

Embodying Ethnic and Settler Identities: An Analysis of the English-Language Korean Play *Sim Cheong* (1938) in Hawai'i*

Heeyoung CHOI

In 1938, Koreans in Hawai'i premiered an English-language play, *Sim Cheong* (*Sim Chung*), at the Honolulu Academy of Arts to celebrate the Korean Spring Festival. *Sim Cheong* is an adaptation by a second-generation Korean of a cherished Korean folktale, *The Story of Sim Cheong*, emphasizing filial piety. This study uses *Sim Cheong* to examine the cultural milieu of 1930s Hawai'i and the complex identities interwoven within the Korean diaspora, revealing efforts by Koreans to preserve their ethnic pride while creating a sense of closeness with the white upper class. The adaptation signalled a dramaturgical shift from the original story, often framed in the context of Confucianism and Buddhism, to a theatrical production incorporating musical performances and revised storylines. This shift is encapsulated in the contrast between the play's downplaying of the boat scene, commonly regarded as pivotal in illustrating the protagonist's commitment to filial piety, and accentuation of the scene depicting the initial encounter between Sim Cheong and the King, presenting independent and diverse elements of Korean culture and conveying undertones of Christian belief. Through this analysis of local political, social, and cultural realms, this study identifies dual identities existing in the Korean diaspora surpassing the confines of a generic pan-ethnic Asian American identity, unraveling the intricate interplay between the preservation of ethnic pride and the imperative of assimilation within the broader sociocultural landscape.

Keywords: Sim Cheong, stage performance, 1930s Hawai'i, Korean diaspora, cultural identity

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Heeyoung Choi (hychoi1115@gmail.com) is a visiting scholar at the Department of History, Northern Illinois University

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