Special Feature

Liberator or Intimate Enemy: On South Korean Cultural Circles' Ambivalence toward Hollywood*

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Introduction

On September 9, 1945, the "U.S. Army Forces General Headquarters, Pacific (GHQ)" proclaimed the "military command of Korea and Korean citizens south of the 38th Parallel" (Proclaim No. 1). Yet if we consider the cultural and everyday aspects, America's "occupation" of Korea had begun much earlier than September 1945. As in other regions across Asia, America exerted a great influence on the shaping of modernity in Korea. America's Protestant missionaries had focused on providing medical support and education to Koreans, thus positioning America as the pioneer of modern civilization. The U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's proclamation on the right of national "self-determination," which is now known to be used as the basis to the March 1st Movement in 1919, glorified America as the "Holy Land of liberal democracy." Jazz and Hollywood, as representatives of American Popular Culture, provided the breeding ground of Americanism by widely dispersing the fantasy toward America in abundance and dynamism.

Yoo Sun-Young (2006)'s research on cultural identity in colonial Korea's popular culture sharply grasped that Americanization was the decisive factor in the formation of modernity in Korea. However, this process occurred in parallel with the loss of national sovereignty and the distorted identity of the colonial period. On the one hand, to the colonized people, Hollywood fostered a sense of admiration of the American way of life portrayed in the film. It also provided the enjoyment of devaluing the Japanese imperial civilization and culture through "cultural non-recognition" of the present reality. The "modern girl" and "modern boy" of colonial Seoul 京城 might have lived under the oppressive rule of the Japanese, but they also incarnated American values as represented on the screens; they emulated the American way of life in fashion, taste, and leisure activities. While America was a faraway presence like a distant star in the skies, it was also "a stranger but intimate neighbor" that was inseparable from the identity formation of the modern subject.

Ironically, the defining moment which put America's existence into

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reconsideration was the Pacific War. In the study of the structural continuity from colonial to postcolonial Korea, it is important to understand how the perception of America was transformed or distorted in the transitional period. According to Chang Se-Jin (2012, 78-101), the discourse on the Pacific War has become the defining moment in transforming the "West-East" schema in modern East Asia. The two elements that had previously defined the "West," Europe and America, started to become distinct through the emblematic "Pacific" of the postwar era. However, in consideration of cultures and everyday lives, Europe and America were perceived as different entities much prior to the Pacific War. This distinction had complicated the "anti-West" discourse during the Pacific War via the "(anti) Americanism" discourse in interwar Europe. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, America became the clear "enemy country" of Japan. During the war, Japan released the racial slur "Demonic Beast American and English" (*Kichiku Beiei* 鬼畜米英), which demonized America and Britain as one Anglo-Saxon block. This slogan may first seem to view America and Europe as one, but we need to focus on the fact that America is named separately from the old continent. This slogan in fact resurfaced the role and influence of America in the modernization process of East Asia.

During a 1942 roundtable titled "Overcoming Modernity" hosted by the Japanese literary magazine *Bungakukai* (Literary World 文學界), Americanism appeared to be one of the more important topics of discussion. While the opinion that simplified the war conflict as one between "colored people" against "white people" prevailed, denying "Americanism" altogether was not a simple matter. In fact, other opinions included views that America "is not an extension of Europe but is creating its own world"; "within the scope of Western Europe's history up until the present, America has been a European colony and external region" but from a "world history perspective America has a new meaning" (Nakamura et al. 2007, 122). As the participants discussed Americanism from a "quantitative culture" perspective such as capitalism and Fordism, as well as the systematization of Americanism moving from Puritanism to democracy, arguments went back and forth on Americanism (ibid. 120-28). Choe Hyon-Hui (2014)'s recent work states that the discourse on Americanism in Japan was able to "overcome modernity" through a continuous affirmation of pure "Japan-ness" in order not to be influenced by Americanism. On the other hand, colonial Korea had to process two levels of negating "the Japan-ness as the result of Korea's self-annihilation." Through the term "double coloniality,"

Choe states that the issue of externalizing Americanism in colonial Korea was more complicated than in Japan. Such complexity is not merely related to the issues on either "Japan-ness" or "Korean-ness." The roundtable participants of the "Overcoming Modernity" discussed concrete topics on America, American culture, as well as Americanism. They attempted to analyze the impact of these topics not only to Japan but also to Europe, thereby showing their knowledge of the different facets of the United States. Because of the prevailing perceptions of the U.S. before the outbreak of the Pacific War, such as class, generation, region, and gender, a diversified debate could derive reaching from essential questions from "what is Americanism" to "how to overcome Americanism," and to "which Americanism should be overcome."

We can assume that the complexity of positioning America as the enemy and negation of Americanism during the Pacific War had a multi-layered effect, particularly on the identity formation in colonial Korea. Many studies on the everyday life of Korea have discussed how the colonial people to emulate American culture: "modern girls" imitating the fashion, hairstyle and walk of Hollywood stars, "modern boys" listening to Jazz music in cafes and discussing their movie tastes with peers. On the other hand, we cannot ignore that critical insights to such emulation also existed in considerable tension with Americanism during that period, those expressed through criticism on different elements of American cultures such as frivolity, decadence, lack of tradition, mass production of Fordism, mammonism and racism. Not only did the advocates of anti-Americanism among socialists lean towards Russianism (Baek 2015, 18-28), but also the continuity of traditional values, interest towards traditional culture, rejection of urbanization, aversion towards popular culture, as well as worship of European culture were all related to the critical views on Americanism. In other words, while Americanism captivated some, critical ideologies and rejection of Americanism existed simultaneously among the people as part of a self-preservation instinct. Additionally, the America as the other in relation to the formation of self-identity of the modern subject was not only distorted by the colonial reality of Japanese hegemony, but was also connected to a multi-layered spectrum of opinions on America and the Americanism in colonial Korea.

As the hostile relations between the U.S. and Japan spread to Korea during the Pacific War, the relatively diverse images of America were reduced to simplistic images of the "enemy" and the "beast." Such simplification resulted

in a complex web of fragments in everyday life of colonial Korea. The total war system with emphasis on practice and performativity deeply penetrated into the individual realms such as lifestyle, personal taste and leisure. Jazz and Hollywood were condemned as hedonistic, and the wavy-haired "modern girl" and tailor-suited "modern boy" were regarded as decadent. Japanese empire interfered in all matters of the general colonial people from listening to Jazz music over watching Hollywood movies as well as fashion, way of life and personal taste. The aim was to "cut out" these influences or "improve" and shift these preferences and "replace" them. Through these actions, it became clear how deeply American cultural hegemony had already penetrated the everyday life and culture of colonial Korea. The Japanese campaign against Americanism was not only confined to the psychological warfare against the enemy America by Japan, but also paradoxically called attention to the already deeply present America in the everyday lives of colonial Korea. As jazz was banned, light music and tango were trending. As Hollywood movies were banned, frivolous shows and entertainment movies from Germany garnered interest. However, all of these actions could not completely substitute American culture. Simply put, Hollywood stars completely disappeared from the peninsula's silver screens with the outbreak of the Pacific War. These stars were not only actors but rather representational icons of Hollywood, ergo America and thus Americanism. The Japanese government's efforts to create the enemy America and externalize Americanism could not but fail. Such failure could faintly be anticipated in the ongoing presence of groundless rumors about the victory of the U.S. in the war and the presence of underground listeners of the radio feature "Voice of America" (Byun 2013; Moon et al. 2005).

