

New Women in Colonial Korea

A sourcebook

Compiled and translated with an
introduction by Hyaeweol Choi

Cartoons

Cartoon 1 New Woman with a violin

Source: *Sin yōja* 2 (1920): 40

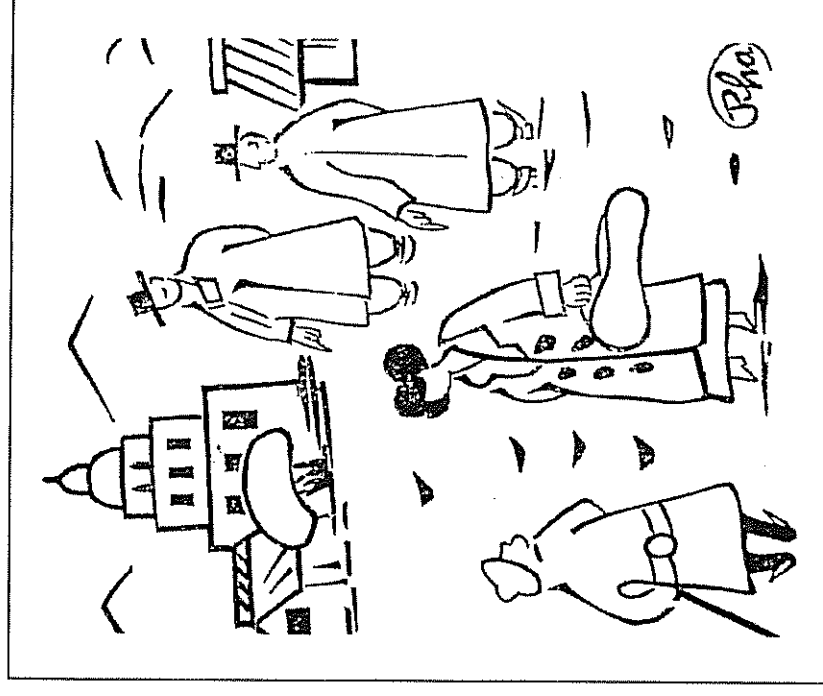
Two men in traditional Korean dress on the right point to a “new woman” who is dressed in Western style and holding a violin case. A young man on the left, also dressed in a Western style coat, is looking after her longingly.

MAN A IN KOREAN DRESS: What’s that?

MAN B IN KOREAN DRESS: That’s supposed to be a contemporary version of Yanggŭm. [Yanggŭm is a traditional Korean string instrument.]

MAN A: Gosh, she looks awfully arrogant. Who would marry such a woman?

YOUNG MAN: Oh my, she is so pretty. If I weren’t already married . . . [I would have liked to date her]. She is so fashionable. I would like to talk to her, but she doesn’t even notice me.

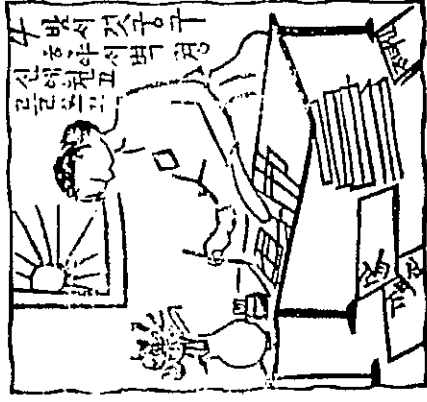
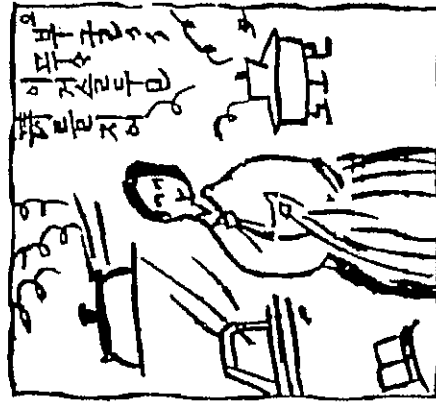
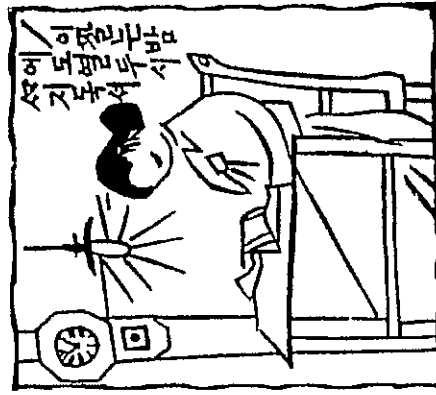


