

## The Identity of “Joseon Film”: *Between Colonial Cinema and National Cinema*

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### Abstract

*Inspired by the idea that Korean films during the colonial and post-liberation periods (1919–1948) constantly question the boundaries of Korean national cinema, this article suggests that those films produced during the periods be designated as “Joseon film” (Joseon yeonghwa) and aims to examine the backdrops and potential effects of the nomenclature. In doing so, this paper reexamines the boundaries of Korean film history. At the center of this discourse are ten Joseon films the Korea Film Archive has rediscovered over the past decade, of which this article focuses on three Tuition (1940), Angels on the Streets (1941), and Seagull (1948); all discovered at overseas film archives. These three films constantly evoke and prompt questions on the conceptual definition of Korean film, even though they have been included in the historiography of early Korean cinema and been preserved materially in the Korea Film Archive. Tuition and Angels on the Streets, dating from the Japanese colonial period, and Seagull, dating from the post-liberation period. I examine their production and distribution on the boundaries between Joseon and Korean cinema and between colonial and nation-state cinema. Although the former two films aimed at becoming imperial Japan’s state (Gukka) films, they came to be categorized as Joseon (Minjok, ethnic) cinema by imperial Japan since the colonial realities reflected in the film were problematic to mainland Japan. The nation-building propaganda film Seagull, which was produced and distributed in 1948, had to start negotiating with the state to become South Korean film. It could not be legitimated as a South Korean film as it was filmed, since the print was confiscated by the authorities due to the actors who defected to North Korea. Reviewing the designations of and the boundaries between Joseon and Korean cinema, this article takes a critical approach to Korean film historiography of the Japanese colonial and post-liberation periods in Korea.*

**Keywords:** *Joseon film* (Joseon yeonghwa), colonial Korean cinema, Japanese cinema, cooperation, co-production, post-liberation Korean film, Korean national cinema, film historiography

## Designation of “Joseon film” and “Korean film”

In the mid-2000s, researchers from the Korean Film Archive (*Hanguk yeongsang jaryowon*; hereafter KOFA) rediscovered eight colonial-era Korean films through the China Film Archive (*Zhongguo dianying ziliao guan* 中国电影资料馆). Four films, including *Jip eomneun cheonsa* (*Angels on the Streets*; dir. In-gyu Choi, 1941) were discovered in 2004, three more, including *Mimong* (*Sweet Dream*; dir. Ju-nam Yang and Fujie Yamazaki, 1936) in 2005 when the members of KOFA visited the China Film Archive. And *Byeongjeongnim* (*Dear Soldier*; dir. Han-joon Bang, 1944) was uncovered in 2006 by members of KOFA from the film catalogue of the China Film Archive. The original prints were all returned to South Korea and are now preserved at the Korean Film Archive. The print discoveries constituted the most epoch-making event in the history of KOFA's collection efforts and helped trigger a boom in academic research on Korean film history during the colonial period. A decade later, in 2014, the Korean Film Archive discovered and collected the print of *Sueomnyo* (*Tuition*; dir. In-gyu Choi and Han-joon Bang, 1940) from the China Film Archive again. The following year, in 2015, the film *Haeyeon* (*A Seagull*; dir. Gyu-hwan Lee, 1948) produced during the post-liberation period was rediscovered in the Kobe Planet Film Archive, a private film archive in Japan, and then repatriated to South Korea for preservation in the Korean Film Archive. The term “repatriate” here denotes that the prints containing *Joseon film*, which had been considered lost, returned to Korea and got placed in permanent storage at the Korean Film Archive. Considering the national unit of South Korea to which the film was returned, however, “repatriation” does not simply mean that the print returned to its homeland, which is bound to be a fairly controversial term due to its national legitimacy. Can those films, which were produced during the colonial period and returned to South Korea in the 2000s, be legitimated as authentic South Korean film?

The discovery and preservation of these films by the Korea Film Archive, which functions as the South Korean state's national film archive, reveals how the state recognizes them included as part of the history of

Korean national cinema.<sup>1</sup> Korean film historians have also incorporated colonial Korean films, as well as films made during the post-liberation period (1945–1948) before the establishment of the Republic of Korea, into the history of Korean film. In fact, it is difficult to translate the English term national cinema into Korean. Most Korean scholars simply transliterate it *Naeshyeoneol sinema* (national cinema), or else translate it into Korean as *Minjok* (ethnic) *yeonghwa*. It is, in South Korea, the most appropriate strategy to incorporate the colonial films into Korean film history, not into Japanese one, that translating national cinema into ethnic (*Minjok*) film. In this article, I use the term “national cinema” as “nation-state film” (*Minjok kukka yeonghwa*) in order to reflect Korea’s pre-1950 historical peculiarity of establishing the state including colonial experiences, liberation period and the establishment of a separate government of South Korea.

Then, how do the films created under Japanese colonial rule become Korean film? In other words, what elements fit these creations into the national text as Korean film? One answer is territorial: these films were created on the Korean Peninsula. According to the current Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act, which stems from the Motion Picture law in 1962,<sup>2</sup> the legal criterion to becoming a Korean film is based on the territorial principle; a Korean film should be produced by an individual or a corporation “of which the major place of business is in the Korean domestic area.”<sup>3</sup> The Korean Film Archive’s collection and preservation of Korean films during the colonial period was also the result of attention to the production by Korean filmmakers based on the Korean Peninsula.

A careful examination of the conditions under which colonial Korean films were produced even in the Korean peninsula, however, casts doubt on whether colonial Korean film and Korean film are conceptually identical

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1. See the details of the national cinema discourse in Crofts (1998). He applies the term nation-state cinema to the conceptualization of national cinema in order to demonstrate that the state intervenes its cinema. And, Higson (2002) explains that national cinema is the negotiating process that recognition and identification about nation-state in cinema, which is relevant to nation-building process.
  2. Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act (2018).
  3. Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Motion Picture and Video Promotion Act (2018).

by providing diverse situations of *Joseon film* production and its agencies. How to designate the films made in Korea during the Japanese colonial (1910–1945) and post-liberation periods (1945–1948) is an important question. During the colonial period, the films made by Joseon and Japanese filmmakers were collectively termed “Joseon film” (*Joseon yeonghwa*).<sup>4</sup> In other words, the films made during the first quarter of the hundred-year history from 1919 to 1945 of Korean film were called *Joseon film*. It is apparent that colonial Joseon films belong to Japanese film under the international law. However, both the colonist and the colonized of the Japanese empire called it *Joseon film*. The imperial government’s designation of them as *Joseon film*, not Japanese film, is an indication of the empire’s duality in operating separation and discrimination against colonies, although it ostensibly puts assimilation policy ahead. On the one hand, Joseon people, especially Joseon filmmakers, called it *Joseon film*, which can be understood as the aspiration and willingness to make Joseon’s national film in the imagined nation.