If the ban of Hollywood movies stood for the political cultural symbol marking the beginning of the Pacific War, the victory of the Allied Forces in August 1945 seemed to be the glorious return of Hollywood to Korea. When the U.S. forces first arrived in Southern Korea, the first questions that Koreans asked to the forces were about Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin (Kim 2000). The warm welcome towards the U.S. was not entirely unrelated to the underlying thirst for the previously banned American culture. However, when facing America and American culture without the mediation of Japan, which had previously enforced the externalization of America and Americanism during the Pacific War, a new definition of the relationship between America and post-liberation Korea was required. This was especially true in consideration of this

new relation budding between America and the divided Korea "south of the 38th Parallel." America was not only the liberator from Japanese Occupation and the war, but also another oppressive military occupant. Hollywood had returned to the screens with the military authority of the U.S., thereby conclusively creating a problematic mixture of Anti-Americanism and nationalism, clashing with the ideology of "national culture" in "post-liberation Korea," injuring the cultural pride of Koreans.

This essay seeks to examine the ambivalence of South Korean cultural circles toward Hollywood which represented not only a cultural liberator, but also the new occupation forces. It also probes into the imaginary intimacy of Hollywood and South Korea, at a time when the latter had just emerged from colonial oppression but was on the verge of being swept up by the Cold War. I hope this can be a re-examination of the post-liberation as the archetypical time when Anti-Americanism and nationalism were mixed, which has been seen in the present, particularly the year of "70th Anniversary of Liberation."

The Return of Hollywood to "Enemy Property Cinema"

On August 15, 1945, simultaneously with the end of the war, all movie theaters in Seoul closed down their businesses for a while. The majority of the theater owners in Seoul, the city with the most movie theaters on the entire peninsula, were Japanese. Not only were many in shock of losing the war or mourning for the fatherland, but they also had difficulty foreseeing their own safety or the future of their businesses. However, within just a week, all cinemas in Seoul re-opened for business. An August 23 article published in 1945 in the Japanese language newspaper *Keijo Nippo* 京城日報 reported that Seoul's cinemas had re-opened as per order by the Japanese Home Ministry that allowed all entertainment facilities in the country to reopen, in an effort to "re-cultivate a healthy and happy public environment" in an "actively promoting manner." The Japanese cinema owners must have concluded that no matter what emotional rollercoaster they had seen Koreans experiencing in the past week, it would not affect their business. Furthermore, with night business now being permitted, business limitations experienced during the war were abolished as well. Despite the defeat of Japan, Japanese cinema owners thought the Japanese occupation of Korea would continue and thus considered the cinemas in Korea to still be

located on the extension of the "Japanese mainland." Of course, some were in rush to sell off their colonial properties and return to the motherland, but a number of Japanese had stated they wanted to remain as all they had to expect in Japan was cities in ruins, run over by refugees due to the mass bombings (Lee 2012).

Under the peculiar circumstance of the division along the 38th Parallel, Seoul's cinemas seemed to be just as bustling as before September. The German musical film *Der Kongress Tanzt* (1931) was "showing to great acclaim" and *Zoku Onna Keizu* (1942) featuring Kazuo Hasegawa as the protagonist was screened at the Meiji-za Theater. Seeing German and Japanese movie ads in newspapers was not an unfamiliar sight to Koreans in the past years. However, Hasegawa's movie was most likely the last Japanese movie to have run ads in Korean newspapers. The Governor-General of Korea, Abe Nobuyuki, who had tried to commit *hara-kiri* immediately after the U.S. military forces had arrived and announced their command of Korea, signed the joint Japanese Surrender Documents and was purged from public office on September 12, 1945. The vague hope of many Japanese cinema owners to be able to continue to screen Japanese movies in Korea even after losing the war soon vanished. Japanese-owned cinemas were declared "Enemy Property" vested by the Allied Forces arriving on the Korean Peninsula. The enemy property movie screens were now "occupied" by America.

If we dwell on the subtle nuance of the speech of the last General-Governor Abe before leaving Korea "[w]e may have lost the war, but Korea has not gained victory," it points to the fact that while Japan had surrendered, Korea did not emerge as a winner. Thus, all Japanese-owned properties in Korea could not be managed by Koreans. In that sense, the Japanese-owned cinemas in Korea did not immediately go into Korean ownership. Following the last screening of a Japanese movie featuring Hasegawa, the Meiji-za Theater, the previously colonial Korea's "box-office hit" cinema was annexed by the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (hereafter, USAMGIK) and renamed *Gugje* (International) Theater. The issue on the administration of enemy property cinemas was a heated argument among South Korean cinema circles. Korean cultural elites assumed that they would be able to own and manage the cinemas deserted by the previous Japanese owners, but the expectation turned out to be naiveté.

It is a well-known fact that Korea was led from "liberation" from Japanese

imperialism over the "divided occupation" by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. at the 38th Parallel to the permanent division between South and North on the Korean peninsula. From a geopolitical situation surrounding the Korean peninsula, the fact that Korea was put under U.S. military occupation, treated just like the defeated Japan, had repercussions beyond eventually postponing the establishment of Korea as an independent nation state. South of the 38th Parallel, the U.S. was not only focused on carefully observing the U.S.S.R.-occupied zones, but was also interested in the relationship with the former empire of Japan. Such actions carry the meaningful interpretation that the U.S. did not only consider their occupation in a "colonial-postcolonial-liberation" temporal dimension, but had also the spatial dimension of "separation" of former imperialism, "division" of the peninsula, and "extension" of defeated Japan in mind. If the U.S. had viewed South Korea and Japan as one entity or Korea as an extension of Japan, the U.S. would not have been a "liberator" but another "occupier." In other words, the sweetness of liberation and nationalistic pride to have escaped from the oppressive colonial rule would have been much lessened.

The prevailing opinion within the cultural circles in South Korea was the prevailing opinion that the USAMGIK did not sufficiently understand the difference between liberated Korea and defeated Japan. For example, the ways in which Japanese property were confiscated and transferred to Koreans clearly indicate the U.S.' understanding of South Korea. Turning the Boomin Hall, which was naturally assumed to become a public facility for Koreans, into an exclusive theater for the U.S. military created antagonism among South Korea's cultural circles and the public alike. The conflict between the USAMGIK and South Korean cinema about the disposal of enemy property cinema deepened. Cultural policies enforced by the USAMGIK as well as the oppressive attitude towards Korean culture put the real intent of the U.S. and U.S. armed forces in question: were they indeed liberators or did they have something else in mind for South Korea? Such complexity was also repeated in the issues surrounding establishment of the National Theater and distribution of American films.[1]

A plethora of Hollywood movies rushed into theaters and created a

1. On the South Korean film industry and the cultural policies under the U.S. occupation, refer to several studies including the leading Cho Hye-Jung's work and other practical studies (Cho 1997; Moon 2002; Lee 2009; Kim 2012; Yecies and Shim 2011).

threat to South Korean cultural field on diverse levels. During the Pacific War, Hollywood movies had been banned by the Japanese Empire. Distributors wanted to reclaim their share on Korean screens after the victory of the Allied Forces. As in postwar Europe, Hollywood was aggressively flooding back to the local screens of Asia. The U.S. Government and the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (hereafter, SCAP) were pivotal players in paving the way for Hollywood films to arrive in the "Far East" across the Pacific Ocean. The Central Motion Picture Exchange (hereafter, CMPE) was the main agent to help dominate the screens in the "Far East."

The issue of distribution of Hollywood commercial films to postwar U.S. occupied territories had already been under careful discussion between the Office of War Information (hereafter, OWI) and Hollywood before the end of the war.[2] Based on the experiences of temporary loss in their overseas market shares during the interwar period and World War II, Hollywood distributors realized the importance of close cooperation between the film industry and the government. U.S. free trade had been in conflict with the efforts of Europe to protect their own domestic film industries since the early 1930s. With the outbreak of WWII, the Axis proclaimed a complete ban on U.S. films, thereby considerably reducing the Hollywood film business in all Axis nations, their colonies, and occupied territories as well as surrounding regions. Hollywood lost 58 local markets during WWII, leading to an increased production of patriotic movies and war documentaries to target domestic audiences. Hollywood also held amicable relations with the U.S. government, and when the victory of the Allied Forces became clear, and it soon began to prepare for postwar business. Foreseeing potential clashes with the various countries' protectionism applied toward Hollywood films, the Motion Picture Export Association (hereafter,

2. During the Pacific War, the Office of War Information (OWI) figured that the easiest way to indoctrinate the public with the American way of thinking was via Hollywood feature entertainment films, so it built up close relations to Hollywood and set up internal and external film policies. Right after the occupation by the U.S. military, film industry representatives such as Michael Bergher or Don Brown who were familiar with the distribution of American movies as well as the Japanese mass media situation, began to independently investigate distribution plans for American movies in the Far East. Such plans included Bergher's proposal to establish the CMPE as the common distributor of major American film production companies in the occupied zones. Bergher actually established the CMPE in occupied Japan and acted as its first managing director. Bergher's plan and actions are a clear proof of the continuity of the pre-war film policy-making process and postwar execution process through the OWI (Tanikawa 2002, 86-120).

