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Consuming Modernity:
Photography in Pre-colonial Korea, 1876-1910

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by

Heejeong Sohn

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Consuming Modernity:
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"Postcolonial studies have successfully unveiled the cultural, social, and political networks of imperial and colonial representations embedded in visual documents of the non-Western world. Within this context, the early photography of Korea has been presented as a cultural force imposed on Koreans in relation to colonialism and Orientalism. This dissertation rethinks the representational politics of early photography during the pre-colonial period of 1876 to 1910 by problematizing the master narratives and suggesting alternative ways to interpret this historical material. Through analyzing the historical contexts of photographic materials and practices, this dissertation argues that photography, as a device of cultural expression, helped native Koreans shape their growing sense of patriotism, individuality, and changing identity at the turn of the century.

In doing so, the dissertation employs conceptual tools such as acceptance and resistance, presence and absence, and invisibility and visibility to read the photographic practices of the Korean people. It also reveals that some of the stereotyped discourses based on camera-related public riots were actually products of continuous reproduction, by different agents to serve their different agendas, over a long period of time following the actual incidents. In analyzing the transformation of photography from a metaphor of civilization and foreignness to a device of counter-conduct to express cultural and political concerns for a period of over forty years, this research improves the understanding of pre-colonial Koreans and their gaze on the world at the turn of the century."

Frontispiece

"Seoul Street Scene." Photographed by Percival Lowell. March 1884.

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INTRODUCTION

The last dynasty of Korea, Chosŏn, opened its doors in 1876 by signing a treaty with Japan after breaking the over-two-centuries-long seclusion policy against the West.[1] This was the beginning of a tumultuous period in Korea's modern history that was followed by colonization, division, the Korean War, and postcolonial political struggles. About thirty-five years of this period, from the opening until the state became colonized by Japan in 1910, is called the pre-colonial period or the opening period, and is the focus of this dissertation. During this period Chosŏn Korea encountered the West in its land for the first time and strove to build a modern state in order to survive in the age of imperial competition. Several imperial powers competed in the peninsula, and the period witnessed the ascendance and decline of different foreign powers, in particular China and Japan. However, throughout the period Chosŏn Korea (1392-1896) and later the Taehan Empire (1897-1910) were sovereign powers and not under the influence of any major foreign powers until 1905, when Japan emerged as its patron through the protectorate. In this

[1] The terms "West" and "Western" are used in reference to Europe and/or the United States. These terms are used for brevity and because Koreans at the turn of the twentieth century did not distinguish the United States from European countries, such as England, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden, Italy and Russia. They used the term "West" to indicate both or either, and broadly identified these countries as modern, and racially white. Another reason that this research finds these obscure terms still relevant in this research is that Orientalism's analysis on the cultural and historical dimensions of land and people under the notions of Orient and Occident has been eclipsed by more recent critique of the bifurcated concepts of East and West.

dissertation the term “early photography” refers to the photography from this pre-colonial period of Korea.

Photography was one of the major European inventions of the nineteenth century. Since the 1839 introduction of daguerreotype photography in France, photography was quickly and widely disseminated around the world through the channels of imperialism, capitalism, and increased human traffic. Korea accepted it belatedly in 1876 with the opening; photography went through the process of local integration and a great number of images were taken around the country. The government viewed photography as one of the areas through which the state could modernize the society. Despite the initial efforts of the government to establish a foundation for photography through training photographers and opening studios in the 1880s, the technological transmission to the hands of the natives did not occur until toward the end of the period. However, many foreigners visited Korea with cameras, and some Japanese photographers established studios and camera supply stores at the turn of the century. It was mainly these foreign visitors who produced the images of Korea during this period.

The early photography in Korea is neither new material nor a new research topic; instead, it is viewed as a subject that has been exhausted theoretically and empirically by many scholars in Korean studies. They believe this mainly because they view that the early photography in Korea was predominantly foreign and thus Orientalist. The notion of the Western gaze over native Koreans persists in the study of photography of the period, and the early photography became fixed as a medium to demonstrate a Korean example of the global stories of Western Orientalism. This dissertation suggests a major shift of focus in this view: from using the early photography to learn about Western or imperial experience to

using it to better understand the lives of local Koreans; from an imperial gaze to the local gaze; and from heavily contextualized discourses to diverse interpretations and perspectives that allow us to gain new knowledge about the period and the people.

The aim of this project is not to write about a new discovery of historical facts or historical materials; instead, it is to offer a new interpretation based on the existing corpus of old and new materials and formulate a new approach to the archive of the early photography. I argue that the foreign paradigms of Orientalist narrative and the representational politics in postcolonial studies imposed on the early photography flattened the complexity and historicity of the native visual culture of this period and suppressed it under textual discourses. Orientalism was an antithesis to modernist and imperialist problems from the previous period. However, once it appropriated visual images with force, it turned itself into a dominant narrative power and did not allow these visuals to exist as objects free from the Orientalist context. It appeared that the Orientalist or master narrative reduced these visual images to textual documents as they were woven into the webs of the narratives.

In postcolonial South Korea the discourse of the early photography was intertwined with the agendas of contentious historical writings. The narratives of Edward Said and Michel Foucault were heavily invested in revealing and indicting the workings of imperial and governmental powers. Postcolonial history writing in South Korea applied and echoed these foreign paradigms to a great extent in order to accuse the period of lacking subjectivity and as responsible for the loss of sovereignty at the end of the period. They used the visuals to perpetuate the concept of this period’s failure. It also seems that these visuals contributed

to contemporary Koreans' conflicting sense of a self—one that was once victimized by the foreign gaze but still sought affirmation through the eyes of the foreigner.

In 2006 and 2007, *The Hankyoreh News*, the only citizen-run newspaper in South Korea, invited twenty photographers from the international group of photojournalists Magnum Photos, and asked them to take photographs as they traveled around the country. A total of 434 photographs out of over 2,400 shots were selected for the two-year touring exhibition, and 242 images were published in an English-language catalog titled *Magnum Korea*. The exhibition Magnum Korea was extensively covered by the media and viewed by over 10,000 people in its first week and 200,000 people in its first fifty days.[2] The fee-based lectures and talks, organized in conjunction with the exhibition, also sold out well in advance.