*Joseon films* were produced as follows: after the mid-1930s, some *Joseon films* were produced as a cooperative effort by Japanese filmmakers in Joseon and Joseon filmmakers; others were made by second-generation Joseon filmmakers who had returned to colonial Korea after studying at Japanese film studios and with the support or sponsorship of Japanese film companies (Chung 2013). Occupying an ambiguous position in-between Joseon ethnic (*Minjok*) film and Japanese state (*Gukka*) film, these films were circulated in mainland Japan (*Naichi*), Manchuria (*Manchukuo*), and Japanese-occupied territories in China, while also manifesting the commercial or artistic aspirations of their Korean filmmakers. As such, the

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4. The term “*Joseon yeonghwa*” first appeared in the colonial period, starting with the advertisement for *Janghwa hongryeonjeon* (*Chosun Ilbo*, July 31, 1924). The film is the first *Joseon film* produced by the cinematography department of the Dansungsa Theater and made only by Joseon filmmakers. It is from 1925 that the category “*Joseon film*” was formed in earnest. In the newspaper article written by Gu-young Lee introduces four feature films, *Chunhyangjeon* (The Story of Chunhyang), *Janghwa hongryeonjeon* (The Story of Janghwa and Hongryeon), *Hae-ui bigok* (Elegy of Ocean), and *Biryeon-ui gok* (Song of Sad Love), which were produced in 1924, as *Joseon films* (*Maeil Shinbo*, January 1, 1925).

existence and designation of “Joseon film” in Korean film historiography reveals the essence of the colonial/imperial system, while clearly exposing the heterogeneity of Korean film history.

The post-liberation period in Korea is an extension of this issue. For three years from August 15, 1945, the date of Korea’s liberation from Japanese control, to August 15, 1948, when the South Korean government was formally established, the films produced on the Korean peninsula were still termed “Joseon film.” As a matter of fact, even after the establishment of the South Korean government, the term *Joseon film* (scene) was still being used alternately with *Hanguk yeonghwa-gye* (Korean film scene). The use of the term *Joseon film* as well as the title of Joseon<sup>5</sup> at this time reflects the more complex socio-cultural and geo-political context of the peninsula in the immediate wake of liberation from Japanese control. However, it is worth noting for our purposes here that the term *Joseon film* employed during the post-liberation period represents both the filmmaking practices during the Japanese colonial rule and the transitional phase of the post-liberation period when South Korean film was being fashioned as a distinct form from North Korean film. As seen in the censorship case of *Hurrah for Freedom*, *Joseon films* made during the post-liberation period contain images of Korean filmmakers who defected to North Korea immediately before the establishment of the Republic of Korea, and the newly established South Korean government, which took anti-Communism as its national ideology, deleted the scenes and recognized them as Korean films.

Should we designate these ten feature films the Korea Film Archive has unearthed over the course of a decade, “Korean film”? This article proposes to denominate them *Joseon film*, based on the concept that the Korean

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5. Following its annexation of Korea in 1910, imperial Japan established the Japanese Government-General’s Office in Korea (*Chosen sotokofu*) to administer its colony. “Chosen” (*Joseon*) derived from the name of the Korean dynasty that ruled the Korean Peninsula from 1392 until 1897, when it refashioned itself as the Korean (*Daehan*) Empire (1897–1910). From the time of Korea’s liberation on August 15, 1945 to the time when the South Korean government was established on August 15, 1948, the international community also used the name of Joseon and South Korea sought a new state name. Meanwhile, North Korea established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (*Joseon minjujuui inmin gonghwaguk*) as a national title on September 9, 1948, using Joseon in its national name.

films during the colonial and post-liberation periods make reexamine the boundaries of Korean film history. Although these *Joseon films* have been incorporated into the historiography of early Korean cinema and preserved at a national film archive—South Korea’s Korean Film Archive—, they are marginalized works, constantly evoking questions about the boundary of Korean film historiography.

### Conceptualization of “Joseon film” (*Joseon yeonghwa*)

In this article, I would like to use the nomenclature of “Joseon film” (*Joseon yeonghwa*) referring to the films from the colonial and post-liberation periods. Since the 2000s, the Korean film scholarships have been using the term “Joseon film” to reflect a new historical perspective on Korean films during the colonial period. The film, which was made in Joseon under the Japanese colonial rule, is generally translated into colonial Korean film in English, but “Joseon film” is employed to reveal the temporal context of the colonial and post-liberation period. This nomenclature of *Joseon film* penetrates from the colonial period to the post-liberation period, and its effect reveals the peculiarity of the films of the time; implying that they cannot be legitimate as Korean national film.

The Korean film history scholarship has probed into the questions of whether *Joseon films* and Korean films are in line within the Korean film history, and of the nomenclature of *Joseon films*. Focusing on the definition of *Joseon film* during the colonial period, the Korean film scholars including Kim (2008), Lee (2011), and Kim (2017) have raised questions of national cinema historiography in Korean film history.

Posing the issue about nation-state film history and national cinema to the surface that has remained below as the acquisition and disclosure of the lost prints became active, Han-sang Kim raises the question of whether films made in colonial Joseon can be viewed as Korean cinema and whether the category of Korean cinema is legitimated (Kim 2008, 258-259). Defining “national cinema” as a functional term to create a particular cinematic set and to nationalize the set, Kim argues that the category of Korean film

renders ambiguous boundaries and contours, even though the designation of Korean film seems to refer to Korea's national cinema. Exemplifying *Mimong*, which was co-produced by Japanese filmmakers who did not meet the criteria of being Korean people and Korean filmmakers whose nationality was Japanese at the time, he delineates that it is ambiguous to define all films made before the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948.

According to Hwa-jin Lee, studying the films at the end of the colonial period means not only about denotation of the subject but also questioning the foundation of the existing Korean film historiography. Lee throws a question of whether it is possible to envision Korean film history as linear and homogeneous (Lee 2011, 240). As she delineates, Young-il Lee in *The Complete History of Korean Cinema* calls the films made during the Japanese colonial era Korean film, while other film scholars consciously designate them *Joseon film* (*Joseon yeonghwa*) so as to deconstruct homogeneity in the category of Korean film and to articulate it from Korean film history after the mid-2000s.<sup>6</sup> She also describes that “*Joseon films* were categorized as Japanese domestic films along with Japanese mainland films at the time,” and that the designation of “Joseon film” evokes their actual nationality of imperial Japan. She also accounts that the recent academic tendency is likely to distance from the existing practice of Korean film history, which had described *Joseon films* as arbitrary as if they were only made by Joseon filmmakers with autonomy (Lee 2011, 245).

