Exploring *Mandam* [Comic Talk] as a Unique Form of Political Entertainment in Korea During the Japanese Colonial Period

Kyung Han YOU
Assistant Professor
The Minerva College
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Cheonjangsan-ro 7 gil 10-11, Dongdaemoon-gu, Seoul, Korea
kyunghanyou@gmail.com

Abstract: Using a lens of cultural industry approach, this study explores the rise and fall of the political entertainment with a focus on specific moments associated with the trajectory of Korean political entertainment in public setting. A historical overview of Korean political entertainment traces back to the 1930s when *Mandam,* a unique kind of political satiric talk became popular in 1930s. *Mandam* played a satiric role in influencing public opinion on political affairs, particularly led by the early generation of *Mandam* storytellers. Their criticism centered on Japanese colonial rule, even though *Mandam* was limited in terms of freedom of speech during this period. Furthermore, this study highlights that the great popularity of *Mandam* was driven by business organizations for the commercial purpose. *Mandam* was placed at the core of intricate relationships among the related industries. In sum, the present study concludes that as distinctive form blending political information and entertainment, *Mandam* played a vital role in expressing individuals' political opinions under the communicative circumstances during the Japanese colonial period.
Keywords: *Mandam*, political entertainment, Japanese colonial period, freedom of speech

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, blended programming in the form of political entertainment television has risen in popularity, becoming an influential way of disseminating political social information in a variety of settings. This phenomenon gives rise to questions regarding what drives such a boost in political entertainment in specific media environments and how the format provides challenging opportunities to vitalize our democracy in terms of critical reflections of the real. This is particularly so, on contemporary television, which incorporates the real into the mimetic and thereby blurs the boundaries between entertainment and traditional news, satire and polemic, jokes and serious political talks, and meaning

and pleasure. Such hybrid form of news and entertainment is more prominent in the US media outlet than in other countries. However, as discussed in previous studies (e.g., Baym & Jones, 2012; Day, 2011), the rise of political entertainment is presently a worldwide phenomenon inasmuch as no matter what the context, the media play a critical role in distributing authoritative information about the real, and it has existed in the diverse ways that it adapts to differing political economic contexts in many countries (e.g., Bardan, 2012; Harrington, 2012; Imre, 2012; Kleinen-von Königslöw and Keel, 2012; Sienkiewicz, 2012).

In line with the previous research, this study pays a particular attention to specific moments that are closely associated with the trajectory of political entertainment in order to tackle questions pertaining to this genre in both private and public setting. A historical overview of Korean political entertainment traces back to the 1930s when *Mandam,* a unique kind of political satiric talk became popular among ordinary Korean people. The present study views *Mandam* as the initial boost of Korean political entertainment, and verbal subversion of the repressive political power by constituting an important and prominent way to criticize Japanese rule. In particular, this study emphasizes that the great popularity of *Mandam* was driven by business organizations for the commercial purpose, rather than for the political purpose. Therefore, using a cultural industries approach, the present study explores the initial boost of Korean political entertainment in the specific context of the relationship among the state, economy, and culture in Korea during Japanese colonial period.

MANDAM AND THE INITIAL BOOM OF POLITICAL ENTERTAINMENT IN KOREA

The historical roots of Korean political humor can be found in *Mandam*, a musical talk in the theatre of the mid-1920s to 1940s. *Mandaum* is known as an comic interlude between intermissions at theater in the late 1920s, and its form was frequently combined with related forms such as *Jaedam* [sketch], farce, and *huigageuk* [comic opera] in that *Jaedam* and *huigageuk* were commonplace in clown performance in the traveling theater, which are clearly distinguished from *Mandam*. *Mandam* refers to satiric storytelling that relies on lampooning given social conditions, political power, and other microphysical powers. Shin Bool-Chool, the

most popular *Mandam* storyteller, offered this definition of *Mandam* in a monthly magazine of the day:

"*Mandam* is not a lecture, nor public speech. It is different from *Jaedam,* and even different from a joke. *Mandam* is characterized as the use of humor in verbal interactions and the liberal use of irony. That is, *Mandam* is the art of speech… In my opinion, fun is a prerequisite for *Mandam*, we do not necessarily enumerate several wonderful euphuistic words to make a good *Mandam*. Rather, a sarcastic, cutting remark based on truth is necessary." (Samcheolli, 1935: 105)

