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# **East Asia in the World**

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An Introduction

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## New Media and New Technology in Colonial Korea: Radio

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JINA E. KIM

One of the dominant images of South Korea in the twenty-first century is that of a country that is technologically savvy, a hyper-wired place where almost every household has access to the world through high-speed, broadband Internet connectivity. South Korea has become a global leader in the information technology (IT) industry, certainly, as evidenced by both mobile phone production and usage. Smart phones made by Samsung and LG—both Korean companies—take up a large market share around the world, successfully competing side by side with Apple's iPhone. What's more, as the country plans for the 5G era in 2014, the number of mobile phones long ago surpassed the country's population of 48 million, meaning many people have more than one cell phone.

Researchers and journalists writing about South Korea's meteoric rise as an economic and technological power in the world have often cited South Korea's IT industry as a measurement for the country's rapidly globalizing society. It is typical to find scenes in Korea, especially in the large metropolitan areas like Seoul, where almost everyone is glued to their mobile screens, engaged in a vast range of activities—from streaming videos and listening to music to social networking, shopping, reading, and playing online games. These new mobile media and the technologies associated with them are altering the way South Koreans, and individuals across the globe, experience and interact with the world and people in the early twenty-first century.

Koreans encountered similar experiences of globalization with new media and new technology in the early twentieth century when they were introduced to radio. While it is obvious that the early twentieth-century radio and the early twenty-first century mobile media are not entirely equivalent, the ways they work to bring what is distant into our intimate spaces by collapsing time and space must have created similar experiences of wonder and a sense of possibilities, as well as confusion and danger. In this case study, I examine one of the new media technologies of the early modern period, the radio, to see how Koreans experienced it and what new possibilities it opened up. At the same time, since radio was part of the material culture of Japanese colonialism from the time it was introduced in Korea, I will

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also discuss how Koreans used the radio on their own terms despite colonial controls and restrictions.

### A Satirical Representation of the Radio in a Modern Korean Novel

In Ch'ae Man-sik's satirical novel *Peace Under Heaven* (1938), the main character, Master Yun, appropriately nicknamed Toad for his large stature and unseemly appearance, is obsessed with money, status, young girls, his health, the Festival of Great Singers, and the radio. This absentee landlord lives a life of leisure listening to the radio and attending music performances in Gyeongseong (also Kyeongseong; later Seoul), all the while collecting rent from his family's land amassed in the most fertile region of Korea—the Jeolla province located in the southwestern part of the peninsula. Although live performances of traditional Korean ballads from the south are Master Yun's true love and longing, radio broadcasts of these songs are the best substitute, and he listens in religiously:

And so he set up a little radio on the table next to where he slept. To master Yun, this radio with three lights on its face was as precious as gold or jade. The sounds of the south wafted to him from the transmitters in the broadcasting studio. Lying comfortably on quilted cushions, the stem of his long pipe in his mouth, he listened constantly to the sweet music, muttering, "Good!" (Ch'ae 1993, 13)<sup>1</sup>

Despite the extreme pleasure he takes from listening to the radio, Master Yun is completely ignorant when it comes to understanding what the radio is and how it functions. Taebok, who is entrusted with the responsibility of operating the radio, receives endless tirades from Master Yun whenever his songs are not available. Because Master Yun does not understand that there are radio stations, program arrangements, and on-air and off-air times, he expects a constant flow of southern music to enjoy endlessly. And when his music is not available, he harangues Taebok:

"Law? What the hell is this dogshit about law? ... What goddamn kind of sound is it that comes out fine until last night and then suddenly today is cut off or no reason? That's what I say. Have all *kisaeng* and the other performers dropped dead overnight?" (13–14)

Master Yun's fixation with the radio and his absolute lack of knowledge merge to create a highly comedic narrative in this extraordinarily satirical novel about the changing face of urban culture lived out by a pseudo-petty bourgeoisie in colonial Korea.

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Ch'ae Man-sik is one of the most important and prominent Korean novelists of the early twentieth century. He was born on June 17, 1902, and died from tuberculosis on June 11, 1950. His novel *Peace Under Heaven* (*Taepyeong cheonha*) was serialized in *Jogwang*, one of the most popular variety magazines of the day, from January to September 1938.

