

Korean Film Companies in U.S. Occupied Japan: Imagining an Independent Korea 占領期日本における朝鮮系映画会社 国境を越えるメディア空間で想像する独立コリアン・シネマ

Shota Ogawa

Abstract

This study reveals the history of little-known film companies founded by Koreans in U.S. Occupied Japan (1945-1952). At a time when a powerful tide of decolonization and “ethnic renaissance” energized the cultural activities of newly liberated Koreans in both Japan and the Korean peninsula, the practical activities of Korean film companies in Occupied Japan were entangled in the economic, ideological, and cultural realities of the era. While these companies produced few original titles, they were nevertheless active in re-screening existing films in new contexts. A cross-media approach is vital for understanding the full scope of Korean engagement with film in postwar Japan. By studying the censorship records left by SCAP (Supreme Commander of Allied Powers), advertisements in Japanese and Korean print media, and documents kept by the Korean organizations, this paper offers insight into the ambitions, methods, and impacts of Korean film companies. It shows how Korean film producers negotiated vis-à-vis SCAP and Japanese film professionals to project their visions of a Korean national cinema in Japan.

Keywords: Occupation, Japanese Film, Zainichi Koreans, Censorship, SCAP, Kamei Fumio

Introduction

Material scarcity figures prominently in the history of the short-lived, but nevertheless important film movement of newly liberated

Koreans in Occupation-era Japan (1945-1952). Making the most of the limited supply of film, equipment, and skilled personnel, a handful of Korean film companies set out to create films that were meaningful for Korean communities. Except for a few newsreels, however, there are no physical films that survive to attest to what Choryon (The Association for Koreans in Japan) described as “a robust film movement” driven by the imperative of decolonization.¹ There are, however, documents housed in disparate locations, some in Maryland—the Prange Collection and NARA (National Archives and Records Administration)—and others in Tokyo—the National Diet Library. Through rationing both film stock and printing paper, SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) was able to implement a strict censorship system that tied down publishers and film producers, including numerous small start-ups, some of which were founded by Korean individuals and organizations. In this study, I analyze the Korean film movement in Occupation-era Japan in order to challenge the dominant discourse surrounding the Occupation-era mediascape, which tends to focus on the encounter of two subject positions; namely, that of American censors and Japanese subjects. Through a cross-media analysis of documents in the absence of films, I demonstrate that Koreans were not only present in the postwar Japanese mediascape, but were involved in some of the most important episodes of Occupation-era media history.

An advertisement placed by the Korean film

company Min-ei (Minjung Yeonghwa), a short-lived, but active group founded in April 1946 and disbanded in September 1947, attests to the important collaborative relations Korean film producers maintained with Japanese filmmakers (Fig 1). The advertisement was placed in the Korean-language journal, *Minju Chosun* (People's Korea), in September 1946. Or to be more precise, it was a shadow of the advertisement that has survived in the Prange Collection, since the page is literally obfuscated by the hand-written note that reads "delete."² While the word "delete" attests to the power of the American censor to literally erase the advertisement from public circulation, it was also thanks to SCAP's systematic documentation and collection of the censored materials that we have access to this unpublished material today. Without the censorship documents, it would be much harder to excavate the little-known history of the Korean film companies. The rigorous censorship on print media imposed by SCAP extended not just to newspapers, books, and political leaflets, but also to calendars, diaries, and children's books, and included over one hundred titles of newspapers and newsletters, as well as over twenty magazine titles that were published by Korean individuals and organizations.³ If the copious archive of censored print media attests to the fact that Koreans were active in the cultural milieu of Occupation-era Japan that was marked by what John Dower succinctly called "the hunger for words in print," my findings demonstrate that the same archive, which contains no motion picture materials, nonetheless provides a glimpse of the vigorous film-related activities of Koreans, albeit through secondary references.⁴



Figure 1. A deleted advertisement of *Daedong-A Jeonjaeng Pyomeon-sa* (*The Hidden History of the Greater East Asian War*), *Eohoe-neun Mueot-ul Hago Itna* (*How Should the Congress Work?*), and *Ilbon Geuhu-ui Ilnyeon* (*A Year after Japan*) in *Minju Chosun* 1. 5 (September 1946). Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries.

The Min-ei advertisement lists three unfamiliar titles as up-and-coming films: *The Hidden History of the Greater East Asian War* (*Daedong-A Jeonjaeng Pyomyeon-sa*), *How Should the Congress Work?* (*Eohoe-neun Mueot-ul Hago Itna*), and *A Year after Japan*

(*Ilbon Geuhu-ui Ilnyeon*). The advertisement may have been suppressed for its use of the phrase *daedong-a jeonjaeng* (*Daitōa Sensō* in Japanese and the Greater East Asian War in English), which violated the U.S. press code; the politically correct phrase under the Occupation was *Taiheiyō Sensō* (the Pacific War). If this was the case, however, a suggested revision (customarily marked by underlining the problematic words) would seem to suffice, rather than a categorical suppression of the whole ad.⁵ The reason the advertisement was suppressed is more likely related to the name Kamei Fumio, credited here for the film *The Hidden History of the Greater East Asian War*. The leftist director, Kamei, has an important place in Japanese film history, not only as one of the founding figures of the genre of documentary film in Japan, but also as the only director whose works were banned both by war-time Japanese censors and by postwar American censors. Just a month previously, Kamei's ambitious four-reel documentary, *Tragedy of Japan* (*Nihon no higeki*), which was made for the first anniversary of Japan's defeat, had been denied public screenings, ostensibly for its bold condemnation of the emperor for his role in leading the war.⁶ The documentary, which re-edited wartime newsreel footage, was also an important project for the non-fiction production company, Nichiei (Nippon Eigasha), in its attempt to reinvent itself from a producer of pro-military newsreels to a producer of leftist documentary films.

There is no reference to *The Hidden History of the Greater East-Asian War* in Kamei's filmography, but the length of the film—four reels—and the timing of its completion hint at its connection to *Tragedy of Japan*. This hypothesis is confirmed in Hirano Kyoko's *tour-de-force* study of Occupation-era cinema, which includes a cursory mention of SCAP's effort to confiscate the prints Nichiei sold to foreign organizations, including the Russian Embassy, the New Zealand Mission, and Min-ei.⁷ We can speculate that Min-ei had drafted the

advertisement just before surrendering the print to SCAP. What are the implications of the fact that a Korean film company was involved in the scandal surrounding *Tragedy of Japan*? After all, *Tragedy of Japan* had a bigger than life status and has come to symbolize the two-faced U.S. censorship system that in one breath both promoted democratic values and curtailed freedom of expression.

Kamei's film, *Tragedy of Japan*, is one of the so-called "phantom films" (*maboroshi no eiga*) that fell victim to censorship. Here it is necessary to provide a cursory overview of SCAP's directives regarding film censorship, which effectively functioned as a carrot-and-stick policy measure that aimed to suppress undesirable content while encouraging the production of films that promoted values such as democracy, individual freedom, and pacifism.⁸ Within months of Japan's defeat, SCAP unleashed sweeping measures to overhaul the Japanese film industry, first by revoking all existing censorship laws and regulations on film exhibition, and second by ironically imposing its own version of censorship.⁹ From October 1945 to November 1949, film production in Japan was subjected to a two-step censorship process in which, first, the scripts and proposals were assessed by the CIE (Civil Information and Education Section), and secondly, the complete films were approved by the CCD (Civil Censorship Detachment).¹⁰ *Tragedy of Japan* had been approved by both the CIE and the CCD, yet SCAP took the unprecedented step of retracting the screening permit at the last minute. The film's producer, Iwasaki Akira, attributes this to the so-called "reverse course" in the SCAP leadership in which the New Dealers within SCAP lost out to anti-Communist hardliners.¹¹ Even though *Tragedy of Japan* had a stamp of approval from David Conde, head of CIE's film division, Kamei's criticism of the Emperor for his role in the war was presumably enough to alarm the hardliners within SCAP.

