



## The Afterlives of Korean An Chunggŭn in Republican China: From Sinocentric Appropriation to a Rupture in Nationalism

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### Abstract

This article examines Sino-Korean cultural relations in the 1920s and 1930s, focusing on representations of Korean anticolonial activist An Chunggŭn's assassination of Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi (1909). Two different junctures in particular are considered: the release of the film *Patriotic Spirit* by Chŏng Kitak in 1928 and the Wanbaoshan Incident in 1931. *Patriotic Spirit*, a transnational dramatization of An's story, was the first Chinese film directed by a Korean; the Wanbaoshan Incident was a violent conflict between Chinese and Koreans caused by the unofficial "discord-provoking policy" of the Japanese empire. The article tracks changes in Chinese responses to An's story before and after these two junctures, showing that *Patriotic Spirit* subtly communicated transnationalism while also catering to the Sinocentric taste of Chinese audiences. It also examines how Chinese print media in 1928 appropriated *Patriotic Spirit* for nationalist ends. Following the Wanbaoshan Incident, An's story resurfaced in China. Despite heightened anti-Korean sentiment in China at this time, An avoided Chinese condemnation because the Chinese unwittingly categorized him as Korean yet not Korean. Hence, while An's story became integrated into Chinese discourse, this study reveals, the sign of An Chunggŭn caused a rupture in the Han/non-Han divide embedded in Republican-era Chinese nationalism.

Keywords: An Chunggŭn, Chŏng Kitak, *Patriotic Spirit*, Wanbaoshan Incident, Republican Chinese film, nationalism, Sinocentrism, colonial transnationalism, Sino-Korean cultural relations

On October 26, 1909, when Korea was a protectorate state of Japan, Korean anticolonial activist An Chunggŭn (1879–1910) assassinated Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), the former Japanese prime minister and first resident-general of Korea, at the Harbin train station in northeast China. Itō had traveled to Harbin for a meeting with Vladimir Kokovtsov, the Russian secretary of the treasury in Manchuria; after An shot Itō to death, An was immediately arrested by the Russian police guarding Kokovtsov and later handed over to the Japanese police. An was incarcerated in the Lüshun prison in the Kwantung Leased Territory, sentenced to death on February 14, 1910, and

executed on March 26, 1910.<sup>1</sup> Despite An's nationality and the context of this incident, his story was repeatedly recounted, dramatized, and memorialized by the Chinese in literature, criticism, biographies, and journalism throughout the Republican period (1912–1949).<sup>2</sup> In 1928, *Patriotic Spirit* (C: *Aiguohun*)—a film directed in Shanghai by Korean filmmaker Chǒng Kitak—injected for the first time a Korean perspective into existing Chinese nationalist narratives about An. In 1931, the Wanbaoshan Incident, a violent conflict between Korean and Chinese civilians in Manchuria and Korea, led to yet another shift in An's legacy in China. This article examines how An Chunggŭn served as a symbol communicating different meanings in Chinese discourse at these two junctures in terms of Sino-Korean relations and Chinese nationalism.

From 1909 to 1939, sixty-eight articles in Chinese-language periodicals, excluding newspapers, discussed An Chunggŭn. Except for 1909 and 1910, when the actual event and execution took place, there were only two years in which six or more articles about An were published: 1913 and 1931.<sup>3</sup> Daily papers, by comparison, reported more steadily on An and his family, including stories about the financial situation of An's bereaved family, who moved to Shanghai following his death; the death of An's mother; the college education of An's daughter; and the careers of An's brothers. However, newspapers showed a similar pattern—more articles were published in 1909, 1910, and 1931—with one exception: there were heated discussions in newspapers in 1928 about the film *Patriotic Spirit*, which was an immense hit in Shanghai.<sup>4</sup> Since the 1910s, then, the most attention was given to An, through reporting and dramatizations, in 1928 and 1931. By connecting these junctures and comparing the use of An as a symbol in Chinese discourse, this study shows how Chǒng's historical-political drama film (1928) and the violent Sino-Korean conflict (1931) unwittingly reinforced nationalism yet caused a rupture in Chinese nationalism, a finding that casts light on the new aspects of the colonial-to-colonial cultural interactions in the 1920s and 1930s.

Tracking Chinese print media's recollections of An, I found striking contrasts in Chinese responses to the 1909 historical incident and to the 1928 film dramatization of that event. Immediately after the incident, Chinese audiences praised An as a “patriotic Korean martyr,” whereas later, Chinese discourse obscured An's Korean nationality, privileging either the story of an individual's sacrifice for the nation or formalistic aspects of Chǒng's film. In the 1930s, Chinese discourse about An changed again and expressed even greater admiration of An, despite heightened anti-Korean sentiment in China due to the 1931 Wanbaoshan Incident. This article

investigates critical implications of these contradictions in the Sino-Korean cultural interaction during the Japanese colonial era. More specifically, my analysis shows what diasporic Koreans were able to do, other than collaborate or resist, in semicolonized China, where ethnonationalism powerfully appropriated transnational voices.

Later in the article, I elaborate on the complicated relations between nationalism and transnationalism in Republican China, the context in which *Patriotic Spirit* was situated. Put briefly, in China both nationalism and transnationalism emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, feeding and competing with each other. As previous studies have demonstrated, Chinese transnationalism of this period ranged from state transnationalism—as seen in Sun Yat-sen’s Pan-Asianism and his rhetorical slogan of the Republic of the Five Races—to the popular transnationalism of religious orientation, exemplified in Kang Youwei’s Great Unity (*C: Datong*) philosophy. Although Chinese nationalism was never self-sufficient and hinged on transnationalism, Sinocentric nationalism co-opted and contained transnational ethics and movements at crucial political junctures (Duara 1998). Whereas previous studies have illuminated two sides of nationalist appropriation of transnationalism—nationalism that dominates transnationalism yet lacks self-sufficiency—this article reveals a self-rupturing aspect of that appropriating process.

Among existing narratives about An, *Patriotic Spirit* offers an excellent opportunity to examine the ways in which Chinese nationalism, embodied in the responses of Chinese audiences and critics to the film, powerfully yet incompletely eclipsed An’s transnationalist intentions and vision. Based on the true story of An’s assassination of Itō Hirobumi, *Patriotic Spirit* was the first Chinese film directed by a Korean filmmaker and also Chǒng Kitak (1905–1937)’s directorial debut. The success of *Patriotic Spirit* brought Chǒng significant fame in China. *Patriotic Spirit* recast An’s true story as a narrative about a Sino-Korean alliance against Japanese colonialism. I show that *Patriotic Spirit*’s transnational voice, which echoes An Chunggŭn’s vision of Asian solidarity, initially generated an unintended nationalist response from its audience, yet ultimately brought about a rupture in ethnonationalism at a most unlikely moment—following the 1931 Wanbaoshan Incident, when more than a hundred Chinese and Koreans were killed.

To demonstrate that process, the article is divided into four parts. The first part of this article lays out the political-historical context of An’s activism and examines Chinese nationalist

responses to An's story prior to *Patriotic Spirit*. The second part discusses *Patriotic Spirit* and its transnationalism. The third part analyzes the unintended nationalist responses of Chinese audiences to the film's depiction of the story. Finally, the last part looks at later responses of the Chinese to An's story in light of anti-Korean sentiments following the Wanbaoshan Incident, showing how the seemingly coherent and cohesive mechanism of Chinese nationalism ruptured. This study argues that 1930s Chinese media inadvertently echoed the transnationalism of An and *Patriotic Spirit*, despite the predominant anti-Korean sentiment following the Wanbaoshan Incident. By attending to Sino-Korean cultural relation in film and print media, I reveal a deconstructive, decentered element within 1920s and 1930s nationalist discourses. Rather than tracking how East Asian nationalisms emerged, developed, and crystallized in the wake of Western and Japanese colonialism, I uncover the incoherent and noncohesive aspects of East Asian nationalism at the time. Hence, this study sheds light on two aspects of ethnonationalism: (1) its exclusionary attribute, which subjugates other nations within and beyond its territory; and (2) the self-rupturing moment of Han-centric nationalism in which it simultaneously excludes and includes another nation.