Employing the nomenclature of Joseon cinema, Dong-hoon Kim diagnoses national cinema discourse. The colonial film is the hybrid constitution where national, colonial, and local cinema discourses converge into, which cannot be accounted only by the national cinema discourse sufficiently. He illustrates that the concept of Joseon cinema would be useful in exploring the complex strata of Korea's colonial modernity and cinema,

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6. For instance, according to Ryeo-Sil Kim, the nomenclature of *Joseon film* is “only a temporary definition to seek a new paradigm.” “Joseon yeonghwa” is the film made under the condition of the colonial rule. Therefore, Kim uses the term *Joseon film* when referring to films from the colonial Joseon, and Korean film only in cases that fall under the category of Korea's national cinema (Kim 2006, 10).

which have been suppressed by the concept of Korean national cinema. Nationalistic historiography mitigates and even conceals the apparent existence of a contact zone between Korean and Japanese film histories (Kim 2017, 4-8).

Colonial Joseon films in this paper are not confined to those made by ethnic Koreans on the Korean Peninsula. Although *Joseon films* are largely based on the activities of Joseon (ethnic) filmmakers, the industry was largely dominated by the Japanese capital, and cooperation with the Japanese film industry was also an important variable. *Joseon films*, before everything, were formed amid the constraints of the imperial Japan and the censorship of the Japanese Government-General's Office, which represent the dynamics of the empire and the colonized. In other words, colonial Joseon films cannot be only made by Korean ethnic filmmakers. Meanwhile, in this article, it is quite decisive to designate the films before and after the establishment of the Republic of Korea as *Joseon film*.<sup>7</sup> If we just call them Korean film, it will result in concealing the circumstances of each film that was not legitimate as Korean national cinema. The nomenclature of *Joseon film* is a surefire way to highlight their particular circumstances. The combination play entitled *Uilijeok guto* (Fight for Justice, 1919) is the first Joseon filmmaker's production in 1919, and I postulate the 30 years from 1919 to 1948 as the age of "Joseon Cinema."

This article also aims at revealing the prominent existence of *Joseon film* included in the existing Korean film historiography and its particular backdrop. After I probe into the issues on the discovered films surrounding the notion of colonial (Joseon) film and (Japanese) state cinema, I will look into the two films *Tuition* (1940) and *Angels on the Streets* (1941), produced by Chang-yong Lee and directed by In-gyu Choi. They aspired to be included in imperial Japanese cinema, but the reality of the colony represented in them became problematic to the Japanese authorities. So, the Japanese authorities labeled them as *Joseon film* (*Chosen eiga* in Japanese) rather than Japanese film. Next, *Haeyeon* (A Seagull; dir. Gyu-hwan

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7. Ryeo-Sil Kim also calls *Jayu manse* "Joseon yeonghwa" which contains the entangled ideology during the post-liberation period (Kim 2009, 302).



Lee, 1948) will be discussed along with the censorship case surrounding *Jayu manse* (Hurrah for Freedom; dir. In-gyu Choi, 1946). The former was produced in 1948 just prior to the establishment of the Republic of Korea and released in August of that year, just after that government's establishment. As this nation-building propaganda film demonstrates, *Joseon film* once more had to negotiate with the state power, in order to be designated Korean national cinema. However, the film was confiscated by the South Korean authorities due to the defection of the film's main actors to North Korea and failed to become a Korean national film.

### Issues in Colonial Joseon Film

Since 1989 the Korean Film Archive has uncovered a total of sixteen formerly lost *Joseon films* in archives in Japan, Russia, and China (Table 1). Six of these date from the 1930s and the remaining from between 1940 to 1945, all of them feature films released in theaters. In the aforementioned table I also include a cultural film,<sup>8</sup> *Gukgi mit-e na-neun jugeoturi* (I Will Die Under the National Flag, 1939) because it was released in theaters as a feature film. Regarding these rediscovered *Joseon films*, I will discuss the agency of production and the mobility of the prints, which leads to the rationale that it is difficult for a *Joseon film* to become a Korean national cinema.

Regarding the agency of production, the rediscovered *Joseon films* were produced by Joseon filmmakers in tandem with Japanese filmmakers in colonial Korea and in the form of coproduction with Japanese film companies, which was unmentioned in Young-il Lee's film historiography *The Complete History of Korean Cinema*, with his nationalistic perspective. For instance, the head of Gyeongseong Studios, which produced the talkie *Sweet Dream*, was Shujiro Wakejima, a Japanese businessman in

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8. The term "cultural film" originated from Kultur film of Universum Film AG in Germany. A Japanese translator used it for the first time. Since a German film entitled *Ways to Strength and Beauty* (*Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*; dir. Nicholas Kaufmann and Wilhelm Prager, 1925) was subtitled "Kultur film," the translator borrowed the term, which generally denoted an educational documentary. For more on cultural film, see Chung (2014).

colonial Korea. In other words, it was a film company run by Japanese capital, as the actual film was produced in cooperation with Japanese filmmakers (Chung 2013). For example, the first Joseon talkie (produced by Gyeongseong Studios), *Chunhyangjeon* (The Story of Chunhyang; dir. Myung-woo Lee, 1935) as well as the second, *Alilang gogae* (Arirang Pass; dir. Gae-myeong Hong, 1935) were recorded by Takashi Nakagawa, a recordist from Japan, accompanied by Pil-woo Lee, a pioneer in *Joseon film* technology. Nakagawa's recording system was called the Nakagawa Talkie (the N.T. System), which he brought himself to colonial Korea. The device was improved upon by Pil-woo Lee, who named his version the "Noiseless P.L. System Joseon Phone." This technology was used starting with the production of *Sweet Dream*. Ju-nam Yang is known as the director of *Sweet Dream*, but one nearly contemporaneous source claims So-bong Kim was a co-director with Yang.<sup>9</sup> However, So-bong Kim was merely the Korean name of the Japanese director Fujie Yamazaki. He was a former director from the Kyoto studio of Shochiku Kinema, before he joined Gyeongseong Studios in 1932. He worked alongside Korean assistant directors starting from the production of *Jeongwaja* (Ex-Convict; 1934). In consequence, the national identity of *Joseon film*'s production agents did not coincide with their ethnic identity.

*Gunhyong yeolcha* (Military Train; dir. Gwang-je Seo, 1938) and *Eohwa* (Fisherman's Fire; dir. Cheol-young Ahn, 1938) released in the cinema chain of Toho and Shochiku in Tokyo in August 1938 respectively, were co-produced by colonial Korean and Japanese filmmakers. As the restriction on foreign films in Japanese theaters was promulgated in 1934,<sup>10</sup> *Nageune*, (Wanderer; dir. Gyu-hwan Lee, 1937) by Sungbong Film Productions showed commercial potential in the mainland Japanese market, which was the beginning of full-fledged co-production between the colonial Korean filmmakers and major Japanese film companies. *Military Train*, a co-

9. *Samcheolli*, May 1940, 239.

