New Women and Modern Girls:
Consuming Foreign Goods in Colonial Seoul

Abstract

Purpose—During the 1920s and 1930s in the colonial city of Seoul, a group of women called the New Women and the Modern Girls expressed their modern identities by wearing different clothing, hairstyles and make-up; visiting cafés; viewing Western movies; and consuming other foreign merchandise. While these women were admired by many women as being pioneers of modernity, they were severely criticized by others under the pretext that they indulged their vanity without considering the economy of their families and their colonized nation. These criticisms continue in 21st century Korea. Based on the striking similarity between the two eras, an understanding of the consumption and the criticisms of the Modern Girls could provide a historical context for understanding women's experiences in the consumer culture of 21st century Korea.

Design/Methodology/Approach—As secondary sources, literature published in both English and Korean was included. Primary data were obtained from articles in Korean newspapers, magazines and print advertisements from the 1920s and 1930s.

Findings—The New Women and Modern Girls expressed their modern identities by consuming various fashion goods, including Western-style clothes, make-up and various accessories, adopting Western hairstyles and frequenting modern cafés, theaters and department stores. However, their behaviors escaped the boundaries of the 'wise mother, good wife' ideology, and they were severely criticized by those adhering to the neo-Confucianism and Korean nationalist ideology that was deeply rooted in Korean society. Thus, the reputations of the Modern Girls were tainted and the individuals were stigmatized.

Originality/Value—This research illuminates the negative aspects of self-expressive consumption, showing how individualistic, identity-driven consumption can be stigmatized in the collectivistic culture of Korea that is rooted in neo-Confucian nationalism.

Keywords: the Modern Girl, Consumerism, Stigma, Neo-Confucianism, Nationalism, Korea.

Classification: Research Paper

Introduction

> In this place where almost half of all college graduates are wandering around with no jobs, women pay thirty or forty won for a piece of cloth for a skirt, two or three hundred won for something to wear on their fingers, and five or six hundred won for an ornament in their hair. ... The cost of facial powders amounts to four to five won, and it costs one or two won only to frizz one's hair. They walk out of straw thatched houses and swagger along the same street over and over, and these are the very women who are the so-called *Modun-ggul* (the Modern Girls) (Ahn, 1930).

The above excerpt is from a 1930 satirical cartoon. From the author's perspective, the so-called Modern Girl was pitiful because she wasted her money on useless clothes, accessories and cosmetics despite being so poor that she lived in a straw-thatched house. Given that the price of one sack of rice (176 lb) was 17.8 Korean won, as recorded by the *Kyungsung Sanguphoeuso* (Seoul Chamber of Commerce) in 1935 (The Seoul Institute, 2003), spending 30 to 40 won to buy cloth for a skirt or 500 to 600 won on a hair accessory was considered unreasonable by many Koreans.

In 2006, almost 80 years later, an anonymous story entitled 'A day of *Doenjang-nyo* (bean-paste girl)' ridiculed a young woman by listing the various foreign luxury brands that she consumes in her daily life. Despite its questionable origin, *Doenjang-nyo* indicates a woman who consumes luxuries or *myongpoom* (masterpieces in Korean) through the wealth of her parents or boyfriend. In the story, she "washes her face with *Lancôme* cleansing foam," carries "a *Le Sportsac* tote bag in one hand and a college textbook in the other" to flaunt her identity as a college student, uses *Chanel No. 5* and listens to music with her iPod. She enjoys "strolling through the *Myongpoom-gwan* (a section for foreign luxury brands in the department stores)

pledging herself to buy the items displayed with her father's credit card later" (*Doenjang-nyeoeu Haroo* (A day of Doenjang-nyeo), 2006).

Despite the differences between the eras, similar themes are addressed by these two stories: the young girls undermine the wealth of their families and the country by their frivolous consumption of foreign products for their selfish desires. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Westernized appearance of the Modern Girl signified that she lacked chastity and was selfish and reckless. Neo-Confucianism and nationalism are central to these criticisms because they espouse ideals of frugality and moderation as important to the well-being of the family and country. Building prosperity through capitalism is a nation's supreme task, but individuals must remain frugal—they cannot waste money on useless, not to mention morally degrading, unnecessary luxuries because their funds should be saved and invested (Chadha and Husband, 2006)

Previous research noted that neo-Confucianism exerts a greatest influence on the daily lives of Koreans among the people of any of the three East Asian countries (Deuchler, 1992, 2003; Koh, 1996; Rozman, 2002). The personal virtues of frugality and moderation resonated with the neo-Confucian outlook of the historical *yangban,* the aristocratic neo-Confucian literati class during the *Chosŏn* dynasty (Michell, 1986). During the *Chosŏn* period, the *yangban* gentlemen considered scholarship and intellectual pursuits to be their privilege and duty, while material and commercial concerns were regarded as being contrary to their calling (Lee, 1984l; Nelson, 2000). Despite many political and economic changes, the ideal of the nonmaterial *yangban* scholar has survived and was so strong in the early twentieth century that Korean capitalists underplayed the pursuit of wealth as a motivating factor for their activities and emphasized the contribution of their economic activity to the nation's well being. Korean intellectuals have also stressed the need to invigorate the national economy as a key to

independence; therefore, Korean entrepreneurs were regarded as nationalist agents working against Japanese colonialism (Nelson, 2000).

In their examination of the golf boom in Korea in the mid-1990s, Cotton and Van Leest (1996) discovered that the Korean middle class had aspirations for both an affluent lifestyle and the status of the old Confucian elite. Korean middle class families continue the domestic lifestyle of the old *yangban* class in which women manage the 'inner quarters' while men perform acts of propriety and distinction in the 'outside' world (Kendall, 2002; Lett, 1998; Moon, 1990; Yi, 1993). Within this structure, Korea's new middle class regards itself as modern day *yangban*, continuing a traditional rationalization of gender asymmetry (Kendall 2002). Similarly, the controversies surrounding the Modern Girl or the *Doenjang-nyo* remain relevant in the conflict between a middle class woman's desire for self-expression through consumption and the neo-Confucian and nationalist values that are still dominant in Korea.

Before beginning this discussion, one should note that the Modern Girl, or *Doenjang-nyo*, as described in the popular media is likely to be a journalistic construct produced by overstatements and embellishments. However, the exaggerated image of the *Doenjang-nyo* the unique consumption reality in Korea, where an appetite for luxury labels results in the christening of a *Louis Vuitton* handbag as the "three-second bag" for its ubiquity, meaning that one is spotted every few seconds on the streets of Seoul (Park, 2011). According to a McKinsey survey, luxury consumers in South Korea spend 5 percent of their household income on luxuries, surpassing Japanese consumers who spend 4 percent. Although men have emerged as important customers, they currently account for only 9 percent of the market (McKinsey & Company, 2011).

