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The role of hegemonic masculinity and Hollywood in the New Korea

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Keywords

role, hollywood, korea, hegemonic, masculinity

Disciplines

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The Role of Hegemonic Masculinity and Hollywood in the New Korea

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We argue that during the 1940s Hollywood films had an important role to play in the creation of a postwar South Korean society based on the new global U.S. hegemony. The connections between political and economic change in South Korea and socio-cultural factors have hitherto scarcely been explored and, in this context, we argue that one of the key socio-cultural mechanisms that supported and even drove social change in the immediate post-war period was the Korean film industry and its representation of masculinity. The groundbreaking work of Antonio Gramsci on hegemony is drawn on – in particular, his understanding of the relationship between “commonsense” and “good sense” – as well as Raewyn Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity. The character of Rick in the 1941 Hollywood classic *Casablanca* is used to illustrate the kind of hegemonic masculinity favoured by the U.S. Occupation authorities in moulding cultural and political attitudes in the new Korea.

Keywords: South Korea, hegemony, hegemonic masculinity, film, *Casablanca*, U.S. occupation of Korea

El Papel de la Masculinidad Hegemónica en la Nueva Korea

Richard Howson & Brian Yecies
University of Wollongong, Australia

Resumen

Nosotros argumentamos que durante los años 40 las películas de Hollywood tuvieron un papel importante en la creación de la sociedad de post-guerra de Korea del Sur cuya base era la recién hegemonía de Estados Unidos. Las conexiones entre el cambio político y económico en Korea del Sur y los factores socio-culturales han sido hasta ahora escasamente poco explorados y, en este contexto, nosotros planteamos que uno de los factores socio-culturales clave que han apoyado y hasta dirigido el cambio social en la post guerra fue la industria cinematográfica coreana y su representación de la masculinidad. El revolucionario trabajo de Antonio Gramsci sobre la hegemonía se apoya, en particular, en su interpretación de la relación entre el “sentido común” y el “buen juicio”, así como en la concepción de masculinidad hegemónica de Raewyn Connell. El papel de Rick en el año 1941 Hollywood con el clásico *Casablanca* es utilizado para ilustrar el tipo de masculinidad hegemónica favorecida por Estados Unidos. Las instituciones de ocupación se encargan de moldear las actitudes culturales y políticas en la nueva Korea.

Palabras clave: Corea del Sur, hegemonía, masculinidad hegemónica, película, *Casablanca*, U.S. ocupación de Korea

In June 1962, a United States Information Service (hereafter USIS) report from Seoul to Washington, “Study of Korean Attitudes Towards the United States”, indicated that a majority of the population of South Korea (hereafter Korea) – over 72% – displayed a general acceptance and appreciation of the United States (hereafter U.S.). According to the study, this level of support for the U.S. decisively outstripped Koreans’ appreciation of any other major nation and its culture. For example, support for Great Britain and West Germany was ranked at 24 and 19% respectively, while support for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was massively in the red at minus 64%. The study’s ‘Concluding Note’ asserted that the finding of positive attitudes toward the U.S. was notably significant because it was based on a “relatively close relationship between the Koreans and Americans.” The Korean people were not basing their judgment on stories or experiences relayed at second or third hand, but rather for the first time “they were reflecting attitudes formed as a result of actual contact with Americans and *with the operation of US policy in Korea*” (Korean Survey Research Center, 1962 [our emphasis]).

Several years later, a questionnaire run by the International Research Associates called Project Quartet: An Opinion Survey Among Korean *Students* (1966) – held by the United States Information Agency’s Office of Records, revealed that while the majority of university students interviewed accepted the cultural changes that had occurred in Korea since liberation from Japanese occupation – 56% claimed to be very happy or fairly happy with their own standard of living – the wider majority (83%) saw economic instability and poverty as either the most important problem (58%) or the second most important problem (25%) facing the nation. This data suggests that in the 1960s young upper middle class Koreans were especially focused on the nation’s economic life that was being moulded by the recent achievement of capitalism and democracy. Whilst this cohort represented a privileged group in terms of education level - i.e. around 5% of the population at the time (National Statistics Office 1995: 80), their perceptions of the U.S. as the international benchmark for both developments was important because it showed a complex relationship in the making. Their attitudes confirmed the findings of the 1962 study insofar as both showed evidence of an

acceptance of the U.S. and its influence among these future community leaders. For example, the later survey supported the view that the U.S. was materialistic (63%) but also democratic (58%), and on a par with Korea itself as a peace-loving nation (42% compared to 43% for Korea).