In contrast to the stunning attendance records of the exhibition, visitors' responses were mixed. While many people observed that they were impressed with the gaze of foreigners, claiming that they discovered a new sense of self, others seemed to be uncomfortable with the foreigners' perpetual focus on the "exotic" side of local Korean culture. Some people even questioned the necessity of such an exhibition, stating that it merely reflected a lack of self-confidence and distrust among Koreans. In fact, criticism of the exhibition largely resonated with the self-reflexive assessment on colonial photography that has objectified Korea epistemologically as well as visually for the past several decades. Magnum Korea can be juxtaposed with the first photographic explosion in Korea over one hundred years ago. Although they occurred over a hundred years apart, both occasions still speak to how representational politics in photography has painted Koreans as victims

[2] *The Hankyoreh News*, July 2, 2008.

through the internalization of others' authoritative prism. The overwhelming public interest in the visualized Koreans and Korean society that was filtered through Western eyes was a reflection of the psychology of Koreans who wanted to see their own images projected through the eyes of foreign photographers in the twenty-first century.

Photography is a visual and technological medium. Visuality creates a powerful, wordless statement. The photograph is a duplicate of the reality of the past, although extremely temporal. Because it is temporal, it is free from the perpetuating narrative. However, within the current scholarship, the images taken by foreigners were either Orientalist production or the products of representational politics. In other words, the photographs from this period were heavily contextualized within the master narrative and the mainstream historical discourses in Korean studies scholarship.

From the study of existing scholarship, I learned that I largely differ in my view and approach to photography. Thus I had to determine what to accept and how to differentiate and formulate my approach to the project. I view photographs as visual material of instantaneous perceptions, something that is not organized or pre-organized, free from the context. They are historical in the sense that they are like isolated dots put in the extremely brief moment of the past, and thus fragile and flexible. My research began to question what would happen if the shrouds of Orientalism and the contexts imposed on them were peeled away. Within this line of thinking, I developed the premise that when a photograph is free from theoretical contextualization, a more diverse and freer narrative is possible that can provide new windows to examine the lives of Korean people of this period.

For the research I collected visual documents through books, catalogs, museum collections, library collections, and Internet sources. I visited many archives in and outside

Korea, and also collected primary textual documents from the period too, such as government documents, newspapers, books, memoirs, diaries, and travelogues. Secondary research materials that discussed modernity, nationalism, Orientalism, colonial photography, subaltern studies, and cultural theories were also utilized.

Early Korean photography has been a cultural force linked to colonialism and Orientalism for the past century. Postcolonial studies successfully unveiled social, cultural, and political networks of imperial and colonial representations embedded in visual documents of the non-Western world. The sweeping narratives about the imperialists' universalizing force over the colonized has revealed colonialism's negative effects, yet they have not properly liberated or decolonized the formerly colonized lands. By rethinking the representational politics in early Korean photography from 1876 until 1910, this dissertation offers a shift of gaze from "theirs" to the "native's" in order to give equal attention to the experiences and gazes of native Koreans. It was these people who were the sitters, spectators, rioters, collectors, and patrons of the modern photograph. This study probes the early photography as a social and cultural medium that transmitted modern desires, fantasy, and self-identity as well as disseminated the new concepts of patriotism and citizenship, contributing to the building of a modern state of Korea in the late nineteenth century.

In this dissertation I argue that the early photography was a device that allowed native Koreans to create cultural and social expressions of their interests and concerns, rather than simply a cultural force that was imposed upon Koreans by foreigners to advance their imperialist agendas. This dissertation considers the early photography as a window into the daily lives of native Koreans before/while being an institutional apparatus projecting the "gaze of political force" or "gaze of colonizer" on Koreans. The research addresses

historical and social changes in Korean society while detailing the parallel historical development of photography.

Photography in Korea emerged as a metaphor for civilization and enlightenment in the Western sense. Over the course of taking root, it suffered from public resistance and failed to become officially institutionalized by the government. However, that failure did not mean that photography failed to localize; instead, it grew as a device to express the cultural and political concerns of the natives, including foreign intervention and nationalist agendas as well as conspicuous consumption. It also delineated Korea as a homogeneous community before Koreans consciously started to redefine themselves as one by reinventing their traditions and spreading the sense of nationalism. In that sense, it provides an unprecedented look at the nuanced, complex, and entangled stories of Korea and its relationship to the world.

The study of the early photography is particularly meaningful because it reveals the documentary values of the visual texts that provide scholars with quality and deep knowledge of the wide spectrum of Korean society of the period, through which it offers alternative ways for scholars to reinterpret both this early period and the colonial period that immediately follows. As a start to this scholarly effort, this dissertation aims to open a new path in understanding pre-colonial and colonial Korea by using the visual materials through which to better understand the contemporary Korean society. This new approach to visual modernity through the uncharted paths could help decolonize the early photography of Korea.

The Photographic Archive and Camera Technology in the Nineteenth Century

The photographic archive of Korea during this period encompasses a vast body of collections, often under the overarching heading of "modern photography." They were produced in various mediums and formats. Well over 20,000 photographic images in books, postcards, stereoscopic images, prints, photo albums, and cards-de-visite have been identified as taken before 1910. More than one hundred books on Korea were published before colonization in 1910 in English, German, Italian, French, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese, and many of them included visual images of Korea.[3] The scrutinizing gaze of the modern visual device captured a great number of images--from lithographed portraits, to glass plates of landscapes and busy marketplaces, to painterly production of royal souvenirs of the emperor's portrait photos, to numerous reprints of nationalists' images, to postcards of the female entertainers known as *kisaeng*.

Despite the abundance of source materials for research, many obstacles exist to the photographic archive of the period. First, the fact that the images produced by native Koreans are limited in numbers has made the notion of the foreign gaze dominant in the study. Second, many visual sources do not have adequate provenance and thus a significant number of them are excluded from the corpus of research objects to prevent arbitrary contemplation of their historical connotations. Lastly, many of the photographs are not original prints but duplicates often made in a later period, which also forces researchers to be wary of potential manipulation of images.

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[3] Around 1876 about twenty books were published introducing Korea, including the widely read travelogue by Hendrick Hamel *Narrative and Description of the Kingdom of Korea* (1670) and *Historie de l'Eglise de Corée précédée d'une Introduction sur l'histoire* (1874) by Charles Dallet. From 1876 to 1910, ninety-five books, including *Corea: The Hermit Nation* by William Griffis and others were introduced. During the colonial period, about eighty-five books were published by the Westerners. See: "Chosŏn viewed by the Westerners: Bibliography of Western Books on Chosŏn" by Park Dae-hŏn in *Sŏyangini pon chosŏn Vol. I & II* (Chosŏn on the Eyes of Westerners I & II), (Hosanbang, 1996).

