

The Billboards of Modern Nation and the Visual Adaptations of *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* in Colonial Korea

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〈Abstract〉

Korea's modernity is often complicated by the presence of colonial experiences in tension with the nationalist movement. And such dominant narrative had undermined the role industrial technology and mass media played in informing and shaping the modern masses and popular culture. In recent years, however, the new generations of scholars began to reconsider the makings of Korea's popular culture in the early twentieth century and how it coped with and responded to the historical and political conditions of the time. *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* in this sense can shed a new light on the relationship between Korea's modernity and the mass media because its new surge of popularity in the first half of the twentieth century paralleled and reflected the development of industrial technology and popular culture. One of the most beloved folktales in its various adaptations had become a very effective vehicle through which the masses experienced new modes of seeing

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and understanding the world around them. Like many women of the time, the recreated facets of Ch'unhyang also acted as a billboard which articulated and exhibited contrasting images of Korea's modernity. In order to trace the cultural implications of *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* in its recreations in Colonial Korea, this paper first examines some of the most popular visual adaptations in light of one particular parody written in an early form of comic strip.

Keywords : Colonial Korea, *The Tale of Ch'unbyang*, visual adaptations, comic strip

In 1907, Tansŏng Theater recognized the world's growing fascination with cinema and visual culture and started showing films instead of theatrical plays. More movie theaters, such as Kyŏngsŏng Theater founded in 1910, quickly emerged and by December 1912-, Umigwan Theater on Chongno Street began to screen European films, beginning with *Quo Vadis?* (dir. Lucien Nonguet and Ferdinand Zecca, 1901) and *The Last Days of Pompeii* (dir. Arturo Ambrosio, 1908). Then, in 1919, Kim To-san produced Korea's first own kino-drama, entitled *Fight for Justice* (Ūirijŏk kur'o), in which images and short film clips were inserted into a theatrical play. Four years after the production of this kino-drama, Hayakawa Kōshu who was the founder of Tong'a Culture Association as well as the owner of Chosŏn Theater and Hwanggŭm Theater recreated *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* into a silent film. Prompted by the success of this film, Korea's film industry grew rapidly as Koreans, too, began to produce films. *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* was a perennially popular subject for filmmakers, and as a result it was always through the remakes of the folktale that new cinematic technology was introduced to the Korean audience or revitalized the frail postwar film industry. The folktale was made into the first talkie-film in 1935 and the first colored film in 1961. When South Korean

society was devastated by the Korean War (1950-1953), Yi Kyu-hwan's film adaptation, released in 1955, revitalized the Korean film industry and provided relief to the war-stricken nation. Since the folktale was published in modern Korean script *han'gŭl* for the first time in 1912, most of the visual and written adaptations that drew large crowds adhered very closely to the romantic rendition of the folktale focusing on the romance or "romantic feelings" between Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong as well as the former's virtue and loyalty. Hayakawa's first film adaptation of the folktale was no exception.

Although none of the films survived, the newspapers at the time reported that Hayakawa hired a popular storyteller (pyōnsa or benshi in Japanese), Kim Cho-sōng, and kisaeng Han Ryong to play the leading roles. Screened in Chosŏn Theater on October 18, 1923, the film adaptation of the folktale highlighted Ch'unhyang's virtue and "single-hearted devotion" (il'p'yŏn tansim). According to *Maeil Newspaper*, the film featured leading actors who were from Namwŏn, the region in which the folktale is situated,¹⁾ and it was also filmed there in an attempt to depict the tale as a true story. The newspaper reported that with its portrayal of Ch'unhyang as an "exemplary wife," the film moved the audience.²⁾ In order to make a realistic version of the folktale, the film director was careful to choose the film setting in Namwŏn region and hire a real Chosŏn *kisaeng* Han Myōng-ok (a.k.s. Han Ryong)³⁾ to play the role of Ch'unhyang. While transforming a fictional character to an embodiment of virtue and beauty, the film director also tried to recreate Korea's "traditional" past on screen, and painstakingly differentiated objects he deemed authentic Asian style from those Western which may be inappropriate to the film. In his interview, the film director stated, "I made the utmost effort to

1) *Maeil Newspaper* 22 & 23 Aug. 1923

2) "Screening of The Tale of Ch'unhyang." *Chosŏn Daily* 19 Oct. 1923.

3) *Maeil Newspaper* 23 Aug. 1923.

exclude things like electric wires, brick buildings, Japanese-style houses, rickshaws; or people dressed in Western clothes, wearing a short haircut, or Western shoes.”⁴⁾ The film was a great success; not only did it draw a large crowd but it also confirmed the infinite possibilities of film media and ushered in a new era of visual culture.

The following year, in November 1924, the Chosŏn Acting School was founded by the writer-actor Hyŏn Ch’ŏl and the film director Yi Ku-yŏng.⁵⁾ By 1926, cinema had become one of the most popular forms of mass media, a fact that was celebrated by intellectuals like the ones who wrote for the popular magazine, *Pyŏlgŏn’gon*:

In truth, cinema has already conquered literature. Literature in general is intellectual and contemplative whereas all cinema needs is a gaze and it is capable of affecting more than just the intellect. It’s also more economically advantageous because all you need is 30~40 *chŏn* per night to watch in person an actual event worth several novels (production) merely in a few hours in a busy world... Chosŏn culture is gradually absorbed into cinema... Hail to Chosŏn’s cinema. When all is said and done, today’s civilization is about radios, sports, and cinema.⁶⁾

Particularly notable was the increase in female viewership:

The major change is that every day the movie theaters are packed with more women than men, ranging from old ladies to married women,

4) Ibid.

5) The Chosŏn Acting School lasted for only two years because Hyŏn and Yi had a fallout over Tansŏng Film Production’s Suggyŏng nangja chon in 1926. The school, however, produced the first generation of film actors, including Hye-suk Pok and Kŭm-ryong Yi, who later played a part in the stage and film adaptations of *The Tale of Ch’unhyang* in 1925 and 1955, respectively.

6) Sŭng’il, “Radio, sŭp’osŭ, shinema,” *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* January 1926.

kisaeng, and female students. Interestingly enough, female students who have barely reached sexual awakening make up more than half of the female audience.⁷⁾

The 1923 film adaptation of the folktale revealed great potential in Korean cinema. According to a survey conducted by the Film Censorship Branch of the Government Publication Sector, in 1927 Japan had 1,018 movie theaters whereas Korea had only about 50: the most of these were in Kyōnggi Province (10), with the smallest number in the Py'ōngbuk area (1) and none in Kangwōn Province.⁸⁾ The same report also noted that North and South Hamgyōng Provinces had a surprisingly high number of movie-goers due to the lack of other entertainment venues.