While different methodologies were adopted in the two surveys, both were undertaken by professional bodies. In the 1962 study of Korean attitudes, three questions devised by the USIS were incorporated into an opinion survey conducted by the Korean Survey Research Center with the assistance of the Statistical Advisory Group of the Surveys and Research Corporation of Washington D.C. The survey was commissioned by a major daily newspaper, *Kyunghyang Shinmun*. The three questions fielded by the USIS sought to elicit Koreans' attitudes toward nine foreign countries including the U.S., aspects of America held in high regard by Koreans, and those liked least. The study sample consisted of 3,150 people selected randomly from voting lists and resulted in 2,724 complete interviews. On the other hand, the 1966 survey of university students by International Research Associates – Far East – also undertaken on behalf of the United States Information Agency, comprised 1,010 students drawn from all disciplines across four universities. Taken together, both sets of data offer a representative sample of the Korean population and the cultural attitudes of the time. More recent studies such as *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the US* (Larson, Levin, Baik & Savych, 2004) do little more than reflect and confirm the findings of these studies from the early to mid-sixties – that attitudes towards the nascent alliance and towards the American people were overwhelmingly positive, if sometimes complex. For Koreans, the U.S. had become the exemplar culture – the one that could meet their aspirations for a steadily improving standard of living.

In this article, we seek to go back some twenty years before this data was first collected to investigate what might be considered one of the foundational moments in the creation of a new Western cultural sensibility in Korea. This development in its turn became part of and helped to sustain the new U.S. global hegemony. However, rather than exploring and analyzing Korean politics and in particular its geopolitical history (which has already been scrutinized in great detail), we argue that during the 1940s particular hegemonic mechanisms based in civil society were equally important in the creation of modern Korean society. Hitherto, however, the

connections between political and economic change on the one hand and socio-cultural factors on the other have been relatively neglected in the literature. In this context, we propose that one of the key socio-cultural mechanisms that supported and even drove change in the immediate post-war period was the film industry. Most importantly, through the U.S. occupation (1945-1948) Koreans were re-introduced to Hollywood films that embodied a new Western sensibility. (Prior to being banned during the Pacific War, hundreds of Hollywood films were exhibited across Korea (see [Yecies, 2008](#)). In this respect, the new economic (capitalist) and political (democratic) institutions introduced by the U.S., which the two surveys discussed above indicated, had a considerable impact on Koreans but only go part way to accounting for the transformation of Korean society during this period. In explaining the socio-cultural mechanisms that helped change the way Korean people thought about themselves, their practices and their aspirations, both at the national and transnational level, film and the representation of gender, particularly the masculinity that it embodied was crucial. In the context of the late authoritarian government era of the 1980s, Kyung Hyun Kim (2004, p. 9) explains:

Just as Hollywood has used the Vietnam War as a springboard for what Susan Jeffords describes as the “remasculinization of American culture”, South Korean cinema renegotiated its traumatic modern history in ways that reaffirm masculinity and the relations of dominance ... the need for masculine rejuvenation ... ironically ended up affirming the hegemonic political agenda rather than resisting it.

Two important points emerge from this statement. The first is that, in many ways, the Korean film industry in the post-1980s era was ostensibly concerned with the “remasculinization” of the Korean male, which in reality was following in Hollywood’s footsteps ([Kyung Hyun Kim, 2004, p. 10](#)). The second is that the creation of a new Korean national consciousness was not an independent achievement with indigenous roots, but was contingent on Korea’s alignment with the growing U.S. global hegemony in which film had a significant part to play. We note that Kim’s concept can be applied to

an earlier period involving the “remasculinization” of the Korean male during the U.S. occupation of Korea.