### ***A Treatise on Peace in the East (1910) and Chinese Responses to An's Story Prior to 1928***

Although An's assassination of a prominent Japanese politician has typically been viewed as an expression of Korean nationalism, his act was based on a vision of Asian unity that challenged ethnonationalism. At his trial, An Chunggŭn stated that in 1905 he encountered the Japanese emperor's statement that Japan was waging a war against Russia "to protect peace in the East [J: *Tōyō no heiwa* 東洋の平和] and the independence of Korea [from Russian invasion]" (Ichikawa 1979, 143). As the only Asian country among the world empires, Japan claimed the role of defending Asia from invasion by Western empires, propagating the slogan "peace in the East" that the Japanese emperor and politicians had conveniently employed, since the 1895 Sino-Japanese war, to legitimate colonial invasion. An took literally the emperor's rhetorical call for peace in the East, concluding that it was Itō Hirobumi who rescinded the military sovereignty of Korea, schemed to occupy Manchuria, and therefore interfered with the emperor's political vision. Hence, An argued that killing Itō was a means of maintaining the regional peace,

inadvertently appropriating the imperialist rhetoric of Eastern peace for a theoretical ground of anticolonial practices.

The Japanese imperialist version of Eastern peace was a concept familiar to people across East Asia in the early twentieth century. However, it is difficult to assess how widely An's own idea of Eastern peace was known in China at the time of his death. A couple of Chinese-language articles touched on An's political philosophy. In a short piece in *National News Weekly* (C: *Guowen zhoubao*), for example, Lü Bo noted, "A person who observed the execution of An quotes [An's last words]: 'I'm leaving [this world]. I plead all of you to strive for peace in East Asia'" (1925, 17), thus informing his Chinese readers of An's call for the communal East Asian pursuit of peace.

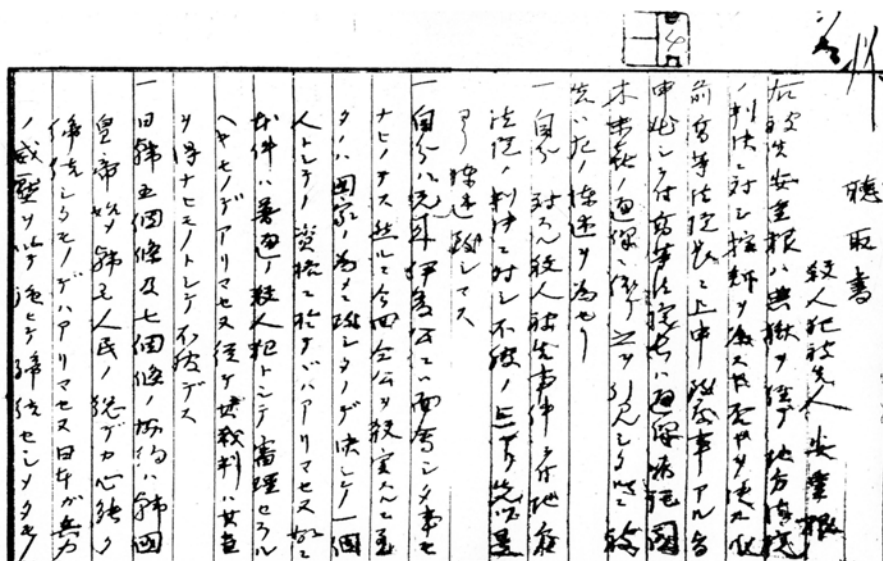


Figure 1. Hearing record. *Source*: Kukka Pohunch'ō (1995, 621). Originally a thirteen-page classified document of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In An's unfinished book, *A Treatise on Peace in the East* (K: *Dong'yang p'yunghwa lon*), which he wrote in prison and which was published posthumously, An condemned the schism within the East, especially Japan's war against China, stressing the necessity of racial solidarity among Asian nations in order to resist Western empires. Although that book is too short to adequately present An's specific political vision, the "hearing record" (K: *ch'ōngch'uisō*) from his one-on-one talk with District Judge Hiraishi Ujihito soon after his 1910 trial (see figure 1) reveals his idea of an ideal regional community and a more detailed picture of regional peace. An

called on Korea, China, and Japan to establish a Peace Council of the East (K: *Dong'yang Pyŏnghwa Ŭihoe* 東洋平和會議), a joint “peace army” in which soldiers should speak at least two languages, and also joint banks in Lüshun and other major cities in the three countries. In addition, An argued that China, Korea, and Japan should share a single currency, and that Japan ought to guide Korea’s and China’s economic development. Finally, An urged Japan to make an official apology to Korea and China for its military invasions (Kukka Pohunch’ō 1995, 621–633).<sup>5</sup>

Chinese cultural responses to An’s assassination of Itō trace back to 1911, when the Evolution Group (C: *Jinhuatuan*), a troupe dedicated to modernizing Chinese drama, staged the play *An Chunggŭn Assassinates Itō* (C: *An Chonggen ci Yiteng*). Deng Yingchao—the wife of Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) who was one of the core members of the Chinese Communist Party—played a role in the production. Without a surviving script, it is impossible to analyze how the play actually presented An’s actions, but newspaper sources nonetheless indicate that between 1911 and 1928, Chinese playwrights and actors dramatized and revived An’s story as a means of bolstering Chinese nationalism. In the 1920s, *An Chunggŭn Assassinates Itō* continued to be performed not only in Shanghai but in other cities across China, a nationwide staging that demonstrates the popular circulation of An’s story in China. As Chang’s study notes, plays dramatizing An’s act were performed in Zhenhai (Zhejiang Province), Haifeng, Tianjin, Wuhan, Changsha, and Guangzhou, among others. Prominent figures of the time, such as Peng Pai, Zhou Enlai, Deng Yingchao, and Tian Han, participated in these plays as directors or actors. The literary group Southern Society (C: *Nanshe*) enthusiastically put on plays about An from the 1910s to 1923 (Chang 2010). On April 21, 1924, a *Shanghai News* (C: *Shenbao*) article reported, “The play *An Chunggŭn* became a hot issue among people. When An Chunggŭn gets arrested after killing Itō, he shouts out one phrase. The audience’s heart will ache upon hearing it,” suggesting that viewers would sympathize with An’s political intention. On May 8, 1925, the newspaper reported that the Youth Propaganda Group (C: *shaonian xuanjiang tuan*) would perform *An Assassinates Itō* the following evening. An’s story apparently attracted Chinese authors and audiences not only because the event had taken place in Harbin and had been widely reported on by the Chinese media, but also because the semicolonized Chinese partially shared Koreans’ enmity toward the Japanese empire.

On the other hand, a *Shanghai News* article on March 6, 1924, “Lecture Report” (C: *yanjiang xinji*), suggests that Chinese interest in An’s anticolonial story reflected Sinocentrism and a nostalgia for the Chinese empire. From the tenth century until China’s defeat in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, Korea had been a tributary state of the Chinese empire, and Chinese intellectuals, both conservative and progressive, viewed Korea as territory that the Japanese empire had usurped from China. The *Shanghai News* article reported on a speech that An Xiansheng, the daughter of An Chunggūn, had been invited to give at a school to commemorate An Chunggūn as a “national martyr ” (C: *lieshi*). “After her talk,” according to the reporter, “the principal Zhao said that the [national] culture of Korea belongs to the Chinese culture” and that the nationalist idea of sacrificing oneself for national salvation actually originated in Chinese culture:

The principal said that Chinese culture inspired the martyr An with the sense of political justice and loyalty to the nation. “I consider that everywhere in Southeast Asia and also all over the world, there is no place on which Chinese culture failed to have influence. The development of the entire Western civilization, for example, depended on Chinese sailing techniques. A compass that people use for sailing was the invention of one of the Chinese emperors. Japanese culture is also Chinese culture that Japan directly obtained through Korea.... I want to assure all of you that developing Chinese culture is the only way to save [China].”

Zhao’s speech here echoes the Sinocentric stance of Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, on the relationship between China and other Asian countries. In assessing the significance of the incident, Zhao not only privileges devotion to the nation, thereby obscuring An’s anticolonial achievement, but also, in order to claim Chinese influence on An, conflates modern nationalism with the premodern virtue of loyalty to a monarch. Rather than perceiving other Asian nations as allies of equal status, both Sun Yat-sen and the principal evoked a past in which the Chinese empire subjugated other Asian nations. This example epitomizes how the Chinese hailed An, a foreigner activist, yet also employed his achievement to celebrate the Chinese cultural legacy, refuting the assumption of previous studies that linked fervent Chinese praise of An with China’s appreciation of Korea as a political partner (Yi 1995; An 2001; Sin 2009; Yun 2011a). As Harrison (2001) has shown, whereas the Han nation sought independence from Western and Japanese empires in the Republican era, it maintained its own imperial relationship to other Asian nations (Harrison 2001).