Figure 1. Total number of movie theaters and moviegoers from January to June 1926⁹⁾

7) "Kūkjang mandam," *Pyōlgōn'gon* March 1927.

8) Chōngmuguk tošō kwa yōnghwa kōmyōlgye Survey, "Ilbon pukgando poda chōgūn chosōn yōnghwa sangsōlgwan," *Tong'a Daily* 6 Feb. 1927.

9) *Tong'a Daily* 6 Feb. 1927.

Province	Number of Movie Theaters	Number of Viewers
Kyōngsōng	10	10549,468
Ch'ungbuk	1	7,205
Ch'ungnam	5	17,425
Chōnbuk	4	42,130
Chōnnam	4	51,826
Kyōngbuk	4	11,691
Kyōngnam	4	4232,820
Hwanghae	5	22,023
Py'ōngnam	4	24,205
Py'ōngbuk	1	32,499
Hamnam	3	69,699
Hambuk	5	45,045
Kangwōn	0	0

The total number of tickets sold reached 2,600,000 in 1927 and increased by an average of 1,000,000 every year. By 1935, approximately 8,800,000 tickets were sold.¹⁰⁾ Through the popularization of movies, people were now experiencing, as Miriam Hansen puts it, “new modes of organizing vision and sensory perception, a new relationship with ‘things,’ different forms of mimetic experience and expression, of affectivity, temporality, and reflexivity, a changing fabric of everyday life, sociability, and leisure.”¹¹⁾ Around this time, the Korean filmmakers were ready to produce their own talkie films, the first one being *The Tale of Ch'unhyang*. Already before its release, the film was predicted to be a hit, as it was based on Korea's most beloved folktale.¹²⁾

10) Hyōn-gu Kang, “Yōnghwa sosōl ūi sidae pyōl koch'al,” *Ōmun nonjip* (Seoul: Minjok ō munhakhōe, 2004) 491.

11) Miriam B. Hansen, “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism,” 60.

12) *Chosōn Daily* 16 Aug. 1935.

As is the case with Hayakawa's film, footage of this film no longer exists, but newspaper and journal records indicate that the film was produced by Kyōngsōng Film Production and directed by a well-known film director, Yi Myōng-u, in 1935. It consisted of four parts: love, separation, waiting/longing, and reunion.¹³⁾ The screening lasted for ten days, from October 4 to 13, 1935. Noting that people were generally more familiar with Yi Hae-jo's written adaptation of the folktale than the premodern versions, a reporter from *Chosŏn Daily* criticized the film for misrepresenting Old Korea.¹⁴⁾ He also criticized producers for focusing only on box-office revenue: "The filmmakers should have at least tried to reflect accurately the culture and customs of the time on which the story is based. They should have made the film more classic or traditional to induce the audience to feel nostalgic and to reminisce about the past Korea."¹⁵⁾ The reporter believed that the movie did not adequately represent Korean culture because its entire production was too influenced by Western and Japanese cinema.

Furthermore, the reporter criticized the film producer for misinterpreting the folktale and treating it merely as a love story, ignoring the characters' age and their social background. The reporter stressed that the folktale was more than a simple love story and the lovers' social background must be taken into account. He went on to indicate that the producer – a Japanese resident of Korea – did not understand integral motifs of the folktale: 1) since Ch'unhyang is the daughter of *kisaeng*, even though her father is of *yangban* class, her falling in love with the magistrate's son foreshadows impending tragedy; 2) the historical context is thus the cause of the tragedy; 3) we must consider the reason why passing the civil service examination was so important to Mongnyong and why,

13) *Samb'ŏlli* Sept. 1935.

14) *Chosŏn Daily* 11-13 Oct. 1935.

15) *Ibid.*

even after he became the secret royal inspector, he went after the corrupt officials in Namwŏn region rather than running back to Ch'unhyang to rescue her from the evil magistrate; 4) Mongnyong, upon arriving in Namwŏn, disguised himself as a wandering scholar and concerned himself with the commoners and their ordeals. By stressing the commoners' class struggle against the corrupt officials, the newspaper reporter had redefined the folktale as a national allegory and undermined the folktale's motifs of love and comedy. In many ways, he echoed what was expressed in *Maeil Newspaper* a few years earlier:

It is indisputable that folktales like *The Tale of Ch'unbyang*, *The Tale of Simch'ŏng* (Simch'ŏng chon), and *The Story of Ch'ullyŏng* (Ch'ullyŏng chŏn) are bestsellers because of the power of Korea's long tradition. The readers of these books are the innocent¹⁶⁾ farmer class who earn their daily provisions of food from our land. And these farmers are the ones who protect Chosŏn's native homeland and live by Chosŏn's tradition.¹⁷⁾

Others also noted that the folktale's main consumers were farmers or peasants. According to a Merchants Union survey in 1935, *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* was still by far the most popular book with 70,000 copies sold at the bookstores, with other folktales like *The Tale of Simch'ŏng* (60,000 copies) and *The Tale of Hong Kildong* (45,000 copies) trailing close.¹⁸⁾ The article also reported that most of the buyers of these copies were actually peddlers – approximately 1,500 of them – who then sold them in rural marketplaces.¹⁹⁾ While peasants were hailed as innocent and pure souls of the native land, they

16) The writer used the word “sunbak” (淳朴), which is used often to refer to the untouched and pure innocence or simplicity of the native Korean people.

17) “Modŏn p'ungmunrok 32-nyŏn yŏpgijŏk yuhaeng (7) – minjok ūi munhwa rŭl p'yonsang han sŏjŏk. Yi hae 1-nyŏn e ilk'yŏjin ch'aek dŭl,” *Maeil Newspaper* 17 Dec. 1932.

18) “Okp'yŏn kwa ch'unhyang chŏn che il,” *Samch'ŏlli* (June 1935).

19) Ibid.

were also disdained by intellectuals like Yi Hae-jo for being stuck in the past and still consuming “silly old tales.”

When the critic pointed out the failures of the film adaptation of the folktale, he also insinuated that one of the important functions of cinema is its accurate depiction of reality. Like the literary trend that increasingly focused on realism, he also believed that “films must be historically accurate, situated in a specific historical time, and reflect the culture and society of their time period.”²⁰⁾ On the other hand, he also complained that the music in the film was too slow and not exciting at all. The only merit of the film, according to the reporter, was that it was Korea’s first talkie film and thus marked the beginning of a new age in the Korean film industry.

Tonga Daily also echoed the *Chosŏn Daily* reporter’s film review and reported that the 1935 film rendition of the folktale was disappointing, and the audience was merely drawn to the novelty of the first talkie film.²¹⁾ These critics made the same argument as critics in the 21st century would later make about the film remakes of the folktale: their attraction was due simply to the sensational effects of being the first of their kind.²²⁾

20) Ibid.