A translation by Chun Kyung-ja, from which I quote in this chapter, was published by M. E. Sharpe in 1993 and can be purchased at the publisher's website (<http://www.mesharpe.com/mall/resultsa.asp?Title=Peace+Under+Heaven+%3A+A+Modern+Korean+Novel>). A review of this translation can be found at Korean American Readings (<http://bookoblate.blogspot.com/2008/10/peace-under-heaven-by-chaec-man-sik.html>). In addition, a preview of it can be found online by accessing it on Google Books ([books.google.com](http://books.google.com)) and typing in the title in the "Researching a Topic" box.

Though Ch'ae Man-sik's comical sketch is a fictional depiction of an early twentieth-century Korean's encounter with the radio, this is probably not an inaccurate portrayal of the general population. Although the first formal radio broadcasting in Korea began on February 16, 1927, the Government General of Korea (GGK) began testing it as early as 1924. According to a 1926 article in the popular magazine *Byeolgeongon* (The other heaven and earth), many experienced a similar "confusion" whereby some described their first encounter with the radio as "magic" or "a ghost's trick." Even after formal broadcasting began, many were still perplexed by the seemingly "magical" wireless box that would transmit sound. But as Ch'ae's novel depicts, although many people were still unaware of the detailed technical aspects of the radio, by the 1930s this new medium had become a commonly used technology, and one that Korean people were increasingly relying on for their information and entertainment. It had also become a medium through which an "imagined community" could be constructed. That is, as the political scientist Benedict Anderson theorized in his 1983 book *Imagined Communities*, the radio created a sense of being linked to others with shared experiences and through a common language.

### **The Birth and Development of Radio in Colonial Korea**

The advent of radio broadcasting can be dated to 1897, when Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian inventor, obtained a patent for a radio receiving and transmitting device. By the 1930s, interest in both radio broadcasting and listening surged to unprecedented heights all over the globe, and Korea was not an exception. The radio became not only a viable site for numerous commercial, information, and government activities, but also a major center around which listeners could gather for leisure and entertainment. In the East Asian region, official radio broadcasting in Japan began on March 22, 1925, by the Tokyo Hōsō Kyoku (Tokyo Broadcasting Stations), which later was

incorporated with Osaka (June 1, 1925) and Nagoya Hōsō Kyoku (July 15, 1925) to become the Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK-Japan Broadcasting Corporation) under the call sign JOAK. NHK was and still is a public broadcasting company under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Communication of the Japanese government. Although official radio broadcasting began in 1925 in Japan, wireless communication, namely wireless telegraphy, was being used by the postal system and the military as early as 1897. It was not until the latter half of the Taishō period (1912–1926), however, that wireless telephony (radio) really began its ascendancy through research and development, technology import, and official testing.

For a short history of Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK-Japan Broadcasting Corporation), see the “History” page of the company’s website (<http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/english/about/history.html>).

For Japan, the early twentieth century was also its age of empire. By 1925, Japan’s colonial rule was firmly established in Taiwan (1895), Southern Sakhalin (or Karafuto, 1905), and Korea (1910); Japan also embarked on a swift control over various treaty ports throughout East Asia and Southeast Asia. When the Japanese army invaded Manchuria in 1931 and established the puppet state of Manchukuo, it also came under Japanese occupation. Moreover, Japan occupied, to different degrees, other parts of China, such as Port of Dalian, and maintained its own foreign concession in Shanghai until 1937, when the Japanese military took over the entire city. The Japanese then kept control over Shanghai until Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II in 1945. Japanese occupation also reached deep into the islands on the Pacific South Seas.

In the process of empire-building, Japanese officials faced the crucial task of maintaining an expeditious flow of information and control between its colonies and the metropole. Radio, then commonly called *musen denwa* (無線電話), or a wireless telephone, became one such tool. Not only was the radio seen as a practical technological tool in governance and administration, but Japanese colonial officials also perceived it as an exceedingly effective tool in disseminating Japanese culture and values to its colonized subjects. Through broadcasting educational and news programs in Japanese, the colonizer aspired to bring together the various geographically and culturally scattered locals under the linguistic hegemony of Japan. It also used its various radio programs to advance its cultural assimilation policy. While many scholars have identified Japan’s aggressive imperial assimilation policy (forced name change, prohibition of native language usage, and so forth), initiated in 1937, as part of Japan’s wartime mobilization, the intricate deployment of radio broadcasting and radio programming by the Japanese colonizers, and the even more complicated relationship the colonized had had with the radio, begs one to reconsider the function of radio in a colonial setting. In effect, as the above example from

Ch'ae Man-sik's novel shows, although the radio was a product of colonialism, it was also significantly redefined and reshaped by the colonized users. Thus, as Michael Robinson, writing on broadcasting in colonial Korea rightly points out, Korean colonial radio did construct a culture of its own that in some aspects undermined Japan's original intent (Robinson 1998, 359-60).

