numbers. Consequently, Korean immigrants were being swiftly adapted into American society, which, in Wayne Patterson’s view, was the cause for low returning rates: only one-seventh of Korean immigrants returned to the peninsula, whereas more than half of Chinese and Japanese immigrants returned to their native lands. Although the political climate of the Korean peninsula should be counted as the major reason for Koreans’ low rate of return, the loss of a home to return to, as Patterson posits, could have pushed Korean immigrants to adopt the settler, rather than sojourner, mentality. In order to maintain a sense of community, therefore, Korean immigrants needed to have continuous experiences of reaffirming their commonalities.

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89 The unification of numerous Korean organizations was initially made to defend two Koreans – In-hwan Jang and Myeong-un Jeon – who were involved in the assassination of a pro-Japanese American, Durham White Stevens, in San Francisco in 1908. The following year, the National Association (Gungminhoe) was founded by unifying the Mutual Assistance Association (Gongnip Hyeophoe) of San Francisco with the United Korean Federation (Hanin Hapseong Hyeophoe), which had absorbed most of the earlier associations in Hawai‘i in 1907. However, some associations such as the Great Unity Fatherland Protection Association (Daedong Bogukhoe) had remained outside the fold and finally merged into the unified association in May 1910, forming the Korean National Association (Daehanin Gungminhoe). See Sam-woong Kim, Tusa-wa Sinsa Ahn Chang-ho Pyeongjeon [Biography of the Fighter and Gentleman Chang-ho Ahn] (Seoul: Hyeonamsa, 2013), 88; Wayne Patterson (2000), 52-54.
Protestantism as a Religious and Secular Base of Korean Immigrant Communities

Protestantism was one of the strongest commonalities that Korean immigrants in the U.S. shared. Unlike other East Asian immigrant groups and even the majority of peninsular Koreans, most Korean immigrants were Protestants. As discussed in the Introduction, American missionaries, representatively including Horace N. Allen, played a leading part in recruiting Koreans for sugar plantations in Hawai‘i. Accordingly, a significant number of Korean immigrants had contact with American missionaries prior to their departure, and may have even been baptized. According to Bong-Youn Choy, “about 40 percent of the immigrants were Christian converts, and gradually most of the Koreans became church-goers.”\(^9^1\) That is, continued mission works in sugar plantations further expanded and solidified Koreans’ connection with Christianity.\(^9^2\) Within half a year after the arrival of the first immigrants to Hawai‘i in 1903, the first Korean church was established in Mokuleia, Oahu. On the mainland, Korean Christians started worshipping together at a mission school in Los Angeles in 1904, and in the following year the Korean Methodist Church was established in San Francisco. Within the first decade, fifty-one churches of various denominations were established in the U.S.: twelve in California and thirty-nine in Hawai‘i.\(^9^3\) Despite schisms and divisions within Korean churches, Protestant Christianity fueled a sense of shared community. First, churches were one of the first public spheres in which Koreans from all walks of life could freely mingle with each other on the peninsula and in the U.S. alike. The notion of equality before God also helped ease the historic divisions between classes, while providing a more egalitarian worldview than the Confucian

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\(^9^1\) Bong-Youn Choy, 77.  
\(^9^3\) Ronald Takaki, 279; Bong-Youn Choy, 100-101.
order previously supported by Koreans. In so doing, churches, particularly in Korean communities in the U.S., served as a center of social life. This kind of new communal experiences would have definitely facilitated the formation of a strong feeling of community; and theatre appears to have been a crucial part of these communal experiences.

There are newspaper reports attesting to the fact that Korean immigrants produced theatrical performances to celebrate Christian holidays. For example, The New Korea reported two theatrical performances produced at a Korean church for the Christmas celebration: New Stage (Sin Mudaе) in 1913 and Abraham’s Devotion (Abraham-ui Jeongseong) in 1915. Although there is no more information about the 1915 production, the report on the 1913 production included a brief synopsis: “[w]hen a play was staged after a main event, there were various interesting happenings such as repentance of a sinner, bestowment of laurels upon believers, and missionary sermons by foreigners.” This nonlinear plot line indicates that the title of New Stage, as Hong-woo Lee argues, was less a specific title of the performance but rather a description of the mixed performance event. Specifically, the first part of the event, according to the newspaper summary, consisted of three subparts: 1. A devout Christian offered gifts to the Christ; 2. A chorus identified as Greek soldiers sang a hymn; and 3. The Saints put laurels on each other’s head. The second part then began with a seemingly short scene titled “The Devil’s Tear,” in which a character named Maenghoedu, tempted by the devil, is ruined along with his family, but he soon overcomes the devil with the help of angels. The event finally

96 “Sin Mudaе [New Stage],” The New Korea, January 1, 1914.
97 Hong-woo Lee (2011), 250-251.
ended with a Caucasian evangelist character preaching a gospel in Korean and a Chinese evangelist doing the same in Chinese.

Although it is not possible to know what the evangelist characters actually said, it is important to underscore the decision of having the Chinese character speak in Chinese and the Caucasian speak in Korean. If the characters stated only basic words, speaking in one’s own language would have been reasonable enough. The majority of Koreans who came to the U.S. as students or political refugees were fluent in both Chinese and English, while Korean laborers were not fluent in either language. Even if Koreans had been highly exposed to the Chinese language throughout the pre-modern period, the Chinese that Koreans learnt and used were only the Chinese characters, more precisely, in Ross King’s expression, “classical Chinese in its Korean guise.”98 If the Chinese evangelist character spoke in Chinese, it is thus highly likely that the majority of Korean audiences, even the formally educated, could not understand. Juxtaposed with the Caucasian character speaking in Korean, the Chinese character’s line would have likely sounded truly foreign. In this regard, the arrangement of the Chinese speaking in Chinese and the Caucasian speaking in Korean would have been a decisive choice made to convey a message that the Korean language, at first, is different from the Chinese, and has a value that even a Caucasian can recognize. Though it may sound like a truism, Koreans only began to understand the meaning and value of the Korean language during this period – a situation, which I contend, suggests the educational purpose of this theatre production.

The choice of the Caucasian evangelist speaking in Korean should come as no surprise when one considers the role of American missionaries in promoting the Korean language. Ross King points out that through the late nineteenth century, the Korean language situation was “one

of diglossia and digraphia.”99 The official written language was the classical Chinese hanmun while the vernacular writing system that King Sejong (reign 1418-1450) promulgated in 1443, hangeul, had been despised by the upper class consisting mostly of Sino-centric literati. For this reason, the Korean language, as Henry H. Em states, “could not have functioned as an effective means for shared communion.”100 Under such circumstances, Protestant missionaries translated and printed the Bible in hangeul in order to reach the poor and working classes. Such was the impact that the translated Bible became one of the first materials written in the Korean alphabet and distributed widely among the common people.101 Studying the Bible, as Sucheng Chan points out, “became synonymous with acquiring literacy.”102 The American Protestants in Korea and the U.S. furthermore inspired and trained numerous Korean language reformation leaders. These included leaders such as Jae-pil Seo – the founder of the first modern daily newspaper exclusively using the Korean vernacular writing system, The Independent (Dongnip Sinmun) – and Si-gyeong Ju – the linguist credited for the unification of speech and writing, and the standardization of the Korean language.103 By promoting widespread literacy in hangeul and respect for hangeul, American missionaries contributed to the creation of a new awareness of the

99 Ross King (1998), 35.
100 Henry H. Em (2013), 67.
101 Between 1895 and 1936, approximately eighteen million copies of Bibles, although not all translations of the full Bible, were distributed. For thorough research on the role Western missionaries played in the development of the Korean vernacular script, see Ross King, “Western Protestant Missionaries and the Origins of Korean Language Modernization,” Journal of International and Area Studies 11. 3 (2004): 7-38.
102 Sucheng Chan, xxxv.
103 The Independent was first printed on April 7, 1896. It was published in the Korean alphabet with occasional articles and editorials in English. The newspaper was the organ of the Independence Club and printed by the Trilingual Press run at the Baejae Boy’s High School by the American Methodist Episcopal Mission. In its inaugural editorial in 1896, Jae-pil Seo states that “in other nations, all the people, male and female alike, first learn their own nation’s script to mastery” – the understanding that he would have gained in his long experience with English and the education system in the U.S. His specific reformation plan, according to Ross King, was furthermore highly influenced by Horace G. Underwood, one of the early American missionaries who entered Korea in 1885. Another main contributor to the newspaper, Si-gyeong Ju, had also been under the education of another representative American missionary, Henry G. Appenzeller, who founded Baejae Boy’s High School that Ju attended. Thus, his explicit explanation about the connection between nationalism and language – such as “Language is a special standard whereby a group becomes a free nation” – can be speculated as derived Ju’s study of English and its position in American culture. See Bae-geun Cha et al., 34-41; Ross King (1998).
national language and an image of Korea as a singular linguistic community. The choice of the Caucasian evangelist speaking in Korean in the theatre production *New Stage*, therefore, can be read as an attempt to credit American missionaries for playing a crucial role in the promotion of *hangeul*. At the same time though, this choice could have also led the audience to grasp how deeply Christianity, often identified as American or Western modernity, was embedded in *hangeul* being elevated to the Korean national language. At the end, this theatre production staged *hangeul* as embodying Western modernity as well as Korean indigenous greatness.

**Americanization as a Way of Reforming the Ethnic Identity**

Not only did the exposure to the Protestantism and the American culture pave the way to the emergence of the Korean language as a vital basis for Korean ethnic identity, it also influenced Koreans, particularly Korean immigrants in the U.S., to devise a specific strategy for the reformation of their ethnic identity. When Koreans arrived, hostility in the U.S. against the Chinese and Japanese was steadily increasing. Koreans were lumped together with Chinese and Japanese immigrants and categorized as Orientals, such that Koreans became subject to the same discrimination. Ronald Takaki provides a concise summary of the passage of a series of restrictive legislations:

> The Asiatic Exclusion League condemned both Korean and Japanese immigrants as undesirable aliens, and the San Francisco Building Trades Council demanded that the Chinese Exclusion Act be extended to the Japanese and Koreans. Support for this legislation was spearheaded by a new organization called the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League. Meanwhile, in San Francisco in 1906, the Board of Education specifically included “Koreans” as well as Japanese in its segregationist directive. In a 1907 executive order, President Theodore Roosevelt prohibited the remigration of Japanese and Korean laborers from Hawai‘i to the mainland. In 1912 the Democratic Party in California called for “immediate federal legislation for the exclusion of Japanese, Korean, and Hindoo laborers.”104

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104 Ronald Takaki, 272.
In 1913 also, the California state legislature passed the Webb-Henry Land Law, which precluded immigrants who were not allowed to become naturalized citizens, undoubtedly including Koreans, from owning land. Though Korean immigrants in the U.S. were affected by the racism of Whites against non-Whites, they believed that a reasonable solution to this discrimination was not to form solidarity with other non-Whites, but rather, to differentiate themselves from others, especially from other East Asians.105

There were various reasons for Korean immigrants in the U.S. to manifest their differences from other East Asian immigrant groups, especially distancing themselves from Japanese immigrants. First and foremost, Japan was the homeland colonizer. Therefore, as Sucheng Chan notes, it infuriated Korean immigrants that whatever seemed to impact Japanese immigrants seemed to also affect them.106 It is also noteworthy that there were no separate, organized anti-Korean movements, unlike existent movements against the Chinese and Japanese, due to the small percentage of Korean immigrants.107 Korean immigrants, being mostly Christian themselves, furthermore considered Americans to be their allies and benefactors rather than their oppressors. After all, Koreans had observed in the homeland how American missionaries had struggled to evangelize, or “better” in the Christian sense, Koreans regardless of Korean

105 Japanese immigrants also sought to distinguish themselves from other East Asian immigrant groups, particularly from the Chinese. Upon observing the American racism having targeted Chinese immigrants, Japanese intellectuals in the U.S. and Japan urged the Japanese immigrant community to adhere to American standards and gain acceptance from the American populace. The assimilation to American society, they believed, would alleviate the American racism against the Japanese and simultaneously solidify Japan’s international standing as one of the civilized modern nations. See: Yuji Ichioka, The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants: 1885-1924 (London: The Free Press, 1988); Eiichiro Azuma, Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

106 Sucheng Chan, XLIX.

107 Sucheng Chan, XLIX. Bong-Youn Choy informs a few sporadic incidents based on his personal interviews. For example, Korean workers were attacked by White workers at Mary E. Steward’s orange orchard in Upland, California, but the date of this incident is not specified (107-110). Hyung June Moon introduces another incident widely reported in American newspapers in 1913. Referred to as the Hemet incident, eleven Korean workers, who went to Hemet, California to pick apricots, were attacked by White residents of the town on June 26, 1913. Hyung June Moon, “The Korean Immigrants in America: The Quest of Identity in the Formative Years, 1903-1918” (PhD diss., University of Nevada, 1976), 370-398.
hostility. In the same vein, Korean community leaders, as Choy states, purposely did not take action against Americans with the hope that they would support Korean independence.\textsuperscript{108}

Korean immigrants attempted to demonstrate that they were more receptive to becoming Americanized than Chinese and Japanese immigrants. For instance, an editorial in The United states, “The reason why many Americans love Koreans and help us, while they hate Japanese more than ever is that we Koreans gave up old baseness, thought, and behavior, and became more westernized.”\textsuperscript{109} With the understanding that the U.S. was essentially “a White man’s society,” Korean immigrants tried to prove their sincere endeavors at assimilation to Americans.\textsuperscript{110} American anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese writings also fueled their eagerness toward Americanization.\textsuperscript{111} The following article was published in The New Korea in 1910, stating:

\begin{quote}
The reason for discrimination against the Asiatics stems from the unfortunate situation of the Chinese who came to this country without abandoning their filthy habits and customs. And, everywhere they go they create disorders. After that the Japanese who have entirely different habits from white society could not mingle with the whites… but also they spend as little as they can for food and houses… so they are becoming a target of hatred from white workers.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

Korean immigrants after all believed that they should prove their higher degree of Americanization in comparison to other immigrant groups, particularly East Asian counterparts, in order to alleviate racial discrimination against themselves.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{108} Bong-Youn Choy, 78.
\textsuperscript{109} The United, December 1906, recited from Hyung June Moon, 159.
\textsuperscript{110} Nadia Y. Kim states that Koreans racialized nations based on their majority or ruling group even for countries like the U.S. that do not share one blood ancestry. Nadia Y. Kim, Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 26.
\textsuperscript{111} The Korean peninsular newspaper, The Independent, occasionally published editorials berating Chinese immigrants in the U.S. for their failure to adopt civilized customs. According to Andre Schmid, its chief editor Jae-pil Seo’s exposure to American anti-Chinese writings during his time as a student in Philadelphia would have led to the publication of such kind of writings. Andre Schmid, 59.
\textsuperscript{112} The New Korea, June 8, 1910, recited from Hyung June Moon, 157.
\end{flushleft}
Several newspaper reports demonstrate that theatrical performances aimed to facilitate the process of associating the Korean ethnic identity reformation with Americanization or Westernization. Productions staged at Korean schools particularly serve as examples. To many immigrants, the possibility of attaining an advanced education was one of the major draws for them to immigrate to the U.S. Patriotism further spurred their commitment to education, urging them to establish Korean schools.\(^{113}\) *The New Korea* published the following: “If we want to start afresh our Korean community, we should give serious thought to our children’s education and have schools that would give them a Korean education.”\(^{114}\) Korean community leaders – with the exception of Jae-pil Seo who had not been directly involved in Korean community issues in the U.S. – operated schools somewhat differently to serve their specific agendas. Nevertheless, they were all involved in producing theatrical performances. In this section, I discuss performances staged at the Korean Youth Military Academy led by Yong-man Bak and the Korean Compound School, aka, the Korean Central School (*Jungang Hagwon*), led by Syngman Rhee. It is a noteworthy fact that Bak and Rhee, as well-known rivals in the Korean community in the U.S., both were involved in the production of theatrical performances.\(^{115}\)

\(^{113}\) If one includes Korean-language schools, there were more than twelve schools. Korean language schools were established in Sacramento, San Francisco, Dinuba, Reedley, Delano, Stockton, Manteca, Riverside, Claremont, Upland, and Los Angeles. Ronald Takaki, 279.

\(^{114}\) Recited from Ronald Takaki, 279.

\(^{115}\) Although they were once prison mates in Korea, Yong-man Bak and Syngman Rhee split over their vision of how to work for Korean independence: Bak’s military approach vs. Rhee’s diplomatic one. Nonetheless, their differing visions entailed not only ideological disputes but also violent encounters and legal wrangling. Bak lost his leadership of the Hawai‘i branch of the Korean National Association to Rhee in 1915 and left Hawai‘i after another factional confrontation with Rhee in 1926. Bak’s life soon ended as he was assassinated by an unknown person in Beijing in 1928, whereas Rhee survived times and became the first president of Republic of Korea after the nation’s liberation from Japan. However, Bong-Youn Choy asserts that both Bak and Rhee were losers since they broke the sense of unity, which they both pursued to cultivate in Korean communities in the U.S. According to Warren Y. Kim, the Korean National Association of Hawai‘i had up to 2,351 members, but the membership plummeted to 150 when the disputes arose within the organization. Kim also accuses Rhee for having “attempted to build a dictatorship over the entire Korean community [in the U.S.],” which may have reflected Kim’s criticism on Rhee’s twelve-year-long dictatorship as the first president of South Korea from 1948 to 1960. Warren Y. Kim, *Koreans in America* (Seoul: Po Chin Chai Printing Co., 1971), 57-59.
Following his imprisonment for reformist activities in Korea, Yong-man Bak immigrated to the U.S. in 1904 to study political and military science at the University of Nebraska. With the belief that Korean independence could be achieved only through direct military action against the Japanese, Bak established the Korean Youth Military Academy in Hastings, Nebraska in 1909, as the first institute to nurture an army for independence outside of the Korean peninsula. The school, according to Keum-sun Yeon, produced theatrical performances every year until it closed in 1914, two years after Bak left for Hawai‘i. The aforementioned performance with the subject/question of “July the Seventh” was highly likely one of the performances produced by the school. *The Korean National Herald (Gungminbo)* also published a report with the title of “Dramatic Theatre by the Youth Military Academy” on August 16, 1913. According to the newspaper report, the performance “intended to deter interracial marriage between Koreans and the Japanese.” The synopsis, however, complicates what the exact intention would have been. The play starts with a Korean girl, Barbara, eloping with her suitor, Mr. Bak, when her father forces her to marry a Japanese noble, Gogawa. In exile, Mr. Bak asks his Chinese friend to give Barbara shelter, but his friend deceitfully takes her to Shanghai instead. Barbara’s father, Gogawa, Mr. Bak, and even Mr. Bak’s father then follow Barbara to Shanghai, and finally find her there. They arrest the Chinese deceiver, and Barbara and Mr. Bak get married. This synopsis may well remind one of a typical comedy plot, which ends with punishment of the villain and

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116 Keum-sun Yeon, 31. Though short-lived, the Korean Youth Military Academy in Nebraska casted a long legacy, while motivating four additional military centers to be established: in Claremont and Lompoc, California, in Kansas City, Kansas, and in Superior, Wyoming. In Hawai‘i as well, military training centers were established. After moving to Hawai‘i, Bak consolidated all military training centers into a single Korean National Brigade in 1914. In so doing, he commanded more than three hundred cadets. After the outbreak of the March First Movement in 1919, he travelled to Shanghai where he served briefly as minister of foreign affairs for the Provisional Government of Korea and then moved to Manchuria to form an army of liberation with Korean exiles until his death in 1928.

marriage between lovers. However, the newspaper states that the performance ended with the marriage between Barbara’s servant boy and Gogawa’s sister.

Due to the limited information provided in the newspaper report, it is impossible to reconstruct even the plot of the performance with any precision. Nonetheless, its ambiguity raises questions particularly regarding the race of Barbara’s servant. The report introduces him simply as “Barbara’s sangno (servant boy or errand boy)” with no comments about his ethnicity. However, one can speculate that he is Korean, considering that all of the non-Korean characters are introduced with their ethnicities. If that were the case, it would mean that the performance portrayed the marriage between a Korean from a low social status and a Japanese from a noble family (Gogawa’s sister) as acceptable. If the play would have had this ending, it would have degraded the Japanese, even if in a comical way, by describing a noble Japanese as deserving only of a Korean from the lower class. This message would not have been easily dismissed, as highlighted in sharp contrast with the miscarried marriage plan between a Korean (Barbara) and Japanese (Gogawa) from an equally high social status. If instead of being Korean, Barbara’s servant boy were Japanese or Chinese, the performance would have presented an image of a Korean female having a Japanese or Chinese servant. No matter the servant’s actual race, the performance thus would have wound up projecting the hierarchical picture among East Asian ethnicities. Above all, the fact that the heroine of the play has an American name Barbara clearly indicates that Korean immigrants actively pursued to associate themselves with Americans while distancing themselves from other Asian immigrant groups.

The Korean Compound School also produced a performance encouraging Korean immigrants to Americanize or Westernize themselves. As the first Korean school in Hawai’i, the

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118 “Sonyeonyeong Hakgyo-ui Hwimunjeok Yeongeuk [Dramatic Theatre by the Youth Military Academy],” The Korean National Herald, August 16, 1913.
Compound School was founded by the Methodist Mission in 1906. After arriving in Hawai‘i in 1912, Yong-man Bak invited his previous prison mate Syngman Rhee to work for the school.\textsuperscript{119} Rhee joined the school initially as a teacher, but within a year became principal. Rhee then rapidly transformed the school from a mere language school into a grade school teaching not only Korean and English languages but also Korean history, culture, and Western civilization, until he resigned from his principal position in 1916.\textsuperscript{120} Simultaneously, students at the school, according to Jong-moon Yoon, participated in extramural activities such as “a slide projector screening, a sports meeting, a temperance union, [and] a prayer meeting.”\textsuperscript{121} Some of those extramural activities aimed at nurturing ethnic nationalism not only among the students but also the parents and other adults who formed the audience – as Kinsley K. Lyu, a pastor at the Methodist church in Hawai‘i, later comments on oratory competitions held by Korean language schools in Hawai‘i in recalling his own experience in a Korean church.\textsuperscript{122} Apparently with a similar goal, the school produced theatrical performances, as \textit{The Korean National Herald} reports indicate.

On June 20, 1914, \textit{The Korean National Herald} reported that the Korean Compound School staged a performance entitled \textit{Historical Play (Yeoksajeok Yeongeuk)} as part of its commencement ceremony. According to the report, the performance consisted of four acts. The first three acts presented the propagation of Christianity and persecution of Christians: the suppression of the Roman Catholic church in the late Joseon Dynasty by Heungseon Daewongun

\textsuperscript{119} Syngman Rhee first came to the U.S. in 1905, and obtained a B.A. from George Washington University in 1907, an M.A. from Harvard in 1908, and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1910. He then returned to Korea and worked as the general secretary of the Korean YMCA. When he returned to the U.S. to attend a conference of the Methodist Mission in Minneapolis in 1913, however, he expressed his desire to stay in the U.S. to Yong-man Bak, who in response secured a job for Rhee in Hawai‘i. David K. Yoo, 68; Bong-Youn Choy, 161.


\textsuperscript{122} Kinsley K. Lyu, 49.
(a regent of the Joseon Dynasty in the 1860s) (Act 1), the missionary works in Africa by the Scottish pioneer missionary David Livingston (Act 2), and the arrest of the Korean missionary Gyeon-do Son in Beijing by the Japanese (Act 3). The last act staged the cruel punishment by the Japanese of a number of Koreans, including the renowned nationalist leader Chi-ho Yun. That is, the performance framed Livingston’s mission work in Africa between two Korean cases of religious oppression, and ended with another Korean case depicting the Japanese political oppression. This dramatourgical structure rendered Koreans who were persecuted, either religiously or politically by the Japanese, as equivalent to a White missionary struggling in a “heathen” country. Certainly, this suggestive parallel between Livingston and oppressed Koreans under the colonial rule cannot be considered convincing, given that Livingston’s missionary work, in close solidarity with British Imperialism, promoted racially hierarchical views on non-Caucasians and facilitated the British colonization of Africa. Still, the play’s implications would have served well its reported goal of “[provoking] sympathy toward Koreans by introducing Joseon to Christian countries and [supporting] Koreans in Hawai‘i, who [were] living like the guilty in exile, to fight for the future of the nation.” Protestant Christianity was used to invite

123 “Yeongeuk-ui Seolbi-ga Ttohan Gwengjanghaldeut [Theatrical Staging Would be Also Great],” The Korean National Herald, June 20, 1914. Chi-ho Yun (1864-1945) was one of the influential Christian nationalists at least until the early 1910s, though he became later an avid pro-Japanese collaborator. From an early age, he was exposed to foreign cultures in Japan, China, and the U.S. In 1881, when he was sixteen years old, he joined a delegation of representatives to Japan. In 1883, Yun returned to Korea as he was appointed as a clerk in the newly established Office of Extraordinary Affairs (the antecedent to a foreign ministry). But as the 1884 Gapsin coup failed, he went to Shanghai and enrolled in a school run by the American Methodist Episcopal Church. As a Christian convert, Yun went to the U.S. with the help of American missionaries in 1888, and studied theology at Vanderbilt University and Emory College. After returning to Korea in 1895, Yun received an appointment first as vice minister of education and then as vice minister of foreign affairs. He was also involved in the Independence Club led by Jae-pil Seo and worked for The Independent as the editor-in-chief after Seo returned to the U.S. in 1898. Yun believed that Korea should catch up with the advancements of Japan and the West through Christian mission and Western education in order to achieve independence. After the Japanese annexation, Yun gradually changed his opinion and advocated taking advantage of resources for modernization under Japanese colonial rule. Vipan Chandra, Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea: Enlightenment and the Independence Club (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1988), 89–91, 137, 172.

Americans and other Christians to look beyond the “foreignness” of Koreans and to garner their support for Korean independence.

Korean leaders in the U.S. believed that their adherence to Christianity would not only demonstrate their higher degree of Americanization but also be rewarded with less racial discrimination against Koreans in the U.S. as well as more support for Korean independence. The common belief that Christianity was a logical basis for appealing their case to Western Christian powers would have been crucial particularly for Syngman Rhee, who devoted himself to diplomacy, and made the Korean case known in his various capacities as lobbyist, petitioner, and unofficial delegate at international conferences. When the March First Movement occurred in the homeland in 1919, however, Chang-ho Ahn also wrote a letter to the Christian Churches of America, in which he, in David K. Yoo’s interpretation, “not only invoked the right of self-determination and the optimism of a new era dawning, but framed his discussion in the context of a call to fellow believers.”\(^{125}\) Those leaders’ appeal to Christian brotherhood, though never answered, could have well corresponded with their approach to the formation of Korean ethnic identity. In their expectation, the reformed Korean ethnic identity through Americanization, including Christianization, would proclaim not only the distinctive characteristic of Koreans but also a respectable position for Korea among other nations.

In their pursuit to secure its place in the world, Korean intellectuals in and outside of the peninsula engaged in the modern project of nationalizing the people. Thus, the project was, as Henry H. Em states, “both particular and universal.”\(^{126}\) Sharing this interpretation, Gi-Wook Shin concludes from his mostly quantitative analyses of textbooks, magazines, and newspapers from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth Korea that “universalistic” elements (Western, foreign,

\(^{125}\) David K. Yoo, 99.

\(^{126}\) Henry H. Em (2013), 66.
modern) had dominated over the “particularistic” (Korean, indigenous, traditional) as the basis of the nation, although the trend was gradually reversed during the colonial period.\textsuperscript{127} But the universalistic and particularistic elements, as Shin clarifies, were mixed, to the extent of making it difficult to distinguish the two treats, as already revealed in the process of elevating the Korean alphabet into the national language. The particularistic elements, such as national history and myth, were reframed with Western ideas and norms when they appeared as representing the nation. In the next section, I examine the ways in which Korean immigrants in the U.S. staged national histories and foundation myths. I begin with an analysis of another performance by the Korean Compound School in 1914.

**Performances of Nationalist Historiography**

*The Korean National Herald* reported that students from the Korean Compound School staged a performance in a church as part of the celebration of the Korean National Association and the inaugural ceremony of the president of its Hawai‘i branch assembly on February 2, 1914. As reconstructed based on two related reports, the performance consisted of four acts with interludes between the acts. The first act began with girls and boys singing and dancing, and all of them joined in hands and circled round. The second act depicted the issue of Koreans in Gando (in Korean) – a region, called Jiandao in Chinese, which had been a subject of border disputes between the Qing and Joseon states, and came under Chinese control through the signing of the Gando agreement between Japan and China in 1909. The third act, entitled “Joseon Students of the Present Days,” then presented a story in which Korean students are arrested while attempting to flee from Korea and then rescued by female troops just before they were to be executed. Entitled “Various Inland Organizations and the Christian Church,” the final

\textsuperscript{127} Gi-Wook Shin, 115-134.
act staged a debate on how to save the nation among educators, farmers, soldiers, and Christians from the peninsula; and a pastor finally appeared to call upon all to unite to save the nation. Staged at the church for the nationalist ceremony, this performance in the end intersected religious and non-religious themes through the loose episodic structure of the play, in a similar manner as *Historical Play* staged at the Compound School.

A distinctive point of the performance is its inclusion of the history of Koreans living in Gando. The Gando issue was critical in determining the territorial and historical boundary of the Korean *minjok*, which emerged as a crucial factor in the formation of national identity. In this regard, I review a series of interconnected issues related to the formation of nationalist historiography, one created on the basis of a Korean national foundation myth that tells that a mythical figure of Dangun descended from the heaven to the Gando area and founded Korea. In so doing, I particularly highlight that the nationalist historiography was formed not totally based on purely indigenous elements, but rather, by incorporating and embracing international intellectual currents of the time, i.e., Western ideas and norms. A clear understanding about the nationalist historiography formed in the early twentieth century enables one to examine its theatrical embodiments, which were either subtly made or not described in detail in remaining historical documents under the dearth of preserved play scripts.

While the territorial border between China and Korea, particularly in sparsely populated regions like Gando, had remained unclear for centuries, the first formal demarcation was made in 1712, marking the Yalu and Duman Rivers as the border and erecting a stele at the summit of Mount Baekdu – the watershed of the two rivers – as an indicator of the borderline. However, the
Chinese character engraved in the 1712 stele was ambiguous, leaving its interpretation open to disputes. Subsequently, the Gando area became a critical issue in the 1870s when Qing authorities began to send stream of Chinese settlers into Manchuria – including the Gando area. Koreans who had already settled in the area contested with Chinese officials and new settlers, while claiming Gando as a Joseon territory. A series of negotiations and joint surveys followed throughout the 1880s, but the issue was left unresolved with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. When the issue reemerged after the war, it became, as Andre Schmid states, “a central contention in nationalist writing on the nation’s spatial limits.” Newspaper editors and historians framed their discussion about Gando with words used in the modern nation, such as “sovereignty” and “national rights,” which “were being used as powerful conceptual weapons to reinterpret history.” As a peninsula surrounded by the sea on the eastern, southern, and western sides, Korea needed to have its northern frontier clearly identified in order to determine its territorial boundary. The territorial identification was also crucial in determining the territorial scope of the national history, which was being recalled in the formation of national identity.

The Gando area, particularly Mount Baekdu, drew attention as the site of the national foundation myth of Korea, known as Dangun mythology. The mythical story about Dangun had appeared as early as the thirteenth century in Memorabilia of Three Kingdoms (Samguk Yusa), a compilation of tales and myths recorded by the Buddhist monk Ilyeon in 1281. In short, the story narrates that Dangun, as the progenitor of the Korean minjok, descends from Heaven with his three thousand followers to land on Mount Baekdu in 2333 B.C. As a creation myth, however, Dangun was superseded by that found in History of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk Sagi), which

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130 Andre Schmid, 212.
131 Andre Schmid, 213.
compilation was undertaken by the government official and historian Bu-sik Kim under the king’s order. Completed in 1145, *History of the Three Kingdoms* proposes a different legendary figure as the progenitor of Korea: an official of the Shang Dynasty of China, Gija. As implied, the Gija mythology represented the Sino-centric view and served, among mainstream historians, as the predominant historiography during the Confucian-rulled Joseon Dynasty. In early modern Korea, however, the Dangun mythology reemerged and galvanized Koreans, as many worked to detach themselves from a declining China to establish instead, the Korean sovereignty in the nation-state system. Such was the hype that accompanied the reappearance of Dangun that there was a surge in editorials treating various aspects of the Dangun myth.

Chae-ho Sin, an editorial writer of *The Korea Daily News (Daehan Maeil Sinbo)*, pronounced the birth of the Korean *minjok* as originating with the appearance of Dangun in a serialized article entitled “A New Reading of History (*Doksa Sillon*)” published in 1908. Sin defined the history of Korea as accounts of fortunes of *minjok* as constituted by the descendants of Dangun, regardless of individual states’ rise and fall and boundary fluctuations over time. The national history, in other words, was understood as the history of the ethnically defined national community rather than the history of territory and state.132 Thus, the prominent position of Dangun as the premier nationalist myth could survive even the loss of Gando, including the half of Mount Baekdu in 1909.133 As Andre Schmid notes, this view of history, one that documents the struggles by which subjects were defined racially, was associated with Chae-ho Sin’s embrace of international intellectual currents of Social Darwinism. Put differently, Social Darwinism was likely adopted to justify, strengthen, and deepen his biological view of *minjok* as

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132 Andre Schmid, 188.
133 Known as the 1909 Gando convention, Japanese colonial authorities signed a treaty with the Qing Dynasty that recognized the Qing’s territorial rights over Gando, arguably in return for the Manchuria Agreement, which endowed Japan with the exclusive rights to build and control a railway and the mining rights in Manchuria in 1909. See: Sang Wook Daniel Han.
the base of the national history narrative, which in fact includes terms such as “the weak shall be the meat of the strong (yangyuk gangsik).” In this respect, it is important to mention that The Korea Daily News (p. 1904-1910), which published Chae-ho Sin’s writings, was owned by a former reporter from The London Daily Chronicle, Englishman Ernest Bethell. Although Bethell would not have been the only channel that informed Western ideologies to Sin, the fact that The Korea Daily News was under the control of British, not Japanese, ministerial orders in council should be noted.

My point is that the nationalist historiography based on Dangun mythology did not emerge from something purely indigenous; it was not entirely disconnected from international currents. I also propose that the deification of Dangun was processed by absorbing the Western religious epistemology of monotheism. While Sin presented Dangun as a historical figure, his contemporaries worshiped him as a divine figure. This led them to establish a new religion, the Dangun Religion (Dangun-gyo, later renamed the Great Ancestral Religion [Daejong-gyo]). Upon the Japanese annexation in 1910, this religious organization appealed to thousands of Koreans especially in the Korean communities of Manchuria. Although Christian missionaries as well as Japanese historians, as Henry H. Em notes, designated the Dangun myth as a purely invented, fictional fable, Koreans’ embrace of the deification of Dangun, in my understanding, would have related to Koreans’ experience with Christianity since Korea was not familiarized with a religion exclusively worshiping a monotheistic supreme being. Instead, the Korean religious culture had allowed a simultaneous faith in multiple religious-cum-philosophical thoughts, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Shamanism. Although

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134 Andre Schmid, 183.
135 Andre Schmid, 166.
137 Henry H. Em (2013), 80.
some scholars speculate that the Dangun myth, as a monotheistic faith, would facilitate the propagation of Protestantism, it is more likely that an opposite, if not interactive, process occurred, considering that Dangun had become a deity only after the introduction of the Christian God.\textsuperscript{138}

Whether taking Dangun as a historical figure or a deity, the recovery of Dangun provided an imaginary of a Korean ethnic nation having existed at the dawn of historical time and steadily maintained over thousands of years from Gojoseon, through Buyeo, the Three Kingdoms, Unified Silla, Balhae, and Goryeo, to Joseon. The national history was specifically written as a long list of “national” heroes dating back as early as the Three Kingdoms period, although, as I noted earlier in this chapter, the sense of collectivity was more than likely absent among Koreans, more precisely inhabitants of the peninsula, during the pre-modern period.\textsuperscript{139} Nationalist historians, including Chae-ho Sin, paid particular attention to military heroes who displayed a tenacious independence spirit as well as military greatness. For example, Sin wrote a lengthy biography of Eulji Mundeok, a general of Goguryeo (37 B.C.- A.D. 668) who fought over Sui Yangdi’s invading army in 612.\textsuperscript{140} In addition, Sin wrote a biography about an admiral in the Joseon Dynasty, Sun-sin Yi, who was also discussed in a textbook published in 1907.\textsuperscript{141} By discovering and popularizing those national heroes, nationalist historians, as Henry H. Em describes, “insisted that Korea had always had a distinct culture and society, testified to the veracity of the Korean nation by chronicling the long history of the Korean people’s resistance to foreign aggression, and narrated the emergence of the Korean nation as an essential part of world

\textsuperscript{138} David K. Yoo, 23; Hyung June Moon, 228.
\textsuperscript{139} Referring specifically to the period of the Three Kingdoms, John Duncan notes that it is “extremely unlikely that the people of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla all thought of themselves as members of a larger ‘Korean’ collectivity that transcended local boundaries and state loyalties” (200).
\textsuperscript{140} Andre Schmid, 63.
\textsuperscript{141} Gi-Wook Shin, 38.
history.” As a modern narrative, the nationalist historiography aimed at rendering Korean independence as a foregone conclusion in examining the national history through the lens of the global standard of “world history,” which was in fact nothing but Western history.

A production described in The New Korea in 1914 – Children’s Dialogue (Adong Mundap) – explains how theatre undertook a role of embodying the Korean nationalist historiography developed as a modern narrative. The newspaper reported that the performance was staged as part of an event celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Korean National Association in 1914.143 The event consisted of singing the national hymn, praying to God, addressing a couple of speeches, and a short performance, followed by band music performances. Performed by three young students named Gi-ho Jo, Jo-sep Choi, and Dan-yol Yi, this short performance appears to have portrayed a dramaturgical structure of a simple dialogue, although it is not clear as to whether or not this was part of a full-length play.

Q: What’s the name of a military leader who killed 1.2 million [Sui] Chinese enemies in the Cheong-cheon River as if catching flies?
A: Eulji Mundeok.
Q: What’s the name of a military leader who killed tens of thousands of Japanese pirates in the Jinhae Bay as if killing rats?
A: Sun-sin Yi.
Q: Then, who in our nation would destroy the current enemies? Don’t you know?
A: The youths of our nation.
Q: When did Italy become a good country by restoring its independence?
A: December 5, 1870.
Q: When did the U.S. proclaim its independence to the world?
A: July 4, 1776.
Q: Then, when will Korea restore itself and proclaim its independence to the world? Don’t you know?
A: The day when all of Korean compatriots are joining forces to patriotism.

By staging the issue of Korean independence to be verbalized by children, this dialogue would have undoubtedly served the purpose of promoting independence movements to those in the

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142 Henry H. Em (2013), 97.
143 “Gungminhoe Je-o-hoe Changryp Ginyeom Gyeongchuk [A Celebration of the Fifth Anniversary of the National Association],” The New Korea, February 5, 1914.
audience. Simultaneously, it is also noteworthy that the dialogue portrayed Korean history not simply as great but as equal to first worlds by discussing Korean independence in the context not only of Korean history but also of other Western countries’ histories. In the end, the theatrical performance staged the nationalist historiography as legitimating Korean independence not only as succeeding the legacy of national history, but also as complying with the global standard set and dominated by the West.