In Japanese cultural discourse, “phantom film” is a popular expression with a connotation that extends beyond a film that is lost to a film that becomes, in its very absence, the object of collective longing. In reference to the documentary known by the title, *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, the film historian, Abé Mark Nornes, describes the allure of a “phantom film” whose “shadowy presence tugs on the mind.”¹² *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* was shot between September 15 and October 27, 1945, by a consortium consisting of the Ministry of Education, independent researchers, and a Nichiei film crew, and was completed in early 1946 under the strict control of SCAP. Upon its completion, all film elements, including the outtakes, were confiscated and shipped to the U.S., where they were locked away as classified materials. Just as the narrative of loss is important to “phantom film,” so is the story of resistance and rescue: the leftist film producer, Iwasaki Akira famously conspired with a small number of confidants to hide a duplicate rush print (without the soundtrack) in a laboratory until the end of the Occupation.¹³ Through the retelling of the Japanese filmmakers’ act of defiance, the story of the “phantom Hiroshima film” also became a national myth that emphasizes a defiant Japanese intelligentsia that confronted the oppressive rule of the U.S. Occupation.¹⁴ As Nornes has persuasively demonstrated, the story behind the confiscation and the resurfacing of the historic documentary footage of the effects of the A-bomb is far more complex; the postwar Japanese government perpetuated the suppression of the documentary film, while the U.S. Army-Air Force cinematographer, Daniel McGovern, contributed to the survival of the film, repeating in the U.S. the defiant act of his Japanese counterparts, surreptitiously making and hiding a 16mm composite film (with the soundtrack).¹⁵

Iwasaki repeated his defiant act when SCAP

ordered the confiscation of Kamei’s *Tragedy of Japan*, a film which he produced as the temporary head of Nichiei.¹⁶ In a story that he repeatedly told, Iwasaki heard the news of SCAP’s withdrawal of the screening permit on August 13, 1946, just two days before the first anniversary of Japan’s defeat. Upon hearing the news, Iwasaki swiftly ordered his staff to organize ad-hoc screenings of the film three times a day for a full week, right up to SCAP’s deadline for surrendering the prints.¹⁷ Newspaper advertisements show that Iwasaki exploited the adverse situation to Nichiei’s advantage. In one instance, an advertisement for the film flaunts its edgy status, stating *ippan kōkai funō to natta* (banned for regular screenings) and reminding the public that this *yūryō shishakai* (pre-screening with a fee) could be the last chance to see the film.¹⁸

That a Korean film company was involved in Nichiei’s defiance against SCAP disrupts the conventional understanding of the Occupation-era mediascape that centers on the clashes and negotiations between the Japanese and the Americans. The Min-ei advertisement calls for a broader view that recognizes the dynamism of the Occupation period, which involved more than the two parties, but also the so-called “Third-Country People,” namely former colonial subjects from Korea and Taiwan who stayed in Japan after Japan’s surrender. If the expression “phantom film” doubly symbolized the suppression of the film and the seductive allure that was amplified by its prohibition, it is apt to call the deleted Min-ei advertisement a “phantom document,” for it simultaneously reminds us of the elusive history of Korean film companies in Occupied Japan, and of its importance as a missing episode in our understanding of postwar Japanese film history.

The two other titles listed alongside *Tragedy of Japan* in Min-ei’s advertisement further illustrate the entanglement of Min-ei’s activities in the negotiation between Japanese producers and U.S. censors. From the title *How*

Should the Congress Work?, we can speculate that the film belonged to a series of educational films made under the CIE's guidance in the lead up to the first general election in April 1946. Riken Eigasha, for instance, produced a two-reel short film entitled *Anata no gikai* ("Your Congress") in December 1945 which was distributed through Shōchiku and Tōhō.¹⁹ As for the title *A Year after Japan*, we can assume with confidence that it was based on Nichiei's, *This Year: 1945-1946*, which echoed the situation of *Tragedy of Japan*. While the film was a conventional compilation that summarized the events of the year with re-edited newsreel segments, the CCD found issues with the film's depiction of the May Day protest of 1946. The protest attracted over a million people who expressed frustration over the sluggish economic recovery and severely delayed rations.²⁰ The leftist Korean newspaper, *Haebang Sinmun* (*Liberation Newspaper*), has a mention of a film, *Phae-jeon Ilbon Ilnyeon-sa* (literally "The Record of Japan in the First Year Since its Defeat"), that is credited to the Korean poet Ho Nam-gi, who was among the leaders of Min-ei and an important member of Choryon, Min-ei's parent organization. From the coincidence of timing, the similarity of the titles, and the close relationship between Min-ei and Nichiei, we can speculate that the film credited to Ho Nag-gi was based on the banned Nichiei film, *This Year: 1945-1946*.

The ambitious activities of the Korean film companies attest to the exceptionality of the Occupation era, "a rare moment of flux, freedom, and openness," to borrow Dower's words, "[when] people were acutely conscious of the need to reinvent their own lives."²¹ The need to reinvent themselves was an acute concern also felt by the newly liberated Koreans in Japan. Koreans in postwar Japan were a highly heterogeneous population. The group consisted of numerous laborers, primarily from rural regions, who were forced or coaxed into working in the most dangerous

construction projects and mines during the Pacific War, and a smaller number of earlier migrants, with better command of Japanese, who often served as foremen overseeing other Korean laborers. In addition, there was a vocal minority of students and intellectuals, typically from privileged families in Korea. This was a fluid population which shrunk from over two million to just over 600,000 within three years from Japan's surrender, as the conscripts and laborers who had been mobilized late in the war found their way back to their liberated homeland.²² Accordingly, it is clear that we cannot speak of a single Korean film movement, nor can we discuss the film-related activities of Koreans in this era in the same way that scholars have discussed the recent rise of *zainichi* Korean directors such as Sai Yōichi (*All Under the Moon*, 1993), Lee Sang-il (*Chong*, 1999), and Yang Yong-hi (*Our Homeland*, 2013). The history recounted here belongs to a time when many diasporic Koreans in Japan, the group commonly known today as *zainichi* Koreans (literally, "Koreans in Japan"), imagined their presence in Japan to be transitory and held to a vision of eventual repatriation. The situation differs fundamentally from that of commercially released feature films made by *zainichi* Koreans today.²³ Instead of producing theatrical films, the Korean film companies focused on re-editing existing films and organizing non-theatrical exhibitions of small-gauge (i.e., 16mm) film. The film movement of the newly liberated Koreans thrived on re-packaging, re-interpreting, and re-engaging existing films, which was also a strategic response to the condition of material scarcity in the Occupation period.

Min-ei: A National Film Movement in a Transnational Media Environment

Two seemingly conflicting visions informed the activities of Korean film companies in Occupation-era Japan. First, there was a vision of an independent Korean cinema—a national

cinema independent from the yoke of Japanese cultural influences. The importance of this vision is emphasized in the “cultural almanac” (*bunka nenkan*) that Choryon published in 1949. The almanac called the activities of Korean film companies in postwar Japan a “cinema movement” (*yeonghwa wundong*) that would eventually contribute to the foundation of a Korean “national cinema” (*minjok yonghwa*) upon their return to Korea.²⁴ Secondly, there was a counter-vision that saw Koreans as an integral part of the postwar Japanese film industry, a structure that was in a state of flux following a series of restructurings by the wartime regime and the postwar Occupation. Working outside, if not against, the discourse of an independent Korean cinema, there were companies and organizations that sought to achieve a foothold in the Japanese film industry. Even Min-ei’s activities were not solely driven by the imperative to found an independent Korean national cinema. The ground-level operations of Min-ei and its handful of rivals relied upon close collaboration with Japanese film companies and technicians, as well as careful negotiations with the SCAP censors. Korean film companies actively used their connections with the Japanese film industry to acquire equipment and gain technical training. The almanac rationalized that Korean employees working in Japanese studios were doing so in order to gain the skills necessary to found a robust film industry in Korea upon their eventual repatriation.²⁵ The process of decolonization, as it was delineated in Choryon’s almanac, was not something that Koreans carried out independently, but rather a project that strategically made use of the resources and opportunities that were available to them in their diasporic existence in Occupied Japan.