Transnationalism was also present in both state and popular sectors, despite the hegemony of Sinocentric nationalism (Han-nationalism) in the 1920s. As much as Sun Yat-sen endorsed the “Sino-Barbarian dichotomy” (C: *huayizhibian* 華夷之辨), he also strategically employed the transnational ideology of “all-embracing unity” (C: *dayitong* 大一統), emphasizing Pan-Asianism internationally and the Republic of the Five Races domestically. Sun Yat-sen’s Pan-Asianism foregrounded the same race—the “yellow” race as opposed to the white—common culture, and cultural resistance against Western empires in order to appeal to people across Asia, including Japan. The Nationalist government strategically appropriated a “dualistic, redemptive modernity” by licensing certain transnational elements from religious groups built on Buddhist and/or Confucian universalism to endorse the Chinese version of the modern world, different from that of Western imperialists (Duara 1998, 653). Ultimately, however, Sinocentrism and imperialism vis-à-vis other Asian nations overshadowed transnational thoughts and practices at critical political junctures in 1920s and 1930s China (Yokoyama 2009).

In 1927, the KMT and other civilian nationalist groups also employed the Chinese play based on An’s story in order to promote projects for building a unified, independent modern nation, which required ending the Warlord Era (1916–1928) and reclaiming economic sovereignty from the Japanese empire. These Chinese dramatizations framed An’s story within a nationalist context, obscuring An’s original transnational pursuit, as seen in three articles in the *Shanghai News*. The first article, appearing on July 12, 1927, indicated that the Nanjing municipal government had organized a large-scale entertainment program for North Expedition soldiers, including a performance of *An Assassinated Itō*. The second piece, on July 31, reported that the Union for Severance of Economic Relations with Japan had organized various demonstrations, including a performance of the play by the Youth Propaganda Group. Finally, the *Shanghai News* noted that on August 5, the southern city district of Shanghai also staged a production of *An Chunggūn Assassinated Itō* to inspire patriotism among viewers. A number of Chinese dramatizations of the 1909 incident therefore reduced that incident’s transnational implications, appropriating the true story to promote the Chinese nationalist project. Despite the popular Chinese depiction of An’s story prior to the release of *Patriotic Spirit*, in other words, strong nationalist drives undergirded Chinese dramatizations of the story.



## Chōng Kitak's *Patriotic Spirit* in China and Transnationalism

Because the prints of almost all the films produced in Korea in the 1920s and 1930s were lost in the Korean War, Chōng's films produced in China provide invaluable access to the achievements of Korean film artists during the Japanese colonial period.<sup>6</sup> *Patriotic Spirit* attained both commercial success and critical acclaim in China. Despite these accomplishments, little scholarly work in either Korean or Chinese film studies has examined the aesthetic and political implications of *Patriotic Spirit* in depth or drawn on both Korean- and Chinese-language sources, a gap that this article aims to fill.<sup>7</sup>

Chōng Kitak (C: *Zheng Jiduo*, 1905–1937; figure 2) had a successful career as a filmmaker and actor in Shanghai from 1928 to 1934, the golden age of Chinese silent film.<sup>8</sup> During this period, he directed eight films and starred in ten, including co-starring in five with Ruan Lingyu (1910–1935), one of the most celebrated actresses in Chinese film history. His works ranged from lowbrow martial arts films to classical melodrama and historical drama.



Figure 2. Chōng Kitak (right) and Mrs. Chōng Yilsong. *Source: Xin yingxing* [New Movie Star] (1928, 34).

According to a 1934 article in *United China Pictorial* (C: *Lianhua huabao*), Chǒng's political activism had begun well before his work on *Patriotic Spirit*, as he had been arrested by Japanese police for participating in the March First Independence Movement in Korea when he was sixteen years old. Although he was quickly released due to his age, soon thereafter he was expelled from his high school, which had banned political activism by students. After graduating from another school, he traveled to Japan and entered the Tokyo Music Institute. Despite his anticolonial activism, support from his wealthy family allowed him to benefit from an imperial education. The absence of records about Chǒng's Tokyo years makes it difficult to assess the Japanese influence on his filmmaking. Upon graduation, he moved to Shanghai for a year, where he was exposed to the city's flourishing film culture. After returning to Korea, he started working as a film producer and actor, and his father helped him establish a film production company, Chǒng Kitak Productions. Although Chǒng enjoyed some fame as an actor in Korea, none of the movies released by his company achieved commercial success.

In July 1926, the Japanese colonial government implemented a film censorship law that prohibited artists from creating movies with any anticolonial implications (Kimu 2011), an exacerbated colonial rule that prompted Chǒng to leave for Shanghai in 1928. Upon arriving in China, he was introduced to one of the major Shanghai film companies, Great China & Lily (C: *Dazhonghua baihe*), by the renowned Korean-Chinese anticolonial activist Yǒ Unhyong (C: *Lǚ Yunheng*, 1886–1947). Later that year, Chǒng made his directorial debut with *Patriotic Spirit*, which he also wrote and starred in. According to *United China Pictorial*, the film “opened up a nouvelle path for Chinese film of the time” (1934, 1), although historical or political dramas such as *Patriotic Spirit* were generally unpopular in the 1920s Chinese film market.<sup>9</sup>

When *Patriotic Spirit* premiered in Shanghai in August 1928, most Chinese films fell into the martial arts genre. Until the KMT government's ban on martial arts pictures in the early 1930s, the martial arts genre was extremely popular among Chinese filmmakers. From 1928 to 1931, around forty film companies were operating in China, and approximately four hundred movies were made, 60 percent of which belonged to the martial arts genre (Cheng 1963, 133). Despite the rapid growth of the Chinese film industry, however, American movies still dominated the Chinese film market in the 1920s and 1930s (Lee 1999; Zhang 1999). As of April 1925, British American Tobacco, which owned five major movie theaters in Shanghai, refused to

screen Chinese domestic films. These circumstances made the success of *Patriotic Spirit* especially unusual and noteworthy.

The final title of Chǒng's film, *Patriotic Spirit*, resonated with core concepts of Chinese political-social discourse of the period. Unlike in the West and Japan, where central governments systematically implemented policies to produce modern national subjects, in China groups of intellectuals, artists, and activists took on the mission of mobilizing a sense of a united, strong nation due to the lack of a central political power. During this period, as Yoshizawa Seichiro has demonstrated, China's discursive movements from below embodied and propagated the emergent concepts of the nation and national spirit (2003, 18–19, 183). Nor was this limited within the region to China; as Andre Schmid points out, “Like so much of the new conceptual vocabulary of the nation, this [the national soul (K: *kukhon*) or the national essence (K: *kuksu*)] was a language shared by nationalists throughout East Asia” (2002, 15). From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, intellectuals and statesmen in both China and Korea dedicated themselves to instilling in citizens the idea and sense of a national soul.

The film also appealed to the discourse and practice of political death—of sacrificing one's life for the nation—which Yoshizawa's study of Chinese nationalism argues played a crucial role in imbuing Chinese citizens with a national consciousness (2003, ch. 5). The film ends with a scene in which An is put to death by Japanese prison officers, depicting An as unafraid of death and proud of his actions. Although the Confucian notion of loyalty to one's monarch (C: *zhong* 忠) led many medieval and pre-modern scholar-officials and soldiers to sacrifice their lives for their monarchs or dynasties, it was not until the late Qing era (1898–1911) that death in honor of the abstract entity of the nation emerged as a cultural value. Cultural practices, such as memorial services, creation of literature, and various rituals honoring “national martyrs” further inspired the Chinese to abandon their lives for the sake of the nation. The theme of political death in *Patriotic Spirit*, therefore, would have resonated with the political death that Chinese nationalists idealized, although the contexts of those two deaths were not identical.