The National Flag as a Critical Prop in Performances

The national flag, as the most prominent symbol of the nation, served a dual function. Andre Schmid describes this duality in the following manner, “flying as one among equals, the flag represented the sovereignty of Korea in a world populated by nations, and at the same time, the arrangement of design and color exhibited a national uniqueness within a single standard format.” The Korean national flag, Taegeukgi, was invented in the late nineteenth century due to hitherto non-existent forced treaties with foreign countries, including Japan in 1876 and the U.S. in 1882. In 1882, the diplomat official Yeong-hyo Bak proposed the design – which is still used in the Republic of Korea – before his departure on a mission as envoy to Japan. King Gojong confirmed Bak’s design, proclaiming it as the national flag the following year. According to Schmid, its popularization as the national icon, however, was made only after The

144 The juxtaposition between Korean nationalist historiography focusing on military heroes and Western histories is also found in a recommended reading list that the Korean Methodist Church in San Francisco provided and The New Korea published in 1909. The newspaper states: “in order to spread knowledge for the members, we have imported the following books: Biography of the Three Italian Heroes, Biography of Eulji Mundeok, The Spirit of Patriotism, Korean Map...” Next to this list, the newspaper published an advertisement by Korean Youth Book Co. in Orden, Utah promoting books such as Korean History, Biography of Washington, History of American Revolution, History of French Revolution, etc. The New Korea, November 17, 1909.
145 Andre Schmid, 78.
Independent (Dongnip Sinmun) published the flag’s image on its front page, while calling for its wider use in 1896.\textsuperscript{146}

The newspaper’s active participation in the popularization of the national flag was likely influenced by its editor Chi-ho Yun’s experience at the Korean Exhibit at the Chicago World’s Fair, also known as the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. When attending the Fair after completing graduate studies at Emory College, Yun acknowledged his embarrassment and disappointment for the Korean Exhibit in the following diary entry, which reads:

\begin{quote}
Felt humiliated not to find a Corean [Korean] flag in any of the buildings from whose roofs fly the colors of almost every nation. Ah! Yet I shall not know the depth and breadth of the degradation and shame of Corea till I get in to her capital… Went to the Corean Pavilion at 11 a.m. and stayed there until 5 p.m.! Why and what for? I can’t explain; only I couldn’t get away from there, miserable as the exhibit is.\textsuperscript{147}
\end{quote}

The Fair, as Henry H. Em notes, exhibited the latest scientific and technological innovations in structured racial and civilizational hierarchies; the Korean section, in Yun’s observation, could not be articulated “within that symbolic universe that privileged industrialization, progress, and empire.”\textsuperscript{148} As noted in the diary, the absence of the national flag was seen as a critical sign for the “degradation and shame of [Korea].” Yun, after all, recognized the centrality of the national flag as a mode of national self-representation in the material and discursive context shaped by the nation-state system dominated by the West and articulated by Western imperial powers.

Other Korean immigrants in the U.S. likely shared Yun’s realization for the need of the national flag to appear in public, international celebrations like the Chicago World’s Fair. Several newspaper articles attest that the national flag was often used as a critical prop in theatre productions. The New Korea reported that a performance which included the national flag explicitly in its title – New Stage, Taegeukgi (Sin Mudae Taegeukgi) – was staged as part of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{146} Andre Schmid, 78. \\
\textsuperscript{147} Chi-ho Yun’s diary originally written in English, recited from Henry H. Em (2013), 61. \\
\textsuperscript{148} Recited from Henry H. Em (2013), 61.
\end{flushright}
inaugural ceremony of the vice president of the North American branch assembly of the Korean National Association in 1914.149 The report introduces the play with titles and summaries of each scene in a verse form. If one reconstructs the story based on the given information, the play narrates the story about a general who flees to a mountain with a national flag in his chest and practices martial arts while reading a book on military tactics (Act 1). He initially feels helpless and powerless (Act 2), but soon recovers himself (Act 3) and invokes a war against Japan with the willingness to die (Act 4). In the final act, the general returns, singing a paean after winning over the war and cries loudly for the eternal glory on the national flag (Act 5). As accompanying the main character’s transformation from his depressed status under Japanese colonial rule to recuperating his happiness after independence, the national flag appears to symbolize an indestructible ethnic identity, while legitimating the main character’s sudden change in his attitude.

The play A Peninsular Hero (Bando Yeongung) also uses the national flag as a critical prop. In the edition of February 4, 1915, The New Korea introduced the play as having been written by Donghae Bae-wu, literally meaning “East Sea Actor,” which research has identified as Earn Hong’s (1880-1951) pseudonym. As one of the most prolific writers among Korean immigrants in the U.S. in the early twentieth century, Hong will be discussed at length in relation to a fully preserved play of his in the next chapter.150 Here I focus on his early play, A Peninsula Hero. According to the newspaper, the play comprised four acts, but the newspaper presents only the first intact, while summarizing the remaining three acts. Entitled “An Elderly Poor Man,” Act 1 tells the story of a tragic, interrupted reunion between an old man, Sa-han Jeon, and his son, Cheong-guk Jeon. After years of flight, Cheong-guk attempts to visit his father but is caught by

Japanese military policemen, who have been lying in ambush. Observing this, the old man faints. Nearing death, he asks Dan-seon Wu, who has been building a relationship with his son, to hand over a national flag to Cheong-guk should he return alive. In Act 2, the old man’s loyal servant, Cha-dol, disguises himself as an evangelist, enters the prison where Cheong-guk is being held, and exchanges clothes with Cheong-guk in order to allow Cheong-guk to flee. In Act 3, Cheong-guk finds refuge from the police in a brothel, but is attracted to and begins to live a dissolute life. After his dissolution brings him hardship, he repents his behavior and travels to meet Dan-seon Wu, who as disclosed in Act 4, has died. Dan-seon’s mother fulfills the promise her daughter made to the old man and gives Cheong-guk the national flag. Finally, Cheong-guk meets Dan-seon’s brother, Bo-in Wu, and pronounces an oath.\(^{151}\)

The play does not specify why Cheong-guk has been taking flight from Japanese military police at the beginning of the play, if Bo-in Wu has been engaging in nationalist activities prior to the reunion with Cheong-guk, and about what Cheong-guk and Bo-in make an oath at the end of the play. Regardless, the continuous appearances of the national flag make readers assume that all of Koreans and all of their activities are supposed to be nationalistic. Considering that the two characters who attempt to hand over the national flag to Cheong-guk – Sa-han Jeon and Dan-seon Wu – die during the course of the play, one can furthermore perceive the national flag as symbolizing their will to Cheong-guk, and the oath that Cheong-guk and Bo-in make, as a decision of carrying on the legacy of the dead with whom they held close or familial relationships. With this interpretation, activities for the nation are seen as activities for the extended family-like community, including the dead: *minjok* defined as Dangun’s descendants. Put differently, the theatrical production of *A Peninsular Hero* would have led its audience to approach the nationalist movements as a duty for one big family of nation referred to as *minjok*.

The production of *A Peninsular Hero* also appears to have realized an ethnic approach to the nation on stage. A year after the play’s publication, *The New Korea* reported that the play was produced as part of a celebration not only for the seventh anniversary of the Korean National Association, but also for the 4249th anniversary of Dangun’s descent to Korea. As staged for the commemoration of Dangun, the production would have clearly conveyed the message that its audiences were members of the Korean nation even if they were residing outside of the peninsula. In other words, the production indicated that Koreans, whether residing in the homeland or in the diaspora, were capable of becoming, and indeed, obligated to become “peninsular heroes” as promoted through the play title, since all Koreans descend from a common ancestry. In the end, the production invited Korean spectators and readers to engage in seemingly contested ideas about *minjok* by staging the variety of newly appeared imaginaries of the nation. These included the peninsula as a spatial metaphor of the nation, Dangun as a mythic origin of the nation’s ethnicity, and *Taegeuki* as a modern symbol of the nation.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examined various aspects of Korean ethnic nationalism represented by and formed through theatrical performances by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the 1910s. In pursuit of forming ethnic identity and promoting ethnic nationalism, the theatrical performances staged Koreans’ understanding of the Korean *minjok* by incorporating newly emerging visions of Korea. The treatment of the national language, history and myth, and the symbol of the national flag in the performances, as my discussion has demonstrated, represented the ways in which the Korean *minjok* was reframed in order to inscribe Korea into the modern nation-state system.

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152 “*Gungminhoe Daechukha* [The Grand Celebration of the National Association],” *The New Korea*, February 8, 1916.
newly invented in the Western world and elevated as the global standard by Western
imperialism. Put differently, the theatrical performances were devised to lead Korean immigrant
spectators and peninsular readers to view their ethnic nationalism in its formative stage as part of
the nation’s integration into the global world. As stated in The New Korea editorial cited at the
beginning of the chapter, theatre served as an institution of “universal education,” notably
instructing Western epistemologies themselves. To this end, as Henry H. Em posits, “the West
was very much present” in the process of constituting the Korean ethnic identity.153 Early Korean
immigrants in the U.S., for the sole reason of having been physically in the West, could have
been seen as ushering in “pure modern” Korea, regardless of how much they could enjoy
Western modernity in what was a highly racialized early twentieth-century American society. In
order to sustain this idealized position, Korean immigrants in the U.S. could not help but
promote performance of Western modernity, while highly affecting the development of Korean
ethnic nationalism. Dramatic strategies of embodying such ironically distinctive but
simultaneous modern ethnic identity and nationalism further developed through genre
experiments in theatrical performances, as the following three chapters examining distinctive
theatrical forms clarify.

153 Henry H. Em (2013), 70.
CHAPTER 2

Blurring a Line between Fact and Fiction:
Docudramas Published in The New Korea (1910s-1920s)

Docudrama, as a theatre genre blending fact and fiction, has not been examined in Korean theatre historiography. When discussed among Western theatre scholars, the genre has been undervalued. Theatre scholars tend to make hierarchical distinctions among fact-based theatre genres by positioning docudrama in a lower category than documentary theatre. Gary Fisher Dawson, for instance, differentiates the two by noting that documentary theatre relies solely on primary sources, whereas docudrama embraces categories of documentary and drama, which are anything but “antithetical and adversarial” to each other. He specifically calls for an end to interchangeable use of the two labels, as he believes that such use only obscures documentary theatre’s distinctive value.\(^{154}\) In a stronger voice, the renowned playwright-cum-theatre critic Eric Bentley goes as far as labeling docudrama as a “bastard and dubious sub-genre.” The critical issue with docudrama, as Bentley points out, is that “its audience has no way of knowing where reporting leaves off and invention begins.”\(^ {155}\) Although scholars rightfully concern themselves with the critically significant ethical issues involved in fact-based theatre genres, I argue that the docudrama form can still work in favor of playwrights, particularly when they attempt to centralize topical issues that they consider significant and covertly inculcate their views on the chosen issues. I posit in this chapter that, in blurring the line between fact and

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fiction, the docudrama form facilitated the construction of an imagined sense of ethnic nationalism by effectively suspending the disbelief in its fictional elements.

This chapter examines two docudrama plays published in *The New Korea: The Biggest Theatre in the World* (*Segye-yeseo Jael Keun Yeongeuk*, 1915) by Il-kyu Baek and *Passionate Play* (*Huimun Yeolhyeol*, 1923) by Earn Hong. Baek and Hong, as journalists writing for *The New Korea*, explored in these plays arguably the most crucial global and local issues of the 1910s for Koreans: World War I and the March First Movement, respectively. While their plays were fact based, they portrayed their distinctive views on the issues by adding fictional parts. It is my interpretation that the two playwrights presented their vision of how new modern Korea should develop by enhancing a global understanding of the world and of Korea’s position in it. Particularly, I argue that these journalist-cum-playwrights devised their docudramas to serve the goal of the journalism of early modern Korea as well as Japan. Journalism – as one of the Western modern ideas introduced to East Asian countries with their openings to the West – was understood as aiming not only to deliver accurate information in the public interest but also to let people know about the West and the nation’s position in the world. This chapter demonstrates that docudrama developed with a new awareness of global interconnectedness introduced by, developed through, and discussed in newspapers, and emerged as an effective theatrical form to fulfill the expectedly central role of theatre in the construction of Korea as a modern nation.

Before examining plays by Baek and Hong, I first demonstrate that modern theatre in Korea began with a docudrama production by demonstrating that *The Silver World* (*Eunsegwe*) by In-jik Yi, as the allegedly first modern Korean theatre production, featured docudramatic characteristics. Produced on the Korean peninsula in 1908, this seemingly monumental theatre production has elicited a heated debate among Korean theatre historians. Partially due to the lack
of a preserved performance script as well as doubtful credibility of Yi’s claim that the theatre production was based on his same-titled novel, early historians have predominantly concerned themselves with a question of how *The Silver World* would have been performed instead of analyzing its contents. As theatre historians have increasingly found Yi’s claim credible, however, I analyze the novel version of *The Silver World* in order to trace the characteristics of the performed story in the theatre production. I posit that the performed story was a docudrama combining a reenactment of an actual event that happened in late nineteenth-century Korea with a dramatization of the playwright’s urge for modern knowledge from the West, specifically from the U.S. I also suggest that Yi learned the efficacy of docudramatic narratives in nation building by observing the Japanese theatre reform movement as well as Japanese early modern newspapers, both of which advocated fidelity to the truth as well as promotion of knowledge from and about the West. This discussion on *The Silver World* will expose the influence of journalism on the docudrama form that the two Korean American plays feature, as well as their position in Korean national theatre historiography.

**Docudrama as a Beginning of Korean Modern Theatre: *The Silver World* by In-jik Yi**

The beginning of modern theatre in Korea is marked with the introduction of indoor theatre. Although Korean historical records testify to the long existence of theatrical performances in Korea, Korea – unlike its neighbors China and Japan – had no permanent, indoor, public theatre spaces until the early 1900s.\(^{156}\) The first indoor theatre, named Huidae and later renamed Hyopyulsa, was built in 1902 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of King

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Gojong’s coronation, in addition to celebrating his fifty-first birthday. Although it was originally established as a royal theatre primarily staging Korean traditional performances, Hyopyulsa became the first Korean modern theatre space; it was the first entertainment enterprise open to the public. Its unprecedented public nature, however, raised objections among Confucian scholars, who argued that Hyopyulsa was endangering the future of the country, as the theatre tempted the public to waste their time and money during a period when the nation was experiencing unprecedented foreign threats. Ultimately, their criticism brought an end to Hyopyulsa in 1907. The short-lived Hyopyulsa, however, had already made Korean entrepreneurs recognize the profitability of investment in the construction of theatres. As they began to open theatres of their own, entrepreneurs professed their goal as one of reforming Korean traditional performing arts and declared reformed theatre harmless. Nationalist intellectuals – such as Chae-ho Sin, Eun-sik Bak, and Ji-youn Jang – also published a series of articles in newspapers to clarify how the reformation should be made. In their view, theatre in the West had served a role in provoking national consciousness, and thus, Korea should reform its theatre with reference to the Western model so as to serve its supposed role in nation building.

157 Andrew Killick provides a concise account of Hyopyulsa’s early history. The planned celebration of Gojong’s anniversary was postponed first by an outbreak of cholera and then by the king’s son coming down with smallpox, and finally cancelled due to several other reasons, including the growing tension between Russia and Japan. In the meantime, the theatre space had been transferring to a commercial enterprise, while becoming known as the name of a special office set to oversee the operation of the theatre, Hyopyulsa. See: Andrew Killick, “Korean Ch’angguk Opera: Its Origins and Its Origin Myth,” Asian Music 33.2 (Spring 2002): 43-82, at 58.

158 For instance, a newspaper editorial published in The Korea Daily News (Daehan Maeil Sinbo) in 1906 states that “[i]t is truly fearful that people are so into drinking, partying, and theatre [going and making] when we ought to pay attention to studying and working in order to find a way of life in such a critical moment for Koreans. I cannot help lamenting over the [inauspicious] future of Korea” (“Chaek Hyopyulsa Gwangwangia [Scolding Those Who Frequent Hyopyulsa],” The Korea Daily News, March 16, 1906). See also, Min-Young Yoo, Gaehwagi Yeongeuk Sahwaesa [A Social History of Modern Drama] (Seoul: Saemunsa, 1987), 20.

159 The subsequently established private theatres include Danseongsa (1907), Yeonheungsa (1907), Jangansa (1907), Gwangmudea (1907), Wongaksa (1908), etc.

Despite having a critically different political standpoint, the pro-Japanese journalist-cum-novelist In-jik Yi (1862-1916) shared with nationalist intellectuals the belief in theatre’s efficacy in nation building, and led the development of modern theatre in practice. First, he reopened Hyopyulsa under a new name, Wongaksa. *The Imperial Capital Gazette (Hwangseong Sinmun)* reported on July 21, 1908 that Yi requested permission from the police department to establish a “New Theatre Space” at the former site of Hyopyulsa. A week later, the newspaper also reported that Yi would present “New Theatre The Silver World” (*Sin Yeongeuk Eunsegye*) based on his same-titled novel. The newspaper, moreover, advertised that *The Silver World* would become an unprecedented performance, which would “sharply distinguish from [Korean] old performance style” and “facilitate the reformation of old customs by imitating foreign performances.” In other words, *The Silver World* was promoted as a new theatre having overcome the “backward” Korean tradition and successfully reformed it through Westernization. If performed as promoted, *The Silver World* may well have been the first Korean modern theatre production that conformed to Koreans’ understanding of what “modern” meant in the early twentieth century. As the performance script does not remain, however, *The Silver World* has long been a controversial issue in Korean theatre historiography.

Korean theatre historians have suggested critically different ideas concerning the extent to which the theatre production of *The Silver World* was new and modern, often engaging with the question of whether the production was actually based on In-jik Yi’s same-titled novel. It was in the 1960s that the pioneering theatre historian Doo-hyun Lee identified the beginning of Korean modern theatre with *The Silver World*. The researches of the 1970s, however,

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161 *The Imperial Capital Gazette*, July 21, 1908.
162 *The Imperial Capital Gazette*, August 1, 1908.
dismissed Lee’s identification by positing that the theatre production of *The Silver World* would have instead featured Korean traditional performance *pansori* style in both its script and performance. For instance, Korean literature scholar Won-sik Choi suggested that a *pansori* script, *The Song of Choi Byeong-do (Choi Byeong-do Taryeong)*, existed prior to *The Silver World*, and served as the performance script. Moreover, Choi posited that In-jik Yi later adapted the *pansori* script for his novel, by pointing out that the published novel was not available until the opening performance in November 1908.\(^{164}\) Based on Choi’s hypothesis, theatre scholar Min-young Yoo further surmised that the theatre production of *The Silver World* was more like a modernized version of *pansori*, i.e., *changgeuk*, rather than modern theatre.\(^{165}\) Considering that In-jik Yi departed for Japan soon after assembling the production team mostly with *pansori* performers, Yoo noted that Yi could not have possibly supervised preparations for the production, and instead left the entire rehearsal process in the Korean traditional performers’ hands.\(^{166}\) Building on Choi and Yoo’s hypotheses, other researchers identified the theatre production of *The Silver World* as the first autonomously developed Korean traditional performance staged in a modern style theatre space, responding to a post-colonial, desperate search for the roots of theatrical modernity in Korea before Japan’s annexation in 1910.\(^{167}\)

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\(^{165}\) *Changgeuk* refers to a form of opera that has developed out of *pansori* in the early twentieth century. The most critical difference between *changgeuk* and *pansori* is that each role in a *changgeuk* performance is acted by a different performer, whereas in a *pansori* performance a single vocalist delivers an entire story while taking on the roles of various characters in turn. Andrew Killick, 43.

\(^{166}\) In-jik Yi left for Japan with the purpose of viewing the Japanese theatre scene in August 1908 and did not return to Korea until May 1909 (*The Korea Daily News*, August 5, 1908 and May 14, 1909). He thus could not have been fully involved in the production of *The Silver World*, which began its rehearsal in July 1908, and had its opening performance in November of the same year. Min-young Yoo, “*Yeongeuk (Pansori) Gaeryang Sidae* [The Reformation Period of Theatre (Pansori)],” *Yeongeuk Pyeongron* 6 (1972): 23-43.

In the early 2000s, however, a discovery was made to strengthen the credibility of In-jik Yi’s claim that the theatre production of *The Silver World* was indeed based on his same-titled novel. Korean literature scholar Chang-rye Park discovered a transcript, which contains the full story presented in the published novel (with only minor differences in organization). This transcript version, according to Park, was created by a country governor named Taek-yeong Sin in Gangwon Province in June 1908, probably based on an earlier version of the novel serially published in a newspaper (although the newspaper has not remained). This newly discovered document thus demonstrated the novel’s availability before the play rehearsal and clarified the order of various versions of *The Silver World*: the transcript’s creation in June, the rehearsal’s start in July, the opening performance and the novel’s publication in November 1908.¹⁶⁸ This clarified timeline led theatre scholars to turn their attention from the pansori script *The Song of Choi Byeong-do* – whose existence after all cannot be verified – to the novel. Although it is impossible to demonstrate to what extent the theatre production was similar to and different from the novel, the novel appears as a viable material source for estimating the story presented in the theatre production.

The novel *The Silver World* depicts an innocent commoner dying as a consequence of a corrupt official’s abuse, and his children leaving for the U.S., only to die as well after their return to Korea. The brief synopsis follows:

[Byeong-do Choi] is a good citizen who adheres to a contemporary political leader [Ok-kyun Kim]. Choi has worked hard to save money to use in the future for patriotic causes, but a provincial governor named Chong arrests him for no reason and embezzles Choi’s money. Choi dies from torture and his wife goes insane. Choi’s son Ok-nam and daughter Ok-sun go to America for study, leaving their insane mother behind. After ten years, Ok-sun and Ok-nam complete their studies and return to reunite with their mother. Upon seeing her offspring again, the mother recovers her sanity. However, the very next day,

on the way to a temple to pray for their dead father, they are captured by the “righteous soldiers” who revolted against [Korean] government’s recent reformation.\(^{169}\)

The synopsis reveals that the novel consists of two disparate parts: the first part deals with Choi’s tribulations in Korea, and the second provides an account of his children’s education in the U.S. and their return home. These two parts, according to Kichung Kim, “are distinct” not only in theme but also “in language and in narrative technique.” Specifically, Kim points out that the first half frequently presents “ballad-like songs,” which effectively and affectively “[add] poignancy and a sense of communal suffering to the tragedy of Choi,” but such lyrical phases are totally absent in the latter part. While admitting that the “ballad-like songs” would not fit well into the story of Ok-sun and Ok-nam, Kim also finds problematic their underdeveloped characterization in comparison to that of their father Choi. For instance, instead of developing age-proper dialogues for the nineteen-year-old Ok-sun and her twelve-year-old brother Ok-nam, Kim contends that In-jik Yi uses them merely as his “mouthpiece” to convey his didactic exhortation to reform and modernize Korea.\(^{170}\)

Another remarkable difference between the substantially divergent first and second halves is that the first is based on a true story, whereas the latter part is fiction. According to recollections from performers involved in the theatre production of The Silver World, the vicious and corrupt provincial governor named Chong, who appears at the very beginning of the story, was a real person. The two performers – Seong-jun Han and Dong-baek Yi – also recalled that Chong’s descendants “built a pray altar in their backyard and prayed for Wongaksa to go


bankrupt soon” and “called for a boycott against the performance.”\(^{171}\) Building on those performer’s recollections, theatre historian Yeon-ho Seo posits that the provincial governor character was highly likely a dramatized reenactment of Tae-ho Chong – a historical figure, who was appointed as provincial governor of Gangwon in 1886 and later promoted in 1890 as the chief minister of a governmental organ of *Yijo*.\(^{172}\) Regardless of the lack of sufficient evidence to prove Seo’s hypothesis, it is circumstantially clear that the first half of the theatre production, as well as that of the novel, was a reenactment of an actual event that occurred in In-jik Yi’s contemporary Korea. In contrast, the second half of the story is Yi’s fictional composition, which, according to Jae-suk Kim, serves as a parallel to the first, rendering the whole narrative to be a tragic drama about two generations suffering from a corrupt, old Korean system. By structuring the story in this way, Kim interprets that Yi intended to convey his pro-Japanese view that Korea was so doomed that it needed a radical reformation even if this meant accepting Japanese intervention.\(^{173}\)

Regardless of his intention, In-jik Yi structured the story as a combination of a non-fictional half based on an actual event and a fictional half presenting his didactic message. I thus identify this combined dramaturgical structure as characterizing *The Silver World* as a docudrama. Moreover, I posit that Yi would have learnt the docudramatic storytelling from Japanese theatre as well as newspapers, both of which highlighted the significance of fidelity to facts and promotion of knowledge from the West and about the West in composition of narratives for a modern nation building. The fictional part in *The Silver World*, in fact, appears

\(^{171}\) “Yi Dong-baek Hoegogi [Dong-baek Yi’s Recollection],” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 29, 1939; “Gamu-ui Jemunje [All Issues Regarding Singing and Dancing],” *Jogwang* (March, 1939), recited from Won-sik Choi, 303 and Ki-ran Kim, 219-220.

\(^{172}\) *Yijo* was a governmental organ in the Joseon Dynasty having served a similar role of contemporary Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs. Yeon-ho Seo, *Hanguk Geundae Huigoksa [History of Korean Modern Drama]* (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1994), 55-56.

related to Yi’s aspiration to incorporate new knowledge from the West in the construction of a modern Korea. In *The Silver World*, the children, Ok-sun and Ok-nam, go to the U.S. – instead of Japan – for the attainment of an advanced education, upon losing their father to the corrupt official. Notably, Yi made a similar choice in his earlier novel, *Tears of Blood (Hyeol-ui Nu)*, which Yi self-proclaimed as the first new novel in Korea, while advertising it as one based on a true story when serially publishing it in the *Newspaper for Ten Thousand Generations (Mansebo)* in 1906. 174 Its protagonist – a young Korean girl named Ongnyon – experiences a separation from her family during the Sino-Japanese War, and then travels to the U.S. to study, just as Ok-sun and Ok-nam do in *The Silver World*. Those choices of presenting the U.S. as his protagonists’ educational destination may look contrary to In-jik Yi’s pro-Japanese political standpoint. 175 However, the choice of the U.S. could have been made not necessarily to represent Yi’s view precisely, but rather, to more effectively appeal to Korean readers and spectators, many of whom would have frowned upon the explicit portrayal of Japan in print or on stage. More critically, the pro-Japanese political standpoint and aspirations for new knowledge from the West would have appeared neither oppositional nor exclusive to each other; Japan also had been promoting knowledge from and about the West in many cultural expressions, including theatre and newspapers.

Recent scholarship on *The Silver World* since the 2000s has drawn attention to the influence of In-jik Yi’s experience in Japan on his projects of writing and staging *The Silver World* in Korea. Yi studied at Tokyo Political School and worked as an assistant staff for the

175 John M. Frankl posits that Ongnyon’s travel to the U.S. reveals that Yi, even though being one of the most avid pro-Japanese collaborators, perceived Japan only as a geographically proximate and easily accessible source for the more ultimate goal of modern Western civilization and enlightenment. John M. Frankl, “Liberated by Oppression: Literary Reflections of Colonial Korea Between the United States and Japan,” *Acta Koreana* 17.2 (2014): 639-671. Sun-Young Yoo interprets pro-Japanese novelists’ choice of the U.S. as their characters’ final destination in their novels as reflecting a high degree of Americanization of colonial Korea. See: Sun-Young Yoo (2007), 230.
Japanese newspaper *Miyako Shim bun* from 1896 to 1903.\textsuperscript{176} During these years, many theatre historians posit that Yi would have been more than likely exposed to the Japanese theatre reform movement. For instance, Ki-ran Kim analyzes the modern aesthetic embedded in *The Silver World* as deriving from “its realistic story with the subject matter drawn from the actual event” – which I identified as a docudramatic characteristic – and argues that Yi would have earned this “new sense” from the Japanese theatre reform movement.\textsuperscript{177} The theatre reform movement in Japan occurred as part of the state-led project to elevate Japan to a nation-state comparable to Western nation-states since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Influential politicians in or near the Meiji government, according to Brian Powell, “attempted to reform Japanese theatre culture as a whole so that it could fulfill a similar social function to theatre in the West.”\textsuperscript{178} Though concerned with scenic realism to some extent, the Japanese theatre reform movement paid particular attention to the reformation of play scripts, specifically urging playwrights to compose probable stories based on reality. Its influence on In-jik Yi would have been indispensable since the most prominent organization that led the movement – the Theatre Reform Society (*Engeki Kairyo-kai*) – was founded in 1886 by the son-in-law of Hirobumi Ito (who served four terms as Prime Minister between 1885 and 1901), Kenchô Suematsu; Suematsu and four other Society members were the faculty members of Tokyo Political School that In-jik Yi attended.\textsuperscript{179}

While the Japanese theatre reform movement would have made In-jik Yi call attention to the significance of composing play scripts based on reality for a new modern theatre, the *Miyako Shim bun*, according to Ki-ran Kim, provided a concrete model based on which Yi developed specific fact-based writing techniques. As a plebeian, popular newspaper, the *Miyako Shim bun*

\textsuperscript{176} Hiroyuki Tajiri provides the most detailed account about In-jik Yi’s experience in Japan. Hiroyuki Tajiri, *Yi In-jik Yeongu [A Study on In-jik Yi]* (Seoul: Gukhak Jaryowon, 2006), 29-74.

\textsuperscript{177} Ki-ran Kim, 218.


\textsuperscript{179} Ki-ran Kim, 201-210; Sang-woo Lee, 192-196.
published theatre-related issues prominently, by serially publishing novels and reporting theatre productions based on those novels.\(^{180}\) In other words, the *Miyako Shimbun* presented novel and theatre as if boundless and defined them as two forms of storytelling media with reality as their material source. Given his unfamiliarity with playwriting, In-jik Yi would have thus taken the idea of adapting a novel for a theatre performance while observing the *Miyako Shimbun*.\(^{181}\) In a similar vein, Jae-suk Kim asserts that Yi understood the close relationship not exclusively between novel and theatre, but also through newspaper, and their equal efficacy in enlightening the populace during his years at the *Miyako Shimbun*.\(^{182}\)

Building on Jae-suk Kim’s analysis, I contend that Japanese journalistic writings, even those not concerning theatre or novel directly, influenced In-jik Yi to envision new, modern narratives as docudramatic. When Yi was hired as an assistant staff at the *Miyako Shimbun*, he wrote that he would become “a machine taking photographs of and delivering news of world civilization.”\(^{183}\) That is, Yi as an emerging journalist saw the role of newspapers as not just delivering accurate information but providing ideas and norms of the civilized worlds, namely Western countries. This implies that journalists in early modern Japan were not strictly required to obey contemporary common standards on journalism, such as truthfulness, objectivity, and impartiality. Rather, the first priority for them was to enhance people’s world perception in order to contribute to the modern nation building. The early history of Japanese newspapers clearly tells that the West did not only serve as a source for the development of newspapers in Japan but also provided content that Japanese newspapers were expected to deliver.

\(^{180}\) The *Miyako Shimbun* was the first Japanese newspaper published as an evening daily. It was founded in Nagoya in 1884, and merged with the *Kokumin Shimbun* in 1942 to form the *Tokyo Shimbun*. See: Louis Frédéric, “*Miyako Shimbun*,” in *Japan Encyclopedia*, trans. Käthe Roth (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 649.

\(^{181}\) Ki-ran Kim, 206-207.

\(^{182}\) Jae-suk Kim, 172-193.

\(^{183}\) In-jik Yi, “Ipsaseol [My Thoughts on Joining the Company],” *Miyako Shimbun*, November 9, 1901, recited from Jae-suk Kim, 177.
Albert A. Altman decisively states that “Westerners pioneered newspapers in Japan.” An English commission merchant, A.W. Hansard, founded in 1861 the first newspaper in Japan, the Nagasaki Shipping List and Advertiser, which was shortly afterwards renamed the Japan Herald. The first newspaper published by the Japanese was also a translated edition of a widely distributed Dutch government newspaper, the Kampan Batabiya Shimbun, published by the Japanese government (Tokugawa shogunate) since 1862. Furthermore, Japanese intellectuals, who advocated the establishment of newspapers, perceived the newspaper clearly as one of Western social institutions carrying out a task of spreading civilization and enlightenment. In 1864, for instance, Naggaki Ikeda demanded for the government to promote newspaper enterprises to elevate the nation’s position in the global order upon his return from the trip to France as the head of a diplomatic mission. Considered one of the most influential Japanese intellectuals who led the modernization of Japan, Yukichi Fukuzawa, furthermore, defined the role of the newspaper as “bringing the world to the reader” in his book Conditions in the West, published in 1866. Japanese journalists, in the end, were expected to buttress the modernizing goals set by Japanese leaders, and thus prove the nation’s degree of adaption to Western modernity as well as to instruct various aspects of Western modernity by giving news not only of Japan but also of the West. Such imposed mission therefore could not help but shape journalistic writings of early modern Japan, making them fully opinionated and occasionally fictional. As understood to attest the nation’s degree of modernization, the newspapers’ ability of

covering world news and discussing the nation in the global perspective was also highlighted, exaggerated, and magnified.

Much influenced by both the Japanese theatre reform movement and Japanese journalistic writings, I contend that In-jik Yi produced his self-proclaimed first modern theatre production in Korea, *The Silver World*, as a docudrama. Notably, Korean newspapers also produced such docudramatic writings in the early twentieth century. The first Korean newspaper established by the Korean court in 1883, *Hanseong Sunbo*, clarified in the first print its goal as “elevating the degree to enlightenment by letting Korean people know the situation of the world as well as introducing political, economical, and cultural institutions of the civilized countries and spreading scientific knowledge.” The following newspapers – *The Independent (Dongnip Sinmun, 1896-1899)* founded by the American citizen Jae-pil Seo (Philip Jaisohn) and *The Korea Daily Newspaper (Daehan Maeil Sinbo, 1904-1910)* co-founded by the British journalist Ernst T. Bethell and Korean nationalist leaders – were established with direct Western influence and explicitly sought to let Korean people know their position in the global world. At the end, the early Korean newspapers, as Bae-geun Cha and others note, played distinct, yet yoked roles of introducing the Western civilization to Koreans as well as provoking national consciousness until the Japanese governor-general banned all Korean newspapers upon the annexation of Korea in 1910, allowing only its own three – Korean, Japanese, and English – publications.

Upon the Japanese annexation of Korea, docudramatic writings could not further develop; all Korean newspapers were banned and the Korean theatre scene was gradually dominated by adaptations of the Japanese melodrama *Shimpa*. Given that Korean immigrants

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186 Bae-geun Cha et al., 17
188 Andrew Killick, 67.
in the U.S. actively published Korean vernacular newspapers and plays in those newspapers, however, they could have produced more docudramas, especially when journalists wrote plays. In examining the two Korean American plays written by journalist-cum-playwrights Il-kyu Baek and Earn Hong in the remainder of this chapter, I identify them as docudramas and focus on the ways in which the playwrights blend fact and fiction. Then, I argue that they inculcated their vision of the significance of enhancing the populace’s global understanding of the world, developing their ability of staging the world, and considering the nation in the global perspective in their docudramas.

Staging the World for the Nation: Il-kyu Baek’s *The Biggest Theatre in the World*

*The New Korea* serially published Il-kyu Baek’s play, *Segye-yeseo Jaeil Ken Yeongeuk*, from May 13 to July 8 in 1915.\(^{189}\) The last Korean word in the play title, *Yeongeuk*, can be translated into either *show* or *theatre*. However, I chose *theatre* as the playwright proclaims that his production would be the “biggest” not only thematically but also spatially through the stage direction, as I will articulate later. The English word “theatre” indeed contains two denotations, and in so doing makes theatre as a unique artistic genre, as Gay McAuley points out, in which “the name given to the place where the artistic event occurs is the same as that of the art form itself.”\(^{190}\) Although it is not clear if Baek was aware of this dual English usage, the chosen translation of the title – *The Biggest Theatre in the World* – would better represent the dual meaning that Baek implied in the play. Highlighting the dual meaning, furthermore, facilitates my discussion, as I interpret this play as a docudrama combining facts in theme and fiction in


space, or in scale. Set in World War I, this play focuses on the alliances and conflicts among Austria, Germany, and France after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. While writing the play at the same time as the development of World War I and faithfully through the progress of the War, the playwright also adopted fictional elements, particularly in the Koreans’ ability to stage such a “biggest” theatre production portraying the world onstage. The play’s author, Il-kyu Baek (1880-1962), is known mostly as a writer of the first Korean academic monograph on economics, History of Korean Economy (Hanguk Gyeongjesa), in 1919. According to Seon-ju Bang’s research, Baek was involved in the Donghak movement, a Korean Neo-Confucian reform movement founded in the late Joseon Dynasty, before immigrating to Hawai’i in 1905. After moving to the mainland in 1906, Baek – along with Yong-man Bak – founded the Korean Youth Military Academy in Nebraska, and engaged in independence movements, while serving as the chairman of the Korean National Association and the editor-in-chief for The New Korea, and later for The Korean National Herald. As for The Biggest Theatre in the World, his biographical timeline shows that he wrote the play immediately after he resigned from his editor-in-chief position at The New Korea; he left the newspaper to enroll at the University of California at Berkeley to study economics in January, 1915.

In the foreword to The Biggest Theatre in the World, Baek stated that the play would consist of three acts; however, only the first two were published. The play starts with the Austrian empress demanding of German Emperor Wilhelm II that he avenge her son’s death. Wilhelm II pacifies the Austrian empress’s worry over the alliance between Serbia and the

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191 Donghak (literally meaning, “Eastern learning”) was established by Jae-wu Choe in 1860 initially as a syncretic religious movement combining elements of Eastern religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism with Roman Catholicism. Before long, however, Donghak developed into a social movement by gathering force on the wave of peasant discontent with worsening economic conditions, corrupt officials, and foreign encroachment. Carter J. Eckert et al, eds., Korea Old and New: A History (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1990), 187-188.
Russian Empire by mentioning Russia’s defeat by Japan in 1904, but he hurries out after receiving a telegraph about Russian preliminary arrangements for the war (Act 1, Scene 1). Then, the Austrian emperor appears in the empress’s chamber and tells his wife that he has sent an official letter to the Serbian emperor with twelve demands (Act 1, Scene 2). Meanwhile, in Germany, cabinet members meet as the prime minister receives Wilhelm II’s charge to prepare for war. After discussion, the minister of national defense calls for an invasion of all Europe, through Belgium into France. He ends his address with a prayer to God; the other ministers answer with Amen (Act 1, Scene 3).