The Basis for a New Hegemony

In exploring the socio-political consequences of the use of film in the hegemonic processes to which Korea was subject in the mid-twentieth century, we begin by invoking the work of Antonio Gramsci on hegemony – in particular, his notes on the relationship between “commonsense” and “good sense” (see Gramsci, 1971, p. 323-326, p. 423) and, most importantly, the transformation of the former into the latter. For Gramsci, the concept of hegemony defines an ethico-political moment when the “commonsense” ideas and practices of a particular group within a society are transformed and assume political and then ethical authority as “good sense”. To build and then retain hegemonic authority, the ideas and practices of the group in question (in this case the U.S.) must merge the ethical or civil society component with the coercive or political component to create a new formulation where “State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 263). It is this extension of the processes of building authority beyond political society and the state and into the civil or “private” spheres (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12) so as to incorporate the average citizen that David Harvey (2005) identified as crucial to the acceptance of a new hegemonic moment. This explains why it was necessary for the U.S. in Korea to extend its reach into the private sphere of communities, families and individuals to cement its influence and control, and why film became the crucial intellectual hegemonic mechanism in this process of expansion.

This expansion was not based on a simple or straightforward mechanism. It required what Gramsci (1971, p. 12) referred to as “intellectuals” whose function within society is to ensure that the people come into contact with and acquire the ethical sensibility and authority associated with the given hegemony. Because for Gramsci intellectuals operate across civil society, those who controlled the film industry were able to harness a significant socio-cultural resource capable of not just touching the masses, but also able to re-present a social model to which the people could now aspire. In this way, film had the ability to disempower the “commonsense” or traditional

sensibilities of the Korean people and make them subaltern. Simultaneously, the hegemonic expansion of principles such as democracy and capitalism, in concert with the promotion of a new masculine identity, endorsed the new U.S. global sensibility as “good sense”. This transformation is crucially important to understanding the success or failure of a hegemony to develop. As a quotidian ideology, commonsense demands conformity and reflects the everyday life and beliefs of a particular social group that, in turn, expresses its cherished cultural traditions. Inherent in the concept of commonsense is a particular ethical (and sometimes political) legitimacy that provides the basis for the identification of a particular group, and that in turn influences its relationship to the hegemonic authority. However, for the U.S., the insertion of their interests into Korean civil and political society required an immediate engagement with the broader Korean culture in order to legitimate and progress these interests and to present them as “good sense” rather than raw domination. The data from the 1962 survey presented above, showing that over 72% of respondents felt positively about the U.S., supports this theoretical argument. What the U.S. was constructing in Korea was not a structure of domination pure and simple, but hegemony, with its integration of politics and civil society, as the basis for a socio-cultural transformation from Korean “commonsense” to a new U.S./Korean “good sense” projected on a global scale.

One consequence to be expected as the result of a hegemonic transformation of this kind is that the society affected will move from disunity to unity. However, any such imposition of authority and subsequent unity is always provisional, and it is this that produces hegemony’s dynamic character or, as Gramsci (1971, p. 182) called it, its “unstable equilibria”. Furthermore, this dynamism and conflict always operates at the level of “good sense” and therefore across both civil and political society. This brings us to the relationship between politics and gender – the link between the process of constructing and implementing a new political system and gender order was important for Korea. Explaining this new gender order in greater detail is a book-length project. Suffice it to say that as we have seen, these changes were occurring at a time when Koreans aspired to leave poverty behind them and create a new socio-political order where the principles of democracy and capitalism were central. To do this required not only an

affirmation of “hegemonic principles” (see [Howson, 2006](#)) such as democracy and capitalism, but the “remasculinization” of Korean men based on an acceptance of the hegemonic masculinity of the West.