MPEA) was constructed by 8 major production companies—MGM, Warner Brothers, Paramount, Universal, RKO Radio, Columbia, 20th Century Fox, and United Artists—and the Republic. The MPEA acted as a legal cartel exempt from antitrust law receiving full support from the U.S. Department of State and Department of Commerce to promote overseas trade of U.S. films. The MPEA closely cooperated with the U.S. government to counter restrictions imposed on American films such as import tax, screen quotas, currency regulations, and so on by negotiating with overseas governments. It also aimed at regulating the profit and maintaining the alliance of Hollywood studios.

The CMPE acted as the outpost of the Civil Information and Education Section (hereafter, CIE), which controlled the reorientation program of the occupied territories of the SCAP. It also functioned as the early East Asia outpost of the MPEA. The SCAP utilized Hollywood films as part of its reorientation program of the people in their occupied territories, in particular to disseminate positive images of America and American liberal democracy. The screening of Hollywood commercial films in occupied territories was expected to additionally result in an increase of screenings of newsreels and culture films. From the MPEA perspective, the CMPE as its East Asia outpost was the easiest way to exhibit the stock films that were stacking up in storage due to bans during the war and regain share in the previously lost markets. Michael M. Bergher, the Far Eastern representative of Columbia Pictures, who had led the American Motion Picture Association of Japan before the war, worked for the OWI overseas branch preparing the film distribution plans to postwar occupied territories. Bergher became the first CMPE head, setting up the CMPE outpost in Tokyo in February 1946 and the Korea Branch (hereafter, CMPE-Korea when specifically referring to Korea) in April in Seoul.[3]

At the launch of the CMPE, the chief of the Motion Picture Section of the Department of Public Information (hereafter, DPI) stated that "we are unrelated to the CMPE" in an effort to deny affiliation (*Jung-wae Ilbo*, April 19, 1946). However, there was in fact no need to offer further explanations to the obvious full support by the USAMGIK. At that time, South Korea had not officially commenced commercial relations with other countries, so there was no clearer evidence than the "temporary expedient" through "supervision

3. On details regarding the establishment of the MPEA and CMPE, refer to Kitamura 2010, Ch. 2.

of the military government" when the Hollywood films began to be imported in Korea (*Dong-a Ilbo*, April 8, 1946; *Seoul Shinmun*, April 11, 1946). The first branch manager of the CMPE-Korea, located at Namdaemun 4th street, was E. F. Johanssen; the Korean branch manager was Kim Dong-Sung. Unlike Michael Bergher, who was fluent in Japanese, knowledgeable about local customs, and therefore well-equipped to establish the foundation of the CMPE, Johanssen, the vice-head of the CMPE East Asia outpost and CMPE-Korea branch manager, was not familiar with local customs. In this, he was not unlike the majority of the USAMGIK officials. The local branch manager, Kim Dong-Sung, was the CEO of the Korean United Press newswire. His appointment had less to do with his interest in the film industry and more with the fact that he was fluent in English and therefore could act as an "interpreter." Kim seems to have personally distributed films to South Korean cinemas and then collected and relayed the local film industry opinions to Johanssen (*Jung-wae Ilbo*, April 19, 1946, 4). To South Korean cultural elites, Kim seems to have been no more than a spokesperson, acting in the interest of the CMPE to promote American films, instead of being a representative voicing the support for Korean culture (Seo 1987, 1971).

As soon as the USAMGIK received notice that the CMPE-Korea would begin with the import and distribution of U.S. films in South Korea, it did not hesitate to take open measures of classifying "American film and the rest" on South Korea's screens. First of all, the USAMGIK promulgated Ordinance No. 68 "Regulation of Motion Pictures" (April 12, 1946) in the month of the establishment of CMPE-Korea. Ordinance No. 68 devised the transfer of censorship duties, previously held by the Japanese Governor-General Police Bureau, to the DPI Motion Picture Section. It also announced a new censorship system and ordered for all South Korean film production companies and cinemas to re-submit all films to censorship review.

"Censorship" was another stimulant to foment discontent among South Korean cultural circles. In fact, the impact of censorship on South Korean cinema could be foreseen. When the pro-Japanese propaganda film *Military Train* (1938) was shown on screens again under the altered title "Young Man at Sunset," the prevailing opinion was, though "a pathetic execution on the brink of establishing a new national film culture in democratic Korea," "we must not suffer oppression of this new censorship system similar to the Japanese imperialistic policies" (Im Hwa) (*Seoul Shinmun*, March 4, 1946).

Just as censorship was one of the most symbolic forms of colonial cultural oppression during the Japanese Occupation, Ordinance No. 68 was yet another systematized vestige of colonial oppression in liberated Korea (Jung and Choi 2011).

This newly enforced censorship system required the submission of a screening permission form including film script, film commentary, title, and English translation, making it complicated and cumbersome for Korean locals to apply for censorship review. English translation work seemed to be a repetition of "the tedious translation work from Korean to Japanese" (Lee Tae-Jun) under Japanese rule. It also meant "a considerable financial burden to submit three copies of English script translations as English is different from Japanese" (Lee Chang Yong). The process raised worries that "the lack of availability of English across Korea creates a considerable burden to both, office administration and accounting, which will greatly impact the reconstruction of the impoverished Korean film culture." Even when considering the linguistic asymmetry between the censor and the censored, which could explain the demand for English translation as an administrative request, such a task only set the barrier to pass censorship higher for Korean filmmakers. On the contrary, the complicated and fastidious censorship process applied to Korean movies was not complicated at all for American movies, which did not need English translations. The censorship ordinance passed by the USAMGIK was in fact a comparatively convenient provision for U.S. films. There were various positions taken among cultural elites regarding these inequities from fundamental anti-censorship ideology "insisting that such a system must naturally disappear for the sake of the development of a democratic and normal culture" (Im Hwa) (*Jayu Shinmun*, May 5, 1946) to moderate views "should censorship be unavoidable, the process should be minimized as much as possible" (Lee Tae-Jun), opinions flourished, and even the Chosun Cultural Organization Confederation had different opinions on the censorship process. However, they agreed on the one point: the new censorship system would limit the development of Korean film industry and culture.

Along with the promulgation of Ordinance No. 68, the USAMGIK ordered all legally imported films before and after August 15, 1945 to be re-submitted for censorship review to the DPI Motion Picture Section. 12 films—Korean, American, German, Italian, and so on—that were screening at the time of this new promulgation were all confiscated. 9 cinemas among the movie

theatres whose movies were confiscated had to close down as they did not have a reserve program to run (*Jung-wae Ilbo*, May 6, 1946; *Dong-a Ilbo*, May 5, 1946; *Seoul Shinmun*, May 5, 1946). It seemed clearer that "the new censorship law will eventually limit the screening of old films and the development of future Korean film by only enabling the screening of newly incoming Western films" (Choo Min) (*Jayu Shinmun*, May 5, 1946). Ordinance No. 68 not only impacted the South Korean film circle but the entire local culture. Finally, the Chosun Film Federation (hereafter, CFU) and representatives of 14 other organizations signed a petition and submitted it to the authorities, requesting the abolishment of the film censorship and the postponement of this ordinance (*Jung-wae Ilbo*, May 6, 1946).