While the first act explores the background of the War from the perspective of the Triple Alliance, the second does so from the vantage point of France. A Frenchwoman deplores that her gender has precluded her from helping avenge France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. A man who looks like a beggar approaches her and asks for money for beer. He explains his shabby appearance by pointing to the indignities of his life after the Franco-Prussian War and then vows that, if given the chance, he will mutilate the arm of Wilhelm II. After giving him some money, she asks him to prove his ability to fire a gun, which he immediately does; he shoots upward three times, astonishing the woman. At this moment, a special newspaper edition announcing the beginning of the war is delivered (Act 2, Scene 1). Shifting scenes, French General Joseph Joffre leads a secretary military meeting and receives a telegram stating the French president’s decision to flee the government and seek refuge. The act ends with the general’s prayer to God to give the French either triumph or death (Act 2, Scene 2).

The play’s existing two acts, as reviewed, pay equal attention to both sides of World War I: the Central Powers of Austria and Germany, and the Allied Powers of the Russian Empire and France (which later included the U.K., U.S., and Japan). Though Hong-woo Lee surmises that
Baek would have felt sympathy toward the Austrians and their murdered head of state considering Koreans’ own plight including Queen Min’s assassination by the Japanese in 1895, Baek, in my interpretation, manifested his suspended decision in choosing a side to align with by ending each act in a similar way; each act ends by showing two parties equally relying on Christianity for their victories. As Baek wrote the play even as the War developed, it would have been difficult for him to choose a side with which to align. This may explain the partial publication of the first two out of three acts that Baek promised in his foreword. Still, the available first two acts imply that Baek intended not necessarily to present his judgment on who was right and wrong, but rather to report on the War’s progress as if journalistic writings would suffice. In other words, I contend that this play manifests the playwright’s understanding of the crucial necessity to centralize the global issue of World War I by taking advantage of a docudramatic theatrical form. Understanding why World War I would have appeared as a critical issue for Koreans will facilitate an understanding of the significance of *The Biggest Theatre in the World* composed as a docudrama.

Although World War I – or, the Great War as it was known before 1939 – that was centered in Europe may appear to have little relevance to Koreans who were under Japanese colonial rule, Koreans had many and equally complicated reasons to support both the Central Powers and the Allied Powers. First, Japan joined the Allied Powers soon after the outbreak of the War, as it was concerned with the expansion of Germany’s influence in China. Japan’s participation, thus, undoubtedly influenced the ways in which Koreans perceived the development of the War. Moreover, Japan used the European situation to justify its increasing imperialistic projects by advertising Japan’s elevated international position and power, and

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193 Hong-woo Lee (2011), 278.
highlighting the efficacy of the pan-Asian solidarity under Japanese leadership.\textsuperscript{194} Japan’s position in World War I therefore would have provoked sympathy among Koreans toward the Central Powers that Japan opposed. In this vein, it is noteworthy that the German Emperor character in the play dismisses the strength of Russia by referring to Russia’s defeat “even to much smaller Japan.” This comment could have sounded like an assertion of Germany’s superiority not only over Russia but also over Japan, which is described just as “small” in this “biggest theatre in the world.” As Tae-hoon Lee posits in discussing pro-Germany writings composed by young Korean intellectuals during the development of World War I, the positive portrayal of Germany intended to refute the Japanese interpretation of the War, disclose the fallacy of the inner logic embedded in the Japanese imperialism, and thus invoke Koreans’ resistance to Japan’s power.\textsuperscript{195}

At the same time though, many Koreans embraced the British advertisement of the War being “the war to end war,” in part due to the deluge of Japanese and pro-Japanese reports about the War’s progress. When Baek wrote the play, the War situation was still unfolding, with U.S. newspapers pointing to German cruelty in its conduct. Germany, as Baek mentions in the play, invaded Belgium, which had declared itself a neutralist nation. The violation of the neural rights also occurred as an incident related to the U.S. – notably less than a week before Baek began publishing the play. In May 7, 1915, a German boat sank a British passenger ship, the Lusitania, which had departed New York City for Liverpool, causing the death of 1,119 out of the 1,924


\textsuperscript{195} Tae-hoon Lee posits that young Korean intellectuals, especially those residing outside of the Korean peninsula, had a liking for Germany, Japan’s main enemy during World War I. Some Koreans in Vladivostok, as Lee introduces, took hostile action against the Allies with the belief in Germany’s ultimate victory. Also, a peninsular journal aiming toward students’ readership, \textit{Youth (Cheongchun)}, dealt with World War I as a special feature in its second edition in 1914, and therein highlighted the supremacy of Germany and portrayed German Emperor Wilhelm II as “the greatest man in the world.” See: Tae-hoon Lee, “Attitudes and Perceptions about the First World War by Members of Joseon Society During the 1910s and 1920s,” \textit{Saah Yeongu} 105 (2012): 187-227.
aboard, including 114 Americans. Although the ship was secretly carrying munitions and contraband destined for the British war effort, the sinking enraged the American public, and in so doing planted the seeds of American animosity towards Germany.\(^{196}\) Such public sentiments among Americans would have likely influenced Baek’s approach to World War I, even if it took two additional years before the U.S. declared war on Germany and entered the War.

Regardless of differing interpretations of World War I’s impact on Koreans, the majority of Koreans appear to have recognized its critical relevance. According to Boduerae Kwon, the War, particularly the images of death filling in war news, reminded Koreans that Europeans were human beings just like Koreans. The newspapers’ reports about World War I, in other words, provided Koreans a visceral realization that Europeans also suffered from tragic components of modern civilization just as Koreans did, and the tragedy of the time took the world as its stage.\(^{197}\) That is, World War I served as a critical moment in which Koreans realized global interconnectedness, in which newspapers played a main role in promoting this new awareness. Such realization, I argue, motivated Baek aim to portray World War I as truthfully as possible through the use of the docudrama form. Furthermore, theatre productions staging the world would have been viewed as greatly contributing to nation building by enhancing the populace’s global understanding, as modernization in Korea as well as in other East Asian countries meant their integration into the modern global order.


Melon, Cause of the Orchid), as the most celebrated theatrical production in early twentieth century China. With a theme of the partition of Poland by Turkey, this production, according to Karl, “aimed to fulfill the reformist goals of incorporating themes from current events and foreign histories into new dramatic works.” Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the century, as Karl maintains throughout the entire monograph, looked to other states for a comparative understanding of the process that China was undergoing with a new understanding of global interconnectedness. Since Qiacho Liang – as one of the most influential reformists of the time – published the journal New Fiction (Xin Xiaoshuo) in 1902, those who were concerned with art and literature attempted to reform the traditional Beijing Opera, to arouse political consciousness about global spatial simultaneity and further activism in the cause of sociopolitical transformation, by dramatizing current, foreign events for Chinese audiences. Thus, it would have been crucial not only to dramatize world issues but also demonstrate the ability to stage the world. Il-kyu Baek’s fictional invention was made in this perspective, as I will demonstrate by examining his lengthy foreword-cum-stage description included in the published play.

Baek’s rich foreword-cum-stage description for The Biggest Theatre in the World represents his keen interest in modern Western theatre aesthetics. Specifically, he addresses the play’s space, time, and audience, and in so doing, maps out both the literal spacing and figurative cultural context for his play with reference to Western theatre:

Although the Orpheum theatre in New York is great, it cannot accommodate all the performers of this play. Although the Globe theatre in London is spacious, it cannot accommodate all the audiences of this play. Indeed, this play is the biggest theatre in the world and in history. The main performers are German Emperor Wilhelm, British Emperor George, French general Joffre, and other famous actors. As for the audience, the whole 1.6 million of the world population will rub their eyes for viewing this play. This play is in the end set in the whole world. […] As grand the play is, so is the space.

199 Rebecca E. Karl, 27-49.
While describing the stage envisioned by Baek as “unrealistic and illusive,” Hong-woo Lee argues that his statement reveals a mostly accurate understanding of Western theatre, given that it accounts for its basic three elements: stage, performers, and audiences. However, he immediately adds that Baek’s comment on the time of the play that follows is incorrect; Baek states that “plays from the twentieth century tend not to exceed 24 hours,” by misidentifying the seventeenth century neo-classical rule – the unity of time limiting the time span of a play within 24 hours – as the characteristic of the twentieth century. Considering both Baek’s correct and incorrect comments, Baek’s priority, in my interpretation, was not to display his knowledge about Western theatre but to position his play in the global perspective by using Western theatre references.

The afore-cited lengthy stage direction indicates that Baek’s ambitious proclamation of this play as being “the biggest theatre in the world” presumes three conditions. First, he supposes that a theatre space bigger than the Orpheum theatre or the Globe theatre would be existent in Korea or at least available for Koreans. Second, he assumes that the German and British emperors, a French general, and other famous actors would be willing to join a Korean theatre production, although he may have just undistinguished names of characters and actors in narrating his casts. Lastly, Baek’s comment on the expected audience of his play – “the whole 1.6 million of the world population” – supposes that foreign audiences would be willing to come to see a Korean theatre production. Baek appears to have been confident that his play depicting the era’s most topical global issue would garner international appeal. Based on his understanding of global interconnectedness, he believed that indeed, Korean theatre would readily become world-renowned by staging the world.

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200 Hong-woo Lee (2011), 247.
Baek’s preface ends with his clarifying the topicality of his play not only with its theme and characters, but also with props symbolizing modern civilization:

This play is not characterized with the ancient Greek drama or Shakespearean dramas; rather it features the twentieth century drama in that it has contemporaneous characters and uses current language. Furthermore, armies do not use arrows or horses but guns, cannons, and tanks.

If performed, the play would have indeed staged Western civilization. Baek provides detailed descriptions about scenic, costume, and prop design throughout the play. For instance, the Austrian empress’s room is described as “having walls decorated with jewelry, gold, and paintings from Italy and France, with electricity being bright like full moon light, and furnished with a table made out of boxwood tree from Turkey.” The outfit of the French woman who appears in the second act is also described in length: “She wears a stylish hat with a peacock feather and a dress (jeoksam) made with famous French original silk (meongju) with rolled up sleeves and tightly narrowed skirt hem. […] She holds a parasol decorated with gold with her left hand and a stylish handbag with her right hand.” As the beggar with whom the Frenchwoman talks demonstrates his ability of shooting the gun, the play, if performed, would have not only staged the gun but also instructed how to use the gun. The French secretary military meeting staged in Act 2, Scene 2 – which is the published last part – furthermore explores a plan of dropping bombs from an air force plane in Germany’s skies, and its potential side effect that the bombs explode near France’s own countrymen. In the end, Baek introduces the most recently developed military strategy in the Western world, which could have served as a platform on which Koreans mapped out their own military strategy.

*The Biggest Theatre in the World* is significant as a very rare Korean play set in places other than Korea and concerned entirely with non-Korean characters among the written in the first half of the twentieth century. Its existence in and of itself manifests Koreans’ urge to know,
engage with, and participate in the wider, modern world. The new understanding of global interconnectedness acquired mainly from newspapers would have motivated the journalist-cum-playwright Il-kyu Baek to explore World War I based on facts. By providing the seemingly fictional stage directions, Baek simultaneously promoted Koreans’ ability of staging the world. Considering all factors, I posit that the docudrama form would have been adopted to serve a dual goal of delivering accurate information about the civilized world as well as urging Koreans to develop their ability to keep abreast of the Western world. While *The Biggest Theatre in the World* explores one of the most crucial global issues of the 1910s for Koreans, the next play I discuss – *Passionate Play* (1923) – deals with a seemingly local issue, the March First Movement of 1919. My examination, however, demonstrates that this play, as a docudrama, also served a dual goal of presenting a story faithful to reality as well as considering the nation within a global perspective. Specifically, I posit that the playwright Earn Hong devised the first half based on facts and fictionalized the latter half to urge Koreans to redeem their expectation to the post-World War I global order predominantly set by the U.S.

**Staging the Nation Not to Lose Hope in the World: Earn Hong’s *Passionate Play***

*The New Korea* serially published *Passionate Play* (*Huinmun Yeolhyul*) from February 1 to April 12 in 1923, identifying its playwright as Donghae Subu. Donghae Subu was one of Earn Hong’s (1880-1951) several pseudonyms, along with Donghae Bae-wu, which Hong used when publishing *A Peninsular Hero* I discussed in Chapter 1. Hong’s biographical information was found when the historian Seon-ju Bang discovered Hong’s resume, which Hong submitted when he joined the Young Korean Academy (*Heungsadan*), a global Korean leadership training

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organization founded by Chang-ho Ahn in 1913. Hong’s resume reveals that his birth name was Jong-pyo Hong. It also notes that he was the fifth son of Sun-hak Hong, who served as the chief inspector general (daesaheon) in the late Joseon Dynasty. According to Il-kyu Baek’s condolatory poem, Jong-pyo Hong immigrated to Hawai‘i in 1904 to “import Western civilization,” and appears there to have gone by the name of Earn Hong for reasons not known. He worked on a sugarcane plantation until 1907, when he became involved in the publication of Korean-language newspapers and journals. In 1911, he moved to the West Coast to work for The New Korea. As an editor, Hong published hundreds of articles and literary works, including plays, poetry, novels, travelogues, and history writings until his resignation from the post in 1919. Subsequently Hong occasionally published his writings and took charge of the newspaper when necessary; and he was appointed as The New Korea’s editor-in-chief in 1939. Thus one can understand a remark by Ki-young Choi that The New Korea was almost “Earn Hong’s solo performance.” He is also the only playwright who wrote multiple works that I analyze in this dissertation: A Peninsular Hero (1915) in Chapter 1 and Compatriots (1917) in Chapter 3, along with Passionate Play (1923) that I examine in this section.

Passionate Play consists of four acts, of which the first two are non-fictional and the latter two are fictional, in my interpretation. The first act presents the play’s main characters preparing for the March First Movement on the eve of its uprising. It takes place in a female dormitory, in which female students – Baek-ryeong Han, Ha-sang Rhee, and Jeong-sun – are making Korean national flags under an old lady’s guidance. Set in Pagoda Park, the second act shows that Han’s lover, a young man named Cheol Kim, reading out the Declaration of Independence in the

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202 Sun-hak Hong belonged to Saheonbu, a governmental office which monitored government administration and officials in both central and local governments for corruption or incompetence in the late Joseon Dynasty.

203 Seon-ju Bang, 259-302.

204 Ki-young Choi (2012), 39.
of the Park. Upon the completion of the public reading, the crowd begins to chant in unison “Long Live Korean Independence! (Daehan Dongnip Mansei!).” In this manner, the second act stages the outbreak of the March First Movement accurately, although not in detail, as the following historical account of the Movement clarifies.

Considered the most massive demonstration of Korean nationalism during the Japanese colonial period, the March First Movement began on March 1, 1919. Thousands of Koreans gathered at Pagoda Park in the center of Seoul to attend the national funeral of the last reigning Korean monarch, King Gojong, who had passed away earlier in the year. Among those in the crowd, a young Korean man – whose name is unknown in historical accounts – appeared and read aloud a document called the Declaration of Independence, which was prepared earlier by thirty-three Korean religious and civic leaders. As the play suggests, the assembled crowd then began to repeatedly shout “Long Live Korean Independence! (Daehan Dongnip Mansei!), while parading through the streets in peaceful procession. Following this occurrence, similar protests chanting “Mansei” took place throughout the Korean peninsula for months. More than two million Koreans participated in more than 1,500 separate demonstrations and protests for independence. Those series of protest rallies became known as the March First Movement. March 1 has been furthermore commemorated in South Korea since 1949 when the date was designated a national holiday, though the Movement was brutally suppressed by the Japanese military police, and so failed to bring about its paramount goal of national independence.

A comparison between the play and historical records show that Earn Hong added to this

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205 Daeyeol Ku states that the March First Movement lasted approximately two years as a political and diplomatic campaign and took its stage not only on the Korean peninsula but over the globe, including Japan, Manchuria, China, Siberia, Moscow, Paris, London, and the U.S. Daeyeol Ku, “The March First Movement: With Special Reference to its External Implications and Reactions of the United States,” Korea Journal 42.3 (Autumn 2002): 219-256, at 220.

206 According to Cater J. Eckert, “estimates of causalities range from the official Japanese count of 533 killed, 14,09 injured, and 12,522 arrested between March and December [in 1919] to a Korean nationalist estimate of over 7,500 deaths, roughly 15,000 injured, and some 45,00 arrest.” Carter J. Eckert et al, eds., 279.
incident only a name (Cheol Kim) and slight information about him (Baek-ryeong Han’s lover). The play then sheds light on a young girl named Jeong-sun, who also seems to have been a real person who participated in the first uprising. In the play, Jeong-sun takes the platform, and shouts “Mansei,” waving the national flag. A Japanese military policeman then appears and cuts her hand holding the flag with his sword. As she attempts to pick up the dropped flag with a different hand, the policeman cuts that hand as well. He finally stabs Jeong-sun in her abdomen to death as she still chants “Mansei” even after losing her two hands. The second acts ends with Baek-ryeong Han asking Cheol Kim to swear an oath to live for the nation over Jeong-sun’s spirit and to leave for Shanghai with a national flag.

Although not many Korean contemporary accounts of the March First Movement mention Jeong-sun, several literary accounts published in The New Korea portray her death during the Movement. Earn Hong wrote a poem commemorating Jeong-sun, in which he added a seemingly historical account about her death (not so different from what he wrote in the play) as an endnote to a poem which he published in the newspaper in 1925.\(^{207}\) A Korean language school principal in Cuba, Se-chang Yi, also wrote a poem dedicated to Jeong-sun, and published it in The New Korea in 1931. It states: “Fourteen-year-old girl Jeong-sun/ A declaration paper in one hand/ A national flag in another hand/ Made a speech in front of crowds/ How divine Miss Jeong-sun was/ Undauntedly to the end/ Continued to shout Mansei/ Sacrificed herself bravely.”\(^{208}\) In addition, Jeong-sun was one of the twenty patriots that Korean residents in Mexico chose to commemorate in 1934. They held a ceremony in which they hung portrait scrolls of twenty

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\(^{207}\) The poem goes like “Where Jeong-sun has rested/ Flowers being in bloom has [already] fallen down/ The cuckoo leaves, calling/ Ah… the spring has gone/ You fell into sleep, smiling/ wait for a news for spring coming/ When the spring returns/ it will be covered by flowers.” Earn Hong, “Geogi Jeong-sun Swineunde [Where Jung-sun Has Rested],” The New Korea, March 12, 1925.

\(^{208}\) Se-chang Yi, “Sam-il Ginyeom-ga [A Song Commemorating March First],” The New Korea, March 19, 1931. Yi was a principal at Minseong School in Cárdenas, the first Korean language school founded in Cuba in 1922.
patriots in the office of the Mexico branch of the Korean National Association, and left a dedication poem for each of them. The one for Jeong-sun reads, “She presented herself on March 1 with a decision to die for the nation, and lost where her arms have gone.”\(^{209}\) In short, Jeong-sun was known – at least among Korean residents in Americas – as a patriotic young girl who lost her arms (or hands) and her life during the March First Movement. Thus, the portrayal of Jeong-sun can be read as the playwright Hong’s dramaturgical strategy adopted to emphasize that his play is based on the actual historical event. Regardless of the playwright’s intention, Jeong-sun, as a character allegedly drawn from actual participants in the uprising, strengthens the documentary quality of *Passionate Play*.

The second act’s documentary quality sets the tone for the reception of the latter part, inviting readers to consider, at the very least, the rest as probable. The third act, moreover, appears to serve as the bridge for Korean readers and spectators of the 1920s to relate to the play, as it recounts the struggles Korean survivors encountered in their efforts to carry on the independence movement in the aftermath of the failed March First Movement. Set two years after the Movement, Ha-sang Rhee stops by Baek-ryeong Han’s place to tell her that she is leaving for Shanghai to see her lover Yeong Choi. Looking back on Jeong-sun’s death, they hold back their tears, and reluctantly admit that “the living cannot help but keep on living their lives.” After Rhee leaves, Cheol Kim, who left for Shanghai two years earlier, appears and explains his unexpected return by expressing his disappointment and low expectations of the progress and quality of the independence movement after the March First Movement. Then he adds that it may be better to take care of family first, implying his urge to build a family with Han. The third act

\(^{209}\) *Chungryeol Jegong Chanyangga* [Songs to Celebrate Patriots],” *The New Korea*, August 13, 1933. The chosen twenty patriots include Dangun (i.e., the mythical figure of the founder of Korea), the navel commander Sun-sin Yi, martyrs having died in anti-Japanese activities – such as Bong-gil Yun, Jung-geun Ahn, and Bong-chang Yi – and representative independent movement leaders having resided in the U.S. – such as Jae-pil Seo, Syngman Rhee, Chang-ho Ahn, and Yong-man Bak.
shows that the characters, though in different ways, have struggled with the lackluster and sluggish progress of the independence movement. As no critical outcomes had come out since the March First Movement, it is most likely that Koreans of the 1920s struggled to regenerate their will to continuously work for independence, and thus, saw themselves in these characters.

While the first two acts and the third act explore the factual past and the probable present, the fourth act appears to portray the near future that the playwright Hong envisioned. The fourth act ends the play with presenting Koreans achieving their independence, although this comes with considerable sacrifice. The characters reaffirm their will to attain independence, and then join the independence army: Yeong Choi and Cheol Kim as commanders and Ha-sang Rhee as a nurse. The independence army advances into the outskirt of Seoul. Cheol Kim then succeeds in capturing the Japanese governor-general of Korea, but he is severely injured shortly afterwards, while trying to rescue Yeong Choi from danger. As news that the independence army has successfully wrested Seoul from the Japanese invaders, Kim dies while hearing Baek-ryeong Han and others shouting “Long Live Korean Independence!” Given that Koreans could not achieve independence when Hong wrote and published this play, it is obvious that he fictionally created this imagery victory over the Japanese. In other words, the latter half of the play portraying the aftermath of the March First Movement, particularly the fourth act, is a fictional invention attached to the non-fictional reenactment of the actual event of the March First Movement. In the end, *Passionate Play* is a docudrama staging the March First Movement and the playwright’s expectation to its legacy to be realized as the independence.

The docudramatic rendering of the March First Movement makes this play significant, given that the Movement could not be staged on the Korean peninsula due to Japanese colonial censorship. In a discussion of the post-colonial boom of theatre productions on the Movement,
Geun-ae Yang mentions in a footnote *The Memorial Service Day (Jehyangnal, 1937)* by Man-sik Chae (1902-1950) as an exceptional play published during the colonial period with the theme of the Movement.\(^{210}\) However, this play, as structured as an elderly woman’s recollection, does not call for staging the Movement.\(^{211}\) Furthermore, it could not be produced, leaving the playwright’s resentful statement that “Plays in Joseon [Korea] are literature to be read, and its performance would be only surplus.”\(^{212}\) In contrast, *Passionate Play* – though no records remain to attest to its production – explicitly requires staging the March First Movement, specifically the first uprising having occurred on March 1, 1919, distinguishing itself from Chae’s play published on the peninsula.

*Passionate Play* appears significant also because this play would have led to a reassessment of the March First Movement when it was almost obvious that the Movement had ended in complete failure. The fictional victory in the battle against Japan presented in the last act would have effectively provided vicarious satisfaction with Koreans who were desperately wishing for independence. Simultaneously, it would have also led to rethinking the legacy of the March First Movement, as the playwright Hong structured an eventual independence as having its roots in the Movement. In this regard, I conclude the chapter with an examination of why it would have been significant for Korean immigrants in the U.S. to reassess the March First Movement. I do this by tracing back a changing trajectory of Koreans’ perception of the U.S.


\(^{211}\) *The Memorial Service Day (Jehyangnal)* is structured as an old lady, Mrs. Choi, telling her twelve-year-old grandson of how she lost her husband during the Donghak Movement in 1894, her son during the March First Movement in 1919, and potentially another grandson of hers to the socialist movement in the near future. See: Gwang-yong Jeon et al. eds., *Chae Man-sik Jeonjip 9 [An Anthology of Man-sik Chae’s Plays 9]* (Seoul: Changbi, 1989).

\(^{212}\) Recited from Yeon-ho Seo, 153. Man-sik Chae was one of the colonial Korean writers who seriously suffered from Japanese censorship. For example, he replied to a question regarding how many readers he thinks he would have by saying that “the most exact number of my readers would be four people in total: myself, a printer, an editor, and a censor” (*Samchumri* 8.12 (December 1936)), recited from Won-seon Sin, 185.
along with the development of the Movement. This discussion will demonstrate that the March First Movement was not just a domestic issue for Koreans, and that staging the Movement meant the consideration of the nation in the global perspective. It will also clarify the central position of theatre in Korean nationalist movements in the U.S. by highlighting the relevance of *Passionate Play* to one of the major strategies to independence suggested by Korean nationalists in the U.S., that of diplomatic means.

The March First Movement, according to Daeyeol Ku, “was not an incident limited to between the ruling Japanese and the ruled Korean[s] [but] a specific case in which the Korean people played a certain role in the revolutionary change in world history.” It was in fact the doctrine of the national self-determination that provided the impetus to the Movement. President Woodrow Wilson presented his so-called, “Fourteen Points,” before the U.S. Congress on January 8, 1918, concerning the post-World War I settlement based on the principle of national self-determination. When the Paris Peace Conference was held in January 1919, two months after the end of the war, Koreans, as Erez Manela notes, “resolved to ensure that Korea would be part of the transformation that Wilson’s declarations promised.” Manela also posits that the shouts of “Mansei,” which resounded in the entire peninsula during the Movement, were aimed not only towards the Japanese colonial regime, but also towards the Allied Powers and Wilson, who gathered at the Peace Conference. The Declaration of Independence can be also interpreted, in the same vein, as “an appeal for the sympathy and support of the United States”; the declaration represented Wilson’s idealistic vision by listing a series of desiderata for an ethical system of international politics stressing “righteousness,” “humanitarianism,” and

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213 Daeyeol Ku, 225.  
215 Erez Manela, 133.
“perpetual peace.” Koreans found a possibility for Korean independence in the Wilsonian principle, which at least in Koreans’ interpretation, revealed the U.S.’s willingness to work towards securing Korea’s right for self-determination.

As the March First Movement ended in tragedy with no official or significant support from the U.S., Koreans, especially Korean intellectuals, according to Ho-min Yang, “were overwhelmed by the grief of disillusionment with Woodrow Wilson’s principle of national self-determination.” With the Movement as a turning point, Yang continues to argue that “the image of America began to change from that of a nation of ‘righteousness and humanity’ to that of another ‘imperialistic’ power struggling for international hegemony.” One can argue that the disappointment that Koreans in the U.S. felt was disproportionately deep, as their trust in the U.S. had been larger than that of Koreans in other places of the world. Although Koreans in entire exile communities all alike had enthusiastically responded to the Wilsonian principle, it was the Korean nationalists in the U.S. who had taken the lead. As early as December 1918, the Korean National Association held a meeting in San Francisco and resolved to dispatch Syngman Rhee, Chan-ho Min, and Han-gyeong Chung (Henry Chung), as its representatives, to the Paris Peace Conference to make an appeal to the U.S. and Wilson to recognize Korean independence. In a letter to President Woodrow Wilson, Rhee specifically framed Koreans’ demand for independence using Wilsonian language, and in so doing, sought to convince Wilson

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217 Ho-min Yang, 250.
218 Korean students in Japan formed the Korean Youth Independence Crops (Joseon Cheongnyeon Dongnipdan) and prepared a declaration of independence. Drafted by Gwang-su Yi, the declaration was read aloud at the Tokyo YMCA before a large crowd of over 600 Korean students attending schools in Japan on February 8, 1919, and it was also delivered to Japanese politicians, scholars, and newspapers, and even to the governor-general of Korea. Koreans in Jiandao and Siberia met in Nikolsk in late 1918 and early 1919 and sent Hae Yun and Chang-il Go to Paris, although they arrived too late to attend the Paris Peace Conference. In Shanghai, Korean nationalist leaders (specifically Un-hyeong Yeo and Duk-su Jang) organized the New Korea Youth Association (Sinhan Cheongnyeondan) and sent Kyu-sik Kim as its representative to the Paris Peace Conference. Erez Manela, 128-129; Daeyeol Ku, 234-235.

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that his rhetoric applied to Korea.\textsuperscript{219} Regardless of their desperate efforts, the mission failed because the U.S. government refused to issue them passports on the grounds that Korea was under Japanese rule, which brought Rhee great disappointment.\textsuperscript{220}

Even though the indifferent stance taken by the U.S. government inevitably generated an intense frustration among Korean nationalists in the U.S., they did not give up on their expectations of the U.S. Instead, they continued to appeal to the American government and people through propaganda and diplomatic activities. First, Korean immigrants in the U.S. convened the “Korean Congress” in Philadelphia from April 14 to 16, 1919, to mobilize support for the Korean independence movement as well as for the new Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea having been established in Shanghai (in a response to the outbreak of the March First Movement) in April 1919. The reason for holding the Congress, as stated by the meeting’s chairman Jae-pil Seo, was to make “America realize that Korea is a victim of Japan” because “[they] believe that America will champion the cause of Korea as she has that of other oppressed peoples, once she knows the facts.”\textsuperscript{221} This statement indicates that Koreans gathering at the Congress (about two hundred delegates from Korean communities throughout North America and as far away as England and Ireland) had a strong belief in “the exceptionalist America [having] a mission to lead mankind toward the orderly international society of the future.” That was the very image that Wilson portrayed in his principle, according to historian N. Gordon Levin.\textsuperscript{222} With the commitment to American political ideals and values, the Korean Congress strove to raise awareness in America of Koreans’ urge to emerge, or reemerge, as an

\textsuperscript{219} Erez Manela, 127.
independent nation and called for American support in returning the Korean right of national
self-determination from imperialist Japan. Such endeavors continued through the Korean
Commission, which was established in Washington, DC shortly after the Philadelphia Korean
Congress, till 1928.²²³

Koreans in the U.S. had various reasons for maintaining their seemingly idealistic and even
naïve belief in the U.S. First of all, many Korean nationalist leaders in the U.S. were Western-
educated elites and devout Christian converts. Such social, educational, and religious antecedents
furthermore, as Richard S. Kim notes, “placed them in privileged positions to define the
ideological contents and political agenda of a burgeoning Korean nationalism.”²²⁴ Even if the
Wilsonian principle turned out to be a mere fantasy, they could not set aside their belief in
American values since it was the very ground for their authority in playing a dominant role in
defining, planning, and directing the Korean nationalist movement. Furthermore, the U.S. at the
time was not just one of many nations but the world’s emerging power. During three years of
neutrality from the war in Europe, the U.S. could amass economic wealth and bolster its military
strength and thus emerge as the world’s premier leader in global affairs by the end of the war.
Indeed, the end of World War I, according to U.S. diplomatic and cultural historian Akira Iriye,
signaled the emergence of the “American Century,” in which “the world was becoming

²²³ Shortly after the Philadelphia Korean Congress, Syngman Rhee established the Korean Commission in
Washington, DC to handle diplomatic work in the U.S. Though Rhee soon departed for Shanghai to serve as acting
president of the Provisional Government, he returned to the U.S. when the Washington Disarmament Conference
was held in Washington from November 12, 1921 to February 6, 1922. Although the conference’s agenda had
nothing to do with Korean independence, the U.S.’s objective at the conference was in part to limit Japanese
expansion in the Pacific Far East. With the hope to draw American attention to Korea, the Korean Commission –
specifically Syngman Rhee and Jae-pil Seo – strove to, once again, appeal to the U.S. government. According to
Seo’s autobiography, the commission succeeded in making the U.S.’s Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes,
have an “unofficial” meeting with the Japanese delegates to “give an unofficial warning to the Japanese that Koreans
must not be treated unjustly.” Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm if the unofficial meeting indeed
took place between Hughes and the Japanese delegates, and to know what the “unofficial warning” precisely was,
the Korean Commission was maintained until 1928. See: Chong-sik Lee, 171-173.
Diasporic Nationalism, and American Protestant Missionaries,” Journal of American Ethnic History 26.1 (Fall
Americanized just as America had become globalized.”\textsuperscript{225} In this context, the American support that Korean nationalists in the U.S. yearned for, especially after the failed March First Movement, would not have been simply material help, but rather, international recognition which could ultimately secure Korea’s position in the global world.

Ho-min Yang posits that “Wilson’s principle of national self-determination provided Korean nationalists, who were struggling in the dark, with a way out.”\textsuperscript{226} In a similar vein, I argue that Passionate Play sought to provide Korean immigrants in the U.S. a ground to maintain their authority as the leader of the Korean nationalist movement by reframing and reengineering Koreans’ belief in the U.S. and the post-World War I world order set by the U.S. As the failure in the March First Movement led to the grief-stricken disillusionment with the U.S., the reassessed legacy of the Movement as a genuine seed of independence would have been expected to help redeem Koreans’ previous view of the U.S. as symbolizing the civilized, righteous world power. Thus I posit that Earn Hong aimed through the docudramatic form to motivate Koreans to regenerate their belief in the significance of connecting the nation with the world, and in so doing solidify the position of Korean immigrants in the U.S. as a model for the new modern Korea.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined two docudramas written by journalist-cum-playwrights Il-kyu Baek and Earn Hong in the U.S., in addition to identifying the first modern theatre production in Korea – The Silver World – as a docudrama. In the early modern Korean and Japanese contexts, newspapers aimed to inform readers about the civilized world, and in so doing, urge them to

\textsuperscript{226} Ho-min Yang, 240.
develop their abilities to adapt to Western modernity. It was, I argue, under the information of such a newly acquired awareness of global interconnectedness primarily from newspapers that Baek and Hong adopted the docudrama form to portray their beliefs in the significance of fidelity to the truth as well as to enhance Koreans’ global understanding of the world and their position in it. Specifically, this chapter demonstrated that those journalist-cum-playwrights, Baek and Hong who were in the U.S., both staged the world for the nation, and staged the nation in order to redeem Koreans’ belief in the world. In so doing, their docudramas would have greatly contributed to the construction of nationalism, as docudramatic, journalistic writings played a leading role in the construction of an imagined sense of national identity, while blurring the line between fact and fiction. I argue thus that the docudrama served as a form of rituals for identity formation.
CHAPTER 3

Connecting a Fictional World of Play to an Actual World:
A Chain Drama Published in *The New Korea* (1917)

At the advent of film-making, a hybrid theatrical form combining elements from both film and theatre emerged. In Korea, such multimedia form was called chain drama (*yeonswae-*geuk). Practiced since 1919, it flourished in the early 1920s, and was occasionally produced through the 1930s. Although there is no concrete visual evidence remaining to outline the specific organization of a chain drama production, historians have inferred from a limited number of recollections and fragmentary documentation that a chain drama production operated by “chaining” motion picture to live performance. For instance, the first Korean chain drama production, *Royal Revenge* (*Uirijeok Gutu*), staged in 1919, is well accepted to have proceeded by projecting filmed exterior scenes of drama onto a lowered screen between staged performance. With filmed scenes capturing well-known spots in Seoul, this chain drama production gained enormous popularity, and provided an impetus for the subsequent development of chain drama in Korea. Its premiere date, October 27, 1919, has been commemorated annually and credited since 1966 as marking the birth of Korean cinema. Korean theatre and film historians, however, have criticized the chain drama genre as an anomalous, colonialist hybrid form that ultimately hampered the development of modern aesthetics in both theatre and film. Specifically, they have taken issue with its *impurity* in the genre’s aesthetics as well as its development history, in which the Japanese colonial influence cannot be dismissed, given the earlier development of chain drama in Japan and the colonial context of its
development in Korea. Nevertheless, its historical popularity is indicative of how Korean regional sceneries projected through motion picture served as a point of expunging the trace of Japanese colonial influence by visually domesticating the foreign-derived form. Moreover, filmed parts would have provided the Korean audience a sense of self-esteem in their progress towards the modern, as film in and of itself was considered as the integration of Western technologies and modern aesthetics.227

This chapter examines a chain drama published serially in *The New Korea* from August 30 to December 20, 1917, entitled *Compatriots (Dong-po)* by Earn Hong.228 This play imagines the step-by-step process for Korean independence from the Japanese colonial rule through two acts, with the independence serving as a dividing point. However, I divide the play into three parts for the purpose of a clear discussion of its form as a chain drama. By labeling the required medium of each scene, the playwright Hong specifies portraying a meeting for planning war against Japan on stage, projecting filmed scenes of a full-scale war and the after-war settlement, and ending the play with a staged reunion of those who led the initial war planning. In other words, the playwright notably calls for the middle part – a spectacular naval battle in Tokyo Bay and a panoramic view of the entirety of war-torn Tokyo (the second half of Act 1), and a surrender of the Japanese emperor in Tokyo Imperial Palace and Koreans’ welcoming ceremony for their army in Seoul (the first half of Act 2) – to be realized on film and projected in-between two parts staged as live performance. Considering the lack of capital, technology, and manpower required for filmmaking, as well as the colonized status of Korea in 1917, however, it would

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have been tremendously difficult, if not impossible, to film those series of scenes. In fact, no records remain to attest to any production of this play, with or without the motion picture scenes. In the published play, however, Earn Hong adroitly suspends Koreans’ disbelief in the possibility of filming those series of scenes by appealing to their wish to realize the contents of the filmed scenes – the independence – in reality. In this Chapter I will specifically argue that the theatrical form of chain drama provided the journalist-cum-playwright Hong a way of inviting the audience to accept fiction as reality, but in a different manner than he did with the docudramatic form that he adopted for his other play, *Passionate Play* (1923), which I discussed in Chapter 2. I ultimately conclude that the chain drama form, as Gwendolyn Waltz comments on the alternation format, facilitated the connection of the confined, fictional world of a play with the wider, actual world outside of the theatre.229

In what follows, I first review the historiography of Korean chain drama that has been mostly concerned with its *impurity* in both its aesthetic and politics. I then challenge Korean theatre and film historians’ dismissal of chain drama as merely a colonialist hybrid form. I do this by highlighting that Korean audiences and artists proactively received and further developed the form regardless of its colonial derivation as well as by clarifying that the chain drama form, though not called so, was globally practiced in the early twentieth century – including in the U.S. where Earn Hong composed *Compatriots* as a chain drama. Specifically, I suggest that Hong, in 1910s’ San Francisco, was highly likely exposed to two strands of developments in representation: multimedia productions called “a cinema-theatrical entertainment” as well as full-fledged cinematic arts capturing both spectacular panoramas and subtle human motions. These American practices would have confirmed for Hong the legitimacy of chain drama and

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motivated him to further experiment with motion picture beyond the modest way adopted in Japanese chain drama practices. While developing an alternative chain drama format, Hong ultimately envisioned staging a full-scale war against Japan and the ensuing construction of democratic republicanism, both of which were promoted by many nationalist leaders residing in the U.S. – representatively including Chang-ho Ahn – as a path to and the ultimate goal of independence. My discussion of Compatriots in the end demonstrates that the hybrid theatrical form of chain drama had the potential to affectively serve the expected role of theatre in the promotion of nationalism and the construction of Korea as a modern nation, if produced outside of the reach of Japanese colonial censorship.