The Role of Hegemonic Masculinity in a New Hegemony

Raewyn Connell’s (1995, p. 76) conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity has proved particularly fruitful in our exploration of Korean gender constructions. She focuses on two key ideas: first, that the masculinity it represents is the only legitimate way for men to think, aspire and act towards creating an ideal masculinity; and second, that by thus building complicity with the hegemonic ideal, men will secure the dominance of their own gender while continuing the subordination of women. Connell here illustrates how a particular construct (in this case masculinity) becomes a component part of a broad culturally based hegemony and thus assumes a parallel authority to more political and economic ideals such as democracy or capitalism. Connell thus exposes the two key constitutive components of authority: legitimacy and power. Power operates through the ability to subordinate a particular group (or idea/practice) through the operation of particular configurations of identification and practice that enable men to position themselves in relation to it [hegemonic masculinity] ([Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832](#)). Thus, it may be that it was never crucial for Korean men to practice and assume an identity based on an ideal Western masculinity. Rather, for a majority of Korean men (and women as well), either as individuals or groups, it could have been enough to adopt certain practices that would enable them to align or position themselves in relation to what they increasingly perceived as *the* legitimate form of masculinity – a strategy that would in turn enable them to gain the social, political and economic advantages they sought.

While this process of alignment acts to modify the behaviour of men and women, it is also a key contributor to the constitution of power with a given society and, as a consequence, defines what is legitimate with respect to issues of identification and identity. It is this ability to confer identity and the associated advantages that men (and also women) seek to acquire that enables hegemonic masculinity to assume the authority of an ideal within a particular cultural situation or system. Describing gender-based behaviour in empirical terms will only ever tell part of the story. The modernist narrative of rational

men practising a form of masculinity that will benefit them and the social system of which they are a part must be re-thought in terms of the representation of a culturally authoritative or hegemonic masculinity. In Korea, film became a key mechanism in perpetuating a gendered hegemony.

The Korean National-Popular Consciousness and American Celluloid Dreams

After the Pacific War, and after Korea had been liberated from the Japanese, the nation was separated at the 38th parallel. The southern and northern halves of the peninsula were to be temporarily governed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, respectively, in order to facilitate the establishment of orderly government. The U.S. interim government aimed to transform the southern part of the Korean Peninsula into a “self-governing,” “independent,” and “democratic” nation, while safeguarding the wellbeing of its people and rebuilding their economic base¹.

Within months of Japan’s defeat, and even as Lt. General John R. Hodge and his U.S. Occupation forces were disarming the Japanese military, American film distributors hurried their most popular films to the southern half of the peninsula. Local cinemas were soon overwhelmed by a range of Hollywood genre films that the United States Army Military Government in Korea (hereafter USAMGIK, 1945–1948) believed had the allure to help the country to transpose four decades of Japanese influence. Most of the films screened during this period were talkies produced between the mid-1930s and the early 1940s. Action-adventure and historical biopics were the most common genres, followed by melodramas, screwball comedies, musicals, Westerns, crime/detective thrillers, science fiction, and animated cartoons. The graphics used in advertisements for these films, placed in local newspapers, also attracted non-Korean-speaking U.S. troops—a welcome secondary audience.

The USAMGIK film project was advanced under the auspices of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP), and with the advice of the Office of War Information’s (OWI) Central Motion Picture Exchange (hereafter CMPE)². During this time, the CMPE – the American film industry’s East Asian outpost that

controlled the distribution rights for Hollywood films – and the USAMGIK’s Motion Picture Section in the Department of Public Information (hereafter DPI) contributed to the re-establishment of Hollywood’s dominance in Korea, reprising the glory days of the early-to-mid 1930s (Yecies, 2005, 2008; Yecies & Shim, 2011)³. Many of the glamorous spectacle films that the CMPE and DPI eased into the market, and which anchored the USAMGIK’s propaganda operation in Korea, were used to evoke a sense of personal, cultural, and political liberty. Instead of thinking and acting like Japanese, Koreans were now expected to think about what “America” and democracy in particular had to offer them. Hollywood films became key vehicles for achieving this task⁴.

To ensure the unhindered dissemination of an “official” American popular culture, the USAMGIK began purging the marketplace of “unwanted” films under Ordinance No. 68, “Regulation of the Motion Pictures,” enacted in mid-April 1946. Following this date, the requirement for censorship approval from the USAMGIK became an effective way of revoking the efforts of a small group of intellectuals who were attempting to assert their independence by using film to catalyze debate on a range of social and political issues, including communism. Some of the films exhibited by this group included Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia* (1936) and the Italian fascist propaganda film *Lo Squadrone Bianco* (1936, aka *The White Squadron*), as well as Julien Duvivier’s poetic realist gangster film *Pépé le Moko* (1937), and a small number of films from China. However, under Ordinance No. 68 these and other foreign (and unauthorised U.S.) films were all rapidly confiscated by the USAMGIK’s Department of Police – not because they contained objectionable or obscene content, but because the DPI was concerned to block films with communist sympathies. Simply put, this type of intellectual activism interfered with the USAMGIK’s cultural reorientation program. Although exhibitors promoted programs that mixed features with shorts and live musical and/or theatrical performances, a surfeit of Hollywood films left little room for the exhibition of non-American films (including those from Korea): movies which might have offered alternative views of “America” and American culture.