As Witkowski and Jones (2006) noted, the available historical materials underrepresent the experiences of marginalized groups such as the lower classes, minorities and women. Therefore, the remaining historical texts and representations of the Modern Girl in colonial Seoul are unlikely to accurately depict the individuals, items and consumer behavior, although snippets may be gleaned from these documents. Despite the inherent limitations in the available historical data, concerns regarding distorted media representations can be mitigated in the present research because its purpose is to investigate the past social attitudes regarding the consumption behaviors of the Modern Girls rather than revealing actual events (Witkowski and Jones, 2006).

The Emergence of the New Woman and the Modern Girl

In the early 20th century, under the burgeoning consumer culture in colonial Seoul (then, *Kyongsong*), the New Woman, later called the Modern Girl, was expressing herself through the consumption of imported goods. The New Woman, educated in the modern schools, discovered the possibility of emancipation through Western values and advocated freedom in love, marriage and career choice (Kim, 1999).

In the 1920s, a marked increase occurred in Korean women's social standing (Kim, 1999). By the late 1920s, Korea had 16 high schools for women. Most New Women were graduates of middle or high school and chose professions including schoolteacher, newspaper reporter, artist, medical doctor, writer, governess, and nurse. Later, careers became common for women with only an elementary education in professions such as bus conductor, phone operator, factory worker, café waitress, and department store clerk (Lee, 2000). Although exact statistics regarding the New Woman do not exist, considering that over 3 million (estimated) women worked in

factories or in service after marriage (Kim, 2011a), a considerable percentage of women were working.

The New Women expressed their newly obtained modern identity through Westernized clothes, accessories, and new hair and make-up styles. Reflecting that trend, articles about fashion frequently appeared in newspapers and magazines along with advertising promoting Western shoes, hats, and cosmetics (Kim, 2004). In the 1930s, as an increasing number of women entered the modern educational system, the consumer culture of the New Woman became more popular in many areas of the country, and the usage of "Modern Girl" slowly replaced the use of "New Woman" (Cho and Yoon, 1995).

The emergence of the New Women and the Modern Girls was, however, not a uniquely Korean phenomenon. In cities such as Beijing, Bombay, Tokyo, Berlin, Johannesburg, and New York, the Modern Girl made her fashionable appearance in city streets, train stations, factories, offices, department stores, theaters, and cafés (Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, 2008). Among the different manifestations of the Modern Girl phenomenon, a brief comparison between the Korean, Chinese and Japanese Modern Girls could be particularly meaningful given the cultural similarities and the historical relationships between these three countries.

The 'Modern Girl' was a name given to women in Shanghai during the early 20th century, and it was also the name given to female consumers in Japan in an earlier era (Belk and Zhao, 2003; Cochran, 1999; Birnbaum, 1999; Sato, 1993). Since the end of the Opium War in 1842, under the strong Western influence, Shanghai became the Chinese fashion capital, with rapidly changing styles of clothes, hair, make-up and entertainment. These modern women displayed their modern consumption behaviors in spaces such as department stores, cafés, movie theaters, and performance halls (Belk and Zhao, 2003). In Japan, the New Woman also represented a free

spirit and expressed her new identity through various consumption behaviors (Sato, 2003). However, the New Shanghai Woman was often characterized as being self-indulgent, materialistic, and lacking control over her love for fashion (Benson, 1999). Japanese intellectuals described the Japanese Modern Girl using terms such as decadent, hedonistic, and superficial (Sato, 2003). As in Shanghai and Tokyo, the Korean Modern Girls were perceived as superficial and full of useless vanity and materialism (Kang, 2005).

Despite the similarities between the Modern Girls from these three East Asian countries, the unique political and socio-cultural contexts of Korea created a different subject positions for the Korean New Women and Modern Girls wherein unique political and social forces guided their conduct and limited other possible actions (Foucault, 1982). Therefore, the identities of Korean New Women and Modern Girls inevitably had distinct characteristics from those of their counterparts in China and Japan.

Shanghai, as a semi-colony (Gerth, 2003; Belk and Zhao, 2003) treaty port composed of territories divided between China and other international forces (Lee, 1999), resulted in the National Product Movement. Based on Chinese nationalism, this movement advocated the consumption of Chinese products by Chinese people. As in Shanghai, to overcome the dependency on foreign imports and to strengthen Korea's industrial base for national business, the nationalist *Mulsan Changnyŏ Undong*, movement emerged promoting the purchase of Korean products (Lee, 1984). In Korea, however, the influence of nationalism went beyond *Mulsan Changnyŏ Undong* due to the country's status as a Japanese colony since 1910. Korean nationalism was heavily involved in the nation's pursuit of independence from Japanese domination; therefore, Korean women's use of imported goods carried heavier socio-cultural implications for the Korean nation than that of Shanghai or Tokyo women.

The Japanese Modern Girl received many social criticisms for her extravagant consumption, which opposed the ideal of the good mother and wise wife (Tomida, 2005); the Korean Modern Girl faced similar criticisms. However, the Korean New Woman and the Modern Girl had to confront more complex, multi-faceted social criticism because of her 'colonized' status. For the Korean people, while Japan was an advanced society to be modeled after and emulated in building a strong nation, it was also an enemy be overcome in pursuit of independence. The Korean people had to confront their ambivalent desire to imitate Japan, while harboring anger toward Japan as a colonized people (Bhabha, 1994; Krishna, 2009). Because of this dilemma, the experiences of the Korean Modern Girl were inevitably distinct from those of the Japanese Modern Girl.

The following section will briefly review modern Korean history and its consumption infrastructure during the late 19th and early 20th centuries because this background will enable a better understanding of the nature of the Korean Modern Girl's consumption and the social criticisms directed at her. Then, I will revisit the consumption behaviors of the New Woman and the Modern Girl during the 1920s and 1930s based on a qualitative analysis of primary sources including newspapers, magazines and the print advertising of the era and through published secondary sources. Finally, a discussion will be included on the neo-Confucian and nationalist ideologies that are suggested as the foundation for these social critiques.

A Brief History of Foreign Trade in Korea

Prior to the *Chosŏn* dynasty (1392-1910), Korea was regarded as worldly and wealthy keeping active trade relationships with Arab countries as well as China, Japan and Southeast Asia

However, the *yangban* class of *Chosŏn* held a different attitude toward international trade. The Confucian hierarchy of the scholar/farmer/artisan/merchant prevented the development of manufacturing in its modern form, and the merchants were considered little better than pariahs in the class system of the country. Trade with China was an exception because it was part of the tribute missions, and trade with Japan was restricted to a bare minimum (Cumings, 2005).

The dominant consumption discourse during *Chosŏn* involved honoring frugality and avoiding extravagance. The annals of the *Chosŏn* Dynasty contain 131 prohibition orders regarding extravagance. Despite the governmental prohibition, during the 15th and 16th century, a trend toward extravagance expanded (Lee, 2011), with women's clothing and wigs, called *gachae*, becoming the most criticized (Kim, 2002b). However, in reality, very few enjoyed consumption beyond basic survival, and the consumption of the upper class was not terribly extravagant by historical comparison (Lee, 2011).