In this contribution, Shin Bool-chool described *Mandam* as an "art of speech" wherein sarcastic remarks and devices as irony are combined with a funny story in order to produce a commentary that is entertaining and that gets at some "truth." In fact, Shin Bool-chool's definition is very close to the definition of satire. According to Kim (2004: 157), Bool-chool offers three aspects in his definition of *Mandam*. Firstly, Bool-chool notes that *Mandam* should offer satiric and educational content about a societal phenomenon. Secondly, he distinguishes *Mandam* from *Jaedam* and other kinds of comedic devices by stating that *Jaedam* has the sole function of evoking laughter, whereas the function of *Mandam* is rhetorical subversion. In fact, Shin Bool-chool performed with the famous *Jaedam* storyteller Park Chun-jae, who was the most popular entertainer prior to the advent of *Mandam* as performed by Shin Bool-chool. Although Park Chun-jae and other famous *Jaedam* storytellers, such as Park Chun-bok and Lee Eun-gwan, attracted large audiences using comedic devices, *Jaedam* was not suitable for talking in a modern comic way. Due to *Jaedam*'s limitation in this regard, Bool-chool based his work on *mandam form,* which enabled eloquent speakers to tell a variety of funny, satiric stories in a flexible way. Thirdly, by distinguishing *Mandam* from some forms of foreign comedic talk, particularly from the Japanese comic talk called *Daesibsarang,* Shin Book-chool highlights *Mandam* as a Korean form that could contribute to Koreans' national consciousness and thus to the nation's liberation from Japan. Therefore, Bool-chool argues that, among various types of verbal expressions such as lectures, orations, *Jaedam*, *yadam* [unofficial historical tale], and *Mandam*, oratory and *Mandam* are the most effective methods of attracting public attention. Further, verbal expression could be perfect when the advantages of oratory and *Mandam* are combined (Ban, 2000: 65–67).

MANDAM AS A POLITICAL ENTERTEINMENT TEXT

As *Mandam* form grew in popularity, the Japanese Governor-General of Korea (JGGK) began to censor the production of records in June 1933 in the name of regulating immoral behavior and maintaining public order. Eighty-nine recordings were prohibited from sale between 1933 and 1934, 44 for breach of public order and 45 for promoting immoral behavior (Maeil Shinbo, 1935). However, most of the records prohibited from sale focused on content that might promote resistance to Japanese colonial rule (Ban, 2000: 201). Indeed, *Seoul Sagye* [Four Seasons in Seoul] and *Arirang* were prohibited on the pretext of breach of public order. Several *Mandam* records starring Shin Bool-chool such as Seoul Gugyeong [A Sightseeing Trip to Seoul] and Yuhaeng Sogok Janghanga [A short piece from a popular song called "Everlasting Regret'] were prohibited for sales under the guise of breach of public order (Samcheolli, 1936: 268).

Given that such harsh institutional censorship was influential to *Mandam* content, it can be estimated that *Mandam* played a critical role in forming public opinion at that time. According to Kim (2004), *Mandam* had two distinctive functions: the role of mass education and the role of critical reflection on daily life. Also, Ban (2000: 190-191) noted that it was small wonder that *Mandam* records were regulated by the Japanese in the 1930s and 1940s because the various satiric allegories in *Mandam* were designed to express very topical political opinions. In 1940, Shin Bool-chool went on performance tours with Lee Eun-gwan, Kim Yoon-sim, and Park Chun-bok.

Furthermore, there found three distinctive types of *Mandam*: *dok-Mandam* [*Mandam* monologue], *minyo-Mandam* [*Mandam* song], and *daehwa-Mandam* [*Mandam* conversation] (Jeon, 2005). Of these forms, monologue and conversation *Mandam* were more suited to rhetorical criticism than was *minyo-Mandam,* which had been developed in the 1950s as a popular form of song that eliminated verbal expressions. However, as a specific form of *Mandam, manyo* [comic song] reflected popular culture, modern family life, the advent of the modern boy and girl, and ordinary daily lives, even though it was a comic form produced for the purpose of entertainment (Park, 2009). Thus, it can be discussed that every *Mandam* form played a critical role in the satiric reflection of the dark side of real or troubled times rather than reflecting a longing for modern Western culture or blindly following cultural modernization at that time.

More specifically, the news articles and documents show that *Mandam* was very satiric and played a role in influencing public opinion on political affairs, particularly led by Shin Bool-chool. In fact, even though his *Mandams* focused on critically reflecting what Korea was really like under Japanese colonial rule, many of *Mandam*s on his albums were restricted to reflecting only very limited aspects of daily life. There appears to have been an unavoidable gap between satiric and topical talk and entertainment talk seasoned with philosophy in the social conditions of the time (Lee, 2011: 40).