In April 1946, the first batch of authorised Hollywood films arrived in Seoul via CMPE-Japan; it included *Queen Christina* (1933), *Barbary Coast* (1935), *The Devil Doll* (1936), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Romeo and*

Juliet (1936), *San Francisco* (1936), *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936), *The Buccaneer* (1938), *The Rains Came* (1939), *Golden Boy* (1939), *Honolulu* (1939), *The Under Pup* (1939), and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940). These films were chosen because they were “prestige pictures” in the sense that they were “injected with plenty of star power, glamorous and elegant trappings, and elaborate special effects” (Balio, 1995, p. 180) —attractive packaging for presenting the core democratic reform values that the U.S. government wanted for Korea⁵. As local film critics noted at the time, the sheer spectacle and extreme “foreignness” of these Hollywood films enabled audiences to take a holiday from the chaotic social, political, and cultural change going on around them (Lee, 1946, p. 4). The positive portrayals of modern Western city life in these films was an important facet of this process. While the criteria used to select the American films distributed and exhibited in southern Korea may appear random, many were Academy Award-winning (or nominated) films such as *In Old Chicago* (1937), *Boys Town* (1938), *You Can’t Take It with You* (1938), *Suspicion* (1941), *The Sea Wolf* (1941), *Random Harvest* (1942), *Rhapsody in Blue* (1945), and *Casablanca* (1942).

In addition to having achieved popularity in the U.S., these films represented well-dressed people scurrying along the skyscraper-lined, car-filled streets of Manhattan, Paris, and other modern cities. In these settings, men took the lead in (exclusively) heterosexual coupling, which for the first time in Korea depicted lovers embracing openly on larger-than-life studio sets and natural locations alike. While many films contained strong moral codas affirming the final victory of justice and the importance of hope, others affirmed women’s (equal) rights, Christian belief, and patriotism. However, these themes were often expressed through the depiction of acts of violence, vigilantism, public disorder, deception, desperation, frailty, suicide, theft, murder, killings, adultery, and corruption. But equally, men were shown displaying toughness, competitiveness, and open and dominant heterosexuality, as husbands and fathers motivated by a strong work ethic that brought them and their families material success. Despite these incongruous elements, Hollywood films were used to sway public opinion toward democratic and capitalist ways of thinking and acting where men took the leading roles. Such screenings were part of a deliberate campaign to assimilate the Korean people into the new hegemony through exposure to

opinions, beliefs, attitudes and values that resonated with American masculine culture. It was the very complexity of this new culture that could be effectively re-presented through film and, most importantly in this context, through the actions of male role models.

Towards a New Masculinity in *Casablanca*

A particularly complex and even controversial film shown during this time was *Casablanca*, released in the U.S. a couple of months after the December 1941 attacks on Pearl Harbor and some 5 years later in Korea in May 1947. The movie starred Humphrey Bogart in the lead male role. As told through the protagonist Rick, a loner and owner of one of the most popular bars in Nazi-occupied Casablanca, the story underlines the conflict between Rick's personal desires and his sense of a greater (national) good. The film shows how Rick resolves this conflict through his decision to forego his true love by helping his lover and her husband escape Morocco and take a stand against the Nazis. Rick's decision, revealed at the end of the film, mirrors the shift in Western society's basic values during the war and is, of course, expressed primarily through the actions of men.