Although the actual film of *Patriotic Spirit* has been lost, numerous magazines and newspaper articles discussing the film, including a detailed summary by Bi Wu in *Film Monthly* (C: *dianying yuebao*) (Zheng and Liu 1996, 1561–1565), provide ample resources for imagining the actors' performances, the director's intentions, and the cinematic techniques used in *Patriotic*

*Spirit*. The political tension that this film generated between Japanese authorities in Shanghai and the Chinese censorship bureau led to changes in the film's title, which indicates that Chǒng was forced to compromise his explicit, direct evocation of An Chunggŭn. Chǒng originally titled the film 安重根 (K: *An Chunggŭn*; C: *An Chonggen*). When Japanese authorities in Shanghai learned from newspaper accounts that Chǒng had finished making *An Chonggen* and that it would be released shortly, they demanded that the Chinese government forbid its screening. Consequently, Chǒng changed the protagonist's name from An Chonggen (安重根) to Yan Zhongquan (晏仲權); although the two names are pronounced differently in Chinese, their pronunciations in Korean are the same. When this accommodation still failed to resolve the censorship issue, Chǒng revised the title again, this time to *Patriotic Spirit*. When the Nationalist government authorities censored the film, they also excised many scenes that explicitly condemned Japanese colonialism to avoid provoking Japanese authorities in China (Beijing Daxue Chaoxian Wenhua Yanjiusuo 1994, 763–768).

Chǒng's intended transnational message can be seen in *Patriotic Spirit*'s focus on a series of events that took place prior to An's assassination of Itō rather than on the assassination itself. There are three major changes that *Patriotic Spirit* makes to An's story to convey transnational anticolonial messages. First, whereas in reality An traveled to China in 1905 to seek assistance from Korean expatriates in Shanghai but failed to find any, in the film An's Chinese comrades play indispensable roles in his anticolonial plan to kill a powerful politician of the Japanese empire. Second, in reality An Chunggŭn mobilized an anticolonial militia, yet the militia consisted only of Koreans and was formed in the Primorsky region of Russia bordering China and North Korea. In June and July 1909, An's militia crossed the Tu River, attacked the Japanese army, and waged a battle in Kyŏnghŭng and Hoeryŏng of North Korea (Hanguk Kŭndaesa Yŏn'guhoe 1998, 202–203; Yun 2011b, 78–79). In the film, however, thousands of Chinese civilians and a handful of Koreans formed the militia. Finally, Chǒng's dramatization moves the setting of An's activism from Russia to China, spanning Guangdong, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Hebei, and Manchuria.

To make a successful anticolonial film in a semicolonial state, where anticolonial issues were less urgent and less consistently challenged than in a colonial state (Shih 2001, 30–40), Chǒng provided his Chinese audience what they wanted to see: other small, powerless nations

seeking assistance from China, and Chinese offering them indispensable help. This “granting assistance to subjugated nations” narrative would have satisfied the sense of Han superiority, compensating for the shame and frustration that the presence of multiple imperial forces, particularly Japan’s, caused for China.

The film presents two main characters, one Korean (An) and one Chinese (Zhu), who fall in love with each other’s sisters. The Chinese characters and romantic plotline are fictional elements that Chǒng introduced to An’s story to represent Sino-Korean solidarity. In *Patriotic Spirit*, when An goes to Shanghai to meet the fictional Chinese revolutionary Zhu Hanlong, Zhu immediately agrees to join the anti-Japanese plan. As the film progresses, their comradeship, based on their passion for anticolonial revolution, grows stronger and is reinforced by each one’s love for the other’s sister. Although another of An’s close Chinese comrades, Zhang Yicheng, is also fictional, the other, Liu Dongxia, is modeled on An’s real Korean friend from the Seven People’s League (K: *Ch’il inhoe*), Yu Dongha. Chǒng strategically adapts Yu Dongha’s character into a Chinese national so that all the major characters in the film, except for An and his sister, are Chinese. Chǒng’s filmic reconstruction of An’s story also depicts his Chinese comrades making many sacrifices for the cause, including Zhang Yicheng’s death in northeast China, Zhu’s loss of his eyesight during a battle with the Japanese colonial army, and Zhu’s sister’s death from lovesickness for An. By introducing new Chinese characters and altering the nationality of the historical characters, Chǒng dramatized an important moment in Korean history as a story of Sino-Korean comradeship in the struggle against Japanese colonialism, catering to his audience’s political-aesthetic sensibility. While indulging the ethnocentrism of Chinese viewers, Chǒng simultaneously embedded his transnational message in *Patriotic Spirit*.

An, Zhu, and Pak—a Korean comrade of An’s—visit An’s mother and sister, and An’s sister decides to join their effort. The four arrive at the River Tu near the Sino-Korean border, where they stay at the home of their comrade Zhang, who provides indispensable assistance to An’s group. However, the Korean army, under Japan’s control, follows them to the Sino-Korean border and wages a battle against An and his comrades, during which Zhang is significantly injured. With no hope of recovery, Zhang pleads with his son and An to leave him behind and save themselves. An’s group, including Zhang’s son, escapes to Hong Kong, where Zhu and An’s sister fall in love and, without a common language to speak, communicate by writing. While An’s group stays at Liu Dongxia’s home in Hong Kong, Zhu’s sister remains in Shanghai,

longing for An's return. Ill with lovesickness, she sees An in a dream, which gives her momentary comfort, but, a few days later, she dies.

Toward the climax, the film shows that An and his comrades travel to the Haigang area of northeast China and organize a militia of thousands of Chinese to fight the Japanese colonial army in Korea, thereby reconfiguring what had been a Russia-based Korean militia of a few hundred into an army of thousands of Chinese and Korean civilians prepared to wage an anticolonial war. After a period of training, the militia travels to the River Tu on the Sino-Korean border to battle the Japanese colonial army, a scene that represents the ideal Sino-Korean relations envisioned by Chǒng: two countries' transnational tie at the level of the masses rather than the individual. Although the militia plans to cross the river to attack the Japanese colonial army, Liu Dongxia informs An that Itō Hirobumi is to arrive at the Harbin railway station. Upon hearing this, An asks Zhu to take care of his sister and leaves for Harbin. After An shoots Itō, the Japanese police arrest him and sentence him to death. An is shown facing his death with a sense of calm dignity and of the rightness of his actions, a final scene that inspires the political consciousness of its audience as semicolonized people.

*Patriotic Spirit* ends with a depiction of the historical assassination, not with a fictional Sino-Korean militia fighting a war against colonialism. However, Chǒng's cinematic rewriting of An Chunggŭn's life to include China in the anticolonial war in Korea reflects what Koreans constantly demanded of China at the time—namely, inter-colonial cooperation, a demand of which some Chinese were also aware, as seen in the *Huazi* newspaper (C: *Huazi ribao*) article discussing An Chunggŭn on November 23, 1909. It is fitting, therefore, that the gathering of the Sino-Korean militia, whose members are eager to battle against the colonial army in Korea, marks the climax of the story, epitomizing the film's transnational anticolonialism.

*Patriotic Spirit* therefore subtly reveals An Chunggŭn's political beliefs in intra-East Asian solidarity by transforming the true story of a Korean activist into a Sino-Korean narrative in which the Chinese characters play indispensable roles in the plot. By making a film in Shanghai, Chǒng was able to dramatize the transnational and anticolonial implications of An's actions in a way that would not have been possible in Korea at the time. How Chinese moviegoers and reviewers perceived and responded to the film is, of course, another matter, as addressed in the next section.

## Nationalist Appropriation in 1928

The spectatorship of Chinese audiences in the 1920s and 1930s was multifarious; further, film viewers and critics creatively co-opted films' messages beyond directorial intentions. Republican-era films provided the Chinese mass public with a reflexive horizon for diverse and often conflicting experiences and desires rather than imposing specific ideas and sensations on their audiences (Hansen 2000). This interpretation contrasts with the simplistic and largely unsupported claim of the few previous studies of Korean filmmakers in 1920s and 1930s Shanghai that *Patriotic Spirit* evoked sympathy for Korea among the Chinese in 1928 as director Chōng intended (Yi 1995; An 2001). My analysis of media reports, advertisements, and reviews of *Patriotic Spirit* that follow demonstrates, first, that the film occasioned unintended readings by its audience and, second, that it nonetheless managed to convey daring, radical ideas of transnationalism. The effect of conveying these ideas would manifest at a most unexpected moment in Sino-Korean relations.