One of the distinctive characteristics of the photography between 1876 and 1910 is that many of them reside outside the national archives today due to the fact that the majority were produced by non-Koreans. Many foreigners who took images of Chosŏn donated them to museums or organizations in their related locality. They came to Korea in the late nineteenth century for various reasons.[4] Some were diplomats representing their countries' interests; some were missionaries; and others were explorers, travelers, merchants, or businessmen, including those taking commercial photographs for companies in Europe and the United States. Their personal histories and backgrounds varied as much as their motivations and agendas. They were engaged in different experiences during their stay in Korea, which ranged from a few weeks to decades. The photographers recorded their experiences in Korea trying to transform their personal experience and knowledge into a form of information that would be memorable, recordable, or marketable for their imagined readership communities outside Korea.

Another important factor that must be addressed in a study of the early photography is its relationship with and dependence on the technological developments in cameras and the printing industry. Walter Benjamin once stated that what was decisive in the early photography in Europe was always the relation of the photographer to his technique.[5] Since its European public debut in 1839, camera technology rapidly progressed towards smaller cameras and technologies that would make mass printing, color prints, and print manipulation of image sizes possible and easier. The first commercialized camera was

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[4] The number of foreign residents in Korea increased rapidly. According to Isabella Bishop's statistics in January 1897, the number of foreigners in three treaty ports totaled 4,357 (estimated native population 6,756) in Chemulp'o, 5,564 (estimated native population 33,000) in Pusan, and 1,357 (estimated native population 15,000) in Wonsan. *Korea and Her Neighbors* by Isabella Bishop, pp. 469-470.

[5] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," *Classic Essays on Photography*, p. 208.

extremely heavy, weighing about 110 pounds and requiring a long exposure of about twenty to thirty minutes during which sitters had to stay still. Besides the issues of cost and portability, this meant there were no photographs of moving objects. Photo taking needed willing sitters who would endure the long wait. Especially due to sitters' active involvement in the early production of photographs, Walter Benjamin argues that the early images obtained the authentic quality of the aura of images. He states that the "procedure [of photo-taking] caused the subject to focus on his life in the moment," which was not possible without the sitters' active cooperation.[6] According to Benjamin, this aura was lost with the development of mass print technology in the later period.

During the 1880s in Korea, the cameras used by both foreigners and native Koreans still required wet Collodion processing, a technique globally popular at that time.[7] By then cameras had become much smaller and lighter, and the processing time reduced to almost one-twentieth of the time needed when it was first popularized. Yet one major drawback to this technology was that the photographer had to sensitize the plate almost immediately before the exposure and process it while the coating was still moist. Consequently, photographers had to carry a portable darkroom along. To obtain the amount of light required most photos had to be taken during the day and outside. Thus photo making required a great deal of preparation and calculation on the photographer's part in addition to a long wait and willing cooperation of those photographed. This was the period when the photography traversed both eras—the era of the early "aura" and the era of reproduction

[6] Ibid., pp. 203-207.

[7] Collodion processing used wet negative plates that needed to be coated, sensitized, exposed and developed within a span of fifteen minutes. This was a new technology developed by the English sculptor Frederick Scott Archer in 1851 and that replaced the first photographic process of the daguerreotype. In the late 1880s, it was replaced by the dry gelatin plate. Most photographers in Korea used Collodion plates in the 1880s and into the 1890s, but gelatin plates gradually dominated starting in the 1890s. Choi In-jin, pp. 407-408, p. 420.

when, in Benjamin's words, "the public need became greater to take possession of the object—from the closest proximity—in an image and the reproductions of an image."[8]

Toward the end of the 1880s the camera was revolutionized with two major inventions. First, English physician Richard Leach Maddox invented factory-produced dry gelatin plates, and second, the hand-held cameras produced by the Kodak Eastman Company spurred the growth of amateur photographers around the world. In the 1890s there were two camera supply shops in Myŏngdong and Ch'ungmuro, run by Japanese merchants. They sold imported cameras, photographic equipment, chemicals, and camera supplies.[9] Those who needed camera supplies such as gelatin plates could only obtain them through one of these shops.

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century and throughout the colonial period, photography evolved from a device for the simple visualization of exotic scenes to a complex medium. This was a site where active recontextualization of native agendas through the language of visual communication occurred while photography became increasingly integrated into public life.

Scholarship on the Early Photography of Korea

Since the 1990s, interest in the reproduction of the early photographs has been increasing in South Korea. After South Koreans achieved a democracy in the late 1980s, public interest swiftly turned to cultural consumption. With economic and political achievements, Koreans wanted to consume tradition and discover their own cultural identity.

[8] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," p. 209.

[9] According to Choi In-jin, there were four photo studios in downtown Seoul run by Japanese in 1895, including the two supply stores. They grew to thirteen studios and forty-five photographers by 1905. *History of Photography in Korea*, pp. 215-217.

Photographs from Chosŏn that were produced over a century ago before the colonial infiltration emerged as material objects that provided the visual evidence of the country's modern development and tradition.

Korean's interest in their photographic legacy emerged in the 1980s with the rise of enthusiastic private collectors who published the catalogs of the early photographic images from photo albums or prints collected overseas, mostly in Japan. Catalogs such as *Sajinŭro ponŭn kuhanmal, 1880-1920* (Late Chosŏn Viewed through Photography, 1880-1920), (Maeil kwan'gwang munhwasa, 1980), *Sajinŭro ponŭn 100yŏnjŏn han'guk* (Korea A Hundred Years Ago in Photographs) (Kat'ollik ch'ulp'ansa, 1986), and *Sajinŭro ponŭn kŭndaehan'guk* Vol. I & II (Modern Korea Viewed through Photography I, II) (Sŏmundang, 1986), published in commemoration of Korea's hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, gave viewers a panoramic view of life and culture of the late Chosŏn dynasty and. With the increasing number of photo exhibitions, more thematically organized catalogs became available in the 1990s. Major publications in the 1990s included four-volume series of *Sajinŭro ponŭn Chosŏn sidae saengwalgwa p'ungsok* (Life and Customs of Chosŏn through Photographs) (Sŏmundang, 1996). Terry Bennett, an American collector, also published an English-language catalog titled *Korea Caught in Time* in 1998, which was drawn from his own private collection and included a useful appendix on the first foreign photographers of Korea. These were followed by many catalogs and exhibitions that were made possible through the reorganization of previously published images and/or newly discovered ones.[10]

[10] *Sajinŭro ponŭn kuhanmal, 1880-1920* (Late Chosŏn Viewed through Photography, 1880-1920), (Maeil kwan'gwang munhwasa, 1980); *Sajinŭro ponŭn 100yŏnjŏn han'guk* (Korea A Hundred Years Ago in Photographs) (Kat'ollik ch'ulp'ansa, 1986); *Sajinŭro ponŭn kŭndaehan'guk* Vol. I & II (Modern Korea Viewed through Photography I, II) (Sŏmundang, 1986); and *Sajinŭro ponŭn Chosŏn sidae saengwalgwa p'ungsok* (Life and Customs of Chosŏn through Photographs) (Sŏmundang, 1996).