10. According to the Motion Picture Control Regulations that took effect on September 1, 1934, Article 7 provided that "the ratio of foreign films per theater shall be within three quarters out of the total meters of film roll screened as of the end of 1935, within two thirds as of 1936, and within a half from 1937."

production of Sungbong Film Productions and Toho Film Company, was the directorial debut of film critic Gwang-je Seo from the KAPF (Korean Artista Proleta Federacio). The original screenwriter was director Gyu-hwan Lee. “Toho supervised distributing the film in Japan except Joseon,” while Sungbong Film Productions was in charge of distributing other territories including Joseon, “Manchuria and northern China.”<sup>11</sup> In the case of *Military Train*, not only was its post-production done at Toho Studios, but the Japanese staff from Toho Film Company joined in the shooting. Sengichi Taniguchi as producer and Takeshi Sato as assistant director were dispatched to coach a rookie colonial Korean director, and Japanese actors such as Jushiro Kobayashi and Nobuko Sasaki also took part in the film production.<sup>12</sup> Takeshi Sato, who formerly served as an assistant director at Shochiku, came to colonial Korea to participate in the production of *Military Train*, and made his directorial debut with Toho later in 1938 with *Chokoreto to heitai* (Chocolate and Soldiers, 1938). The actors and actresses of the film, including Mun Ye-bong, went to the Tokyo studio of Toho Film Company in May 1938 to conduct a post-recording and finish the film.<sup>13</sup>

Although *Military Train* was produced as the first state-run propaganda film following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, and drew great attention from the pre-production stage, it failed to achieve satisfactory results in the colonial Korean and Japanese box offices. Gwang-je Seo, who was in Tokyo shortly after the film’s release, remarked, “No matter what kind of partnership the current *Joseon film* company has with any Japanese film company, it [the Japanese film company] will never trust Joseon [Korean] filmmakers with the technical details. Joseon companies have no choice but to leave all matters concerning original screenplay, directorship, and actors to the initiative of the Japanese film company. Hoping a decent film will be produced in this kind of subordinate partnership is like hoping to catch a whale in a pond.”<sup>14</sup> This may be a testament to the production realities facing *Joseon films* under the Japanese colonial/imperial system.

11. *Chosun ilbo*, January 22, 1938.

12. *Donga ilbo*, March 27, 1938.

13. *Kinema junpo*, June 1, 1938, 32.

14. Seo (1938).

*Fisherman's Fire* was produced by Keukgwang Film Productions with post-production by Shochiku. Keukgwang Film Productions was established by its members, including Byeong-gak Seo, Young-soo Choi, and Cheol-young Ahn, who had returned to Korea from Germany after studying photography. Sook-hee Jeon participated in the production as an assistant director, and Byung-mok Lee, a previously unknown figure in the film industry, became its cinematographer, which demonstrates that the film's producers were not filmmakers from the established colonial Korean film industry. As for the film's Japanese staff, Yasujiro Shimazu, who was affiliated with Shochiku Kamata Studios, oversaw post-production, and Kozaburo Yoshimura, who would later make his debut as a director, was the editor. Other technical staff from Shochiku Kamata Studios supervised post-production. The film's opening credits term it an “Ahn Cheol-young film,” and specify that the film was recorded with Tsuchihashi-style Shochiku-phone, which was the recording system used in Japan's first talkie, *Madamu to nyobo* (The Neighbor's Wife and Mine; dir. Heinosuke Gosho, 1931).

*Fisherman's Fire* was promoted as a “peninsula film” (*Bando yeonghwa*), which contains the same meaning of *Joseon film*, in Japan and released in August, ahead of the October release in colonial Korea, but it failed at the Japanese box office.<sup>15</sup> When it was released in Japan, *Fisherman's Fire* was marketed as the work of director Yasujiro Shimazu, who was listed as a supervisor in the credits. But it was criticized by Japanese critics for its lack of any “Joseon-like sense” due to Shimazu's re-editing and for “missing the local scenery behind the story.”<sup>16</sup> As seen in the cases of *Military Train* and *Fisherman's Fire*, starting in 1937, *Joseon films* could be released in Japan due to new restrictions on foreign film showings that required theaters to show domestic films (*Houga* 邦畫, or Japanese film), which included *Joseon films*, for more than half of each month. But it was still difficult for *Joseon films* to gain public attention in the Japanese film market due to their lack of popularity among the Japanese public.

Next, I turn to an examination of the localities where these sixteen

15. *Nihon eiga*, August 1, 1939, 121.

16. *Kinema junpo*, September 1, 1938, 75.

*Joseon films* were discovered. While the KOFA found only two rolls each of *Fisherman's Fire* and *Shim Cheong* in the collections of Gosfilmofond (Russia's national film archive), the China Film Archive had nine near-complete *Joseon films*. In the course of one of my two research trips in June 2006 and August 2010, a Gosfilmofond official said to me, "After the defeat of Japan, the Soviet Union seized films from the Manchurian Film Association [Manshu eiga kyokai] before the Chinese communists took control of the region." However, it is certainly an interesting point that nearly intact *Joseon films* have been found in the China Film Archive. How then did they arrive there? The films themselves become a clue. The interesting aspect about the celluloid film is that they contain markings indicating their own history.

First, I examined the initial credits on the films under examination here. Unfortunately, among the *Joseon films* collected by the China Film Archive, only two contain detailed source information at the beginning of the print: *Mimong* (Sweet Dream; dir. Ju-nam Yang, 1936) and *Joseon haehyeop* (Straits of Joseon; dir. Gi-chae Park, 1943). The former arrived in Beijing after being preserved at the Changchun Film Studios in Manchuria, while the latter came via Hubei. The fact that *Sweet Dream* had formerly been preserved at the Changchun Film Studios, the successor of the Manchurian Film Association, suggests that the film may have been obtained by Chinese communist forces before the Soviet army entered Manchuria in 1945. On the other hand, Hubei Film Studios was located in Japanese occupied territory in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which may explain why *Straits of Joseon* was preserved there.

Another clue is the remnants of censorship found in films. Some Joseon feature films, such as *Sweet Dream* and *Bando-ui bom* (Spring of Korean Peninsula; dir. Byeong-il Lee), have a perforated censorship identification number on their print. According to the *Film Censorship Bulletin* (*Naimusho keiho kyoku*, 1985) published by Japan's Home Ministry (*Naimusho*), the censorship identification number of *Sweet Dream* differed from the identification number assigned to the film by the Ministry of Home Affairs,<sup>17</sup> while for *Spring of Korean Peninsula*, no Japanese censorship

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17. The censorship identification number of *Sweet Dream* issued by the Japanese Ministry

identification number is to be found. Based on this, one can assume these films were exported from Joseon to the state of Manchukuo and then reviewed by the Manchukuo, rather than going through Japanese censors. On the other hand, the perforated censorship identification number found on the version of *Angels on the Streets* discovered in the China Film Archive matches the number assigned by Japanese authorities,<sup>18</sup> leading one to conclude that the version censored in Japan was then exported to Manchukuo. In fact, in the case of *Angels on the Streets*, Towa Corporation, a Japanese distributor of European art films, tried to distribute it in Japan, and it can be assumed that Towa also obtained the rights to distribute it in other regions, such as Manchukuo and China. It is difficult to determine with any accuracy the distribution routes of *Joseon films* due to the lack of historical documentation, but it can be confirmed that *Joseon films* were exported to Manchukuo, either directly from Korea or via Japan. As a result, *Joseon films* were circulated within the territory of imperial Japan before the end of World War II in 1945.