21) *Tong’a Daily* 11-16 Oct. 1935.

22) Kŭm-sŏn Yun, *Kyŏngsŏng ūi kŭkjang mandam* (Seoul: Yŏn’gŭk kwa in’gan, 2005): 100.

Image 1. Scenes from *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* (Myŏng-u Yi, 1935)²³⁾



Regardless of the persistently negative film reviews, the 1935 *Tale of Ch'unbyang* became a box-office hit. By then, cinema was hailed as the “most affordable yet most extravagant and exciting entertainment,” “the century’s most beloved child,” as well as “the contemporary world’s king.” With just 30 - 50 chŏn, “people get to relish in the coquetry of beautiful actresses and soak in the abundance of music, dance, and thrilling excitement for a whole three hours. What more could they ask for when they also get to experience Western arts?”²⁴⁾ Only 30 percent of the entire population in Korea was able to read Korean *han’gŭl*, classical Chinese, or Japanese in the mid-1930s,²⁵⁾ but anyone, whether literate or illiterate, rich or poor, was able to enjoy films.

The success of the 1935 film rendition of the folktale even contributed to an increase in sales of the folktale’s literary version.²⁶⁾ It was also quickly

23) The first photo is from Chogwang magazine, from an article by Kyŏng-gyun Sin entitled, “Kŭmnyŏndo Chosŏn yŏnghwa kaep’yŏng: kang kŏnnŏ maŭl ūnha e hŭrŭnŭn chŏngryŏl, Ch’unhyang chŏn” (December 1935): 187-188.

24) So Ha, “Yŏnghwa ka paekmyŏnsang,” *Chogwang* (December, 1937).

25) Korean Statistical Information Service: Literacy Statistics 1908-1943 (http://www.kosis.kr/feature/feature_03List.jsp).

26) Yun, 100.

followed by Kim Sang-jin's "Songs of Chosŏn" (Norae Chosŏn, 1936), a comedy film adaptation of the folktale edited together with a musical recording of the OK Record singers' concert held in Osaka, Japan. The same year, Yi Kyu-hwan directed *Epilogue of Yi Mongnyong* (1936),²⁷⁾ which traces Mongnyong's journey to other regions in Korea to fulfill his duty as a secret royal inspector. The same film director went on to produce another film adaptation of the folktale in 1955, a few years after the Korean War, which revitalized the popularity of the folktale as well as the Korean film industry as a whole. This film was soon followed by two further film adaptations, released within a week of each other in 1961, which marked the beginning of South Korea's golden age in melodrama.²⁸⁾ In all these film adaptations, Ch'unhyang, whose loyalty until death triumphed over all obstacles, was visualized in a melodramatic and sentimental mode. Her unsurpassed "single-hearted devotion" became a model for all women and fit ideally into the ideology of "wise mother and good wife" (hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ) that was necessary for the nationalist agenda and the nation-building process.

By 1940, there were approximately 12,500,000 movie-goers and 1,090,000 theater-goers²⁹⁾ out of a total population of 24,300,000. And more and more intellectuals began to acknowledge the power and potential of cinema to move and mobilize the masses: "Film is the best tool... it cannot be matched by written or spoken language in terms of its effectiveness... Cinematic language penetrates people's minds and thoughts... Cinema will decide the fate of a nation."³⁰⁾ In spite of the increasing Japanese censorship, Korean cinema

27) "Kū hu ūi Yi Toryong" was produced by Oyang Film Production, produced, directed, and written by Kyu-hwan Yi, with camera by Fujii Kiyoi (藤井清). Cast: Ūn-gi Tok, Chin-wŏn Yi, and Ye-bong Mun. It was screened at Chosŏn Theater in October 1936.

28) The 1961 films are discussed in more detail in the Postscript.

29) *Samb'ŏlli* (May 1940).

30) Matsuoka Yosuke, "Masters of World Theatre," *Samb'ŏlli* Vol. 13, No. 6 (1941): 195.

continued to flourish, even becoming more creative in order to skirt around the censorship regulations.³¹⁾ As the war intensified in East Asia, the Japanese enforced a stricter colonial policy ranging from changing Korean people's family name to Japanese and banning Korean language in public spaces. By 1943, the Korean language had all but disappeared from films and most public rhetoric.

The more people became obsessed and fascinated with female public figures, the more the images of a virtuous Ch'unhyang as well as the "wise mother and good wife" became integral to mainstream rhetoric. Ch'unhyang, once a fictional character from an old tale, was transformed into a real woman with the aid of artists who used *kisaeng* entertainers as models to paint portraits of Ch'unhyang. With the help of landowners and *kisaeng* entertainers who collected donations from various Kisaeng Unions, "The Shrine of Ch'unhyang" was built in Namwŏn in March 1931. It was surrounded by bamboo trees which symbolized chastity, and with the main gate decorated with the word "red heart" (tansim) meaning faithfulness. Then from June of the same year, various festivals and annual rituals to worship Ch'unhyang and her unflinching devotion were held here. With the donation of the famous painter Kim Ŭn-ho's portrait of Ch'unhyang in 1939, the shrine was finally complete. It was just two years after a portrait of Ch'unhyang had already been displayed in the Sixteenth Chosŏn Arts Exhibition. Other than the fact that both portraits were

31) The first Japanese censorship regulation, "Hwaldong sajin p'illŭm kŏmyŏl kyuch'ik," was enforced in 1926, and it stalled the development of the silent film industry. The first Korean film to be banned from screening was Hong Kye-myŏng's film, *Hyŏlma* (1928). In April 1939, Japan establishes the Film Branch office and announces the "Japanese Film Policy" and in October of the same year, the Japanese Government General also establishes the Chosŏn Filmmakers Association in order to enforce registrations of all filmmakers and issuance of license permits to work in the film industry. By January 1940, "Chosŏn Film Policy" (Chosŏn yŏnghwa ryŏng) is announced to control production and distribution of Korean films. As a result, most Korean-owned film companies get shut down and the Japanese-Korean Film Production Company, Chosŏn Yonghwa Chusik Hŏesa, is established in 1942.

modeled after a famous *kisaeng*,³²⁾ they represented very different images of Ch'unhyang. Whereas the 1937 portrait portrayed her as a married woman in simple traditional *hanbok* reading a book under the candle light, the 1939 portrait depicted her as a maiden dressed in bright-colored *hanbok* with rounder face and clear facial features. The later portrait, if not for the traditional outfit and hairstyle, may have well passed for many of those modern girls and new women on the streets of Seoul.