To overcome the backward reality of the *Chosŏn*, reformist neo-Confucianism called *Sirhak* (the practical learning) advocated the promotion of manufacturing, commerce, and foreign trade during the 18th century (Kang, 1994). *Sirhak* scholars were usually *yangban* who had been expelled or eclipsed from public office, or who belonged to socially restricted group called *chungin* (middle people) (Lee, 1984, Cumings, 2005). Park Je-Ga, a prominent *Sirhak* scholar, lamented the *Chosŏn*'s backward reality in which few households had two meals a day and farmers in the countryside usually could not afford one piece of cotton clothing per year (Lee, 2011). In short, the *Chosŏn* was far from a consumerist society in which many individuals' life goals included the acquisition of goods that were unnecessary for subsistence or traditional display (Stearns, 2006).

From early in the nineteenth century, despite the seclusion policy of the *Chosŏn*, the Western powers, including Britain, France, the United States and Russia, became interested in Korea. The *Chosŏn* government was aware that China continued to clash with the Western nations and regarded the rejection of Western demands for trade as a means of preventing such disasters. Even contact with Japan, which had established relationships with the Western powers, was considered dangerous, and relationships were permitted with Qing China only (Lee, 1984). In 1876, however, Korea abandoned its isolationist policy, opened three ports, and was finally incorporated into the capitalist world system by signing the Treaty of *Kanghwa* with Japan. This treaty was an impetus for the Western powers such as Britain, the United States, France, Russia and Germany to begin trade with Korea, thus opening Korea's doors to the outside world (Lee, 1984). In the meantime, the peasants' grievances against foreign countries and their own ruling class led to an uprising called the *Tonghak Nongmin Undong*, a revolutionary peasant struggle that employed military operations on a large scale in 1894. To suppress the peasant army, the Korean government brought in Chinese forces, eventually leading to the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, which ended in a Japanese victory in early 1895. This victory allowed Japan to regain a monopoly on foreign trade with Korea. With another victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japanese interests in the Korean peninsula won recognition by Russia, England, and the United States. Japan moved immediately to establish a protectorate over Korea, and, finally, in August 1910, Korea became a Japanese colony through forceful annexation (Lee, 1984).

Women's status in the Old *Chosŏn* Society

Neo-Confucianism served as the major foundation for defining and symbolizing gender relationships during the *Chosŏn* dynasty. During this period, gender inequality was severe and rigid (Belk, 2006), although virtuous wives and mothers were socially recognized and rewarded with prominence (Kim, 1993). Confucianism, which originated in China, applied the *yin-yang* rubric to women and men, respectively (Adler, 2006). Under this ideology, a woman was expected to achieve moral authority by the realization of subordinate roles, remaining 'inside' and restraining herself from public life (Ko et al., 2003).

The most influential Confucian tenet during the *Chosŏn* was the neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi in the Song dynasty. After the change of Ming dynasty to the Qing in 1644, Confucian scholars of *Chosŏn* considered themselves the sole guardians of Confucian orthodoxy. In turn, *Chosŏn* women were expected embody the Confucian virtues, which were believed to transcend gender boundaries (Ko et al., 2003).

The gender ideals of neo-Confucianism were realized through two fundamental principles in *Chosŏn* society: *namnyo-yubyol* (sex-difference) and *namjon-yobi* (honored men, abased women). Based on the principle of *namnyŏ-yubyŏl*, within the home, women were restricted to the inner spaces (Cho, 1998b), where they were unable to see men other than their immediate family. A *yangban* woman was prohibited from appearing outside her household without the permission of her husband. Even with permission, she had to ride in a covered palanquin or wear a cloak to hide her face (Belk, 2006). Another principle, *namjon-yobi* instructed that men are the heavens—high and destined to lead, and women are the earth—low, soft and destined to follow men (Cho, 1998). The women during the *Chosŏn* were required to observe the rule of "three obediences," which refers to the obedience of daughters to their fathers, wives to their

husbands, and mothers to their sons. This ideal of male superiority became more prominent during the late *Chosŏn* period (1650-1910) (Han Park and Cho, 1995).

In the patrilineal Confucian family, marriage had little to do with love or affection; rather, the choice of a partner was a guarded prerogative of the parents. Once a woman joined her husband's family through marriage, she was forced to be loyal to them even after her husband died (Kim, 1993). According to the law of the *Chosŏn* dynasty, a widowed woman was never supposed to marry again, and most did not, although women had frequently remarried during the *Koryŏ* (918-1392) period. Widows of lower classes were occasionally allowed to remarry; however, for *yangban* women "a marriage once concluded cannot be changed within a lifetime" (Deuchler, 1993; Cumings, 2005). Given this , free love and free marriage advocated by the New Woman of the early 20th century were progressive.

Under the influence of Japan since the late 19th century, the ideal of *Ryosai kenbo (hyonmo yangcheo* in Korean), *meaning good wives and wise mothers,* was introduced to Korea. This ideology was an amalgam of Confucianism and the 19th century Western cult of domesticity found during the mid-Meiji (1868-1912) in Japan, which aimed to legitimize the exclusive role of women at home as wives and mothers as a way of strengthening the state as a large family (Tamanoi, 1990). In turn, the ideology of *ryosai kenbo* exerted strong influence over the lives of Korean New Women and Modern Girls as women's role as good wives and wise mothers was praised as a requirement for building a strong nation and ultimately achieving independence from Japan.

The Landscape of Consumption in Colonial Seoul

At the start of its colonial rule, the Japanese government destroyed the existing governmental buildings and the ramparts of the *Chosŏn* dynasty in Seoul to construct new office buildings, straight main streets and a railroad station in the center of the city. The colonial government headquarters was moved into *Gyeongbokgung Palace,* which was the principal palace of the *Chosŏn* dynasty, and a straight boulevard was built to connect the Seoul railroad station and *Kwanghwamoon*, the main entrance of the palace (Shin, 2003).

The boulevard divided Seoul into two section: a southern village, called *Namchon*, of Japanese residences, and a northern village, or *Bukchon*, of Korean residences. A business district called *Jingoge* was formed in the southern village, and a business district in the northern village developed around the *Jongno* area (Kang, 2005). The terms *Namchon* and *Bukchon* had existed since the *Chosŏn* dynasty. While *Bukchon* was a wealthy village settled by high officials and dignitaries, *Namchon* was an area in which the ordinary people and the poor *yangban* classes lived together. However, after the Japanese-supported coup d'état of 1884 by the Progressive Party (*Kapsin Chŏngbyŏn*), the Japanese began to reside in the *Namchon* area. After their victories in the *Sino-Japanese War* in 1894 and the *Russo-Japanese War* in 1905, more Japanese merchants flocked to Seoul (Kim, 2011b; Lee, 1998; Lee, 2012). In the areas around *Namchon,* 90 percent of the residents were Japanese (Cho, 2009). During the 1920s, *Namchon* exceeded *Bukchon* in terms of economic power (Agency, 2005). Around the *Jingoge* area, Japanese merchants ran many upscale stores selling jewelry, cosmetics, books, stationary, groceries and other general merchandise (Cho, 2009). Many cafés, restaurants, department stores, movie theaters and hotels were also located in *Jingoge* (Kang, 2005; Shin, 2003).