As seen in the examples of the sixteen rediscovered *Joseon films*, Korean and Japanese filmmakers moved back and forth between colonial Korea and Japan as they collaborated in the production of *Joseon films*, while the films they created were distributed throughout imperial Japanese territories. Filmmaking in colonial Joseon from the 1930s to the 1940s was a complicated issue; as Joseon filmmakers possessed cinematic ambitions to be production agents on the Korean peninsula; as the Japanese private sector tried to gain financial profit from the colonial Joseon film industry; and as imperial Japan desired to maintain its imperial propaganda in its Joseon colony. I would like to argue that although *Joseon film* was conceptually considered part of Japanese state cinema because Joseon was a colony of imperial Japan, *Joseon film* could not aspire to become Japanese film, as it was always marginalized and categorized as *Joseon film*.

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of Home Affairs is L25461 (*Film Censorship Bulletin*, no. 26 [1937], 1369), but the film in possession of the Korea Film Archive has the perforated number 1862.

18. This is 30572 (*Film Censorship Bulletin*, no. 36 [1941], 445).

**Table 1.** Discovered *Joseon Films* from the Japanese Colonial Period, 1934–1945

Original Release Date	Title (Run Time)	Director	Production Company	Language	Release Date in Japan	Source (Year)	Note
Sept. 1934	Crossroads of Youth (73 mins)	Jong-hwa Ahn	Geumgang Kinema	Silent Film (Korean Subtitles Lost)	-	Korean Holder (2007)	-
Oct. 1936	Sweet Dream (47 mins)	Ju-nam Yang, So-bong Kim	Gyeongseong Studios	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	The Export to Japan is Confirmed, But the Date is Not Specified	China Film Archive (hereafter China, 2005)	Preserved in Changchun Film Studios
Nov. 1937	Shim Cheong (14 mins)	Seok-young Ahn	Kishin Yang-haeng, Film Department	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	-	Russia Gosfilmofond (hereafter Russia, 1998)	Released in Hawaii Feb. 1938
June 1938	Military Train (66 mins)	Gwang-je Seo	Sungbong Film Productions-Toho	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	July 1938	China (2004)	Partly Japanese Language
Oct. 1938	Fisherman's Fire (52 mins)	Cheol-young Ahn	Keuk-gwang Film Productions (Sponsored by Shochiku)	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	Aug. 1938	China (2004)	Also Found in Russia (1998, 2 rolls)
Sept. 1939	I Will Die Under the National Flag (9 mins)	Yu Yamanaka Ik Lee	Joseon Cultural Film Association	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	-	Russia (1998, discovered 2 rolls)	-
April 1940	Tuition (80 mins)	In-gyu Choi, Han-joon Bang	Goryeo Film Association	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	Banned in Japan Due to Censorship	China (2014)	Partly Japanese Language
March 1941	Angels on the Street (73 mins)	In-gyu Choi	Goryeo Film Association	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	Oct. 1941	China (2004)	Partly Japanese Language
March 1941	Volunteer (56 mins)	Seok-young Ahn	Dong-a Heung-eop, Film Department	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	Aug. 1940	China (2004)	Partly Japanese Language
Nov. 1941	Spring of Korean Peninsula (84 mins)	Byeong-il Lee	Myeongbo Film Company	Korean with Japanese Subtitles	Dec. 1942	China (2005)	Partly Japanese Language
Nov. 1941	You and Me (24 mins)	Eitaro Hinatsu (Young Heo)	Joseon Military Press Bureau	Japanese	Nov. 1941	National Film Center, Japan (2009)	-
April 1943	Suicide Squad of the Watchtower (95 mins)	Tadashi Imai	Toho Films (Supported by Joseon Film Production Company)	Japanese	April 1943	Toho Cinema, Japan (hereafter Japan, 1989)	-
July 1943	Straits of Joseon (75 mins)	Gi-chaek Park	Joseon Film Production Company	Japanese	-	China (2005)	Preserved in Hubei Film Studios

Dec. 1943	Figure of Youth (81 mins)	Shiro Toyota	Joseon Film Production Company	Japanese	Dec.1943	Japan (1989)	
June 1944	Dear Soldier (100 mins)	Han-joon Bang	Joseon Military Press Bureau	Japanese	-	China (2006)	
May 1945	Love and the Bow (74 mins)	In-gyu Choi	Joseon Film Corporation	Japanese	July 1945	Japan (1989)	

Source: Author.

### ***Joseon Films Excluded from Japanese Cinema: Tuition (1940) and Angels on the Street (1941)***

The *Joseon films*, *Tuition* and *Angels on the Street*, help evince the structure of the film industry during the colonial as well as the immediate post-colonial period in Korea. The context of the two films reveals the final steps taken by private Joseon filmmakers shortly before the Japanese imperial government established the Joseon Film Production Company (*Joseon yeonghwa jejak jusikhoesa*; hereafter the JFPC), a single state-run film production company to manage filmmaking in its Korean colony, in September 1942. It is notable that the director In-gyu Choi joined the JFPC, and through it produced an official propaganda film, and then participated in the production of a “Korean film” entitled *Jayu manse* (Hurrah for Freedom; dir. In-gyu Choi, 1946) after national liberation.

Choi’s second film, *Tuition*, and his third, *Angels on the Streets*, were produced through Chang-yong Lee’s Goryeo Film Association (*Goryeo yeonghwa hyeophoe*; hereafter Goryeo Films). Lee actively negotiated with Japanese authorities in the late 1930s seeking the survival of Joseon filmmaking. And In-gyu Choi, along with Chang-geun Jeon, director of *Bokji malli* (Miles Away from Happiness; 1941), the first production of Goryeo Films, was the main agents in filmmaking targeting the entire imperial Japanese market. The original screenplay of *Tuition* was based on a piece by Soo-young Woo, a fourth grader at Bukjeong Public Primary School in Gwangju, who won second prize in an open essay contest hosted by the *Gyeong-il sohaksaeng sinmun* (Gyeong-il Elementary Newspaper)



published by the Japanese Government-General's Office in Korea. In March 1939, when the award was announced, Chang-yong Lee quickly asked a veteran screenwriter in the Japanese film industry, Yagi Yasutaro, to adapt the screenplay from which the film was produced by In-gyu Choi (Chung 2015). Choi's next film, *Angels on the Streets*, is based on the true story of the Christian minister Suwon Bang (changed to Sung-bin Bang in the film), who lived among street urchins in the orphanage of *Hyangrin-won* in colonial-era *Gyeongseong* (Seoul). Motosada Nishiki, a non-regular staff member of the Publications Monitoring Department of the Japanese Government-General in Korea, adapted the screenplay from an essay by Minister Bang.<sup>19</sup> As with *Tuition*, the directorship of In-gyu Choi, resulted in subtle differences to the film from the original Japanese-authored screenplay, as will be discussed below.

