Cold War Cosmopolitanism: The Asia Foundation and 1950s Korean Cinema

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South Korean films first became visible on the world stage in the late 1950s when they began to be exhibited and win prizes at international film festivals. Yi Pyŏngil's [illegible] (1956) and Han Hyŏngmo's [illegible] (1958) were among Korea's earliest award-winning films. These two films exemplify a postcolonial and postwar discourse I am calling "Cold War cosmopolitanism." The cultivation of this cosmopolitan ethos among cultural producers was a major objective for Americans waging the cultural Cold War in Asia, and the Asia Foundation was Washington's primary instrument for doing so. This article traces the history of the Asia Foundation from its inception in the National Security Council in the late 1940s through its activities in Korea in the 1950s and early 1960s. It pays particular attention to the foundation's support for Korean participation in the Asian Film Festival. It offers a close textual and historical reading of Yi's and Han's films as a means of exploring how Korean cultural producers, acting as Cold War entrepreneurs, took advantage of the Asia Foundation's resources in ways that furthered their own aesthetic, economic, and political interests.

Keywords: [illegible]

INTRODUCTION

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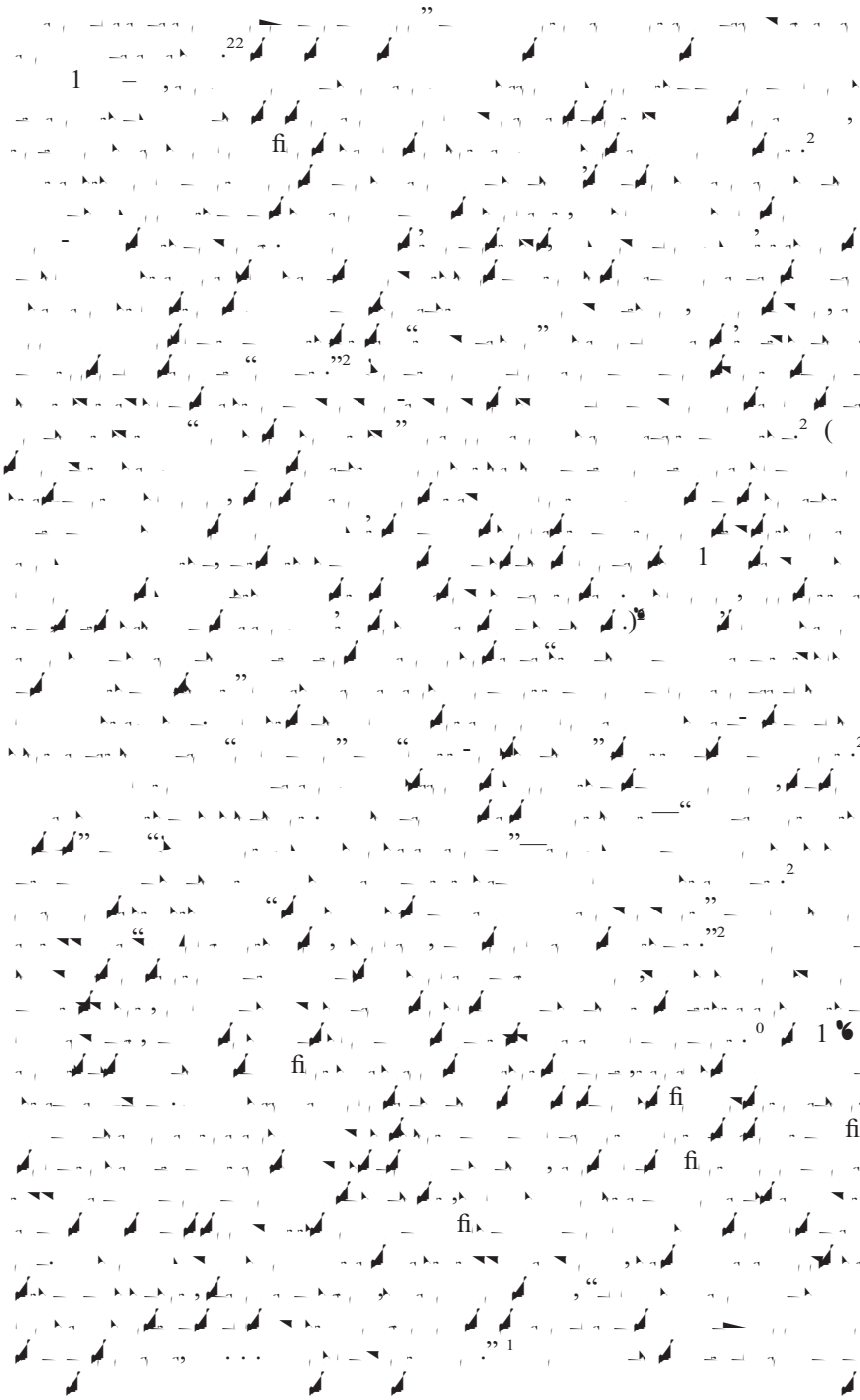

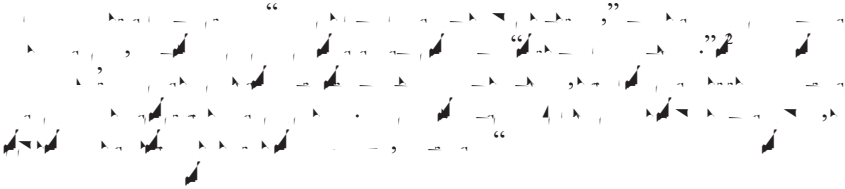

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