Articles and advertisements about *Patriotic Spirit* appearing in the *News* (C: *Xinwenbao*), which focused on business and economic news, paid attention to the political aspects of the film in contrast to the exclusive attention paid by the *Shanghai News* and the magazine *Movie Star* to the film's formalistic aspects. An advertisement for *Patriotic Spirit* that appeared in the *News* on November 7, 1928 (figure 3) states that the purpose of the film is diametrically opposed to that of typical martial arts films: “[*Patriotic Spirit*] makes an outcry [C: *yi ku*] on behalf of the people who were oppressed by [colonial] powers all over the world.... The film serves to develop insights of the oppressed.... Larger, philosophical implications underlie this film.” The advertisement compares the politically provocative and aesthetically stimulating elements of *Patriotic Spirit* to those of films by D. W. Griffith and Rex Ingram, commenting that “the film can awaken the audience’s [political] consciousness.”<sup>10</sup> As Shu-mei Shih has pointed out, due to its semicolonized status, pre-1937 Republican China was marked by a lack of consistency, coherence, and comprehensiveness in political consciousness vis-à-vis colonial powers compared to countries, such as Korea and Taiwan, which were directly colonized at the time (2001, 30–45; Duara 1995, 224). Under these circumstances, *Patriotic Spirit* could operate as a reminder of China’s subjugation by multiple empires.

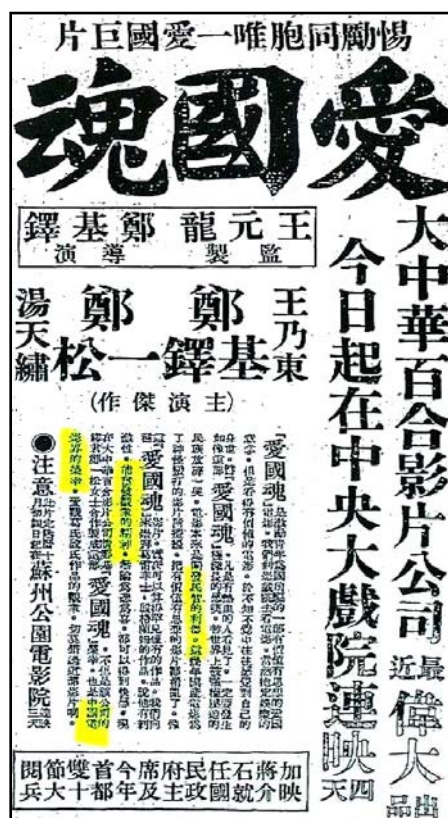


Figure 3. Advertisement for *Patriotic Spirit*. Source: *News*, November 7, 1928.

As a *News* advertisement on the same day demonstrates, Chinese newspaper articles and advertisements conflated Korean activists' anticolonialism with Chinese nationalism. Although the second Great China & Lily advertisement of the film in that issue notes that the director is a Korean with superb artistic acumen, it discusses the film's political implications as an appeal to nationalist sentiment, noting that *Patriotic Spirit* is "an unprecedented movie that concerns nationalism as well as romance. The film politically alerts the entire world [C: *jingshi*]." This advertisement, too, compares *Patriotic Spirit* to Griffith's and Ingram's films, arguing that Chōng's movie is even better at awakening political consciousness and therefore having a critical impact on Chinese people. The advertisement also presents the film's noble intent to awaken, alert, and edify the Chinese masses as an antidote to the decadent atmosphere of Chinese society: "The social circumstances [of China] worsen day by day, and people's minds also tilt toward dangerous things" (see figures 4a and 4b). Hence, these advertisements for *Patriotic Spirit* foregrounded Chinese nationalism, eclipsing the transnational anticolonialism underlying the film.





Figures 4a and 4b. Advertisements for *Patriotic Spirit* in the *News* on November 7, 1928 (left) on November 8, 1928 (right).

That the Chinese media hardly articulated or even recognized the transnationalism of *Patriotic Spirit* may have been due in part to Great China & Lily's decision to screen the film along with its documentary news film (C: *xinwen pian*) showing Chiang Kai-shek's inauguration ceremony, making the transnational anticolonialism of *Patriotic Spirit* less relevant than its appeal to Chinese nationalism. The *News*'s November 11 review of *Patriotic Spirit* also conflates the film's message with nationalism, claiming that *Patriotic Spirit* had the power to incite vigorous political, nationalist action on the part of its audience. In the *Shanghai News*, a November 29 article describes it as "an excellent art piece that can stimulate national characteristics [C: *guominxing*]," and another remarks that *Patriotic Spirit* is a rare success story in Chinese film history in that it attained both commercial success and critical acclaim. Whereas Chinese audiences appeared to entirely appropriate *Patriotic Spirit*, suppressing its transnational

dimensions for the sake of nationalism, that appropriation and integration of An's story into Chinese culture over two decades, I argue, led unexpectedly to a rupture in Chinese nationalism that the next section will analyze.



Figure 5. Still photo from *Patriotic Spirit* with caption noting the true story behind the film. Source: *New Movie Star* (1928, 33).

### An Chungŭn and a Rupture in Nationalism

One Chinese source in 1928 explicitly, albeit briefly, mentioned the Korean nationality of the protagonist in *Patriotic Spirit*. This example shows that Chinese discourse and narratives about that transnational artwork were not entirely obscured by hegemonic Chinese nationalism. In 1928, the magazine *New Movie Star* (C: *Xin yingxing*) declared that *Patriotic Spirit* dramatized the true story of a Korean anticolonial activist: “*Patriotic Spirit* is a drama based on the real story of a Korean, An Chungŭn, who assassinated Itō Hirobumi, the prime minister of Japan” (see figure 5). According to the magazine, “Chōng's *Patriotic Spirit* has different [artistic] colors in comparison to other domestic [Chinese] films.” Although *New Movie Star* failed to further explain how the film reconstructed Korean history within the Chinese context, unlike other print media, it did clearly point to An Chungŭn's story as the film's basis. Whereas numerous newspaper articles and other magazine reviews either reduced *Patriotic Spirit* to a Chinese nationalist film or highlighted the film's formalistic aspects only—such as the actors' performances, the use of light and props, camera techniques, and editing and directing skills—

*New Movie Star* clarified that the 1909 anticolonial struggle of Korea against the Japanese empire was the actual model of *Patriotic Spirit*.

It was not until the 1931 Wanbaoshan Incident that newspaper coverage of the film located An's actions primarily in their own political context. That year represented a crucial moment in which tensions in Sino-Korean relations were exacerbated due to this violent conflict, whose death toll exceeded one hundred. In April 1931, Chinese official Hao Yongde granted a contract to eight Korean farmers to lease land in Wanbaoshan without approval from the local government. One of those eight farmers, Li Sūnghun, and roughly 180 other Korean farmers moved to the Wanbaoshan area, initiating an irrigation project to cultivate their lands, which caused problems in nearby land held by Chinese farmers. The Chinese farmers petitioned the local government to stop the Korean farmers' construction, a demand that ultimately forced the Koreans to discontinue the project. The Japanese consulate in Manchuria had its police suppress the Chinese farmers' opposition, pushing ahead the irrigation construction, which was completed in June 1931. On July 1, some four hundred Chinese farmers, provoked by the completion of the irrigation project, broke out in protest and buried about one kilometer of the irrigated path, which led to a clash between the two groups: the Chinese police and farmers versus the Japanese police and Korean farmers (Zhongguo guomindang xuanchuanbu 1931; Kim 2010). A number of participants in that initial conflict were injured, but there was no loss of life.

Taking advantage of this tension between the Chinese and the Koreans in Manchuria, the Japanese, as part of their unofficial "Discord-Provoking Policy" (J: *rikan seisaku* 離間政策), manipulated a Korean journalist—Kim Yisam from the *Chosŏn Daily* (K: *Chosŏn ilbo*)—into writing a misleading and provocative article about the Sino-Korean schism in Manchuria on July 2, 1931, in which he claimed that the conflict on July 1 had resulted in tragic death of a number of Korean farmers. As Yi's study (2012) has demonstrated, in the colonial era the significant economic power that overseas Chinese exerted in Korea generated discontent and ethnonational feeling against Chinese among Koreans. The Sino-Korean tension in Wanbaoshan and the false, sensational reportage about it catalyzed and intensified anti-Chinese sentiment in Korea. More crucially, when the Chinese consulate requested that the Government-General protect overseas Chinese upon the outbreak of the incident, the Government-General failed to dispatch a sufficient number of police to control the violence. As a result, 127 Chinese living in Korea were

killed and 195 injured; three Koreans were killed and 33 injured (Yi 2012, 417–477). In retaliation, Chinese killed scores of Koreans (the exact number is unclear) near the Korean-Chinese border. Although intellectuals and activists in both countries urged the masses not to be swayed by Japan's colonial scheme, the hostility between the two countries reached a climax in 1931 (Kikuchi 2007).