### **To Listen or Not to Listen: Radio Dilemmas**

Significantly, the colonized Koreans' construction of their own culture of radio was, in fact, set in motion even before formal radio broadcasting began in February 1927. Print media, such as newspapers and magazines in particular, actively participated in introducing the radio as a new form of civilization to the general population. In the July 23, 1920, edition of the *Chosun ilbo* (*Korea Daily News*), a brief article entitled "New Civilization: Transmission of Music through Wireless Telephone" reported on various radio broadcasting activities taking place in the United States. Interestingly, the *Chosun ilbo*'s first report on the radio preceded the famous first broadcasting by KDKA, a radio station in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 2, 1920. According to George Douglas, KDKA was the first radio station licensed by the U.S. government to operate a broadcasting service on U.S. soil (although other stations had begun regular broadcasting earlier than November 1920). Thus, not only did much broadcasting activity in the United States exist prior to the official establishment of KDKA, but many Koreans also had an interest in radio, as the *Chosun ilbo* article attests, prior to the commencement of testing in their own country. When official testing began in 1924, the number of feature articles in newspapers increased as well, which served as attractive free advertising for the GGK's Ministry of Communications. The coverage also helped increase the sale of newspapers: in addition to featuring articles and pictures about the radio, newspapers printed free admission tickets to the various demonstration events.

One headline read "One of the Most Important Intrigues of Modern Science" (*Chosun ilbo*, December 17, 1924). This article highlighted the importance of understanding modern science and technology, and it urged readers to actively seek knowledge and information from the radio demonstration to be held the next day. Two days later, the same reporter described the scene, in which an enormously successful public demonstration took place. Apparently it was being held in a Seoul public meeting hall where an unexpectedly large crowd had gathered:

The crowd started to congregate around 6 o'clock. There were suited gentlemen and housewives as well as laborers. The elderly were also present. I felt as though Seoul citizens from all sectors of society were gathered there. The crowd that had assembled could not possibly all be accommodated, so the doors had to be closed shut in order to command some order. The meeting hall was so full of people that it was about to burst. (*Chosun ilbo*, December 19, 1924)

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These demonstrations substantially raised the public's interest and curiosity about the marvels of radio, and for some the radio even presented the possibility of "spreading" Korean culture and "sounds of [Korean] language" outside the peninsular boundaries (*Chosun ilbo*, January 12, 1927).

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After two years of testing, Kyeongseong Broadcasting Corporation (or the Korean Broadcasting Company, KBC), under the call sign JODK, began its formal programming on February 16, 1927. The initial broadcasting used a Marconi Q-type one-kilowatt transmitter at 690 KHz, by which the range of transmission was limited to central Seoul, where the station was located, and its near surroundings. The first KBC broadcasting station was located in central Seoul in Jeongdong and was housed in a two-story brick building owned by Yi Wangjik. The station occupied both floors and the basement and was flanked by two towering antennas. Despite the many successful pre-opening demonstrations, however, KBC did not experience a surge of subscriptions to the broadcasts upon its formal establishment. Nor did sales of receivers increase drastically during the initial phase of broadcasting. In the early stages, though the radio generated an enormous level of curiosity, the general public was reluctant to invest in purchasing a receiver and subscribing monthly to listen to the broadcasts. According to the April 20, 1926, edition of *Chosun ilbo*, a radio for private home use (for one person with headphones) cost between 10 and 15 won, and a monthly subscription fee cost two won. The same article lists the price of a crystal radio with a capacity of up to ten listeners (without headphones) to be about 100 won. In 1927 a crystal radio set with antenna was being sold for 6 to 15 won, while a vacuum tube radio went for 40 to 100 won (*Chosun ilbo*, April 21, 1927). Considering that an average monthly wage for a low-ranking office worker in the 1920s and 1930s ranged between 10 and 22 won, these costs were high for most people. Recognizing that the two won registration and monthly subscription fees were too high for Korean listeners, KBC reduced the fee to one won per month in hopes of attracting more subscribers.