Interest in these old photographs increased alongside the publication boom of reprints or translations of old books on Chosŏn. These books were originally written by foreigners from the late nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth centuries. Out of over two hundred foreign-language books written by the end of the colonial era, more than one hundred were either reprinted or translated into Korean for past twenty years.[11] Many contain photographs or drawings in addition to surveying articles and textual information. Through these publications, exhibitions, and events, the early photographs underwent a scrupulous process of recataloguing, recategorizing, and rearchiving, and thus the recreation of meaning. In this process Korea's past was reimagined.

This efflorescence of public interest in the early photographs brought some problems. Images were often circulated with inaccurate labels or with no records of when, where, and by whom they were taken. In fact, many photographs have no historical data. Furthermore, the images were often taken out of their original location or completely out of their original historical context to be recontextualized. Some cases created serious controversy and confusion, too. The photographic reproductions of nationalist activist Yun Pong-gil (1908-1932), Queen Min, and the royal family were the some of the examples that were subject to criticism of incorrect identification and possible manipulation. The picture of Yun Pong-gil, taken during his arrest after the Hongkou bombing in 1937, has raised questions about the accuracy of Yun's identity in the image, although it has been used for education and publicity in South Korea for years. A couple of alleged portrait images of

[11] According to Park Dae-hŏn, about two hundred books (20 before 1876, 95 between 1876-1910 and 85 between 1910-1945) were published. See "Chosŏn viewed by the Westerners: Bibliography of Western Books on Chosŏn" by Park Dae-hŏn in *Sŏyangini pon Chosŏn* (Chosŏn on the Eyes of Westerners), Vol. I & II (Hosanbang, 1996).

Queen Min also triggered debates on the visual authenticity.[12] The widely distributed picture of the eight royal family members including Emperor Kojong, Emperor Sunjong (1874-1926) and his wife, Prince Yŏngch'in (1897-1970), and Princess Tŏkhye (1912-1989) was also found to be fabricated through photo editing at a later time when Prince Yŏngch'in's presence in the picture was questioned. These controversies are alarming because they were widely circulated and even used for educational purposes when photograph's historical veracity has not been proved. Furthermore, the debates emerged when either the active reassessment of historical meaning was underway in the cases of Queen Min and the royal family, and during the rigorous ideological debate over the nature of the colonial rule that Yun Pong-gil vehemently resisted. Indeed, the discussions on these images were not immune to contemporary historical interpretations.

The issues of misuse or questionable legitimacy of photographs is often inherited from their original form of publication in books or albums a century ago. Images in some of the old books are found to have problems of proper citation of photographer, distortion of original context, or incorrect labels. Incorporating photographic evidence in books as references to certain locations was already very popular by the nineteenth century. Popular images could make their way to multiple publications and become widely circulated. Using images without acknowledging the creator was not very uncommon in the nineteenth century. There are even cases where a couple of authors claimed to have taken the same photograph, too. These writers were travelers, missionaries, or diplomats of different nationalities. They wrote about the places where they had traveled for the readership in their home country or for audiences in different countries, resulting in their loose sense of responsibility for correct attribution.

[12] "A Study on Queen Min" (2001) and "Re-assessing Queen Min" (2002) by Sŏ Yŏng-hee in *Yŏksabip'yŏng*.

The renaissance of reprinting and translating pre-colonial books shows the importance of research on visual documents, especially academic interest in the early photography. The first landmark research that dealt with a comprehensive history of photography in Korea was *History of Photography in Korea, 1631-1945*, published in 1999 by Choi In-jin, a reporter and photographer for *Dong-A Daily Newspaper*.[13] A 504-page-long encyclopedic work, the book has extensive references that make use of historical sources on Korean photography from the late 1600s to the end of colonial rule in 1945. Despite the criticism of some inaccurate historical narratives, many critics acknowledge that the book contributed to the exploration and expansion of topics on modern photography in Korea. One can safely say that most academic writing about Korea's modern photography in the 2000s is indebted to Choi's foundational work.

In the early 2000s, the number of photography exhibitions and catalog publications multiplied in major cities around the country. The documentary value of old photographs was useful in learning and reconstructing lost or discontinued knowledge of the past. As the country's bureaucratic decentralization policy continued, many municipal and provincial governments tried to reproduce and publicize their local histories. Scenes and information from the early photographs provided important insights into the people and lifestyles of different localities around the country. Scholars in different fields, including geography, architecture, art, business, costume, and food were invited to discuss the images and reconstruct their past. Seoul Metropolitan City led the field in this endeavor. The City History Compilation Committee of Seoul, the city's historical research unit, published an

[13] Choi In-jin, *Han'guk sajinsa, 1631-1945* (History of Photography in Korea, 1631-1945) (1999). Several years prior to this in 1991, Choi published *History of Newspaper Photography of Korea* (1992) which locates Korea's burgeoning photo-journalism within the global context of photo-journalism in this century.

academic journal titled *Hyangt'o sŏul* (Native Seoul) and a photo catalog series with images of Seoul, as well as presenting photography exhibitions.[14]

The majority of writers who used the early photographic images during this period were trained in photography or art history. They worked in conjunction with museums to write exhibition catalogs and articles for public consumption. Researchers in diverse academic disciplines, such as gender studies, anthropology, visual studies, cultural studies, and local history gradually joined the cohort. Significantly, scholars with different academic orientations approach and interpret the early photography in similar and different ways.

However, regardless of their academic interests, the study of the early photography poses challenges to many scholars. This is especially important regarding the most complex period of Korea's modern history that spans the loss of national sovereignty, colonization, and the complex postcolonial reality, which have long shaped the contemporary society of South Korea after liberation. Thus the interpretation and discourse on the early photography engaged the existing academic contentions. In order to understand this relatively young body of scholarship, it is necessary to view it within the broader historical narrative and paradigms that developed in postcolonial Korea.