Despite a wide range of Chinese nationalisms, from exclusive to inclusive strands, previous scholarship has argued that the Han/non-Han divide was at the heart of Republican-era Chinese nationalism (Yokoyama 2009). Yet some examples of Chinese responses to the Wanbaoshan Incident, discussed below, show that An Chunggŭn's true story escaped the Han/non-Han binary underlying the hegemonic Chinese nationalism. As my analysis of three reactions to the Wanbaoshan Incident demonstrates, the Chinese placed An Chunggŭn in the Korean-yet-non-Korean category, thereby failing to delimit his nationality. I argue that these three cases, among many similar others, thus show that the symbol of An Chunggŭn within Chinese discourses and narratives over time came to deconstruct the dichotomy that the Chinese imposed between Han and non-Han at the height of anti-Koreanism in China. The Chinese critics examined here simultaneously recognized An's Korean nationality and refused to impose national characteristics on An. Hence, I argue, An became a symbolic aporia within the Republican-era discursive paradigm.

The following examples of Chinese use of An's assassination of Itō reveal that Chinese discourses situated An in an ambiguous category, distinguishing him from other "blameworthy" Koreans who were cast as "culturally inferior" non-Hans. The distinction between Han and non-Han is based on Hans' supposed cultural superiority, through which Hans are supposed to civilize or edify "barbaric" non-Hans. When condemning other ethnicities for their savage minds and low culture, Han-Chinese intellectuals offered Han culture and knowledge as a model that other ethnicities should embrace and emulate. What underlay Han nationalism was the idea that non-Hans could not improve themselves without adopting the Hans' high culture. Upon the outbreak of the Wanbaoshan Incident, however, Han-Chinese critics suggested that An Chunggŭn's legacy offered the solution to Korean "barbarity." As a corrective to Korean propensities, therefore, An's activism became part of Han culture. Hence, the nationalist logic was ruptured, because although An was non-Han, he belonged to a Han culture that could rectify

and discipline non-Hans. Due to this liminal quality, An Chunggŭn as a symbol unsettled the Han/non-Han divide, deconstructing Republican-era nationalism.

The first example of 1930s appropriation of An Chunggŭn's story underscores the opposition between individuals and the government in the midst of a national crisis. On December 11, 1932, the *Shanghai News* reported that a ninety-three-year-old man, Ma Xiangbo, had urged the Chinese to support the militia that fought the Japanese puppet regime in Manchuria. Strikingly, Ma quotes An, using the words that best represent An's transnational vision of Eastern solidarity, although Ma employs these words to support his own anti-institutionalism by highlighting An's individual and direct action. Arguing that it is urgent that every household in China support the militia of the Northern Expedition and not be subjugated by Japanese colonial power, Ma quotes from An's essay, which promoted a Sino-Korean alliance that challenges ethnonationalism:

My country's enemy is also China's enemy. I killed Itō for the relationship of our two nations and also for the great mission [C: *dashi* 大事] of the East. The Chinese people ought to understand what lies at the heart of my political path and realize that the two nations share the same communal fate. In so doing, [we] ought to save twenty million people of my country and four hundred million of China, who are amidst dire suffering [C: *shuihuo zhi zhong*]... Until Korea achieves independence, the Chinese will not have high-pillowed [i.e., carefree] days.

It is not political leaders or institutions, Ma argues, but pioneering small groups and individuals like An Chunggŭn who have built and shaped Chinese history. Ma further contends that the Heaven, the Boxers (C: *Yihetuan*), and the Master of Eight Countries (C: *Baguo zhi chi*) had determined world history at crucial junctures. In Ma's account, An Chunggŭn represents the core of Han-Chinese history and also what has made that history move forward. Ma not only puts An Chunggŭn in the same category as the Boxers and the Master of Eight Countries that embody the Han-Chinese cultural legacy, but also relies on An's political philosophy, even more than Han examples, to endorse Daoism and anti-institutionalism in the modern context. Ma argues that An epitomizes the collective Han-Chinese experience, especially its radical, subversive aspects. Hence, in this piece, An symbolizes a Han-Chinese characteristic that defies any institutional constraints, including ethnonationalist ones. While acknowledging An's Korean nationality, Ma still argues that An exemplifies one of the most crucial parts of Han-Chinese history, culture, and

lived experience. This example therefore shows that by 1932 An had become a sign that disrupted the ethnonational boundary between the Korean and the Chinese.

The second example, a *Shanghai News* article dated September 4, 1931, introduced to its readers the fifth volume of *China Magazine* (C: *Zhonghua zazhi*), the contents of which included articles about the infamous 1931 Wanbaoshan Incident, other forms of Sino-Korean tension, and Jing Wan's biography of An Chunggūn. Referencing *Patriotic Spirit*, an unidentified author draws on the film and other sources to criticize Koreans for killing innocent Chinese out of anger and not being able to emulate An Chunggūn. The author stresses that if Koreans acted as An Chunggūn had (either in reality or in the film)—though not explaining precisely what that way is—then the tragic Wanbaoshan event would not have occurred. Rather than suggesting Han-Chinese examples that Koreans ought to follow, the author endorses the Korean case of An as an ideal to cultivate the “uncivilized” Korean mind. As discussed earlier, however, An neither lived in China nor became acquainted with any Chinese in his life. Even during a short visit to Shanghai in 1905, he contacted only Korean expatriates, rather than Chinese activists, to seek assistance for anti-Japanese movements. Furthermore, a range of political, religious, and philosophical ideas—Catholicism, Confucianism, Asianism, and nationalism—constituted An's highly syncretic thoughts (Rausch 2012). An's autobiography, of which Chinese renditions were published in Shanghai in the 1910s and 1920s and circulated in China afterwards, shows a strong Catholic influence on An throughout his political career. Chinese newspapers also often mentioned An's close ties with Catholic priests during and following An's trial. As much as An appeared to be proximate to Han-Chinese culture, teachings and thoughts of non-Chinese origin formed a central part of An's philosophy. Yet the author of the *Shanghai News* article nonetheless contends that An, rather than other Han-Chinese national martyrs, should serve as a political model to “enlighten” non-Han Koreans. If the article's intended audience had been Koreans, admonishing them would have been a reason for mentioning An Chunggūn, because Korean readers would be more familiar with political figures of the same nationality. However, its target audience was Chinese who felt outraged about Koreans' killing of innocent overseas Chinese. Most importantly, the article's overall tone is not only ethnonationalist but also Sinocentric imperialist, a stance that attributes the problem of the Wanbaoshan Incident not to a political situation between China and Korea but to a lack of Koreans' cultural cultivation. Acclaiming An Chunggūn in this context thus indicates that An was deemed to embody Han

culture to fix “barbaric minds,” beyond simply implying that An was exceptional and better than other Koreans. Within this logic, An comes to represent Han culture despite being a non-Han Korean who neither had contact with living Han culture nor sought an anticolonial ideal in Han-centered tradition, a contradiction that reveals a rupture in Chinese nationalism.

The final example of a Chinese response to the Wanbaoshan Incident also situates An Chunggŭn ambiguously—as Korean yet non-Korean—showing that the Chinese nationalist demarcation of cultural and ethnic belongings failed to be held. On October 21, 1931, the *Shanghai News* published an article by Xu Jie titled “Outdated Method of Annexing Korea,” which stated that “Korea has been my country’s tributary state,” suggesting that even four decades after the official end of Korea’s tributary relation to China, some Chinese still viewed Korea from an imperialist perspective. Xu Jie delineates how Korea was colonized by Japan to caution Chinese readers that Korea’s tragic history might foreshadow their own country’s political future. He describes how Koreans resisted Japanese oppression (e.g., by forming myriad anticolonial groups, both public and underground; destroying railroads; and cutting electrical power to public facilities of the colonial government). Xu Jie underlines that although all of these efforts turned out to be futile, “only An Chunggŭn’s assassination of Itō in Harbin was an acknowledgeable resistance [C: *chaqiang renyi*].... Although I have described the fall of the Korean nation-state, I have no time to lament for them.” Xu’s determined apathy and dismissive stance toward colonized Koreans reflect the prevailed anti-Korean sentiment in China following the Wanbaoshan Incident, rather than a reasonable critique of Korean anticolonialism. First, when asserting that An made an exceptional case for anti-Japanese resistance, Xu fails to provide his readers with any evidence. Second, Xu’s reason for not sympathizing with the plight of colonized Koreans—the lack of time—has nothing to do with political, cultural, or historical elements, indicating an irrational aspect of nationalism. Third, the death of Itō actually prompted Japan to accelerate a colonizing process in Korea with more coercive measures, a historical-political fact that several Chinese journalists and critics have pinpointed, but that Xu’s account obscures. Finally, the political impact of Korean anticolonial movements in the 1910s and 1920s on East Asia, which ranged from the 1919 March First Uprising to the 1929 Kwangju Student Protest, far surpassed that of An Chunggŭn’s action. The contrast between Xu’s assessment of An Chunggŭn and the actual limits of An’s activism thus shows that the Chinese discursive practice of commemoration and revival turned An’s true story into a myth immune to Han-

nationalist condemnation of Koreans. Xu's refusal to criticize An Chunggŭn with no reasonable grounds betrays the unarticulated Chinese consciousness or will to categorize An as not-Korean. That is to say, what makes Xu's discussion of An Chunggŭn a discursive aporia is not because Xu contends that An is an exceptional case, but because Xu does so with no explicable reasons. By attributing both Korean and non-Korean qualities to An Chunggŭn, therefore, Xu's article symptomizes a rupture in Republican-era Chinese nationalism.