Rich landowners like Master Yun in *Peace Under Heaven* were from a new, wealthy class that had the means to purchase a radio for "seventeen wŏn . . . plus one wŏn per month in listening fees" (Ch'ae 1993, 14). With about 100,000 won in capital on deposit in his bank, and annual rent of 10,000 bags of rice (a bag of rice on the average sold for about four won a bag in those days), Master Yun could certainly enjoy listening to the radio in the privacy of his own room, unlike most people, who were likely to have listened in public spaces, such as restaurants, cafes, department stores, train stations, or the streets. These public spaces, however, were also spaces predominantly inhabited by the new bourgeoisie and intelligentsia classes. Hence the radio represented at once a democratizing cultural artifact that could spread sound and culture to a broad populous, as well as a class-reifying artifact that reinforced the deepening class division in colonial Korea. But, oddly enough, even people like Master Yun, to whom the cost was insignificant, were still reluctant to part with their money for the privilege of having the radio "tease" them (Ch'ae 1993, 15). (As illustrated earlier, Master Yun believes that the radio is "teasing" him by providing

his programs on some days and not on other days.) For example, in the novel, every month when the time comes to pay his fees, Master Yun undoubtedly complains, "What do they think the damn thing is? Does it entitle them to shake me down for cash every month?" (Ch'ae 14). The radio, in spite of delivering much satisfaction to listeners like Master Yun, was also a site of contention and frustration, especially since one had to pay for it.

While Ch'ae masterfully establishes Master Yun as a penny-pinching scrooge throughout the novel, the radio episode in particular draws attention to the triangulated relationship among the new bourgeoisie, technology, and colonialism. Through these explorations, Ch'ae Man-sik presents a social critique of the radically transformed social structure in colonial Korea. We are told that in the days of Master Yun's father, the family had come to amass wealth, but bandits constantly thieved and government officials extracted bribes, never granting the family a day of peace. But luck and timing bring "peace under heaven" to Master Yun. Japanese colonialism and Japan's land survey projects effectively alter Master Yun's life, and as a result he is able to accumulate even more land and move his family to Seoul, the capital, while maintaining his country estate and collecting rent as an absentee landlord. Although social class distinctions were "legally" dissolved during the late Joseon (Choson) Dynasty through the enactment of the Kabo Reforms, thereby freeing slaves and eliminating the literati social-class (*yangban*—the highest social-class), social customs and practices were still very much intact even during the Japanese colonial period, when power relations unequivocally disrupted (but did not eliminate) the thousand-year-old social structure.

#### The Daehan Jeguk Period

The period between 1897 and 1910, before the formal annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, is generally called the Daehan Jeguk period, or the Period of the Great Han Empire, in which Korea was "independent" and no longer a tributary state of China. This status, however, came about in the aftermath of the Ganghwa Treaty, an unequal arrangement that Japan forced on Korea in order to open its ports to Japan and allow Japan to hold direct diplomatic relations with Korea. This can be seen as one of the first steps in Japan's move toward imperialism.

For Master Yun's family, and others like them who could not boast of an illustrious *yangban* family lineage, their newly gained wealth could buy a prominent genealogy, which Master Yun promptly does. With his newly purchased *yangban* genealogy, he also marries his son and grandsons to families of *yangban* origin, thus cementing the Yun's social class as hailing from the highest of the literati social classes. Just as he can buy his genealogy and status, Master Yun is amply capable of purchasing the



newest technology—a technology that was as much a product of broader Western imperialism and Japanese colonialism as it was a product of the science and progress so important in the colonial metropole (Japan) as well as in the colonies (in this case, Korea). In many aspects, creating Master Yun as the protagonist of this novel helped to express the underlying tensions of colonialism—those questioning both the possibilities and the impossibilities that colonialism necessitates—and the impact of those tensions on the formation of colonial identity and subjectivity.