Image 2. *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (Cho Yong-sŭng, 1937) exhibited in the Sixteenth Chosŏn Arts Exhibition



Image 3. "Portrait of Ch'unhyang" (Kim Ŭn-ho, 1939)



Radios and gramophones around this time were quickly becoming common household items. The Columbia Music Records in the 1930s recorded "The Tale of Ch'unhyang in Broadcasting Style." It was a short "nonsense" play based on the few scenes from *The Tale of Ch'unhyang*. Layered with many English words and popular items such as "hiking," bicycles," "whiskey," and

32) For art historians' analysis of images of Ch'unhyang and women in modern Korean art, see the edited volume published by the Museum of Ehwa Womans University, *Misul sok ũi yŏsŏng: han'guk kwa ilbon ũi kŭn·hyŏndaek misul* (Seoul: Ehwa Womans University Publisher, 2003).

“aerolin,”³³⁾ the play quickly led up to the young lovers’ parting scene.

In contrast to the usual rendition of a melodramatic moment, this particular play portrayed Mongnyong as a modern boy leaving in a train rather than on a horse. Ch’unhyang, too, became a modern girl in music records: no longer chaste and discreet, the modernized Ch’unhyang seemed rather temperamental with a “stinging hand” like a boxer venting her disappointment and frustration at Mongnyong for leaving her behind as he packed for the capital to study for the civil service examination.³⁴⁾ The play then jumped to the most famous scene in which the evil magistrate tortures Ch’unhyang to make her his *kisaeng*. When she defiantly proclaimed her “single-hearted devotion,” Mongnyong cheerfully exclaimed, “all right, let’s keep at it!” and reminded her to be steadfast and prove to the world her virtue that cannot be found in the modern age.³⁵⁾ At the same time, the “modernized” lovers advertised to the listeners the things that are in fashion: “Gucci products, almond-papaya cream, high heels, smart Western suits, etc.” More so than Mongnyong, Ch’unhyang was depicted as a new modern woman completely absorbed in decadent urban culture.

Many intellectuals and writers also echoed those who recreated what used to be a fictional character into an exemplary woman whose beauty, loyalty, and virtue of “single-hearted devotion” was a model to all Chosŏn women. In these texts, the folktale became a visualization of modern Korea quickly consumed by decadence and corruption. Especially Ch’unhyang became a palimpsest on which the intellectuals and nationalists engraved the new

33) It is unclear what “aerolin” (aeirorin) is; it is spelled in Korean transliteration of English.

It may refer to aerolin, which is a medicine used to treat asthma

34) “Yosŏn hyŏng Ch’unhyang,” reprinted in Man-su Kim and Tong-hyŏn Ch’ŏe eds., *Ilde kangjŏnggi yusŏnggi ūmban sok ūi taejung hŭgŭk* (Seoul: T’aehaksa, 1997) 356.

35) *Ibid.*, 356. [In original Korean, it was written, “orai, ganbare,” the former being a Korean romanization of the English word and the latter of the Japanese word.]

manuals of true modern Korean woman – a “wise mother and good wife.”

In February 1929, a pseudonymous writer nicknamed after Mongnyong, “Master Yi” from P’algak Temple, published an essay entitled “A Story about Ch’unhyang whom I Saw in My Dream” (Monggyŏn Ch’unhyanggi). It was a make-believe story in which the writer meets Ch’unhyang in his dream and engages in a discussion with her about problems in the modern Korean culture and especially people’s loss of trust and faith. He began his essay as the following:

I don’t know what the world says about Ch’unhyang’s beauty or her accomplishments but I see them as the following: She is the very first lady in Korea who practiced *chayu yŏnae*.³⁶⁾ She is beautiful because she gave up money, fame, and even her own life for the sake of her love. Her accomplishments were her refusal to accept an unfair social system and her strength to persevere through all suffering on her own and her indomitable spirit that is not afraid of death. Juliet of the West drank poison for Romeo but that seems trite compared to what Ch’unhyang went through to protect her love. Truly, Ch’unhyang is the most beautiful woman and courageous person of all from the past to the present, from the East to the West.³⁷⁾

36) Roughly translated “free romance,” it is a concept espousing men and women’s freedom to choose their partners and have relationships before marriage.

37) Master Yi from P’algak Temple, “Monggyŏn Ch’unhyanggi,” *Pyŏlgŏn’gon* Vol. 19 (February 1929): 110-111.

Praising Ch'unhyang's indomitable spirit that faced all odds to protect her virtue, the writer complained that despite the modernization movement, neither the people nor the world were better off than they were in the past. In particular, he pointed out that there were no more trust or faith between men and their wives. Then he went on to praise Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong for holding steadfast to their love and believing in each other against all odds:

Noticing the jade ring on her hand, I remembered the promise that Ch'unhyang and Mongnyong made to each other before parting in Namwŏn. Mongnyong gave a hand mirror to Ch'unhyang and promised her, "A gentleman's pure heart is like a mirror and will never change in thousand, ten thousand years." Upon receiving his mirror, Ch'unhyang handed him her cherished jade ring and in tears bid him farewell. And even now, they probably renew their 'romance' every time they look at the ring on Ch'unhyang's finger.³⁸⁾

More notable than the writer's praise of the lovers' faithfulness was his criticism of the growing number of new women or *sin yŏŏng* who became increasingly visible in public spaces. Then both the writer and Ch'unhyang in his dream begin to criticize *sin yŏŏng* for using their newfound freedom to justify their scandalous affairs and illicit behaviors with men.

For example, Ch'unhyang explicitly expressed her disapproval of young women cutting their hair short for the sake of "work efficiency." She cried out, "What on earth is this work efficiency for? At least they won't have to worry about messing up their hair when going from the embrace of one man to that of another.³⁹⁾ She then argues that the so-called women's liberation

38) Ibid., 112.

39) Ibid., 112.

movement is merely a disguise to attract as many men as possible. She then urged Korean women and their counterparts from all over the world to think carefully about what it means to be a true woman instead of wasting their time arguing about Ibsen's Nora.⁴⁰⁾ Also mourning the loss of real *kisaeng* in Korea, she expressed her frustration with the mass consumers who hovered around Japanese or western goods stores: "The *kisaeng* entertainers must have all gone to Japanese stores to learn 'bento' [Japanese lunch box] songs because all they know how to say is 'yorokobashii' [I'm happy]." ⁴¹⁾

The essay was published in a popular magazine, *Pyŏlgŏn'gon*,⁴²⁾ that covered entertainment and popular culture and explicitly targeted the masses, as the publishers stated in the first issue of the magazine. Ever since the magazine price was lowered in 1931, the readership quickly expanded from a minority of intellectuals to the wider population. According to Ch'ae Sŏk-jin, the magazine was nicknamed the "three-day" or "sold-out" magazine due to its popularity and its subscription base of 20,000 readers.⁴³⁾ The actual audience could be as much as five times greater, considering that the few people who had access to newspapers and magazines would read the newspapers and magazines out loud to their neighbors.⁴⁴⁾ The majority of the population lived outside the urban city that thronged with new women, *kisaeng*, as well as modern girls and boys. Consequently, the ordinary people would mostly hear about these characters via magazines, radios, and films that were often critical

40) Ibid., 113.