**Chain Drama: Not A Colonial Hybridity But A Globally Practiced Popular Cultural Form**

Korean theatre and film historians have treated chain drama pejoratively. As I stated in the Introduction, the Korean theatre historiography has developed to privilege “purely artistic modern drama” over “hybrid commercial entertainment.” Such a tendentious attitude toward hybrid commercial entertainment, as I also posited, was derived from the Japanese colonial censorship – leaving Korean theatre artists no other option than to aestheticize or commercialize their creation to the extreme – and its legacy to post-colonial Korea, in which elite supporters of aestheticism emerged as leaders by claiming their authority. The Korean theatre historiography has been after all constructed based on a historically situated, but ultimately false dichotomy. In this binary narrative, chain drama as a genre that enjoyed tremendous commercial success with a hybrid form and melodramatic content has long been criticized. Right after its advent, theatre director Baek-nam Yun denounced chain drama as “a perverted drama” that had no potential in

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230 Su-jin Woo, 277-279.
leading the populace to civilization and enlightenment. Following Baek’s criticism, pioneering theatre historians in post-colonial Korea – Doo-hyun Lee and Min-young Yoo – writing separately, described chain drama as “a canned art [containing] neither theatre nor film” and “decadence in theatre.” Their argument was that chain drama productions provided only “anachronistic” repertories and thus could not respond to Korean audiences who were, in their interpretation, in need of purely modern aesthetics.

Film historians have raised objections to including chain drama in Korean film historiography. Hee-mun Cho, for instance, argues that chain drama “cannot be considered responsible for the advent of film arts in Korea as filmed scenes were just part of theatre.” Su-nam Kim, a film historian who has conducted extensive research about chain drama, also contends that filmed scenes in a chain drama production served only a “supplemental” role in the development of the plot, and thus had a viable function only in the expansion of theatrical expressions – but not in the development of film aesthetics. Considering the historical condition of chain drama’s introduction and development in colonial Korea, Kim further argues that the first Korean chain drama production, Royal Revenge, was nothing more than an unoriginal imitation of the Japanese chain drama that was devoid of any serious review or reflection. Moreover, he has written a provocative article which revokes the privileged status of Royal Revenge as the first Korean film, and firmly opposes the celebration of its premiere date, October 27, as National Film Day.

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While widely accepted as the first Korean chain drama production, *Royal Revenge* has been indeed a point of discussion as well as a troubling piece of work. Theatre and film historians have paid exclusive attention to *Royal Revenge*, although approximately 27 more chain dramas were produced until the form gradually declined with the advent of *pure* film in 1923 with *The Border* (*Gukgyeong*), finally disappearing in the 1930s.\(^{236}\) This exclusive focus on *Royal Revenge* has derived not only from it being the first Korean chain drama production but also its production being relatively well documented. Given that no concrete visual evidence remains for any chain drama productions, the only materials that outline the specific characteristic, organization, and reception of a chain drama are recollections and fragmentary documentation, both of which are available for *Royal Revenge*. Simultaneously, those available historical materials clearly attest to the strong Japanese influence in its inception, production process, and the produced performance, which I outline below.

*Royal Revenge* was produced by Do-san Kim’s Singeukjwa and premiered at the theatre Danseongsa (owned by Seung-pil Park) on October 27, 1919. Based on a surviving cursory description, *Royal Revenge* portrayed a melodramatic story in which a young man seeks revenge on his evil, covetous stepmother, who has plotted to murder him to steal his wealth.\(^{237}\) Despite the fact that this type of simple, platitudinous plot was prevalent in the Korean theatre scene of the time, *Royal Revenge* achieved tremendous success. Two days after its premiere, the newspaper *Daily News* (*Maeil Sinbo*) reported that “audiences surged into the theatre like a tide since early evening” regardless of the rather expensive ticket price.\(^{238}\) Subsequently, *Royal


\(^{237}\) The most detailed synopsis of *Royal Revenge* is found in Jong-hwa Ahn, *Hanguk Yeonghwa Cheukmyeon Bisa [Korean Cinema’s Hidden History]* (Seoul: Chunchugak, 1962), 41.

\(^{238}\) *The Daily News*, October 29, 1919, quoted in Mi-hyeon Kim, *Hanguk Yeonghwasa [History of Korean Film]* (Seoul: Communication Books, 2006), 29. The newspaper suggests the unusually high ticket price with its comment that “the cheapest seat costs as much as four bowls of seolleongtang (beef and rice soup).”
Revenge enjoyed a three-year run of overwhelming box office success that included a series of regional tours. Citing newspaper descriptions of its motion picture scenes, historians have attributed its smash hit to the filmed scenes. Young-il Lee and Young-chol Choe, for instance, state that the filmed exterior scenes provided the Korean audience an opportunity to observe their everyday space through modern technology by covering well-known tourist locations in Seoul, such as a king’s tomb, national park, gisaeng (Korean traditional female entertainers) house, and a bridge over the Han River. Lee and Choe also cite a review of Royal Revenge, which not only praises the quality of filmed scenes but also identifies Royal Revenge as a motion picture instead of a chain drama. It states: “[t]his motion picture was not only lucid and beautiful but also the background scenes were as good as those made by western filmmakers.” This review thus demonstrates that the filmed scenes were the chain drama’s major point of attraction – even though the motion picture part of Royal Revenge lasted only five to ten minutes, according to journalist-cum-writer Pung-yeon Cho’s (1914-1991) recollection.

A more detailed description of the performance came from theatre director Jin Bak’s (1905-1974) recollection of Royal Revenge, which he watched when he was young:

In a garden, a youth fought with a villain, who began to run away. As the youth ran after him, the stage became dark with a whistle sound. A white curtain slid down in front of the stage, and actors hid behind the curtain. With the second whistle sound, a shot of a mountain was projected. The villain came running to the mountain with the youth in pursuit. After a series of struggles between the two, the villain took out a dagger. At this moment, the third whistle sound came. As the white curtain was raised, the stage was

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239 The great success further resulted in regional tours in Daegu, Masan, Busan, Pyeongyang, Jinmanpo, etc. See Hee-mun Cho, 239.
240 Subsequent chain dramas adopted and expanded this theme by inserting visually expansive shots of Seoul and other national landmarks. For example, Gi-se Yi’s Munyedan filmed the city of Daegu, famous sights such as Bulguk Temple and the astronomical observatory Chomseongdae, superb views in Pyeongyang, etc.; and Seong-gu Im’s Hyeoksindan filmed Incheon and Pyeongyang. See Su-jin Woo, 295.
241 Young-il Lee and Young-chol Choe do not clarify their source (26).
arranged like the filmed scene of the mountain, and the villain who had been in the film continued his attempt to stab the youth.\footnote{243}

Revealing that he was mostly drawn to the mechanism of chain drama, Bak’s description has served as a valuable source for historians to estimate the specific ways in which a chain drama was performed. However, it would also have bewildered Korean historians, as it is critically similar to Japanese recollections of Japanese chain drama productions. I briefly cite one below:

As four or five actors were performing onstage, a woman shrieked and fled through the curtain. Two or three men and women chased her through the curtain. In an instant, the stage became dark, a white curtain slid down in front of the stage, and on it was [projected] a shot of a park. The woman came running into this park, and there was a struggle between her and the people who were chasing her. [...] At this point the film suddenly disappeared. When the white curtain was raised the stage was arranged just like the film scene [...] and the same woman and man that had been in the film continued performing just as they were.\footnote{244}

The Japanese influence on the production of Royal Revenge is undeniable. According to Young-il Lee and Young-chol Choe, Do-san Kim’s decision to produce a chain drama was made after he watched a Japanese chain drama entitled The Wife of the Captain performed by a Japanese play troupe Sedonaikai at Hwanggeum-gwan in Seoul in 1918. He also secured the service of a Japanese cameraman, Sounosuke Miyagawa, from the Japanese chain drama company Osaka Dengas-sa, to shoot the filmed scenes.\footnote{245} In short, Do-san Kim produced Royal Revenge in a similar manner to the Japanese chain drama, by deriving his inspiration from the Japanese chain drama production as well as seeking practical assistance from the Japanese manpower.

Along with the factors mentioned above, the advent of the Japanese chain drama prior to the Korean chain drama and the older form’s likely impact on cultural productions in Japanese

\footnote{244} This is an account that film historian Junichiro Tanaka gave of his experience at Asakusa theatre in 1917, cited from Joanne Bernardi, \textit{Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement} (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2001), 310.
\footnote{245} Young-il Lee and Young-chol Choe, 25-26.
colonies have led many historians to believe that the chain drama developed in Korea under strong Japanese influence. The chain drama form arose in Japan as early as the turn of the twentieth century. The first Japanese attempt to incorporate motion picture into live performance is known to be *The Imperial Army Attacks Russia (Seiro no kogun)* staged at Masago Theatre in Tokyo in 1904. The *Miyako Shim bun* reviewed it as “a highly acclaimed war play,” in which “scenes depicting the naval battle at Port Arthur and the sinking of the Russian fleet [employed] the device of the applied motion picture.” While depicting heroic episodes of Japanese soldiers participating in Russo-Japanese War, this piece included a short projection of documentary war footage filmed antecedently to and independently from the theatre production. Such early chain drama-like arrangement was soon adopted by *kabuki* theatres and further developed by Japanese melodrama (*shimpa*) theatre troupes. As the motion picture industry (introduced in Japan in 1896) threatened the popularity of theatre performances, theatre practitioners attempted to infuse their performance with the appeal of motion pictures by alternating filmed scenes and staged performance. In 1908, Tokyo’s Miyato Theatre staged *Woman Warrior (Onna Samurai)* with its climatic scene filmed and projected on screen. Though at first variously referred to as “applied reality,” “applied motion picture,” and “applied motion picture reality,” the term chain drama (*rensageki*) began to replace other terms after it was coined by actor Chonosuke Yamazaki in 1913. Chain drama took hold of the popular imagination in Japan’s Kansai region and sustained enough popularity over the years to support its own theatre in Tokyo, Asakusa Theatre. Soon

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247 The contacts with the West brought about, in the late 1880s’ Japan, a new type of theatre, *shimpa*, through which the Japanese developed their conception of Western drama within Japanese contemporary settings. With its emphasis on contemporary subject matter of a melodramatic bent, use of colloquial language, and representational style of acting, *shimpa* appealed to the newly urbanized populace, who found difficulty relating to traditional performing arts. Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 248-252.

after, its popularity gradually spread outward, first across the Japanese islands and then to the overseas colonies of Taiwan and Korea. The imported Japanese chain drama productions in Korea included *One Sided Love* in Busan in 1915, *Revenge of Civilization* in Seoul in 1917, and *The Wife of the Captain* in Seoul in 1918, the last of which Do-san Kim watched before producing *Royal Revenge*.

Yet, the Japanese chain drama was, to borrow the expression of theatre historian Earle Ernst, “a nine-days’ wonder.” In other words, its popularity did not last long – a situation that I contend has proven particularly perplexing for Korean historians. During the 1910s, Japanese critics and filmmakers formed a movement to “purify” Japanese film practices, which, they asserted, had been infiltrated with such theatrical “contaminants” as narrators (*benshi*), female impersonators (*onnagata*), and chain drama. The Pure Film Movement, according to Hase Masato, sought to render a cinematic work to solely represent a director’s self-expression, although such developments, ironically, facilitated censorship. In concert with the Movement, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police laid down the Regulations for the Control of Motion Picture Screening in 1917. Concerned mostly with circumstances of film exhibition rather than film contents, the Regulations, in Masato’s interpretation, aimed to diminish the live aspect of movie screening in order to efficiently and effectively control “the director’s self-expression,” which would be easily censored through a decisive one-time control of the finished film. Though

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250 Young-il Lee and Young-chol Choe, 26; Su-jin Woo, 292; Su-nam Kim, 60.
251 Earle Ernst, 252.
252 Consisting of 6 chapters and 51 articles, the Regulations for the Control Motion Picture Screening included the banishment of children from movie theatres, the segregation of audience seating for men and women, the prohibition of publicity to solicit customers, and the introduction of a licensing system for *benshi* along with the rejection of the chain drama. Hase Masato, “The Origins of Censorship: Police and Motion Pictures in the Taisho Period,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (December 1998): 14-23.
having almost opposite intentions, film reformers and officials alike stigmatized chain drama as “a horrendous corruption of the cinema,” and subsequently banned the practice in 1917.253

For Korean theatre and film historians, this chronology – with the end of chain drama in Japan, or more precisely in Tokyo, in 1917 and the start of chain drama in Korea in 1919 – has suggested the painful possibility that the Japanese used Korea as a dumping ground for a form that had already been discarded as unfashionable, impure, or even pre-modern in Japan, and that Koreans for their part mistook the demoted form as cutting-edge modernity. For instance, Korean film historian Mi-hyeon Kim implies such a conviction in her first stating that chain drama was considered within Japan to lack all cinematic value, then going on to trace the Japanese influence on the development of chain drama in Korea.254 Su-nam Kim also observes that the Japanese economic subjugation of Korea facilitated the influx of Japanese chain drama into Korea, noting that Japanese chain drama practitioners could have circumvented the prohibition by reestablishing themselves on the Korean peninsula.255 While shaping the historical narrative around a sense of Korea’s sociocultural inferiority to its Japanese colonizer, Korean historians express their discomfort toward the colonial history in their historical narratives about chain drama.

The Korean theatre and film historians in sum have criticized chain drama for two distinctive, but subsequently linked, reasons: chain drama was impure in its aesthetics as well as in its development history. Starting from the 2000s, however, some theatre and film historians have suggested new perspectives on the supposed impurity of chain drama. For instance, film

253 Kinema Record 27, September 1915, recited from Aaron Gerow, Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2010), 193. According to Iwamoto Kenji, the chain drama practice continued for several more years in the Kansai region. The practice also revived later in the 1930s with a different genre title of kino-drama while distinguishing itself from rensageki by highlighting its appropriation of talkies instead of silent motion pictures (4 & 7-11).
254 Mi-hyeon Kim, 28.
255 Su-nam Kim (2011), 49.
historian Pyong Kuk Chun published in 2004 an article in which he observes that theatre and film historians have treated chain drama as if it were “an illegitimate child” in their attempts to make a theatre or film history narrative as a “pure” genealogy. He then argues that the Korean audience of the 1920s would not have perceived chain drama as an anomaly considering that indoor theatres of the early twentieth-century Korea presented hybrid spectacles across genres from Korean traditional performances, including pansori, dance, puppet theatre, Korean instruments’ playing, as well as motion pictures, all in an one-day program. In observing a series of performances of various genres all at once, Chun posits that the Korean audience would have received them without a strict generic distinction and instead enjoyed being in a theatre space itself, which was one of the first public spheres where Koreans developed their communal consciousness.256 Theatre historian Su-jin Woo also published in 2010 a monograph in which she interprets chain drama not as a passive mimesis, but rather, borrowing Homi K. Bhabha’s term, as an active “mimicry” of the Japanese chain drama, and calls attention to its contribution to the development of modern theatre in Korea. She argues that the filmed part in chain drama productions appealed and responded to the Korean audience’s growing desire to see realistic representation. Accordingly, it contributed to the development of realistic mise-en-scène on Korean stage, specifically the emergence of actresses by facilitating the decline of the Japanese convention of casting male actors for female roles in Japanese melodrama-styled (shimpa) performances in Korea.257

Building on the scholarship demanding less tendentious and more serious attention to chain drama than it has received to date, I call attention to the underappreciated fact that the

256 Pyong Kuk Chun, “A Study on Yeonswaegeuk as the Origin of Our Film,” Yeonghwa Yeongugu 24 (2004): 463-498. Brian Yecies and Ae-Gyung Shim introduce indoor theatres, along with churches, trams, and department stores, as “part of a newly formed and modern public sphere” (44).
257 Su-jin Woo, 275-299.
practice of combining motion picture with staged performance occurred globally in the early twentieth century. As Chun and Woo suggest, the production, reception, and legacy of chain drama should be further discussed in the Korean context, regardless of its debt to Japanese chain drama. However, given post-colonial Korean historiography’s sensitivity to colonial influence, the clarification that chain drama is a globally practiced popular historical form can facilitate a revised evaluation of chain drama. In this regard, I conclude this section by briefly introducing European practices, before fully engaging with American practices in their relevance to Earn Hong’s play *Compatriots* in the next section. That is, I consider a global perspective, one which Koreans in the early twentieth century, particularly cultural reformists, adopted to construct Korea as a modern nation. In so doing, I challenge the prevalent historiography of chain drama, and more broadly, the nationalist historiography assessing the modernization of Korea as a consequence of the presumed exclusive interplay between Japan and Korea.

Multimedia performances mixing film and theatre were widely practiced in Europe in the early twentieth century. Among the best-known cases are productions by Erwin Piscator in 1920s’ Germany. Piscator developed his montage aesthetics by blending films and stage performances in such works as *Hoppla, We’re Alive!* (1927), *Rasputin* (1927), and *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1928). Even before Piscator, as John Willett points out, film had been used in operatic performances in Germany as early as 1911. A revue production in Hamburg, entitled *Rund um den Alster*, for instance, projected a film showing actors running through the Hamburg streets up to the main entrance of the theatre, and then began the live performance with actors who jumped out of the orchestra pit on to the stage.\footnote{John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), 113.} Another scholar of Piscator, C.D. Innes, relates that similar explorations were made in France before World War I.\footnote{C.D. Innes, *Erwin Piscator’s Political Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 208.}
French filmmaker Georges Méliès produced several film inserts for the Victor Darlay and Victor de Cottens fairy pantomime, *Les Quatre Cents Coups du Diable* (*The Merry Deeds of Satan*), which opened at the Théâtre Municipal du Châtelet in 1905. Méliès’s film inserts, according to Gwendolyn Waltz, served a twofold role of facilitating scene-changing and providing continuity with staged performance scenes.260 Another example that demonstrates that the chain drama form was being globally practiced is the Russian stage actor Pavel Orlenev’s production of a hybrid performance of Henrik Ibsen’s *Brand*, which ran to full houses for three months in 1914.261

Given the prevalence of chain drama-formed performances all around Europe, it is not improbable that Korean theatre artists were aware of and able to draw from European practices as they molded their own multimedia format, even if they had not experienced European works in live performance. Moreover, this possibility of a wider scope of reference suggests that Korean theatre artists could believe that their cultural debt was less to the specific Japanese chain drama and more to universal modernity. In the next section, I suggest the strong possibility that Earn Hong’s envisioned incorporation of motion picture into his chain drama play *Compatriots* was influenced, if not directly shaped, by American popular theatrical and cinematic productions. For this purpose, I first demonstrate that Hong’s vision of filming a huge-scaled battle as well as the characters’ subtle actions cannot be fully explained by early Japanese practices (that included short documentary war footage pre-filmed independently from the theatre production) or by later Japanese and Korean chain drama practices (that predominantly adopted motion picture in order to heighten melodramatic effects). I then clarify that Hong, as

the most prolific writer in Korean communities in the U.S., had a keen interest in Western histories and the arts, and a belief in their efficacy in nation building. This point strengthens the possibility that he drew his reference from American popular arts, particularly those having received acclaim not only for their artistic achievements but also for their social, particularly educational, efficacy. The section concludes with an introduction to possible American references for the chain drama format as well as the filmed scenes of *Compatriots*.

**Earn Hong’s Alternative References: Ramona and The Birth of a Nation**

Earn Hong (1880-1951), as introduced in Chapter 2, immigrated to Hawai‘i in 1904. Duk Hee Lee Murabashi published in 2001 a compiled list of Korean passengers arriving in Honolulu between 1903 to the late 1905 based on microfilmed copies of passenger manifests held by the National Archives and Records Administration. She identifies Hong as having arrived in Honolulu on September 16, 1904, under the name Chong Pio Hong, at the age of 24. Taking into account that early Korean immigrants first traveled to Nagasaki to take a steamship to Honolulu, and that it took approximately ten days from Japan to Hawai‘i, Hong would have been in Japan around late August and early September in 1904. Therefore, he could have heard about, if not seen, the early Japanese practice of chain drama using a motion picture in a theatrical war drama. According to Iwamoto Kenji, many *kabuki* theatres included in their performances a short projection of war footage from such films as *Great Motion Picture of the Russo-Japanese War* and *Recently Imported Microscopic Motion Pictures*, following the Masago Theatre’s adoption of the footage of the sinking of the Russian fleet in its war drama *The*  

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263 Wayne Patterson (1988), 49-50
Imperial Army Attacks Russia in March, 1904.\textsuperscript{264} Nevertheless, if Hong took an idea of composing a chain drama from the early Japanese practice, he would not have needed to delay the composition of Compatriots till 1917. More critically, the early Japanese practice of briefly airing pre-filmed war footage during a theatre performance cannot fully explain Hong’s ambitious vision. I clarify the characteristics of Hong’s envisioned filmed scenes by providing a summary of his detailed description below, though I will analyze the play in detail in the next section.

Hong divides the film segment in Compatriots into two subparts by changing acts in-between the two: a spectacular naval battle in Tokyo Bay and a panoramic view of the war-torn city of Tokyo (Act 1); and a surrender of the Japanese emperor in Tokyo Imperial Palace and Koreans’ welcoming ceremony for their army in Seoul (Act 2). The first part mainly requires capturing spectacular panoramas:

As a projector begins to beam a film onto a screen, a vast expanse of the ocean appears slightly heaving under the full moon. Therein, hundreds of warships with Korean national flag are surrounding three sides of Tokyo Bay. The ocean then soon becomes covered with black smoke fumed from both Korean and Japanese warships. Among the cloud of smoke, only bright flames raise as if lighting flashes. As the Korean warships fiercely fire cannons, the Japanese warships begin to make an attempt to steam away, but only end up sinking one by one, leaving a trail of bubbles.

After such “stunning” scene of the naval battle, the film presents a panoramic view of the entirety of war-torn Tokyo.

The Korean national flag hung in the tall flagpole standing at the center of the city is waving in the breeze in a late morning. Tokyo is bathed in sunshine, and filled with Korean armies. However, no sign of people can be found in parks and theatres as they are firmly closed with their badges dropping to the shade of dead Japanese soldiers.

The first part ends with projecting a Korean independence army commander’s letter to the Japanese emperor urging him to surrender.

\textsuperscript{264} Iwamoto Kenji, 2.
While the film in Act 1 is required to present spectacular and panoramic views of the war and its aftermath, it also begins to include close-up scene of people. Earn Hong, in other words, provides detailed descriptions of characters’ subtle bodily and facial motions in the filmed scene of Act 2. After projecting the letter, the film presents the Seimon Ishibashi Bridge, which leads to the main gate of Tokyo Imperial Palace. The main gate opens, and the Korean army commander (implicitly along with the Korean acting prime minister) enter the Palace to see the Japanese emperor who has already come out to the main gate. Hong describes: “tears come out from the Japanese emperor’s eyes, and the Korean commander expresses his sympathy on his face.” Inside the Palace, the Japanese emperor and the Korean acting prime minister then discuss treaty clauses following Korea’s annexation of Japan. The Japanese emperor begs to allow him to keep his title, while “grasping the Korean’s hands” in tears, and the Korean “shakes off the Japanese’s grip.” The Japanese then exits with “his face covered with the sleeve from shame.”

The setting is changed to Seoul, where a welcoming ceremony is held for the Korean army. A number of people gather to welcome the returning army around a hastily built temporary triumphal arch. A military band, civil and military officers, foreign countries’ diplomats, many national and international newspapers’ reporters, other organizations’ representatives, students from various schools, and people of all ages and both sexes from all provinces of Korea stand in queue. In the midst of the crowds, people discuss their lost children and the future of Korea until the Korean army finally arrives. In other words, Hong includes a dialogue among adoring onlookers in this crowded scene.

The filmed scenes envisioned by Earn Hong after all appear much more ambitious than the modestly projected short motion picture footage, which he could have experienced in his short stay in Japan while waiting for the ship transfer, or later learnt about Japanese or Korean
news about Japanese chain drama practices. Hong’s description specifically presumes a capacity to adeptly use various film technologies such as varied camera angels and close-ups, as the filmed scenes envision capturing not only spectacular panoramas but also subtle human actions. Furthermore, it should be noted that Hong, as the most prolific writer in Korean communities in the U.S., revealed his keen interest in Western histories and arts in his writings. For instance, Hong set all of his novels published in *The New Korea*, if loosely, in European historical contexts: *A Beauty’s Mind* (*Miyin-sim*, January 15, 1912 – June 18, 1914) about a Polish woman committing suicide after discovering that her lover has been engaging in pro-Russian activities during the Polish-Russian War; *Blood-and-Iron Lovebirds* (*Cheolhyeol Wonang*, May 4, 1916 – April 19, 1917) about a Serbian couple who marry after a series of struggles during the First Balkan War of 1912-1913; and *Scent of Chinese Magnolia* (*Okranhyang*, May 16, 1918 – July 3, 1918) about a British intelligent agent rescuing a British woman from a disguised Italian spy and winning her heart in England. In 1924, furthermore, thirteen Koreans including Il-kyu Baek and Earn Hong founded an organization named *Yimunhoe* – which could mean an organization for “interesting” or “different” literature – in San Francisco, while identifying themselves as Koreans enjoying literature and arts in the U.S. and proclaiming their aim as contributing to Korean communities in the U.S. by promoting Koreans’ appreciation of literature and arts.

In sum, it is highly likely that Hong sought to stay current with American literature and arts, especially forms of culture with exceptional fame or popularity across the U.S., but particularly in San Francisco, where Hong resided from 1911 through 1919, with occasional visits thereafter. It is thus highly probable that his exposure to American cultural expressions

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266 Ki-young Choi (2012), 26-27.
267 *The New Korea* reported in April 1919 that “the former editor-in-chief [Earn Hong] became too exhausted after years persistently working for the promotion of independence spirits with his pen, and thus decided to take a break.
motivated him to develop his ambitious vision of filming part of a play with highly advanced film technologies and projecting the filmed part in-between live performance. Thus, I shall examine American theatrical and cinematic popular cultural productions available in the mid 1910s’ San Francisco, with particular attention to *Ramona*, produced as a multimedia performance in 1916, and *The Birth of a Nation*, regarded as a masterful film that successfully captured what *Compatriots* sought to present: spectacular panoramas as well as subtle human actions.

According to Gwendolyn Waltz, a practice integrating motion pictures into stage plays appeared in the U.S. almost right after the introduction of motion pictures. This practice was first designed to facilitate scene changing, but later to impel the plot. The earliest hybrid that Waltz names is Rosabel Morrison’s 1896 production of Theodore Kremer’s play *Carmen*, which projected a ten-minute motion picture, *Bullfight*. Increasingly, the stage and screen alternation was applied to difficult-to-stage racing or chasing scenes, as also found in the Korean chain drama *Royal Revenge*. Two examples of such uses of film in theatre were the Castle Square Theatre Stock Company’s production of *The Country Fair* (1897) in Boston and the Owen Davis Stock Company’s production of *A Twig of Laurel* (1902) in Rochester. In the 1910s, Waltz reports, “multimedia productions increased in number, and in alternation format hybrids,” and so “greater intermedial integration took place.”

Example that Waltz introduces with the term “half real-half reel format” include *Camille* (1910), *The Honeymoon Express* (1913), *The Battle and head toward Los Angeles.” *Jeon Sinhan Minbo Jupil-ui Nambanghaeng [Travel to South by the Former Editor of The New Korea],” The New Korea, April 8, 1919.

268 Gwendolyn Waltz (2012), 373.
Cry (1914), The Alien (1915), Pay-Day (1916), Life (1916), and Ramona (1916), among others.269

Ramona (1916) was particularly popular and toured throughout the U.S. Originally written as a romance novel about the Spanish settlers and Mission Indians in Southern California, Ramona was first made into a staged version in 1905 with D.W. Griffith as an actor playing an Indian hero. The story was also made into films several times: one directed by D.W. Griffith in 1910, Edwin Carewe in 1928, and Henry King in 1936. The 1916 production that I discuss, however, was neither film nor staged performance but a combination of the two: “a cinema-theatrical entertainment,” as an ad in the Los Angeles Times called it.270 Produced by William Clune and directed by Donald Crisp, this chain drama-formed production premiered in Los Angeles on February 7, 1916. A week before the opening date in Los Angeles, Grace Kingsley (1873-1962) – the first film editor at the Los Angeles Times – wrote a preview, anticipating that Clune’s Ramona would introduce “many unique features, never before used in connection with pictures, but calculated to add immeasurably to the effectiveness of the film portrayal” since it would be “actually staged.” Kingsley provided a detailed synopsis, while indicating that each act would begin as a stage play and smoothly transit to a film.

When the curtain goes up, Santa Barbara Mission will be revealed in exact replica, even as to size. The light of gray dawn will reveal its stained and moss-grown walls, the lighting changing gradually to rosy morning and full day. A procession of priests will wend its way into the mission, a set of twenty chimes will call to prayers, followed by music of the mass within the church. Thus, ushered in, the picture play will begin.271

The day after the premiere, drama critic and film scenario writer Henry Christeen Warnack (1877-1927) commented on the chain drama format, favorably stating that “‘Ramona’ is too

wonderful for words. The term ‘motion picture’ is too small. It is photoplay, drama, and opera all in one.”

The excitement about the novelty of the format, reflected in the above review, drew audiences as well. Ramona achieved great commercial success to the extent that it toured subsequently in New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia, in addition to sustaining three concurrent touring companies in Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco.

In San Francisco, Ramona was staged at the Cort Theatre for six weeks from March to April in 1916. The San Francisco Chronicle published a series of reviews attesting to its immediate, tremendous success. For instance, the newspaper, in its March 24 issue, hailed Clune’s Ramona as “the most ambitious effort yet put forth in the field of cinema production” with a specific comment on its unique format “partaking of a triple [operatic, theatrical, and cinematic] nature.” About a week later, the newspaper also praised it as “living up to its advanced reputation” as the leading-edge production in the history of American popular arts. Furthermore, this later newspaper report included a paragraph highlighting the show’s exceptional educational value:

Ramona is not only an admirable entertainment, but it has interested the foremost educators of the state on account of its historical and educational features. It shows a true and unexaggerated picture of California of the early days […], depicts the injustice done the Mission Indians […], and therein calls attention to the present condition of the California Indian.

Given that Earn Hong, as a journalist-cum-writer, had a keen interest in Western histories and arts, and furthermore worked for the newspaper that published an editorial promoting theatre to serve an educational role following Western models, it is highly likely that Ramona caught his attention.

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273 Gwendolyn Waltz (1991), 111.
attention. Furthermore, the Cort Theatre was not far away from where he lived and where he worked. The theatre was located in 64 Ellis St, which was about a six minute walk away from the office of the North American branch of Korean National Association (995 Market St.) and about a ten minute walk away from where he lived (794 Howard St.) based on information provided in his United States World War I Draft Registration Card drafted on September 12, 1918. Together, the high popularity of Ramona, the American reception highlighting its educational value, and Hong’s geographical proximity to the theatre space all suggest that Earn Hong was highly likely exposed to Ramona and thus the American practice of “cinema-theatrical entertainment.”

Another American popular cultural production that was staged at theatres in San Francisco (not exclusively, but including at the Cort Theater) in the mid 1910s was The Birth of a Nation (1915) – D.W. Griffith’s popular and notorious film that has been credited for signaling the birth of American cinema. Based on the novel and play Clansman, both by Thomas Dixon, Jr., The Birth of a Nation premiered as Clansman in Los Angeles on February 8, 1915, and was released throughout the U.S. under the title The Birth of a Nation. In San Francisco, it first opened on March 1, 1915 at the Alcazar Theater on O’Farrell Street – located not far from the spaces that Hong frequented. The film was subsequently exhibited at the Savoy Theater, and then

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276 At the beginning of Chapter 1, I discussed the editorial “Dramatic Literate is Necessary for Reforming Public Morals and Elevating Sprits” published in The New Korea on September 10, 1914. In this editorial, the author demands to promote theatre as part of universal education, following the ways in which Western civilization took on theatre. Although the published newspaper does not disclose any hints to its author, Hong-woo Lee and Keum-sun Yeun attribute this editorial to Earn Hong without any evidence (Hong-woo Lee (2011), 243; Keum-sun Yeun, 84). Regardless of this specific editorial’s authorship, I contend that Earn Hong would have been well aware of the newspaper’s expectation to theatre, given that he was actively engaged in both playwriting and The New Korea.

277 All males in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 45 were required by law to register for the World War I Draft throughout 1917 and 1918. In this record, Hong left his full name, date and place of birth, citizenship, occupation as well as his home and place of employment addresses. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, preserved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, D.C., are electronically searchable on the subscription website Ancestry.com (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015). My gratitude goes to Ramona Curry for calling my attention to this valuable historical source.

occasionally at the Cort Theater, through the fall of 1916. As in other regions of the U.S., the film received tremendous commercial and critical success in San Francisco. It led to heated debates about its historical accuracy and educational value – a reception, which would have likely become known to most residents in San Francisco. Indeed, as Jack C. Ellis notes, The Birth of a Nation was not merely a motion picture but “a cultural phenomenon that everyone felt obliged to witness,” and its notoriously blatant racist portrayal of African Americans only attracted more audiences as well as produced active public discussion on the film. That is, the film was an issue among the American population in and outside of the theatre. It is thus highly likely that at the very least, Earn Hong heard about the film. Exposure to the film and its controversy would have introduced Hong to unprecedentedly advanced film technologies as well as the position of cinematic arts elevating as one of the most critical social agencies in the modern world, as it did for Hong’s American contemporaries. I thus consider The Birth of a Nation here with a particular focus on its reception in San Francisco.

The Birth of a Nation narrates the history of nineteenth-century America by chronicling the entwined fate of two White families – the southern slave-owning Camerons and the northern abolitionist Stonemans – over the course of the Civil War, the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, the Reconstruction, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. In so doing, the film notoriously portrays slavery as a benevolent system for African Americans, lynching as a necessary social practice, and the Klan as redeemers of the South. Such extremely prejudicial portrayal of U.S. history takes nearly three hours of over 13,000 individual shots created with highly innovative cinematography. In short, The Birth of a Nation is a spectacular epic of White

279 The San Francisco Chronicle reported that The Birth of a Nation would end its thirty-five weeks of exhibition in San Francisco on October 1, 1916 at the Cort Theatre. “’Clansman’ Breaks Record,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 28, 1916, 9.
supremacy presented through artistic flourishes and cinematic innovations. Admirers and detractors alike responded not only to its achievement and problems as an individual piece of artwork but also to the potentially far-reaching social effects that this synthesis could produce.

On the film’s opening night in San Francisco, the San Francisco Chronicle exclaimed that Griffith “has made the history-drama live, move, seethe, thrill, and palpitate in a swift succession of shadows on a blank surface.” About a week later, the newspaper also evaluated the film as “artistically, historically, and morally a step forward – ahead of the greatest that has ever been taken before in this new art.” In so doing, the newspaper represented mainly White admirers’ interpretation of the film as “the sweep of American history incarnate.” Certainly, the San Francisco Chronicle was not alone in praising the film for its alleged historical accuracy. Notably, The Birth of a Nation was the first movie ever shown at the White House, and President Woodrow Wilson – a former historian – purportedly remarked after watching the film that “it is like writing history with lightning, and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.” Allegedly echoing the president’s approval, the San Francisco Examiner highlighted the film’s distinctive power in educating about history by hailing the film as a “pictorial and psychological diagram of the creation of the United States, an educative message that no written history can rival.” Such remarks highlighting the film’s historical accuracy and educational value – regardless of their validity – led the film to exert strong influence on the public well beyond the walls of theatre.

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285 Michael Rogen, 151.
286 San Francisco Examiner, April 20, 1915, recited in Matthew Philip Andrews, 145.
To San Francisco’s African American populations, *The Birth of a Nation* did not represent “a real history but true blasphemy.” Matthew Philip Andrews provides a detailed account of African American leaders’ and organizations’ response to the film in San Francisco. Though having different opinions about the proper course of protest and action, Black San Franciscans united in their denunciation of the film. The local African-American press urged the region’s black organizations to fight against the insidious film, and organizations such as the Colored Citizens of San Francisco and the San Francisco Negro Welfare League separately sent signed petitions to Mayor James Rolph and others to ban the film from the city. Their primary concern, according to Andrews, was “neither […] that on-screen stereotypes damaged black self-respect nor that blacks had a right not to be offended” but rather that “the film might incite examples of racial violence akin to what Griffith had himself created.” The real issue for Black San Franciscans after all was not just a distorted representation of the past, but its highly predictable adverse effects on the present and the future.

The controversy surrounding the film indeed produced civil unrest in 1916, when Mayor James Rolph – who had remained silent about the controversy – suddenly ordered the city to immediately cease showing *The Birth of a Nation*. The major newspapers reported that White San Franciscans were outraged by the mayor’s order, and condemned censorship as “unprogressive, undemocratic, and un-American.” In the process, they framed the controversy surrounding the film as an issue of the sanctities of free speech, and moreover characterized moving pictures not merely as entertaining the populace but rather as “liberalizing, instructive,

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287 Matthew Philip Andrews, 149.
289 Matthew Philip Andrews, 155.
290 Matthew Philip Andrews, 162.
and formative” of the national character.\textsuperscript{291} Though such criticism on censorship, as Andrews interprets, was derived from White Americans’ unswerving dedication to Griffith’s message comforting their racial superiority and their desire to exclude an issue of racial anxieties from the public debate on the film, their frame led to the elevation of cinema’s position in American society. Moreover, the controversy surrounding the film ultimately brought about the entire abolition of the Board of Censors in San Francisco in September of 1916. In the end, The Birth of a Nation served as a catalyst for subsequent changes in a broader societal realm beyond the boundary of cinema, entertainment, and the arts.

The enormous power of The Birth of a Nation apparently, if not exclusively, came from its cinematic achievements. Dixon’s novel The Clansman, according to Garth Jowett, “had no outcry whatsoever, although it was widely read.”\textsuperscript{292} His play adaptation also received, in San Francisco specifically, unanimous yet tepid criticism from both local major newspapers and African American leaders, when it was staged as a theatre performance at the Van Ness Theater of the city in November 1908.\textsuperscript{293} They all suggested that the play was “poor material and stupid, old-fashioned construction,” as a writer of the San Francisco Chronicle stated in his play review.\textsuperscript{294} By contrast, as Robert M. Henderson states in his biography of Griffith: “Griffith showed that an audience would accept fiction as reality” by provoking emotional excess through “the immediacy of the close-up,” which could not have been achieved on “a remote theatre


\textsuperscript{292} Garth Jowett, 102.

\textsuperscript{293} According to Jeffrey B. Martin, D.W. Griffith’s film features close similarities to Thomas Dixon, Jr.’s play version, though not to his original novel, in both subject matter and dramatic structure; and such similarities conflict Griffith’s reputation being the primary author of his movies. See Jeffrey B. Martin, “Film out of Theatre: D.W. Griffith, Birth of a Nation, and the Melodrama The Clansman,” Literature Film Quarterly 18.2 (April 1990): 87-95.

\textsuperscript{294} Colgate Baker, “‘The Clansman,’ Lurid Historical Melodrama,” San Francisco Chronicle, November 3, 1908, 7.
stage.” D.W. Griffith is indeed regarded as fathering the birth of American cinema by putting new film techniques to significant dramatic use, though not necessarily having invented most of them himself. Michael Rogin explains that Griffith “pulled the viewer into action” by varying camera angels and adopting close-ups, and in so doing “broke down the barriers not just of time and space and inner and outer but of audience and film.” Griffith’s innovative way of using film technology enabled his, and subsequent American filmmakers’ films, to provide the audience an immensely powerful experience that does not end when leaving the theatre space but rather lingers in the audience’s lives. When dealing with social issues of national importance, as in the case of *The Birth of a Nation*, films were expected to influence their audiences’ attitudes and actions. The advanced film technologies and aesthetics that D.W. Griffith pioneered, in sum, demonstrated and helped create the cinema’s potential as one of the most potent societal agencies in the U.S.