As an illustration of the ways in which the vision of an independent Korean cinema necessarily involved the Koreans’ active and strategic use of their existence in Japan, we can

turn to the organization of travelling screenings which constituted an important part of the Korean film companies’ activities. As the almanac proudly outlined, Choryon’s two travelling screening units covered a total of 245 locations between December 1945 and May 1946, bringing film programs to Korean communities scattered across Japan. The travelling screenings were the first major project Choryon assigned to the organization’s film division, which it founded in November 1945, only a month after Choryon’s own founding. In December 1945, Choryon purchased 16mm film projectors and bolstered the personnel of its film division by integrating the film division of *Minjung Sinmun* (later *Haebang Sinmun*), one of the earliest newspapers published by Koreans in postwar Japan.²⁶ The importance Choryon placed on outreach to Korean communities is evident from the fact that the implementation of the travelling screenings preceded the completion of Choryon’s original newsreel *Choryon News*. For Choryon’s vision of a Korean film movement, it was as important to create a Korean viewership—through vigorous screening activities—as it was to produce original films. It is important here to nuance the notion of “original,” for the first three issues of *Choryon News* incorporated footage edited from existing Japanese newsreels such as *Nippon News* and *Shinsekai News*. While Choryon’s film division was far from prolific in terms of the output of new original films, it nonetheless reached an impressive number of communities through its screening efforts. By simple calculation, each projection team would have visited 25 locations per month. In addition, the screening team made a special visit to Seoul, where they screened *Choryon News* to report on the situation surrounding Koreans in different parts of Japan.²⁷ In April 1946, Choryon’s film division was incorporated as Min-ei, which took over the production of *Choryon News* and the travelling screenings until it ceased operations in September 1947 owing to insufficient funds.²⁸

Underlying Choryon's emphasis on mobile projection was a view of cinema as a tool for effective communication, education, and a vehicle for decolonization. Choryon's leadership was conscious of the motion pictures' advantage over print culture for engaging the diverse population of Koreans in Japan. Through cinema Choryon could engage Japanese-speaking youths, Korean-speaking adults, as well as the large number of illiterate people in Korean communities.²⁹ If the goal of Choryon and Min-ei's travelling exhibition was decolonization, its method was ironically deeply rooted in the tradition of Japanese wartime propaganda. In March 1941, *Taisei Yokusankai* (the Imperial Rule Assistance Association) set up ninety mobile projection teams, which was followed by newsreel producers and film studios that organized their own projection teams.³⁰ The projection teams disseminated *bunka eiga* (cultural films), a sub-genre of non-fiction film with educational and political contents that was modeled on the German *kulturfilm*. While the Film Law—which mandated the screenings of *bunka eiga* in cinemas—was the primary factor that elevated the status of *bunka eiga* in wartime Japan, travelling screenings also contributed to the dissemination of *bunka eiga* across Japan. As part of a broader campaign to raise the morale of agricultural and fishing communities, a consortium of military and private organizations promoted travelling screenings as the means to deliver fiction and non-fiction films to the rural residents who had no access to conventional cinema.³¹ The continuity between Min-ei's activities and the wartime Japanese propaganda efforts is hard to overlook in light of the fact that Min-ei hired Japanese filmmakers returning from the colonies as advisors. A notable example is Ishimoto Tōkichi, a director who is best known for *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*, 1939), which was a milestone in Japanese documentary film history.³² Ishimoto had just returned from Indonesia where he headed Java Eiga Kōsha, and later Nichiei Jakarta, which were key

organs of the Japanese propaganda machine in Indonesia as the producers of newsreels and educational films aimed at the Indonesian public.³³

The participation of Japanese technicians in Min-ei's ethnic film movement was mutually beneficial; Min-ei needed skilled advisors and the Japanese filmmakers needed jobs. Luckily for Min-ei, there was an oversupply of skilled technicians in postwar Japan thanks to the large number of film professionals who were returning from colonial territories that Japan had surrendered. Korean film companies were candid about the participation of the Japanese technicians in many cases. Take the full-page advertisement that appeared in the June 1947 issue of the Korean-language magazine *Minju Chosun* in which three titles are listed for July's program: Choryon's original newsreel *Choryon News*, the three-reel *bunka eiga* entitled *Hyōgo no dōhō* (*Compatriots in Hyogo*), and the two-reel short film *Kaiho Chōsen o iku* (*Travelling through Liberated Korea*) (Fig 2). Names of Japanese directors Asano Tatsuo and Ōta Kōichi (affiliated with Asahi Eiga and Nichiei) in the advertisement confirms the claim made in Choryon's almanac that Min-ei received assistance from leftist Japanese directors, notably from two newsreel and documentary production companies: Asahi Eiga and Nichiei.³⁴



Figure 2. Advertisement for Min-ei’s July 1947 program, in *Kokusai* (August 1946). Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries.

The key person to connect Min-ei with the Japanese film industry was Kim Sun-myung, a former employee of the Japanese studio Tōhō. Kim actively set up workshops given by Japanese technicians to train Korean staff, in addition to supplying film equipment purchased through his Japanese contacts. In 1948, Kim was arrested for attempting to “smuggle” film equipment into North Korea.³⁵ For Kim, collaborating with Japanese technicians ultimately did not contradict the imperative to found an independent Korean cinema in Seoul (and later Pyongyang as the locus of leftist Korean politics shifted). Among the Japanese technicians Kim recruited to teach Koreans was the accomplished cinematographer, Miyajima Yoshio—renowned not only for his collaboration with top-tier directors including Kobayashi Masaki, Oshima Nagisa, and Fukasaku Kinji, but also for his leftist politics symbolized by the documentary *Chonrima* (1964), which he directed as a paean to the rapid development of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.³⁶ Kim remained an active leader of the leftist Korean film movement beyond the Occupation era. After serving two-and-a-half years for his

attempted “smuggling” of film equipment, he oversaw the foundation of the Zainichi Chōsenjin Eigajin Shūdan (Zainichi Korean Filmmakers Cooperative, 1953-1955), and laid the foundation for the present day Chongryon Film Studio—a studio best known for the production of educational materials used in Korean schools run by the pro-Pyongyang organization Chongryon (General Association of Korean Residents in Japan). Sometime in the 1960s, Kim “repatriated” to North Korea, his adopted ideological homeland.³⁷

While the imperative to create an independent Korean cinema informed much of Choryon and Min-ei’s activities, the political goal alone cannot explain the operation of producing and exhibiting films. Especially in the first few years of Liberation, the political environment surrounding Koreans in Japan was dynamic and fluid. Choryon was initially founded as a trans-ideological organization that represented many smaller Korean organizations that had sprung up across postwar Japan. Choryon’s primary function was to negotiate with the Japanese government and the U.S. Occupation on critical issues such as the protection of assets and rights of the Koreans who chose to stay in Japan, and the logistics of repatriation for those who chose to leave.³⁸ But the trans-ideological alliance that Choryon envisioned at the outset was difficult to sustain. Within a few months of Choryon’s founding, right-leaning nationalists defected to form rival organizations such as Kensei (Youth League to Expedite the Foundation of Korea, established on November 16, 1945) and Kendō (The League for the Establishment of a New Korea, established on January 20, 1946). Companies and organizations such as Chōsen Kokusai Bunka Renmei (Korean Culture League), Kokusai Eiga (International Film), and Chōsen Eiga Kyōkai (Korean Film Association) that were sympathetic to the right-leaning nationalists and anarchists also sought to produce and exhibit films.

Two of these right-leaning companies sought to penetrate the Japanese film business as providers of short films. Kokusai Eiga sought to distribute a series of fiction films through Shōchiku. The series was to have historical themes, with the first episode planned as a biopic on Park Yeol. Park was the Korean anarchist leader who had served twenty-two years in prison for an alleged plot to assassinate the then Crown Prince Hirohito. Upon his release in postwar Japan, he quickly became the leader of right-leaning Korean nationalists. Despite Kokusai's reputation as a for-profit enterprise, the vision of screening a story about Park Yeol in a Japanese cinema echoes Min-ei's plan to screen *Tragedy of Japan*. Another right-leaning organization, Chōsen Eiga Kyōkai, also sought mainstream distribution of its films—topical documentary shorts featuring patriotic topics such as Park Yeol's speeches, and the repatriation of the Korean resistance fighter Lee Bong-chang's remains to Seoul—through the Japanese *bunka eiga* producer, Riken Eiga.