However, explicit criticism was expressed in many *Mandam* concerts. Particularly Shin Bool-Chool's *Mandam* was very critical and satric. According to several articles, Shin Bool-Chool's satire began to lean to the left after Korea's liberation from Japan. At the May Day commencement meeting in 1946, he gave a *Mandam* monologue entitled Doggaebiwa doknib [Goblin and Independence] in which he criticized the troubled situation of Korea. Shin Bool-Chool often utilized a Horatian satire entitled Keunko dachinda [Pay Dearly] to criticize the US military administration's take-over of political power from Japan. Keunko dachinda actually had a dual meaning; i.e., it refers both to paying dearly for something, but it means a big nose, a metonymy of Westerners, has been badly hurt. For this satire, Bool-chool was arrested for violating MacArthur's decree 2, specifically for hat was referred to as by slandering the Allied Forces. Several articles (e.g., *Donga Daily,* June 15, 1946) noted that after his arrest Shin Bool-chool stopped *Mandam* performance. After his arrest, not only did Bool-chool quit as a *Mandam* performer, he also quit his other activities, eventually defecting to North Korea for political reasons. For this reason, there are relatively few studies on whether Shin Bool-chool continued as a performer in North Korea. Only a few documents (e.g., Kim, 2004: 148) briefly noted that he continued to give *Mandam* concerts in North Korea until 1976.

Several *Mandam* storytellers succeeded in the tradition of satiric comic talk that Bool-chool had initiated. Son Il-pyeong and Kim Won-ho became popular for the satiric content of their *Mandam* conversations. They were the first comedic duo nicknamed "Fatty and Skinny" because they modeled a style of Laurel and Hardy, a famous comedy double act during the early Classical Hollywood era of American cinema (Rawlings, 2010). Their satiric criticism concentrated on Japan's colonial rule. For this reason, several policemen would be stationed for surveillance purposes around any theater in which the duo were performing (Ban, 2000: 211).

A female *Mandam* storyteller known as a disciple of Shin Bool-chool, Kim Yoon-sim took part in many collaborative *Mandam* concerts with Shin Bool-chool, and she continued giving topical *Mandam* storytelling performances after Korea had gained independence. Several of *mandam*s she performed reflect a considerable effort to protect the original function of *Mandam* as a reflection of society such that the form presents topical and satiric criticism, as seen in her *Mandam* entitled "Women, Take a look at Yourselves!" at the Sudo Theater in 1947. Also, her *Mandam*s, such as *gamtoo-Taryeong* [a traditional ballad about having an important title], *manhwagyeong* [kaleidoscope], and *yeombool-Taryeong* [a traditional ballad about Buddhist prayer reflected the social criticism characteristic of her *Mandam* performances. In fact, her songs critically reflect on life in the post-Korean War era, using a variety of techniques in regard to satiric expression.

It is noteworthy that after the Bool-chool's last *Mandam* performance on June 11, 1946, *Mandam* had become bifurcated into *Mandam* conversation and *Mandam* song. As a result, the function of *Mandam* as a form of entertainment was strengthened, while its criticism was reduced. The next generation of *Mandam* storytellers such as Yoon Bak-nam, Bok Hye-sook, Wang Pyeong, Na Poom-sim, Jang So-pal, Goh Chun-ja, and Kim Yeong-un paid more attention to playing with words in order to create funny stories. These were predominantly featured in radio programs, as the storytellers began to migrate from the recording industry to radio broadcasting after the 1950s. Their *Mandam* performances were quite different from those of the early *Mandam* storytellers who emphasized the role of *Mandam* in producing social criticism via comic devices. Instead, they aspired to rhetorical play and verbal fun by quickly repeating words such that these performers' work was similar to the US stand-up comedy of the 1950s and 1960s. Accordingly, during this period, there was little in the way of satiric criticism and the movement of *Mandam* to radio only strengthened this tendency.

INTRIGUING RELATIONSHIPTS AMONG MEDIA CORPORATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH *MANDAM*

Next, but more importantly, the present study reviews the ways in which *Mandam* was structurally associated with and placed at the center of intricate relationships among the music industry, the theater, and the press, i.e., between popular culture and freedom of speech. As noted,

Mandam began as an interlude for musical plays in 1920s when many traditional theater companies experienced increasing financial troubles as the size of their audience diminished. Most classical theaters were finding it difficult to give a sufficient benefit to the storytellers due to Japanese regulations governing cultural products. In addition, although theatrical performance was very important to Korean pop-culture during the era of Japanese colonial rule, the theatres were generally operated with limited finances. Hence, many theater companies reduced actors' wages and favored performing foreign work over creating new pieces. According to Bool-chool, the result was an overly commercial business in which theaters engaged in a mad scramble to attract the most popular actors and in which the relationship between the theaters and the actors more generally became troubled. It was in this context that the theater companies introduced *Mandam* as a strategic way of diversifying their repertoires for attracting a larger audience. As this form succeeded in quickly attracting an audience, *Mandam* became an independent play separated from the original play, such that modern Korean comedic theatrical performances took on one of two forms; any given performance was either a *Mandam* or a traditional drama. Given that great stress was laid on the importance of verbal technique for *Mandam*, whereas visual performance emphasized movement over verbal dexterity, this subdivision influenced the transformation of the comedic genre with the introduction of radio and television, as discussed in following chapters.