As these examples illustrate, Chinese discourse about the Korean figure An Chunggŭn confounded the structure of Chinese nationalism—the opposition between us and them, or Han and non-Han—thereby revealing the limitations of nationalist appropriation. That is to say, even when Chinese appropriated Korean culture, that appropriation unwittingly caused a rupture within Chinese nationalism. Although reactions to the 1931 Wanbaoshan Incident manifested that latent change, the constellation of existing political events, social discourses, and literary and cinematic narratives overdetermined that rupture within Chinese nationalism.

## Conclusion

By tracking changes in Chinese audiences' responses to An Chunggŭn's story before and after the release of *Patriotic Spirit* and the tragic Wanbaoshan Incident, this article has highlighted a twofold aspect of Chinese nationalist power that excluded other nations and minor ethnicities yet inadvertently included what the Chinese themselves excluded. An Chunggŭn as a symbol came to escape the nationalist distinction between Koreans and Chinese, or the opposition between Han and non-Han, as Sino-Korean cultural relations evolved in the late 1920s and 1930s. As Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism has illuminated, the collapse of an opposition is part of the system rather than an exception in humanistic discourses (1978). Whereas Derrida identified examples that preceded an opposition, my analysis has uncovered how the sign of An Chunggŭn shifted from a specific referent embodying Korean nationality to a signifier that disrupted the Han/non-Han divide over two decades.

Chŏng Kitak's *Patriotic Spirit* in Shanghai and the Chinese responses to the story also reveal which aesthetic strategies colonized artists in this foreign, semicolonial state were able to take when deprived of means to reject Chinese nationalism. Unable to challenge ethnonationalism openly, the diasporic artist Chŏng subtly insinuated transnationalism while



catering to the political and artistic demands of his Chinese audience, as evidenced in his rewriting of An's life into a Sino-Korean narrative in which the Chinese played indispensable roles in realizing An's anticolonial ideals. However, that compromise failed to bring the story to a conclusion. Although *Patriotic Spirit* was appropriated and transformed by Chinese contexts and demands, it also helped make An's story part of Chinese culture as An Chunggŭn replaced and usurped the authority of Chinese anticolonial activists. Like Lydia Liu's (1995) and Michel de Certeau's (1984) analyses of how literary and everyday practices of the powerless become politically productive without rejecting or challenging any superior force, this article demonstrates how a Korean artist's aesthetic practice in Shanghai gradually brought about a rupture in Chinese ethnonationalism without explicitly resisting that nationalism. The strategy of escaping nationalism without leaving it, an example of what de Certeau calls the "consumption" by the powerless of products of the powerful, concerns ways of using and adapting what belongs to the powerful to meet the interests and ends of the powerless. The diasporic artist and colonized Korean Chŏng in semicolonial Shanghai did not resist but rather employed Chinese nationalism to his own anticolonial end. Hence, my analysis has shown how the colonized film artist deflected colonial and nationalist power in China in a way that involved political compromise, yet that compromise ultimately generated a rupture in Chinese nationalist ideology.

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### Notes

- 1 Upon the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the Japanese emperor proclaimed that Japan was waging war "to protect peace in the East and the independence of Korea [from Russia's invasion]" (Ichikawa 1979, 143). However, following the Empire of Japan's victory, Japan forced Korea to sign the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty (1905) and dissolve its existing political parties. To revoke this unequal treaty, Korea's King Kochong secretly dispatched envoys to the Hague Conference on World Peace (1907), yet the attending countries refused to talk to them. That "underhanded" attempt led to the 1907 Japan-Korea treaty that provided Resident-General Itō Hirobumi with the authority to govern Korea's internal affairs. King Kochong was dethroned as a result, and Korea's military sovereignty was annulled, a dramatic political change that prompted the Korean masses, including An Chunggŭn, to mobilize anti-Japanese militia movements. For a historical-political background of the 1909 event and An's trial process, see Nakano (1984, 1996). For a detailed study of the historical Japan-Korea relations,

- Itō's political career, and An Chunggŭn's activism, see Ichikawa (1979). For an analysis of the complex religious, political, and philosophical bases of An's anticolonial activism, see Hwang (2009) and Rausch (2012). For the responses of Chinese, Russian, and other Western journalists to An's assassination of Itō, see Ichikawa (1979, 186–208) and Bang (2010). Bang's article introduces a few Chinese and Russian articles that critiqued An Chunggŭn and lamented Itō's death, a stance that most previous Korean-language studies of An overlooked. For studies that focus on Korea-Russia relations, see Pak (2009), Sumbirtseva (Сумбирцева) (2010), and Sin (2010). For studies that compare An's view of Russia to others', see Tikhonov (2009) and Finch (2012).
- 2 Ye Tianni's *Biography of An Chunggŭn* (C: *An Chonggen chuan*) and Zheng Yuan's *An Chunggŭn* are Chinese-language biographies of An by Chinese authors. The exact years of publication are unknown, as the copyright pages of both books have been lost. However, scholars conjecture that Ye's biography was published in 1914 or 1915 and Zheng's was published in the 1920s. A Chinese-language biography of An by Pak Ŭnsik, a Korean scholar living in Shanghai, appeared in the first issue of *Republican Report* (C: *Minguo huibao*) in 1913 and was later published as an independent volume, the publication year of which is also unknown. Chang notes that a number of Chinese poems also dramatized the 1909 assassination. In 1915, the magazine *Virtue-Esteem Bulletin* (C: *Chongde gongbao*) serialized a novel dramatizing An; in 1921, *Historical Novel/Drama in Qing* (C: *Qing shi yanyi*) by Lu Shi'e also dramatized An's true story. Among all genres, plays were the most frequent and drew much attention from mass audiences (Chang 2010).
- 3 The periodicals include *East Magazine* (C: *Dongfang zazhi*), *China* (C: *Zhonghua*, Shanghai-based), *Benefitting All Round* (C: *Guangyi congbao*), *New Century* (C: *Xin shiji*), *Daxia Collection* (C: *Daxia congkan*), *People* (C: *Guomin*, Shanghai-based), *Foreign Affairs* (C: *Waijiao bao*), and *South* (C: *Nan Bao*), among many others.
- 4 The 1842 Treaty of Nanjing made Shanghai a semicolonial treaty port, a special zone whereby imperialists reached the interior of China only indirectly. Since the semicolonial state delimited imperialist power within treaty ports, assistance from local elites and merchants was indispensable for European and Japanese empires to attain commercial-financial interest. For studies probing interdependency between imperialists and Chinese merchants and elites, see Walker (1999) and Goodman (2000). Goodman's article on the 1893 Shanghai Silver Jubilee offers excellent insight on Shanghainese capacities of reconfiguring the European-led festival as a Chinese event, a novel appropriation that recognizes the presence of foreign powers yet simultaneously celebrates the Empress Dowager's birthday and native-place identities. Although Goodman focused on one specific moment prior to the first Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895), the ingenious Chinese culture of appropriating semicolonial, modern practices continued through the 1920s and 1930s. Chinese did not persistently resist Western culture, yet "advanced" European influences failed to replace or marginalize "backward" Chinese culture, unlike other Asian countries. Instead, both modern Western and traditional Chinese culture thrived side by side. Japanese condemned this resilient quality of Chinese culture, calling Shanghai a "demon city" (Liu [Ryū] 2000). For studies examining the fragmented, multiple, and multilayered forms of semicolonial domination that lacks institutionalized colonialism in most parts of China, showing the partial and limited power of imperialists