Following Korea's liberation, In-gyu Choi, in his autobiographical work *My Autobiography of Ten Years in Film: from Border to The Night before Independence Day (Gukgyeong-eseo dongnip jeonya-e—Sibyeonyeon-ui na-ui yeonghwa jaseo, 1948)*, wrote regarding his directing of *Tuition* and *Angels on the Street*, "It was my intention to appeal to the Japanese people about the harsh treatment of collecting tuition to younger nations (*Sokungmin*)."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to note his "sincere intention to remonstrate with Japanese politicians through the film" about "why the streets of Joseon were full of beggars."<sup>20</sup> That said, one cannot take at face value Choi's post-liberation remarks. This is especially true when one considers that Choi, as a production manager at Goryeo Films, participated in an official meeting held in Gyeongseong in June 1941, in which he reportedly said to Japanese military and government authorities, "We try to make a lot of bright and cheerful films, but we are stuck by the limited subject materials. So, I hope the authorities will ease their regulation so it will not be the dark, harsh law we have today, but it should be suitable for filmmaking. I want to make a cheerful film, and I think I can make a naturally bright film."<sup>21</sup> Unlike his

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19. Bang (1940).

20. Choi (1948).

21. *Eiga hyoron*, July 1941, 60.

“sincere intention” as expressed after liberation, his words in 1941 paint the portrait of a weak colonial artist whose greatest desire was to make film.

However, we can nevertheless detect in some parts of *Tuition* and *Angels on the Streets* messages that can be interpreted as anti-Japanese, whether intentional on the part of the director or otherwise. Rather than pushing the imperial propagandistic line that all must pay tuition, the film *Tuition* discloses the realities of an impoverished Korean elementary school student who cannot afford his school fees. In *Angels on the Streets*, the main agent of enlightenment is Sung-bin Bang, a Korean Christian pastor, despite the final scene where the Hyangrin-won children chant the “Pledge of Imperial Subjects” (*Hwangguk sinmin seosa*). The children are likely to be seen as if they stayed in an autonomous place instead of the imperial Japan, owing to the activities of the Joseon agent.

In fact, unlike their release in colonial Korea, the two films faced considerable obstacles in Japan. *Tuition* passed the censors and enjoyed box office success in colonial Korea, but its Japanese release, which was promoted by Towa Corporation, was delayed for more than a year before finally being denied release. *Angels on the Streets* earned the recommendation of the Publicity Bureau of the Japanese military on the Korean peninsula and the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Monbu-sho*), the first *Joseon film* to do so, but the recommendation was disregarded after a review by Japan’s Ministry of Home Affairs immediately prior to its planned release in Japan. In the end, a redacted edition was released with 218-meters (or about eight minutes) of film cut, but it was devastated at the Japanese box office. And it also could not meet the requirement of the imperial Japan that “*Joseon film* should keep step with Japanese film as a reliable part of it.”<sup>22</sup> The two films tried to gain recognition as imperial Japanese films, they failed and were ultimately categorized as *Joseon films*.

Towards the end of the Japanese colonial period, In-gyu Choi joined the JFPC and continued his film career as a director of propaganda films advocating and promoting the logic of Japanese imperialism.<sup>23</sup> After Korea’s

22. *Eiga junpo*, December 1, 1941, 66.

23. Starting as an assistant director for *Boro no kesshitai* (Suicide Squad of the Watchtower);

liberation until the establishment of the Republic of Korea, Choi continued filmmaking; a liberation trilogy, *Hurrah for Freedom* (1946), *Joe-eobneun joe-in* (An Innocent Criminal; 1948), and *Dongnip jeonya* (The Night before Independence Day; 1948), which may have been intended in part to exonerate Choi for his pro-Japanese activities during the colonial period, and directed three cultural films, including *Gugmin tpyo* (A National Referendum; 1948), *Jang Chu-hwa muyong* (Dance of Jang Chu-hwa; 1948), and *Huimang-ui maeul* (The Town of Hope; 1948) produced by the United States Information Service (USIS). During the Korean War (1950–1953), Choi was abducted by North Korean forces and his final fate remains a mystery. It should be noted that while Korean film historiography came to depict *Hurrah for Freedom* as a representative film in Korean film history, the film currently preserved in the Korean Film Archive is not the version released shortly after liberation but rather is the censored version.

### **Between Joseon Film and Korean Film: *Hurrah for Freedom* (1946) and *Seagull* (1948)**

*Seagull* (Haeyeon, 1948), which was discovered at the Kobe Planet Film Archive in September 2014, was unveiled in July 2015 as a South Korean film of the post-liberation period, some sixty years after its original release. It may not be controversial to call *Seagull* a Korean film, as it was completed and released shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Korea in August 1948. However, it is worth considering how the *Joseon film*, *Hurrah for Freedom*, came to be considered a Korean film. In fact, even after the establishment of the Republic of Korea in August 1948, films produced in Korea continued to be called “Joseon films.” *Hurrah for Freedom*, released in October 1946, more than a year after liberation, was also called a *Joseon film*. The film, however, has not only come to be interpreted in the historiography

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dir. Tadashi Imai, 1943), originally a project of Goryeo Films, Choi went on to direct *Taiyo no kodomodachi* (Children of the Sun; 1944) and *Ai to chikai* (Love and the Vow; 1945), produced by the Joseon Film Corporation, which was formed with the JFPC's integration into the Joseon Film Distribution Company in April 1944.

of Korean national film as a representative Korean film of the post-liberation period, but even as a classic Korean film. This is not merely a question of terminology, between Joseon versus Korean film, as the original version of the film released in 1946 differs in significant ways from the version currently being preserved by the Korean Film Archive.