While the privileged few enjoyed a flourishing consumer culture in *Namchon*, most Seoul residents in the 1930s lived in severe poverty. Almost half of the city contained dilapidated

thatched-roof houses, and over half of the college graduates could not find jobs (Shin, 2003). This striking discrepancy is well captured in Figure 1, a cartoon from the August, 1927 issue of *Pyolgongon* magazine.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The urban poor, called *tomakmins,* lived in dugout huts or rundown houses outside of Seoul and in adjacent areas and endured a polarized existence. The number of *tomakmins* continued to increase and, according to the statistics compiled by the Seoul division of colonial government since the late 1920s, accounted for 1,143 households and 4,803 people in 1928, which increased to 2,870 households and 12,378 people by 1933 (Yeom, 2002). Given this situation, affluent consumer culture was a false hope for the poor in Seoul in the 1920s and 1930s (Kang, 2005).

Despite an increasing number of urban poor, Seoul was advanced enough to be called a nightless new world in the 1920s (Chung, 1929). The department stores, mass media and advertising played crucial roles in spreading consumer culture throughout Korea in the 1930s.

Department Stores

Mitsukoshi was the first modern department store (*paekhwajŏm*) in Korea (Kwak, 1993; Mha, 2004). *Mitsukoshi* originally began in 1906 as a drapery shop in Seoul (Cwiertka, 2011); in October 1930, it moved into a grander new building as shown in Figure 2. Other Japanese self-proclaimed department stores, such as *Chojiya* and *Minakai*, were also in business in *Jingoge*, but no other 'modern' department stores like *Mitsukoshi* opened until the mid-1930s.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The Seoul branch of *Mitsukoshi,* the largest department store in Korea and Manchuria, had 1.8 acres of floor space and 360 employees (Mha, 2004). With a devotion to customer service, the employees greeted Korean customers in Korean while greeting Japanese customers in Japanese. The majority of the *Mitsukoshi* customers were Japanese, and the Korean customers were usually high officials or extremely wealthy. The gallery in Mitsukoshi was a venue for exhibitions and cultural events that became the talk of the town (Kwak, 1993).

Dong-A and *Hwashin* were department stores established by Korean entrepreneurs in 1932 in the *Bukchon* area. Later that same year, *Dong-A* merged with *Hwashin* (Kang, 2005; Kim, 2005c). After an accidental fire in 1935, *Hwashin* reopened its store in a seven-story building to become the largest department store in Korea in 1937 (Kim, 2005c, Cwiertka, 2011). The items sold in *Hwashin* included neckties, glasses, phonographs, wine glasses, beverages, handbags, chests of drawers, dresses, hats, parasols, and other items. These products could not be readily purchased by ordinary people but clearly demonstrated the consumer aspect of a modern industrial society (Kim, 2005c).

Unlike their Western counterparts, the department stores in Korea introduced the Japanese concept of the department store as a family space (Kim, 2005c; Cwiertka, 2011). Japanese department stores devoted large amounts of floor space to lounges, restaurants, exhibition galleries, roof gardens, roller-skating rinks, children's playgrounds, and even miniature zoos (Cwiertka, 2011). The large restaurants in the department stores were popular places for socializing by both celebrities and ordinary people (Shin, 2003; Kang, 2005; Kim, 2005c).

For many people during the 1930s and 1940s, from students on field trips to old men from the countryside, buying commodities was not the primary reason for visiting a department store; the crowds were attracted to the spectacles that flourished in these retail spaces. Through a variety of merchandise, restaurants, galleries and events, the department stores allowed ordinary people to indulge in a temporary fantasy of wealth (Cwiertka, 2011).

Despite an association with Japanese colonial domination, the department store was enthusiastically embraced by the Korean public. By 1941, sales at the *Mitsukoshi* Seoul location were twice those of a store of similar size in Sapporo (Cwiertka, 2011). Department stores were one of the few places where people from every walk of life could visit because Seoul lacked public facilities for urbanites (Kim, 2009). However, the Korean customers, who accounted for 60 to 70 percent of the business in the Seoul department stores, were largely from the middle to upper classes (Hayashi, 2005; Sohn, 2008). The department store was primarily a bourgeois-class destination. As such, the department store required that its female visitors wore proper attire, hairstyles, and make-up, as advised in an article from *Chosun Ilbo* on December 1, 1934. Given that in 1936 a meal in a department store was worth a day's wages for an unskilled worker, a ten-day supply of firewood or a two-day supply of rice for a family of five (Grajdanzev, 1944; Cwiertka, 2011), the working class was unlikely to be able to purchase consumer goods in the department stores. For most people, the department stores were essentially museums in which they could look, but not buy (Drakulic, 1992).

Mass Media and Consumer Culture

After the March First Movement for Korean independence in 1919, the Japanese colonial government adopted the so-called *Munhwa-Jongchi*, which means enlightened administration

(Lee, 1984). This change in colonial policy led to the creation of private newspapers in the Korean language such as the *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo* in 1920 (Jung, 1990).

In the 1930s, a variety of newspapers were being published, and magazines began to emerge in their modern form expanding beyond the literary coterie magazines. The newspaper industry became more dependent on advertising sales, and, consequently, the news articles increasingly catered to popular interests rather than to socio-political issues (Kim, 1996; Kang, 2005; Kim, 2005c). Therefore, the newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s allocated more space to fashion topics than today's newspapers (Mha, 2004). General interest magazines and even feminist magazines promoted consumer culture under the guise of providing practical knowledge such as how to choose cosmetics, outfits, and lose weight (Kim, 2005b, Kang, 2005). People could read articles about "make-up methods for schoolgirls" and "beauty counseling" in *Shinyosung* (The New Woman), a magazine that primarily carried pedantic articles about the women's movement and the trends that preserved the position of socialism in the 1920s (Kim, 2005b).

In addition to newspapers and magazines, film was medium that strongly influenced the consumer culture of the 1920s and 1930s. The history of film in Korea began with the promotion of tobacco by the British-American Tobacco Company (BAT). The BAT began its business in China in 1902. Motion pictures became an important tool for BAT to attract more customers in China (Cochran, 1980; Cochran, 2000), and this tactic was expanded Korea to overcome BAT's handicap of being a latecomer to the Korean tobacco market (Kim, 2002a). Movies became a regular feature of city life in Korea. According to *Dong-A Ilbo*, Seoul had 3,000 regular moviegoers by 1925 (Yoo, 2001). Korea had 27 movie theaters, including 12 in Seoul (Jung,

1997). Movie audiences increased very rapidly from 2.6 million in 1927 to 8.8 million by 1932. In 1940, the number of moviegoers reached 12.5 million (Kim, 2002a).