In another vein, modern Korean pop culture was led by traditional ballad music called *Taryeong*, which became popular and vitalized the record industry in 1930s. This form is particularly important in discussing the early stages of Korean political entertainment in that two different cultural industries encountered on the border. For a deeper understanding of the music industry of the early 1900s, it is necessary to begin with the introduction of the gramophone to Korea. According to Dokrib Sinmun [Independent Newspaper] on April 22, 1899, the gramophone was first introduced when a governmental officers' banquet was given to recognize this invention. However, it was not until 1907, eight years later, that the first standard playing (henceforth, referred to as SP) disk, a recording of a master singer, Han In-Ho and Choi Hong-mae, was released by Columbia record company. The early stage of the record industry was dominated by two large US recording corporations, Columbia

and Victor, from 1907 to 1911. However, with the beginning of Japanese colonial rule in 1910, Japanese gramophone companies began selling records in Korea and the record industry experienced dramatic growth due to the change in recording method from acoustic to electronic in 1926. Accordingly, the record industry had its heyday from the mid-1920s until the early 1940s when the Japanese government adopted an ideological ruling method in order to obliterate Korean culture (Bae, 1989: 278-282).

The 1930s was a golden era for the record industry. Four record companies, Polydor, Chieron, Taepyeong, and Okeh entered the record industry dominated by Victor and Columbia. The result was a marketplace characterized by intense rivalry among big six record corporations. Approximately fifty new records are being newly released at more than three hundred gramophone stores every month in those days, and the price is varied from 1 won to 1 won 50 jeon (Samcheolli, 1933). Based on record that the then monthly living expenses for a family of six were 150 won, and the price of rice pack was 4 won (Lee, 2012), the value of the record market can be estimated as $108 million (up to $405 million) in current monetary terms.

The initial role of Gyeongsung radio broadcasting was limited to disseminating propaganda in support of the JGGK. Indeed, the JGGK utilized radio broadcasting for propaganda of the Japanese imperialism as well as for "national spiritual mobilization" Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War (Lee, 2012). In addition, radio sets had found their way into very few households such that the target audience was restricted to Japanese governors and their families and to Korean governmental officers to an extent. In 1927, the number of radio subscribers stood at only 1,115 (212 of these were Korean) – a number that would not reach 20,000 until 1933 (Lee, 2012: 6-7). Although radio broadcasting had offered full Korean-language programming since 1933 when the Chosun Broadcasting Association (CBA) established the second radio broadcasting station, radio did not become popular until the late 1950s (Korea Broadcasting Association, 1997).

For these reasons, radio broadcasting did not seem to have substantial influence on the Korean pop culture of the day. Nonetheless, the initial radio broadcasts were critical in that radio was introduced as a Western cultural product through Japan, which implied that an intricate relationship among Japan and other Western powers was reflected on radio (Lee, 2012). Certainly, the introduction of radio broadcasting exemplified the

influx of Western culture and products in the 1920s and the 1930s. Drinking coffee was no longer an unfamiliar sight to Korean people, and the gramophone became the most popular item in the hope chest.

Furthermore, a specific cooperative relationship developed among the press, broadcasting, and record industries. In particular, newspaper organizations played an important role in connecting the broadcasting and record industries to an audience. As is known, Korea's economy was marked by Japan's exploitation of resources and infrastructure during the period of Japanese colonial rule. At the same time, as Japanese companies began to establish branch companies in Korea for the purpose of developing a new market, capitalism was penetrating most business areas in Korea, and thus leading their rapid commercialization. The press organizations were also in the similar process of commercializing.

There were three main paths to commercialization: (1) advertising and sponsorship, (2) subscription fees, and (3) the sale of news content. Among three, advertising was a major source of revenue, accounting for about 45% of the total revenue of the Donga Daily in 1935. Record companies became one of the major advertisers in 1930s. Furthermore, to maximize their profits in an indirect way, the newspaper corporations monopolized the distribution channels for cultural information by making a connection between advertising and news content. For example, they provided promotional tickets for cultural affairs such as records, theatrical performances, movies, and other cultural festivals, as well as offering commentaries, editorials, and promotional articles on these. Civilians had little access to cultural information other than from newspapers; therefore, the newspaper companies substantially controlled information through an oligopolization of the distribution of cultural information. It is evident that initial cooperative relations among media and entertainment corporations had already begun in Korea (Lee, 2012: 57).

Subscription fees did not constitute a main source of revenue for the newspaper companies due to the small number of subscribers. Therefore, newspaper companies sought ways to increase their subscriber base as another way to increase revenue. For those reasons, newspaper companies showed a strong interest in utilizing *Mandam* for the purpose of increasing subscriptions. Four of the newspapers with the largest circulation, the Donga Daily, Chosun, Chosun Joongang, and Maeil Shinbo, were in competition to enter into a cooperative relationship with *Mandam* storyteller, Shin Bool-chool.