Cartoon 2 Na Hyesök's portrait of the daily life of Kim Iryöp

Source: *Sin yōja* 4 (1920): 53-56

Kim leads a full life, doing all the things that a married woman is expected to do in the domestic arena, while actively pursuing a new, creative life as a writer:

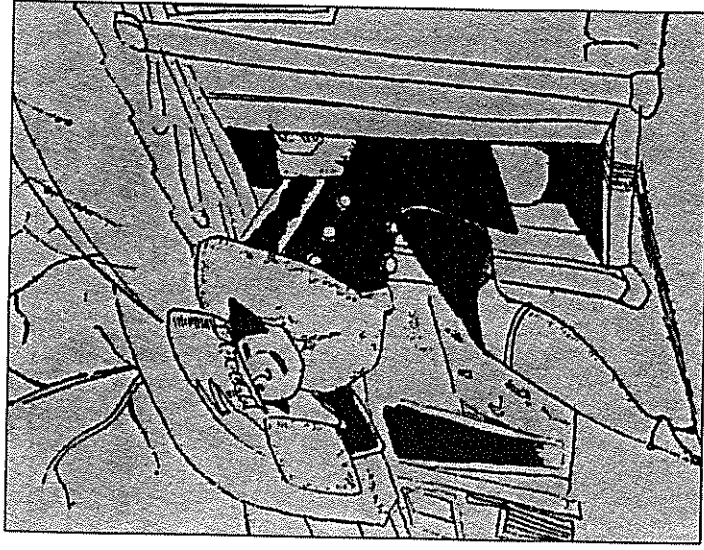
- In Plate 1 she is making full use of the limited time given to her, reading until midnight.
- In Plate 2 she is composing poems, while cooking.
- In Plate 3 she is thinking about the ideal life that New Women will have, while mending clothes.
- In Plate 4 she is working on a manuscript throughout the night until dawn.



Cartoon 3 "Kkori p'i nūn kongiak" (Peacock with its tail feathers on display)

Source: *Chosŏn ilbo* February 9, 1928

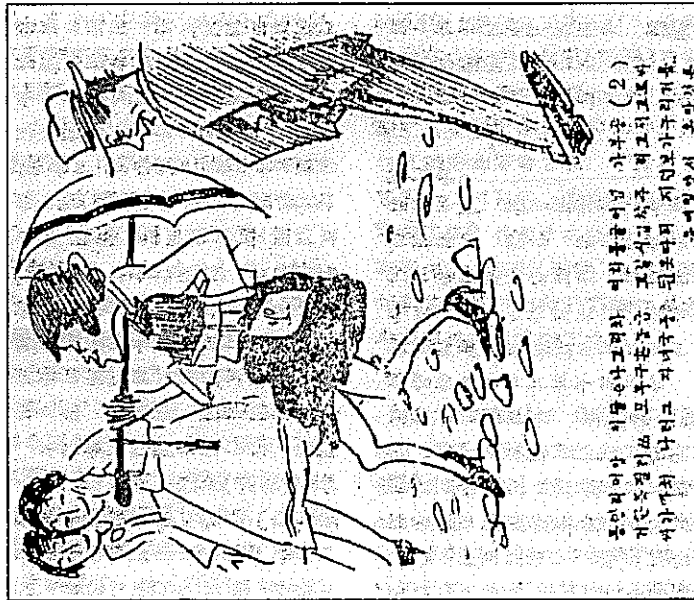
This cartoon portrays a New Woman, who is dressed in Western clothes, stepping out of a hut. The intention of the cartoon is to ridicule women who wear expensive clothing beyond their means.