Foreign movies dominated the Korean movie theaters until the Japanese government enforced a strong screen quota policy for Japanese movies in 1934. The import of foreign movies grew every year, and by the mid-1920s, American movies accounted for 95 percent (Kim, 2002a). Many people began to imitate the behaviors of the movie characters (Kang, 2005). Western movies, in particular, had a significant impact on the increasing interest in the Westernized ideals of the body and liberal sex. Consequently, these movies had considerable influence on the consumption practices of the Modern Girl and Boy (Kim, 1999). In the 1930s, Western actors and actresses were frequently used as fashion examples. For example, Western movies inspired people with symbols such as Harold Lloyd's glasses, Charlie Chaplin's mustache, Gary Cooper's coat, Lowell Sherman's hat, Robert Montgomery's necktie, William Powell's trousers and Clive Brook's shoes (Kim, 1999; Kang, 2005; Yoo, 2001).

The Development of Advertising

The first newspaper advertisement was for a German business with a Korean branch called *Sechang-yanghaeng*. The advertisement appeared in the fourth issue of *Hansung Joobo* (1885-1888) on February 22, 1886. Thereafter, newspapers such as *Tongnip Shinmoon* (1896-1899), *Hwangsung Shinmoon* (1898-1910), and *Jekook Shinmoon* (1898-1910) carried advertisements for foreign products including tobacco, fabric dye, and liquor (Shin and Seo, 1998; Lee and Kim, 2004).

In the 1900s, the products advertised became more diverse, with the most heavily promoted being Western hats, suits, and shoes. The 1920s was the golden age of Korean

advertising (Mha, 2004). In the 1920s, the number of advertisements in newspapers was so high that it created doubt regarding the sincerity of the papers' criticisms of the reckless consumer culture (Kim, 2006). The most common advertisements were for pharmaceuticals, followed by cosmetics (Mha, 2004) including perfumes, basic skin treatments, make-up products, powders, and facial creams (Lee and Kim, 2004). The primary targets of the cosmetics advertising were literate homemakers and schoolgirls (Kim, 2005b). In the 1910s and early 1920s, the models in the advertisements were usually Japanese women wearing kimonos, but these were replaced later by Korean women in *Hanbok*, the Korean traditional costume (Kim, 2005c), as shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Insert Figure 4 about here

The appropriation of Western images was a notable aspect of the advertising from the 1920s and 1930s. A Western hat was promoted as "the crown of civilization." The print advertisement in Figure 5 uses a Western male pilot's image, although there was no connection between a Caucasian male pilot and the effect of the advertised gonorrhea medicine. The term '*yoosunhyung*' (streamlined shape) was used often to emphasize the modernity and science behind particular products. In fact, the fascination with streamline shapes was not limited to Korea (Forty, 1986). In keeping with the Eugenics ideas that prevailed in the U.S. popular culture of the 1930s, designs evolved from intricate, gaudy, and ornamental to sleek and

simplified. Therefore, the functionalist design of streamlined forms, which resulted from this evolutionary process, was believed to embody modernity and science (Cogdell, 2000, 2003).

For Korean people of this era, a streamlined shape represented speed and the advanced science of Western civilization (Shin, 2003); the streamlined aesthetic conveyed the ideas of perfection, efficiency and control (Clarke, 1999). Accordingly, a streamlined bottle was even promoted as a selling feature for eye drops. Although advertisers did not provide an explicit connection between their products and the modern images such as Western women, pilots and a streamlined shape, they wanted their audience to associate the products with these modern images to improve product sales.

Insert Figure 5 about here

With the increased yearning for all things modern and Western, the Korean dependency on imported goods increased. Since the late 19th century, Korea had imported a large number of consumer goods. Bird, who visited Korea between 1894 and 1897, observed that Korean households were using unbleached shirtings, lawns, muslins, cambrics, Turkey reds for children's wear, American kerosene oil, and matches (Bird, 1898). Of the products advertised in *Dong-A Ilbo* between 1920 and 1940, only 25.1 percent were of Korean origin, while Japanese products accounted for 67.8 percent and American products for 5.6 percent. Considering that the products produced by Japanese enterprises in Korean factories were also considered of Korean origin, the advertisements for genuine Korean products were few (Kim, 1996).

The Consumption by New Women and Modern Girls

According to *Shinyosong*, a representative women's magazine from the 1920s, a true *Shinyosong*, or a New Woman, should confront the reality of the colonized state of Korea and actively work to resolve the nation's difficulties beyond her personal achievement as an individual woman (Lee, 2003). In other words, Korean intellectual society asked the New Woman to develop a social and political consciousness along with her personal awakening as a modern individual woman (Lim, 2004). However, in reality, the term "New Woman" has been broadly applied since the early twentieth century to distinguish between the intellectual women who benefited from modern education and more traditional women (Kwon, 1998).

The first modern institution for women's education was the *Ewha Hakdang* mission school, which was established in 1886 and was followed by more schools for women (Kim, 1999; Kim, 2004). Through modern education in Korea and abroad, many Korean women obtained modern ideas such as gender equality and engaged in feminist movements (Kim, 1999). Although earlier curricula are unavailable, the regular curriculum, which was established in 1911 by the Japanese colonial government, included moral training, Japanese language, Chinese characters for the Korean language, math, science, music, physical education, reading, handicrafts, commerce, and sewing (Kim, 2004).. Apparently, these subjects were not designed to raise women's consciousness; however, given the tradition of the *Chosŏn* dynasty, during which official education was not allowed for women except for occasional homeschooling, women's participation in official education was quite progressive. This traditional attitude persisted even into the 1910s. Many parents were reluctant to send their daughters to school, and for this reason, teachers often had to beg stubborn parents to recruit students (Lee et al., 2005).

In this social context, the New Women signified modernity by challenging the moral system of the Confucian patriarchy, using a new self-identity that was crafted through modern education in Korea, Japan, or the Western countries (Choi, 2004; Kwon, 1998). The New Women's movement in Korea became socially visible in the 1920s through pioneering New Women such as Na Hey-suk and Kim Won-ju, who returned to Korea after finishing their studies in Tokyo (Kwon, 1998). These New Women drew public attention because of their radical ideas and because they behaved differently from traditional women. Thus, the newspapers and magazines exhibited a great interest in them. The New Women acknowledged the influence of Western feminism and advocated free love regardless of marriage, free marriage without the intervention of parents, and the destruction of the ideology of feminine chastity. Many of the radical ideas of the New Woman challenged the patriarchal social order and thus faced harsh criticisms by the older generation and by male intellectuals (in professions such as literary writers, social activists including both nationalists or socialists, and newspaper reporters) who usually benefited from a modern education in Japan, China, and the Western countries (Kim, 1999). Male intellectuals joined the criticism, though they acknowledged the necessity of women's education and promoted it as a requirement for building a prosperous modern nation. Even for male intellectuals with progressive ideas, the purpose of women's education was constricted by the boundaries of the Confucian patriarchy. According to an article in the March, 1920 issue of *Shinyoja* magazine, the New Woman was to be an intellectual assistant to her husband, healthy without being obese or frail, strong enough for her husband to depend on her in times of hardship, and devoted in her love for her husband with a determination to protect her chastity even upon risk of death (Park, 2003). This ideal for the New Woman became the bedrock of the male intellectual criticism toward the consumption practices of the New Woman. Despite severe

criticism grounded in these dominant patriarchal ideals, however, the emancipatory ideas and practices of the New Woman provided role models for many ordinary women.