The newspaper companies made several marketing strategies in this effort such as providing advertisements for the theater companies and offering special discount passes to the theater to the newspaper subscribers. In particular, there was keen competition among the newspaper companies to secure a contract with Shin Bool-chool because of his popularity (Ban, 2000: 70-79). Shin Bool-chool's popularity as a *Mandam* performer was at its peak from 1934 to 1940, a period during which he gave a total of 73 performances. Overall, newspapers did not depict most of *Mandam* as satirical content in nature, but took an interest in utilizing *Mandam* as a way to increase the number of subscriptions.

Mandam concerts were overwhelmingly popular and highly commercialized at that time. At least 500 and as many as 3,000 people went to every performance based on several news articles reporting that *Mandam* performances were doing a roaring business (*Chosun Daily,* Jan 1933), although the ticket price of *Mandam* performances were relatively high (50 jeon), compared with a movie ticket (10 jeon). The estimated revenue from Bool-chool's *Mandam* concerts was more than $1.5 million annually based on an average of twelve concerts per year with 1,500 tickets sold for each.

Furthermore, *Mandam* concerts were not held by the storytellers, but by a regional instrument store or gramophone store which monopolized sales of the SP records, or in many cases, advertisers sponsored these concerts. Also, a branch office of the newspaper issued complimentary tickets and a local gramophone store provided discount passes in order to promote record sales (Ban, 2000: 107). It is noteworthy, too, that in order to promote for their own sales gramophone stores made connections with the newspapers, which is evidence that *Mandam* records were among their top sellers (see Table 1). Further, it is evident that the record business was deeply implicated in the commercialization of *Mandam.*

In 1930s, the record companies were dealing in several genres of music records such as *Taryeong* [traditional ballad song], *pansori* [traditional dramatic song], and *Minyo* [Korean folk song], and gradually expanded their business area to *Gayo* [Popular song] and musical skits. Additionally, the record companies began to make exclusive agreements with popular musical actors. Accordingly, a number of actors and actresses such as Kim Yeon-sil, Lee Kyung-seol, Shin Carnaria, Nah Poom-sim, Wang Pyeong, and Seok Wa-bool entered the *Mandam* record business. These madam storytellers were traditional singers who only later became *Mandam* storytellers.

Year	Chosun Daily	Donga Daily	Note
1934	20	-	• Shin Bool-chool
1935	3	-	• Shin Bool-chool
1936	9(1)	2	• Shin Bool-chool, Hwang Jae-kyung • A joint-Concert entitled "Samguijae" planned by Chosun Joongang daily in January was included
1937	19	6	• Shin Bool-chool, Kim Yoon-sim
1938	17	4	• Chosun: Shin Bool-chool • Donga: Lee So-bool
1939	8	2	• Chosun: Shin Bool-chool (traveled with provincial performances), Son Il-pyeong and Kim Won-ho • Donga: Lee So-bool, Seo Da-chool
1940	4	3	• Chosun: Shin Bool-chool, • Donga: Seo Da-chool
Total	81	17	

Table 1. *Promotional Articles on Mandam Performances in Two Major Newspapers*
Source: *Chosun Daily* (1934-1940) and *Donga Daily* (1937-1940).

The enormous popularity of *Mandam* records was engineered by the record companies, which expected albums consisting of *Mandam*, skits, and/or other songs would bring sales. Columbia advertised a special release of a compilation record that included *Mandam*, the first of its kind, in July 1932. But, these kinds of albums did not bring big hits until the following year when Shin Bool-chool cut the first *Mandam* record entitled "Iksalmajeun Daemeori" [Facetious Bald-Headed Fellow]. Okeh was a mid-size record company that released Shin's album with an advertisement in February 1933. The advertisement highlighted that the album exceeded 20,000 sales during its first two weeks of sales. In the same period, record market was dominated by two companies, which conferred and agreed on a selling price of 2 won per record.

Also, as noted, these companies oligopolized the record business by signing twenty-five singers and *Mandam* storytellers to exclusive contracts.

The exclusive contracts were accompanied by the increase of market competition among these companies. Among these corporations, Taepyeong and Okeh, the newer market entrants as small startups, established with Korean capital, began to try out new strategies for sales.

In particular, Okeh began as a very small company with Lee Chul who managed the Seoul office of the Japanese gramophone store with the assistance of his wife who had a social network of Japanese friends (Park, 2009). As Okeh successfully applied a strategy of a low-unit margin of profit to selling Bool-chool's album to increase the company's market share, Shin Boo-chool's *Mandam* album broke the record for sales during a short period and contributed greatly to Okeh's new financial success. Thereafter, Okeh adopted diverse strategies to make a profit, e.g., arranging overseas concert tours by putting together a team of people exclusively affiliated with his company (Kim, 2014). In another way, Okeh signed five of the most popular singers and storytellers to exclusive contracts (see Table 2).