41) Ibid., 114.

42) *Pyŏlgŏn'gon* was published by Kyebŏk Publishers from November 1926 to August 1934.

43) Sŏk-jin Ch'ae, "Sense of the Imperial Japan: 'Ero-Gro-Nonsense'," *P'eminiŷŏm yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Han'guk yŏsŏng yŏn'guso, 2005) 49.

44) Ibid. (Sŏk-jin Ch'ae also notes that a magazine subscriber wrote to the publishers to complain that by the time he received the magazine, it was already worn out because the village headman who usually receives all parcels from the mailman had already read and circulate it among his neighbors.

about their excessive consumption habits and decadent lifestyle. Many writers also mocked and criticized some of the most well-known new women by writing novels loosely based on them.⁴⁵⁾ The scandalous affairs of new women and *kaisaeng* always made headlines on the front pages of newspapers. And the public was quick to forgive and forget men who were involved, as in the case of Na Hye-sök's affair with one of the most influential intellectuals in Colonial Korea.⁴⁶⁾

More poets and writers such as Kim So-wöl, Kim Sa-ryang, Kim Yöng-rang, and Sö Chöng-ju followed suit, recreating Ch'unhyang as a literary metaphor to symbolize Korea resistant to Japanese colonizers. In most of these literary works, the writers focused on the imprisoned Ch'unhyang and her steadfast loyalty to her lover and paralleled it with Korea faced with an "evil villain" – in this case, Japan – as well. Mostly written in the mid-1930s and early 1940s, these literary works reflected nationalist ideologies that tried to reassert traditional values and reconstruct national identity so that the masses may be unified by collective consciousness and solidarity against the common enemy.

There were other writers who also joined the "Ch'unhyang wave." Among them were Kim Kyu-t'aek, an illustrator and a writer, who authored two adaptations of the folktale in the form of *manmun*, or miscellaneous writing. The genre was similar to a light-hearted and comic causerie, but it also included some illustrations in an early form of cartoons.

In the early 1920s, the illustrated drawings or picture stories (iyagi kŭrim

45) For example, Kim Tong-in wrote a short story entitled, "Kim Yönsil chön" (*Munjang* 1939) that was based on a famous female actor and writer, Kim Yön-sil. In this story, the writer condemned new women as those who have no morals, ethics, or filial duties, and were only obsessed with romance. Kim Tong-in also depicted most female students as the daughters of lowly *kaisaeng*.

46) For more information on famous scandals, see Ch'öl Yi's *Kyöngsöng ül twihün dön 11-kaji yönae sagön* (Seoul: Tasan Ch'odang, 2008).

or kŭrim iyagi) were commonly known as *manbwa*. The term first appeared in print in *Tongmyŏng Weekly* that published a cartoon entitled “Inability to Pay Indemnity” (賠償能不能) on September 24, 1922. This *manbwa* was actually based on a one-cut comic strip published in German and French newspapers around the same time. A few months later that same year, *Tongmyŏng Weekly* announced the very first Korean *manbwa* contest in the business advertisement section.⁴⁷ It described *manbwa* as that which is “more expressive and efficient than language itself and more powerful than the public media.” *Tong’a Daily* followed suit and announced another *manbwa* contest along with a writing contest on May 3, 1923 to celebrate the publication of the thousandth issue of the newspaper and to confirm the increasing popularity of cartoons. Unlike European countries which differentiated between genres such as caricature and comic strips that are comprised of at least two cuts of sequenced drawings, the term *manbwa* is used more broadly and generally in Korea to encompass any stories with illustrations or drawings and various journals and newspapers began to include comic strips and cartoons. Even Ch’oe Nam-sŏn who was a famous poet and writer founded children’s journal called *Red Jacket* (Pulgŭn chŏgori) in 1913 and became the first magazine to serialize *manbwa* entitled, “Taŭm ōtjji,” meaning “what next?” or “to be continued” in pure *han’gŭl*.⁴⁸ In a short span of time, *manbwa* joined the mainstream popular culture and the increasing number of readers began to publish their own works via various drawing and writing contests and thereby informing and shaping the popular culture. *Tong’a Daily* even reserved a page in its Sunday issue for three months in 1923 to print subscribers’ cartoons

47) Sang-ik Son, *Han’guk manbwa i’ongsa* (Seoul: P’uresŭbil, 1996): 16-19.

48) In the first issue of *Red Jacket*, the publishers indicate that the comical drawings must be seen in the order in which they appear in the magazine; the viewers must closely examine the first drawing to assess its meaning so that they can enjoy the humor in the following sequence of drawings.

discussing current affairs. The section became a fixed column called “Tong’a Manwha” for the next four years.⁴⁹⁾ Like many other features in journals and newspapers, however, it came under the scrutiny of the Japanese censorship bureau and disappeared abruptly in 1927.

However, writers like Kim Kyu-t’aek (1906-1962) who mostly dealt with popular old folktales and nonsensical cartoons were able to evade the Japanese censorship. Like many intellectuals of his time, Kim went to Japan in pursuit of modern and higher education. Soon after he graduated from Kawabata Arts School, however, he returned to Korea and started working for *Chosŏn Daily* literature and culture section under the penname Ungch’o (熊超). His first cartoon “Idiot” (Pyŏkch’angho) became an immediate success and was serialized from June 1, 1933 to January 18, 1934. He quickly gained fame and later went on to work as an illustrator for one of the most influential publishers, Kyebyŏk, which published a popular magazine called *Pyŏlgŏn’gon*.

Thanks to the success of his first short story with illustrations published in 1933,⁵⁰⁾ Kim became *Chosŏn Daily’s* main illustrator and started working for other magazines and newspapers. From September 1933, he designed book covers and illustrations for popular writers such as Yi Kwang-su, Ham Tae-hun, and Han Yong-un.⁵¹⁾ Kim started working for *Maeil Newspaper* in 1940 but after Korea’s liberation, he returned to *Chosŏn Daily* as a columnist and illustrator. Even after the liberation, Kim continued to write commentaries on current affairs in the same newspaper and drew illustrations for popular

49) Son, 191.