The term “Modern Girl” was used more often than “New Woman” in the 1930s. While the New Woman of the early 1920s included intellectual women such as medical doctors, teachers and artists, the definition began to broaden to include literate women from all walks of life. In a *Pyolgongon* article from December, 1928, reporters, phone operators, bank tellers, and bus conductors were introduced as representative professions held by the New Women. Unlike “New Woman,” the term “Modern Girl” did not refer to a woman with a modern education; rather, the term generally referred to those with a Westernized appearance, short hair and Western clothes (Cho, 2003) and who embraced elements of Western popular culture such as frequenting cafés and movies and owning gramophone records. Unlike the New Women, who were praised as vanguards of modern ideas, Modern Girls were heavily criticized for their extravagance (Jeon et al., 2004). According to Cho and Yoon’s (1995) oral history concerning the actual New Women, the term “New Woman” was used frequently until the mid 1920s, when the number of schoolgirls remained limited; the term was used less frequently as more women began to participate in the modern education system.

While the term “New Woman” implied the positive aspects of the modernized women when these women remained a novelty portrayed by the mass media, the term “Modern Girl” was frequently used to critique the women’s vanity in consumption. Therefore, women such as café girls (café waitresses) and *gisaeng* (an entertainer in upscale restaurants and saloons), who were not included in the category of New Woman, were incorporated into the notion of the Modern Girl. The issue of *Pyolgongon* from December 20, 1927, demonstrates the connection between the Modern Girl and consumption by declaring that the Modern Girl is associated with the piano

or movies. The same article also provides negative connotations of the Modern Girl, stating that "the Modern Girl gives the impression that she is not a woman of good conduct but a gorgeous and bewitching woman like an actress that goes to dance halls" (p. 120).

To break the repressive patriarchal order in Korean society, the New Woman expressed her new identity by changing her appearance and her way of life (Park, 2003). One of the first things that the New Woman advocated was the reform of women's clothing. The traditional Korean clothing since the late *Chosŏn* dynasty created many difficulties for women because their breasts were tied too tightly, and many women became ill or suffered from inactivity because of upper garments that were too short and skirts that were too long. With the reform movement, the upper portion of their garments became longer and the skirts became shorter, as seen in the upper right image in Figure 6. Although the New Women and schoolgirls wore reformed clothing, many women still wore the traditional wardrobe with a long skirt (Yoo, 1990), which can be seen in the upper left image in Figure 6.

Insert Figure 6 about here.

The New Women in Korea were usually schoolgirls or graduates from modern schools with the most popular fashions in the early stages coming from these schoolgirls (Keum, 2002). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, schoolgirls were the trendsetters on the streets of Seoul and demonstrated a Westernized lifestyle. At the early emergence of fashion trends in the 1920s, these young women were pioneers who expressed their thoughts and modern sensibilities through their appearance (Kang, 2005).

The most notable aspects of fashion at the time were hairstyles. The pompadour, which became popular in Japan around 1900, was introduced in Korea as well. The pompadour style, also called the *hisasigami*, was a typical hairstyle for schoolgirls (Keum, 2002). In the early 1920s, a *tremori*, a style in which the hair was swept-back into a chignon, became popular among schoolgirls. In the mid-1920s, women began to cut their hair short; they were referred to as '*danbal yosong*' (short-haired woman) to distinguish them as more modern than women with different hairstyles (Yoo, 2001). The first woman to cut her hair short was Kang Hyang-ran who later transformed herself from a *gisaeng* to a socialist activist. Lee Wol-hwa and Kim Myung-soon, actresses who were shunned by a public who disapproved of their immoral private lives, followed Kang's move. Short hair stirred controversy in Korean society. In response to the public disturbances caused by women with short hair, the August, 1925 issue of *Shinyosong* magazine published an article titled "Women's Short Hair, Is it Right or Wrong?" which consisted of the opinions of thirteen famous intellectuals (Yoo, 1990). Although short hair was promoted by some New Women for its convenience, hygiene, and symbolic representation of emancipation from patriarchal oppression, until the early 1930s, few schoolgirls had short hair.

In addition to changing hairstyles, Western clothing also became a tool for expressing women's modern identities. After Koryo Yoon, the wife of the independent activist Chi Ho Yoon who studied in America in 1899 (Yoo, 1990), returned to Korea in Western dress, Western-style clothing became a progressive fashion for modern women (Kim, 2005a). In the 1920s, more New Women began to wear diverse Western-style clothes such as overcoats, jackets, one-piece dresses, sweaters, and blouses, and skirts were shortened to knee length. To express their modern identity, these women also purchased fashion items such as handbags, parasols, fans, and shawls and had a heightened interest in other accessories and make-up (Jeon et al., 2004).

In the late 1920s, fashion began to assume a position of prominence that clearly went beyond the need for clothing. In 1923, long draping mufflers were popular, as can be inferred from the cover of *Sangong Sekye* magazine from 1923 (see Figure 7). In the mid-1920s, purple mufflers gained popularity among schoolgirls. An article in *Shinyosong* from April 1924 ridiculed this phenomenon, saying, "Currently it has become a fad for schoolgirls to wear purple mufflers when they go out. Accordingly, the equation of 'schoolgirl = purple muffler' has emerged" (Yoo, 1990: 200). In the summer of 1924, it became popular for schoolgirls to wear short skirts and twirl a parasol, and in the fall of 1924, belted skirts became a huge hit (Kim, 2005b). In 1927, gold wristwatches were sought after by many schoolgirls, and gold watches became an essential part of a schoolgirl's wardrobe. A moralistic commentator lamented that schoolgirls no longer sat in their bus seats because they wanted to show off their gold wristwatches by holding the bus handles (Kim, 2005a).

Insert Figure 7 about here.

The New Woman was a role model at that time, and her fashions and behaviors were ardently imitated by many ordinary women (Yoo, 1990). Indeed, the fashion trends of schoolgirls and Modern Girls had a significant impact on other women. Many women aspired to be like these schoolgirls (Shin, 2003) and attempted to imitate them. Consequently, clothing modeled after schoolgirl uniforms became a fad (Kim, 2005c). As Western-style clothing replaced traditional schoolgirl uniforms in the 1930s (Jeon et al., 2004), it also began to penetrate into cities other than Seoul (Kim, 2005c). The desire to be a New Woman or a Modern Girl was portrayed in "*Taraji*" (Imitator) (1937), a novel about a bus girl (bus conductor) carrying heavy

magazines wrapped with a book wrapper every day to prevent others from discovering her real identity. The desire of ordinary women to become schoolgirls led to many complaints from the parents of schoolgirls. Parents were angry that they could not differentiate the schoolgirls from the *gisaengs* because the *gisaengs* imitated the schoolgirls' fashions (Kim, 2005b). In the 1930s, as cafés became popular for urban entertainment, many *gisaengs* became café girls or waitresses. Many famous actresses and singers were originally *gisaengs*. In the 1930s, the *gisaengs*, along with the New Women, represented the Modern Girls as women who enjoyed modern city culture, consumed popular art and mingled freely with intellectuals and artists (Seo, 2009).