- in China, see Cohen (1984), Duara (1995, 224), and Shih (2001). For Shanghai's cosmopolitanism as a consequence of semicolonial cultural conditions that go beyond the dictates of nationalism, see Bergère (1981) and Shih (2001). For a literature review of Shanghai studies from the 1990s to 2010, see Fogel (2010).
- 5 Sino-Japanese relations during this period also provide an important context for Chinese discourse and narratives about An Chunggūn. Since the late 1910s, Japan-China relations had become multifaceted, as large-scale anticolonial movements in Japan's (semi-)colonies broke out, and the United States arose as a world power (Yonetani 2006). From the late 1910s to 1930s, Chinese and Japanese intellectuals exchanged ideas and endeavored to mobilize international mass movements against the Japanese Empire and Chinese warlords, linking the momentum of the Chinese May Fourth Movement and that of the Taisho democracy movement (Yonetani 2006; Tanaka 1993, 276–277). Japanese thinkers—such as Yoshino Sakuzō (1878–1933) and Yanaihara Tadao (1893–1961) in the interwar years and Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945) and Ozaki Hotsumi (1901–1944) during World War II—viewed China, Taiwan, and Korea not as backward colonies to be dominated, but as potential allies for Japan. Previous studies have shown that China affected policy making in the metropole, and therefore the colony-metropole relationship was not unidirectional. However, by the early 1930s, international and transnational movements within Asia became distinctively militarist and imperialist (Conrad and Duara 2013, 22). As multifaceted as Sino-Japanese relations were, China's antagonism toward Japan prevailed throughout the Republican era.
- 6 From 1928 until the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937), six Korean film artists were active in Shanghai, as Yi (1995) and An (2001) note. Kim Ilsong (known as Zheng Yisong in China) played a lead character in *Patriotic Spirit* (1928), *Flaming Cave and Sword* (C: *Huo ku gangdao* 1928), *Three Heroes Compete for a Beauty* (C: *Sanxiong duo mei* 1928), and *Woman Pirate* (C: *Nü haidao* 1929). Li Kyōngson directed *Yangtze River* (1930), in which Korean Chōn Ch'anggūn played a lead character, and Han Ch'angsōp was its cameraman. Literary critic Kim Kwangchu's film reviews appeared in *Film Art Theories* (C: *Dianying yishi lun*) and Chinese-language newspapers. Finally, Chōng Kitak had the most successful career in Shanghai among Korean film artists. See note 7 below.
- 7 In Korean film studies, Yi Yōng-il's 1995 article is the first study to identify such work, which has more recently been examined in an MA thesis by An T'aegūn (2001). Notwithstanding their important contributions, neither work analyzes the films in depth or examines the responses of Chinese media. Also, the existing scholarship on Republican-era Chinese film has not addressed Chinese-language films made by foreigners. Pioneering studies by Yingjin Zhang (1999) and Paul Pickowicz (2012) have illuminated highly dynamic, multifarious, and polyvalent characteristics of early Chinese films in terms of aesthetic qualities and sociopolitical themes. More recent works by Zhen Zhang (2005) and Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar (2006) problematize the nationalist assumption underlying previous studies and stress the overall transnational character of film media. Zhen Zhang redefines the Republican Shanghai film culture as a mediator of the global cinematic “language” of Hollywood film and Chinese experiences and sensibilities. Similarly, Berry and Farquhar focus on the constituted nature of nationalism by foregrounding Sinophone films produced outside the mainland (e.g., in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and other areas of Chinese diaspora). These works

- reveal the varied themes and forms of Republican Chinese films, spanning feminist, socialist, nationalist, anticolonial, and anticapitalist works. However, even when extant studies challenge the idea of Chineseness through the notion of transnationalism, namely China's relations with the West and the Chinese diaspora, they rarely analyze Asian filmmakers' works made and shown in Shanghai.
- 8 Chinese cinema in the 1920s and 1930s emerged out of tensions between the influence of American film and that of Chinese traditions, as Zhen Zhang (2005) has shown. Miriam Hansen (2000) has cogently argued that 1920s and 1930s Shanghai cinema falls into her critical category, "a sensory-reflexive horizon" for the contradictory experience of modernity, an aesthetic quality through which a film conveys different meanings to different people. Film offered the Chinese public a vernacular whereby mass audiences found expression and recognition by others in public. Shanghai cinema of the 1920s and 1930s as an instance of vernacular modernism provides us with an analytical tool to examine film's unique role in articulating and disseminating a distinctive historical experience of the time. Yingjin Zhang (2003) notes that although the success of *Orphan Rescues Grandfather* (1923) caused a rapid rise in Chinese film production, increased prices of film stock and overproduction of low-quality films resulted in the bankruptcy of small companies. "From 179 companies in 1927, the number nose-dived to 20 in 1928, and fewer than a dozen were in business by 1930" (Zhang 2003, 9). Upon Chiang Kai-shek's takeover of Shanghai in 1927, the Nationalist Party strove to regulate influence of Hollywood movies and Western theater and to establish a new civic culture for the Chinese-administered portions of Shanghai, an attempt that included repression of leftist films. Zhang (2003) also notes that the establishment of the Nationalist central government in Nanjing in 1927 interfered with the market-driven characteristic of Chinese film production, an enforced cultural shift that promoted nationalist ideology. The Nationalists' top-down endeavor to police private leisure ended up as an unsuccessful project due to little support from masses and immense corruption (Wakeman 1995).
- 9 In 1926, Chǒng unsuccessfully tried to export Li Kyǒngson's film *Crown of Phoenix* (K: *Ponghwang ūi myǒllyukwan*), produced by Chǒng Kitak Studio, to Shanghai. Since moving to Shanghai, Chǒng had made films exclusively with Great China & Lily from 1928 to 1930. In 1928 Chǒng directed, in addition to *Patriotic Spirit*, two more films in which he also played a lead character: *Three Heroes Compete for the Beauty* (C: *Sanxiong duo mei*) and *Flaming Cave and Steel Sword* (C: *Huo ku gangdao*). In 1929, Chǒng directed two films: *Woman Pirate* (C: *Nü haidao*) and *Flower of Screen* (C: *Yinmu zhi hua*). The latter is also known as *Romance of Liyuan* (C: *Liyuan Yanshi*), which was written by Zhu Shouju. That same year Chǒng played a lead character in four other films: *Pearl Crown* (C: *Zhenzhu guan*), *Great Destruction of Nine Dragon Mountain* (C: *Dapo jiulongshan*), *Burning Down Nine Dragon Mountain* (C: *Huashao jiulongshan*), and *Precious Mirror of Desire* (C: *Qingyu baojian*). In 1929, all the six films that Chǒng either directed or starred in fell into the martial arts genre. In 1930, Chǒng directed, starred in, and wrote the screenplay of *Knight in Black* (C: *Heiyi qishi*). When Great China & Lily restructured in 1931, Chǒng left for Tokyo, where he directed *March Song of Shanghai* (C: *Shanghai jinxing qu*) for Imperial Cinema Company (C: *Diguo yinghua gongsi*). Chǒng had completed approximately half of the film when the company forbade

him from continuing to shoot due to perceived sympathy with China's boycott of "enemy goods," including those produced by the Japanese. Chǒng returned to Shanghai, as Imperial Cinema Company forced him to stop filming. Although Chǒng wanted to make new-style films, he was unable to proceed for several months due to a lack of funds. In 1932, United China Cooperation (C: *Lianhua yingye gongsi*) embarked on a new project to revitalize domestic films, and it invited Chǒng to participate as a director. Two months after joining United China, he completed the film *A Way Out* (C: *Chulu*, 1933). In 1933 and 1934, Chǒng directed *A Way Out* (C: *Guangming zhi lu*) and *Goodbye Shanghai* (C: *Zaihuiba Shanghai*)—his last film—respectively.

- 10 Chinese audiences in the 1920s enthusiastically responded to Griffith's films. *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was especially well received, "arous[ing] considerable patriotism among Chinese audiences" (Chen 2013, 27) despite U.S. controversies due to the film's racism. Chen (2013) argues that D.W. Griffith was the single most influential Hollywood director in China during the silent film era. Given Griffith's fame and popularity in 1920s Chinese culture, the reviews acclaiming Chǒng more than Griffith show Chinese enthusiasm toward *Patriotic Spirit*. For more details on the Chinese reception of Griffith's works and Griffith's influence on Chinese perception of film, see Chen (2013).

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