Cartoon 4 A girl student on the street

Source: *Sin yǒng* 3, no. 6 (1925)

A girl student, who is expected to study hard, is roaming around the street with short bangs, dressed in a short skirt, long jacket, and high heels. A man looks at her disapprovingly, while two other young girl students check her out, as if to look for fashion tips.

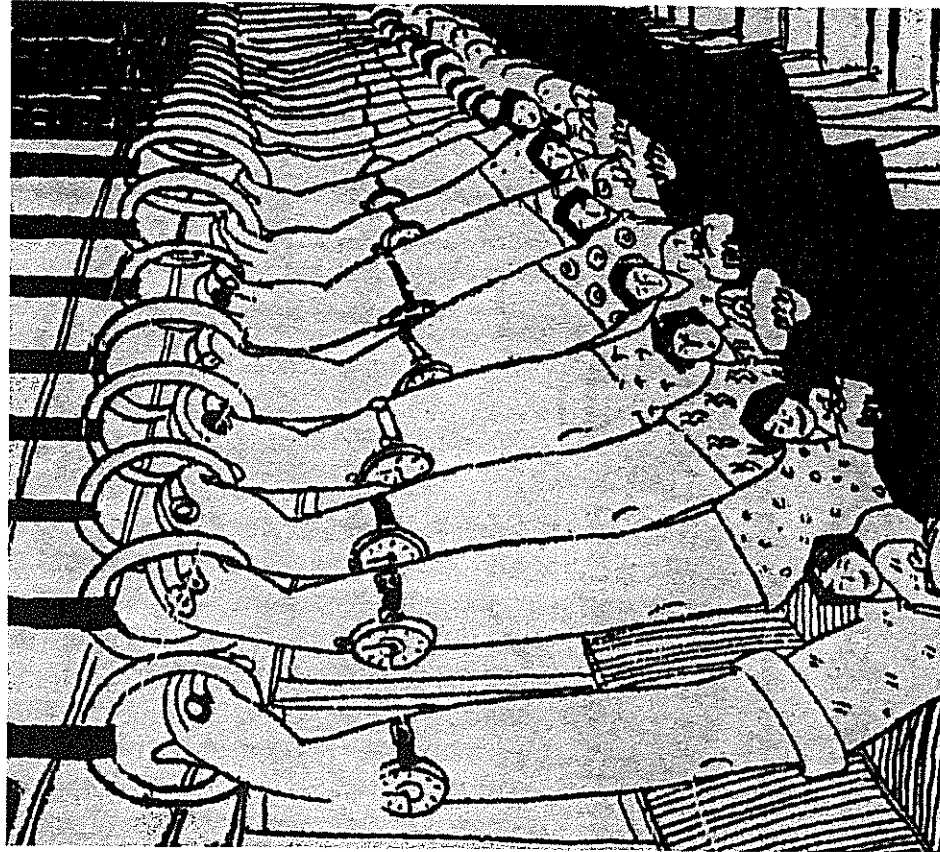


동진
이동진
1925

Cartoon 5 "Mo-don kkǒl i changsŏn undong" (Modern Girls' race for accessories)

Source: *Chosŏn ilbo* February 5, 1928

The cartoon is intended to exaggerate New Women's or Modern Girls' obsession with jewelry. The women are depicted riding on a tram, holding the commuter straps with oversized arms, to prominently show off their gold watches and rings.