50) The original title is “Mangbusŏk (望夫石)” which is a legendary tale of a faithful wife who turned to stone waiting for her long-lost husband.

51) Other works include the following: Yi Kwang-su’s “Death of Yi Ch’adon” (Yi ch’adon ūi sa, 1935-6), Kim Mal-bong’s “Wild Roses” (Tchillekkot, 1937), Hong Myŏng-hŭi’s “Yim Kkŏkjŏng” (1937-1939), and Han Yong-un’s “Three Kingdoms” (*Samgukchi*, 1939-1940).

writers like Chŏng Pi-sŏk (“A Walk in Moonless Night,” 1947), Yŏm Sang-sŏp (“Warm Current,” 1950), as well as Kim Yŏng-su (“Glacier,” 1959-1960). Kim also briefly worked for the United Nations based in Japan during the Korean War but soon returned to South Korea in 1961 and began to publish comic strips on current affairs in *Han'guk Daily*. As always, Kim was very critical of the mass consumption culture in Korea and targeted new women and modern girls as the classic example of “modernity-gone-wrong.”

In many of his illustrations, Kim criticized Seoul's decadent urban culture revolving around cafés, jazz bars, and restaurants whose main patrons were modern girls and modern boys. His illustrations, however, inadvertently furthered consumption culture by articulating social, cultural, and economic capitals that only highlighted the class distinction between the riches and the poor. In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu also noted that social classes in the age of capitalism were defined by the “structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices.”⁵²⁾ His notion of class distinction was determined by the dominant group marked by their objective distance, or “refusal to surrender to nature,”⁵³⁾ as it constitutes the greatest functional weight in the social structure.⁵⁴⁾ Thus, the working class becomes a dominated group that is constantly obliged to define itself according to the dominant aesthetics. As Bourdieu rightly pointed out, the working class would encounter

52) Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 106.

53) *Ibid.*, 39.

54) Bourdieu further notes that, “As the objective distance from necessity grows, life-style becomes the product of a systematic commitment which orients and organizes the most diverse practices. This affirmation of power over a dominated necessity always implies a claim to a legitimate superiority over those who, because they cannot assert the same contempt for contingencies in gratuitous luxury and conspicuous consumption, remain dominated by ordinary interests and urgencies” (*Ibid.*, 55).

a competitive struggle by accepting the stakes offered by the dominant class. He referred to this form of class struggle as the “reproductive struggle” or “objective collaboration of the production apparatuses and clients”⁵⁵⁾ that creates modern culture. “Capital” in Bourdieu’s sense, then, was the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others.

Instead of hereditary class status determined by one’s bloodline, the consumer culture and mass media allowed for people to strive for social mobility. As long as they had enough financial means, they could penetrate the dominant group. While Kim’s parodies of the folktale made fun of the modern girls and modern boys, they also underscored the power of consumers and new standard of class division. Most importantly, the parodies acknowledged women’s sexual desires and hence their body through the voice of now-modernized Ch’unhyang. In his study of Dostoevsky’s poetics, Mikhail Bakhtin observed that people under repression often use parodies and satires to assert themselves in the dominant discourse and thereby to create friction between different voices.⁵⁶⁾ As a self-corrective method in response to a rapid development, parodies like those of Kim Kyu-t’aek provided an arena through which modern Korea self-critiqued its mass consumption culture. At the same time, the parodies with comical illustrations yet very familiar story plot articulated the social class distinction based upon such consumer pattern more readily to the working class who were mostly unlearned and illiterate.

“Modern Ch’unbyang” and “Willful Ch’unbyang”

One of Kim’s best-known cartoons, “Modern Ch’unhyang,” was serialized in a popular magazine called *Cheilsŏn* from November 1932 to March 1933.

55) Ibid., 250.

56) Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson (Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

He later changed the title to “Willful Ch’unhyang” and redid the illustrations for another popular magazine, *Chogwang*, from February to July 1941.⁵⁷⁾ Despite Son Sang-ik’s criticism that Kim recreated many folktales merely for commercial purposes,⁵⁸⁾ his cartoon parodies – particularly *The Tale of Ch’unbyang* – acted as the double-edged swords that became barometers of social class as well as the ethics and morals of modern women.

Sin Myōng-jik also noted that Kim was different from other famous illustrators such as An Sōk-yōng and Ch’ōe Yōng-su because rather than using the urban city as the backdrop of their cartoons, Kim sought to recreate old and “outdated” heroes and heroines into modern boys and modern girls of 1930s Korea.⁵⁹⁾ And by rendering popular folktales into modern parodies, Kim was able to defamiliarize something that was so familiar to the masses and thereby offering them a new way of seeing and understanding the world around them. In other words, Kim was able to capture the conflict or tension between the old and the new Korea that had left the majority of the population in confusion. The readers saw themselves in Mongnyong and Ch’unhyang, who often got lost in the rampage of modern technology and consumer culture as in “Modern Ch’unhyang” and “Willful Ch’unhyang.”

Except for the drawings, the two parodies are almost identical. Both stories begin with Mongnyong’s visit to Kwanghallu Pavilion, where he meets

57) *Cheilsŏn* is a monthly magazine that was initially called *Hyesŏng*, published from March 1931. It was owned by Kyebŏk Publishers, who was also responsible for the popular magazine *Pyŏlgŏn’gŏm*. The publication stopped in March 1933 after just eleven issues. *Chogwang* was a sister magazine of *Chosŏn Daily*. It was launched in November 1935 and was shut down temporarily in August 1944. Although it resumed publication in March 1946, the magazine was completely discontinued in March 1949.

58) Sangik Son, 337.

59) Myōng-jik Sin, “Kim Kyu-t’aek ūi manmun manhwa wa ‘usŭm’: Modŏn ch’unhyang chon, modŏn simch’ŏng chon, ōkji ch’unhyang chon ūl chungsim ūro,” *Toshibikatsu Saegusa*, ed., Han’guk kŭndae munhak kwa ilbon (Seoul: Somyōng Ch’ulp’an, 2003).

Ch'unhyang for the first time. Kim's second parody of the folktale comes to a premature halt due to the outbreak of the Pacific War. It ends after the 40th episode, in which Ch'unhyang is imprisoned in jail and her mother Wŏlmae laments her daughter's ordeal. The general story plot does not stray far from the conventional folktale but here, too, Kim adds modern twists to the details of the story. Since the second parody is incomplete, "Modern Ch'unhyang" will be examined as the primary text of analysis from here on.