Connell (1987, p. 184-185) emphasises that the "winning of hegemony" – the successful implementation of a new ethical and socio-political order – relies on "the creation of models of masculinity that are quite specifically fantasy figures" such as Bogart's character Rick. In *Casablanca*, Rick is a loner in a hostile environment with a complex and unhappy past into which the viewer is offered only a brief window. However, in the context of his relationship with the beautiful woman who walks back into his life there is much pain and anguish that is reprised for the benefit of the audience. As Rick says in the film, "[o]f all the gin joints, in all the towns in the world, she had to walk into mine". Nevertheless, woven through what is essentially a love story wrapped around the themes of war, corruption and violence, Bogart's character shines with all the hegemonic characteristics demanded by the new post-war cultural and gender order. Notwithstanding a brief emotional breakdown, which is interlaced with controlled drunkenness and aggression, Bogart emerges to take control of the situation by manipulating the bad guys, making decisions for his lover and taking actions that will ultimately ensure his independence and economic security.

Despite his fictional status, Bogart's character incorporates the kind of masculinity that according to Connell is crucial for the winning of hegemony. In the character of Rick, positive themes of nationalism and patriotism aligned to masculine toughness, intelligence and independence are interwoven with cynicism, violence, contested loyalties, and sexual license. Drawing on the work of David Grazian (2010), film critic Mark Snidero (2013) argues

that the popularity of mass entertainment, such as the film *Casablanca*, “can be explained primarily in terms of their social uses in generating solidarity among individuals within large and anonymous communities” (Grazian 2010, p. 25). This leads to the creation of “shared feelings of identity” among members of a group on the messages portrayed and espoused through the media and “can bring people together by generating a sense of social solidarity” on any particular topic (Grazian, p. 26-27). This is largely accomplished because of the use of popular culture as a “resource of public reflection” about various elements of the human condition or experience (Grazian, p. 28).

In this context, *Casablanca* is a particularly useful and important example of a film in which representations of masculinity as well as isolationism are used to create a sense of solidarity and a shared identity among viewers – here with the practical aim of defeating Nazi forces in Europe. By the time *Casablanca* was shown in Korea, the Nazis had been defeated and the forces of democracy and capitalism – and the hegemonic masculinity that had contributed to the victory – were firmly entrenched. It mattered little that *Casablanca* presented a complex canvas whose themes and motifs stood in stark contrast to the traditional values to which Korean audiences were accustomed⁶ although this would have limited the ability of Hollywood films to assimilate Korean audiences in the direction of American values such as democracy, capitalism and aggressive masculinity. Nevertheless, even though Bogart's character re-presented a fantasy masculinity in the Korean context, Rick contained the qualities that Korean men could aspire to – or, in the context of hegemonic masculinity theory, the idealised qualities against

which both Korean men and women could measure themselves and, in so doing, build the kind of solidarity evident in the nascent social attitudes of the 1960s.

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued for the importance of not only acknowledging the impact of a national film industry on the creation of a national-popular consciousness, but also of considering the complex intersections involved in the construction of gender relations. More specifically, we have begun to show through an analysis of a key Hollywood film of the 1940s how the cultural construction of masculinity can be made to serve wider ends – in this case, as a mechanism through which the U.S. could impose Western values in order to create a particular kind of national-popular consciousness. In turn, as our analysis of *Casablanca* suggests, these values were used in a wider attempt to expand the U.S.'s own political and cultural hegemony in the region.

This argument is confirmed through two key sets of data which were produced almost twenty years after the impact of *Casablanca* and other Hollywood films was first felt in Korea and which indicate an overall acceptance of U.S. influence and its key hegemonic principles in particular. While the hegemonic strategies behind the screening of these Hollywood productions were not completely successful in terms of fostering total assimilation, they made a significant contribution to a complex process of integration between Korea and the U.S. that began with the USAMGIK's utilisation of Hollywood films as a tool to undo whatever ties of loyalty had persisted following thirty-five years of Japanese occupation and a heavy diet of colonial propaganda films. That is not to say that after 1945 creativity was wholly denied to Korean filmmakers, who yearned for the opportunity to make their own films in their own ways. Indeed, in several cases, Korean nationals wrote scripts and directed films, such as *Hurrah for Freedom* (aka *Jayumanse*, Choi In-gyu, 1946) and *Ttol-ttol's Adventure* (aka *Ttol-ttol I- ui moheom*, Lee Gyu-hwan, 1946), in a spirit of experimentation and independence. More attention is needed elsewhere on this dynamic topic and the potential influence that *Casablanca* and other Hollywood films had on such domestic Korean films and their re-presentation of masculinity.