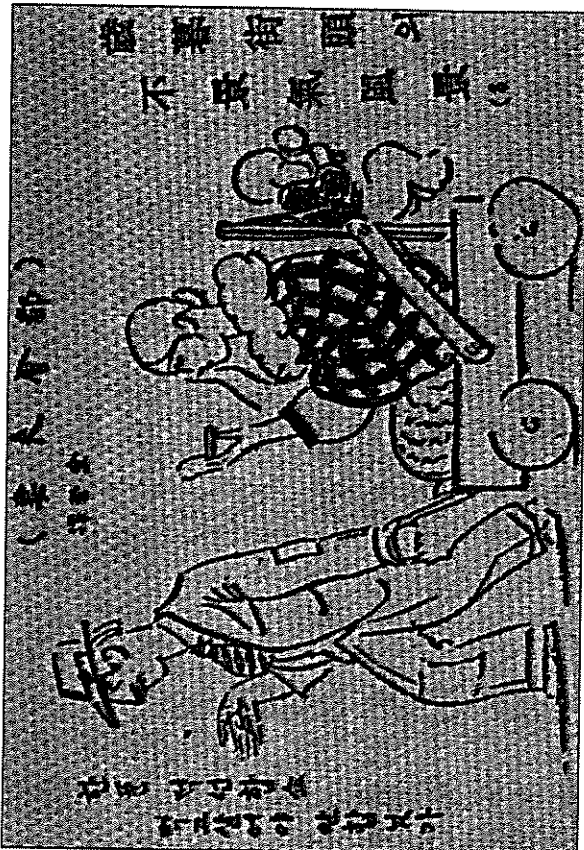
Cartoon 6 "Yösŏng sŏnjŏn sidae ka om-yŏn" (What if there comes a time when women can advertise who they are and what they desire)
Source: Chosŏn ilbo January 12, 1930.

As women's skirts got shorter and shorter, their legs, in particular, started to attract men's attention. The cartoonist, An Sŏkyŏng, imagines a future in which women use their legs as billboards. This cartoon shows the legs of a group of women sitting side by side, with "advertisements" written on them. The things written on the women's legs include: "I am very sensitive. He [my future husband] has to understand this. I am a virgin. I will accept any man who has lots of money", "I cannot pay my rent. Help me. I like chocolate. Buy a box of chocolate for me", "I am still single, and I want to marry a man who studied overseas", and "If he can build a 'culture house' (*munhwa chut'aek*) for me, I will marry him, even if he is seventy years old. As long as he can buy me a piano ..."



Cartoon 7 "Pulgyŏnggi p'unggyŏng" (A scene from the economic downturn)
Source: Pyŏlgŏn gon (December 1930)

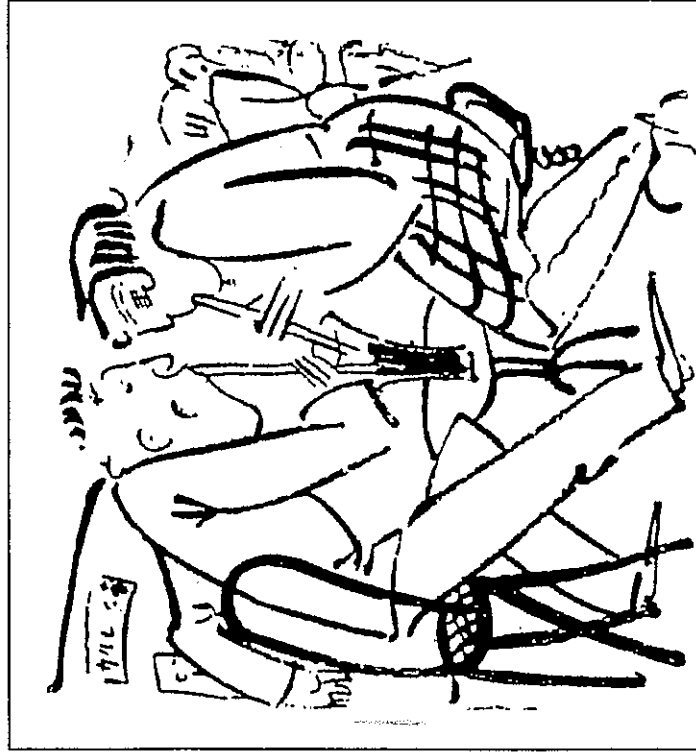
The cartoonist depicts a poor family in the street. The husband pulls a cart and begs for food, while his wife sits idly in the cart, applying make-up, and their child hangs off the back, ignored and untended.