	Number of Exclusive contracts	**Artist**
Victor	5	Lee Aerisu, Kang Seok-yeon, Choi Nam-yong, Cheon Ok, Kang Hong-sik
Columbia	5	Chae Gyu-yup, Kim Sun-cho, Im Heon-ik, Kim Seon-young, Choi Myeong-ju
Polydor	4	Wang Soo-bok, Wang Pyeong, Kim Yong-hwan, Shin Il-seon
Chieron	5	Kim Yeon-sil, Nah Seon-gyo, Kim Yong-hwan, Choi Hyang-hwa, Namgoong Seon
Taepyeong	1	Lee Nan-young
Okeh	5	Shin Bool-chool, Cheon Choon-woo, Shin Eun-bong, Seo Sang-seok, Baek Hwa-seong

Table 2. *List of Artists Signed to the Major Record Companies*
Source: Samcheolli, *Monthly Magazine* (1933, December).

At that time, 5,000 copies, which is equivalent to approximately 100,000 copies today, of each album used to be produced, which accounts for passing the break-even point (Cho, 1933). In comparison, at least 400,000 copies of Iksalmajeun Daemeori were sold in today's terms. Uhm (2005: 28) estimated that this record in today's terms could have sold as many as one million copies taking the distribution of the gramophone at the time into consideration. In addition, an advertisement for Iksalmajeun Daemeori by the Chieron record company was published in the *Donga Daily* on February 2 1933, according to which the album exceeded sales of 30,000. This statistic indicates that Bool-chool may not have signed an exclusive contract with Okeh and/or that Chieron may have bought the copyright from Okeh. It is remarkable that an advertisement for Iksalmajeun Daemeori appeared in the *Donga Daily* and another in the Chosun Daily on the same day, February 2, 1933. However, the advertisements differ regarding the figures given for the record's sales. No study has examined which is the correct figure, although several studies have noted that the first advertisement was in the Chosun Daily. In any case, this Iksalmajeun Daemeori became the first album to reach 30,000 in sales, which converts from $18 to $22.5 million in today.

As Okeh achieved a great success with its price-cutting strategy, Columbia began to produce cheap SP records called Regal at 80 jeon, which triggered a price-cutting competition among the record companies. Okeh lowered its price to 50 jeon. This price-cutting strategy was possible because Okeh had already passed the break-even point and because *Mandam* recordings were generally no more expensive to produce than other records were. That is, *Mandam* was the genre that contributed the most to the record companies' profits.

In another vein, *Mandam* was associated with the cooperative relationship between radio broadcasting and the record industry in the 1930s, although radio broadcasting was not yet popular at this time. As noted, although radio broadcasting was established to disseminate propaganda for Korea's Japanese government, it was also a new technological vehicle for Korean audiences to experience Western modern culture. Specifically, Korean-language broadcasts began in 1933, and radio broadcasting was gradually systematized by programing three types of content: news, education, and entertainment.

Among these three types of programs, entertainment rapidly became popular with Korean audiences. The most popular programs were music and radio drama, but there were also several comedic program types on air, such as sketch, farce, (radio) nonsense, and (radio) comedy on the Gyeongsung broadcasting station's schedule from 1933 to 1938 (Seo, 2007). Among several entertainment programs, it is noteworthy that the radio broadcasts used *Mandam* with stars such as Shin Bool-chool, Yoon Baek-Nam, Yoo Chu-Gang, and Shin Jeong-Uhn (Bae, 2000: 129-130).

Furthermore, the Gyeongsung broadcasting station created an exclusive theater troupe named *Mansojwa* for radio programming. As the broadcasting station managed the performance teams, many comedians entered the broadcasting market and became stars. Also, radio broadcasting held a number of *Mandam* festivals, some of which were sponsored by newspaper companies. Accordingly, a number of *Mandam* concerts entitled real performance tonight with broadcasting artists began in between 1937-1942.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored *Mandam* as the initial boom of political entertainment with a focus on the politics of in *Mandam,* traced back to the 1930s, in the political economic context of the relationships among record companies, press organizations, theater companies, and the radio broadcasting industry. In 1920s, an influx of Western cultural products promoted the rise of Korean popular culture to which the gramophone made a fundamental contribution. Under these media environment, *Mandam* played a vital role in expressing individuals' political opinions as distinctive form blending political information and entertainment.