The tremendous popularity of *Ramona* and *The Birth of a Nation*, both of which were based on histories relevant to the nation’s present, would have been compelling to the journalist-cum-writer Earn Hong who sought to contribute to the Korean community in the U.S., as well as to the construction of Korea as a modern nation through literary and artistic projects. The study of *Ramona*, as performed by combining theatre and motion picture, certainly should convince Hong that the chain drama form was not exclusively Japanese, but clearly global, and thus benign, universal, and modern in the early modern Korean epistemological chain. *The Birth of a Nation* more than likely motivated Hong to envision a more advanced use of motion picture in a chain drama production than Japanese practices he might have known. Above all, Hong’s description of filmed scenes in *Compatriots* cannot be explained without supposing his

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296 Michael Rogin, 157.
appreciation of advanced film technologies and aesthetics that D.W. Griffith pioneered. Thus, it is plausible that the American popular theatrical and cinematic productions of the mid-1910s served as an inspiration, if not a model, for Earn Hong to envision an alternative chain drama production.

The controversy surrounding The Birth of a Nation most likely clarified for Hong that cinematic arts have a potential to render fiction as if truth, and in so doing, dissolve the boundary between theatre and reality. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Hong envisioned Compatriots not as a motion picture but rather as a chain drama. In the next section, I analyze the play, and posit that Hong would have chosen the chain drama form to present the filmed independence to create the impression of realizing at the very moment of performance with the audience’s participation. The chain drama form, I contend, ultimately served as a platform on which Hong could affectively promote the audience’s belief and participation in Koreans’ advance toward modern independent nation building, which the filmed scenes demonstrate in both form and content. Compatriots as an alternative Korean chain drama, if not produced, would have contributed to the modern nation building by intertwining Korea’s independence and the Western modern art form, and promoting Koreans’ aspiration for the both.

A Dramatized Promotion of Beliefs in the Dawning of a Modern, Independent Korea

The play Compatriots, as previously noted, consists of the following three parts: live performance of the staging of a war planning meeting, a motion picture projecting the war, and live performance presenting a reunion of the war planners. The first part entitled “We Are Compatriots All Alike” utilizes various dramaturgical strategies of promoting ethnic nationalism found in other 1910s plays, including Earn Hong’s play Peninsula Hero (1915). Hong portrays
nationalist activities as a way of carrying over the legacy of ancestors and thus, depicts Korean participants as an extended family. He also highlights Koreans’ distinctiveness by emphasizing Koreans’ higher degree of adaption to Western modernity – specifically Western education and Protestantism – as opposed to the foreign characters appearing in the play. Lastly, he renders independence as a foregone conclusion one would draw after examining Korean national history through the lens of the global standard, i.e., Western history.

The opening of the play is set to August 29, 1917, exactly seven years after Japan annexed Korea. The first scene shows an old man sharing with his granddaughter, Miseon, the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Miseon’s father. Her father, the grandfather reveals, was wounded while serving as a supreme commander in a Righteous Army (uibyeong) led by Geung-ho Min, and died of shock and anger upon learning of Korea’s defeat to and annexation by Japan. Before broaching the difficult subject, the grandfather presents Miseon with a sword left by her father. The sword thus appears to symbolize the father’s will, while characterizing Miseon’s participation in the following war-planning meeting as a way of carrying over her father’s legacy. This prelude frames all Korean characters gathering at Miseon’s place – a clergyman, a gentleman, a college student, and laborers – as Miseon’s extended family sharing her familial duty. In the end, those Korean characters from all walks of life appear as constituting a large family based on an ethnic approach to the nation, minjok, defining all Koreans as Dangun’s descendants. This frame, furthermore, possibly served as an invitation to the Korean audience or reader to the world of the play.

297 The Righteous Armies (uibyeong) rose up in response to the forced abdication of King Gojong and the demobilization of the Korean army in 1907. Having operated as guerilla bands all over the country, they attacked Japanese and pro-Japanese individuals and organizations as well as infrastructure such as bridges, railroads, and telegraph lines. The commander mentioned in the play, Geung-ho Min (1865-1908), was one of the most famous leaders, who had several thousand men under his command, and inflicted a series of defects on the Japanese in central Korea. See Carter J. Eckert et al, 242-244.
Earn Hong highlights Koreans’ distinctiveness by distinguishing them from foreign characters, who also attend the meeting: a Chinese man named Geumsan Wang, a Japanese man named Taerang Guk, and an American missionary called John Bunker. The composition of the meeting committee arguably reveals Hong’s understanding of who were the foreign powers most directly involved in Korea’s independence: China, Japan, and the U.S. (specifically American missionaries). At the same time though, he uses those foreign characters to demonstrate Koreans’ reformed ethnic identity. At first, the Chinese Geumsan Wang appears engrossed in past Chinese glory and blind to China’s decline. When he argues that the small country of Korea should rely on the big country of China, Koreans refuse his assistance, and by extension Chinese help, with the counterargument that “the Chinese’s blindness would be the very reason as to why the Chinese are being neglected and slighted in the U.S.” That is, Hong portrays the idea that the American anti-Oriental stance applied only to the Chinese and its reason would have been the Chinese ignorance to the changing geopolitical dynamics in the global order. This representation suggests that Hong aimed to motivate Koreans to work to differentiate themselves from other East Asian immigrants, especially by advancing their understanding of the modern world.

Given the strife infecting Korean-Japanese relations at the time, it is easy to imagine and perhaps understand the negativity that infuses Earn Hong’s characterization of the Japanese Taerang Guk. Hong’s description of Guk’s appearance is marked by vicious ethnic stereotyping:

[Guk] is very short and wears loosely fit clothing with the tightened neckline. His mouth is pointed as it has become hereditary over three hundred years of pouting a mouth since

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298 In Chapter 1, I stated that Korean immigrants attempted to appeal to the fact that they were more receptive to becoming Americanized than Chinese and Japanese immigrants in order to alleviate racial discrimination against them. In targeting the Chinese specifically, The New Korea published an editorial on June 8, 1910, stating that “The reason for discrimination against the Asiatics stems from the unfortunate situation of the Chinese who came to this country without abandoning their filthy habits and customs.” Taking advantage of their familiarity with American anti-Chinese discourse, Korean newspaper editors in the U.S. promoted Americanization as a way of reforming Korean ethnic identity.
the Japanese were defeated by the navy commander Sun-sin Yi and the army commander Yul Gwon at the Japanese Invasion of Korea [of 1592-1598].

The derogatory description continues with mention of Guk’s eyebrow shape, round head, and short legs. Hong anticipates and counters a potential objection by adding that “this detailed description is not exaggerated by a critical observation; rather, the appearance [of the Japanese] is just like the description.” In sum, Hong portrays Japanese inferiority not only as a history-related fact based on Korea’s sixteenth century defeat of Japan, but also an observed genetic, thus scientific fact. In other words, he defends his racist remark by using the rhetoric of modern science, more precisely, pseudoscience, just as Western ethnographers and eugenists of the time defended their racist views by highlighting their adherence to scientific methods, such as observation and genetics.299 While echoing imperialist discourses of the time, Hong’s racist remark expresses not only his disdain for Japan as the colonizer, but also his acknowledgement of contemporary Western views on race.

Adherence to Western religion, specifically Protestantism, is appropriated to prove Koreans’ higher degree of assimilation to Western standards and, therefore, their superiority to the Japanese. Described simply as a “gentleman,” a character named Tung-guk Yu states:

When they [the Japanese] lived in their bare skins without houses and clothing inside of mountains, they would feel damp, chilly, and so troubled in rainy days. But when the sun rose, the weather became warmed while drying their wet bodies. This is why they still worship the Sun God. It is also the reason why the Sun is being worshiped in Africa.

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299 Since the turn of the nineteenth century, eugenic thoughts and practices swept the world while disguising political interferences into private matters as a purely scientific program. Eugenics, furthermore, presented itself as an apolitical modernizing project and justified social discrimination and imperialism under the pretext of providing practical plans to achieve national prosperity. See Ayça Alemdaroglu, “Eugenics, Modernity, and Nationalism,” in Social Histories of Disability and Deformity, eds. David Turner and Kevin Stagg (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 126-141.
Compared inappropriately with native African culture, the Japanese religious affiliation is cited as a proof of barbarism. After this unreasonable, malicious, and indeed false claim, the Korean characters end the meeting with a prayer to God. The Korean clergyman entreats:

   The reason why we evoke this war is not only for freedom of the [Korean] nation and people but also for widely spreading your words into the world. Thus, please be always with our armies no matter where they go.

Although contemporary readers of any racial, ethnic, or religious affiliation would frown upon the racial bigotry and twisted religious charges Hong makes in the name of patriotism, his twinning of politically targeted racism and distorted Christianity appears as an integration of various dramaturgical strategies used in other 1910s plays to associate the Korean ethnic identity reformation with Americanization and Westernization. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Korean dramatists in the U.S. often sought to demonstrate Koreans’ highly reformed ethnic identity by highlighting Koreans’ adherence to Christianity, and more broadly, their higher degree of Americanization in contrast to other immigrant groups, particularly East Asian counterparts.

   The way in which Hong presents the American character John Bunker, however, reveals that Hong had a sharper understanding of Americanization than it may first appear. Americanization, as implied here, does not refer to assimilation to American society, but rather, to the adoption of American modernity, which, in Koreans’ expectation, would secure a more previledged position in the modern world system. Upon his arrival, Bunker is introduced to a Korean student character, Hye-gyeong Ji, who is described as having recently graduated from Yale University. In their conversation, Ji asks where Bunker was educated, and Bunker ashamedly and reluctantly discloses his lack of a college education. Bunker leaves after declaring that the Koreans’ only hope lies in worshiping the Christian God, but his remark is received as a sign of his ignorance. By sharply differentiating these two characters, a U.S.-enlightened Korean
realist and an ignorant American moralist, Hong tacitly makes use of American race and class politics to suggest, subversively, that Koreans could occupy a higher standing (than individuals such as Bunker) in the American social hierarchy. In caricaturing foreign figures as delusional, flawed, and pathetic, Earn Hong in the end posits as inevitable that Korea will one day rise above outdated China, pagan Japan, and even ignorant America, once they achieve independence.

Korean characters all uniformly promote the prospects of independence and frame some of those prospects in world-historical terms. They assert, for example, that Koreans should recover stolen national artifacts as “Julius Caesar did after his conquest of Turkey” and that Koreans should send Christian missionaries to Japan just as “Columbus arrived at North America, only with the cross.” With such a flawed understanding of imperial history, Hong projects Korean independence as following the same path to civilization once taken by Western nations. In his vision, post-colonial Korea would be as powerful and widespread as ancient Rome, as progressive and prestigious as twentieth-century America, and as spiritually enlightened as the purest Christians. Western historical references, as juxtaposed with previously mentioned Korean historical military heroes Sun-sin Yi and Yul Gwon, would serve well both to legitimize Korean independence as a path of carrying on Koreans’ tenacious independent spirit and integrating the nation into the modern global order. Earn Hong, after all, portrays “the Korean compatriots all alike” – allegedly including the audience and reader – not only as distinctive from the foreigners but also as reformed through Western education and religion, and thus, their future as following the path to Western civilization.

After framing the future of Korea as a virtual hybrid of Korean distinctiveness with Western modernity, Earn Hong begins the film segment with an excerpt from the *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, an account of the founding of Joseon Dynasty and the first lyric
poetry written in the Korean alphabet in 1447. The selection chosen is the poem’s 59th movement narrating the first king of Joseon Dynasty, Seong-gye Yi, annihilating Japanese pirates. As if repackaging this nationalist history in a new genre for the modern audience, the motion picture begins. The screen is lowered, and, in the playwright’s words, “a marvel [is] happening in which a daydream becomes a truth in a moment.” That is, Hong was aware that filming the aforementioned series of scenes would be as challenging as creating a marvel. Nonetheless, Hong explicitly declares that the filmed part would, or should, be produced. After the filmed scenes, Hong appears as the playwright and gives a lengthy speech, which I cite in part below:

The motion picture is adopted to present a huge scale of independence war, which cannot be presented on stage. Readers would probably argue that this is implausible. Still, your inmost heart would wish this happen. Then, why do you say that this is implausible? Since this is one of wishes, this should be taken as an ideal. As an ideal is not a reality, this ideal might as well be called as a daydream. [...] This motion picture is also a daydream. But it depends on the audience whether to take it wise or foolish. However, I can assert that everyone wants to regain the lost nation. Then, who can say that it is unreasonable to write about the invasion of Tokyo? [...] If you think of the invasion of Tokyo as impossible, then it would just mean that you do not dream of the independence. If you want the independence and believe that it would certainly happen, [my vision of filming] the invasion of Tokyo should not look unreasonable at all.

Though it may sound esoteric, Hong’s explanation adroitly rationalizes the presentation of the independence war and the use of motion picture altogether. More precisely, he blocks any accusation of unreasonableness by building a logical chain between his proposed use of the motion picture and the independence war, and then appealing to the audience to suspend their disbelief. As the appeal unfolds, it emerges that Hong’s call for a suspension of disbelief is not just aesthetic but political as well. If the audience can accept the plausibility of what this new, risky medium can deliver and then experience it live, they might just as easily embrace the possibility of achieving independence through military action, or the other way around.
My point is that Earn Hong calls for the Korean audience and readers as “compatriots all alike” to believe in and furthermore participate in the realization of the independence war not only on stage but also in reality. The adoption of motion picture serves to blur fiction and reality. The last part of the film scene reveals another appeal that Hong makes to his Korean compatriots. In the scene of a welcoming ceremony for the returning army in Seoul that follows the naval battle and the surrender of the Japanese emperor in Japan, a Korean among the crowd begins to look for the king, questioning if the acting minister is the king. Then another Korean reutes, stating that “Ah… [how inappropriate to search for] the king… when we are about to establish a constitutional republic.” This conversation ends as a train transporting the independence army arrives and a military band starts to play. Soon afterwards, the motion picture ends in a shot of the Korean crowd showing respect to the independence army commander and the acting prime minister standing side by side, visualizing a system of separation of powers. The future of Korea, which is envisioned through the modern medium of motion picture and expectedly soon to become a reality with Koreans’ beliefs, in the end, is presented to include the construction of a modern nation based on democratic republicanism.

The play returns to a staged performance, connecting the envisioned future to the here-and-now world of the theatre. The last part of the play, labeled as a staged performance, provides a specific example of how national matters would be handled in a new modern and democratic republic of Korea. As the projected filmed scenes end, the stage curtain rises to show the post-war Seoul surrounded by the Fortress Wall of Seoul, the Inwang Mount, and a number of Western-style houses of three stories lining up alongside a newly constructed road. At the center of the stage, an arch celebrating and commemorating independence is being built. Miseon in female riding clothes and a horsewhip in her hands, Tung-guk Yu as an army general, and others
as lieutenants, and an army clergymen appear one by one to discuss legislation regarding the Independence Arch. They reveal their concern about the delay in the finalization of the regulations and regret the illness of Miseon’s grandfather who, otherwise, could have arranged the discussion more efficiently. At the same time though, they clarify that they, as leaders of the modern Korea, should make a decision that well represents everyone’s opinion on it, even if it takes a frustratingly long time. In so doing, Hong clearly presents his vision that post-colonial Korea should not return to a monarchy, or more precisely, a Confucianism-based society led by a limited number of old elites, but rather to be reborn as a democratic republic. Given that Hong has urged the audience of *Compatriots* to participate in the realization of his play and independence, it is the audience who is called to be leaders in the new Korea.

I have demonstrated that *Compatriots* effectively and affectively connects the confined, fictional world of a play with a wider, actual world outside of the theatre by alternating staged play and motion picture. In my interpretation, Earn Hong defines the audience’s belief as the major driving force for the realization of his play as well as the independence, and in so doing, characterizes the envisioned future of Korea portrayed in *Compatriots* as Korean compatriots’ ideal realized. Such a meta-theatrical message conveyed through the chain drama form, I contend, aimed to promote the voice of Korean immigrants in the U.S. in the landscape of Korean nationalist movements, given that the full-scale war against Japan and the following construction of democratic republicanism were suggested particularly by Korean nationalists residing in the U.S. – including Chang-ho Ahn – as a path to and the ultimate goal of independence. As a final point of this chapter, I provide the historical context within which I read *Compatriots* as a dramatized promotion of a political vision of Korean nationalists in the U.S. heading not only to Korean communities in the U.S. but also to Korean compatriots globally.
Though often described as a non-political moderate reformist in Korean historiography, Chang-ho Ahn (1878-1938) did not eschew military engagement or other violent means to achieve his ultimate goal of Korean independence. Ahn immigrated to the U.S. in 1902, and returned to Korea in 1907, where he stayed until 1910. During his sojourn in Korea for these three years, Ahn asserted “an open war” (gaejeon) in many of his speeches, and strategically mentioned the issue of “Independence War Strategies,” in his last meeting with the executive council of New People’s Association (Sinminhoe) that Ahn established in 1907. Addressing such timing, Ilsup Ahn speculates that Chang-ho Ahn learned about the American Revolution (1775-1783), aka, the American War of Independence, during his stay in the U.S. between 1902 and 1907, and then applied the American model to the Korean case and developed his thoughts on revolutionary militarism. Although one can only speculate about the extent to which Ahn’s understanding of American history shaped his support for a Korean independence war, his belief that democratic republicanism was an ideal political system was highly likely shaped by his observation of the American political system. As Zihn Choi posits, the only Koreans who experienced democracy in the early twentieth century, after all, were those residing in the U.S., as other Koreans living in Korea, Manchuria, or Russia lived “under the tyranny of Japanese colonial rule, the feudalistic control of Chinese warlords, and a despotic czarist regime, and later, a communist dictatorship.” Choi argues that the American political system impressed early Korean immigrants in the U.S. to the extent of suggesting a liberal democratic republic as the ideal model for the new Korea. Chang-ho Ahn was no exception, given that various

organizations that Ahn engaged in advocated for democratic republicanism: the New People’s Association, the Korean National Association, and the Young Korean Academy, the last of which was, in Jacqueline Pak’s expression, “the patriotic organization closest to Ahn’s heart” and where Earn Hong presided as one of its eight founding members.303

Earn Hong’s rhetoric of equating an opposition to the war with an opposition to independence can be found in Chang-ho Ahn’s speeches. For instance, Ahn made a speech to the Korean Provisional Government in 1920, in Jacqueline Pak’s translation, “An independence war is not an imagination, for the war to be a reality.”304 Ahn also proclaimed the year 1920 as the “Year of the Independence War” and published an editorial in The Independent (Dongnip Sinmun) – a newspaper established as an organ of the Provisional Government in 1919 – that includes the following statement: “Those who oppose the war also oppose independence.”305 Such similarity may simply confirm Chang-ho Ahn’s indisputable influence on Korean communities in the U.S. Although I do not intend to dismiss this interpretation, I rather highlight that Compatriots, even if only read, would have promoted the vision supported by Ahn and his followers in the U.S., certainly including Earn Hong himself, much more effectively and affectively than Ahn’s speeches. The play Compatriots first provides, even if only in the reader’s imagination, an experience in which Koreans’ dreamed ideal comes true as a living history. The filmed scenes furthermore demonstrate Western modernity as the main vehicle to the realization of independence. Lastly, the chain drama form affectively link fiction to reality.

303 According to Sam-woong Kim, the New People’s Association (1907) was the first Korean organization explicitly proclaiming its goal as establishing the republicanism after the liberation. When establishing the central branch of Korean National Association (1912), Chang-ho Ahn also proclaimed, “Although Daehan Jeguk (The Great Korean Empire) has already perished, a democratic nation is about to rise.” See Sam-woong Kim, 63 & 90. Jacqueline Pak, “Review: Tosan Ahn Ch’ang-ho (Book),” Korean Studies 25.1 (2001): 147-151, at 149.
305 The Independent, January 17, 1920, quoted from Sam-woong Kim, 115.
Conclusion

This chapter examined the overlooked play *Compatriots* written by Earn Hong. I argue that Hong was exposed to American theatrical and cinematic popular cultural productions that enjoyed highly commercial and critical acclaim and played enormous societal effects well beyond the walls of theatre in the mid 1910s’ San Francisco. In drawing his observations and experiences in the U.S. in the composition of *Compatriots* as a chain drama, Hong attempted to demonstrate his belief in the efficacy of theatre as well as other artistic and literary projects in nation building. Whatever the extant of influence of the American productions I have discussed on Hong’s vision, it appears that Hong attempted to produce an alternative chain drama production, which includes filmed scenes using highly advanced film technologies and aesthetics, and in so doing, invite the audience to accept fiction as reality. The first part of the play, envisioned as enacted on stage, demonstrates that Koreans’ ethnic identity was reformed enough to lead the nation to the path once taken by Western civilization, namely independence. His explanation as to his choice for using motion picture affectively promotes the audience’s belief in Koreans’ degree of adaption to Western technologies and modern aesthetics that the motion picture represented. By then ending the play with a staged performance, Hong also declares that the future of Korea envisioned in the motion picture would be directly linked to the here-and-now time-space, that is, reality. In so doing, the chain drama form play *Compatriots* constructed Korea as an independent modern nation somewhere in-between theatre and reality, fiction and truth.
CHAPTER 4

A Traveling Fusion of Protestantism and Nationalism:
Church Music Dramas Published in The New Korea and Produced in California (1929-1936)

Music drama dominated the theatre scene in Korea from the 1930s to the 1950s. It was often called ga-geuk, but also ak-geuk, or chang-geuk – all of which were interchangeably used to refer to various theatrical forms in which music played a leading role in guiding their dramatic development.306 Most Korean theatre historians posit that music drama, as a modern form in Korea, originated in part from makgan (literally meaning “curtain to curtain”), a short comic interlude performed on stage while the sets of the main drama were being changed for the next scene. At the same time though, they argue that its emergence as a distinct theatrical form occurred only after the advent of professional music drama troupes – mainly two troupes separately founded in 1929 by Sam-chun Gwon (1910?-?) and Gu-ja Bae (1905?-2003). Given that these two pioneers learned music drama in Japan prior to the formation of their own troupes in Korea, Korean theatre historians have concerned themselves mainly with the Japanese influence on the music drama development in Korea.307 In so doing, however, they have

306 Ga-geuk was an all-inclusive term used for several different theatrical forms featuring music, including opera, operetta, musical, variety show, or a modernized version of East Asian traditional performance. For instance, Nan-pa Hong (1898-1941) – one of the most respected composers of the colonial period – explained in 1923 that the term ga-geuk appeared originally as a translation for the Western art form opera. His explanation, however, goes on to state that the term in a broad sense also referred to Japanese Noh, Chinese Jinde (Beijing Opera), and Korean Pansori. It is important to note that ga-geuk was not the only term in circulation to denote music drama. Others, like ak-geuk and chang-geuk, supposedly referred, respectively, to performances with popular music and performances with Korean traditional music, but in actual use, they were interchangeable with ga-geuk and with each other. In this chapter, I specify how each individual production was denoted, but use the English translation – music drama – in general; Korean terms did not necessarily indicate a difference in aesthetic styles. For an elaboration on the historical use of Korean terms, see Ho-yeon Kim, Hanguk Geundae Ak-geuk Yeongu [Studies on Korean Modern Music Drama] (Seoul: Minsokwon, 2009), 25-29.
307 Eui-gyeong Kim and In-gyeong Yoo, eds., Bak No-hong-ui Daejung Yeonyesa I [No-hong Bak’s Popular Entertainment History I] (Seoul: Yeongeuk-gwa Ingan, 2008); Mun-pyeong Hwang, Hanguk Daejung Yeonyesa
dismissed from consideration a rich body of music drama publications and productions that preceded the advent of professional music drama troupes, namely musical plays performed in churches. Usually produced by Sunday schools operated by American missionaries and Korean Christian intellectuals, church plays featured a form of music drama that flourished from the late 1910s to the early 1930s. As I noted in the Introduction, Protestantism had been imported to the peninsula – in many Koreans’ conception – as an embodiment of Western civilization and played a critical role in the formation of modern culture in colonial Korea; music drama was no exception. Not only did churches serve as venues for performances, but they also produced performances serving not exclusively religious but broadly socio-political purposes. Moreover, Protestant churches provided a transnational production circuit across peninsular and diasporic Korean communities, as I demonstrate in this chapter by examining productions of church music drama plays originally published and staged on the peninsula but which were later republished and produced in Korean communities in the U.S. Thereby, I contend that a reexamination of these music drama plays – despite their having been dismissed due to supposed amateurism and religious overtones – offers a new perspective on the development of Korean music drama and the formation of Korean ethnic identity across Korean peninsular and diaspora communities during the colonial period.

This chapter examines three music drama plays published in *The New Korea: A Transient Life* (*Choro Insaeng*, 1929), *Hurray for Our Nation* (*Woori Nara Mansei*, 1929), and *Thirteen Houses* (*Yeolse Jib*, 1935). I also draw attention to their productions, including one production staged as part of the Young Korean Academy’s ceremony in 1936, in addition to those performed by a children’s music drama troupe founded by Seok-won Han (1894-?). Almost
immediately after his arrival in the U.S. in 1928, Han was appointed reverend in a Korean Methodist church in Reedley, California, where he formed a children’s music drama troupe and toured larger Korean communities in California, such as those in Oakland and San Francisco until 1931.\textsuperscript{308} \textit{The New Korea} credited Han with all of the aforementioned published plays, identifying him as the playwright of \textit{Hurray for Our Nation} and as the adapter of \textit{A Transient Life} and \textit{Thirteen Houses}, both of which were originally written – also as music drama – by the Christian schoolteacher Hyeon-sun Kim (1896?-?) on the peninsula. As I further elaborate in this chapter, an examination of the script and a review of the publication history of \textit{Hurray for Our Nation} reveal that it is also Han’s adaptation of Kim’s earlier play \textit{Thirteen Houses}.\textsuperscript{309} By producing adaptations and productions of Kim’s plays in California, Han, I argue, acted as a mediator between Korean communities on the peninsula and in the U.S., and rendered music drama a transnational phenomenon in the early twentieth century.

I begin this chapter by providing a review of the theatre historiography of Korean music drama mostly concerned with Japanese influence on its development. I then posit that colonial Korean artists and audiences would have hardly perceived music drama – even if developed under strong Japanese influence – as exclusively derived from Japan. It would have been the case partially due to Japanese music drama artists’ claims and endeavors to attribute their creation to a Western art form. More critically, Koreans, since the late 1910s, had experienced music drama performances at Protestant churches, which they perceived as unquestionably Western and therefore modern, and considered as not only religious but also nationalistic domains. My examination of music drama productions staged in California reveals that the moderation of

church music drama’s religious derivation for secular ends was readily established. First, the children’s music drama troupe founded by Seok-won Han was promoted not in relation to its religious inception, but rather, to its modern orientation as compared to American glee clubs. A comparative reading of the U.S. versions of music drama scripts with those published on the peninsula also reveals that the U.S. versions project a clearer nationalistic and less religious stance than the peninsular ones, notably through subtle modifications. The 1936 production of Thirteen Houses is of particular importance as it was produced as part of an event of the Young Korean Academy founded by Chang-ho Ahn, and directed by Chang-ho Ahn’s son Philip Ahn (1905-1978), who, as the first American-born Korean Hollywood actor, occupies a significant position in the history of Korean American performing arts. As a production of significance in many respects, Thirteen Houses decisively demonstrates the central position of music drama in nationalist activities. Ultimately, the reevaluation of church music drama clarifies the historical significance church plays have had in the formation and circulation of Korean modern culture as experienced by Korean minjok, i.e., as a Korean concept of the nation defining Koreans solely based upon the figuratively imaged ethnic homogeneity without attending to many other factors, including place of residence.

**Korean Historiography about Music Drama**

Music drama has been largely overlooked in Korean theatre historiography. Ho-yeon Kim attributes the scarcity of music drama studies to (1) the tendentious attitude toward hybrid commercial entertainments among Korean theatre historians, as noted in the Introduction, in addition to (2) the lack of preserved music drama scripts and scores. In fact, those who engaged in music drama productions during the colonial period laid the foundation for writing

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310 Ho-yeon Kim, 15.
about music drama by heavily drawing from their memories under the dearth of preserved historical documents. No-hong Bak (1919-1982) and Mun-pyeong Hwang (1920-2004) are recognized as pioneers in that way.

No-hong Bak, who was one of the most prolific lyricists as well as a director-cum-producer of music drama productions from the 1930s to the 1950s, published his essays about colonial Korean music drama serially in the journal Korean Theatre (Hanguk Yeongeuk) in 1978; these articles were later compiled into a book in 2008. In this first monograph-length study of music drama, Bak relates that music drama was initiated by two professional music drama troupes formed in 1929: (Gwon) Sam-chun Ga-geuk-dan and Bae Gu-ja Ak-geuk-dan. While acknowledging an earlier performance staged under the aegis of music drama in 1928 – Paradise Bird (Geukrakjo) produced by Chuiseongjwa – Bak dismisses this work as too musically and dramatically disconnected to qualify as a music drama production. He further justifies his historiographical choice of starting the narrative with 1929 by noting that Chuiseongjwa’s core members (So-rang Kim and his wife, Ho-jeong Ma – who was Sam-chun Gwon’s relative) disbanded their troupe and joined Sam-chun Gwon’s troupe in 1929.311

Mun-pyeong Hwang, a cultural critic and popular music composer who worked most actively after the nation’s liberation in 1945, published a monograph on music drama in 1989, and thereby provided an almost identical narrative to Bak’s. Since Hwang joined the Korean music industry after graduating from Osaka College of Music in 1942, his account on the 1920s and 1930s in Korea likely relied on someone else’s recollections, including one presented in Bak’s earlier publication.312 As is perhaps appropriate to the status of these two works as memoirs rather than scholarly histories, both authors exclude from their accounts the music

311 Eui-gyeong Kim and In-gyeong Yoo, ed.
312 Mun-pyeong Hwang.
dramas practiced earlier than their own exposure to the genre and outside of the commercial realm. Given the dearth of other accounts, the memoir form has heavily influenced subsequent research on music drama, thus extending absences in those two pioneering accounts into present historiography on the subject.

Although only a few theatre-history monographs have substantially discussed music drama, Min-young Yoo’s *History of Korean Modern Theatre* devotes a full chapter to it, one entitled “Derivation and Fixation of Ak-geuk and Ga-geuk.” Providing narrative similar to Bak and Hwang’s, Yoo argues as well for the primacy of Japanese musical forms in shaping Korean music drama. “One should take into consideration,” he writes, “that a similar form [of music drama] was being practiced in Japan that was the major source for our modern culture.”

According to Yoo, Japanese influence was inevitable since the two foremost pioneers of music drama, Sam-chun Gwon and Gu-ja Bae, learned about music drama in Japan. Although it is not clear by which Japanese troupe Gwon was trained, it is known that Bae learned under Tenkatsu, a revue troupe founded in 1911. Rumored to be the daughter of the Japanese Resident-General of Korea, Hirobumi Itō (1841–1909), Bae was recruited by Tenkatsu when the troupe toured Korea in 1916. She later left the troupe and formed a dance studio, which she converted into Bae Gu-ja Ak-geuk-dan in 1929. Yoo states that Bae founded with this troupe “the first music

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313 Min-young Yoo (1996), 419.

314 Although many scholars believe that Sam-chun Gwon participated in a Japanese female music drama troupe, most of them do not specify which troupe. However, Mun-pyeong Hwang suggests that Gwon trained in Takarazuka by pointing out that she was “a member of a girls’ music drama troupe, which was founded in 1914 and had been producing performances till now.” Takarazuka staged its inaugural performance in 1914, although it was, precisely speaking, founded in 1913. See: Mun-pyeong Hwang, 253. In contrast, Hyun-mi Baek argues that Sam-chun Gwon and Ik-nam Gwon are the same person—who participated in the Japanese troupe Suzuranjwa. Hyun-mi Baek, “Girl Musical Plays in Early Modern Period of Korea,” *Hanguk Geukyesul Yeongu* 35 (2012): 81-124, at 94.

315 Gu-ja Bae left Korea after the death of her first husband, Sun-eon Hong, in 1937 and lived in Japan with her second husband, the Japanese American Francis Ryozo Yamamoto, with whom she later moved to California. In 2002, she sat for an interview with *The Santa Barbara Independent* under the name Nobu Yamamoto, which she had adopted during her residence in the U.S. and used until her death in 2003. In the interview, Bae insisted that she is a secret child of Japanese Emperor Meiji (Japanese emperor from 1867 to 1912) and Korean Empress Myeongseong (the first official wife of King Gojong). However, no scholars have accepted this as true. See: Walter Wolf, “Nobu
drama troupe similar to [a Japanese music drama troupe] Takarazuka on the Korean peninsula.\textsuperscript{316} The historiography beginning its narrative from these two professional troupes, in the end, cannot help but stress the influence of Japanese music drama, represented by Takarazuka, on the development of music drama in Korea.

Targeted by Yoo as the analog to Korean music drama, Takarazuka originated in 1913 at a hot-springs resort, in the selfsame city, near Osaka. Its founder, Hankyu railway magnate and department store owner, Ichizo Kobayashi (1873-1957), sought to furnish “wholesome family entertainment” to stimulate business for the resort, which he had newly opened. Towards this end, Kobayashi recruited twenty young females, trained them to sing and dance, and called them the Takarazuka Choir. He later changed the name to the Takarazuka Girls’ Opera Training Association, and finally, in 1940, to the Takarazuka Revue, by which it has since been known in English-language scholarship. Nonetheless, its Japanese title is Takarazuka kagekidan, which means Takarazuka ga-geuk troupe in Korean.\textsuperscript{317} According to Jennifer Robertson, the troupe offered “an eclectic mix” of “grand revues, operetta revues, variety shows, and grand operettas,” that is, various different theatrical forms featuring music.\textsuperscript{318} Put differently, their repertoires

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\textsuperscript{316} Min-young Yoo (2006), 170.

\textsuperscript{317} Jennifer Robertson, Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 4-5.

\textsuperscript{318} Jennifer Robertson, 6. Zeke Berlin proposes that Takarazuka’s repertoires be categorized by performance genres as follows: ‘revues (feature lavish costumes and sets; rarely text-based; derived from the French tradition); shows (generally American in source and the most ‘realistic’ and ‘contemporary’ in thematic material and characterizations); grand romance (a very romantic love story, usually from Western sources); \textit{ōchô roman} (a Japanese historical romance); and \textit{bunyôshi} (a Japanese dance performance).” See Zeke Berlin, “Takarazuka: A History and Descriptive Analysis of the All-Female Japanese Performance Company” (PhD diss., New York University, 1988), 2-3.
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covered such an assortment of performance types that not all could be fully embraced by the revue label, as in the case of Korean music drama performances.

Takarazuka, along with other Japanese music drama companies, indeed influenced the development of music drama in Korea. First of all, Takarazuka and Korean performers visited and interacted with each other. For instance, Ok-cho Bak (1920?-1985), who performed in both Sam-chun Gwon’s troupe and Gu-ja Bae’s troupe, brought Korean girls to Japan to study music drama by observing and experiencing Takarazuka, and then founded with them Nang-nang-jwa in the mid 1930s. Takarazuka visited Seoul on two separate occasions, in April 1940 and October 1942, to stage four productions in total, which, according to Min-young Yoo, inspired and stimulated music drama practitioners in Korea. Yoo goes as far as to credit the Takarazuka’s tours for launching music drama to its popular peak in Korea during the 1940s. The boom of music drama in 1940s’ Korea is explained with a different but still Japanese production by Mun-pyeong Hwang. Hwang gives particular attention to the Japanese production, Music Drama, The Story of Chunhyang (Ga-geuk Chunhyang-jeon) staged by an unidentified Japanese troupe in Seoul in 1940. Performed in Japanese, this production seems to have featured unprecedentedly high aesthetic achievements not only in its music scores and scene changing techniques but also in its script, which was ironically based on the famous Korean folk tale of The Story of Chunhyang. Hwang posits that this fact motivated Korean music drama artists not only to improve aesthetics but also to rethink the subject matter, and ultimately to embrace Korean traditional tales and songs in their own music drama productions.

While Mun-pyeong Hwang highlighted the Japanese influence on the boom of Korean

319 There is dispute between scholars about the date of the founding of Nang-nang-jwa. Mun-pyeong Hwang dates the troupe to 1933, while No-hong Bak indicates 1936.
320 Min-young Yoo (1996), 423-5.
321 Mun-pyeong Hwang, 262.
music drama productions based on Korean traditional tales and songs during the 1940s, those who led the Korean musical movement in post-colonial Korea labeled those 1940s’ Korean music dramas as “local music drama” (hyangto ga-geuk) and insisted on their cultural originality. For instance, Yong-gu Bak – director of Yegreen Company founded in 1961 – contended that the 1940s’ Korean music drama productions were not blind imitations of Japanese music drama, but rather a “native Korean” music drama that sought to “awaken national consciousness.”

Bak’s claim likely aimed not only to vindicate the Korean music drama of the colonial period, in which he was also involved, but also to authenticate Yegreen’s productions by claiming this company’s model as being the “native Korean” music drama, unlike many other post-colonial musical productions modeled after American musicals. Bak and other post-colonial Korean artists’ efforts to assert, identify, and create a distinguishably Korean musical form can be claimed as being fruitful. Korean musicals indeed rapidly developed after Yegreen’s 1966 production of Sweet, Come to Me Stealthily (Saljagi Opseoye), which was produced based on the Korean folk tale of The Story of Bae Bijang and thus has become well accepted as the first “Koreanish” musical, in Sung-hee Kim’s term.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that both Hwang’s and Bak’s discussions about the 1940s’ Korean music drama productions both address the history of colonial Korea as a binary struggle between Korea and Japan. In other words, Korean music drama historiography, either insisting on or dismissing Japanese influence, has only reproduced the predominant nationalist dialectic view framing the history of colonial Korea as an exclusive cultural exchange between a colony and its metropole.

An under-discussed issue is how Korean artists and audiences perceived Korean music

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322 Recited from Sung-hee Kim’s interview with Yong-gu Bak, which is quoted in Sung-hee Kim, “A Study on the Musical Movement at its Earlier Stage in Korea,” Hanguk Geukyesul Yeongu 14 (2001): 51-95, at 63. The Yegreen Company was founded by Jong-pil Kim, who led the 5.16 military coup d'état in 1961, to develop a music drama competitive against North Korean propagandistic, large-sized singing and dancing troupes.

