

Revolutionary Mother: Comparing the role of the Mother in North Korea's *Tale of Ch'unhyang*, *Flower Girl*, and *Sea of Blood*

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The *Tale of Ch'unhyang* is a timeless story of love, suffering, defeat, and justice. The filmic versions of this tale have been reenactments of this formulaic plot and creative interpretations of iconic characters. On the one hand, the audience judges the filmic version on the basis of its faithfulness to the "original." On the other hand, the film must offer a creative delineation of the narrative and its characters, one that is different from previous films. The multiple iterations of this story—from the colonial period to present day and from both North and South Korea—generate the cathartic release from unrighteous suffering and project a paradisiacal nation free of ideological differences. However, the imaginings of a once unified country infers national division, which affects the way in which a classic tale such as *Ch'unhyang* is told. In North Korea's renditions of the tale, the emphasis is not only on the working class but more importantly on the role of *Ch'unhyang*'s mother, Wŏlmae. This paper will discuss the deliberate effort to transform Wŏlmae into the ideological revolutionary mother, who is comparable to other delineations of mothers in North Korean classic literature. The portrayal of Wŏlmae perpetuates North Korea's ideological iconography of the suffering mother, who is supposed to reflect the collective sentiment and history of the nation.

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