In addition to the exorbitant cost of radio, another frustrating obstacle experienced by both the broadcasters and listeners of radio was programming in two languages. During the first six years of broadcasting, KBC practiced a dual-language policy where the language breakdown ratio was roughly 30 percent Korean and 70 percent Japanese. Complaints by Korean listeners, however, resulted in an increase of Korean programs to 40 percent by July 1927. As one might surmise, this policy frustrated both Korean and Japanese listeners, whose programs were constantly being interrupted by the program in the other language. Newspapers published detailed schedules of the day's broadcasting program, but this neither alleviated the confusion nor lessened the complaints. KBC, under the jurisdiction of the GGK's Ministry of Communication, did experiment with various programming schedules. For example, the station alternated the same program in Japanese and Korean, and also alternated Japanese and Korean programs every other day. As depicted in *Peace Under Heaven*, however, the confusion Master Yun encounters upon learning that his program is on one night but not the next night appears to be not far from the truth. Furthermore, Ch'ae Man-sik's depiction of the dejected and desperate Taebok, who has to furnish Master Yun with his favorite programs, would likely also resonate with listeners who stridently wrote to the station with their complaints and requests:

For some time the radio station had been receiving anonymous letters, dozens of them, all beseeching that southern music be broadcasted every day. These anguished letters were dispatched by Taebok who composed them in tears, literally, after bearing the full brunt of Master Yun's undue recriminations. (Ch'ae 1993, 14)

Various efforts to work within the dual-language broadcasting system, however, were largely considered failures. In the first six years of operation, KBC did not reach the anticipated number of registered subscribers, nor were the subscription fees adequate to cover the cost of operation.

Once again, Japanese officials had to make significant concessions in order to broadcast in Korea. It was announced in 1931 that opening a second station, an all-Korean-language station, was planned, and in 1933, KBC Station 2 began broadcasting in Korean with a more powerful transmitter (Han'guk Pangsong Kongsa 1977, 30–35). And in April 1937, when KBC Station 2 was able to broadcast with a 50-kilowatt transmitter, a far wider geographical range was achieved. In addition, the GGK began to launch regional broadcasting stations; the first was in September 1936

in the city of Busan, a southeastern coastal port city with a large Japanese settler population. Another station was established in Pyongyang, the current-day capital of North Korea, in April 1936. The Pyongyang station simultaneously launched an all-Korean-language station along with a Japanese-language station. All of these expansion activities were financed by Japan's NHK. In 1931, NHK provided a loan of 430,000 won to KBC to build facilities, and in 1935 an additional 543,000-won loan was added for establishing regional broadcasting stations. Ironically, as Michael Robinson astutely notes, it was the Japanese radio listeners in the metropole as well as those in the colonies who paid for and supported the Korean broadcasting system.

While broadcasting technology was advancing and expanding, one of the most crucial aspects for the success of radio listening continued to be its programming, the content of the daily radio program. Although the colonial regime made concerted efforts to use new media technology and programming to cement its cultural hegemony, Korean listeners did not always fall victim to the system of control or to the assimilation strategies. Rather, consumers learned to use, and indeed used, the radio for their own pleasure and entertainment. This appears to be the case, especially after the establishment of a separate Korean language broadcast system in 1933 in which 16 hours of radio broadcasting filled with news, education, and entertainment were carried per day. Seo Jaegil's 2007 study on colonial Korean radio charts the ratio of news, education, and entertainment content to be roughly 3:3:4 between 1929 and 1936. As shown in Ch'ae Man-sik's *Peace Under Heaven*, music was indeed one of the most popular types of programming, but radio dramas, novels, and dialogues also occupied a large portion of the schedules, which attests to the genre's popularity among the listeners.

To learn what KBS broadcasts today, in English and Korean, visit the KBS website (<http://english.kbs.co.kr>).

The establishment of the all-Korean-language station promoted the proliferation of radio sales and broadcast subscriptions throughout the 1930s. But more importantly, this station contributed to the development of Korean radio programs. An article in *Jongwang* variety magazine lists the programs aired on KBC Station 2, providing a glimpse of the variety of programs available to listeners. According to the article, radio programs can be largely divided into music, entertainment, education, and news (*Jongwang*, December 1935). The author goes on to describe the various things that can be heard under these different categories. For example, in terms of music programming, they aired popular Korean songs, *pansori* (which is Master Yun's favorite), and other music, such as Japanese music (in particular, *naniwabushi*) and Western music (mostly classical music). Another highly popular category was entertainment, which included radio dramas, radio novels, film stories, and comedy

shows. News and weather reports certainly occupied an important position in radio programming as well. Additionally, lectures and information programs, children's programs, and sports filled the airwaves. The radio virtually provided everything that anyone would like to hear. In fact, the next month's *Jogwang* appropriately ruminates that "anyone who has experienced listening to the radio becomes so hooked [to it] that they won't last a day without being curious about what is on the radio."