323 Sung-hee Kim (2001), 94.
drama during the colonial period. First, it should be noted that Japanese music drama artists did not promote their productions as intrinsically Japanese. Takarazuka openly hoped to reproduce the Western art form of opera. Toward this end, its founder Ichizo Kobayashi recruited people with expertise in Western culture, such as Shiko Tsubouchi, who had studied at Harvard University and lived in Europe before entering the company, and also dispatched staff to the U.S. and Europe in search of techniques or styles to modernize and Westernize Takarazuka’s performances. For instance, writer-directors Tatsuya Kishida and Tetsuzo Shirai were sent to the U.S. and France in 1925 and in 1928 respectively. Lastly, Takarazuka gave tours all around the world, beginning in 1938 in Germany and Italy. A year later, Takarazuka also sailed for the U.S., performing in Hawai‘i, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, and Seattle. Given these factors, as Zeke Berlin argues, it should not be surprising that “much of the company’s material, principally its music, was of European and American origin.” Thus, Korean music drama artists under the influence of Takarazuka, or other Japanese music drama companies, would have been well aware of their ultimate model being the Western music drama.

The Japanese music drama troupes furthermore did not exclude their non-Japanese members from their endeavors to expose their artistic scouts to Western art forms. For instance, Gu-ja Bae as a member of Tenkatsu toured Korea, China, Russia, and the U.S. In so doing, she experienced a diversity of Western art forms. In recollecting a tour visit to the U.S. in 1915, she wrote:

We went to Chicago by train. [...] We stayed in Chicago for months. As all of us are interested in stage performance, we went to see theatre, ballet, and vaudeville every night. We also got ballet lessons from Michiro Ito, a famous ballet dancer having a studio there. [...] We also spent almost a year in New York. We had lots of lessons of ballet,

324 Zeke Berlin, 93-106.
325 Zeke Berlin, 96.
opera, tap dance, piano, saxophone, flute, and etc. At night, we watched ballet, opera, theatre, and vaudeville.\textsuperscript{326}

Moreover, it is also known that Bae met the Russian Prima ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) during the trip.\textsuperscript{327} Given that it is unknown how long Bae trained under Pavlova and that Bae’s memoir indicates that most of her training, even in the U.S., was under Japanese tutelage, it is most likely that Bae’s experience with Western art forms was still mediated through Japanese artists. Above all, all of the performances and Western artists that Bae experienced during the tour were more than likely selectively chosen by the Japanese. Nevertheless, the Japanese troupe sought to reproduce the Western art form and provided her opportunities to experience the Western art world. Thus, her experience as a member of Tenkatsu would have blurred the distinction between what is Japanese and what is Western in her understanding of the national identity of music drama form. As Bae’s case illustrates, the music drama form, even when filtered through the Japanese, most likely appeared as a distinctively modern art form with which individuals around the world engaged.

The real issue for Korean artists, I argue, would have been not to completely avoid the music drama form, but rather, to wipe away, if detected, any distinctively Japanese imprints on the imported form. In this regard, it should be noted that music drama in Korea, unlike Takarazuka, was not designed as exclusively female. It is true that several Korean music drama troupes – such as Bae Gu-ja Ak-geuk-dan, Nang-nang-jwa, and Dowongyeong Ak-geuk-dan – had female-only membership, but Bae’s troupe stayed mostly in Japan and the others were short-lived.\textsuperscript{328} In contrast, Sam-chun Gwon recruited twenty male and female actors along with twenty

\textsuperscript{326} The Daily News, October 22, 1915, recited from Min-young Yoo (2006), 165.
\textsuperscript{327} Min-young Yoo (2006), 169.
\textsuperscript{328} Nang-nang-jwa disbanded after its inaugural performance in 1936, although its members continued to act individually in other companies. According to Hyun-mi Baek, Dowongyeong Ak-geuk-dan did not last long, either. Hyun-mi Baek (2012), 103-109.
performers, to Gukak performance engaged actresses (2010): 330
American featuring colonial was Takarazuka’s female of Korea singers. whom they had tied to exclusive contracts; all of those companies recruited male and female singers. In this regard, Sung-hee Kim argues that the aesthetic that music drama in colonial Korea adopted from Takarazuka was not primarily its gender composition, but rather its staging of Western dance and music; it was the Female National Drama (Yeoseong Guk-geuk), an all-female music drama genre that appeared in the late 1940s, that in Korea first appropriated Takarazuka’s male-impersonator-centered star system. In short, even if the influence trajectory was mediated by Japan, it was Western arts that permeated music drama in Korea during the colonial period.

To many Korean audiences, the music drama form hardly appeared to belong to Japan. They were exposed, in a clearly West-derived context of church, to theatre performances featuring music, which were also labeled as music drama, ga-geuk. As noted in the Introduction, American missionaries had brought Protestantism to the Korean peninsula beginning in the late

330 Sung-hee Kim, “The Character as Genre and History as Image of Female Guggeuk,” Hanguk Yeongeukhak 40 (2010): 61-96, at 65. Although Korea also had a tradition of all-female performance, its performers were not actresses in the modern sense; they were mudang (shamans) or gisaeng (female entertainers—many of whom also engaged in prostitution). It was only after the liberation from Japan that the unique aesthetic of all-female performance prevailed in Korea on a full scale. Since the founding of Female National Music Club (Yeoseong Gukak Donghohoe) in 1948, more than a dozen of all-female troupes appeared and enjoyed such high popularity as to threaten other performing arts during the 1950s. All of these troupes bore several general commonalities: female performers, impersonations of male characters, and spectacular stages—comparable with Takarazuka. See also Hyun-mi Baek, “Sexual Politics of Yosong Kukkuk during 1950s in Korea,” Hanguk Geukyesul Yeongu 12 (2000): 153-182.
nineteenth century, and succeeded in quickly converting large numbers of the Korean populations by engaging in a wide variety of humanitarian and educational activities. American missionaries and Korean Christian intellectuals subsequently used American-run churches, which enjoyed relatively greater protection from Japanese intervention than Korean domains, for cultural and quasi-political purposes. To that end, they operated Sunday schools. The Sunday schools appeared in Korea almost immediately after the foundation of churches, and certainly no later than 1888, when Ewha Hakdang (the first female education institute established by Mary F. Scranton of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the U.S.) initiated the Sunday school movement. During the 1920s, according to Youngjeong Park, there were about 2,000 Sunday schools attended by nearly 130,000 students. Those Sunday schools frequently produced plays, and the Protestant missionaries adopted music drama as a way of educating and proselytizing Korean populaces, particularly children. Notably, the first use of the term music drama – *ga-geuk* – was also made when a children’s Sunday school affiliated to Seung-dong Church (founded by American missionary Samuel Moore) produced a music drama piece entitled *Tears with Sympathy (Dongjeong-ui Nunnul)* in 1918. Since this 1918 production, according to Youngjeong Park, at least forty church music drama productions were staged across the Korean peninsula until the early 1930s.

A review of the forty church music drama productions listed by Park indicates that they were not always amateur productions performed at churches or by students from Sunday schools. For instance, the Joseon Female School (Joseon Yeoja Hakwon) in Seoul performed a music

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332 Ho-yeon Kim, 32.

333 Youngjeong Park provides a list of music drama productions conceived as church plays, but he cautiously explains that the provided list significantly undercounts the total number of productions since many would not have been reported or documented. See Youngjeong Park (2010): 68-72.
drama piece, *Our Pride (Wuri-ui Jarang)*, with other plays of satire and tragedy at the theatre Umigwan in 1928 after four months of rehearsal. This event was advertised in all of Korean vernacular newspapers that had reemerged after the March First Movement of 1919 – namely, *Chosun Ilbo, Dong-A Ilbo, Maeil Sinbo*, and *Jungwe Ilbo*. This performance also achieved tremendous success, and subsequently had a revival a month later at the theatre Danseongsa, with the inclusion of *A Transient Life* with the earlier program.\(^{334}\) Although I will further discuss this play later in this chapter since it was one of the music drama scripts republished and reproduced in California, I would mention here that *A Transient Life* was also produced by a professional music drama troupe on the peninsula. *A Transient Life* was staged in 1928 by Chuiseongjwa, the professional theatre troupe that was later absorbed into Sam-chun Gwon’s troupe. This occurred after five days of performance of *Paradise Bird*, which is the theatre performance that No-hong Bak mentioned as a prototype of music drama.\(^{335}\) The production history of *A Transient Life* ultimately indicates not only the popularity of music drama in a non-religious context but also the blurred contextual boundary between the religious and secular for the performance of music drama overall.

During the 1920s, Korean society’s embrace of church music drama was further broadening beyond church walls, mainly through the “music drama convention (ga-geuk daehoe)” that occurred throughout the country, serving a variety of functions, such as a marketplace of new ideas and a fundraiser for night schools construction, and famine or flood relief.\(^{336}\) That is, religious dramas began to fulfill a wide range of societal purposes. For instance, one music drama convention held on January 19-20, 1922 at the Owen Memorial Hall in Gwangju consisted of hymn singing, praying, and a staging of *A Transient Life* and *Thirteen*

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\(^{335}\) Seung-youn Choi, 404.

\(^{336}\) Ho-yeon Kim, 55-56.
Houses. Despite the explicit Protestant nature formed not only by the program, but also by the venue specifically built to memorialize the American missionary Clement C. Owen, the event could not be considered simply religious. Rather, it was designed as a fundraiser for the establishment of a preschool, and was sponsored not only by Christian organizations but also by a newspaper company as well as a workers’ mutual aid association.\textsuperscript{337} This music drama convention was thus set in the religious context, but simultaneously served non-religious roles.

Church music drama, as Eun-ju Kim argues, was developing into “a nationalistic drama inspiring nationalistic consciousness.”\textsuperscript{338} The majority of music drama performances staged mostly by children at churches would have been rudimentary in their artistic achievements, but their significance should not be totally dismissed for their supposed amateurism. The timing of the church music drama’s boom starting from the late 1910s indicates that church music dramas developed by taking advantage of the changing Japanese mode of governance of Korea after the March First Movement of 1919 to allow some limited spaces for cultural activities on the part of Koreans. After 1919, an increasing number of societal gatherings occurred among Koreans, many of which included theatrical performances; and the development of church music drama was part of such broad social change. In other words, church music drama was one of the newly allowed cultural activities, which accordingly served as a reason, and occasionally as an excuse, for Koreans’ societal gatherings, in which Koreans built up their communal consciousness. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the church music drama developed to combine Christian religious elements with nationalistic secular elements. This combination would have appeared as fully legitimate to Protestant nationalists. Even non-Protestant nationalist leaders would have readily embraced the church setting since they needed to disguise their gathering with a

\textsuperscript{337} Dong-A Ilbo, January 28, 1922, quoted in Youngjeong Park (2008), 83.
\textsuperscript{338} Eun-ju Kim, Gidokgyo Yeongeuk Gaeron [Introduction to Protestant Church Theatre] (Seoul: Seonggong Munhwasa, 1991), 355.
seemingly apolitical cover to bypass Japanese censorship. Above all, the church plays featuring
distinctively Western cultural elements of Protestantism would have been definitely considered
worthy under the colonial Korean epistemology valuing national activities partially based upon
their degree of advance toward Western modernity.

Despite the different reasons behind each production of church music drama serving
nationalistic causes as well, it is apparent that many music drama performances embraced both
Protestantism and nationalism in their performances. Koreans’ exposure to such semi-religious
and semi-nationalistic church music drama productions would have also informed their reception
of music drama produced by professional troupes. In Koreans’ conception, the music drama form
thus likely appeared as having no specific national identity but rather representing universal
modernity. In the next section, I examine the music drama productions staged by the children’s
music drama troupe founded by Seok-won Han in California. I first review the way in which The
New Korea described the troupe and then analyze plays that they performed in comparison to the
original versions published on the peninsula. In so doing, I contend that The New Korea situated
Seok-won Han’s troupe, and Han adapted the peninsular plays, in a direction that further
complicated the music drama form’s identity by blurring its Japanese and religious derivation.
The music drama productions in Korean communities in the U.S. solidified the music drama
form as an effective means for nationalist activities by emphasizing nationalistic themes that the
peninsular church music drama practices featured with varying degree of explicitness.

Children’s Music Drama Troupe Founded by Seok-won Han and its Repertories

Seok-won Han (1894-?), who founded the children’s music drama troupe, was born in
North Pyeongan Province in 1894. He went to Japan in 1912 to study theology at West Japan
College (Kwansei Gakuin, later renamed Kwansei Gakuin University), and returned to Korea in 1917. He later worked as a manager in the Seoul branch of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and in that position, educated youth and teachers through drafting educational plans and programs, as well as producing educational materials ranging from textbooks to children’s stories and songs. In his tenure at the YMCA, he also compiled eighteen music drama scripts with their scores and, in 1923 and 1924, published them in a two-volume anthology entitled *A Score-Accompanied Anthology of Music Dramas for Boys and Girls*. This anthology notably includes *A Transient Life* and *Thirteen Houses*, which he adapted and produced in California after moving to the U.S. in July 1928. According to Chun-byeong Yoon, Han traveled to the U.S. to seek further education in theology, and studied at Southwest University and Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas from 1931 to 1935; he returned to Korea in 1936.

A newspaper editorial published in *The New Korea* in 1929 fills in the gap between Han’s arrival in the U.S. in 1928 and the enrollment in the American university in 1931. In its March 21 edition, the newspaper discussed children’s performance with a particular focus on a troupe founded by Han:

> After being assigned to a church in Reedley, California, Reverend [Seok-won Han] realized desperate needs to try harder to improve and develop the church. He particularly recognized the needs to educate children. Thus, he formed a music drama troupe with children and instructed them eagerly. Just in a half year, the troupe has become fairly

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339 The YMCA was introduced in Korea in 1901, when a student YMCA was established at Baejae Boy’s High School, which founded in 1886 by a Methodist missionary, Henry G. Appenzeller, as the first Western-style educational institute in Korea. In 1903, the Seoul Branch of the YMCA was founded, and in 1923, the Korean YMCA entered into the World Alliance of YMCAs. It has grown into the biggest private organization in Korea, with about 40 regional branches and 700 clubs. See: Gyu-sik Jang, *Ilje-ha Hanguk Gidokgyo Minjokjuui Yeongu [A Study of the Christian Nationalism in Korea under Japanese Rule]* (Seoul: Hyean, 2001), 66.


Reading this newspaper article in the context of Han’s biography, it becomes clear that Han organized the troupe almost immediately after his arrival in the U.S – no later than sometime in the fall of 1928.

The editorial implies that Han’s idea to develop music drama as part of religious ceremonies was welcomed in Korean communities in the U.S. Yet it continues to clarify that Han’s troupe served not only religious but also nationalistic purposes.

This children’s music drama troupe produces not typical plays aiming for temporal pleasure but music dramas nurturing our patriotism. Thus, it would be great if everyone who is Korean can get a chance to watch them. What would be the reason to go to Westerners’ theatre venues, if our young friends standing on stage can refresh our minds? How cute and adorable they would be! Furthermore, if [the performances] can solidify our patriotic sentiments once again, then our wills to revive would be reborn here and the foundation of our independence would be established here.343

Korean community leaders, as I discussed in Chapter 1, regarded theatrical performances in general as beneficial to Korean communities in the U.S. due to its efficacy in activating the audience’s emotion. This newspaper editorial shows that even more was expected of music drama in this regard than of other spoken drama performances: music drama’s higher level of intensity, amplified by the integrated music, was perceived as instrumental in leading its audience past the helplessness engendered under the colonial rule. Moreover, it tells that casting such “cute and adorable” young performers was considered an affective asset to an audience comprised not only of children but also adults. After all, children’s church music drama performances in California were expected to affectively play the intertwined religious and nationalistic role, as church music drama did on the peninsula.

Despite the close similarity between the children’s music drama troupe that Han

343 The New Korea, March 21, 1929.
established in California and the prevalent peninsular practice of students from Sunday schools performing music drama, this newspaper editorial defines Han’s troupe in its relevance to American glee clubs. The newspaper states:

As we know well, many American universities and colleges formed music drama troupes called “glee clubs” and have been giving touring performances. Their elegant performances of music and music drama were warmly welcomed. In so doing, performers have been sharing mutual love with audiences. In this regard, our children’s music drama troupe can be compared to a glee club.

American college glee clubs were, indeed, flourishing on campuses nationwide around the time Han formed the children’s music drama troupe.

According to J. Lloyd Winstead, the glee-club phenomenon developed based on a long Christian tradition of psalm singing. While acknowledging its partially religious origin, Jeremy D. Jones provides a further detailed genealogy of the glee club’s development in the U.S. He states that the term glee was derived from an old English word meaning mirth and entertainment, and used to refer to an accompanied song for three or more male voices in eighteenth-century England, which developed later into a combination between text and music to illustrate “the poetic imagery.” This British tradition, along with a similar tradition in nineteenth-century Germany, migrated to the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century with European immigrants, who established glee clubs around the country, including college campuses.

However, Jones highlights that the advancement of American glee clubs was made no earlier than the 1910s, as World War I played a critical role in the popularization of glee clubs in the

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344 The New Korea, March 21, 1929.
U.S., while motivating clubs to incorporate patriotic tunes into their repertoires.\textsuperscript{347} The tradition underlying American glee clubs of the 1920s was thus a kind of music drama that intertwined religious and patriotic characteristics, as expected of Han’s troupe in California.

Given their similarities, it is possible that American glee clubs served as an inspiration for Han to form a children’s music drama troupe in California. Even in that instance, however, it would have been just an additional stimulus, since before moving to the U.S., Han had been already well aware of the peninsular practice of students from Sunday schools performing music drama. In the preface to the two-volume anthology of music drama scripts that he edited, Han clarified his familiarity not only with the music drama scripts but also with their actual productions by stating that “all [plays included in this anthology] received a great welcome and favorable reviews when they were presented in regional Sunday schools and regular schools.”\textsuperscript{348}

The two plays that Han adapted and produced in California – \textit{A Transient Life} and \textit{Thirteen Houses} – in fact were the music drama repertories that were most frequently produced on the peninsula: \textit{A Transient Life} was eventually produced twelve times and \textit{Thirteen Houses} thirty times, if one includes productions staged under different titles such as \textit{Eight Houses (Yeodeol Jib)}, \textit{Thirteen Provinces’ Representatives (Sipsamdo Daepyo)} and \textit{Post of the United Mind (Dansimju)}.\textsuperscript{349} Thus, it is plausible to conclude that Han chose what to produce in the U.S. based on what was popular on the peninsula.

It is highly probable, given the above factors, that Han approached his project with the children’s music drama troupe in California as reproducing, or developing further, the peninsular practice. It is also likely that the newspaper editorial’s author – though one cannot identify who


\textsuperscript{348} Seok-won Han, ed., vol. 1 (1923), 1-2.

\textsuperscript{349} Youngjeong Park (2010), 80.
the author was – was aware of the peninsular practice, even if not specifically Han’s intention. I posit in this regard that the newspaper author’s making an analogy between glee clubs in the U.S. and Han’s troupe was certainly conscious and arguably purposive. The newspaper’s characterization downplayed the religious derivation of the music drama form, and instead highlighted its orientation to the modern as a cultural activity practiced in American educational institutes as well. The American glee clubs’ nationalistic performances promoted after World War I were also likely an advantage in adopting the glee clubs to identify the children’s music drama troupe expectedly serving nationalistic roles. The following analysis of the music drama scripts clearly illustrates that Han’s adaptation was made to effectively promote ethnic nationalism among Korean immigrants in the U.S.

*The New Korea* published the script of *A Transient Life* on March 28, 1929, with the preface that it was originally “written by Hyeon-sun Kim of Hanseong [Seoul] and revised by Han of Reedley, California.” Although not much is known about Hyeon-sun Kim (1896?-?), a newspaper report published after Kim’s retirement as an elementary school principal in 1961 provides a brief biography. He studied at the YMCA school in the early 1910s and started teaching around 1913 at the Central Christian Youth School attached to Seung-dong Church in Seoul – which, as previously mentioned, produced the first performance labeled as music drama in Korea, *Tears with Sympathy*, in 1918. After listing a number of primary schools that he had worked for during his 48-year teaching career, the newspaper highlights, as one of his major accomplishments, that he wrote approximately fifteen music drama scripts during the colonial period. *A Transient Life* was originally published first in a short-lived magazine, the *New

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People’s Public Opinion (Sinmin Gongron), in May 1921, and was republished in an anthology that Han edited in 1923. Although The New Korea introduced the published version as Han’s adaptation of Kim’s original, the anthology version and The New Korea version are almost identical. Thus, I provide a synopsis based on the common story the two versions present, and then clarify the modifications Han made.

The title of the play, Choro Insaeng – which I translate as A Transient Life – literally means that life is just like a drop of dew formed on grass. As the title implies, the play addresses the ephemerality of life, through personified characters of Snow, Moon, Flower, and Butterfly, along with an elderly man and an angel. The play begins with a round of songs in which Snow, Moon, Flower, and Butterfly boast of their beauties and mock the old man for his signs of aging. The angel then scolds the four non-human characters by pointing out that their lives, like that of the old man, are only transient. After the angel leaves, the non-human characters realize that they were being insolent and sing in chorus a song of praise for the perpetually beautiful love of Christ. In the next scene, Flower and Moon appear and attempt to deliver the youth the lesson that they just gained. Soon, however, they worry aloud that the modern young are so blind to the ephemerality of life that they are just turning the world to “a devil’s shambles.” The characters finally exit the stage while praying for God to “lead the Daehan [Korean] youths along the right path.” To sum up, A Transient Life is structured as a sequential delivery of a lesson from the angel to Snow, Moon, Flower, and Butterfly, and then to Korean Youth. The lesson is basically the religious doctrine of relying on God’s love, the only eternal aspect in an otherwise fully

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ephemeral world. With the last line, however, the play explicitly targets this message specifically to Korean youth, endowing a nationalistic layer to the religious theme.

Given that this play was written to be performed by children, the explicit designation of Korean youth as the target audience means that the play intends to talk to its performers as well as the audience. This factor is represented in a slight modification that Han made to Kim’s original play: place-name reference changes. Kim’s play includes some mentions of famous spots in Seoul, such as Wuyidong, Cheongryangri, and Moran-bong; in Han’s adaptation, these are changed to the Golden Gate Bridge, Yosemite National Park, and Long Beach. These changes effectively rendered the production to appeal directly to his troupe’s children performers and Korean audiences residing in California. Thereby, I would argue, Han implicitly represented the approach to Koreans based on ethnic commonality, minjok, which designates everyone figuratively being Dangun’s descendant and thus supposedly belonging to the homogenous bloodline as Korean regardless of their residence.

At the time of its productions in the U.S., A Transient Life would have effectively conveyed the intertwined religious and nationalistic message by calling for Koreans residing in the U.S. to live their lives as a Korean within the eternal love of God. Though this play was likely staged for several times in several places in the U.S. during the troupe’s tour around California, the only one production is confirmed with The New Korea. The newspaper reported that the children’s music drama troupe consisting of five boys and ten girls from a Methodist church in Reedley performed A Transient of Life along with Hurray for Our Nation in a Korean church in San Francisco on March 31, 1929.\textsuperscript{353} I thus continue my discussion by analyzing Hurray for Our Nation, published in The New Korea on March 21, 1929 with an identification that it was

\textsuperscript{353} The New Korea, March 28, 1929.
written by Seok-won Han for an Easter celebration to be held in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{354} However, this play also appears to be Han’s adaptation of Hyeon-sun Kim’s play since it features almost identical lyrics with Kim’s play \textit{Thirteen Houses}, which was first published in the magazine \textit{New People’s Public Opinion} in July 1921 and republished in Han’s anthology in 1923, as was \textit{A Transient Life}.\textsuperscript{355} I first provide a brief synopsis based on the common storyline of the two versions, and consider the way in which it was staged based on the stage direction given only in Kim’s version published as part of Han’s anthology.\textsuperscript{356} Then, I point to minor modifications that Han made to \textit{Hurray for Our Nation}.

\textit{Hurray for Our Nation}, like its predecessor entitled \textit{Thirteen Houses}, intertwines religious and nationalistic themes more closely and expresses the fusion more explicitly than \textit{A Transient Life}; its central message is to love the country, and Christianity is suggested as the path by which to best accomplish this. Consisting of three acts and fifteen scenes, the play features eleven characters: a national representative, eight representatives (one each from the eight provinces of Korea), an old man, and an angel. With speeches and choral songs, the characters offer praises for Koreans, defining them as “descendants of the Goryeo,” a dynasty that existed on the Korean peninsula from the tenth through fourteenth centuries. They also extol Korea as “the garden of a rose of Sharon,” which serves not only as a reference to the Bible using a phrase from the Song of Solomon but also as a nationalistic expression adopting Korea’s national flower.\textsuperscript{357} The national representative then announces that all characters make the peninsular map “the most beautiful thing in the world,” and also delivers a speech encouraging Korean

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{355} Seok-won Han, ed., vol. 1 (1923): 40-50.
  \item \textsuperscript{356} The anthology includes not only lyrics and scores, but also stage directions as well as floor plans and blocking worksheets, albeit abstractly. Seok-won Han, ed. (1923).
  \item \textsuperscript{357} The King James version of the Bible states that “I am rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley” (Song of Solomon, 2:1).
\end{itemize}
people to unite. A child’s prayer and the angel’s blessing then follow, and the others in return sing in chorus entreating “God to preserve the peace of Koreans and the independence of the nation forever,” as if independence had been already achieved. The last song entitled “The Beautiful Korean Peninsula (Areumdaun Daehan Bando)” ends the play with a paean to the land: “It is beautiful. Thirteen houses; our Korean peninsula.” The play after all makes a fusion of religiosity and patriotism, with the religious context of the performance, that of Easter, providing an occasion for nationalist fervor.

A strange point, as implied in the synopsis above, is that the play features eight representatives from eight provinces while attributing to Korea thirteen houses. Through the stage directions given in the anthology, one can speculate the way in which thirteen houses were represented with just eight characters, as the directions specify how each line was supposed to be assigned to each character. The eight provinces are Gyeonggi, Gangwon, Hwanghae, Chungcheong, Jeolla, Gyeongsang, Hamgyeong, and Pyeongan, following the province division system of Joseon Dynasty. In the colonial period, the last five provinces were divided into north and south, thereby raising the count to thirteen. 358 In the play, the representatives of the last five provinces take charge of lines assigned to both north and south of their provinces. That is, Kim’s play superimposed a colonial Korean setting over a Joseon Dynasty schema. Although it is not immediately clear why Kim did this, it is noteworthy that Kim, as I already mentioned, described Koreans as descendants of Goryeo Dynasty, introducing yet a third context for his characters. With this admixture of contexts and the historical connotations attached to them, it is possible to speculate that a broad, sketching, and ahistorical image of Korea was part of Kim’s design. An

all-encompassing depiction of Korea could create an imaginary of a Korean ethnic nation that existed from the dawn of historical time and steadily maintained over the years.

The stage directions also disclose how the theme of uniting all Koreans’ minds and wills was envisioned to be realized on stage. At the beginning of the play, the stage direction describes each province representative preparing an electric lamp shaped like the province each represents. At the end of Act One, the province representatives bring their lamps to the stage, light them, and hang them in midair, forming a mosaic of the whole peninsula. In Act Two, the national representative sets up, in the center of the stage, a post to which long scarves of blue, red, yellow, and white are tied, and the all province representatives circle around the post, taking hold of one of the ropes. Thereby, they create a colorful pole. Interpreting this scene, Youngjeong Park posits that the characters engage in a Korean folk dance similar to a maypole dance, which was called *dansimjul nolyi* or a play of united-minded rope.359 The *dansimjul nolyi*, according to Sin-suk Kim, was developed during the colonial period based on a traditional play, as the traditional play could be easily incorporated to express the message that all Koreans must unite to fight Japanese colonialism.360 The map-making scene and the *dansimjul nolyi*, after all, are designed to effectively convey the significance of solidarity among Koreans for the achievement of independence.

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359 Youngjeong Park (2008), 104-106.
360 Sin-suk Kim, “*Dansimjul Nolyi*,” in *Bukhan Hakjaga-sseun Joseon-ui Minsok Nolyi* [Joseon’s Folk Plays Written by North Korean Scholars], 3rd ed., eds. Yu-ho Do and et al (Seoul: Minsokwon, 2010): 234-242. Originally published in North Korea in 1964, this book has been reprinted in South Korea three times, including: 1989, 1999, and 2010. In an introduction to the third edition, Gang-hyeon Ju states that this book’s rendition of premodern Korean popular culture is much more credible than many other South Korean research published in post-colonial Korea because many South Korean publications owed too much to previous Japanese research conducted during the colonial period. The North Korean scholar Kim states that *dansimjul nolyi* has been performed with the text about the “pride of thirteen provinces” since around 1924. Although one song that she particularly analyzes appears to contain communist ideology with lyrics such as “workers of the world, unite!,” it would have been a version of *Thirteen Houses*, considering that Kim describes that province representatives in the play make a peninsular map while singing and dancing.
The anthology version of *Thirteen Houses* also includes seven music scores to be used. In contrast to the apparently nationalistic scene staging, the function of music in the production appears more complicated. Youngjeong Park suggests that all songs used in *Thirteen Houses* were not newly composed for the performance, but rather were extant songs of which only some lyrics were changed. Park analyzes each song and argues that almost all music numbers – except for the third one, a Korean traditional song – are *changga*, songs sung to the tune of Western-styled scores that were composed modeled directly after Japanese songs during the colonial period. Specifically, he states that the second, fifth, and sixth songs strongly hint at a Japanese origin though their sources cannot be identified. Park then identifies the seventh as a then well-known *changga* composed by Thomas W. Garden, an American who resided in Japan during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Lastly, Park particularly criticizes another identifiable *changga*, that is, the fourth song titled “Shape of Mountain and Sea Spirited like a Fierce Tiger (*Maenho Yakdong Sanhaejin*)” for keeping not only the melody but also most of the lyrics of a Japanese song, which contains an overtly imperialistic message. Its direct source was “Our Seventy Million Compatriots,” which the Governor-General of Korea adapted from a Japanese song “Our Fifty Million Compatriots” (1900) for the publication of an anthology of *changga* in Korea in 1914. For the collection, the Governor-General changed the lyric indicating the Japanese population as fifty million to seventy million in order to explicate that the Korean population – twenty million at the time – was also under the governance of the Japanese empire.\(^{361}\)

Considering that this song was to be sung in the explicitly nationalistic scene of the peninsular map-making, the song’s strong Japanese imperialistic origin could have produced feverish, if sometimes diverse, reactions, as I suggest below.

\(^{361}\) Youngjeong Park (2008), 98-103.
Some audiences may have considered the Japan-derived melody as undermining the patriotism that this scene was supposed to present. At the same time though, others could have regarded Kim’s minor lyrical shifts as a subtle counterattack to Japanese imperialism. In other words, this music drama’s rendering of Japan-derived songs could have been read as a subversive attempt to take on the colonizer’s cultural properties and thus de-authorize the colonizer – what Homi K. Bhabha insightfully articulates as an ambivalent process of mimicry. Building on this possibility, I call attention to the potentially further ambivalent attitudes that Koreans under an Asian, not Western, colonizer would have had toward the colonizer’s cultural products created in Western style. That is, I posit that it is highly questionable how and to what extent the nationality of a music composed by the Japanese in a Western style was concerned. The case of music used in a music drama production would have been more complicated, since Koreans, as I proposed, very likely considered the form of music drama as having no national identity but rather a universal modernity. While experiencing the music drama form claimed by Japanese artists as Western-derived as well as practiced by American Protestant missionaries and Korean Christian intellectuals at churches, Koreans could have also perceived music included in a music drama production as having no national identity. That is, I contend that the incorporation of songs of apparently imperialistic origin into a music drama production could have been an attempt to dismiss the songs’ established Japanese associations by imbuing them with other contextual meanings. This possibility is plausible considering the explicitly nationalistic message that the script of Kim’s version of Thirteen Houses conveys and Han’s adaption of Hurray for Our Nation even further strengthens.

While the similarities between *Hurray for Our Nation* and *Thirteen Houses* are blatant, there are two critically different lines. First, these are lyrics of the song “Song of United Mind (Dansim-ga)” as found in the anthology version of *Thirteen Houses*:

United mind, united mind, our minds are united.
Making all the mind and wills alike; let’s celebrate the birth of Christ.
Do not let ranks be broken; in thirteen directions to east, west, south, and north.
Our minds and spirits become united with the holy cross.³⁶³

The animus in these words is a spiritual one. Koreans are urged to unite under the Christian religion. However, revisions made to the second and fourth lines in *Hurray for Our Nation* shift the emphasis from religion to nation. Han’s new verses command: “Making all the mind and wills alike; *let’s work for the country* […] Our minds and spirits become united with the *rose of Sharon*.³⁶⁴ By changing the lyrics from celebrating Christ to working for the country, and from the holy cross to the rose of Sharon, Han transformed the Christian hymn into a nationalistic plea. In the same manner, the word “hurray,” which is used in the title, is found only in Han’s adaptation. In Kim’s original version of *Thirteen Houses*, the angel character sings that “the angel pitches a tent in the heaven, and brightly lights up with the sun and moon. Within the love of Jesus Christ, [we sing] a song of joy and delight.”³⁶⁵ But in *Hurray for Our Nation*, the “song of joy and delight” are changed to “Hurray, hurray, better hurray. Hurray for Daehan.”³⁶⁶ Han further explicated the nationalistic messages that Kim’s original version strongly portrayed and by doing so, emboldened patriotism. This explicitly expressed nationalistic narrative, I argue, would have attributed every element in the play to Korea, at least in its Korean audience’s reception.

³⁶³ Seok-won Han, ed., vol.1 (1923), 44-45. *Dansim* in Korean can mean either “united mind” or “unified mind” depending on which Chinese character is used. The play uses the Chinese character meaning “united” – 廝 – rather than the character meaning “unified” – 聯 – but the word sung in performance could sound like implying both.
³⁶⁴ *The New Korea*, March 21, 1929.
³⁶⁵ Seok-won Han, ed., vol.1 (1923): 48-49.
³⁶⁶ *The New Korea*, March 21, 1929.
Thirteen Houses Staged as Part of the Young Korean Academy’s Ceremony in 1936

Hyeon-sun Kim’s play was republished in The New Korea on December 26, 1935, under the original title, Thirteen Houses, but once again with minor modifications by Seok-won Han. This version features the same eleven characters found in Kim’s original version of Thirteen Houses as well as Han’s adaptation of Hurry for Our Nation, with three exceptions: the old man and the angel become, respectively, an old painter and a benefactor, and a pianist character is added. However, these changes in the character designation do not make any difference in the narrative because almost all of the lyrics remain unchanged. The 1935 version also preserves the stage directions of the anthology version, including dance around the pole – dansimjul nolyi – and the peninsular mosaic formed by lamps. A critical difference, however, is found, once again, in the song “Song of United Mind.” The 1935 version replaces the lyric “Our minds and spirits become united with the holy cross” with “Seek to the truth and strive to put it to practice, and be loyal, trustworthy, and courageous. There is a united mind under the flag.” The first part of the line is also repeated by the national representative in his prayer to God. This repeated line of “Seek to the truth and strive to put it to practice, and be loyal, trustworthy, and courageous” was in fact, to borrow Young-dal Kim’s formulation, “the core of Dosan [Chang-ho Ahn]’s Philosophy,” which served as the main principle of the Young Korean Academy that Ahn founded in 1913. The inclusion of Ahn’s philosophy in the 1935 version should come as no surprise, since this version was staged as part of a ceremony for the Young Korean Academy in 1936.

367 The New Korea, December 26, 1935. The meaning of this line that I translated into “Seek to the truth and strive to put it into practice, and be loyal, trustworthy, and courageous” becomes clear only when reading it with Chinese characters: 務實力行 信義勇敢, which reads in Korean as “Moosil-Yeokhaeng Sinui-Yonggam.”
The New Korea advertised twice through its editions of December 19 and 26, 1935, that a ceremony for the Young Korean Academy would be held at Louise Glaum Playhouse in Los Angeles on New Year’s Day in 1936. Those advertisements also listed programs to be included in the ceremony, such as several music performances (Hawaiian numbers and Korean numbers), dances (twelve young people’s dance and tap dance), theatre performances, including a show introduced just as “short comedy,” and Thirteen Houses. While highlighting that this ceremony would be special because Korean youth were fully responsible for its preparation, the newspaper article also makes it clear that the Young Korean Academy had provided ceremony every year. As a matter of fact, Chang-ho Ahn appears to have appreciated the efficacy of performance in sowing nationalism among Koreans in the U.S. In a surviving letter from Neung-ik Choi (1889-1976), who was also a member of the Young Korean Academy, to Ahn, the former wrote:

I sent a few people to Dinuba for a sports meeting to hold in tandem with the grapefruit harvest as I told you before (…) [I will] grant up till 80 won for theatre and miscellaneous expense, and make students’ caps to fit to the sports meeting, though I will let students prepare their sportswear by themselves (…) 100 won for the playground facility, 70 won for lunch, and 100 won for each equipment purchase…

According to this account, the Young Korean Academy not only included theatre productions in its signature events but also financially supported them, with Chang-ho Ahn’s approval. Since Ahn was an incomparably influential figure in both the Korean communities in the U.S. and the Korean independence movement, this letter along with the Young Korean Academy’s

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369 The New Korea, December 19 and December 26, 1935.
performance manifest that theatre was embraced as a central activity in community building as well as nationalist movements by nationalist leaders in the U.S.

This ceremony’s review discloses another point of significance. The New Korea in its January 19 edition in 1936 reported that the Young Korean Academy’s Los Angeles ceremony proved a tremendous success, and particularly emphasized Philip Ahn’s (1905-1978) deep involvement in the ceremony preparation. The newspaper states:

This year’s ceremony was specially led by the second-generation youths. Under the supervision of the stage director Philip Ahn, they staged the music drama Thirteen Houses as well as a comedy titled Miju-ui Gajeong Saenghwang [Home Life in The U.S.] written by Philip Ahn. They received enthusiastic applauses from about three hundred audiences. This year’s ceremony was an unprecedented success in the number of viewers as well as in the quality of performances. 371

Philip Ahn’s involvement in one of Chang-ho Ahn’s associations should not be surprising since he was Chang-ho Ahn’s eldest son. However, it should be also examined in the context of Philip Ahn’s own career. Philip Ahn, as the first U.S.-born Korean actor, achieved a substantial career in Hollywood, and so he was honored posthumously, for his contribution to the American film industry with an inscription on the Walk of Fame. 372

Philip Ahn appeared in more than three hundred films and television series between the 1930s and the 1970s. Among his very numerous roles, however, he repeated played stereotypical Asian villains or victims. That casting surely bewildered Koreans who recognized him as Chang-ho Ahn’s son and thus heir to the nationalist cause. Addressing this confusion, film scholar Hye Seung Chung sheds light on “the intersecting legacies of [Dosan Chang-ho Ahn] and his son

Philip Ahn in the formation of Korean American nationalism.” She focuses on Philip Ahn’s direct and indirect manifestations of Korean diasporic identities and his steadfast, albeit unfulfilled, wish to contribute to the postcolonial Korean film industry. Indeed, Philip Ahn implied on several occasions that he was concerned about how to balance his position as the renowned patriot’s eldest son and his aspiration to act. In an interview with the Chinese American playwright Frank Chin in 1970, Philip Ahn said that “[he] could not go into the movie business because a lot of people working with Father (for independence) felt… that in Father’s position, his son shouldn’t be acting, because in those days, under the Oriental standards, being a movie actor was rather degrading.” Then he, in a seemingly proud voice, shared his father’s approval statement – “I don’t see why you cannot become a motion picture actor [since] it’s an art” – that Chang-ho Ahn made when he visited his family for the last time in his life in 1925. Also, John Cha, in his biography of Chang-ho Ahn’s daughter Susan Ahn Cuddy, relates an anecdote based on Cuddy’s recollection in which Philip Ahn disputed with his father’s peers, challenging their dismissive attitude toward his actor vocation. Under others’ gaze on him as well as his own self-evaluation, Philip Ahn could not help but be concerned about the value of performing arts in society, more specifically in nation building of Korea.