*Hurrah for Freedom* (1946) was planned by its creators, who had formerly worked under Japanese colonial rule, to mark the first anniversary of Korea's emancipation.<sup>24</sup> It was distributed by Goryeo Film Company, produced by Goryeo Films, and co-produced by Hyangrin-won, a social work facility, which was the setting of *Angels on the Streets* (1941). *Hurrah for Freedom* is known as the first Korean film to be made after national emancipation and depicts the armed independence movement under Japanese colonial rule. Regarding the film, a period review commented that "its effect of arousing public hatred towards the Japanese military police detective is not to be found in any other film."<sup>25</sup> The film was a box-office hit during the post-liberation period, as it gave expression to the overwhelming moment of liberation in the genre of action-melodrama, as the title suggests. The film was repeatedly screened in Korea until 1947 and "exported to China as a *Joseon film* for the first time."<sup>26</sup> But, there is no record of *Hurrah for Freedom* has been released after 1948. The film was the renewed object of media attention when Wan-gyu Choi, president of Goryeo Film Company and brother of In-gyu, was sued for failing to make a print copy for tour screenings after having received money to do so. It is interesting that a period news article mentioned, whether true or not, that the print of *Hurrah for Freedom* was in fact in Hawaii, not Korea.<sup>27</sup>

*Hurrah for Freedom* was re-released in 1975 when the Korean Motion Picture

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24. The screenwriter was Chang-geun Jeon, known for *Bokji malli* (Miles Away from Happiness; dir. Chang-geun Jeon, 1941); its director, as mentioned, was In-gyu Choi; the cinematographer was Hyung-mo Han, who debuted with *Children of the Sun* (1944); the gaffer was Sung-chun Kim, who debuted with *Salsucha* (The Sprinkler; dir. Han-joon Bang, 1935); and the editor was Ju-nam Yang, the director of *Sweet Dream* (1936).

25. *Jayu sinmun*, October 25, 1946.

26. *Kyunghyang sinmun*, June 15, 1947.

27. *Kyunghyang sinmun*, June 29, 1956.

Promotion Corporation (the predecessor to the Korean Film Council), in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Korea's emancipation from Japan, selected twelve Korean films produced after liberation for a showcase of classical Korean film.<sup>28</sup> Such a showcase was possible because a film archive (the predecessor to the Korean Film Archive) was established within the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation in January 1974 and films began to be preserved. One contemporaneous newspaper article mentions that the showcase's only 1940s film, *Hurrah for Freedom*, was able to be included because Wan-gyu Choi had kept a copy of the film, which if true, contradicts the previous account of events as detailed in the aforementioned lawsuit. Although it is difficult to establish with any precision the exact circumstances, I would like to highlight the following statement by Wan-gyu Choi: "The film's cast included actors who later defected to North Korea, so many of the film's scenes were deleted by the time of screening so that the print is now only fifty minutes long."<sup>29</sup> That is, the original version was 100 minutes in length, but after its release (in approximately 1948), the film was only 51 minutes long, which is similar to the version preserved today in the Korea Film Archive.

Hak Park and Eun-gi Dok were the two actors in *Hurrah for Freedom* who defected to North Korea. It is actually still possible to identify them in the expurgated version of the film preserved in the KOFA. First, at the beginning of the film, Han-Jung (Chang-geun Jeon) and his compatriot (Hak Park) escape from Seoul's Seodaemun Prison. Park's face is not well revealed in these opening and fast-moving scenes, so these shots were preserved in the film. Modern technology now allows us to slow down and focus on these scenes. On the other hand, Park's close-up after he has been shot and killed by Japanese soldiers was removed by period censors and the faces of replacement actors were then filmed and inserted to fill the cut scenes. In addition, in the scene introducing the Japanese military police detective Nabe (Eun-gi Dok), Dok was replaced by another actor. And, in the scene where Nabe meets his girlfriend Mi-hyang (Gye-seon Yu), the shot jumps to

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28. *Dong-A ilbo*, July 5, 1975.

29. *Kyungghyang sinmun*, June 28, 1975.

a different shot, which reveals that Dok’s image was deleted here. But when he appears with another character in the same place in a short shot, we can catch his face in the original filmed shot of him.

When were these new scenes with replacement actors filmed? It is difficult to determine this at present, but we should note the information provided in the opening credits in the version preserved at the KOFA. First, there is commentary at the beginning of the film explaining that “the film was miraculously preserved despite historical tumult, such as the inter-Korean conflict of over the past 29 years,” indicating that the film was set to reopen in 1975. The opening credits of the new version were also re-created. The film’s main actors, Chang-geun Jeon, Eun-gi Dok, Gye-seon Yu, and Ryeo-hee Hwang in the original version (according to a period newspaper advertisement),<sup>30</sup> were replaced with Chang-geun Jeon, Gye-seon Yu, and Seung-ho Kim in the new version. Ryeo-hee Hwang, whose name was deleted in the new version, did not cross into the northern part of Korea like Eun-gi Dok, but according to period accounts, she was being investigated by the Seoul District Public Prosecutors’ Office, so one can infer that she had official troubles with the government in the south.<sup>31</sup>

It should also be noted that the currently preserved sound print of *Hurrah for Freedom* remains very clear although a period newspaper article’s criticized that “its recording was a failure in general.”<sup>32</sup> One can say with certainty that the currently preserved print is a newer version because the term “Joseon,” which comes up frequently in the original screenplay has been changed to “Korea” (Hanguk) in the newly recorded version (Kim 2009, 296–297; Han 2018, 220). According to more information in the opening credits, this new version was developed and printed by the Korean Film Culture Association (*Hanguk yeonghwa munhwa hyeophoe*). The Korean Film Culture Association was established in July 1956 to manage film equipment donated by the Asia Foundation, a US-based non-profit organization. All the equipment was installed in Jeongneung Studios, which

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30. *Kyunggyang sinmun*, October 6, 1946.

31. *Dong-a ilbo*, March 7, 1948.

32. *Kyunggyang sinmun*, October 24, 1946.

opened in January 1957.<sup>33</sup> Thus, this newer version of *Hurrah for Freedom* must have been re-recorded at some point after 1957.

To sum up, *Hurrah for Freedom* was censored in 1948 and many of its scenes were deleted, and sometime between 1957 and 1975, a new print was created through various stages including re-filming, editing of the new scenes, and re-recording. Although it is difficult to determine the specific process and chronology of how this occurred, the production of the new *Hurrah for Freedom* seems to be related to the period when South Korean society after the establishment of the Republic of Korea was endeavoring to define Korean cinema. *Hurrah for Freedom* was only able to become a Korean film after it was re-edited and recorded after expurgating the actors who had defected to North Korea.

Let us now return to *Seagull*. This film is important for illustrating the situation of the Korean film industry during the post-liberation period. The shooting of *Seagull* began in late 1947 and was completed in October 1948, shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Korea. The Art Film Company (*Yesul yeonghwasa*) that produced it was led mostly by theater personnel, including producer Chul-hyuk Lee and screenwriter Woon-ryong Lee. On the other hand, shooting was dominated by filmmakers who had been active since the Japanese colonial era, with the exception of actors like Dong-kyu Kim. Gyu-hwan Lee, who debuted with *Imja-eomneun narutbae* (A Ferry Boat that Has No Owner; 1932), directed the film.<sup>34</sup>

At first, Yeong-hwa Kim planned on directing *Seagull*. Kim was a former assistant director at the Japanese Toho Films, who had made *Uleuleola changgong* (Look up at the Blue Sky; 1943) at the Joseon Film Production Company, a state-run Japanese film company. But because Kim was installed as the manager of the Film Division of the Korean interim government, Gyu-hwan Lee was named director of the film instead. At the time, Lee was distinguishing himself in the film industry of the post-liberation period, releasing his directed films one after another, including

33. *Chosun ilbo*, January 16, 1957.