Korean *pansori* and Japanese *naniwabushi* are sung narratives that were highly popular forms of musical performance. Much of these musical forms were disappearing as popular songs gained prevalence. Examples of both *pansori* and *naniwabushi* (also called *rokyoku*) can be found on YouTube.

### Making Radio Work and Working for the Radio

For many, listening to the radio remained a form of entertainment. But for others, the advent of radio paved the way for new work and for the professionalization of work. At the time of KBC's first broadcast, the organisation employed about 50 people, of which only a handful were Korean. No Changseong and Han Deokbong were employed as technicians, while Ma Hyeongyeong and Yi Okgyeong were the first two female radio announcers. Ma and Yi, in particular, are noteworthy, because these two were the very first to be called "announcers," a new category of work.

Interestingly, for this position, the broadcasting company was specifically hiring women. A classified advertisement appearing in *Byeolgeongon* lists the required qualifications as follows: "Graduate of at least a girls high school; Age between 16-40." Besides listing the wanted qualifications, the ad also describes the pay and the kind of work that will be performed. "An apprentice's starting salary is 30 won per month. Upon becoming a full time announcer, salary will increase between 50 won to 60 won a month." Considering that low-ranking, male, office workers were paid 22 won a month, even the apprentice-level salary shows that female announcers were being paid handsomely. The ad goes on to say that "although this job is physically and mentally exhausting, the work is a very rewarding one because an announcer's single word can reach the ears of thousands of people around the world" (*Byeolgeongon*, March 1927).

Professional working women were still rare in Korea, so a combination of the first radio broadcasting and female announcers roused a great stir in the print media. Newspapers carried interviews with the newly hired announcers, and magazines began to publish roundtable transcripts regarding working women. Through radio broadcasting, the early twentieth-century *kisaeng* (female entertainers highly trained in the arts) also took on new roles, becoming active participants in modern urban technology. They were not only singing on public stages, but also performing for

various radio programs. For a society that once believed “silence” in women was a virtue, a woman projecting her voice to be aired to “reach the ears of thousands of people around the world” marked a radical shift.

Yun Paeknam (1888–1954), a prominent pioneering film director, novelist and playwright of the colonial period, was an ardent advocate of radio and identified it as a critical medium for entertainment and information. He held important editorial positions in various newspapers and journals (several of which he was a founding member of). In 1917 he established the Yun Production Company and began his career as both producer and director. He was also a leading figure in the new drama movement and established his own drama troupe. With the establishment of KBC Station 2, Yun advocated for the radio becoming familiar technology to be used on daily basis (*Chosun ilbo*, January 15, 1933). In particular, he suggested that the radio should become so commonplace in the home of Koreans that it could be used for educational purposes as well as developing people’s interests and tastes. The Korean word he and others used in this context is *chwimi* (趣味). In contemporary everyday parlance, this is often translated as “hobby.” However, this is a neologism that came into use during the early twentieth century. The two Chinese characters used for this word are 趣 (*chwi*), meaning “mind” “intention” or “idea,” and 味 (*mi*), meaning “taste.” Early twentieth-century thinkers and artists, such as Yun Paeknam, used this word to mean “taste” in the aesthetic sense, which is also linked to the idea of self-development. For Yun and others, radio became a medium through which one could cultivate the self and engage in new kinds of work; as a new medium, it encouraged innovation in producing new kinds of programs most appropriate for the radio.

Although music was popular on the radio, radio dramas were even more popular. Writing for the radio became not only an important new career, but also a means for Koreans to debate and theorize on the potentials of the radio. One of the most daunting dilemmas for those writing for the radio, however, was the matter of how to compensate for visual cues and directions in a medium that relied on the oral and aural. Rather than reading texts and watching theatrical performances, the listener had to rely only on her or his hearing to understand and imagine the story being presented. While sound and hearing are central to the listening experience in radio dramas, as Tim Crook rightly points out, listening to radio dramas does not preclude visual realities, the theatrical, or the spectacle. In other words, radio drama is a form of storytelling transmitted through sound. Indeed, sound is so central to storytelling on the radio that it cannot be completely “separated from image based narratives,” for it “exists as a dramatic storytelling form communicating action as well as narrative” (Crook 1999, 7). In essence, Crook is arguing that there is a very visual component to the psychology of listening. Ears see, he asserts. Crook’s claims pointedly move toward the intermedial qualities of visualizing while listening to the radio, and toward how these intermedial qualities are achieved through writing for the radio.