The photography from the pre-colonial and the colonial periods are often discussed together, although they had very different historical contexts. The pre-colonial period (1876-1910) experienced somewhat loose state control over photography, with no explicit colonial rule in operation, while the latter period (1910-1945) was under the rigorous colonial system. Thanks to the relative abundance of resources and theoretical approaches available

[14] In 1957 the first issue of *Native Seoul* (Hyangt'o sŏul) was released; after years of irregularity it was discontinued, only to resume in 2000 as a quarterly magazine to publish research on Seoul. The City History Compilation Committee of Seoul also published a series of photo catalogues on Seoul. *A Record of a Hundred Years of History of Seoul* (Seoul 20segi 100yŏnŭi sajin'girok) (2001).

in colonial photography, the latter period has attracted more research. Scholars have approached the study of colonial photography from various angles, including how the Japanese colonial policies and visual gaze as apparatuses of power and control, penetrated colonial life and practices, and how the colonial agendas were internalized in the psyche of the Korean people via various visual tools. In addition, they also pay attention to how anthropological projects used the images of Korean artifacts, landscape, and people, and examine how colonizers used the images of women in particular to reinforce the images of colonized Korea in gendered terms. Colonial tourism and the emergence of the era of commercial photo studios run by native Koreans have also been popular topics.

Kwon Hyŏk-hee's research on Korean picture postcards examines the most popular visual medium between 1900 and 1914. He contends that the postcards were used as a political tool to lay the foundational work of Japan's colonial system constructed under an altered form of Western Orientalism. He holds that the postcards penetrated deeply into the cultural life of the Korean public, not only as a tool to deliver messages but also as collectible and exchangeable items. He analyzes images including postcards such as "Chosŏn ŭi p'ungsok (Folklore of Chosŏn)," and tourist pamphlets such as "Chosŏn ŭi p'unggwang (Landscape of Chosŏn)" and "Chosŏn ŭi chŏnmang (Views of Chosŏn)," published by the Office of Japanese Governor General. For Kwon these images effectively degraded the Chosŏn people as the items of a pastime, thus committing cultural violence.[15]

Another critic, Kwon Haeng-ga, has written about the images of *kisaeng* (female

[15] Kwon Haeng-ga, "Tourist Postcards and Images of *kisaeng* during Japanese Colonialism" (*Misulsa Nondan*, 2001), "Politics of Representation Shown in the Picture Postcards from the Colonial Period under Japanese Rule." *Anthropology Association of Korea*, No. 36-1 (2003), pp. 187-217; *Postcards Mailed from the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Minŭm, 2005), pp. 105-111; "Origins and Production of Postcards with Photographic Images," *A Journey to the Modernity through Postcards* (Minsŏkwŏn Publishing, 2009), pp. 7-26.

entertainers) on picture postcards and concludes that these commercialized images became a colonial metaphor for colonial conquest and sexual desire.[16] In his books *Kyŏngsŏng sajine pakhida* (Kyŏngsŏng Caught in Photographs)) and *Chegug ŭi lenjŭ* (Colonizer's Lens), Lee Kyung-min, the most prolific writer and archivist on the early photography, also asserts that it is necessary to look outside the colonial lens to discover the colonial agents of representation that reinforced the ideological agenda through the images.[17]

While such arguments are useful, they have provided little room for interpretations other than the gaze of colonizers. In an effort to demystify the embedded colonial impact of Japan, they rely on the theories and discourses developed in Western academia and connect Korea's colonial images to the discursive frameworks based on Western experiences. They often apply the Foucauldian method of knowledge and power that became even more revealing when combined with the totalizing model of Edward Said's Orientalism.[18] In so doing, scholars tend to voice nationalistic tones in their interpretations, which correlated

[16] Kwon Heang-ga. "The Image of Kisaeng Represented on the Postcards under the Rule of Japanese Imperialism," *Art History Forum*, Vol. 12 (2001), pp. 90-91.

[17] Lee Kyung-min wrote articles to draw public and institutional attention to the building of a modern photography archive. "A Study on the Current Status of the Photo Archive and Its Necessity" (Yŏksa Minsŏkhak 14, 2002). He also wrote on colonial photographs: "French Representation of Koreans through Photo Collection by Hippolyte Frandin" (*Mŏnnara kkore*, 2003), "Re-presentation of Colonialist Discourses – Focusing on Japanese Survey on Historical Sites," *Sajin and Photography* (2002), *Kyŏngsŏng Caught in Photographs* (Sanch'aekcha Publishing, 2008); *Colonizer's Lens* (Sanch'aekcha Publishing, 2010). For research on colonial anthropological photographs, see Lee Mun-ung's "Korean society in 1930s viewed through a Japanese anthropologist: focusing on Akiba Takasi's glassplate images," *Japanese Colonialism and East Asian Anthropology* (2003) and Sun Il's *A Study on Japan's Photo Archive of Academic Survey* (master's thesis, 2004). For missionary-related photographs, see Donald Clark's *Missionary Photography in Korea: Encountering the West through Christianity* (Seoul Selection, 2009) in conjunction with the exhibition held at the Korea Society in New York City, May 19 to August 14, 2009.

[18] Foucault's discursive criticism of knowledge and power that penetrates into nondiscursive networks of the living world is rather undifferentiated and not limited to bad representations of colonialism, imperialism or dictatorships. In contrast, Said makes distinctions and limitations to Orientalism that differ from the knowledge of the West produced by the Orient. Even within Orientalism, there is a covert and subjective Oriental culture (Latent Orientalism) and a visible and overt one (Manifest Orientalism). For differences between the two critics, see "Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Affinities and Dissonances" by Karlis Racevskis, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn 2005), pp. 83-97.

well with the popularity of the early photography in the contemporary public space of South Korea. However, the nationalistic approach is not exempt from an academic obligation to scrutinize the substantive historical experiences of Korea.

Photography from the pre-colonial period of 1880 to 1910 has less been the interest of academic research than any other era, and is the focus of this dissertation. The lack of academic interest is connected to several factors. First, there are only a limited number of images with available accurate historical information. The next reason has to do with the interpretative device, namely the pre-colonial period does not fit neatly into the discursive framework of colonial photography. Lastly, most of the images were produced by foreign visitors and circulated outside Korea. They were deemed as neither native nor Korean in that sense. Due to these reasons, pre-colonial photography has been interpreted as a Korean example of Western racial views or a prelude to the colonial discourses that came after.

When writing about pre-colonial photographs, their interpretations largely split between the Western/imperial gaze on Korea based on visual texts, and the general historical narratives of the period based on nonvisual texts. Most research on this inchoate period of Korean photography discusses how Korea was imaged and imagined by Westerners in the nineteenth century.[19] Alongside this, their analysis of the early photography is closely contextualized within the discourse on the modern history of Korea.