Besides the divisions between ideologically opposed groups, there were tensions within groups. At the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in 2005, the film collector and researcher, Yasui Yoshio, showcased an unidentified film titled *Liberation News* that was credited to Min-ei. Despite the title, the film must have differed from the famous left-leaning series of the same name that was produced by the leftist company Chosun Yeonghwa in Seoul, for the news items covered in the mysterious film were too supportive of U.S. rule of sub-38 parallel Korea for it to have been a newsreel of the leftist company. Judging from the splices found on the film and the old labels attached to the canister, Yasui speculates that the title "Liberation News" and the credit "Produced by Minjung Yeonghwa Co., Ltd.," was spliced onto the main body of the film, which came from newsreels produced by the Japanese company Jiyū Eigasha.³⁹ The address on the canister—Fuse,

Osaka—also hints at the possibility that a Min-ei subsidiary named Min-ei 16mm Eigasha was involved in fusing the two titles. This clandestine operation appeared to have taken place beneath SCAP's radar, since CCD's "Special Report" on Min-ei, dated February 8, 1947, does not mention the incident even though it contains a detailed record of the issues of *Liberation News* Min-ei imported and distributed in Japan.⁴⁰ While the exact circumstances in which the film was altered remain a mystery, this story illustrates the important role re-editing played in the activities of Korean film companies in Occupation-era Japan, and that the sources for the re-edited films were not always Japanese titles.

A Cinema for "Third-Country People"

The rhetoric of "Third-Country People" (*Sangokujin*) haunts any discussion of Koreans in postwar Japan, including the study of their relationship to film. As David Conde summarized in an article published in 1947, following his deposal from the CIE, "a nationwide anti-Korean campaign emerged in Japan" from around the time of the May Day Protest of 1946, in which Koreans took a visible part. The stereotype of "Third-Country People"—namely, former colonial subjects from Korea and Taiwan—was of peddlers and thugs that thrived in the black market (*yamiichi*). Shocked by the presence of emboldened and increasingly assertive former colonial subjects, the Japanese derisively blamed them for "being brave today after having cowered in fright during the war," in Conde's words.⁴¹ The expression "Third-Country People" succinctly captures the ambivalent and indeterminate position the newly liberated Koreans occupied in postwar Japan. They were subjected to a two-sided treatment by SCAP, which recognized former colonial subjects from Taiwan and Korea as neither citizens of the Allies nor the Japanese. Despite its appearance, this was not a measure of exclusion, but rather an attempt to include the former colonial subjects in SCAP's

jurisdiction. As “liberated peoples,” Koreans and Taiwanese were doubly subjected to the controlling gaze, for they were at once “alien,” for the purpose of immigration control, and “Japanese” for purposes of policing and judicial processes (including war crimes trials).⁴²

The distorted stereotype of “Third-Country People” casts a dark shadow on the scholarship of Occupation-era cinema where Koreans only gain visibility as disruptive forces rather than as participants of film culture. For instance, Tanaka Jun’ichirō’s anthology only briefly mentions the presence of “pro-Pyongyang Korean activists” among members of various unions who gathered in Tōhō’s lot during the studio’s major strike in 1948. It is significant that the only reference to Koreans in Tanaka’s survey of Occupation-era film history should be the Tōhō strike, an incident that symbolized the disruption of film production, the strike was famously terminated when SCAP directly intervened by mobilizing tanks and airplanes of the U.S. Eighth Army.⁴³ In other narratives, Koreans are explicitly characterized as foreign elements that do not belong to the sphere of Japanese cinema. In one of the earlier accounts of Occupation-era cinema, written in 1956, a former CIE employee named Murao Kaoru recounts an incident, from “the time when Koreans were swaggering all around Japan,” in which a Korean youth visited the CIE and argued that Koreans, as liberated subjects, should have free access to cinemas in Japan. Murao’s story ends with CIE Chief David Conde categorically refusing the request, stating “we are not making Japanese films for Koreans.”⁴⁴ Murao’s language buys into the bigoted stereotype of “Third-Country People” in which Koreans and Taiwanese are seen as rogues who disrupt the civil order by claiming immunity from Japanese law. This is a stereotype that has been reinforced in popular culture, notably in the image of the unruly Korean peddlers and gangs in the black markets (*yamiichi*) depicted in Yakuza films in the 1960s and the 1970s.⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the stigma attached to the label of “Third-Country People,” there is merit in taking its rhetoric seriously in order to understand the legal and discursive ambiguity of Koreans in Occupation-era Japan. It was this ambiguity that informed the idiosyncrasy of their film movement, which was neither an autonomous cultural movement, independent of situations in Japan, nor a subsection of the Japanese film industry. As in the black markets, where military helmets were repurposed as pots and pans, the crux of the Korean film movement was the inventive effort to re-use existing films for new purposes. Reversing Murao’s claim that Japanese films were not made for Koreans, we could argue that what Korean film companies did was to make existing films meaningful for them regardless of the original contexts of production. Take the screening of the French film *Mayerling* (dir. Anatole Litvak, 1936), which was organized by Chōsen Bunka Renmei on April 29, 1947 (Fig 3).⁴⁶ *Mayerling* was among the foreign films that were initially banned under the wartime Film Law, but were later screened in postwar Japan. Shōchiku had already shown *Mayerling* in late 1946, half a year prior to Chōsen Bunka Renmei’s screening.⁴⁷ This was, thus, a second re-release of the French film that presumably used the same print.



Figure 3. Advertisement for *Mayerling* (1936), organized by Chōsen Bunka Renmei (here listed as Chōsen Kokusai Bunka Renmei), *Yomiuri Shimbun* (November 10, 1946).

In another instance, a newspaper advertisement from January 1947 shows that the Chōsen Eiga Kyōkai (The Korean Film Association) rescreened *Angels on the Streets* (*Ie naki Tenshi*, 1941), a humanist drama made in colonial-era Seoul by the Korean director Choi In-kyu, which was one of the few colonial Korean films widely screened in mainland Japan through Kawakita Nagamasa's Tōwa Shōji (Fig 4). It might at first appear ironic that newly liberated Koreans should organize a screening of a film made in colonial Korea that upheld the war-time ideology of *naisen ittai* ("Japan and Korea as one body"). This ideology is most visible in the film's climactic scene in which the street children pledge loyalty to Imperial Japan.⁴⁸ Despite supporting Japan's colonial ideology, *Angels on the Streets* was one of the few Korean language feature films that were available for postwar Koreans in Japan. Chōsen Eiga Kyōkai integrated the screening of the film into a charity event for

drought victims in southern Korea. Seen in this new context, postwar viewers might have found a contemporary resonance in the film's realist depiction of Korea's homeless children. Instead of seeing the film as a problematic colonial film, perhaps the postwar audience saw it as a story of resilience of the Korean people, an image which would have resonated with their concerns for drought victims. Another colonial-era Korean film *Traveler* (*Nageune*, dir. Lee Gyu-hwan, 1937) was re-screened in Tokyo and toured Japan. The leftist film corporation Shingwang Yeonghwa screened the film, using the equipment for touring exhibitions that the company bought from Min-ei the previous year.⁴⁹ As historian Oh Kyu-sang emphasizes, the re-screening of *Nageune* attests to the strong demand felt among *zainichi* Koreans for Korean-made cultural products in the Korean language.⁵⁰