Considering Philip Ahn’s need for community affirmation in the validity of performing arts, the 1936 Young Korean Academy’s ceremony might have played a significant role in solidifying his decision to become an actor. The Young Korean Academy’s ceremony took place

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when Philip Ahn’s career in Hollywood was about to take off. Though he debuted with *A Scream in the Night* in 1935, his first credited roles came with *The General Died at Dawn* and *Stowaway*, released in September and December, 1936, respectively – just slightly later than the Young Korean Academy’s ceremony. A community performance of modest aesthetic quality undoubtedly could not serve as a decisive breeding ground for an actor launching into Hollywood in terms of aesthetic skills. Rather, it would be more reasonable to consider that Philip Ahn took charge of various roles in the preparation of the ceremony by taking advantage of his previously developed skills or inborn senses in performing arts. Nevertheless, the Young Korean Academy’s 1936 ceremony could have presented Philip Ahn a high possibility of carrying on his father’s legacy through performance. This concrete precedent could have also served as a base with which Philip Ahn retained his belief in the efficacy of performance in contributing to the nation despite the unfavorable circumstances to him, whether racist Hollywood or tumultuous post-colonial Korea.

My point is that the 1936 Young Korean Academy’s ceremony manifested the efficacy of performing arts in nationalist movements, and accordingly would have encouraged Philip Ahn to have no scruples about devoting himself to his acting career. Building on this possibility, I contend that church music drama played such critical roles in nationalist movements, particularly in Korean communities in the U.S., that exhibited societal value of performing arts, and in so doing, facilitated the process of expunging a traditional social stigma attached to the vocation of actor. In this regard, it is compelling that another pioneering Korean American performing arts artist, Peter Hyun (1906-1993), was from a family with a similar background to Ahn’s. Hyun was born to Reverend Soon Hyun (1880-1968) who was a renowned Christian nationalist leader in Hawai‘i, and had his first exposure to theatre at church in Hawai‘i as well as in Shanghai. In

376 Hye Seung Chung, 9.
his autobiography, Hyun mentions that his first involvement in theatre occurred in 1922 in Shanghai, where he wrote a play and staged it in a church auditorium with Korean residents. He also recalls that his improvisational acting was well received in a Korean church in Hawai‘i.\textsuperscript{377}

After all, Church plays, it can be argued, motivated diasporic Koreans with familial and national obligations to launch into the professional performing arts scene by demonstrating the value of performing arts. Even though those performances at church could not offer professional acting training, the motivation itself would have been significant considering the strong anti-theatrical prejudice among Koreans in pre-modern and early modern periods. Above all, church plays featured nationalistic characteristics when performed on the peninsula, but further emphasized the patriotic elements when produced in Korean communities in the U.S.

\section*{Conclusion}

In this chapter, I examined church music dramas produced in California along with those on the peninsula mainly in the 1920s and 1930s. Although endowed with religious overtones and modest aesthetic achievements and thus prone to critical dismissal, many of those church plays were incorporated into a platform of cultivating a modern Korea. The role of the church in the formation of modern culture in Korea was further evident in its operation not only as the literal site for the staging of these productions but also as the conduit for transnational cultural

\textsuperscript{377} Soon Hyun immigrated to Hawai‘i in 1903 as an interpreter, and helped found a Korean Methodist Church in Honolulu. Later in 1907, he returned to Korea and engaged in nationalist activities, such as participating in the March First Movement in 1919. To escape Japanese arrest, he moved to China in 1920 and served as a founding member of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai. Under financial hardship, he moved his family back to Hawai‘i in 1925 following his appointment as pastor in a Korean church in Honolulu. Thus, Peter Hyun, who had accompanied his father throughout, returned to his birthplace at age 17. He then attended DePauw University in Indiana, but left the school after resolving to be a theatre artist. Hyun distinguished himself as one of the few Asian Americans achieving a career in the American professional theatre industry during the first half of the twentieth century, though his work was eventually thwarted by racism. See: Peter Hyun, \textit{In the New World: The Making of a Korean America} (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1995). For an academic analysis of Peter Hyun’s autobiographies, see Wook-dong Kim, \textit{Hanguk-gye Miguk Jaseojeon Jakga [Korean American Immigrant Autobiographers]} (Seoul: Somyeong Chulpan, 2012): 237-282; for a survey of his theatre works, see Esther Kim Lee, \textit{A History of Asian American Theatre} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16-18.
exchange between peninsular and diasporic Koreans. Church-based music drama circulating between Korean communities on the peninsula and in the U.S. would have aided the belief that peninsular and diaspora Koreans were sharing an identical consciousness, uniting in their growing enchantment with the possibility of the construction of a modern nation for all Korean minjok. Simultaneously, Koreans in the U.S. could affirm themselves as custodians of the nation, despite their geographical separation, by reinforcing the latent patriotism in adapting and producing adaptations of the peninsular music drama scripts into more explicitly nationalistic ones. In manifesting the societal efficacy of performing arts, church music drama performances also contributed to the birth of pioneering artists who launched into the American professional performing arts scene. The review of early music drama performances on and outside of the Korean peninsula in the end challenges the common and academic conception of the colonial-era Korean as a passive cultural subject of the Japanese, one disconnected from the rest of the world. Considering that American missionaries were deeply implicated in American expansionism, the role churches played in the construction of modern culture in Korean ethnic communities, ultimately, exemplifies the way in which modernity’s merger with colonialism and imperialism shaped the genesis of modern Korea beyond the exclusive dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized on the peninsula.
CHAPTER 5

Recalling Old Korea, Illuminating New Korea:
Performances of Traditional Korean Elements in Hawai‘i (1920s-1930s)

In the previous three chapters, I explored three theatrical forms – docudrama, chain drama, and music drama – that Korean immigrants in the U.S. incorporated for the purpose of representing, producing, and performing their Korean ethnic identity developed to correspond to the modern era. Although similarly formed theatre performances appeared on the Korean peninsula around the same time with the influence of Western modernity (either directly introduced by American missionaries or filtered through the Japanese), the plays and theatre performances produced in Korean communities in the U.S. represented – more explicitly than peninsular cases – Koreans’ urge to integrate the nation into the modern global order. Knowledge of those performances by Korean immigrants in the U.S. not only enriches but also complicates an understanding of the genesis of modern Korea, as it leads to the questioning the prevailing historiography of colonial Korea that focuses only on binary dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized on the peninsula. This chapter concludes my discussion with a further clarification of the historical significance of incorporating Western modernity by demonstrating that even traditional Korean elements were significantly modified, or modernized, when incorporated into theatrical performances in Korean communities in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century.
Traditions, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger insightfully claim, are in fact conscious products of modern state formation, even if they may appear, and claim to be old.\textsuperscript{378} Taking this approach to traditions as recent, artificial, and modern inventions, I examine performances of traditional Korean elements produced by Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i in the 1920s and 1930s. I first discuss a cultural organization established explicitly to revive traditional Korean performing arts: the Hyung Jay Club that Ha Soo Whang founded mostly with second-generation Korean American young females in 1927. Specifically, I propose that this female-dominated organization facilitated the redefinition of boundaries of traditional gender roles and the expansion of Korean women’s influence to the public. The Club’s performances appear to have promoted an all-encompassing imaginary of “old Korea” by lumping together diverse elements that had different societal contexts in pre-modern Korea under the illusive category of “tradition.” Based upon its participants’ recollection, I posit that such imaginary of “old Korea” was readily embraced not only in the Korean communities but also in the larger Hawaiian society; it would respond well to Korean and Hawaiian needs to develop myths of distinctive Korean-ness and ideal multiculturalism, respectively.

I turn my discussion to the play \textit{Lotus Bud}, an adaptation of \textit{The Story of Hong Gildong} (\textit{Hong Gildong Jeon}), which is considered, although incorrectly so, as the first prose-fiction written in the Korean alphabet. This adaptation appears particularly noteworthy since it is a rare Korean American play written in English in the early twentieth century and produced by Korean immigrants at the University of Hawai‘i. Although discovered by Kyu-ick Cho in the 1990s with some loss of pages, this overlooked adaptation of one of the most representative work in the Korean literary canon elucidates the specific ways in which “old Korea” was retold and reformulated to present “new Korea” in the early twentieth century, in which Koreans on and

\textsuperscript{378} Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1.
outside of the peninsula engaged in modernizing themselves under influence of multiple colonizing powers.379

I first review the process by which *The Story of Hong Gildong* gained a prestigious, though erroneous, iconic status to serve both Japanese colonial and Korean nationalist agendas in colonial Korea in order to highlight how the novel became an invented tradition right before Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i chose to adapt it into a theatre production. After analyzing *Lotus Bud* in comparison to *The Story of Hong Gildong*, I then argue that the adaptation was made to declare Korean-ness as fully enlightened, by embedding an iconic modern theme of “free love” into the fiction considered representative of Korean-ness. At the same time though, I propose that the “free love” theme could have been interpreted, albeit loosely, as implying an interracial romance in the multiracial context of Hawai‘i. Lastly, I review the 1934 production of *Lotus Bud*, and speculate that its production team was comprised of students and staff from Hawaiian public schools – not only the University of Hawai‘i but also McKinney High School – which accommodated a large number of Asian American students. Knowledge of those demographics leads to the expectation that the play’s audience would have likely included not only Korean immigrants but also Asian American students attending those schools. I shall thus focus on how *Lotus Bud* portrays its characters often as Oriental, although sometimes as distinctively Korean. This portrayal, I contend, may have catered to its diverse Asian audience groups, while also manifesting how well the changing, yet distinctive Korean identity could meet dual demands imposed upon them to preserve Korean-ness as well as to adopt Asian-American-ness. Living in-between Hawaiian public domains (school) and Korean private domains (home), second-generation Korean Americans needed to reconcile what Yen Le Espiritu calls “panethnicity”

with Korean ethnic identity. My examination of Lotus Bud, ultimately, illuminates that the performance of tradition was made to present a “new Korea” as embracing Korean Americans’ liminal identity placed between tradition and modernity, as well as fatherland and homeland.

**Performance of an Imaginary of “Old Korea”: Hyung Jay Club**

As mentioned in Chapter One, early Korean immigrants in the U.S. appeared to have engaged in staging performances featuring traditional Korean elements either in their theme, form, or both. In the context of Hawai‘i, in particular, cultural organizations concerned with traditional Korean performing arts emerged in the 1920s, in my interpretation, to replace Korean language schools. The Hawaiian state legally required teachers at language schools to take certificate examinations, including subjects of American history and values, and English in 1921. Consequently, by 1925, the number of language schools had decreased from twenty-four to nine. During this same period, as Warren Y. Kim points out, two cultural organizations were founded to foster traditional Korean performing arts. The first one Kim mentions was an organization called “Nam-Pung-Sa” that the Hawai‘i branch of Korean National Association established in Honolulu in 1922. Its promoters, according to Kim, “brought musical instruments and other paraphernalia from Korea, taught young people the heritage of Korean arts, and made efforts to introduce them to the American public during its five-year period of existence”; but no further information is known about this organization. The second organization was the Hyung Jay Club, or Sisterhood Club, that Kim notes was founded by Ha Soo Whang in 1927 in order to “promote social activities and instruction in the Korean traditional arts by lectures and class

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381 Duk Hee Lee (Murabayashi), *Hawai‘i Imin 100 Nyeon [A Hundred Years of Immigration to Hawai‘i]* (Seoul: Joongang M&B, 2003), 221.
382 Warren Y. Kim, 45.
discussions, and to preserve the knowledge of the traditional Korean arts.” Though limited, available biographical information of its founder Whang and its participants’ memoirs about their experiences with the Club enable researchers to consider the types of performances the organization produced.

Ha Soo Whang (1892-1984) was a pioneering Korean woman whose various and profound contributions to Korean communities in Hawai‘i were posthumously recognized during the centennial celebrations in 2003. Her life story has been reconstructed with a memoir written by her niece Mary Whang Choy, along with a newspaper article coauthored by Mary’s daughter, Peggy Choy, and Andy Sutton, and published in the Korea Times in 1991. According to Mary Whang Choy, Whang family members were early Korean converts to Christianity, and three of the eight siblings, including her father and Ha Soo Whang, immigrated to the U.S. in the 1910s. In the U.S., Ha Soo Whang attended Athens Women’s College in Alabama and later moved to Honolulu in the early 1920s to accept a position offered by the International Institute of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). As the first and only Korean social worker in Hawai‘i during this time, Whang worked with Korean immigrants, especially with those who came as picture brides. She helped them adjust to the alien culture by founding the Mother’s Club, through which she taught English and homemaking, among other subjects. During this same period, Whang also devoted herself to the YWCA’s additional goal identified, in an International Institute’s report, as the “Conservation of Old World Arts and Activities.”

383 Warren Y. Kim, 45-46.  

Lili M. Kim identifies the primary purpose of the Hyung Jay Club as having been that of providing “a social space where young Korean girls could learn Korean traditional culture and folkways.”\footnote{Lili M. Kim, “Redefining Traditional Gender Roles,” in \textit{Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology}, eds. Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003): 106-119, at 113.} In other words, the Club was mainly comprised of girls and young women of Korean descent and performed allegedly traditional Korean performances. Although it was not strictly exclusive to girls but open to boys, its female dominant membership invites consideration about the relevance of traditional Korean performance repertories.\footnote{Duk Hee Lee (Murabayashi) (2003), 174.} The question is whether or not there is a correlation between the fact that the performers were predominantly female and the Club’s productions having consisted primarily of traditional Korean performances. In discussing pioneering female traditional Korean dance advocates in Hawai‘i throughout the twentieth century (including Ha Soo Hwang), Judy Van Zile suggests that females took charge of the maintenance of aspects of homeland tradition while males occupied themselves with nationalistic concerns. Van Zile, however, also clarifies that women were experiencing the “dual pulls,” in the words of Esther Kwon Arinaga, of Korean-ness preservation and Americanization fever. Arinaga suggests that “[d]espite their small numbers, the Korean woman managed to preserve their distinct cultural heritage and resist erosion of their ethnic identity. Still, they cherished the
American ideals which had lured them from the country of their birth.\textsuperscript{389} Van Zile as well as Arinaga thus both characterize the engagement with homeland tradition as opposed to the pursuit of Americanization.

In examining the Hyung Jay Club, I challenge such a premise that positions performing tradition and Americanization, or modernization, as mutually exclusive. Specifically, I contend that the Hyung Jay Club did not preserve diverse traditional Korean elements as they were, but rather, created the tradition by neglecting critical differences among those elements and their socio-cultural contexts in pre-modern Korea. In so doing, the Club contributed to the construction of an all-encompassing imagery of “old Korea” based upon which to develop Korean unity and ethnic pride. As such imagery facilitated the development of national identity as well as the demonstration of a distinctive Korean ethnicity, male-dominated nationalist leaders would have readily supported the Club’s performances. Such approval explains how the Club could succeed the previous organization of Nam-Pung-Sa, which the Korean National Association had established to reproduce traditional Korean performing arts. Those performances of tradition would also likely have elicited approval from the larger Hawaiian society that sought to nurture immigrants into becoming good Americans by accommodating their ethnic activities into their own domains (such as the YWCA). Performances of tradition, or more precisely of newly invented elements claimed as \textit{tradition}, accordingly, empowered female participants to exert their influence in the public sphere. In the multicultural context of Hawai’i, the self-proclaimed performance of Korean tradition in the end, as Richard Schechner suggests,

froze the Korean identity in a virtual Korea of an unspecified past.\textsuperscript{390} In my opinion, such virtual “old Korea,” ironically however, enabled Koreans to envision a “new Korea.”

I first demonstrate that various performances by the Hyung Jay Club could not have been authentically traditional Korean. Even if the Club attempted to reproduce traditional Korean performing arts, none of its instructors – not to mention its student members – seemed to have an ability to do so. First, Ha Soo Whang, having grown mostly in the Christian environment and having left Korea at an early age, had no intimacy with aspects of Korean tradition. She thus more frequently assumed the role of a producer or a facilitator than an instructor or a creative member of a production, and recruited people who presumably had better knowledge than she. Two individuals who worked with Whang on many occasions, according to Judy Van Zile, were Susan Chun Lee (or Mrs. Henry D. Lee) and Chai Yong Ha. However, neither of them seems to have had enough knowledge to really take charge of reproducing various traditional Korean performing arts. As to Susan Chun Lee, Van Zile identifies her as immigrating to Hawai‘i in 1910, and then suggests a slight possibility that Lee “may have” experienced court dance and traditional Korean music through her brother (who worked as a doctor at the royal court) and her sister (who studied the traditional Korean zither-like string instrument gayageum). Simultaneously, however, Lee’s daughter asserts, as Van Zile reports, that Lee’s “fertile imagination” rather than any kind of formal education was a source of Lee’s creation of “court dances, the monk’s drum dances, and a sword dance.”\textsuperscript{391} In the case of Chai Yong Ha, Van Zile states that he arrived in Hawai‘i some time in 1904-5, and for many years worked as a planation worker until he was recruited by Ha Soo Whang to teach dance at the Club in 1940. A couple of Hawaiian local newspapers mention him, but the effect is only to make his background in

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\textsuperscript{391} Judy Van Zile (2007), 259.
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traditional Korean performing arts ambiguous. For instance, a newspaper describes his choreographed dance pieces as having been suggestive of traditional Korean court dance or folk dance, while another newspaper profiles him as a former Buddhist monk in Korea prior to his immigration to Hawai‘i.  

Apart from the issue of its members’ mastery over traditional Korean performing arts, the wide spectrum of their repertories rendered their ambition as unachievable. As implied in the discussion of its instructors, the Club seems to have instructed and produced mainly court dance, folk dance, and Buddhist dance, all of which are categorized under the broad category of traditional dance (jeontong muyong) in contemporary Korean dance scholarship. In pre-modern Korea, however, the majority of Koreans could not have had experienced all of them, as those dances were performed in front of specified spectatorship at critically different, and occasionally conflicting, social contexts. Court dance, as the label indicates, refers to a type of dance performed in the palace for entertainment at court banquets, which were inaccessible to common people at large. In sharp contrast to court dance, what is generally translated as “folk dance,” is minsok muyong, meaning “dance of the common people,” which includes tremendously diverse dance movements performed in quite different contexts.  

In the case of the Buddhist dance, it is believed to have been initiated by the Buddhist monk Wonhyo (617-686) from the Silla Dynasty (B.C. 57-935). However, it did not develop fully until the Joseon Dynasty, ironically due to the Confucianism-based regime’s suppression of Buddhism. As it lost aristocratic supporters, Buddhism began to transform into a popular religion for common people, and adopted artistic practices.

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elements in its rituals through collaboration with folk dance performers to widen its reach. Consequently, the Buddhist dance was occasionally performed with folk dance – but definitely not with court dance. Simply put, each dance movement belonged to sharply separated Koreans of different social classes. Thus, it is hardly plausible that Susan Chun Lee could have observed court dance performances, regardless of her brother’s high rank at the court. If Chai Yong Ha was a Buddhist monk, he would have been most likely not familiar with court dance; the opposite equally applies.

The majority of Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i in the 1920s and 1930s would have been unfamiliar with traditional Korean dances, particularly court dance and Buddhist dance, considering their Christian and commoner backgrounds. Thus, both performers and audiences alike, would not, or could not, have concerned themselves with the authenticity of the Hyung Jay Club’s performances. Furthermore, the Club’s broad repertories suggests that Ha Soo Whang and other instructors lumped all those diverse dance movements together under the single category of traditional dance, and in so doing, created a new dance program that nobody had ever observed or performed in a single setting. Such a project of creating – instead of preserving – tradition benefited the Club members in a significant way. First, the performance provided its participants, particularly young girls, opportunities for expressing themselves free from societal restraints that most certainly would have constrained them had they been in the strictly Confucius homeland. Furthermore, the Club seems to have enabled them to venture beyond the boundary of their ethnic community into multiethnic public settings; for example, beginning in 1928, the Club’s performances had become annual programs of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

The Hyung Jay Club participants recollected their performances mainly as having
enabled them to stand on the prestigious stage of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, where,
according to Mary Whang Choy and Andy Sutton, “audiences represented many ethnic
groups.” Rosie Kim Chang (1927-2011) – a second-generation Korean immigrant who built a
pioneering career in nursing in Hawai‘i – recollects her experience with the Hyung Jay Club:

I was very active with the activities that she [Ha Soo Whang] started; for example, at that
time, I remember so clearly, that she set up so many activities at the [Honolulu] Academy
of Arts. I don’t know who taught us Korean dances and so forth. But I remember
performing there at that time.

Ha Soo Whang’s niece, Mary Whang Choy, also remembers a performance at the Honolulu
Academy of Arts, and proudly tells of the performance’s well-received reception in the entire
Hawaiian community. She states in an interview:

There was this production at the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts, which was, really, I think,
one of the greatest productions at that time. […] The programs were so well received:
The whole community, hundreds and hundreds of people were present.

These accounts indicate that a primary concern of the Club’s young girl participants was not to
learn, perform, and thus preserve Korean tradition that they had not experienced, but rather, to
achieve social approval from the Hawaiian society that they belonged to. To them, performing
tradition and Americanization were neither oppositional nor exclusive. In participating in the
creation of an imagery of “old Korea,” Korean young girls could challenge and cross the
boundaries’ of Korean traditional gender roles, which eventually expedited their
Americanization process.

Concerning the eventual Americanization that the young Korean girl participants
experienced, Peggy (Myo-young) Choy – the daughter of Ha Soo Whang’s niece Mary Whang

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396 Peggy Choy and Andy Sutton.
398 Seonju Lee and Roberta Chang, 131.
Choy, argues that the role of Hyung Jay Club was “a microcosm of the larger racist colonial society.”

Though not further articulated, her point seems to be that the allowed representation of each ethnic group’s distinctiveness was part of the Hawaiian project of nurturing immigrants into good Americans as well as strengthening the growing idealized image of Hawaiian multiculturalism. Such a point is valid given that the Hyung Jay Club as well as the Mother’s Club, both of which Ha Soo Whang founded, belonged to the YWCA. Anne Soon Choi argues that, although the population of Asian immigrants outnumbered that of Whites in the 1920s’ and 1930s’ Hawai’i, “a haole elite routinely controlled the [Hawaiian] local politics, the local economy, and dictated cultural standards.”

She also clarifies that the YWCA was one of the Americanizing institutions serving the role of spreading the White-defined cultural standards among non-White populations, and thus did not segregate its sub-organizational activities along racial lines. Synthesizing the aforementioned factors, the Hyung Jay Club would have presented its self-proclaimed traditional Korean performing arts in front of non-Korean audiences, following the cultural standard defined by White elites.

Yet, it is not clear as to how directly the Club members interacted with non-Koreans and how wide its audience’s ethnicity spectrum was. Furthermore, one cannot trace back the ways in which the Club modified elements of traditional Korean performing arts, since none of their performances were recorded. However, according to Peggy (Myo-young) Choy, the Club performed not only the previously noted dances, but also theatre performances based on Korean legends and folktales. For instance, Choy tells that the Spring Festival of 1938 included the dramatization of The Story of Shim Chung (Shim Chung Jeon), a well-known pre-modern Korean

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400 Anne Soon Choi, “Hawaii Has Been My America,” American Studies 45.3 (Fall 2004): 139-155, at 149.
401 Anne Soon Choi.
tale included in the repertories of the traditional Korean performing arts of *pansori.* Such an adaptation, if it had remained, would have elucidated ways in which the Hyung Jay Club achieved the empowerment of its performers by creating Korean tradition that catered not only to Koreans but also to non-Korean members of Hawai‘i.

Given the lack of remaining play scripts – not to mention adaptations of pre-modern Korean tales – produced by the Hyung Jay Club, the play *Lotus Bud* discovered by Kyu-ick Cho in the late 1990s is a truly valuable source. Cho published the play in 2004 with an introduction discussing his speculation of its production in Hawai‘i in 1934, along with his Korean translation of the English original and his analysis of the play. In his introduction, Cho contends that *Lotus Bud* is likely an English adaptation of the well-known Korean pre-modern prose fiction *The Story of Hong Gildong.* In the next section, I review *The Story of Hong Gildong* and its canonization process in the late 1920s’ and the early 1930s’ colonial Korea. In so doing, I posit that Korean immigrants may have chosen this prose fiction because it had just been elevated as a Korean literary canon on the peninsula, though initially through a Japanese scholar’s authorial misattribution. This misidentification has served various political agendas of Japanese colonialists, Korean nationalists, and even post-colonial scholars. An imaginary of “old Korea” was, in the end, constructed to correspond to various political parties’ conflicting, but equally desperate, needs for a representation of Korean-ness. Then, it was circulated through diasporic Korean communities that were also in need of a clear demonstration of their distinctive ethnic identity, albeit in a form that the host country’s other ethnic members could understand and appreciate.

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The Source of Lotus Bud: The Story of Hong Gidong as the Invented Tradition

I begin the discussion on The Story of Hong Gildong by first providing its brief synopsis, while also including necessary details for its comparison to Lotus Bud, which I discuss later in this chapter. The Story of Hong Gildong unfolds through presenting three different conflicts that Gildong experiences with his father, with the king of Joseon, and with the aborigines of Yul Island who Gildong conquers at the end of the novel. Born as an illegitimate son to a minister and his lowborn concubine, Gildong is in constant conflict with his father. Gildong – as one of the most famous lines of the fiction repetitiously states – laments over not being able to address his father as father and his half-brother as brother. At the same time, Gildong’s father, Minister Hong, regrets that Gildong, who has exceptional talents, was not born to his lawful wife. Furthermore, Minister Hong worries about the possibility of future calamities that Gildong may bring to his household, particularly since a shaman hired by his other concubine, Chorang, lies to him regarding Gildong’s fortune. After escaping from an assassin (also hired by Chorang) by taking a crow’s caw as a warning, Gildong leaves home and becomes a leader of a band of bandits after demonstrating his intellectual and physical strength. He names the band Hwalbindang, meaning the group that saves poor people, and punishes corrupt Buddhist monks first, and subsequently, corrupt officials. His band steals these individuals’ unjustly gained possessions, and distributes them to the poor. Thus, Gildong, though being praised as chivalrous among the poor, appears to the king of Joseon as a threat to his authority. The king makes several attempts to capture Gildong by using all possible means, and eventually, though reluctantly, accepts Gildong’s request to grant him the minister of war position. In return, Gildong leaves Joseon with his band of bandits, and then marries two women whom he saves from monsters, conquers the king of an island country called Yul, and makes himself the king of the island. The
fiction ends with a description of the country being at peace with rich harvests under the benevolent rule of Gildong.\footnote{This synopsis of The Story of Hong Gildong is based on Minsoo Kang’s translation. Kang translated one of the handwritten (pilsa) versions of the fiction, which is considered the earliest among twenty-eight extant manuscripts with a publication date of 1894. According to Kang, the most commonly used English translation – Marshall R. Pihl’s translation published in Anthology of Korean Literature (1981) edited by Peter H. Lee – is based on one of the abbreviated versions of the fiction. Minsoo Kang, trans., “The Story of Hong Gildong (Pilsa 89 Version),” Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture 6 (2013): 229-322. For in-depth analyses of twenty-eight extant manuscripts, refer to Yun-suk Lee, Hong Gildong Jeon Yeongu [A Study on The Story of Hong Gildong] (Daegu: Gyemyeong University Press, 1998).}

The Story of Hong Gildong is one of the most popular Korean pre-modern prose fictions, one with which a vast majority of modern Koreans are familiar. Its popularity seems to have been immense, at least since the late nineteenth century, given the awareness of the fiction by foreigners who resided in Korea during this time. The American missionary Horace N. Allen (1858–1932) – who played a critical role in the process of Korean immigration into Hawai‘i – published abbreviated translations of seven Korean tales in 1889; one of them was The Story of Hong Gildong.\footnote{Horace N. Allen, ed., “Hong Kil Tong, or the Adventures of an Abused Boy,” in Korean Tales: Being a Collection of Stories Translated from the Korean Folk Lore (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889): 170-193.} Allen’s translation was also mentioned in three-volumes of the annotated bibliography of Korean books that Maurice Courant (1865-1935) published in France in 1894, with data that he had collected while working as an assistant secretary at the French Consulate in Joseon from 1890 to 1892.\footnote{Maurice Courant, Joseon Seoji [Bibliographie Coréenne (1894-1901)], trans. Hee-jae Lee (Seoul: Ichogak, 1994), 292.} Their renditions of the story, though having some nuanced differences, are basically similar to the story known to modern Koreans. That is, The Story of Hong Gildong features an adventurous story where “the son of a concubine [who] is so ill-treated runs away from home, becomes a master of magic, forms a Robin Hood band, and eventually

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\item[\footnote{Maurice Courant, Joseon Seoji [Bibliographie Coréenne (1894-1901)], trans. Hee-jae Lee (Seoul: Ichogak, 1994), 292.}]
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leaves Korea to become king of his own Eutopia [sic],” as the first British academic specializing in Korean literature, W.E. Skillend, concisely summarizes.⁴⁰⁶

W.E. Skillend adds to the aforementioned synopsis information regarding the fiction’s origin and significance:

The story is always attributed to Ho Kyun [Gyun Heo] (1559-1618) in [sic] the basis of a quotation from Yi Sik [Sik Yi] (1584-1647): Taektang Chapcho [The Collected Writings of Taekdang], which I have not found, but which is always given as “Ho Kyun wrote the Story of Hong Kiltong in imitation of [the famous Chinese classical fiction] Shu-hu-chuan [Shui Hu Zhuan in Chinese, and Water Margin or Outlaws of the Marsh in English].” On the basis of this attribution it is invariably described as the first novel in Korean.⁴⁰⁷

Such information regarding the fiction’s author and its significance in Korean literature history – which had not been included in earlier accounts of fiction, such as those by Allen and Courant – is well known to modern Koreans, as it has been firmly established in the public consciousness through repetition in school texts.⁴⁰⁸ Most post-colonial Korean school textbooks, as Minsoo Kang notes, matter-of-factly inform students that The Story of Hong Gildong was written by the Joseon Dynasty poet and government official Gyun Heo (1569-1618); and that it is of significance as the first work of prose fiction written in the Korean alphabet, hangeul, invented under the guidance of King Sejong in the mid fifteenth century.⁴⁰⁹

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⁴⁰⁸ Earlier studies discussing The Story of Hong Gildong – including not only those by Horace N. Allen and Maurice Courant, but also Hwak Ahn’s History of Jeon Literature (Joseon Munhaksa, 1922) and Yun-jae Cho’s A Study of Joseon Prose Fiction (Joseon Soseol-ui Yeongu, 1929) – did not mention its author. Also, the author was not identified when the fiction was reprinted, as in the cases of the 1913 publication by the publisher Simmungwan and the 1926 publication of Hajime Hosoi’s Japanese translation of the fiction. See: Yun-suk Lee, “The Genealogy of Discussion on the Authorship of Hong Gildong Jeon,” Yeolsang Gojeon Yeongu 36 (December 2012): 381-414, at 386-390.
Many scholars of Korean pre-modern literature, however, claim such an accepted public understanding false.\footnote{Korean pre-modern literature scholars have raised suspicions about Gyun Heo’s authorship of The Story of Hong Gildong since the 1960s. The early works include: Neung-woo Lee, “Heo Gyun Ron [A Discussion on Gyun Heo],” in Nonmunjib [A Collection of Learned Papers] 5 (Seoul: Sukmyeong Women’s University, 1965); Jin-se Kim, “Hong Gildong Jeon-ui Jaksago [An Examination of the Author of The Story of Hong Gildong],” in Nonmunjib [A Collection of Learned Papers] 1 (Seoul: Division of General Education at Seoul National University, 1969).} For example, Yun-suk Lee resolutely dismisses the idea of Gyun Heo being the author of The Story of Hong Gildong. Lee notes that the first mention of the story as a popular fiction comes from the introduction of the war fiction Record of the Black Dragon Year (Imjin Rok) published in 1876, and a manuscript having the earliest publication date among twenty-eight extant ones comes from 1894. Furthermore, in Lee’s reading, The Story of Hong Gildong – in its exciting and sensationalistic plot and its theme questioning the status quo – bears close resemblance to Korean-written popular fictions developed to attract mass readership no earlier than the nineteenth century. As in the cases of other Korean-written popular fictions bearing no information regarding authorship, Lee surmises that an anonymous writer of secondary or commoner status most highly likely wrote The Story of Hong Gildong not much earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century.\footnote{Yun-suk Lee, “Hong Gildong Jeon Wonbon Hwakjeong-eul Wihan Siron [An Essay on the Determination of the Original Text of The Story of Hong Gildong],” Dongbang Hakji 85 (January 1994): 247-285.}

According to Lee, the first person to attribute The Story of Hong Gildong to Gyun Heo was a Japanese scholar named Toru Takahashi (1878-1967), a professor of Joseon literature at the Keijo Imperial University – the sixth Imperial University of Japan founded in 1924 in Seoul and run by the Governor-General of Korea. As his lecture notes published in 1927 document, Takahashi surmised that Gyun Heo wrote The Story of Hong Gildong in order to gain recognition from his friends, many of whom were illegitimate sons like Hong Gildong, while providing Sik Yi’s writing – that Skillend also mentioned – as sole evidence. Takahashi’s lecture notes also include an ambiguous hypothesis that “if Heo is the author, he would be the earliest among the
known as writers of Joseon fiction.⁴¹² Such a thin reasoning, according to Lee, reveals only Takahashi’s lack of insight into the topography of pre-modern Korean literature. In Lee’s view, Korean scholars before Takahashi did not take Sik Yi’s writing into consideration in the discussion of The Story of Hong Gildong, not because they were unaware of Yi’s mention, but because they intuitively knew that Yi’s Chinese writing and the Korean-written work of The Story of Hong Gildong belonged to two sharply separate worlds of authorship and readership. Lee’s point is that one can hardly link the Korean-written work of The Story of Hong Gildong with Sik Yi and Gyun Heo, both of whom were of aristocratic classes, if considering that aristocratic classes of the Joseon Dynasty eschewed the Korean script, referring to it by the derogatory name of eonmun (vulgar script).⁴¹³

Toru Takahashi might have had lack of insight as Lee points out, but I argue that this lack would not have been the sole cause for his misidentification of The Story of Hong Gildong. Instead, The Story of Hong Gildong could have appeared to the Japanese as a perfect candidate to establish in the Korean canon, as the novel can be readily read to portray how discontented Koreans had been with corruption and injustice before Japan’s invasion. As E. Taylor Atkins thoroughly documents, the Japanese colonial government and its commissioned and non-commissioned scholars enthusiastically attempted to collect, curate, and preserve aspects of Korean heritage and tradition throughout the entire colonial period. For instance, the Japanese

⁴¹³ Yun-suk Lee (2012), 405-408. Minsoo Kang also concisely summarizes the problem with authorial misattribution by stating that “there is no evidence that Sik Yi had actually read or even seen the [Gyun Heo’s] work, and none that can demonstrate that the work supposedly written by Gyun Heo in the seventeenth century is related in any way to the extant work of that title” (Minsoo Kang, 223). Sung-jong Paik also insists that there is a low possibility of Sik Yi having read The Story of Hong Gildong. He demonstrates many dramaturgical differences between The Story of Hong Gildong and Shui Hu Zhan (Water Margin, or Outlaws of the Marsh) that Yi suggested as Heo’s source. While The Story of Hong Gildong is a short work featuring a single protagonist who eventually leaves Joseon, Shui Hu Zhan is a lengthy epic story featuring more than a hundred heroic characters, many of whom end up being accepted into the Chinese society. Sung-jong Paik, “Gososeol Hong Gildong Jeon-ui Jeojak-edaehan Jaegeomto [Reexamination of the Authorship of the Old Fiction The Story of Hong Gildong],” Jindan Hakhoe 80 (December 1995): 307-331, at 316.
Government-General of Joseon published in 1935 *Thriving Chosen [Joseon]: A Survey of Twenty-five Years’ Administration* to boast of its accomplishments in securing the hitherto neglected cultural heritage of Korea, including scripts written in the Korean alphabet. The report also proudly states that the Government-General assembled “very ancient literature scattered all over [Joseon]” at the Keijo Imperial University. In so doing, the Japanese colonial regime characterized the Korean alphabet and Korean-written literature as “the centuries-old yet moribund” and “[having been] in tatters until the Government-General intervened.” The enthusiastic Japanese engagement in the preservation of Korean heritage and tradition was, that is, in effect cultivated to justify Japan’s colonial mission. Thus, the Japanese research often ended up providing evidence of Japanese superior cultural sensibility in contrast to Korean indifference toward and inability in preserving its own heritage. Such a Japanese colonial agenda behind the research on Korean tradition conditioned the misidentification of *The Story of Hong Gildong* as the first Korean-written prose fiction.

One of Toru Takahashi’s students, Tae-jun Kim, was the one who widely circulated the authorial misattribution and misidentification of *The Story of Hong Gildong*. Kim discussed the fiction in his book, *History of Joseon Prose Fiction (Joseon Soseolsa)*, which was first serialized in the newspaper *Dong-A Ilbo* from 1930 to 1931 and compiled into a book in 1933. Nevertheless, it seems that Kim was not entirely influenced by the Japanese ideology nor did he just uncritically replicate his teacher Takahashi’s view. While attributing the fiction to Gyun Heo

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415 The Japanese project of collecting, curating, and preserving Korean tradition further increased after the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and peaked later with the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In appropriating Korean heritage and tradition, the Japanese imperial regime sought to provide pretexts for their expanding military aggression in Asia by suggesting pan-Asianic common cultural roots distinguished from those of the West and demonstrating the Japanese willingness to preserve various Asian cultural forms within its empire. See: Sang Mi Park, “The Making of a Cultural Icon for the Japanese Empire: Choe Seung-hui’s U.S. Dance Tours and ‘New Asian Culture’ in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Positions* 14.3 (2006): 597-632, at 604-605.
solely based on Sik Yi’s writing, as Takahashi did, Kim as a nationalist-cum-socialist, also provided his own interpretation of the fiction. He read the fiction as representing Heo’s radical, political ideas of criticizing the feudalistic order of Joseon and suggesting his vision for an egalitarian state. In so doing, Kim portrayed Korean-written literature as having begun with a self-awakened intellectual’s manifestation of a proto-socialistic message as early as the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{416}

Although having critically different purposes and making different readings of the novel, the Japanese Toru Takahashi and the Korean Tae-jun Kim spearheaded the elevation of The Story of Hong Gildong to become an iconic text in the Korean canon, and in so doing, constructed a tradition of Korean prose fiction. This process thus illuminates the way in which a tradition was invented during the modern state formation, which, in the Korean context, occurred under Japanese colonial rule. The liberation of the nation, however, did not bring about the correction of such authorial misattribution and its related misidentification of The Story of Hong Gildong. It was because, as Sun-geung Kwon suggests, the maintenance of the error “is the more favorable choice for the history narrative of Korean literature than otherwise.”\textsuperscript{417} Simply put, the history of Korean-written literature would be tremendously shortened and become allegedly less promising, once admitting that The Story of Hong Gildong was written not by the intellectual statesman Gyun Heo during the seventeenth century, but rather, by an anonymous commoner during the nineteenth century. This whole process, I posit, exemplifies how a tradition was invented in the modernizing period, and how it has steadily maintained its prestigious status. Despite different ideological agendas having been involved in the process, The Story of Hong Gildong has been established as representative of Korean-ness.