Furthermore, *Mandam* was situated at the core of intricate relationships among the record industry, the theater business, and the press industry. It appears that the growing popularity of the hybrid content of political information and entertainment was led by the business sector, which shows that political entertainment was initiated for commercial purposes. This commercial relationship was initiated by the SP record industry. As noted, the six big record companies had succeeded in attracting a wide audience from the late 1920s to the early 1940s. Record companies collaborated with small theatrical companies

by providing financial support to small theater companies, which, in turn, introduced *Mandam* performances as a strategic way of diversifying and thus attracting an audience. The theaters did this in return for the cultural and human resources, i.e., *Mandam* storytellers, scripts and technicians, provided by the record companies. Furthermore, record companies were major advertisers in newspapers, and newspapers promoted record sales. Major newspaper companies used several marketing strategies such as providing promotional articles, commentaries, and editorials for theater companies and offering special discount passes to newspaper subscribers, which also indirectly contributed to an increase newspaper subscriptions. In the same way, the radio broadcast industry established a cooperative relationship with the theater companies and likewise with press organizations (Figure 1).

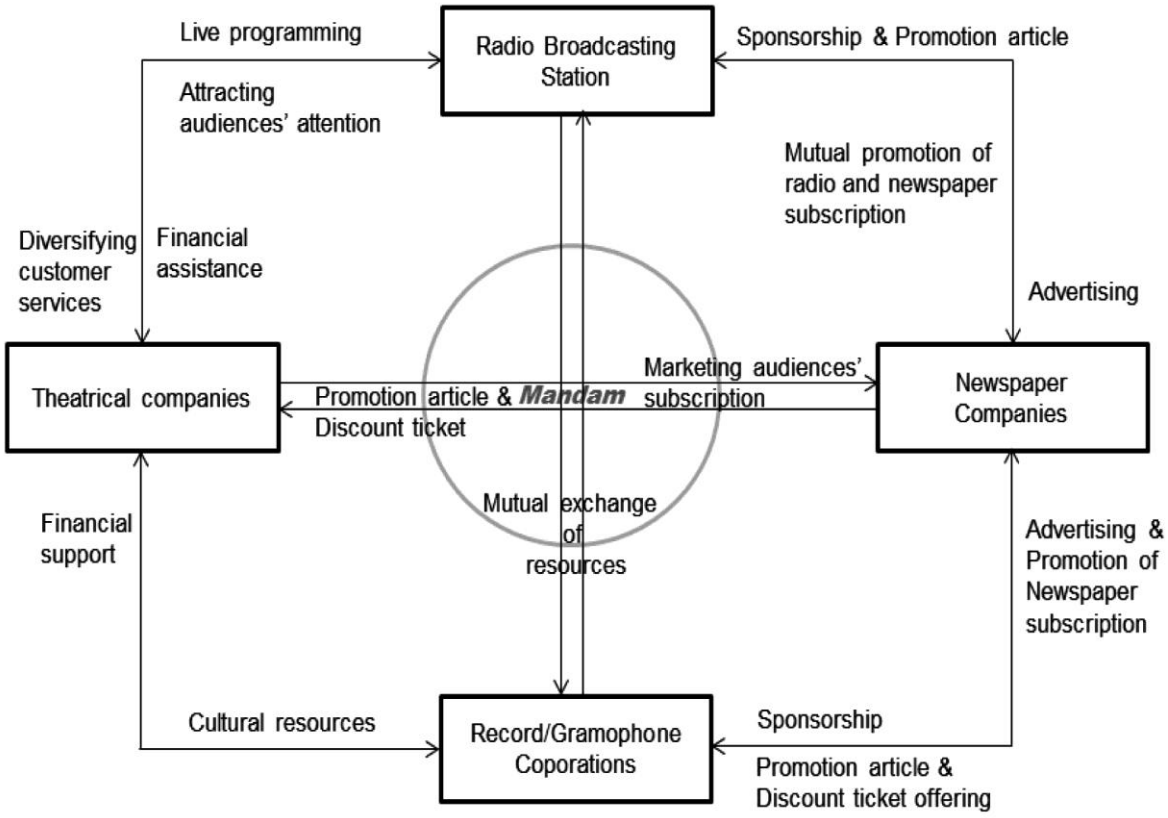

Figure 1. *Business relationships among industries associated with Mandam*

With regards to *Mandam* content, *Mandam* played a satiric role in influencing public opinion on political affairs, particularly led by the early generation of *Mandam* storytellers such as Shin Bool-chool and Kim

Yoon-sim. Their criticism centered on Japanese colonial rule, even though during this period *Mandam*s were limited in terms of the issues they could address. However, other *Mandam* storytellers preferred soft criticism under the stringent regulations of Japanese colonial rule. This gave rise to that many ideas of *Mandam* performance were restrained to play an absurd as appeared in *Moosikhan Buboo* [The Ignorant Couple] and *Meongteongguri Seoul Googyeong* [Fathead's Sightseeing Trip to Seoul], wherein the satiric criticism was less powerful because *Mandam* storytellers were likely to avoid lampooning the repressive political power punitively. Consequently, political suppression under the JGGK made *Mandams* focused more on entertainment than on political expression and *Mandam* became a popular form gaining economic interest.