DPI chief Glenn Newman responded that censorship was applied in order to control "illegal screening," and further conceded that if the regulation had become a burden to the Korean film industry it would be revised (*Seoul Shinmun*, May 8, 1946). The "illegal screening" Newman was referring to incorporated two matters of interest to the USAMGIK. One was the regulation and limitation of leftist film activities in South Korea including the mobile screenings by the CFU[4]; the other was the confiscation of illegally distributed and exhibited films through black market dealers, thereby putting all competition—Soviet, French, German, Italian, Chinese, and Korean films—under the control and regulatory system of the USAMGIK. Before Ordinance No. 68, South Korean cinemas screened Korean films produced during the Japanese colonial period, old American films, French, German, Chinese, and Soviet films.[5] Illegal imports from Japan and China, and film stock from

4. USAMGIK promulgated Ordinance No. 115 Article 3 to regulate that all screenings for groups of more than 15 persons needed permission. Cho Hye-Jung (1997, 78) points out that this ordinance implies the intent to limit the activities of mobile film units of the Chosun Film Federation.

5. The following is a list of movies exhibited in Seoul between September and December 1945 based on advertisements in the *Keijo Nippo* and *Seoul Shinmun*. *Der Kongress Tanzt* (Germany, 1931), *King Solomon's Mines* (Britain 1937), *Truxa* (Germany 1937), *Saison In Kairo* (Germany 1933), *Der Kosak und die Nachtigall* (Germany 1935), *Der Herr Der Welt* (Germany 1934), *Tarss Boulba* (France 1935), *Le Golem* (France 1935), *S.O.S. Eisberg* (Germany 1933), *Der Schwarze Walfisch* (Germany 1934), *La Tête d'un Homme* (France 1933), *La Belle Epoque* (France 1936), 우리 거리의 젊은이 [The Youth on the Street] (U.S.S.R., Original Title Unknown), 東方の虹 (U.S.S.R., Original Title Unknown), 襲來 (U.S.S.R., Original Title Unknown). The first movies to be exhibited after liberation in December 1945, *What Price Crime* (1935) and *The New Adventures of Tarzan* (1935) also were from film stock imported prior to the war.

the colonial period created considerable trouble even after resubmission for censorship. Among such film stock were several popular French and German films, which were shown on screens in Korea again and again. Besides the questions whether the USAMGIK could indeed seamlessly control the distribution of all films in South Korea, this phenomenon just clarified that the Korean film industry leaned heavily the exhibition business, due to a severe lack in production infrastructure. Furthermore, it was the comparative apathy of the USAMGIK and CMPE towards South Korean film culture that could be another explanation for this phenomenon.

The USAMGIK and CMPE-Korea probably had gained insight into details of the films distributed in South Korea, the size of business, and other practical information as a side effect of censorship. However, these insights did not translate into promoting South Korean movie productions or supportive policies. It was not because the U.S. military occupation period of Korea was too short.[6] Rather, the film policies of the U.S. military regime stood in direct correlation to the efforts of re-establishing a global hegemony within the Cold War dynamics through a postwar Hollywood trading project. CMPE-Korea, charged with the import and distribution of American films throughout South Korea, had a successful start in business with such systematic support by the USAMGIK.

Neglect and Monopoly: CMPE Dualism and Reaction of South Korean Cinema

The CMPE had established a branch in Seoul with the argument that South Korea was also a U.S. military occupied zone. Thus began a series of problems following the now direct distribution of American film to Korea. Japan and South Korea were not only essentially different through their distinction into "defeated" and "liberated (post-colonial)" nations. The film industry

6. Yecies and Shim (2011, 148) argue that the U.S. support and protection of Korean cinema was comparatively weaker than Japan because the occupation period was shorter. In my opinion, the reason why we have the difficulty to find the film policy for the development of South Korean film production during the U.S. military occupation is related to the U.S. attitude itself toward South Korea, rather than its short occupation.

infrastructure also showed great gaps in development. At the end of the war, 3 major film production companies existed in Japan: Toho, Shochiku and Daiei Film, the latter a product of a merger of several smaller studios. Even though the film industry outlook looked bleak due to the war, the Japanese film industry had been a world-ranking production industry and possessed a solid infrastructure including facilities, equipment, technology, and manpower. The two major franchises Toho and Shochiku had nationwide distribution networks respectively reaching from major cities to small and medium-sized cities. Film magazines such as the *Kinema Junpo* キネマ旬報 or *Eiga no Tomo* 映畵之友 resumed publication with the end of the war. All of these became important channels to promote the Hollywood films distributed by the CMPE. Letters to the film journals along with a number of hobby clubs became important sources to monitor Japanese audiences' reactions. In stark contrast, the only film production available on the Korean peninsula right after liberation was the enemy property, Chosun Film Corporation (hereafter, Cho Young Inc.).[7] Most of the previously Japanese owned cinemas now were managed as enemy property, and with the dissolution of Cho Young Inc., which controlled the film distribution, South Korean cinemas now lacked a corporate distribution system that could connect and reach the cinemas. Therefore, whether CMPE-Korea perceived the difference in structure and national emotions between Japan and Korea and what its intentions towards South Korean film industry were, constituted an important aspect of the newly established bureau. It could have a significant impact on the USAMGIK cultural policy and the reception of Hollywood film in South Korea.

CMPE-Korea announced the first movies that were to be distributed: *First Love* (Universal 1939), starring Deanna Durbin in the lead, *The New Adventures of Tarzan* (MGM 1935) starring Johnnie Weissmuller and *San Francisco* (1936) with lead actor Clark Gable (*Dong-a Ilbo*, April 8, 1946). Within this selection, *Tarzan* had already been exhibited several times during the colonial period and

7. The two film corporations formed under the Japanese General Government in 1942, Chosun Film Distribution Corporation (CFDC) and Chosun Film Production Corporation (CFPC) merged and restructured into the Chosun Film Corporation (Cho Young Inc.) in 1944 when the CFDC acquired the CFPC. At the time of liberation, Cho Young Inc. possessed a film studio with two warehouses. Directly after liberation an operation committee formed around the technical director Lee Jae-Myung. The Japanese management is said to have paid out retirement severance and to transfer the rights of operating its facilities to Korean filmmakers. However, all facilities and funds of Cho Young Inc. were confiscated to the USAMGIK (Han 2013, 23-30).

had even been screened in December 1945, before the official implementation of censorship by the USAMGIK. *San Francisco* had been released at the Meijiza in 1937 (*Kyeongseong Ilbo*, March 10, 1937); *First Love* had been imported in 1941 under the different title "Silver Sippers," but could not be exhibited for years (*Maeil Shinbo*, February 12, 1941). None of these three movies, all starring popular actors of pre-war times, were new releases. In fact, any movie fan would probably already have seen or almost seen any of the films. Keen interest resided all over the Korean peninsula over these Hollywood movies which would be screened after years of banning. However, as if time was turning back, these "new releases" for liberated Korea were all films produced before the Pacific War.