As we can now see more clearly – particularly following the recent discoveries of previously unknown colonial-era films, and the re-release of post-liberation films on DVD by the Korean Film Archive – the films made and exhibited during the U.S. occupation period embodied a wide array of narrative techniques, aesthetic styles, and genre conventions. Nevertheless, the policy direction set by the USAMGIK ensured that local audiences would be exposed to exciting new images that embodied new ideas and ideals in films such as *In Old Chicago*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *Casablanca*. There is no doubt that these films fitted well with the USAMGIK's larger aims for the development of the country during what was anticipated to be a speedy transition to economic stability and political autonomy.

Finally, this article shows that there is a very real and important connection between politics and cinema that scholars of history, sociology and culture would find helpful when examining the nature of national identity and the development and impacts of the cinema industry. In this relationship, we showed how politics and cinema are key elements in the creation of a hegemony that in turn, illuminates the operation of gender and in particular a hegemonic masculinity. In this way this Korean case study contributes to an emerging area of research that follows Raewyn Connell's (see 2007), argument about the need to give priority, when studying masculinities, culture and social change, and to the analysis of gender relations *beyond* the Western paradigm. Although Asia can be said to exist on the periphery of the West, through the processes of globalisation and transnationalisation no one region or country can effectively lay claim to operating autonomously. Thus, the continuing task of building knowledge about gender, gender relations and hegemony demands that we open our understanding to these new frontiers of knowledge.

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Notes

- ¹ Explicit details of these plans are found in General Headquarters, Commander-in-Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific, Summation No. 11: United States Army Military Government Activities in Korea for the Month of August, 1946: 12–13; and Records of the United States Department of State relating to the internal affairs of Korea, 1945–1949, Department of State, Decimal File 895, Reel 5, “US role in Korea,” National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as NARAII).
- ² The OWI had been developed in the U.S. in mid-1942 to coordinate the mass diffusion of information at home and abroad through multiple government departments and diverse media formats. Through the publication of its *Government Information Manual*, the OWI trained representatives from across the film industry to utilise both educational and entertainment films as propaganda, that is, for promoting American notions of “freedom” in both wartime and postwar conditions. In early 1946 the OWI and the Motion Picture Export Association – Hollywood’s centralized industry trade body – formally coalesced as the Central Motion Picture Exchange.
- ³ The chief role of the DPI was to impose film policy and oversee film censorship while monitoring and moulding public opinion in relation to the U.S. and to democracy in general in Korea. See “Operational Guidelines for the Distribution of O.W.I. Documentaries and Industry Films in the Far East,” 22 December 1944, Records of the OWI, Records of the Historian Relating to the Overseas Branch, 1942–1945, RG 208, Box 2, Entry 6B, NARAII.
- ⁴ In Germany, the U.S. launched a similar project aimed at transforming a former enemy into a democratic country through motion pictures. As noted by Fay (2008, p. xix), Hollywood films were seen as quintessential vehicles for disseminating “American” ideology as “democratic products.”
- ⁵ In order to connect with local audiences, well-known Korean *byeonsa* (live narrators) were recruited to introduce each film. Almost immediately, these first Hollywood films made a splash in the marketplace as local audiences lapped them up with enthusiasm, whether or not they understood them or appreciated the cultural values they contained. U.S. Embassy, Seoul 1950, “Dispatch No. 657,” 2 January, U.S.-DOS, RG59, Decimal File 1945–49, Box 7398, NARAII.
- ⁶ The USAMGIK was well aware of the criticism directed at the undesirable elements found in many of these films. According to one report from mid-1947 submitted to the U.S. Department of State, a committee of American educators that had conducted a formal survey of local attitudes in Korea was disappointed at the CMPE’s failure to offer appropriate films to Korean audiences. Report of the Educational and Informational Survey Mission to Korea, 20 June 1947, pp. 35–36. Dept of State, Decimal File 1945–49, RG59, Box 7398. NARAII.

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