Neo-Confucian and Nationalist Criticisms of the New Woman and the Modern Girl

The New Woman and the Modern Girl became models of the latest fashion trends for many Korean women, but these women simultaneously suffered from severe social disapproval. Although the Modern Boy was also attacked for his frivolity in following trends, he was not subjected to the same harassment and public gossip that plagued the Modern Girl (Kim, 2005b). The denunciation of these women penetrated into everyday life. People applied a double standard when evaluating the Modern Boy and the Modern Girl. It was 'modern' and 'dandy' when male intellectuals dressed up, but it was 'extravagant' and 'full of vanity' when female intellectuals did the same (Jeon et al., 2004). To many Korean observers, the distinct visual changes in the New Women or the Modern Girls merely symbolized the depravity of these women and gave license to the moralists, members of older generations and male intellectuals—both nationalists and socialists, to criticize these women (Kwon, 1998).

To the intellectuals of this age, the Modern Girl and Modern Boy were emblems of "daekadan" (decadence). An article in the December, 1927 issue of *Pyolgongon* reported that

these women and men were called '*motdoen gul*' (a bad girl) or '*motdoen boi*' (a bad boy) and added that many people made defamatory comments regarding the chastity of these women and men based on their appearance. The author admonished the Modern Girl and the Modern Boy, arguing that their behavior could have a deeper meaning and that they should build a society to realize their freedom before calling for free love. The author also criticized the contemporary Modern Girls and Modern Boys saying, "It is symbolic of the decadence of the end of the century that today's Modern Girls and Modern Boys grow restless with gaudiness, call for free love playing the violin and piano, or become drunk and wander around due to lost love" (Choi, 1927, p. 120).

While Confucianism ceased to be a formal state ideology in Korea in 1910, the Confucian norms continued to dominate the daily lives of the Korean people (Cho, 1998a). In the Confucian values system, desire, appetite, and naked ambition, manifested by spending and lavish displays, were considered contrary to the Confucian requirements to practice balance and moderation in one's daily life (Kendall, 2002). Accordingly, in Korea, discourses on consumption became intermingled with those on morals (Deuchler, 1992, 2003). The Confucian notion of the subordination of a woman to a man and his family (Cho, 1998a) intensified the criticism of Modern Girls. For a short time, the traditional Confucian ideal of women was denounced as both regressive and a barrier to the modernization of the country. However, in the mid-1920s, to resist the Japanese efforts to obliterate Korean cultural identity, many Koreans reverted to the old Confucian traditions as a symbol of resistance to the Japanese regime. Any new law that abolished traditional norms—regardless of how antiquated it may have been—caused hatred toward the Japanese rule (Cho, 1998a). The revised nationalist discourse aimed at resisting Japanese colonialism reformulated and revalued Confucian traditions. Progressive intellectuals

came to believe that the New Women's challenge to the Confucian patriarchy could weaken the Korean nation's power to stand against Japan by deconstructing tradition as the national cultural foundation and symbol (Kwon, 1998).

Moreover, people began to honor the women who maintained a traditional lifestyle, calling them *Gooyosong* (the Old Woman). They glorified the sacrifices that the Old Women had made for the sake of their families, criticizing the selfishness of the New Women and the Modern Girls (Jeon et al., 2004). For example, one article in the February 1927 issue of *Pyolgongon* magazine scolded a woman who wanted to purchase, instead of prepare, daily food staples such as soy sauce, bean paste and *kimchi* because "there would be warmth in the family only when a woman cooks for her husband and children with sincerity" (p. 115). This excerpt indicates that the Confucian ideology of the *Chosŏn* Dynasty, which taught women to be passive and obedient (Cho, 1998b) and to sacrifice themselves completely in service to their husbands and families (Han Park and Cho, 1995), was still dominant in the 1920s after the *Chosŏn* dynasty had collapsed. According to Confucian ideology, a woman seeking to fulfill her aspirations could destroy the peace and harmony of the social world (Chandra, 199; Cho, 1998a); therefore, the desire to purchase basic sauces and *kimchi* was considered outrageous by many male intellectuals.

Given the Confucian ideal of women that prevailed in Korean society, the Modern Girl or the New Woman, who was interested in expressing her individual identity through fashion, was naturally considered irresponsible, empty-minded and selfish. Articles in newspapers and magazines commonly lamented the selfishness of Modern Girls, who did not think of the economy of the family. For instance, in his magazine article, "Schoolgirls and the Gold Watch," Yang (1927) tells the story of one neighborhood family that confronted economic difficulties

because a daughter had purchased a gold watch. The cost of buying clothes and accessories was astronomical from the perspective of an average person. The price for cloth to make one skirt was 30 to 40 won; one pair of socks, 3 to 4 won; face powder, 4 to 5 won; and a haircut, 1 to 2 won (Shin, 2003). Considering that the price of a large sack of rice was approximately 18 won in 1935, the pursuit of fashion by the Modern Girl likely caused her family economic difficulty. Figure 8 presents an example of a social critique of the consumption behaviors of these young women. Economic difficulties caused by the pursuit of fashion may have been similar for the Modern Boy's families; however, the majority of the criticism regarding reckless consumption was directed at the Modern Girls, not the Modern Boys. This distinction clearly implies that the Confucian ideology of women played an important role in constructing the criticisms of the Modern Girl.

Insert Figure 8 about here

The consumer culture of the Modern Girl became the target of criticism from a nationalist perspective as well. As the national economy struggled with the worldwide economic recession beginning with stock market crash of 1929, criticisms of the consumption of the Modern Girls strengthened. These women were attacked because their indiscreet consumption behavior ignored Korea's difficult economic realities (Kim, 2005b). To the nationalists, the women's consumption of Japanese products unquestioningly embraced colonialism. This consumption of Japanese goods was also treated as an anti-Korean behavior that endangered the survival of the women's families and the Korean nation. Therefore, the fulfillment of one's own aspirations rather than devotion to the family became a destructive act against the national community. To

build a stronger nation, women were advised to adhere to traditional values including those of a wise mother and good wife (Lim, 2004). Women's education was valued only because educated women would make better mothers and fitting companions for their husbands. Women's empowerment was relevant insofar as it aimed to empower of "others" such as the family and the Korean nation (Kim, 1995). From the beginning of the Korean consumer culture, the ideal of a woman who serves her own family and country persisted in the consumption discourse in Korea.