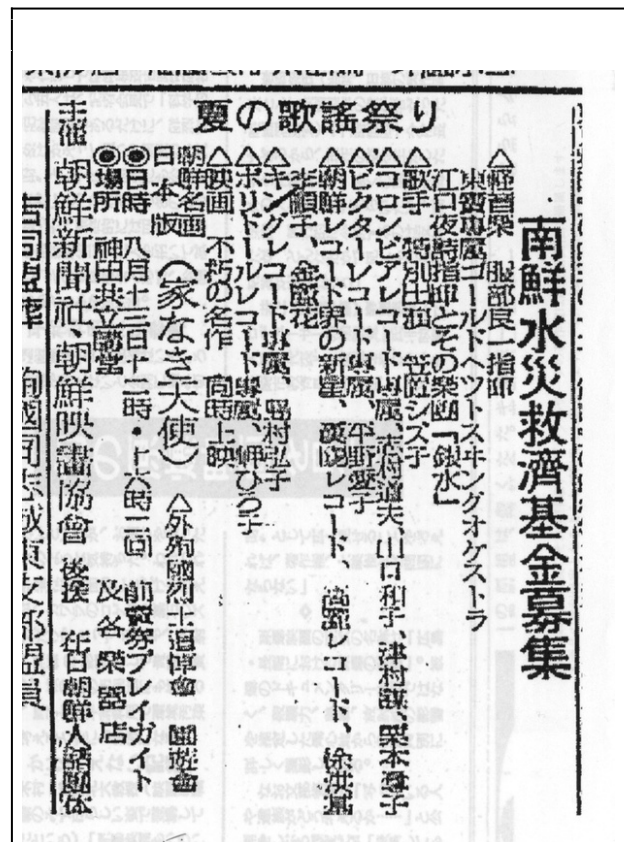


Figure 4. Advertisement for a cultural event organized by Chōsen Shimbun and

Chōsen Eiga Kyōkai which features the screening of *Angels on the Streets* (1941), *Yomiuri Shimbun* (August 9, 1946).

The re-screening of existing films by Korean film companies belonged to a broader trend in Occupation-era culture, which was entangled in the black market ethos of bartering and repurposing. An article in the *Asahi Shimbun* in September 1946 illustrates the magnitude of the problem of unlicensed film prints. The article cites a Japanese government report on 2,510 prints of known foreign film titles, out of which only 286 had proven legitimate ownership, while the majority of the remaining 2,224 prints had been brought from captured regions.⁵¹ The Korean film companies were only minor players in the burgeoning film market which operated on the margins of the black market. This is evident from the fact that most of the advertisements are from 1947, by which time the mainstream Japanese film market had already shifted gears to screening new domestic films and newly imported foreign films.⁵²

In a few instances, Korean film companies sought to play a bigger role than that of a second-run distributor by screening films that were made in Korea after the war. For instance, Ajia Bunka Kyōkai (Asiatic Literary Association), based in Fuse, Osaka, was locked in a long negotiation with the U.S. authorities to gain a permit to screen a Korean feature-length fiction film entitled *A Sea Gull* (*Galmaegi*, dir. Lee Gyu-hwan, Lee Cheol-Hyeok Productions, 1948). The film was donated to the organization by the New Korea Silk Textile Co., Ltd.—based in Seoul—ostensibly as charity.⁵³ Between January 1948 and March 1949, Kim negotiated with the CIE and the representative of USAMGIK (United States Army Military Government in Korea) in Tokyo to circumvent the regular procedure for importing film on the

basis that the revenue from the non-commercial screenings would be used exclusively “for the sake of charity.” Kim proposed using the revenue for a “scholarship fund” for “self-supporting students” and for covering the “operating cost of this Association.”⁵⁴ Writing without having seen the film, Kim describes it as “an educational picture representing poetical justice [*sic*] in atmospheric sentiment with a theme of a juvenile court.”⁵⁵ Even though the CIE appeared hospitable to Kim’s idea of a special permit for charity film screenings aimed at Korean communities across Japan, Kim was unable to accept the definition of “non-commercial,” which for the CIE meant no admission fee.⁵⁶ The film arrived in Tokyo, and was viewed by the CIE staff, but there are no further indications as to whether Kim’s screenings materialized.

Kokusai Eiga: Beyond National Cinema

As a final example, it is important to consider the little studied case of Kokusai Eiga, a company run by a right-leaning anarchist, Kim Geon, whose for-profit pursuits went against Choryon’s vision of a Korean film movement in Occupation-era Japan. While documents about Kokusai Eiga are scarce, there is an illuminating reference to the company in a semi-autobiographical work by the Korean novelist, Jang Hyak-ju (Noguchi Kakuchū). In the novel, Jang’s protagonist encounters a small film company run by a young Korean who flaunts his extravagant pursuits, such as driving expensive cars and patronizing nightclubs.⁵⁷ The Japanese secretary of the company’s president, with whom the protagonist soon starts an extra-marital affair, complains about the company’s shady businesses in producing “erotic films” (*ero eiga*) that are sold to brokers, and trading rationed film stock in the black market. She criticizes the company for only producing films to meet SCAP’s requirement for film rations, before adding that the documentary the

protagonist wrote was an exception. As the narrator later comments, the immediate postwar years presented an extraordinary opportunity for new film companies since “even a nondescript company was allotted the same amount of rationed film stock as major film studios, such as Shōchiku and Tōhō, as long as they provided the Occupation authorities with details regarding the organization and the employees of the company, accompanied by a small application fee.”⁵⁸

Koma Village is advertised alongside “Sports Films”, which Kim presumably distributed, providing a glimpse of the company’s wide-ranging activities, and its interest in breaking into commercial film distribution (Fig 5). While the film itself is now lost, it is easy to locate *Koma Village* in Jang’s continuous efforts to rearticulate the entangled relations between Japan and Korea.⁵⁹ Already in Jang’s infamous pro-Japanese military propaganda novel, *Iwamoto Shiganhei* (1944), Koma Shrine appears as a symbol of a utopian vision of a hybrid Korean-Japanese culture. The protagonist, a colonial Korean elite, visits the shrine before taking up the job of writing a laudatory article about Koreans enlisting in the Imperial Japanese Army. By tracing the Korean influence on the shrine’s architectural features, he reaffirms his belief in the common roots of the Koreans and the Japanese.



Figure 5. Advertisement of Kokusai Supōtsu Eigasha (above, right) and Koma-mura by Chōsen Kokusai Eiga Kabushiki Gaisha (bottom, right) in Kokusai (June 1947). Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries.

Jang briefly collaborated with Kim as a screenwriter. The film that the secretary refers to in the novel is *Koma Village* (*Komamura*, 1947), a documentary produced by Kim Geon’s Kokusai Eiga, about a settlement in Saitama Prefecture that is known for its medieval Korean roots. In an advertisement placed in the June 1947 issue of *Kokusai*, the Japanese language magazine founded by Koreans (which has no direct connection to Kokusai Eiga),

In the same issue of *Kokusai*, another intriguing advertisement captures the exploitative orientation of the company (Fig 6, 7). The text announces a Japanese premiere of *Mori no otometachi* (literally, “maidens of the woods”) with a grainy photograph of women in white garments dancing in the field. The printed text below the photograph opens with the exclamation “semi-nude women!” (*hanra no josei*) before proceeding to qualify the meretricious statement with the verbose explanation of the artistic intentions that underline the exhibition of nudity in the film. Typical of the language used for film promotion, the text includes grandiose claims such as, “The image of birds gliding over the tranquil face of a lake is enough to move a poet and open the door to the art of Japan’s tomorrow” and “*Mori no otometachi* is an imaginative poem dedicated to the heavens.”⁶⁰ The advertisement offers us enough clues to place the film in the category of the “kisses and nudity” films that Choryon’s almanac criticized as a rampant regressive trend that tainted Japanese postwar cinema.⁶¹ But it also raises multiple questions regarding the origin of the

presumably foreign film, the context of the film's showing (if it ever was screened), and the roles played by the company's president Kim Geon and the novelist Jang Hyuk-ju, who are credited for artistically striving to "liberate the secrets of nature and the maidens" to the public.