The list of films distributed by CMPE-Korea to South Korea is a clear example of the Hollywood film industry's perception of the South Korean market. The CMPE in Japan paid careful attention in the selection, review, promotion, and exhibition of Hollywood films. On the other hand, CMPE-Korea did not have specific information on the South Korean market specifications. At this point, South Korea can be viewed as an outlet for the CMPE. A "freebie" market where previously imported film stock to Japan and Korea could be recycled, leftover films in Japan that had been sent to East Asia by Hollywood studios or films that finished exhibition in Japan. For example, *Madame Curie* (MGM 1935) and *His Butler's Sister* (Universal 1943) were one of the first films distributed to Japan by the CMPE. Madame Curie in particular was deemed adequate for the Japanese reorganization program of the SCAP. A French female scientist of Polish descent shows perseverance under all circumstances, achieving greatness through sacrifice. She also becomes a symbol of the democratic myth, a poor female immigrant woman who overcomes race, class, and gender to succeed.[8] We can assume that the film was selected to facilitate American democratic values to the defeated nation Japan. It is further interest to see that one of Deanna Durbin's musical films

8. Cinematographer Jung Il-Sung was a teenager in poverty in Japan at the time of liberation. On looking back upon his stay in Japan, he said that the American movies he watched in Tokyo before returning to Korea showed him a different world. The first movie distributed by the CMPE in February 1946, *Madame Curie*, left a strong impression about American democracy and gender equality to him: "*Madame Curie* completely changed my traditional value of women, whom I thought to exist to take care of their husbands and raise children. It showed me that women could realize their own potential even more than men" (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, April 11, 1996). *Madame Curie* was screened in November 1946 in South Korea.

was also selected among the first distribution list in Japan. The 1943 movie *His Butler's Sister* features Durbin in her 20s, she is no longer a little girl. Upon closer inspection of the distribution list of 1946, most of the films were produced between 1941 and 1945. In other words, they were films that had not been able to cross the Pacific Ocean due to the war. Contrastingly, CMPE-Korea's first selection of films was "older" ones, produced in the late 1930s. These films did not implement affirmations of American values neither were they enlightening biographies. They were entertainment, musical or adventure movies. The *Tarzan* episodes continued to be screened in South Korea several times even though the Civil Information and Education Section (hereafter, CIE) in Japan had expressed concern that the audience would receive racist and narrow-minded imperialistic impressions toward America (Kitamura 2012, 76).[9]

Even though both Japan and South Korea were under the military rule of the SCAP, the film distribution in the early days of the CMPE showed significant differences in the year 1946. The issue at hand was not about the numbers of film prints or theaters. It derived from the fact that the CMPE was established as an outpost of the SCAP with the clear early objective and emphasis to eradicate negative sentiment toward allied occupation of the defeated nation Japan. As commercial Hollywood films were not produced specifically as part of the reorientation program by the American occupiers, the review of films for the occupied territories required careful selection. Additionally, films produced during the Pacific War had to be selected with extra care, since they were specifically tailored to the sentiment of the American domestic audience, promoting patriotism in a distinctive "American way." With the return of American films to theater screens, the occupied audiences received two messages at once: one is the relief of the end of the war; another is the bitter humiliation of being "occupied." At the same time, the film distribution in South Korea by CMPE-Korea did not show a consistency in the selection criteria. Charles Armstrong argued that the United States showed a lack of cultural policy toward South Korea in the early years during the Cold War.[10] While the SCAP exercised the same military occupation of Japan

9. Refer to http://www.allcinema.net for information on American movies distributed in Japan by the CMPE.

and South Korea, it was ignorant of the cultural situation in South Korea, displaying relative indifference. Such ignorance and indifference stemmed from the arrogance confidence of the USAMGIK and CMPE-Korea, assuming that American movies would be welcomed unconditionally by the South Korean people.

The fact that CMPE-Korea was not paying South Korean audiences careful attention first became clear in the subtitles of the American films exhibited (*Dong-a Ilbo*, April 8, 1946). A number of American films arrived via the production offices of CMPE Tokyo with superimposed Japanese subtitles. At this age of post-liberation, when the people were longing for a national culture, the use of Japanese subtitles directly clashed with the "Korean Language Movement" that aimed at eradicating Japanese language and other remaining fragments of the colonial past. It also offended the policy of the educational authorities. These American films with Japanese subtitles were a plain exhibit of the indifference of the CMPE toward the cultural background of South Korea, as well as South Korea's situation that still connected it to the former imperial Japan through the allied occupation. This situation stood in stark contrast to the first Soviet film shown after liberation, which had Korean subtitles (*Jungang Shinmun,* November 24, 1945). The CMPE prioritized the adaption of Korean subtitles on American films with a clear enlightenment theme, such as *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (RKO 1943), a biographical film on the Abraham Lincoln called "father of democracy" (*Chosun Ilbo*, August 9, 1946), or the *Men of Boy's Town* (MGM 1941) a children film (*Dong-a Ilbo*, June 1, 1947). Even these films, however, still featured Japanese idioms or letters, leading to wide resentment (*Seoul Shinmun*, September 24, 1948). The screening of Hollywood films with Japanese subtitles continued even long after the South Korean government took office (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, June 25, 1949). In the early years of the Cold War, Koreans took this indifferent attitude of the USAMGIK as an affront, which would weigh the cultural pride of Koreans lightly.

10. Armstrong (2003, 74-78) summarizes the development of the cultural policy of the USAMGIK in Korea by categorizing three stages: "Apathy" from August 1945 to the end of 1946, the period without much interest on cultural issues in South Korea; "Alienation" from early 1946 to mid-l947, the period when the number of intellectuals grew out of disillusionment towards the U.S. occupation and moved to the North; "Activism" from mid-1947 to 1950, the period when the USAMGIK paid the serious attention to the propaganda and public information.

Secondly, South Korean audiences felt that the CMPE indiscriminately poured films produced before or during the Pacific War (Lee 1949). Among the films distributed by CMPE-Korea, many were old and tattered. Films that had been exhibited during the colonial period were also put up on the screens frequently. In the beginning, the audience was happy to see the faces of old Hollywood stars again, but the constant stream of wartime films even though the war was over did not meet the expectations of the South Korean audience for a more progressive and hopeful future after liberation. Among these old films there were of course some classical Hollywood masterpieces that had won or were nominated for the Academy Awards, and some films featured new starlets of Hollywood as well. However, it suffices to say that the American films exhibited on South Korean screens were not all representative of "contemporary America." Contrary to American films, most of the British films that brought about a "British Film Renaissance" just started distribution in 1948 through Eunyong Film Company (Lee 1949). Hollywood films that arrived much later than their production created an incoherent "cultural parallax." Even though Hollywood cinema still exercised a universal appeal, Korean audiences were longing to meet the "new America" on the screen.

Thirdly, members of South Korean film industry claimed that the USAMGIK applied looser censorship rules to the films distributed by the CMPE. Criticism existed that censorship regulations only complicated the distribution process of Korean film distributors, the potential competitors of the CMPE and that the cinemas "became the effusion place of sexual desire" "due to the American films" (Yoo 1948). However, the level of sex and violence perceived in American cinema merely differed from person to person. There exists no evidence that American movies were released without censorship review.[11] American films also had to undergo the censorship approval process by American officials and Korean chief of the Motion Picture Section just like other films. However, we can assume that the films that already received approval in Japan were reviewed on the grounds of "potential

11. When the Department of State requested information on the reaction of South Korean audiences toward American movies on December 30, 1947, W. R. Langdon (1948)'s reply on censorship mentions that movies were censored based on "passionate kiss scenes, violent gun fights, brutality, quarreling or drunk women, almost all gang and mystery movies" but that the reaction on kiss scenes differed among the generations (qtd. in Moon 2002).

damage to Korean sensibility" (Bruns 1949, 1-4). The USAMGIK's censorship standards exclusively related to whether the content of the films could damage "democracy and the USAMGIK" (ibid.). While the films with socialistic or Japanese militaristic content were banned as they could become a hindrance in implanting American democracy to the South Korean people, films such as German entertainment movies continued to be exhibited. The USAMGIK film censorship was not only part of a colonial legacy. It also had the effect of strengthening the monopolistic domination of Hollywood films by regulating the distribution of illegally imported films and existing film stock. The CMPE stated that its foundation had the objective of the introduction of the nature of America, the achievement of democratization and educations, and the conduct of concrete occupation policies through films" (Ahn 1948). In fact, however, the American movies that had seized South Korean screens were mainly for amusement—romances, adventure, Western, and comedies.[12] This was the reason why South Korean cultural circles thought that the American films distributed by the CMPE had low quality.