The images of King Kojong (1852-1919) and the royal family, for example, have been examined in many works as evidence used to evaluate Kojong's policy or the regime. Photographic analysis and evaluations about Kojong and his regime are often juxtaposed in the general historical debates of the period. In some research works, Kojong's personal

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[19] Since the 1990s, the concept of the Western gaze on Koreans has appeared frequently in the public sphere and in academia. Since 2008 the publisher the Korean Heritage Books has published twenty-two books as a series under the theme *Kŭdŭri pon uri* (Us They Saw), which included many photographs and illustrations.

interest in modern culture as the head of state, including photography, is highlighted as a sign of modern consciousness. His personal proclivity is often contrasted with Emperor Meiji, who allegedly abhorred being photographed. In this view, scholars gravitated toward acknowledging King Kojong for his efforts to modernize the country by implementing new policies and eventually establishing a modern empire, although he could not turn the course of the irresistible wave of the imperial era.

Another line of research criticizes him as a political anachronism who only strove to strengthen the old monarchal system and acted on his political interests to safeguard his own regime. Both fields agree that though Kojong was personally fascinated with Western culture and photography, he neither fully understood the political effects of the modern visual device nor made persistent efforts to incorporate photography into his modern regime. The visual evidence of photography does not trigger questions or debates on these issues but provides a common ground. However, in line with the current scholarship, it should be noted that the historical evaluations of Kojong, who eventually turned the country over to the colonial rule, still activate contentious debates among historians today, mainly because of the extensive colonial distortions and postcolonial failure to correct them.

What is often paralleled with Kojong's failure to institutionalize photography is the issue of Korea's late and passive acceptance of camera technology. Scholars of Korean photography define the period from the mid-1880s when the first short-lived native studios were established, until 1907 when the studio Chŏnyŏndang opened after a long absence of any native studio, as a period of stagnation in the development of camera technology, and thus a period of stagnation for photography as a whole in Korea.[20] In this view, photography

[20] Kwon Haeng-ga, "Photographic Representation of Emperor of the Taehan Empire: Focusing on Photographic Portraits of Kojong," *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndae misulsahak*. Vol. 16, No. 0 (2006), p. 22.

only represents technology and science, and its stagnation attests to Korea's failure to adequately respond to the challenges and changes of the time. They argue that backwardness such as public resistance to and misunderstanding of the camera and the lack of stronger administrative measures also contributed to the country's failure to institutionalize this symbolic modern visual device. This particular view of technological universality as a sign of societal advancement was adopted by scholars using a nationalist approach as well as those who blamed Kojong's failure to modernize the system with Western technology as a contributing cause of the national decline in the face of national crisis.

This "failure paradigm" of the period backed by the failure of technological acceptance as an indicator also echoes to an extent the voice of the Japanese colonial government and the views of colonial sympathizers and apologists who argue that Korea had to wait for the arrival of Japanese colonizers to modernize the country and that the major economic and industrial foundations were laid only during the colonial period.[21] Some even argue that Korea actually achieved significant economic development under Japanese colonial rule, and could thus achieve postwar economic prosperity. In this paradigm of interpretation, the native resistance to the camera was caused simply by the deeply rooted shamanistic attitude and lack of rational thinking, and was thus an indicator of the backwardness of the society. In the contentious historical discourse on the period, the early photography offers a conjoining material ground to scholars of different historical views such as nationalists, colonial modernists, colonial apologists, and even the latest New Right

[21] Among the critic is an American diplomat and a historian Gregory Henderson who saw Korea's failure in modernization and loss of national independence as the result of the shamanistic national character and Chosŏn's lack of social innovations in modernizing. Henderson saw political centralism, ethnic homogeneity, and economic subordination to the academic culture as main causes for Chosŏn's failure. *Korea: the Politics of the Vortex*. Harvard University Press (1968), pp. 13-35.

intellectuals.

Outside Korean studies, with influence from postmodern and cultural studies and the rise of subaltern studies, the scholarship on colonial photography has moved away from dominant West-centered views in order to provide radically diverse local accounts of global dissemination and local experiences. The focus varies ranging from photography's relationship with other media, the local visual economy, visual currency, vernacular modernism, social biography of images and archives, and materiality as object, to the gendered device of identity formation.[22] Within the circle of Korean studies, the early photography, previously neglected or downplayed as unreliable or supplemental, has lately opened multidisciplinary approaches to studying the country's recent past, crossing multiple academic boundaries such as history, art history, study of photography, anthropology, and more recently cultural studies, visual studies, and gender studies. It is expected that this growing academic interest will bring the early photography out of the old narrative groups to a new academic horizon of diverse perspectives.

Research Questions and Methodologies

This dissertation rethinks representational political boundaries in the study of the early photography and aims to give equal attention to the experiences of Koreans and non-Koreans. It employs inquiries such as examining how individuals of different visions and interests responded differently to visual technology, especially in relation to the rapid change of the social status system during the period. It looks into how Koreans as individuals accepted or resisted photography in social and cultural expressions. It also

[22] Some of the leading field research includes Deborah Poole, Morris Low, Nicolas Peterson, Christopher Pinney, Heike Behrend and Janet Wolff.

examines the guiding principles of the government's modernization policies as well as the visual body politics that transformed Kojong from a king to an emperor. In addition, it explores how the Korean body became objects of modern desires, fantasy, consumption, and possession. It also looks at the roles the early photography played in the shaping of a growing sense of patriotism, individuality, and changing identity. Lastly, it examines how images of Korea entered the Western cultural discourse and participated in the formation of the modern visual world through mediums of circulation such as stereographs, postcards, newspapers, and magazines.

Addressing these issues leads to broader and more fundamental inquiries into the nature of archives that are under reinterpretation and reconstruction in contemporary Korea. Specifically, the research seeks to understand what modes and kinds of images survived and to what extent the photographic archives of the past are meaningful and useful in intervening in today's contentious historical debates. More significantly, the research hopes to contribute to better understanding who the cultural other(s) is in today's new visual paradigm/interpretation in South Korea. Some of these questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but serve as guiding lights for this research and may be significant for future research.

This dissertation uses diverse primary sources, such as local newspapers and periodicals, government documents, memoirs, travelogues, personal diaries, as well as the extensive photographic archives and paintings. This research utilizes seven Korean language newspapers and two English-language periodicals from this period: *Hansŏng sunbo* (1883), *Hansŏng jubo* (1886-1888), *Tongnip sinmun* (The Independent, 1896-1899), *Taehan maeil sinbo* (The Korea Daily News, 1904), *Kŭrisŭdo sinmun* (Christ News), *Cheguk sinmun*

(1898-1902), and *Hwangsŏng sinum* (Imperial Capital News, 1898-1910), and *The Korean Repository* (1892, 1895-1898) and *The Korea Review* (1901-1905).