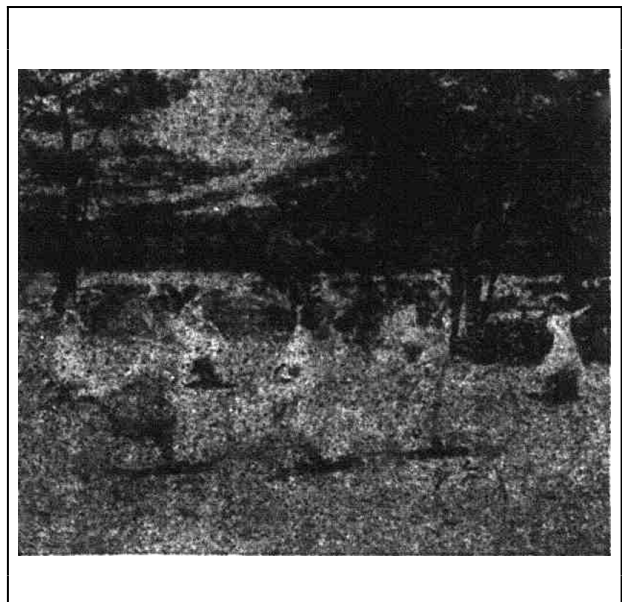
Despite various hints, it is difficult to conclusively identify of *Mori no otometachi*. But Kokusai Eiga's advertisement again directs our attention to the lively economy of second-run screenings in Occupation-era Japan and the opportunities it opened up for Korean start-up film companies. In light of the large stock of foreign titles "captured" from enemy territories during WWII, we cannot rule out the possibility that Kokusai Eiga had obtained a print that was smuggled into Japan from the British territories of Hong Kong and Burma, or from the Dutch East Indies.



Figure 6. Advertisement for *Mori no otometachi* by Kokusai Eiga Kabushiki Gaisha in *Kokusai* (August 1946). Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries.

Kokusai Eiga's alleged practice of trading off rationed film stock in the black market suggests that not all Korean film companies in Occupation-era Japan were driven by the lofty goal of founding a Korean national cinema. But despite its obvious profit-driven orientation, Kokusai Eiga was also an underdog in postwar Japanese cinema that sought to take advantage of the unique possibilities opened up by U.S. censorship and rationing. Kim's episode is a stark reminder that much of the activities of the Korean film companies in Occupation-era Japan took place in a grey area—a discursive *yamiichi*—that existed outside the conventional steps of production, distribution, and exhibition that define the film industry.⁶³

The title *Mori no otometachi* was also the Japanese title given to the American silent film *Back to the Woods* (dir. George Irving, 1918), which was shown at the Teikoku-kan in Tokyo from May 1, 1920. Is it possible that Kokusai Eiga obtained the print of *Back to the Woods* that was screened in 1920 in the same way that Chōsen Bunka Renmei got hold of the French film *Mayerling*? Given the absence of the 5-reel feature-length film today, it is difficult to compare the film to the description offered in Kokusai Eiga's advertisement. Starring Mabel Normand, Irving's *Back to the Woods* was a comedy, rather than an "imaginative poem dedicated to the heavens," and from the plot synopsis appears unlikely to contain nudity.⁶²



Clarification of image in the advertisement for *Mori no otometachi* by Kokusai Eiga Kabushiki Gaisha. Kokusai (August 1946). Gordon W. Prange Collection, University of Maryland Libraries.

Conclusion

Through studying the little-known history of Korean film companies in Occupied Japan, we find ourselves implicated in their inventive strategy of making the most of the limited materials. Like the organizers of non-theatrical screenings of second-run films that reinvented the value of colonial-era Korean films such as *Angels on the Streets* and *Nageune* in the new postwar context, our tasks as film historians involve reinventing SCAP's documents as an archive that illuminates the little-known history of Koreans' film-related activities. Like any of the other film companies active in U.S. Occupied Japan, Korean film companies were subject to SCAP's oversight and censorship, and like others, they too strategically negotiated their positions vis-à-vis SCAP's directives.

Through the "phantom document" of Min-ei's aborted screening of *Tragedy of Japan*, I have stressed the ways in which Koreans were part of the struggle between U.S. censors and Japanese film producers. Min-ei's involvement in the incident surrounding the U.S. ban on *Tragedy of Japan* casts a critical light, first, on Occupation-era media history in general and, second, on the nature of the Koreans' film-related activities in particular. While the Occupation-era film history has typically been imagined as "unique historical circumstances [in which] the two nations [i.e., Japan and the US] met (and often locked horns) on the field of cinema," my study of the vigorous activities of Korean film companies highlights the complex picture of a transnational mediascape that involved former colonial subjects who occupied

an ambiguous position in postwar Japan as "Third-Country People." Similarly, it is important to note that the Korean film movement in this period was built on the Koreans' collaboration with the Japanese film companies and Japanese individuals, even though its ostensible goal was to construct an independent Korean national cinema.

In Choryon's almanac, which summarized the cultural activities of Koreans in Japan between 1945 and 1948, the significance of the film movement of Koreans in Japan is emphasized by the productivity of Min-ei and its rivals that made ten documentary films and twenty newsreel issues in the span of just three years.⁶⁴ But it is difficult, and unnecessary, to assess the film movement of Koreans in Occupation-era Japan on the basis of the number of films they produced. The idiosyncratic conditions of the era directly informed the forms of film-related activities Koreans were able to undertake. Ultimately, Korean film companies in Occupation-era Japan were only able to make short non-fiction films and feature-length films that were re-edited from existing Japanese titles. By accepting material scarcity as both the condition for these film companies and for modern-day scholars studying their history, I believe we can appreciate the inventiveness rather than the productivity of the Korean film companies; their achievement lies in making films meaningful not only for the Korean audience at that time, but also for historians of Koreans in Japan today.

Shota Tsai Ogawa is a Visiting Assistant Professor at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research focuses on the figuration of Zainichi Koreans (Koreans in Japan) at the intersection of film texts and theory. This study was supported by the Short-term Research Grant from the AAS Northeast Asia Council, and completed with the generous help of colleagues Iskander Zulkernain and Sohl Lee as well as productive comments from

reviewers.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shota Ogawa, sogawa@uncc.edu.

Recommended citation: *Shota Tsai Ogawa, "Korean Film Companies in U.S. Occupied Japan: Imagining an Independent Korean Cinema in a Transnational Mediascape", The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 12, Issue 38, No. 3, September 22, 2014.*

Notes

¹ From Choryon's cultural almanac compiled in 1949. Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, *Zainichi Chōsen bunka nenkan* (Tokyo: Chōsen Bungeisha, 1949), 60. For the summary of the almanac in Japanese, see Oh Kyu-sang, "Eiga tsūshin jigyōhen" in *Dokumentō Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei: 1945-1949* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009), 261-262.

² The Prange Collection at University of Maryland is a unique archive contains a near complete record of the paper-based media published between 1945 and 1949. Sakaguchi Eiko, "Senryōki (1945-1949) GHQ no shuppanbutsu ken'etsu," *Intelligence: 20-seiki media kenkyū jōkan* 12 (March 2012): 6-13.

³ My study owes much to Kobayashi Somei's groundbreaking discovery of the hundreds of magazine and newspaper titles published by Koreans in Occupied Japan. The majority of materials Kobayashi found were in the Japanese language and were aimed at a general Japanese readership. For an overview of his study, see Kobayashi Sōmei, *Zainichi Chōsenjin no media kūkan: GHQ senryōki ni okeru shinbun hakkō to sono dainamizumu* (Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2007). For an annotated list of magazines published by Koreans, see Kobayashi Sōmei, "GHQ senryōki ni okeru zainichi Chōsenjin zasshi no shoshiteki kenkyū," *Jinbungaku kenkyū shōhō* 43 (March 2010): 101-111.

⁴ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 180.

⁵ The media scholar Katō Tetsurō suggests that, despite SCAP's press code, there were ample instances in which publications used the banned expression "Daitōa Sensō." "Senryōka-Nihon no jōhō uchū to 'genbaku' 'genshiryoku'," *Intelligence: 20-seiki media kenkyū jōkan* 12 (March 2012): 14-27.

⁶ The film included an infamous dissolve towards the end that showed an image of Hirohito in military uniform morphing into the postwar image of the emperor in his civilian clothes. But the story behind the ban was complicated. Even within the CCD (Civil Censorship Detachment), there were voices that supported the film and its critique of the wartime military-industrial complex and the imperial system. For instance, in a memo from the CCD to the CIS (Civil Intelligence Section), dated August 9, 1946, an American staffer defends the film, noting that the film did not "indulge in violent criticism, vituperation, or ridicule of the Emperor," and cautioning that a ban would not only set a bad precedent, but also necessitate "a change in policy governing not only films, but all public media which are censored." See Civil Censorship Detachment, "CCD to CIE Cinema: *Tragedy of Japan*," in Box 8520, Folder 2, in *SCAP Records*, NARA.