First, both stories begin with one of the four famous scenes, where Mongnyong notices Ch'unhyang for the first time on a swing in Kwanghallu Pavilion. Gone is the traditional setting as Mongnyong orders his servant Pangja to take whiskey along to the pavilion. Unlike in the old folktale in which Mongnyong visits Ch'unhyang's home on a horse, the modern Mongnyong uses his "personal car" donkey after his servant fails to holler a cab. Upon arriving in the pavilion, he uses binoculars to observe Ch'unhyang. The illustration juxtaposes Mongnyong's traditional Korean dress with the modern implement of the binoculars in his hands. Kim thus introduces new modern objects and foreign words through the story. Along with the rise of mass media and modern technology, visions and senses were reorganized like a sequence of a comic strip or movie scenes.

In the second parody, "Willful Ch'unhyang," this scene is more elaborate and Mongnyong is seen explaining the drinking protocols of modern society. While learning drinking manners from Mongnyong, Pangja complains about the rigid censorship of the Japanese policemen. Then he asks his master to tell the police that he was a victim, should they get caught. Here the readers get a glimpse of scenes from jazz bars and cafes. And every so often, Kim inserts his own voice in parentheses within the text.

Upon Mongnyong's assurance, Pangja finally took out all the food and drinks from his sack like magic and laid them out like a peddler at a black market. (This is such a lie!) There was a bottle of White Horse whiskey, French sausages that looked like bean sprouts, and a few glasses that were as clear as Pyŏksu rice wine.

Pangja: Here's your drink.

Mongnyong: Hey, your cup is empty already.

Pangja: Drinking in secret does that to you.

For a while, the glasses circle around the two like a millstone. No, there are only two people here so the glasses go back and forth between them as if they are playing catch ball.⁶⁰

With the development of modern technology, the concept of time changes dramatically. Gone are the horses and palanquins; in the modernized folktale they are replaced by bicycles, cars, and trains. As Mongnyong drives a "donkey car" to Ch'unhyang's house after meeting her at Kwanghallu Pavilion, he urges his servant to drive faster, to which Pangja replies that he is driving at 8 miles per hour.⁶¹ The new magistrate Pyŏn also uses an "express horse" in his haste to see Ch'unhyang in Namwŏn. Reflecting the social concern about traffic accidents at a time when more cars were appearing on the streets, the totems erected on the sides of the road to ward off evil spirits provide a quick safety warning and remark: "They must be circus clowns but if they keep at that speed, they are going to get into a traffic accident!"⁶² Next to the statues is a traffic sign that reads "M 2[?]03 $\frac{1}{4}$." It seems to indicate maximum speed limit. The illustration very aptly captures the clash between old ancient totems and a traffic sign, the symbols of past and present Korea.

60) "Willful Ch'unhyang," *Chogwung* (February 1941): 238-9.

61) "Modern Ch'unhyang," *Cheilsŏn* (November 1932): 78-80.

62) "Modern Ch'unhyang" (February 1933): 49.

Images 4 and 5. “Modern Ch’unhyang” (November 1932 & February 1933)



The story then progresses quickly to Ch’unhyang and Mongnyong’s first night together. In contrast to the conventional story, the lovers in “Modern Ch’unhyang” are playing card games together and whoever loses the game has to remove his or her clothes. Ch’unhyang is playing a Western instrument, guitar, and next to her dressing table are photos of Western actors such as Charlie Chaplin and Clara Bow.

Notable in both parodies is the reversal of the power relationship between Mongnyong and Ch’unhyang, and the detailed description of their interactions as if readers were seeing them onscreen. When Mongnyong finally tells Ch’unhyang that he has to leave Namwŏn by himself, Ch’unhyang turns into an enraged vixen and starts throttling him so hard that Mongnyong feels as if his eyes and tongue are going to pop out.

Image 6. “Modern Ch’unhyang” (December 1932)



Although Ch'unhyang quickly calms down and parts with him in tears, she does not forget to threaten him that if he ever looks at another woman, she will kill herself so that her spirit can gorge his eyes out. If he ever covets another woman and sleeps with her, she swears she will return to him as a monster and eat him alive.⁶³⁾ Like the premodern and canonized versions, Ch'unhyang accepts her fate and lets Mongnyong go. In Kim's parodies, however, she reverses the power relationship between the two. Instead of merely accepting her fate, Ch'unhyang sends letters to Mongnyong by way of mailman and warns him what will happen should he fool around with other women. Likewise, the modern Ch'unhyang does not just refuse the evil magistrate but throws a chair in his face when he tries to rape her.⁶⁴⁾ She screams when the magistrate's servants try to torture her by removing all her clothes and hang her upside down.

63) "Modern Ch'unhyang" (January 1933).

64) "Modern Ch'unhyang" (March 1933).

Image 7. “Modern Ch’unhyang” (March 1933)



Don't you dare lay a hand on me. I knew this was going to happen and if I must take my clothes off, I'm going to do it myself.

Everyone! Hold your breath!

Alas, Ch'unhyang was wearing a swim suit underneath her clothes. Nimbly she jumped up to grab a rack hanging above her and hung herself upside down as if she's doing a gymnastic on a horizontal bar.

Finally, Ch'unhyang said, “Okay, here I am. If you're going to interrogate me, why not start from waterboarding. Even the interrogator was at a loss for words but soon brought the water pump. Five minutes passed since he started pouring water over her face...



Ch'unhyang drank so much water that she grew a potbelly by the time she jumped down from the interrogation rack and put on her clothes before the interrogators handcuffed her and took her to her cell. All the Namwŏn kisaeng flocked around her to show their sympathy.

A woman who was also watching the parade exclaimed, “my goodness, it's been only a few hours since Ch'unhyang walked into the magistrate's office and she's already pregnant! People said the new magistrate was a womanizer but he must be really something.”

Myŏng-jik Sin, in his analysis of “Modern Ch’unhyang,” claimed that the parodies based on premodern folktales led readers to recognize the discrepancy between their cultural mentality, which was rooted in the past, and their physical being, situated in a present that was rapidly changing.⁶⁵⁾ However, I would argue that the readers became alienated from their past as well, since

even familiar things like *The Tale of Ch'unbyang* transformed their own present reality to something that is from the past and distanced from them.

By the 1930s, both *Chosŏn* and *Tong'a* had printed approximately 40,000 to 60,000 issues all together.⁶⁶⁾ Although the Japanese censorship became increasingly intense, manhwa continued to develop and thus by the 1930s, more diverse genres like children's comic books and *manmun manhwa* emerged. On the other hand, political satires and comic strips based on current affairs or critiquing Japanese colonial policy rapidly disappeared, as in *Tong'a Daily*.⁶⁷⁾ Literary journals and magazines replaced newspapers as an arena in which cartoons became a regular addition,⁶⁸⁾ especially after the Japanese Government-General forcefully shut down all Korean newspapers except *Maeil Newspaper* in 1940.⁶⁹⁾ It was the same year when the Pacific War began. Korea was once again subsumed by the waves of war mobilization and nationalist zeal subsequently followed the World War II resulting in Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945 and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953.