The early photography circulated around the country and the world in various formats, including a form of rumor. They were integrated into multilayered local practices and constructed as a cultural form by multiple parties of different agendas over a long period of time. Thus they cannot be attached to a single cultural context or be reduced to a single discourse. This dissertation contends that the early photography as material objects, and nonmaterial objects at times, belonged to a wider historical discourse that could change the landscape of thinking and behavior of the locals. Thus it argues that the early photography in Korea as a tool of cultural expression as well as objects of social power contributed to the construction and deconstruction of the ways in which things would not otherwise have occurred, and that it continued to do so over the past century.

In order to formulate my approach to the research I employed a few conceptual devices. Among them is *photographic practices*. *Photographic practices* not only incorporate direct practices as sitter, photographer, distributor, or patron but also include the indirect participation of nameless and numerous native Koreans who were within and outside of the visual frame: many were left outside the frames as spectators gazing at the camera and the scene of picture taking. Some were vehemently resistant to the practice of this mysterious technology. *Photographic practices* embrace mutually contradictory concepts, such as resistance as well as acceptance, counter-conduct as well as conduct, absence as well as presence, and the ambiguity and paradoxes found paramount in the public spheres.

The rise of photography in Korea coincided with both the rise of national identity and the decline of national sovereignty. In explaining this paradox as well as the complexity and ambiguity embedded in the visual device, this research simultaneously considers the conflicting concepts of the rise and decline of visual technology, presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, and tradition and the modern. In an effort to move beyond the direct reading of image content and try to capture the local complexity in image making and consumption, this research thus presupposes that the early photography involved multiple dimensions of *photographic practices*—material, visual, social and performative, and quasi-performative. Through these, I offer a major shift in understanding visual images from that of the West or imperial power over Koreans to the gaze of the Korean people. The concept of *photographic practices* intends to capture the local complexity and multiplicity in image making and (anti)consumption by bringing photographic reactions and practices to the forefront to understand the native experiences of vision and representation of this period.

Photographic phenomena were more actively observed in locations with transnational interactions or centers of politics and commerce such as Seoul, trade ports, missionary posts, and sites of foreign investment. These were the places where people-to-people interactions between the native and the foreigner were prevalent. Especially before the opening of a few Japanese commercial photo studios in the late 1890s, the phenomena relied on direct contact between individuals. Seoul and the first trade ports—Chemulpo, Pusan, and Wonsan—were represented in most photographic images of the 1880s and after.[23] In contrast, places such as major gold mines and the battlefields of the Russo-

[23] Before the Opening, Korean photographic contact zones were in Japan and China where traveling Koreans often ventured out to take photographs. This was banned within Korea, but inspired those Koreans about Western technology along with the ideas of civilization and enlightenment. With the opening, the central contact zones were established in the trade ports. In 1897, the foreigner population in the three trade ports

Japanese War were short-lived locations for visual representations.

These "photographic contact zones" were spatio-temporal spaces where active transmission of knowledge and interactions in the medium of photography occurred between native Koreans and foreigners. This term is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt's seminal work *Imperial Eyes: Travel, Writing and Transculturation*, which examines the cross-cultural travel writings on Spain, Portugal, and Latin America by Europeans. She argues for the mutual shaping of relations between the European metropole and non-European peripheries. Pratt articulates her contact zone as a space of colonial encounters in which people who had been geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other, establish ongoing relations, and influence each other's views and understanding of the world with coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.[24] In this research, the term "photographic contact zones" means the ground where the foreigner and the native encountered, gazed, and interacted with each other through the medium of photography as technology, images, or simply ideas.

The visual discourses on the nineteenth century's East-West encounters have been predominantly framed within representational within which nameless natives were often relegated as a mere photographic backdrop or read as passive, backwards, and superstitious. Regarding India's colonial photographs, Arjun Appadurai argues that the "backdrops tend to

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reached 39% of the resident population in in Chemulpo (4,357 foreigners out of 11,113), 14% in Pusan (5,564 foreigners out of total residents of 38,564), and 8.2% (1,357 foreigners out of 16,357) in Wŏnsan. *Korea and Her Neighbours* by Isabella Bird Bishop (1897), pp. 469-470.

[24] Mary-Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: Travel, Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 6. Pratt intentionally downplayed the importance of ideological considerations of conquest. She emphasized the interplay between the colonizers and the colonized, and argued that the utopian image of a European bourgeois subject asserted a harmless hegemonic vision that installed no apparatus of domination in their writings. She contended that they created dynamic interactions between power and appropriation, global and local, and transnational and national. pp. 6-11.

become part of a more complicated dialogue between the posed photography and the practices of everyday life."[25] Appadurai's problematique on colonial photographs comes from the realization that they are rarely read and interpreted "outside the taxonomizing and coercive techniques of colonial observers and the colonial state." Extending from his argument on the backdrop, the numerous Koreans in photographic backdrops are not simply passive when images are read from the broader backdrop of comprehensive human behaviors and historical progress. During this period of 1876 to 1910, no official colonial power was using "taxonomizing and coercive techniques" to control the visual practices in Korea, and the Chosŏn court maintained a low-profile policy on photography throughout the period. On the contrary, the visualization of everyday life and landscape of people and land in this period was unprecedented, and thus demands serious academic analysis.

Another issue of the overused discourses on representational politics is that it pays little attention to the understanding of voices and gazes of the native and the marginalized foreigner as subjective agents. They have been relatively less visible or invisible in contemporary visual scholarship on the early photography because of the ambiguity and paradoxes of their voices. It is even necessary to acknowledge the offensiveness, as well as the ambiguity and the paradox, embedded in both native and foreign gazes to allow space for marginalized Others to partake in the making of the visual modern. Appadurai admits the partiality and contradiction of the backdrops, saying that backdrops may be "partial but often introduce contradictory ideas about the context and location of the subject."[26] In line with this argument, this dissertation revisits and reexamines a couple of widely known

[25] Arjun Appadurai, "The Colonial Backdrop," *Afterimage*, Vol. 24 Issue 5 (Mar/Apr 1997).

[26] Ibid.

historical incidents involving the camera and photography and the public riots for alternative interpretations.

To include the views of the natives and diversify the perspective of interpretation, this research consistently problematizes the issue of how to define modernity, more specifically technological modernity or universality, in non-Western cultures like nineteenth-century Korea. The transmission of Western technologies and its successful adoption have been considered a common model of modernity in countries like Japan. However, "modern" is not a universal term. It is a historical term specific to a certain time and place. Thus there cannot be any universal modernization standards, and accordingly no technological universality exists that can be applied uniformly to all societies and cultures to gauge their modernity .