⁷ Cited in Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 138.

⁸ On September 20, 1945, film company executives were summoned by the IDS (Information Dissemination Section), a section that was on the same day reorganized into the CIE (Civil Information and Education Section), and were instructed to produce films that followed the principles of the Potsdam Declaration. For a full account of the values SCAP demanded the Japanese film companies

promote, see Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo*, 37-41.

⁹ With the “Memorandum Concerning Elimination of Japanese Government Control of the Motion Picture Industry,” issued on October 16, 1945, Japanese film producers and exhibitors were freed from Japanese government censorship, effectively annulling not only the 1939 *Eiga-hō* (Film Law), but also all preceding laws going back to the *Katsudō eiga ‘firumu’ ken’etsu kisoku* (Motion Picture Film Censorship Act) issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs in 1925. With the formal annulling of the Film Law on December 26, 1945, theaters were allowed to screen Japanese and foreign films that had been previously banned. At the same time, however, SCAP imposed a new set of restrictions. Already on November 17, 1945, the CIE issued the “Memorandum Concerning Elimination of Undemocratic Motion Pictures” which listed the 236 titles of films that were to be banned for supporting militarism and feudalism. See Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo*, 39-41; Makino Mamoru, *Nihon eiga ken’etsushi* (Tokyo: Pandora, 2003), 18.

¹⁰ The double censorship system continued until April 19, 1949, when the task was handed over to the Film Classification and Rating Committee (commonly known as Eirin) in a system based on the American Motion Picture Production Code. Makino, *Nihon eiga ken’etsushi*, 19.

¹¹ Citing Mark Gayn’s article on the issue in *The Chicago Sun*, Iwasaki speculates that Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru had personally lobbied SCAP to stop the release of the film which he found problematic. Iwasaki Akira, *Eiga ni miru sengo sesōshi* (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1973), 51.

¹² Abé Mark Nornes, “The Body at the Center: The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” in *Hibakusha Cinema*:

Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film, ed. Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 121.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁴ A good example of the mythological postwar narrative of Japanese defiance of US censorship is the television documentary: *Ima zenbō ga akirakani: Bosshū sareta genbaku firumu* (*Now All Is Revealed: Confiscated Atomic Bomb Film*), TV Tokyo Documentary, August 4, 1990.

¹⁵ In addition to the tacit alliance the Japanese filmmakers formed with McGovern in defying the U.S. government’s suppression of the film, Nornes presents another instance that complicates the dichotomy of the Japanese and the Americans. Through a close reading of the film and the criticism it garnered for its “inhumane” depiction of the destruction, Nornes suggests a disturbing ideological identification of the Nichiei filmmakers with the developers of the A-bomb. Eager to understand the logic of the bomb, the film methodically documents the destruction, starting from sites 15 kilometers away and zooming in on the epicenter, boasting of the technological prowess of the team to scientifically document the destruction. Nornes, “The Body at the Center,” 139-142.

¹⁶ *Tragedy of Japan* carried a symbolic significance for Iwasaki who was conscious of Nichiei’s complicity with the wartime military regime in disseminating false information about the war through the newsreel series *Nippon News*. The focus of the compilation film was, therefore, the exposition of the deceptions in the newsreel footage it re-edited. Iwasaki, *Eiga ni miru sengo sesōshi*, 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-60.

¹⁸ *Yomiuri Shimbun* (August 11, 1946).

¹⁹ See an advertisement in *Asahi Shimbun*

(December 22, 1945).

²⁰ The ban on *This Year* became another point of contention between the CIE and the CCD. Nichiei's producer Kanō Ryūichi took a bold decision to write to the Nisei official at the CCD, A. K. Mori, to protest the instruction to delete 12 scenes in *This Year* (also referred to as *This Past One Year* in the letter), reasoning that the May Day celebration of 1946, which was ordered for deletion, was indispensable for the film. The CIE official Leonard Osrow supported Kanō's argument and critiqued CCD's suppression. An internal memo reports that Osrow likened *This Year* to *Tragedy of Japan*: "I don't care about the 'Tragedy of Japan' [...] That was Conde's film. This one is mine." See Civil Censorship Detachment, "Letter from Nippon Eiga Sha, August 22, 1946" and "Memo for Records 'This Year-1945-1946' 4 reel film produced by Nippon Eiga Sha," in Box 8520, Folder 2, in *SCAP Records*, NARA.

²¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 121.

²² Repatriation was made difficult by the scarcity of vessels, in addition to a SCAP regulation that limited the value of properties Koreans could take out of Japan to 1,000 yen for fear of destabilizing the already precarious economy in Japan. Although ameliorated in January 1946, the strict regulations and the unfavorable rumors about the chaotic situations in Korea contributed to the decision of some 600,000 Koreans to postpone their repatriation. See Changsoo Lee, "The Period of Repatriation, 1945-1949," in *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation*, eds. Changsoo Lee and George Vos (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1981), 58-61.

²³ For instance, John Lie reads contemporary feature films in the rubric of politics of representation. "Zainichi Recognitions: Japan's Korean Residents' Ideology and Its Discontents," *Japan Focus* (November 2008),

<http://japanfocus.org/John-Lie/2939> (accessed August 22, 2014). For a more detailed study of the representation of *zainichi* Koreans in Japanese cinema in Japanese-language scholarship, see Yang In-sil, "Sengo Nihon eiga ni okeru 'zainichi'-zō o meguru gensetsu kūkan," *Zainichi Chōsenjin kenkyū* 33 (October 2003): 77-95 and Monma Takashi, "Nihon eiga no naka no zainichi-zō," in *Tsuki wa dotchi ni deteiru o meguru nisan no hanashi*, ed. Lee Bong-ou (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1994), 213-230.

²⁴ *Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, Zainichi Chosen bunka nenkan*, 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Oh, *Dokyumento Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei*, 165.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 261-262.

³⁰ See Imamura Taihei's summary of the penetration of mobile projection units organized by news companies and film studios including *Tōnichi Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Tōhō*. Imamura Taihei, *Sensō to eiga* (Tokyo: Daiichi Geibunsha, 1942), 61-64.

³¹ Tanaka Jun'ichirō, *Nihon eiga hattatsushi*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1976), 143-146.

³² SCAP documents record Ishimoto's official title as the assistant to Ri San-yo, Min-ei's Production Bureau Chief, but there is no mention of the exact nature of his work at Min-ei. Civil Censorship Detachment, "Special Report: Minshu Eiga Kabushiki Gaisha (People's Motion Picture Co. Ltd.)," in Box 8617, Folder 34, in *SCAP Records*, NARA.

³³ Film production in Indonesia and the

Southern Pacific regions was masterminded by the Cabinet Information Bureau (*Naikaku Jōhōkyoku*), which reasoned that “for places in the Southern territories with undeveloped culture, the impact of visual presentation, as in motion picture, can be particularly significant.” Such a statement betrays a utilitarian view of film as an ideal vehicle for the masses and echoes the logic of Choryon. For information on Ishimoto in Indonesia, see Okada Hidenori, “Kikuchi Shū: Jawa jidai o kataru,” in *Kikuchi Shū no kiroku*, ed. Makino Mamoru (unpublished commemorative volume, 2002). For information on Japanese film production in Indonesia, see Kurasawa Aiko, “Propaganda Media on Java under the Japanese 1942-1945,” *Indonesia* 44 (1987): 59-116.

³⁴ Choryon’s almanac published in 1949 lists four other Japanese names (Nakamura Tadashi, Nakamura Toshirō, Kurahara Nobuo, and Nakayama Yoshio) as those hired by Min-ei for directing, camera, and screenplays. Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, *Zainichi Chōsen bunka nenkan*, 80.

³⁵ Shimada Kō, “Kim Sun-myung: Gambling on a Homeland Film Studio,” in *Borders Within: What It Means to Live in Japan*, eds. Yasui Yoshio and Tanaka Noriko (Tokyo: Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival Tokyo Office, 2005), 18; Oh, “Eiga tsūshin jigyōhen,” 266.