Conclusion

In Korea, New Women and Modern Girls in the 1920s and 1930s were pioneers of consumerism who expressed their individuality via fashion. Through their appearance, including short hair and Westernized outfits, the New Women and Modern Girls constructed modern identities. The fashions of these women significantly impacted the consumption patterns of other women. The fashions of schoolgirls became the objects of voyeuristic gazes, and *gisaeng* and ordinary women imitated these fashions. The movement to reform the traditional Korean costume began with the New Woman, and the popularization of Western clothes began with changes in schoolgirl uniforms from the reformed *hanbok* to Western clothing (Yoo, 1990; Koh, 2001). These changes in appearance were reproduced in and promoted by the mass media and popular culture. These Modern Girls and New Women were consuming modernity.

However, these women's expression of individuality through consumption could not escape criticisms based on the neo-Confucian and nationalist ideals, which imposed a stigma on the individuals who expressed their newly obtained identity as modern women through various forms of consumption. The mainstream discourse distributed through the mass media such as newspapers and magazines regarded particular aspects of appearance, including short hair,

Western clothes and Western shoes, as indicative that these women had no sense of chastity, self-restraint, or an interest in their nation's tragic status as a Japanese colony. As Goffman (1963) notes, a Modern Woman was "reduced," in the minds of their contemporaries to "a tainted, discounted one" (p. 3). While the various fashionable objects of consumption symbolized an advanced modern subjectivity to these women and others in the 1920s and 1930s, the same objects became the signs of the stigma attached to the New Woman or the Modern Girl.

Denouncing women's consumption in Korea is not confined to the past. The present discourses on consumption, as observed in the *Doenjang-nyo* controversy, are similar in their position on women's self-expressive consumption. A woman's consumption of foreign brands, ranging from *Louis Vuitton* and *Chanel* to *Starbucks* and *Dunkin Donuts*, is regarded as being particularly detrimental to the well being of their family and to the nation's wealth. Therefore, their consumption behaviors are condemned as irresponsible and reckless. The interplay of neo-Confucian ideals with Korean nationalism, formed through the patriotic struggle to fend off the aggression of the world superpowers (Kim, 1995), intensifies the criticism against women's self-expressive consumption. These women's reckless consumption is thought to erode the economic health of the nation and their families. However, men's enthusiasm for expensive cars and luxury wristwatches (Chae, 2012; Oh, 2012) escapes this severe social criticism.

Times have changed, and the socio-political and cultural contexts in which Korea is situated are different from those of the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, parallels between the past and the present indicate that an understanding of the Korean women's experiences in colonial Seoul can benefit today's marketing and consumer researchers to improve their understanding of the current moral discourse regarding the consumption of foreign brands by Korean women. Many Korean women enjoy using luxury fashion goods to express their identities and still struggle

against the stereotype of *Doenjang nyo*, arguing that drinking Starbucks coffee and carrying *Louis Vuitton* handbags does not necessarily indicate that they are irresponsible, empty-minded and selfish.

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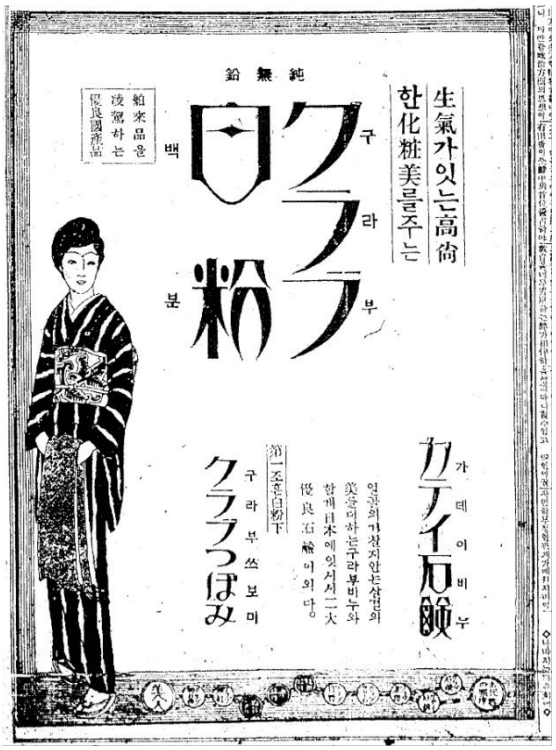
FIGIRE 1. THE DISCREPANCY IN CONSUMPTION BETWEEN CLASSES

Note: The cartoon contrasts different lives between the rich and the poor. While the rich were enjoying coffee in a café, playing billiard, swimming in the sea, and driving in a leisurely way, the poor were working hard to make their ends meet (source: *Pyolgongon*, August 1927)

FIGURE 2. MITSUKOSHI DEPARTMENT STORE OF SEOUL IN 1930

Note: When it first opened in October 24, 1930, The Seoul branch of *Mitsukoshi* had 1.8 acres of floor space and 360 employees. According to an article of *Chung Ang Ilbo* (January 31 in 2012), there were a drug store, a travel guide center, and gifts and cosmetics counters on the first floor, drapery counter on the second floor, Western clothes corners for gentlemen and ladies and corners for jewelry and furniture, a coffee shop and a restaurant on the fourth floor. (Source: http://modernseoul.culturecontent.com/)

FIGURE 3. GURABU WHITE FACIAL POWDER ADVERTISEMENT 1



Note: Gurabu, Japanese pronunciation of ‘Club’, was one of the representative Japanese cosmetics brand in 1920s of Korea. This advertisement for Gurabu White Facial Powder shows a picture of woman in a *Kimono,* Japanese traditional costume (Source: *Dong-A Ilbo,* March 11, 1925).

FIGURE 4. GURABU FACIAL POWDER ADVERTISEMENT 2

Note: Another advertisement for Gurabu White Facial Powder shows a picture of woman in a reformed *Hanbok*, Korean traditional costume (Source: Dong-A Ilbo, January 11, 1926)

FIGURE 5. ADVERTISEMENT OF GUROBEL, GONORRHEA MEDICINE

Note: The Advertisement for Gurobel, gonorrhea medicine, shows the image of an airplane and a pilot to symbolize its scientific superiority (Source: *Chosun-Chung Ang Ilbo* Dec. 3 1935)

FIGURE 6. WARDROBE SHOW-OFF

Note: The photos from *Pyolgongon* magazine shows that different clothing style co-existed in late 1920s (Source: *Pyolgongon*, May 1928).

FIGURE 7. THE COVER OF SANGONG SEKEY MAGAZINE

Note: The cover for the first issue of *Sangong Sekey* magazine in February 1923 shows a New Woman that carries a handbag in a reformed Hanbok and a long muffler and a man that wears a Western coat and a hat.

FIGURE 8. SOCIAL CRITIQUE ON YOUNG WOMEN'S CONSUMPTION

Note: The caption of the figure ridicules the consumption behaviors of young women saying "A Pair of Sheepskin Shoes = Two Sacks of Rice, a Brave Girl" (Kim, Kyu Taek, *Pyolgongon*, December 20, 1927)