34. The cinematographer was Se-woong Yang, the recordist was Pil-woo Lee, and the gaffer was Hae-jin Ko.

*Ttolttori-ui moheom* (The Adventure of Ttolttori; 1946), *Minjok-ui saebyeok* (Dawn of the Nation; 1947), and *Geudeul-ui Haengbok* (Happiness; 1947). In fact, he refused to participate in the JFPC at the end of the Japanese colonial period, though his mention is unreliable, so was drafted into the Japanese military by force at the Pyeongtaek Airport.<sup>35</sup> This fact apparently became a kind of exoneration for him. In other words, the Korean film industry's consistent assessment of him as untainted by collaboration with Japan seems to be a key factor in his active role in the South Korean film industry after liberation.

*Seagull*, a myth on nation-building, is similar to *Angels on the Streets* in that it depicts creating young boys as the nation. It is particularly interesting that Park (played by Dong-kyu Kim) in *Seagull* remarks on the fifth anniversary of the foundation of the reformatory as of 1948.<sup>36</sup> It means that the reformatory for the boys in the film has been there since the end of the Japanese colonial period. The children of the reformatory in *Seagull* experienced two states, imperial Japan and Korea. Are the children in *Seagull* to be understood as being located in-between the undetermined (vague) state and their autonomous space, as the children in *Angels on the Streets* are posited? This setting of the film renders the issues between Joseon and Korean cinema more prominent.

Meanwhile, *Seagull* and *Angels on the Streets* also offer interesting comparisons in terms of how they depict the process of nation-building, that is, the scenes where the children of Hyangrin-won work in *Angels on the Street* and where members of the juvenile reformatory work in *Seagull*. In-gyu Choi, echoing *Boys Town* (dir. Norman Taurog; 1938), directed these scenes in the style of classical Hollywood cinema, while Lee did it in the style of a Soviet montage. From the rhythmic juxtaposition of the teachers and pupils reclaiming the wasteland by the sea and the strong waves against the audio backdrop of a magnificent male choir, we can discern how the

35. This is entirely based on Gyu-hwan Lee's testimony. See details in Korean Arts Institute (2003, 188–197).

36. In fact, the Busan Suyeong Boys School (*Busan Suyeong sonyeonwon*; the real-world name of what is the Gyeongnam Juvenile Reformatory in the film), where the film was shot, was established in February 1947. See *Kyunghyang sinmun*, March 6, 1947.



director's artistic ambition melds with a nation-building ideology in the montage scenes.

*Seagull* was released on November 21, 1948 at the Chungang Theater in Seoul and won recognition as the first Ministry-recommended film since the liberation. But while screening at Busan's Bumin Hall, where it had opened December 11, the film was suddenly seized by South Korean authorities. Although an advertisement at the time of its debut in Seoul included the names of the film's main actors,<sup>37</sup> including Dong-gyu Kim, Hak Park and Kyung-ae Yu, this became an issue by the time it opened in Busan, even though the distributor had by then deleted the names of those actors who had defected to North Korea. The reason for the confiscation is presumably that the film itself had not been modified. After they defected to North Korea, around July 1948, Hak Park, Dong-gyu Kim and Kyung-ae Yu who starred in *Seagull*, became active in the North Korean film scene, appearing in the North's first narrative film *Nae gohyang* (My Hometown Village) in 1949.

*Hurrah for Freedom* was censored in 1948 after its release and then altered with new scenes and audio some time before its re-release in 1975. Its fate reveals its transformation from a *Joseon film* to a Korean one, in both idea and form. The censorship based on anti-communist ideology after the establishment of the South Korean government deleted the existence of the defectors and re-created *Jayu manse* as a Korean film. In this regard, can we call *Seagull* a Korean film, if its North Korean actors remain included? Assuming the film had been found in South Korea, would it not have been a version where some actors' scenes were deleted, and the film censored in 1948? Thanks to its import to Japan by the Asian Literary Society, a Korean Japanese organization in Osaka, Japan, and its banning in Japan by the US military government there (Kim 2015, 211–217), *Seagull* was preserved in its original form in the Kansai region of Japan. As a result, the version returned to South Korea was the original one made in 1948. As in the case of *Hurrah for Freedom*, designating *Seagull* as Korean film suggests that the stalled anti-communism from the chaotic period of emancipation, the establishment of

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37. *Kyungghyang sinmun*, October 24, 1948.

the South Korean government, and the Korean War no longer mattered in South Korean society.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has raised a question of designating the films, made in the Korean peninsula during the colonial and the post-liberation periods and preserved in the Korean Film Archive functioning as a national film archive in an area, as Korean national film. The moment the films of the periods are designated as Korean film, the internal logic and the external contexts of the films become overly simplified. Film production during the colonial period that Joseon and Japanese filmmakers co-operated, and that Japanese and Joseon film companies coproduced went beyond the confines of the nationalist film historiography, which appertains to the nomenclature of *Joseon film* implying the simultaneous duality of assimilationism and separatism in the colonial/imperial system. The films aspired to become the ones of imperial Japan, but as a result, they ended up being Joseon (ethnic) films, not Japanese (state) ones, because they represented the uncomfortable colonial reality which the empire did not want to expose due to the nature of the film media. As imperial Japan separated and segregated the outland Joseon from the mainland Japan unlike the ostensible policy slogan for assimilation, it was impossible for colonial films to become Japanese ones.

Meanwhile, the films before and after the establishment of the Republic of Korea from the time of liberation aspired to become Korean national film in tandem with nation-building propaganda but also failed as a result. This is the result of strong anti-communist ideology following the establishment of the Republic of Korea in the Cold War era. Post-liberation films suffered

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38. In 1988, the South Korean government cancelled the ban for cultural artists who defected to North Korea, but the North Korean filmmakers were neither discussed nor listed on the cancellation list because there were no films left during the Japanese colonial period and the liberation period (Han 2018). In 1988 when they were unbanned, the film sector did not become a social issue. Although the films with North Korean filmmakers in were found later, they had already unbanned then.

from censorship due to some scenes that included actors who had defected to North Korea; the print of *Seagull* was confiscated by the authorities and banned from showing it; *Hurrah for Freedom* could become a Korean film only after being redacted and re-edited. The Korean national film historiography will only be able to start a reflective review on the mythology of national cinema when recognizing the realm of “*Joseon yeonghwa*” that represents the sociopolitical contexts of the colonial situations and the post-liberation period.

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