After the 1950s, *Mandam* faced the introduction of television. Though some *Mandam* storytellers moved to radio broadcasting by specializing in *Mandam* songs, the cultural technological breakthrough weakened their cultural influence on audiences and brought about the transformation of political entertainment. Future study needs to examine how political entertainment was influenced by new media and how this technological shift affected political entertainment relating to other comedy programs in a broader social context.

References

Bae Y. H. "A historical story on collecting old records (4th): Here come many stuff in which the voices of Korean geisha were put". *Wolgan Gaeksuk [Auditorium Monthly]*, 1989(October): 278-282.

Ban J. S. *Hundred-year History of Mandam*. Seoul: Baekjoongdang, 2000.

Bardan, A. "'The Tattlers' Tattle': Fake news, Linguistic national intimacy, and new media in Romania". *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 145-157.

Baym, G., & Jones, J. P. News parody in global perspective: Politics, power, and resistance. *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 2-13.

Cho, B. J. "Victor, Columbia, Taepyeong, Chieron, Polydor, and Okeh: Big six companies Oratory and *Mandam*". *Samcheolli Monthly Magazine,* 1933(October), n.d.

Chosun Daily. *Claiming to the Entertainment World in Chosun.* Chosun Daily, January, 21, 1933.

Day, A. *Satire and dissent: Interventions in contemporary political debate.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.

Donga Daily. *Outline of Thought Control Law.* Donga Daily, September, 16, 1933.

Donga Daily. *Creatioin of a sensorship task force for radio broadcasting.* Donga Daily, March, 2, 1934.

Harrington, S. "From the 'little Aussie bleeder' to newstopia: (Really) fake news in Australia". *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 27-39.

Imre, A. The witty seven: "Late socialist-capitalist satire in Hungary". *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 131-144.

Jeon, Y. S. "Bae Sam-Ryong, Lee Joo-Il, and Shim Hyung-Rae: The march of fools on Korean comedy?" *Weekly Chosun*, October, 22, 2005.

Kim, J. K. *Do you know who Lee Chul, a father of hallyu is?* Daejeon Daily, January, 16, 2014: A23.

Kim, K. H. "Shin Bool-Chool's art work and the meaning". *Gukmunhak Yeongu [Journal of Korean literature Studies]* 12(1), 2004: 143-174.

Kleinen-von Königslöw, K., & Keel, G. "Localizing *The Daily Show*: The *heute* show in Germany". *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 66-79.

Korea Broadcasting Association. *70-year history of the Korean Broadcasting.* Seoul: Korea Broadcasting Association, 1997.

Korea Broadcasting System. *History of Korean Broadcasting.* Seoul; Korea Broadcasting System, 1971.

Lee, S. G. The production and programming of entertainment programs of the early JODK. *Eollongwa Sahoi [Mass Communication & Society]* 20(3), 2012: 5-74.

Lee, S.H. "Actor Shin Bul-chul, the Politics of 'Laugh'". *Hankook Geukyesuyeongu [Journal of Korean Dramatic Art]* 3, 2011: 13-49.

Maeil Shinbo. *A Genius Comic Storyteller Shin Bool-Chool Has Great Popularity.* Maeil Shinbo, January 3, 1935.

Park, C. H. *Hanguk Gayosa, Vol. 1[History of Korean Music]*. Seoul: Miji Books, 2009.

Rawlings, N. "Top 10 across-the-pond duos". *Time Magazine* July 20, 2010.

Samcheolli. "Big six record companies on the battle". *Samcheolli Monthly Magazine,* 1933 (December), n.d.

Samcheolli. "Oratory and *Mandam*". *Samcheolli Monthly Magazine,* 1935(June): 105-106.

Samcheolli. "What albums were prohibited for what reasons?" *Samcheolli Monthly Magazine,* 1936(April): 268.

Seo, J.G. *A Study on the Modern Korean Broadcast Literature, 1927-1945* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from Korean Educational Research Information Sources (KERIS), 2007.

Sienkiewicz, M. "Out of control: Palestinian news satire and government power in the age of social media". *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 10(1-2), 2012: 106-118.

Uhm H.S. *A Study of the Modern Media Text and the Mode of Drama in Korea* (Doctoral dissertation, 2005). Available from Korean Education & Research Information Service (http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T10329030, retrieved on April, 22, 2014).

Acknowledgments: This article reconstructed parts of the author's doctoral dissertation, and was presented at the KACA division at the annual convention of AEJMC in San Francisco in August 2015. Also, this work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund.

Kyung Han YOU is an assistant professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. He is interested in studying how the humor devices on media technologies, audiences' aesthetic experiences, and their emotional engagement are linked with contemporary democracy and cultural politics, especially in the Asian context.