\textsuperscript{416} Yun-suk Lee (1994), 271; Minsoo Kang, 222.  
In the 1930s, retelling, rewriting, or adapting *The Story of Hong Gildong* appears to have meant to engage with a representative of traditional Korea. The fiction was adapted into various genres multiple times during the 1930s. These included a children’s story, *Hong Gildong Jeon*, by Yu-jeong Kim in 1935 and two films – *Hong Gildong Jeon*, directed by So-bong Kim in 1934 and *Hong Gildong Jeon Huphun (Hong Gildong Jeon Part II)*, directed by Myeong-wu Yi in 1936. Thus, it is more than likely that Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i likewise chose the fiction to adapt into a theatre production, because it was considered representative of Korean-ness. At the same time though, those who engaged in the adaptation of *Lotus Bud* highly likely read the novel based on their own agendas, just as Toru Takahashi and Tae-jun Kim did, and applied their own reading to the adaptation. From that perspective, the discovered script of *Lotus Bud* illuminates the specific ways in which Koreans in Hawai‘i repackaged elements of Korean tradition. In analyzing *Lotus Bud* in comparison to *The Story of Hong Gildong*, I argue that the producers of *Lotus Bud* rendered the novel into a wholly different one in order to present a new Korea. The adaptation specifically features a new theme of “free love,” which was one of prevailing social issues and literary themes that emerged to represent modernized Koreans on the peninsula in the 1920s. I end the section by highlighting that “free love” was also a prevailing theme appearing in Asian American plays throughout the second quarter of the twentieth century in Hawai‘i, though, more precisely speaking, a specific type of free love, interracial romance, was explored.

**The Play *Lotus Bud*: New Korea Staged by Re-telling of “Old Korea”**

In the introduction to the publication of *Lotus Bud*, Kyu-ick Cho relates how he came to acquire the manuscript. He states that he obtained the document from a third-generation Korean-

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418 Yun-suk Lee (2012), 391.
American named Stephanie Han, a poet-cum-actress, whom he met in Los Angeles in the late 1990s. Han’s grandmother had preserved this document, which was comprised of sixty-two pages of typed script of the play *Lotus Bud* with some missing pages, printed on old A4 size paper.\(^{419}\) In analyzing the play, Cho asserts that *Lotus Bud* is an English adaptation of *The Story of Hong Gildong*.

*Lotus Bud* indeed follows the dramatic development of *The Story of Hong Gildong*. The recovered manuscript, consisting of three acts, tells the story from Gildong’s suffering in his household, through his joining a band of bandits, and to his first project with the bandits punishing Buddhist monks, more precisely, hairy barbarians disguised as Buddhist monks. Given that ending, it may appear that Gildong’s overseas venture is completely deleted. However, it is not clear as to how much longer the actual play was in comparison to the manuscript Cho obtained. Furthermore, the discovered manuscript, as noted by Nam-seok Kim, has already a part suggestive of an ideal space located somewhere over water.\(^{420}\) Chorang, the concubine who plots to kill Gildong in *The Story of Hong Gildong*, is renamed Jinju and modified into a character having a desire to possess Gildong in *Lotus Bud*. In the play, she states the following as she lures Gildong to leave with her:

> I know a place where freedom is. There is a lake where wide-eyed lotus drift. There you could sit in you [sic] boat and play your flute, and lift your eyes to towering mountains. Not even the King himself could find that secret hiding place.\(^{421}\)

This idealistic place on the lake could have appeared as a variation of or as an alternative to Yul Island, and served as a hint to the end of the play, although this part did not remain. Above all, the adaptation keeps intact various motives that the fiction has, such as the concubine’s plot

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\(^{419}\) Kyu-ick Cho, ed. (2004), 11.


involving a shaman, Gildong’s escape from a murder through the warning of a crow, his acceptance into a band of bandits after demonstrating his intellectual and physical strength, the punishment of corrupt Buddhist monks, and the rescue of future wives (or a wife) from monsters (or hairy barbarians).

Nevertheless, *Lotus Bud* presents a drastically different message from that of the received tale. The theme explicitly represented in *Lotus Bud* is “free love,” which the play constructs by characterizing the evil concubine character, Jinju, differently, and adding a new character, Lotus Bud. The play unfolds by presenting Jinju, Gildong, and Lotus Bud’s quests for love of their own choice, that is, “free love” in Koreans’ understanding of the time. The Korean word *yeonae*, as a shortened form of *Jayuyeonae* (free love), appeared as a neologism to translate the Western word referring exclusively to romance between the sexes in the late 1910s. Carrying the Western sentiment, the word became highly popular after the March First Movement of 1919. This is because the Movement, as mentioned in previous chapters, caused the Japanese colonial regime to change its style of governance of Korea into “cultural rule” (*bunka seiji*), which, ultimately, facilitated opening up hitherto nonexistent public spaces. Accommodating both men and women, these newly appeared public spaces motivated Korean youth to practice romantic love. In this regard, Boduerae Kwon identifies the 1920s in Korea as the era of “free love,” noting the tremendous impact that “free love” exerted on the Korean society at large. To summarize Kwon’s detailed discussion: “Free love” did not necessarily mean rejecting marriage itself, but rather the traditional convention of marrying whomever one’s parents choose. The young generation’s quest for “free love,” furthermore, became representative of the awakening of individual consciousness and, thus, linked to enlightenment in the modern sense.422 By using the

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term “free love” based on such a historical connotation in the following play’s analysis, I emphasize that Koreans on the peninsula, and in the U.S. alike, experienced modernization at the micro-level. Thereby, I would argue, the Lotus Bud producers attempted to declare Korean-ness having been fully enlightened by embedding the iconic modern theme of “free love” into the fiction that was considered representative of Korean-ness.

Act I begins with the introduction of the main character, Gildong, who has been held prisoner in his own home for months. He wonders why his father, Minister Hong, has imprisoned him for so long, and suggests that Jinju may be behind his imprisonment. As the play proceeds, it turns out that Gildong had a fight at a village fair to rescue a beggar maid, who is actually Lotus Bud. This disturbance provides an excuse for Jinju to create tension between Gildong and his father. However, Jinju does not simply hate Gildong, as Chorang does in The Story of Hong Gildong; rather, she visits Gildong in prison and entices him to leave with her to enjoy freedom together. Her desire for Gildong is further explicitly expressed by Minister Hong when he is extremely drunk and tells Gildong, “Some say [Jinju] loves YOU! And you will not return her love.” The unreturned love in the end appears to be the very cause of Gildong’s hardship in his household. Indeed, although it is not clearly presented whether Gildong is Minister Hong’s illegitimate son or not, Gildong in Lotus Bud – unlike the one in The Story of Hong Gildong – freely addresses his father as father, and Minister Hong addresses Gildong as “my much loved son.” Lotus Bud, after all, portrays Gildong’s issue in his household as caused by Jinju’s desire for him rather than his natal background.

While Act I mainly discloses Jinju’s quest for “free love,” the play gradually moves its focus toward Gildong’s quest for love with Lotus Bud. At the beginning, Gildong is described as

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wishing to achieve freedom by escaping from home, which Jinju has made into “the nest of evil.” As soon as he sees Lotus Bud, however, his quest for freedom is intermingled with a quest for love. Lotus Bud comes to Minister Hong’s place disguised as a dancing girl in order to help Gildong escape from jail; she feels that perhaps she caused his imprisonment. In a short meeting with Lotus Bud in the jail cell, Gildong falls in love with her and determines that he will “escape tonight to freedom and to her.” That night, he indeed succeeds in escaping by using a donkey, which Lotus Bud has prepared herself without letting Gildong know. Then, Gildong easily, though unwittingly, reaches Lotus Bud’s residence, as the donkey that he uses has been trained to return straight home. However, Gildong’s quest for love with Lotus Bud is further complicated after this seemingly quick and easy reunion. As Act 2 begins, it turns out that Lotus Bud is the daughter of Li El Han, who was introduced earlier as the “prince of outlaws” or “prince to the poor.” While Gildong was in jail, Gildong’s house was attacked by Li El Han’s band of bandits who came to rescue an innocent man, Lum Dah. Gildong’s father unjustly accused Lum Dah as a traitor, and had him arrested and tortured in order to extort his possessions. That is, Gildong’s father, Minister Hong, is a corrupt official who harasses innocent people and exploits their possessions, and Lotus Bud’s father, Li El Han, is the leader of a band of bandits formed to punish such corrupt officials. Li El Han in fact identifies Gildong’s father as “the bitterest enemy [he] ever had in all Korea.” As the love between Gildong and Lotus Bud turns out to be an unrequited one opposed by both families, it becomes evident that Gildong’s issue is that of “free love.”

Lotus Bud had been also developing her wish to achieve “free love,” long before she met Gildong. Her friends inform the audience that Lotus Bud has been firmly and repetitiously resisting her father’s longtime request to marry a man of his choice. However, when she finally
finds the man of her choice, Gildong, she compromises her wish in order to save Gildong. As Gildong is in danger of being executed by the bandits, Lotus Bud asks her father to provide Gildong the opportunity to prove himself qualified to join his band of bandits. In return, she reluctantly accepts her father’s request to marry a man of his choice. Though Gildong is accepted into the band, the situation becomes more difficult for these two young lovers who desire “free love.” Making the situation more drastic, Li El Han finds out that Lotus Bud lent her donkey to Gildong and in so doing, even if indirectly, broke the band’s unexceptional law to not betray their residence, and so decides to imprison Lotus Bud. On her way to the prison, Lotus Bud is kidnapped by hairy barbarians disguised as Buddhist monks, who have been harassing innocent people. After six missing pages, Act 3 begins with the hairy barbarians preparing for their chief’s wedding with Lotus Bud in a dilapidated Buddhist monastery. Lotus Bud is indeed in danger of being forced to marry a man whom she does not love.

The extant manuscript concludes with a disguised Gildong coming to the hairy barbarians in order to save Lotus Bud. That is, the last part of Lotus Bud looks like a combination of two scenes from The Story of Hong Gildong: Gildong’s punishment of corrupt Buddhist monks and his marriages with women whom he saves from monsters. Such a rearrangement may appear to shift the focus from Gildong’s social endeavors to eliminate corruption and realize social justice – highlighted in The Story of Hong Gildong – to his private quest for individual happiness. Nonetheless, his quest for “free love” could have been read as inseparable from his desire for social reform, given that, “free love,” as Boduerae Kwon notes, had far-reaching implications about social reform during this period. Many modern novelists on the peninsula in the 1920s, according to Kwon, coupled “private passions inspired by romantic love” with “passion for the
nation and for enlightenment.” In a similar vein, the theme of “free love” of *Lotus Bud* could have been understood to represent a new, modern outlook on social reform and national redemption, one believed as hinged on “free love.” Above all, *Lotus Bud* expresses both of the allegedly traditional Korean story about a chivalrous, heroic act of Hong Gildong, and the modern story of his romance with Lotus Bud. With this entwined traditional and modern Korean-ness, Korean immigrants who engaged in *Lotus Bud* most highly likely represented their liminal identity as ethnic Koreans in pursuit of modernizing themselves.

Undoubtedly, the theme of “free love” could have been incorporated to represent, rather literally, young Korean immigrants’ changing view on love and marriage from that of their parents’ generation. This young generation’s quest for love, one opposed by their parents, could have then been also interpreted, if loosely, as implying an interracial romance in the multiracial context of Hawai‘i. The interracial romance had been on a rapidly increasing trend in Hawai‘i, particularly since the passage of the national-origin quota system in 1924. As it became impossible to sustain the practice of bringing Korean women from the peninsula as picture brides, more than half of Korean immigrants, according to Duk Hee Lee, married non-Koreans during the 1930s. The issue of interracial romance was after all one of the most critical issues for Korean immigrants, as it was so for other ethnic groups in Hawai‘i at the time.

Notably, the issue of “interracial romance,” according to Josephine Lee, was one of the most prevailing themes that were explored in plays written by Asian Americans during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Lee calls attention to a ten-volume play anthology comprised of 127 student plays written for the classes of English professor Willard Wilson at the University of Hawai‘i, *College Plays 1937-1955*, which includes twenty-two plays allegedly

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423 Boduerae Kwon (2014), 32.
424 Duk Hee Lee (Murabayashi) (2003), 221.
written by Asian Americans. In so doing, she posits that these Asian American pioneering plays served to produce, reproduce, and reinforce a “myth of Hawaii as a melting pot in which Asian American assimilation becomes the living proof of a more liberal and tolerant America.”°425 Lee then demonstrates that such a myth was often represented through the theme of “interracial romance” by providing in-depth analyses of plays included in College Plays. For instance, three Japanese-American plays – Bessie Toshigawa’s Nisei (1946-7), James K. Irikura’s Broadminded (1947-8), and Edward Sakai’s And Never the Twain Shall Meet? (1947-8) – portray main characters’ interracial romances, according to Lee’s interpretation, as “part of a larger pattern of racial mixing inspired by the inevitable effects of American leniency” while locating parents’ opposition to them “in the unreasonable prejudice of ‘traditional’ Asian parents.”°426 The “interracial romance” was in the end not only one of the prevailing issues among Asian Americans of the time but also a literary theme adopted to promote the idealized image of Hawaiian multiculturalism.

A question that should be asked about Lotus Bud, thus, would be if its performance would have represented the trend of Asian American assimilation in Hawai‘i, even if the play does not directly deal with the theme of interracial romance. In the next section, I examine the 1934 production, particularly its performers, consider its audience composition, and analyze the staging of Lotus Bud. In so doing, I contend that the performance of Lotus Bud portrayed its characters featuring Asian American panethnicity as well as Korean ethnic identity. By demonstrating the compatibility of the two identities, the Lotus Bud performers – mostly comprised of second-generation Korean Americans – represented another aspect of their liminal

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426 Josephine Lee, 312-315.
identity – in addition to the aforementioned aspect derived from the modernization process. They were, indeed, part of the U.S.-born Koreans residing in Hawai‘i, where Asian immigrants comprised the largest racial category but where Whites, nevertheless, dictated the cultural standards that by default, shaped Asians’ perception of themselves.

**Performing Both Korean Ethnic Identity and Asian American Panethnicity**

Kyu-ick Cho surmises that *Lotus Bud* was staged at the University of Hawai‘i in 1934. He based his supposition on an unidentified photo included in *A Study on Korean Immigration and Independence Movements in Hawai‘i* by Incheol Oh. The photo captures six young girls in Korean traditional costumes standing side by side, with the following caption:

A 1934 Grouping of the Pho Sung Whe – the University of Hawai‘i Korean Girls’ Club, which later took the name of Beta Gammas. At left is a group of little dancing girls interpreting Korean culture in a “Lotus Bud” titled play.

Cho adds to this information another document that he found. Although Cho found no information about its author, date, and publisher, he concludes this document as part of the “70th anniversary pamphlet,” for it states:

One outstanding event in the early 1930s was the presentation of the Korean classical drama *Hong Gil-Tong* [*The Story of Hong Gildong*] directed by Fern Weaver McQueston at the Farrington Theatre, University of Hawai‘i, with Rose Shon, Bernice Kim, and Arthur Song, leads. […] This was the first major stage project undertaken by the ‘older-young immigrants’ and the second generation Korean-Americans resulting in closer relationships between these two groups. *Lotus Bud* was another production involving the entire Korean Community.

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428 Incheol Oh, *Hawai‘i Hanin Imin-gwa Dongnip Undong* [*A Study on Korean Immigration and Independence Movements in Hawai‘i*], vol.1 (Gwangju: Chunil Silup Chulpanguk, 1999), 490. As Oh does not identify the source, one cannot substantiate the context in which this photo was taken, printed, and published. Given that the Pho Sung Whe published its newsletters since its foundation in 1934, however, the photo may have been included in a newsletter that is no longer extant. See also: Jaewe Dongpo Jaedan [Overseas Koreans Foundation], *Baengnyeon-eul Ulrin Gaelic-ho-ui Godongsori* [*The Whistle of S.S. Gaelic Blowing for 100 Years*] (Seoul: Hyeonsil Munhwa Yeongu, 2007), 154-155.
Based on these documents, Cho posits that Korean students at the University of Hawai‘i produced *The Story of Hong Gildong* sometime between 1930 and 1933, and its adapted version of *Lotus Bud* in 1934.\(^{430}\)

Considering that *The Story of Hong Gildong* was probably staged at the University of Hawai‘i just like *Lotus Bud*, I posit that the two productions would have been produced similarly, and speculate the productions by utilizing the both materials that Cho provided. The Pho Sung Whe, or Boseonghoe, was a Korean girl’s association founded at the University of Hawai‘i in 1934. According to Duk Hee Lee, this association published newsletters beginning with its foundation, although no copy remains.\(^{431}\) Given the dearth of identifiable sources, the U.S. School Yearbooks can enable scholars to further extrapolate the production’s composition. For instance, the 1932 Yearbook of the University of Hawai‘i mentions the name of Bernice Kim as a student of the class of 1935, as well as a member of a literary society of Hawai‘i Quill. However, none of the other three names mentioned in the aforementioned unidentified pamphlet – Rose Shon, Arthur Song, and Fern McQuestion – is found in the University’s yearbook, but rather they appear in the 1936 Yearbook of McKinley High School. This historical document reveals that Fern McQuestion and Rose Shon served as advisers, respectively for “Mick Players” that aimed to “create interest in dramatic work” and for the “Korean Cultural Club,” the purpose of which was to “study the culture of Korea and to bring unity and fellowship among students.” Given the connection of these clubs’ activities with theatre performance, it would seem from the circumstances reasonable to conclude that at least these two individuals are identical to those mentioned in the pamphlet. Though the name of Arthur Song is not found as spelled, the 1936 McKinley document includes a name of “A. Song” as a student member of the “McKinley Hi-Y

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\(^{431}\) Duk Hee Lee (Murabayashi) (2003), 62.
“Federation” – a club to “create, maintain, and extend throughout the school and community high standards of Christian character.” In synthesizing all of the information, I contend that *The Story of Hong Gildong* was staged at the University of Hawai‘i not solely by its students but also by students and staff from McKinley High School. *Lotus Bud* could have been produced in a similar manner, though I acknowledge as a possibility the exclusive involvement of the University’s Korean girls’ association in it. Above all, I identify *The Story of Hong Gildong* and its adaptation *Lotus Bud* as theatre performances that second-generation Korean students from the Hawaiian public schools produced.

It is noteworthy that both the University of Hawai‘i and McKinley High School had a large Asian American student body. Asian immigrants comprised the largest racial category of Hawai‘i of the 1930s, and consequently, students of Asian descent in Hawaiian public schools significantly outnumbered Whites. McKinley High School, for instance, had 2,339 students in 1929, among whom 43% were of Japanese ancestry and 20% of Chinese parentage, 11% Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, and only 10% of haole. In the case of the University of Hawai‘i, its various academic departments, particularly the sociology department, embraced non-White students, under the heavy influence of the Chicago School of Sociology that began in the 1920s to investigate Hawai‘i, identifying it as “the ultimate racial laboratory.” Accordingly, the department’s professors frequently assigned and actively encouraged their non-White students to write about their ethnic communities. Although such projects facilitated non-White students to experience or revive their ethnic pride, those students’ papers, as Anne Soon Choi points out, served White researchers as sources “to access process of assimilation, race relations, rates of

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intermarriage, and class mobility.” More critically, as indicated in Josephine Lee’s analysis of Asian American plays written for a class at the University of Hawai‘i, those White academics’ approach to non-White students, ultimately, promoted the students’ assimilation to the cultural standard that they set. Second-generation Korean American students’ experiences in the Asian-dominated Hawaiian public schools, in the end, would have facilitated their assimilation and embracement of what Yen Le Espiritu calls “Asian American Panethnicity.”

Espiritu defines Asian American panethnicity as “a politico-cultural collectivity made up of people of several, hitherto distinct, tribal, or national origins” such as China, Japan, Korea, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, and various Pacific Islands. Though she focuses mainly on Asian Americans’ voluntary and pragmatic adoption of panethnicity since the 1960s to fight against anti-Asian sentiments and violence, she also clarifies that the panethnic concept was imposed first by outsiders in pre-1960s. Labeled as “Oriental,” Asian immigrants were lumped together as one homogeneous group, even though they were, and still are, people of diverse national origins with distinctive cultures, histories, religions, and languages. Espiritu suggests that panethnicity is an efficient, or inevitable, choice for Asian Americans who live among people who do not distinguish between the various Asian groups, and proposes to adopt the panethnicity as a weapon to fight against inequity. Although not as subversively as Espiritu proposes, I posit that Lotus Bud includes dramaturgical choices to show that second-generation Korean Americans embraced to some degree the panethnicity imposed on them, particularly in its staging. Those choices could have been made to cater to the production’s non-Korean audience members, many of whom were likely Asian American students. At the same time though, I contend that Korean American students who staged Lotus Bud aimed to reveal their

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435 Anne Soon Choi, 147.
436 Josephine Lee, 308.
437 Yen Le Espiritu, 2.
belief that embracing the panethnic notion of “Oriental” would not necessarily lead to the loss of their distinctive Korean ethnic identity.

Lotus Bud describes its characters’ various characteristics with the adjective “Oriental.” Act I, as mentioned, is set in a jail where Gildong has been imprisoned for months. The stage direction describes the jail having “Oriental scrolls,” along with “a high Korean chest, low table, books, writing brushes,” all of which indicate that “obviously the occupant is a Korean and Chinese scholar.” The stage direction continues to describe the sound being played as “Oriental music.” The hidden village where Li El Han’s band of bandits resides is also identified as “an Oriental village nestling in mountains,” while Act 2 and Act 3 are mostly set in nature, like “beautiful mountain top” (Act 2) and “another mountain top” (Act 3). The world of Lotus Bud represented in its production would have thus featured not necessarily Korean-ness but “Oriental-ness,” though it is questionable as to what those “Oriental” scenic and sound designs would have been like.

Many of the play’s characters could have also looked more “Oriental” than Korean. First, some of the minor characters’ names are unlikely Korean. For example, the names of Gildong’s servant, the jailor, and the innocent person imprisoned by Minister Hong are Mansa, Ye Tung, and Lum Dah respectively, all of which are hardly Koreans’ names. One may conclude that only these minor characters are meant to be non-Korean Asian. However, the main characters, although apparently Korean, are not exempt from such “Oriental” descriptions. For instance, Gildong writes with an “Oriental brush” and Jinju and Minister Hong are described as wearing “gorgeous Oriental clothes or robes.” Not only are costumes and props described with the adjective “Oriental,” but also the main characters. Gildong, for instance, is described as “lying on the floor sleeping in Oriental fashion,” while Lotus Bud is portrayed as a “delicate flowerlike
figure resembling the pictured fairies of the Orient.” In short, all of the characters in *Lotus Bud* are supposed to embody Oriental manners and images to some degree.

Gildong and Lotus Bud, nevertheless, perform a type of traditional Korean performing arts during the production. Gildong, while being locked in jail, “quotes poetry or lines from a Korean play,” which presumably requires him to present ten different voices. Thus, an actor playing Gildong may have performed in the style of the traditional Korean performing arts of *pansori*, in which a single singer-narrator acts out roles of all characters appearing in the given script as well as the role of a narrator. The play also requires the actress playing the role of Lotus Bud to present traditional Korean dance. Having come to Minister Hong’s place as a dancing girl in disguise, Lotus Bud is described as “[leading] girls in posturing dance or by herself [doing] the drum dance in which men hold the drum and she beats upon it with many skillful twists and turns.” Through the performance of traditional performing arts, Gildong and Lotus Bud are thus supposed to present their distinctive Korean-ness.

The production of *Lotus Bud* in the end would have featured “Oriental-ness” in its scenic, sound, and costume designs and acting styles as well as Korean-ness particularly through elements of traditional Korean performing arts. That is, Korean American students in Hawai‘i who engaged in the production of *Lotus Bud* ultimately embodied both Oriental-ness and Korean-ness throughout the play. In so doing, the production rendered Koreans as panethnically Asian, but simultaneously, distinctively Korean, particularly in terms of possession of their own tradition. Such portrayal thus would have appeared to characterize preserving Korean-ness and embracing American norms as readily compatible in an individual’s identity, while manifesting that the racial lumping would not, or could not, wipe out the distinctive Korean-ness.

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Nevertheless, it should be noted that the enacted Korean tradition was that being significantly altered, given that the play in and of itself is a drastically changed adaptation of the Korean literary canon. In the end, *Lotus Bud* presents seemingly contradictory attempts that second-generation Korean Americans made to modify, or modernize, Korean tradition, but at the same time attribute their tenacious Korean-ness to such modified Korean tradition. In so doing, *Lotus Bud* ultimately presents the new Korean identity as changing, yet distinctive, and thus, such modernized Korean-ness as communicable, understandable, and appreciable to non-Korean members of Hawai‘i.

**Conclusion**

As Lisa Lowe insightfully comments, tradition, as part of culture, is formed through “a much ‘messier’ process than unmediated vertical transmission from one generation to another, including practices that are partly inherited, partly modified, as well as partly invented.” The two cases discussed in this chapter – Ha Soo Whang’s Hyung Jay Club and the production of *Lotus Bud* – show that such “messy” processes occurred in Korean communities in Hawai‘i in the 1920s and 1930s particularly due to two, yet tightly intertwined, critical changes they were experiencing, namely modernization and Americanization. My discussion disclosed that Korean immigrants in Hawai‘i did not attempt to authentically reproduce Korean tradition, perhaps in part – but only in part – because they did not have enough knowledge to do so. Living in-between tradition and modernity, and the fatherland of Korea and homeland of Hawai‘i, their primary concern was to reconcile the dual pulls of demonstrating a distinctly Korean ethnic identity as well as embracing Asian American panethnicity. In performing “old Korea,” Koreans

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in Hawai‘i thus envisioned the “new Korea” to be an ideal place in which they, as modernized Koreans, could present their indigenous aesthetics that readily coexisted with the civilized world’s cultural standard. However, as I have engaged, their performance of Korean tradition arose from their somewhat superficially glossing their own traditions and their perhaps unconsciously accepting the Whites’ practice of lumping all Asians together. In this regard, it is significant to highlight that Korean-ness was fostered, shared, and performed first exclusively among Koreans in the enclosed Korean organization of language schools, and then through a cultural organization (Hyung Jay Club) under an American organization (YWCA), and finally at Hawaiian public schools. Arguably, this process helped Koreans widen their influence in the Hawaiian public sphere, while also facilitating their adaptation to American cultural standards, including multiculturalism. As modernization meant to integrate Korea into the modern global order, Koreans could not help but reframe Korean-ness, not exclusively based on their self-perception, but rather, on civilized outsiders’, namely Americans’, perception. The performance of “old Korea” ultimately served to represent “new Korea” – the “pure modern” Korea envisioned by Koreans in the early twentieth century with their imagined, idealized, and mystified understanding of modernity.
EPILOGUE

Returned Censorship, Demanding Pure Art

This dissertation has investigated theatrical activities by Korean immigrants in the U.S. during the early twentieth century. It has in the process demonstrated vibrancy of theatrical activities and their centrality in nationalist movements in Korean communities in the U.S. I have also challenged the prevailing national theatre historiography that has mainly reproduced a geographically and aesthetically limited discussion of early modern Korean theatre. In contrast to Korean theatre historiography, which has largely neglected Korean diasporic theatre and harshly denounced hybrid theatrical forms produced during the Japanese colonial period, I have argued that those early Korean American plays significantly contributed to the development of ethnic identity and nationalism by incorporating hybrid forms. Thereby I have called for a less tendentious and more sustained and serious study of hybrid theatrical performances produced by Koreans on and outside of the peninsula than they have received to date. Nonetheless, I certainly do not mean to say that theatre performances facilitating the development and maintenance of an imagined entity of nation should be more valued than those not necessarily concerned with nation. This clarification appears to be critical as the correlation between purity and nationality in arts has emerged as a contentious issue in South Korea in 2015. In an effort to prevent potential misinterpretations of my argument, as well as to stress an urgent necessity to challenge the pairing of two equally illusory concepts of pure and national in discussion of art, I end this work with this epilogue. Hereby, I discuss the return of theatre censorship and its related debates on pure art in South Korean theatre. My ultimate goal, however, is to underline that the concept
of pure art in Korea carries a vestige of the Japanese colonial period, and thus, cannot be completely denounced without a clear understanding about the genesis of modern Korea as well as modern Korean theatre historiography – the very issues that this dissertation investigates.

On September 10, 2015, JTBC, a South Korean broadcasting company, reported that a theatre production had been censored. The Arts Council Korea (ARKO) – affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism – has operated a program called the Creativity Incubator since 2008, and annually appoints theatre artists and critics as judges, with the power to select plays to fund their production. This year, however, ARKO reportedly asked the judges to exclude a certain piece from final consideration. When the judges refused to do so, ARKO took it upon itself to adjust the outcome, and pressured the playwright-cum-director Geun-hyeong Park to give up his bid. Park eventually retracted his submission, as he was warned by ARKO employees that, if he resisted, he would be compromising other selectees’ awards.440 This report undoubtedly raised indignation among theatre practitioners and scholars, as well as other genre artists. Regardless of its underlying cause, this case revealed that censorship has returned to the South Korean theatre in 2015. Still, it should be closely inspected as to what caused the return of the censorship, which definitely appears as unbelievably anachronistic to Korean artists.

The JTBC report surmised that ARKO took issue with Frog, which Geun-hyeong Park produced in 2013 with the National Theater Company of Korea. Park adapted the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes’s The Frogs into a debate between former presidents Chung-hee Park (1917-1979) and Moo-hyun Roh (1946-2009), and portrayed the former significantly more negatively than the latter. Though not mentioned in the report, the play that Geun-hyeong Park submitted this year, All Soldiers Are Pitiful, also includes a satirizing, or in some people’s

interpretation, a demeaning section, which refers to former president Chung-hee Park. The play proceeds by alternately presenting four separate stories. Each revolves around, respectively, Koreans joining the Japanese kamikaze (military aviators who aimed at suicide attacks) in the 1940s, a Korean kidnapped and murdered by Islamic militants in 2004, Korean soldiers surviving a navy ship sinking, and a runaway soldier in contemporary Korea, to narrate in chronological order. In the section depicting colonial Korea, a character named Masaki appears to represent a truly pro-Japanese (or Japanized) Korean who gratefully joins the Japanese army with a belief in the total extinction of Korea. This character cannot but remind many Koreans of Chung-hee Park, as Park used the Japanese name Masao Takaki during the colonial period, and served as a lieutenant in Japan’s army. Furthermore, the character Masaki appears to have a younger sister named Dong-hee Park, which is the name of Chung-hee Park’s elder brother. Thus, this part of the play can be read as Geun-hyeong Park’s critique of Chung-hee Park, or at least his career as a soldier during the Japanese colonial period. By extension, the playwright’s recent projects (including Frog) could thus appear taking issues with the legitimacy of the current president, Geun-hye Park, who assumed the presidency in 2013 by emphasizing the fact that she is the daughter of Chung-hee Park.

In my observation of the 2013 premiere of All Soldiers Are Pitiful, however, the play criticizes not simply former and current presidents, but rather, Koreans’ blind adherence to a concept of minjok defining Korean people as a mono-ethnic group sharing pure blood and unconditional aspirations for civilization, notably including their loyalty towards the U.S. and Christian beliefs. In other words, I read Park’s play as aiming at various epistemologies developed under the contested dynamics of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism in the early twentieth century. In staging the two apparently history-based episodes related to World War II
and the Iraq War in 2004, the playwright gives voice to those who have been considered as standing against Korea: the pro-Japanese and the Islamist group. The character Masaki seemingly genuinely tells his Japanese friends: “Though I am from the peninsula, I believe that the blood flowing through my body now is not different from yours.” He also desperately asks his mother and sister not to “act like Joseon people” since all of them, in his belief, have become Japanese, and he “bravely” dies as a kamikaze pilot. The portrayal of Masaki, in my interpretation, asks if being pro-Japanese could mean being patriotic when Korea did not even exist as a nation-state. The question that the character Masaki ultimately provokes is: what does it mean to be a member of a nation-state?

The scene where the Korean is kidnapped and murdered by Islamic militants in the play is based on a historical incident. In 2003, a Korean named Sun-il Kim (1970-2004), who worked for a South Korean trading company, arrived in Iraq, and was shortly thereafter kidnapped by the Islamist group and publicly executed in 2004. In portraying this historical incident, Geun-hyeong Park highlights the facts that Kim identified himself as a Christian missionary when kidnapped, and the company that he worked for was under contract by the American military. In so doing, Park rationalizes, although does not justify, the Islamist group’s final decision to execute Kim; Kim could not help but appear to the Iraqis as a pro-American who had the intention to forcefully propagate the American religion while working for the American soldiers. One Iraqi character explicitly states in English that “Korea, this is your punishment for taking sides with America” when carrying out the execution in the play.\textsuperscript{441} \textit{All Soldiers Are Pitiful}, thus, provokes questions about Koreans’ conception of minjok and their adherence to the U.S. and its values.

\textsuperscript{441} Geun-hyeong Park, \textit{Modeun Gunin-eun Bulssanghada [All Soldiers Are Pitiful]} (unpublished play script used for the performance at the Korea National University of Arts, October 17-19, 2013). It is more than likely that this version differs from one submitted to the Creative Incubator this year. However, as the playwright firmly objects to the circulation of this play, I analyze the play based on my memory of having watched the 2013 production, while including citations of the play based on already circulated fragments.
which served as base for the vision of “pure modern” Korea and has continued to shape modern Korea.

In response to the JTBC’s report that identified the issue as a political act of censoring pure art (explicitly in its title), an internet-based newspaper, the *Mediapen*, has published two editorials arguing that Park’s play is not pure. Providing citations from *All Soldiers Are Pitiful*, a reporter named Seo-young Lee evaluates the play as accomplishing nothing more than negatively portraying Chung-hee Park, the U.S.’s participation in the Iraq War, and Korean soldiers. In so doing, the play, in her view, conveys anti-nationalistic messages filled with biased political views, and thus, should not become a national project funded by the nation. The editorial concludes with a statement that “there would be so many great plays presenting purely theatrical aesthetics without entailing destructive and consumptive political controversies.”*442* Wu-seok Cho, who identifies himself as a culture critic, also published an essay in the *Mediapen* where he questioned, “which countries’ artists are you, those who make a great fuss about creative and satirical freedom? I assert that it is a seriously shameful and vulgar act to covet nationals’ bloody taxes for staging such an anti-nationalistic piece.”*443* Those editorials, in other words, associate artistic purity with patriotism, and define anti-national theatre productions as aesthetically impure.

Though Korean theatre artists and historians understandably have been tied up for objecting to what appears to be the return of censorship, I argue that it is significant to delve into the usage of adjectives such as *pure*, *political*, and *national* in the rendition of the issue on media. While the JTBC identified the production at issue as *pure* and thus censoring it as

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political, the Mediapen counteracted by analyzing the play as political, and anti-national, thus impure. The issue in the end calls not only for criticizing the return of censorship, but also for questioning the prevailing way of evaluating an artwork with such loaded concepts of purity, nation, and politics. Though appearing to take its premise the confrontational dichotomy of aesthetics and politics, the 2015 theatre censorship controversy, I argue, reveals the inseparability of the aesthetic and political discourses. As the French philosopher Jacques Rancière insightfully articulates, politics and aesthetics equally “revolve around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who had ability to see and the talent to speak, and around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.” Ultimately, what the ARKO attempted to repress was the artistic (thus political) will and power to “distribute” what an artist believes should become “sensible” to Koreans: the Japanese colonial legacies that still affect contemporary South Koreans.445

I identify this theatre censorship controversy as a corollary in and of itself of the colonial epistemology of the arts that led to the hierarchization of theatre productions by drawing on the concept of purity. As I previously noted, during the colonial period, elite theatre artists denounced hybrid forms and defended their productions of Western modern dramas by claiming them as aesthetically pure. Independent of their literal wordings and phrasings, elites’ criticism on commercial entertainment comprised of hybrid theatrical forms appears not to take aim at the forms’ national origins or hybrid aesthetics, but rather on performances’ presumed efficacy in nation-building. Considering that these cultural reformists promoted modernization modeled after Western civilization, they could have genuinely believed that their projects of staging

Western dramas contributed to the building of Korea as a modern nation. Mainstream theatre artists and historians in colonial and post-colonial Korea, I contend, ultimately, adopted the illusive concept of *aesthetic purity* for the purpose of declaring theatre’s efficacy in nation building and progress, and circulated it widely as a frame for Korean national theatre historiography.

The Korean national theatre historiography framed with *aesthetic purity*, moreover, represents Koreans’ understanding of the nation, or more specifically, *minjok*. As I have noted throughout this dissertation, the concept of *minjok* developed under the foreign threats in the early twentieth century to render Koreans as an extended family and therefore, provide an imagined sense of oneness and emotional affiliation. Grounded in *minjok*, the concept of citizenship in both South and North Koreas, according to Suk-young Kim, “has been presented with a heavy-handed, top-down imposition of state ideals,” unlike its usage in Western tradition commonly denoting “dual dimensions of right and duty that bind individuals to a larger community.” In other words, Koreans’ approach to citizenship emphasizes the citizens’ duty more than their rights vis-à-vis the state. Such emphasis in post-colonial Korea is justifiable considering the stark reality of a divided nation-state; but it cannot help but entail tremendously problematic byproducts. As disclosed in the 2015 censorship controversy, some Koreans suppose that Korean artistic expressions should support state ideals just as being a Korean citizen is predominantly conditioned by serving national duties. Echoing this logic, the Korean national theatre historiography, if inadvertently, has been reproducing the absurd definition of the *pure art* as an art for nation.

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Undoubtedly, it is questionable at best that every artwork should aim to contribute to the nation-state. More fundamentally, there cannot be a single unified voice in what improves the nation-state. Many contemporary Koreans, including myself, support theatre productions projecting critical voices toward various ideologies that have shaped Korean modern history, such as Geun-hyeong Park’s *All Soldiers Are Pitiful*. I do not necessarily want to defend it by stating how conducive this play is for the nation-state; but I do not agree with labeling it as an anti-nationalist play, and definitely disagree with criticizing it for not presenting purely theatrical aesthetics. To be precise, my point is that *pure art* is just as much a fantasy as is *pure modern nation*. I hope that my work illuminates that such absurd pairing between aesthetics and *purity* carries the burden of the Japanese colonial legacy on modern Korea. I also hope that this project will contribute to reformulating Korean national theatre historiography by freeing it from the illusory concepts of *pure art* and *pure nation*, which still haunt Korean theatre at the very moment as I am completing this dissertation.
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