Cartoon 8 A café scene

Source: *Chosŏn ilbo* July 16, 1930

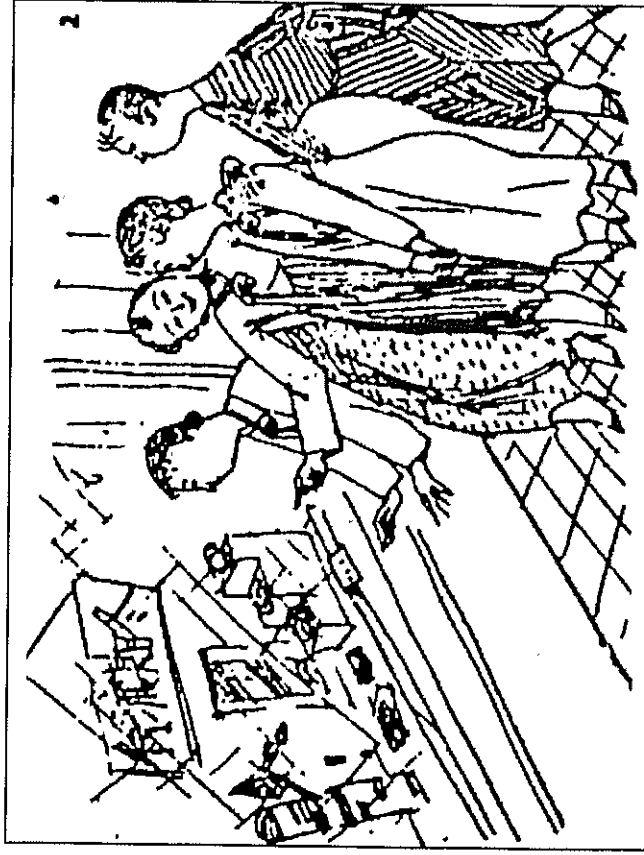
A young man and young woman in Western-style clothing sit close together over a table, sharing a single "ice coffee" with two straws. One says, "*Atasi! aisukohiga taisūki, taisūkiyo*" ("I love ice coffee!"), and the other replies, "*Washi mone*" ("Me, too!").



Cartoon 9 "*Manch'u kadu p'unggyōng*" (A street scene in the heart of autumn)

Source: *Yōsōng* 2 (November 1936)

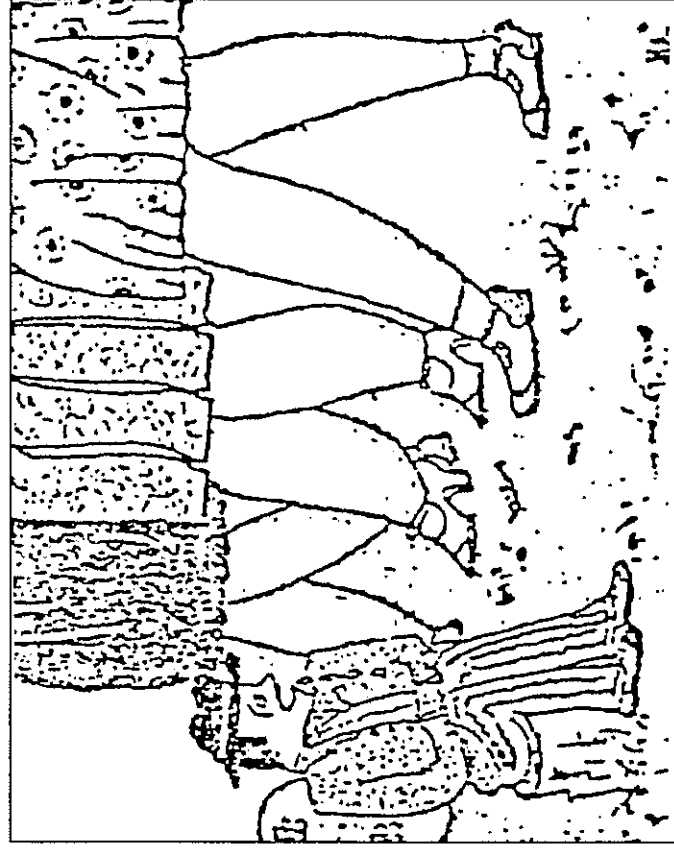
Department stores had become the center for modern trends and fashion. Each season, the newest fashions were put on display in department-store windows to attract women consumers. The cartoon shows women window-shopping.