³⁶ Shimada, “Kim Sun-myung,” 18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ In the first general conference held on October 15-16, 1945, Choryon members adopted the following six points as the objectives of the organization: to contribute to the founding of Independent Korea; to help maintain world peace; to provide stable livelihood for Koreans who stayed in Japan; to facilitate orderly repatriation for Koreans who wished to leave Japan; to foster good relations with the Japanese; and to unite the Koreans

under shared goals. Oh, “Eiga tsūshin jigyōhen,” 14.

³⁹ Yasui Yoshio, “An Investigation Starting from a Film Can Label,” in Yasui and Tanaka, eds., *Borders Within: What It Means to Live in Japan*, 20.

⁴⁰ CCD’s report describes Choryon a “Communist organization [...] composed mainly of members of the Japanese communist Party,” and meticulously records the names of companies and individuals that hold the stakes in Min-ei. Given such scrutiny, the absence of the mention of the manipulation of *Liberation News* in the report presumably indicates their ignorance of the incident. Civil Censorship Detachment, “Special Report: Minshu Eiga Kabushiki Gaisha (People’s Motion Picture Co. Ltd.),” in Box 8617, Folder 34, in *SCAP Records*, NARA.

⁴¹ David Conde, “The Korean Minority in Japan,” *Far Eastern Review* (February 26, 1947): 41.

⁴² The two-sided treatment originates in Washington’s directory issued on November 10, 1945, which stipulated that former colonial subjects should be treated as liberated subjects except under special circumstances, which enabled SCAP to treat them as both Japanese and alien during the Occupation. See Kim Taegi, *Sengo Nihon seiji to zainichi Chōsenjin mondai: SCAP no tai zainichi Chōsenjin seisaku 1945-1952-nen* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1997), 9.

⁴³ “Airplanes in the sky, tanks on the ground, only the battle ship was missing,” was the famous line summarizing the heavy handed way in which SCAP broke the third and final phase of the Tōhō Strikes that lasted between 1946 and 1948. See Tanaka *Nihon eiga hattatsushi*, 246.

⁴⁴ Murao Kaoru, “Makkāsā no tai-Nichi eiga gyōsei,” *Kinema Junpō* 153 (August 1956), 91-95. While we might find the Korean

student's demand in Murao's anecdote incredulous, it might not have been as ridiculous to demand free admission for the now-liberated Koreans at a time when the admission fee itself was politicized within mainstream leftist politics. For instance, the studios and the unions clashed with the government in 1947 regarding the proposed hike in the admission tax, an additional tax on each ticket that the unions criticized as the legacy of the wartime Film Law. See the pro-union newsletter by Jiyū Ēigajin Shūdan (Collective of Free Filmmakers), *Sukurin Daijesuto* (May 28, 1948).

⁴⁵ The image of the Korean thug in black markets became a staple in yakuza film. In *New Bad Reputation* (*Shin Akumyō*, dir. Mori Kazuo, 1962) and *Battles Without Honor and Humanity* (*Jingi Naki Tatakai*, dir. Fukasaku Kinji, 1973), Koreans are unruly foreigners who terrorize Japanese citizens while the Japanese yakuza assume the role of the crusaders who restore order by eliminating the foreigners. Yang In-sil, "The Representation of 'Zainichi' in Yakuza Films," *Ritsumeikan sangyō shakai ronshū* 38. 2 (September 2002): 113-131; Kokubo Satoshi, "Nihon eiga ni kakareta Chōsen," *Kiroku* 161 (1992): 44-48.

⁴⁶ The screening was advertised on mainstream Japanese media. According to the advertisement on *Yomiuri Shimbun* (August 9, 1946), the site of the screening was the public hall Hibiya Kōkaidō, a symbolic location where Choryon was founded. On February 7, 1947, Chōsen Kokusai Bunka Renmei had already used the venue for a concert featuring Japanese singers performing arias from classical opera including *Madame Butterfly*, *Carmen*, and *Il Pagliacci*. See the advertisements in *Yomiuri Shimbun* (January 28, 1947 and April 27, 1947).

⁴⁷ Shōchiku premiered *Mayerling* on November 19, 1946. See the advertisement featured on *Asahi Shimbun* (November 20, 1946).

⁴⁸ While the film tacitly supported the wartime ideology of *naisen ittai*, the CCD presumably found the film acceptable for public screening. For the discussion of *Angles on the Street* as a work shaped by the colonial-era Korean Film Law, see Brian Yecies and Ae-Gyung Shim, *Korea's Occupied Cinemas, 1893-1948* (London: Routledge, 2011), 120.

⁴⁹ Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, *Zainichi Chōsen bunka nenkan*, 81.

⁵⁰ Oh, "Eiga tsūshin jigyōhen," 266.

⁵¹ "Gaikoku eiga no 9-wari wa fuhō shoji," *Asahi Shimbun* (September 21, 1946).

⁵² The bio-pic *Madame Curie* (dir. Mervin LeRoy, 1943), which opened in February 1946, was the first American film imported into Japan after the war. Imports from other countries reopened in December 1946. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga hattatsushi*, 274-289.

⁵³ The story of Ajia Bunka Kyōkai (alternatively referred to as Ajia Bungeikai, and translated as "Asia Literary Association" by the SCAP censors) is well documented thanks to the numerous letters Kim sent to the CIE and USAMGIK. "Korean Film Data," Box 5307, Folder 2, in *SCAP Records*, NARA.

⁵⁴ See Kim's letter to the Central Foreign Affairs Office of USAMGIK: "Application for the Authorization to Import a Korean Motion Picture Film to Japan" (July 20, 1948), in *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ The CIE was largely supportive of Kim's plan to use the film for the education of Korean pupils and youths to encourage the study of Korean and "the literary arts of the native country," but it could not allow an admission charge without infringing on the jurisdiction of the Central Motion Picture Exchange that administered imports of foreign films. Tanaka, *Nihon eiga hattatsushi*, 274.

⁵⁷ Noguchi Kakuchū, *Henreki no Chōsho* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1954), 245. The novel *Henreki no Chōsho* was a turning point in Jang's career, published soon after he changed his pen name from the Korean Jang Hyak-ju to the Japanese Noguchi Kakuchū, adopting the last name of his Japanese wife and the Japanese reading of his first name. In this article, I will use Jang Hyak-ju for the sake of consistency.

⁵⁸ Translation mine. Ibid, 250.

⁵⁹ The Korean settlement in Koma is said to originate in the arrival of the exiles of the Goguryou Kingdom (spanning the northern region of North Korea and Northeast China) who migrated to Japan following their defeat by the rival kingdom Silla in the late 7th century. After WWII, Jang moved to Hidaka, a town adjacent to Koma. For Jang's biography, see Yutaka Shirakawa, "Jang Hyak-ju Kenkyu" *Shokuminchiki Chōsen no sakka to Nihon* (Okayama: Daigaku Kyōiku Shuppan, 1995), 112-222.

⁶⁰ My translation of the text used in Kokusai Eiga's advertisement. *Kokusai* (August 1946), 97.

⁶¹ Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, *Zainichi Chōsen bunka nenkan*, 25.

⁶² For a plot summary of *Back to the Woods*, see Jolo, "Back to the Woods," *Variety* 51 (August 1918), 37-38.

⁶³ In an introductory essay to a volume within a new anthology of Japanese film studies, Yoshimi Shun'ya chooses the Japanese word "kōgyō" ("promotion") to denote the complex intersubjective processes through which film is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Rather than isolating each of the processes into a discrete object of analysis—the directors, the studios, and the spectators—Yoshimi proposes to look at a network of individuals and groups that emerge in the process of realizing film projects, for instance, labor unions that raise funding for independent film production and civil groups that organize out-of-theater screenings. "Miruhito, tsukuruhito, kakerushito," in *Nihon eiga wa ikite iru*, vol. 3, eds. Kurosawa Kiyoshi et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), 1-3.

⁶⁴ The almanac stresses the productivity of Korean film companies in Japan by comparing it to the situation in mainland Korea. The almanac estimates the number of films produced in the forty years of Korean cinema at 150. Zainichi Chōsenjin Renmei, *Zainichi Chōsen bunka nenkan*, 60.