Several years after the end of the Korean War, the new and revised laws of the South Korean government banned all comic books published before the 1960s and only those new publications meeting the government regulations were printed. The new South Korean government enforced laws and regulations that were just as restrictive as those in the colonial period, if not more so. By January 1969, the people's resentment erupted into a public debate over the banning of 150,000 or so books and the major newspapers covered it on their front pages.⁷⁰⁾ The media reported that comic books had

65) Myŏng-jik Sin, "Kim Kyu-t'aek ūi manmun manhwa wa 'usŭm,'" 522.

66) Min-hwan Kim, *Han'guk Ŏllonsa* (Seoul: Sahŏe pip'yŏngsa, 1996) 235.

67) According to Sang-ik Son, most of the satirical cartoons were replaced by the foreign ones in *Tong'a Daily* in the 1930s due to Japan's almost-fanatic censorship. (Son, 265)

68) Son, 263-4.

69) *Ibid.*, 308.

caused a sixth-grader's suicide in February 1972. The student had hung himself, and according to *Tong'a Daily*, his family alleged that he returned home from a comic book store and told them, "In comic books, people come back from the dead. I want to see if I will also come back from the dead."⁷¹) The boy's death and media coverage blaming it on comic books led to a major campaign against comic books. Various newspapers reported in excitement that approximately 30,000 comic books were confiscated in a mere ten days. Bookstore owners also rushed to report that they had already taken down the so-called "delinquent comics" from their bookshelves but even after the incident, people continued to treat comic books as something that would negatively influence and corrupt children and teenagers.⁷²)

So far, this paper has examined the ways in which the old folktale *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* was recreated into an ideological apparatus in Colonial Korea albeit with some paradoxical outcome. Many literary texts and visual adaptations of the folktale idealized Ch'unhyang as a chaste and virtuous woman while the cartoon parodies in their critique of the modern consumer culture resulted in creating a new social class distinction based on the consumption pattern. When Japan's total mobilization quickly suppressed all voices except the nationalist movement, however, the varying images of Ch'unhyang became solidified into that of a "wise mother and good wife."

As Walter Benjamin speculated in the context of early modern Europe,⁷³) social transformations induced by technological changes in production were also

70) *Chosŏn Daily* (28 Jan. 1969).

71) *Tong'a Daily* (1 Feb. 1972).

72) Set-byŏl Ch'ŏe and Hŭp Ch'ŏe, *Mumbua! Mumbua sab'ŏekajŏk illeki* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Publisher, 2009) 158.

73) See Walter Benjamin's *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969); *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

altering aesthetic perceptions in 1920s Korea. Cinema deepened public appreciation of art, while full blown-up faces appearing larger than life onscreen brought awareness of the minute details of one's own body and the consciousness that began to rule people's everyday lives. Analyzing the influence of cinema in modern society, Miriam B. Hansen argued that cinema is the new medium through which the masses also experienced modernity and partake in the formation of the culture and social capitals.

The new medium [cinema] also offered an alternative because it engaged the contradictions of modernity at the level of the senses, the level at which the impact of modern technology on human experience was most palpable and irreversible. In other words, the cinema not only traded in the mass production of the senses but also provided an aesthetic horizon for the experience of industrial mass society.⁷⁴⁾

In this regard, Michel de Certeau also argued that the “marginal groups” are in fact a “silent majority” that is “massive,” “pervasive,” and even “universal.” He urged people to acknowledge active consumers and unrecognized producers who play an integral role in forming and governing culture. With their tactics of consumption, Certeau believed that the “weak” makes use of the “strong” and thus lending a political dimension to every practice as well as every use of language.⁷⁵⁾

In Colonial Korea, the masses turned to native culture and tradition to reconstruct their distinctive national identity as it came under attack by Japanese colonization. As Anthony Smith rightly pointed out, a nation

74) Hansen, 70.

75) Michel de Certeau, trans. Steven Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1988).

responses to times of acute crisis by creating a national history, a story of its particular past and origin.⁷⁶⁾ Koreans, too, responded to the moment of historical crises by writing national histories and trying to locate things that are “intrinsically” Korea. The old tale of a lowly *kisaeng* holding steadfast to her love and overcoming all obstacles became a perfect allegory of Korea’s “authentic national identity” that is unlike and hence cannot be assimilated into any other culture. Modernity had come to symbolize foreign invasion and threat to Korea’s own culture and identity. Thus many nationalists and intellectuals turned to the immortal figure of Ch’unhyang and her indomitable spirit and devotion in reaction to or against the seemingly Japan-forced modernization of Korean culture. The same group of people turned to women – particularly *kisaeng* and new women or who seemed most visible or in public space – to critique modernity on one hand and to espouse nationalist movement on the other.

76) Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

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근대 국가의 빌보드

- 식민지 조선에 나타난 춘향전의 시각적 각색

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한국의 근대성은 식민지 경험과 더불어 민족주의 운동이 나타나는 긴장 상태로 인해 혼란스럽게 여겨진다. 그리고 그러한 지배 서사는 근대의 대중과 대중문화가 형성되는 데 있어서 산업 기술과 대중 매체가 수행한 역할을 폄하했다.

최근 소장 학자들은 20세기 초 한국의 대중문화 형성 과정을 재고(再考)하면서 어떻게 대중문화가 당대의 역사적, 정치적 상황에 대응하고 반응했는지를 밝히고 있다. 이런 맥락에서 춘향전은 한국의 근대성과 대중 매체 사이의 관계를 새롭게 조망하게끔 해준다. 춘향전은 산업 기술과 대중문화의 발전과 궤를 같이 하며 20세기 전반부에 인기를 누릴 수 있었기 때문이다.

한국에서 가장 사랑받는 민간 설화 중 하나인 춘향전은 다양하게 각색됨으로써 대중들이 그들의 세계를 새로운 양태로 바라보고 이해하는 데 효과적으로 사용되었다. 당대의 많은 여성들과 닮아 있는 춘향의 이미지는 한국의 근대성이 지닌 대조적인 국면들을 표현하고 전시하는 ‘빌보드’의 역할을 했다. 본고에서는 춘향전이 식민지 조선에서 재창작되는 과정에 내포된 문화적 의미를 추적하고자 한다. 이를 위하여, 초기 만화 형태로 기록된 패러디 작품에 주목하며, 당시 가장 인기 있었던 몇 편의 각색 작품을 살펴볼 것이다.

주제어 : 식민지 조선, 춘향전, 시각적 각색, 초기 만화

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