Cartoon 10 "Kkot poda tari kugyōng" (Looking at legs is better than looking at flowers)

Source: *Chosŏn ilbo* May 3, 1934

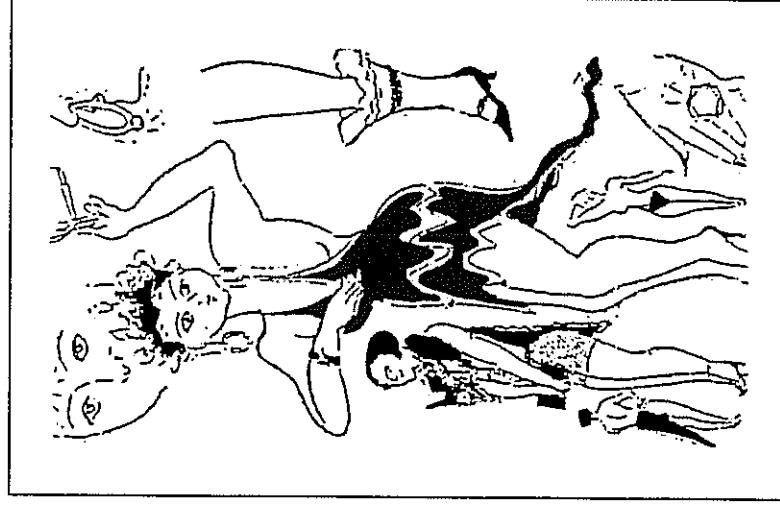
Korean women's traditional dress covered the entire body. New Women were marked out by the fact that they wore short skirts that revealed their legs. In the cartoon, a man is supposedly in a park at the time of a flower festival, but, instead of admiring the flowers, he is shown drooling over the legs of women passing by.



Cartoon 11 A caricature of a Modern Girl

Source: *Chosŏn ilbo* January 20, 1932

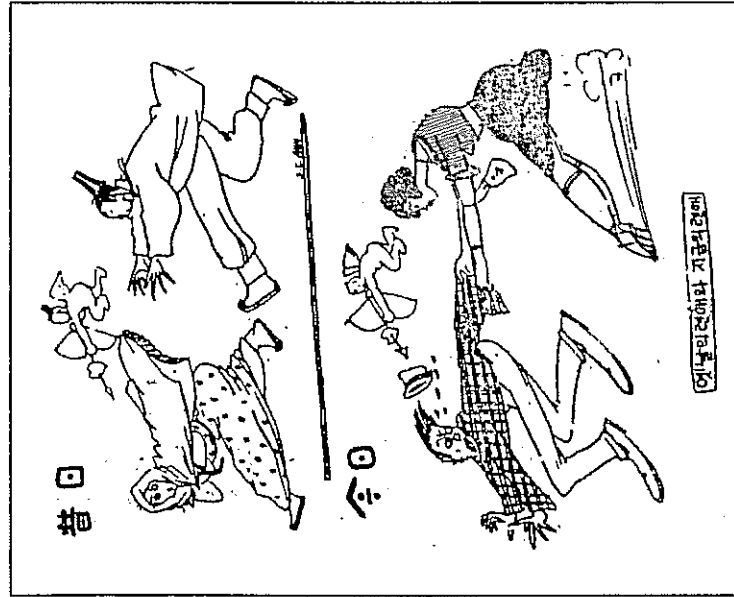
A caricature of a Modern Girl, noting her penchant for decorating her body with jewelry and Western-style lingerie.



Cartoon 12 "Yennal ūi yōnae wa chigūm ūi yōnae" (Old romance and new romance)

Source: *Sin yōsōng* March 1926

Unlike the old times, when men were the pursuers, New Women were imagined to be proactive and aggressive in seeking out love. The cartoon contrasts "old times," with a man dressed in traditional clothing, chasing a woman who is completely covered, with "new times," with a woman dressed in Western-style clothes, catching a man, also dressed Western style and looking quite frightened.



Cartoon 13 "Yuhaengsōng kiminpyōng" (Hypersensitivity to fashion trends)

Source: *Chosōn ilbo* July 25, 1934

The cartoon derides women's obsession with rapidly changing fashion trends and their husbands' slavish service to meet their wives' demands. The two men are engaged in a dialogue:

A: Why are you in such a hurry?

B: I just bought a dress for my wife and I have to get home before it goes out of fashion.