The early films distributed by CMPE-Korea created an ambivalent perspective of South Korean cinema toward American films. Korean audiences began an active reading of Hollywood films. In other words, they applied a different perspective to the movies they were now again encountering on their screens after years. As if responding to the SCAP plan to use Hollywood films as part of their reorientation program of occupied territories, the general discourse on the reception of Hollywood films was that Korean audience had to know what and what not to learn from American films as pedagogy, even if the film

12. The January 1948 issue of *Sincheonji* is titled "Speical Feature of American Movies." At the time criticism on the vulgarity and popular culture of American movies prevailed. The survey conducted by *Shincheonji* shows these diverse sentiments. On the other hand, when reviewing the flood of American entertainment movies, the different interests of the SCAP and CMPE as well as MPEA can be seen in the censorship reviews and screening of commercial movies. They also show that the interest of these organizations and the military government did not always coincide. According to Kitamura, Hollywood studios tried to aggressively recapture the Japanese market after the Pacific War, collaborating with the SCAP and establishing the CMPE. However, at times the enlightenment project by the SCAP for reorientation clashed with the profit-targeted objective of Hollywood commercial movies, sometimes even endangering the mutual-assistance system they had formed. Refer to Kitamura 2010, Ch. 4, for further information on the strained relations between the occupation authorities and the CMPE as well as MPEA. We can assume that the tensions grew after May 1947, when the CMPE was acknowledged as a profit-making private corporation in Japan.

was nothing more than for pure entertainment.

> Movies are a reflection of society. In such, we have to know about the reality of American culture, the American democratic thinking, ways of life, etc. to learn what we can and ingest their good points. In terms of artistic value, American films are generally far from European films. Of course, there are valuable "Humanism" films such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, You Can't Take it With You,* or *Holiday*. However, most of the movie plots with their typical American-ness dealing with peculiar magic and gambling, emptiness and violence, nonsense, eroticism and so on enforce a "fantasy" moment. We cannot but marvel at the ability of "Hollywood" cinema to enforce such "fantasy" moments, the technological superiority or power of capital of these movies. On the other hand, we have to bear in mind that American cinema often lacks a sense of poesy and ideology. Our tendency to forget about Korean cinema and believe in the supremacy of American cinema is also not a favorable phenomenon. Lowbrow movies like *The Adventure of Ttolttori* 똘똘이의 모험 will inevitably arouse resentment and pleasure alike in a cultured individual, but after all, we should not forget that the quality of indigenous cinema is a product of its people. Neither the government's censorship nor the self-restraint of the business circle will improve the quality of a movie. Only social regulation and social selection will do the job. In other words, movies that the public deems worthless must be flat out "boycotted." Movies appraised valuable are a representation of a democratic behavior of appreciation. Such critical attitude specifically needs to be applied with more objectivity toward American movies. (Lee 1946)

In this rather long quote, film critic Lee Tae-Woo diagnoses that the ongoing slump of Korean film production introduced the flux of American films. He declares that South Korean audience should "learn and take a stance" towards American movies "the reality of American culture and the American democratic thinking, way of life, and so on," while keeping a distance and taking a critical stance towards the "fantasy" of American cinema. Even though he bases his argument on the prerequisite that movies are a reflection of society, he nonetheless makes a distinction between America and American cinema. The audience should learn democratic thinking and way of life of the new postwar supremacy America. Conversely he offers a way of viewing that filters out "peculiar magic and gambling, emptiness and violence, nonsense, and eroticism" of American cinema. His argumentation intertwines a positive image

of the America that has achieved absolute supremacy as the winner of the war, as well as the diverse perceptions towards America that have persisted since the colonial period. During the colonial period, two views repeatedly surfaced. On the one hand, there was a positive reception of American way of life and democracy through film; on the other hand, a critical dual attitude with a strong dichotomous distinction of the "European spirit" and "materialistic America" also existed and claimed that the latter lacks artistry and ideology.[13]

We need to pay close attention to what I call "dual attitude" in this article because it implies how the cultural politics discourses on America and American cinema participate in the reading of the text. This point of view has derived from the effort to appropriate Hollywood cinema which was not made for educational purpose as a useful text. The powerful political, economic, and cultural hegemony of America can be seen as an effect of cultural geopolitics of Cold War, which positioned the U.S. as the most advanced Western model. After WWII, movies of the dominate nation America required the world audience to participate in an active reading to "dismiss an old and shallow idea of America and grasp an accurate view of awareness" (Ok 1946). Thus the transnational distribution of Hollywood cinema produced the cultural decoding of the American film as an educational text in the occupied territories of the U.S.[14] Lee Tae-Woo established a link between such a reading and a "democratic way of appreciation" towards the end of his essay. He states that the distinction of "good movie" and "bad movie" and the unhesitating expression of such an opinion is the democratic. When viewing an American movie, it is necessary to maintain the detachment based on such a critical attitude.

When the monopolistic and unjust distribution system by the CMPE began to create serious problems that began to threaten South Korean cinema, the previously moderate viewpoints applying a pedagogic method to American cinema for "Liberated Korea," became much more complex and multilayered. Opposing and critical voices against the material civilization and capitalistic violence depicted in American cinema grew gradually louder. The authors contributing to the special issue on American Cinema in *Shincheonji* 新天地

13. This point of view during the late colonial period became an important basis in the formation of anti-Americanism. For example, please see Kim 1941.

14. For more information on a transnational reading of Hollywood movies in U.S. occupied zones after WWII, see Fay 2008, Ch. 2.

published in January 1948 rigorously expressed their critical opinions toward American cinema. Ok Myung-Chan (1948) focused on Hollywood cinema in his "On American Culture," published in spring 1946, harshly criticizing the commercialism of Hollywood cinema that mass-produced average films and the "bourgeoisie of American culture." He lists up following examples of his meaning of bourgeoisie: "[h]aving to adjust to general resentment deriving from social class and unequal division of wealth," "exaggerated scenes of richness and indulgence that feed into the immature fantasies in the minds of the poor people," "the illusion that individual talent will easily open the way to success," and "the hope that material or spiritual happiness or unhappiness is not destined by fate but that even elevator boys can one day become millionaires." He focused on the optimism of Hollywood movies to argue that the "happy ending" shared by these movies would imply that the opportunity to happiness is open to anybody. These endings were a summary of the "bourgeois way," a "hymn to American democracy" and an expression of the "American Dream" where everybody is free and equal.

Ok's intention of this critical essay was to attack the "deceptive Americanism" rooted deeply in American cinema by questioning the nature of American democracy. American cinema conveyed the message that happiness was possible to anybody and that everybody was free and equal. The audience of such movies could dream of "hope," thus ignoring their reality of class inequality and the structural imbalance of society. Furthermore, during these times the U.S. summoned progressive filmmakers criticizing the myth of Americanism into the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), suppressing the freedom of thought by exhibiting radical anti-communist measures. News on Charlie Chaplin's interrogation had a great impact on South Korea's cultural circle. Chaplin was greatly loved by South Korean Hollywood fans and his interrogation aroused a sense of suspicion on the freedom, equality, and democratic values advocated by America.

Another contributor to the same special feature, Chae Jung-Geun, discusses the violence exerted by the USAMGIK and CMPE on South Korean cinema in his essay "Miscellaneous Thoughts on American Cinema: The Influence on American Movies and Korean Show Business." He specifically lists a detailed description of the problems emerging through the distribution by the CMPE. One of these episodes is as follows. When CMPE-Korea demanded high fees for the distribution of American films, the so-called three major

cinemas of Seoul refused to exhibit Hollywood films as a symbol of protest. A military government official then summoned these cinema managers and asked "[d]o you have anti-American sentiments? If not, why do you refuse to exhibit American movies?" Just by hearing the words "anti-American ideology comment" the managers were so intimidated that they had but to agree to the unjust contract conditions. Chae exemplifies that the managers of "enemy property" cinemas were in a helpless position without the capability to negotiate with the authorities. This helplessness was not only limited to cinema managers. In a summary of information collected through sources on Japanese cinema and journalists, he states that we cannot but think that "American cinema is favorable towards its former enemy Japan, while it tightly controls us for whose independence they originally arrived." He adds that the CMPE "does not 'consider Korea equal to other regions in the world' but deems it a special profit-gaining region." While the CMPE did not support Korean cinema neither with facilities, equipment, nor film, an "American GI" is quoted to ridicule "Korean movies are clumsy and infantile that barely anyone goes to see them. Why make them?" On the other hand, disillusionment towards the "freedom of enterprise" and arrogance of capitalism grew further, as it "spared no effort to fly in dozens of American film prints for the American trading company to Japan via airplane."