Seo Jaegil’s study on the development of the broadcasting arts, especially radio dramas, in colonial Korea clearly outlines the stages the genre underwent to distinguish itself from other genres, particularly that of stage theater. Seo shows how, in

its early phase, radio dramas borrowed heavily from theatrical, filmic, and novelistic texts. That is, without adapting the existing texts specifically for the radio, many of the works were transferred to the radio to be performed (or, more accurately, to be read). In its scripted form, therefore, early Korean radio dramas differed little from stage scripts, which often included stage directions (e.g., place markers) and acting directions (e.g., affect, gesture, movement) invisible to the listeners when performed by voice actors in the radio station. As a result, early radio performances were wanting in various aspects. As many critics, including Seo Jaegil, have noted, these dramas lacked the aesthetics of radio dramaturgy. It was not until the mid-1930s that original radio dramas were written specifically for radio broadcasting by such writers as Yu Chijin, Yi Seogu, and Kim Unjong, to name just a few.

It appears that critics began seriously considering the art and theory of radio dramas only after radio became a popular medium in colonial Korean society, which was, as mentioned earlier, after the establishment of Korean-language broadcasting. In their writings on the radio, critics such as Han Sangjik, Yang Hun, and Yi Seokhun took up theorizing on radio dramas as a way to analyze the larger media phenomenon of the radio. In doing so, these critics began to postulate more specific methodologies for composing radio dramas that would pay close attention to the various aural aspects, including the special effects that could be produced through the mechanism of the radio; ways of enlivening the listeners' imagination via sound; usage of music for narrative and tone; and the construction of dialogue in ways that would replace simple, straightforward, descriptive narratives. This critical analysis entailed comparisons to the other media that were, in a sense, in competition with radio at the time. While they realized that the radio was an aural medium, they also recognized the importance of the qualities it shared with film, stage theater, and the serialized novel. Thus, writers and critics actively applied or rejected methods from the stage, film (especially the talkie), and the novel to find the most appropriate means of expression for the radio medium.

Korean television dramas continue the radio drama tradition and are still popular today. Many examples, with English subtitles, can be found on YouTube or other Internet sites. The KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) World TV channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/kbsworld>) is a good place to begin.

### Conclusion

As was the case with print media, radio did not escape being monitored by the Japanese colonial state. Restrictions and censorship tightened during the late colonial period, especially after the Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937, when Japan decreed the *hwangminhwal/ kominka* (imperialization) movement. Paper shortages and censorship during wartime eventually led to the closing of *Chosun ilbo* and

*Donga ilbo*, the two major privately owned Korean-language newspapers, in 1940, leaving only the *Maeil sinbo*, the official organ of the Japanese colonial government, operating. At a time when the majority of Korean-language publications had been terminated, Korean-language broadcasting continued until 1944, albeit limited in its programming. Korean-language lessons and lectures were eventually banned altogether by 1941. Only those programs that voiced support for the imperialization and the *naisen ittai* (Japan and Korea as one) movements were permitted to be aired. Indeed, propaganda materials were effectively placed within mass media, such as the radio, to control and discipline the colonized subjects.

Yet, despite the loss of sovereignty and the censorship and suppression of the freedoms of press and speech, the case of radio in colonial Korea shows that Korean cultural producers and consumers were not mere victims of colonial repression or passive consumers of radio. Rather, Korean listeners demanded to use this new medium and new technology for their own pleasures, creative outlets, and educational purposes, among other uses. Furthermore, radio gave rise to new everyday spatial practices, leading to formations of new imagined communities connecting listeners, both those close to each other and those separated by great distances. After all, radio listening was taking place simultaneously across the country, dependent on a set programming schedule. And since the cost of owning a radio and subscribing to broadcast programming were expensive, radio listening became more or less a communal activity rather than strictly private. In these ways, the role of radio in the early twentieth century resembles our twenty-first century new media experiences, in which various mobile devices have come to reshape our everyday practices and social interactions, giving us a sense that we are instantly connected to the world outside our immediate circle.

### Note

1. Quotations from *Peace Under Heaven* are taken from Chun Kyung-ja's English translation. Unless otherwise notated, all other translations are the author's.

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