However, not all critics expressed denial of America and American cinema from the same standpoint. Literature critic Baek Chul (1948) who had great interest in cinema claimed that the postwar American cinema had created a "new American-ness" through a reinterpretation of European intellect into American sentiments. He lists *Rhapsody In Blue* (1945) and *No Time For Love* (1943) and other movies as examples stating that these postwar films displayed intellect and rationality. Unfortunately, his list of examples mostly comprised films produced before the war. Baek's distorted perception of America possibly caused this misconception and created this "New America."

Poet and film critic Park In-Hwan also did not hide his preference toward American cinema. Reaching the 1950s, Park positively evaluates Americanism while discovering the "power of youth." Despite the clear changes in the view on Americanism, his consistent theme on American cinema is a positive perception of America as "colony" and its puritanism before and after the Korean War. He also describes his expectations of "the new birth" 新生. During the USAMGIK period, discontent toward the monopoly and tyranny of the CMPE grew

among South Korean cultural circle. At the same time Park uses pre-war examples of *Dodsworth* (1936) and *Lost Horizon* (1937) to associate American identity with "the wholesome spirit of development by the English forefathers" (Park 1948), further discussing the "tragedy of America" caused through an imbalance of material and spirit which created greed. In his perception, Great Britain and the United States, Europe and America, tradition and lack of tradition form opposing pairs. He argues that the asymmetry of these pairs results in a "nostalgic fantasy" of Europe. While Ok Myung-Chan accused the falseness of Americanism's optimism, Park In-Hwan interestingly tried to state that the "typical despair of the colonial world" derived from the imbalance of material and spirit. Though he used pre-war examples, he possibly wanted to focus on this kind of despair due to his desire to dig into the dark side of postwar America. Whatever side of America one wanted to see, the USAMGIK, CMPE, and Hollywood respectively would have had different faces and expressions.

Dilemma of Criticism: Revisit or Illusion of Discourse of "Cinema Nationalization"

Could Hollywood movies returning to post-liberation South Korean screens still symbolize the paradise of motion pictures? No filmmaker, struggling with the meager environment s/he faced every day, would easily bury the deep-rooted admiration of Hollywood capital, technology, and well-established system. However, when the unjust monopolistic dominations of the CMPE further confined room for Korean cinema, it increased the criticism towards "popular but shallow low-budget" Hollywood movies and the capitalist mass production system which enabled such production. Even though the oppressor Japan had vanished and Korea was able to encounter Hollywood directly, the rapid change due to the Cold War and national division created multi-layers in this face-to-face encounter.

The discourses on how new "Korean cinema" would be positioned within world cinema, and on what system this new cinema would be based were both in the processes of dissolution and development of idealized myth of Hollywood. The particular question for the establishment of national cinema displayed further interest in the reorganization of the film industry in other postwar nations. South Korean cinema, which tried to battle the oppressive monopoly of

CMPE, took for granted that the "sublime idea" of new "national cinema" could not be produced under the mass production system like Hollywood.

During this period, opposing or alternative production systems—Soviet, British, French, etc.—garnered more attention in the cultural sphere of South Korean film. The discourse of Cinema Nationalization was particularly prevailing. Nationalized production systems already existed on the Korean peninsula. The Soviet Union which occupied the region north of the 38th Parallel utilized a nationalization model, and under their tutelage North Korea had established the National Film Studio. Through the Chosun Film Corporation (a.k.a. Cho Young Inc.) founded by the Government-General of Korea, South Koreans also already had direct experience of state-operated production. Such direct and indirect experience of nationalized systems created an unequivocal contrast to the Hollywood system, enabling the formation of a critical distance from Hollywood cinema.[15]

First, let me focus on the situation in South Korea. The past cooperation with imperial Japan's cultural warfare must be a shameful experience. However, this direct experience of a completely vertical process of production-distribution-exhibition under a nationalized system had become an important background to the demand for cinema nationalization, which was yet led by the not-yet-established nation-state amidst the radically altered cultural situation of postwar South Korea. The filmmakers who participated in the production of imperialist propaganda films had advocated for nationalization as early as the point of liberation. Many of these filmmakers who had worked under the comfortable system of Cho Young Inc.—even received retirement severance at the end of the war—now faced serious struggle and experienced insecurities considering their livelihood and film production future.[16] While new cultural organizations

15. Han Young-hyun (2013) argues that the monopoly of the CMPE in South Korean market aroused resistances in the South Korean cultural circles and gave the contents of "national cinema" to its empty form. "'American cinema' has a kind of methodological function in postulating the concrete idea of national culture as portrayed in post-liberation Korean cinema." Though I agree at first glance, in the discourse on national cinema, I would like to stress that several opposing powers existed in South Korea after liberation, not only "South Korea-America (USAMGIK, Hollywood)," but also "imperial Japan-colonial Korea," "defeated Japan-liberated Korea," North and South Korea, Soviet and U.S. military governments. The national cinema discourse was affected by diverse factors, including divided Koreas settling in, the opening of the National Film Studio of North Korea, and many artists defecting to the North.

constantly formed and dissolved in an effort to establish a national culture, the film industry also repeatedly assembled and dispersed again. This come-and-go, however, nonetheless shared the common thirst for a "state-operated film industry." A state-operated cinema did not only symbolize a long cherished desire for the future of the film industry, but it was also a psychological return of recent past experience.[17]

Amidst the discourse of a national cinema in liberated Korea lies the prerequisite that the film industry fundamentally requires big capital as well as a large production organization (*Jungang Shinmun*, November 12, 1945). And it would furthermore have to develop through close alliance with politics. An article published a few months after liberation analyzing the then current trends in Korea not only listed the aforementioned unique characteristics of the industry, but also stressed that "the government must take initiative when it comes to raising capital, technical development and distribution" of film production (ibid.). The same article expressed worries that should film production be owned by "free enterprise," they may be able to resolve the issue on technical developments but it would be difficult to overcome confusion among production companies and escape a wave of lowbrow films. It is worth noting that "free enterprise" in this context is referring to a company without any government subsidy. In other words, it is used as an antagonistic term of the nationalized cinema model which is based on past experience. Its only characteristic would be a governmental policy of *laissez-faire*. Tracing back before the foundation of the Chosun Film Corporation, the plethora of countless production companies during the silent era are the examples of such free enterprises.

It is significant to note that the national cinema discourse asking for governmental support of the film industry flourished through criticizing the ways in which the USAMGIK disposed of the enemy property and the CMPE's oppressive monopoly. Right-wing and left-wing proponents voiced the same opinion that the "cinemas deserted by the Japanese" should be operated by

16. The number of filmmakers who had worked at Cho Young Inc. and thought that they "lost their jobs after liberation" was said to be considerable (Korean Film Archive 2005, 437).

17. For further information on the homogeny and continuity of the discourse of "New Regime of Cinema" in the late colonial period and the discourse of "Cinema Nationalization" in post-liberation period, see Yoo 2012, Ch. 2.

Korean "cultural elites." Within the constructive general mood of "liberated Korea," their predominant notion was that "like schools and churches, cinemas are moral institutions" (*Dong-a Ilbo*, February 14, 1946). These opinion leaders did not gain management of Japanese-owned cinemas and thus criticized that the cinemas had fallen into the wrong hands through conspiracy by "profiteers." Management was given to those who followed suit to the USAMGIK. The CMPE monopolized cinema screens with the support of the USAMGIK, raising enormous profit through unfair exhibitor contracts and high film rental fees. Of course, the income earned by the CMPE was not invested in the Korean film production. Korean filmmakers lacked facilities and equipment. They even had trouble sourcing film for shooting. Nonetheless the USAMGIK had no plan to support and promote the Korean film industry. These filmmakers most likely felt that the USAMGIK was not only unsupportive in the establishment taking away the possibility to autonomously build a system themselves. In this regard, the CFU strongly advocated the discourse of Cinema Nationalization. It proposed the most urgent issue at hand to be facilities and equipment as well as the development and education of film technicians. It repeatedly stressed that the government should lead the film industry in Korea.[18]

Meanwhile, even CFU secretary general Choo Min (1946) continuously expressed discontent toward the cultural policy of the USAMGIK, which provided preferential treatment to American films. For the sake of protecting and nurturing Korean cinema, he requested the "cultural, technical and if necessary materialistic assistance by the United States" as well as the regulation of "foreign films," thus referring to a corporate regulation of American cinema. He stressed further that the monopoly of American cinema weakened the development of national culture. His request on a regulated American cinema provided the grounds for the role of nationalized cinema. The reason why the discourse of Cinema Nationalization garnered such wide support in South Korea was the mutual feeling of loss and degradation, experienced by Right and Left alike. It was in fact impossible to know whether a regulation of foreign film to a certain ratio would have resulted in an opportunity for Korean cinema. As mentioned before, the production industry, only comprised of Korean workforce, not only lacked facilities and equipment, capital and skill, but was

18. For example, please see Kim 1946, 112-15.

generally understood to even have regressed since before liberation. Rather, a restriction on the number of exhibitions would most likely result in an increase of popular variety shows, instead of a Korean cinema reflecting the spirit of the new age.

On the other hand, proponents also argued that the nationalization of Korean cinema was the only realistic choice. In such relation, Kim Jeong-Hyuk (1946) explains as follows:

> The question is whether the film industry can be established as a corporation in Korea. To start with the conclusion, it "will be extremely difficult." First of all, the market size of the total nationwide number of 196 regular screens cannot bring in the production fee of even one movie, 500 thousand *won* (combined direct and indirect cost). The only solution is paving a path through nationalization as we cannot foresee the future of the private company discourse, nor can we exert influence on our current reality.

As can be seen from this quote, Kim argues that the small film market of Korea makes it impossible to turn around production cost. Thus, the only solution is "paving a path through nationalization." He bases his argument on the reality of the small market size. It is the same argumentation he used years earlier in his article written during the late colonial period "On Chosun Film Industry" (Kim 1940a).[19] The rationale for "rationalization" of film industry, one of the biggest issues during the late colonial period, resulted in the promulgation of the Regulation of Chosun Film in January 1940 by the Governor-General, which created the inevitable condition of a state-operated film corporation. Kim had experienced the two major production companies Chosun Film Production Company and Koryo Film Association during the colonial period and analyzed the actual profit of these corporations based on statistics of the distribution number and profit of Korea's cinemas. He came to the conclusion that a "corpormate rationale" was improbable based on the

19. Kim Jeong-Hyuk published a series of articles actively expressing his support of the "new regime of Cinema" when the Regulation of Chosun Film was proclaimed, including "Jejakjeongsin Gwa Joseon Yeonghwa" [Production Spirit and Chosun Cinema], "Joseon Yeonghwa ui Hyeonsang gwa Jeonmang" [The Present and Future of Chosun Cinema], Executing "Yeonghwaryeong ui Silsi wa Joseon Yeonghwagye ui Jangnae" [The Regulation of Film and the Future of Chosun Film Industry], and others.

small size of the Korean film industry. He strongly voiced that "no matter how high the commercial value of Korea cinema can be calculated, the current market is devastated" (Kim 1940b). This unreasonable situation had no room for improvement even after liberation. Whereas the export or collaboration through the cinema industrialization movement in the late colonial Korea could have moved beyond the "Korean Peninsula" and desire to find a place in the "imperialistic" market, the situation of "liberated Korea" faced an even limited market through the severance with Japan and the division into North and South. In reality, South Korean production companies were trapped in an irrational structure that made it impossible to turn around production cost by whatever means necessary.

Kim Jeong-Hyuk (1946) confidently exclaimed in his another article "On the National Management of Film" that the film industry should be established by the state if corporate management was improbable. He added that such a state-managed system should not be confused with the ideological control of the Japanese Occupation. This argument shows that Kim himself was aware of the fact that a nationalized film industry could be seen as an incongruous continuation of colonialization. In fact, in many aspects, the discourse of cinema nationalization developing in post-liberation Korea resembled mere "repetitions" of cinema discourses or simply seemed to be a "result" of the experience of a "New Regime of Cinema" 映畵新體制 in the late colonial period. However, we should not ignore the fact that the state-operated productions derived not only through simple repetition or a result. In the spatiotemporal context of liberation, they also derived from the "discontent" over South Korean film industry in "comparison" to its surroundings.

Conclusion

From market share perspective, the return of Hollywood to South Korea seems to have been successful. Considering it only started business in April 1946, American movies had gained a 95% of market share by 1948 in South Korea (Cho 1997, 35). However, Hollywood's aggressive approach, which utilized South Korea like a discount outlet of the CMPE in cooperation with the U.S. government and the SCAP, resulted increasingly in widespread discontent about the USAMGIK and its cultural policy among Korean filmmakers and intellectuals.

When we consider the impact on Korean culture only, the USAMGIK not only maintained censorship as a colonial legacy, but also suppressed leftist ideologies and culture. The USAMGIK's consistent disregard of indigenous culture and artists made anti-American sentiments grow, resulting in a ripple effect of artists defecting to North Korea. Whichever the reasons for defecting to North Korea were, the eventual choice of North Korea by intellectuals and artists alike meant that they were no longer supporting American democracy and the capitalist system. Under military command of the United States and the Soviet Union, both, South and North Korea were stuck in a competitive rivalry of the two systems. The fact that the USAMGIK could not gain support among South Korean intellectuals and artists only visualized the failure of the cultural policies.

Whether or not and how concrete national cinema could be established by South Korean filmmakers in response against the monopoly of Hollywood and the despotism of CMPE, and how realistic their aims were, the fact that their movement started out from criticism against the indoctrination of these two entities has a significant meaning in that it marked the beginning of Korean cinema to take a place in the "national cinema" of the postwar world cinema. However, the political changes from "national division" to "separated governments" more or less anticipated the difficulties of achieving the ideal of the "authentic national cinema." Given the circumstance of national division, the authentic national cinema cannot but be indefinitely suspended as an incomplete project; it played as an engine to be part in the bloc of "Anti-communist Asia" in the Cold War.

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Abstract

Hollywood film was banned in colonial Korea during the Pacific War. The victory of the Allied Forces in the War meant "Hollywood's return in glory." Hollywood tried to regain its "lost screens" in the East Asian market, through the establishment of the Central Motion Picture Exchange (Headquarter in Tokyo and branch in Seoul) and the alliance with the U.S. government and the military (SCAP). The market share proved successful in South Korea. However, Hollywood's offensive also caused widespread discontent about the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) and its cultural policy among Korean filmmakers and opinion leaders who had initially welcomed American liberators. This essay attempts to examine the ambivalence itself in relation to Hollywood within the spatio-temporal context of the "liberation": filmmakers' experience of state-operated production in the late colonial period, their thwarted ambition to take advantage of Japan's imperial expansion in Asia, North Korea's successful nationalization of film production and its encouraging effect of filmmakers' defection from South Korea, persistence of a colonial censorship system, frustrated expectation of "authentic national cinema," and so on.

Keywords: Hollywood, USAMGK, CMPE, liberation, occupation, South Korean cultural circle, Americanism, discourse of cinema nationalization, ambivalence

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