East Asian historians Kyung Moon Hwang and Alexander Woodside approach the issue from the point of continuity and synthesis and discuss the transition from tradition to Westernized modern.[27] According to them, modern transformation did not so much reject the premodern foundations as much as reformulate it into a driving force for further development. They do not completely drop the notion of the modern as having a Western origin; instead, the modern is identified as a signifier, neither spatial nor temporal, of fixed standards. It became a descriptive device. It is also found, for example, in the rational tradition of bureaucratic systems in East Asia. Rather than denying the legitimacy of Korea's modernity as a whole, as is often found with colonial modernists and colonial apologists, or arguing for the preexistence of the internal forces of the modern, as is found with some Korean nationalists, these approaches shed new light in reinforcing the historicity

[27] Kyung Moon Hwang, *Beyond Birth: Social Status in the Emergence of Modern Korea* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), p. 10; Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities* (Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 1-16.

of the photograph.

Another noteworthy issue involving the study of the early photography is that of representation and realism. Photography was a landmark product of nineteenth-century Europe that, along with many other modern technological innovations and inventions, allowed the world to enter a visual world in which things were flattened, duplicated on paper, and circulated in an unprecedented manner and speed. Both the problems and potential of photography lie in the fact that photographic images are a representation of an actual occurrence. Photography possesses the powerful ability to duplicate reality and therefore makes it an effective tool for documenting, persuading, and remembering. However, photographs can never duplicate the entirety of reality, no matter how many of them are taken. Duplicated reality in images cannot be complete but remains partial and limited. More importantly, its production involves the subjective gaze of photographers. Due to its double-sided nature of being temporal and real, suspicions and distrust of photography grew as it rapidly gained power and currency around the world throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

This issue caught the attention of many intellectuals as early as photography's official inception in Europe. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), a nineteenth-century German philosopher and anthropologist known as a ruthless critic of Christianity, may be one of the earliest premonitors of the era of photography. He tried to enlighten people about their religious reality, but became wary that his time was creating new disillusionment. In *The Essence of Christianity*, written three years before the official introduction of photography, he criticizes the contemporary trend of relying on things representational and superficial, not genuine and real:

> I do nothing more to religion—and to speculative philosophy and theology also—than to open its eyes, or rather to turn its gaze from the internal towards the external, i.e., I change the object as it is in the imagination into the object as it is in reality. But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to the reality, appearance to the essence. This change, insomuch as it does away with illusion, is an absolute annihilation, or at least reckless profanation.[28]

While the idea of photography's potential to misrepresent the real with power concerned many critics, photography quickly won over other forms of visual mediums such as paintings, illustrations, and drawings in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Despite skepticism and concerns, photography's documentary/realistic function was irresistible and caught the attention of some intellectuals. Cultural critic Roland Barthe embraces it as a bizarre but trustful medium that is "false on the level of perception, true on the level of time." In his seminal book *Camera Lucida*, he asserts:

> It is a fashion, nowadays, among Photography's commentators (sociologist and semiologists), to seize upon a semantic relativity: no "reality" (great scorn for the "realists" who do not see that the photograph is always coded), nothing but artifice: *Thesis*, not *Physis*; the Photograph, they say, is not an *analogon* of the world; what it represents is fabricated, because the photographic optic is subject to Albertian perspective (entirely historical) and because the inscription on the picture makes a three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional effigy. This argument is futile: nothing can prevent the Photograph from being analogical; but at the same time, Photography's *neome* has nothing to do with analogy (a feature it shares with all kinds of representations).[29]

Barthe asserts the power of historicity of the photograph. He argues that photographic authenticity exceeds its power of representation. He even argues that its

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[28] Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957). Reprint (originally published in 1843), p. xxxix (Preface).

[29] Roland Barthe, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 87-89.

temporal truth or historicity cannot be achieved by any other medium since the photograph speaks for something "that-has-been-there" in reality, though it cannot speak for "what was *not* there" such as things abolished or that did not exist by time or by distance.[30] What the photograph of the past demonstrates is things that existed in the past. In this light, the power of the photograph is often violent—not because it shows violence but because on each occasion it fills the sight by the force of the real. Barthe argues that despite the "invincible resistance to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of myth, the photograph, for the first time, puts an end to this resistance: henceforth the past is as certain as the present."[31]

In the 1930s, observing the remarkable speed of the development of photographic technology, Walter Benjamin complained that "the camera will become smaller and smaller, more and more prepared to grasp fleeting, secret images whose shock will bring the mechanism of association in the viewer to a complete halt. At this point captions must begin to function, captions which understand the photography which turns all the relations of life into literature, and without which all photographic construction must remain bound in coincidences."[32] Benjamin's statement addresses where technological development started to compromise photography's integrity as a documentary recorder. Benjamin's observation attests to the theatrical displays of photo making and images' visual affinity to human visions in the previous period. His observation also paradoxically assures the historical value of the early photographs as "what-has-been-there" when photographic manipulation was either nonexistent or easily noticeable.

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[30] Ibid., pp.76-77.

[31] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[32] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography." p. 215.

In their own way, textual documents are limited in reflecting and explaining cultural and epistemological changes, over which disjunction in our knowledge is inevitable. Visual documents of this period may be able to provide some broken puzzles to connect these historical disjunctions or suggest new clues to epistemological and historical changes in the period.

Project Outline

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The five chapters are deployed to situate the early photography and the modern visual practices of Korea within localized and historicized frameworks. The early photography was prominent in two areas: 1) the public sphere where the integration and the participation of the general public in photographic practices took place, and 2) official policy making as part of the government's modernization drive. Kojong himself was central in both policy making and photographic practices through the body politics as the face of the nation.

Based on these two pillars of topics, the first chapter examines the issues of current scholarship, and chapters 2 and 3 show alternative approaches and interpretations through examining photographic practices on diverse levels in the public sphere. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the governmental transformation in visual policies and practices. The governmental side of visual practices is important not only because the court and government were major players in photographic practices, but more importantly because the evaluation of the early photography has been tied to the evaluation of the regime itself, and visuals have been used as evidence for the failure discourses of the government.

The first chapter sets the research in relation to the notion of visual modernity and the existing practices of knowledge production, particularly in relation to the influence of the master narratives. It problematizes the overused but still difficult notions such as modernity and technological universality to assess their limitations in adequately addressing local experiences and particularities of ‘their’ modern period. Beginning with the introduction of contentious debates on modernity in non-Western society and the discursive clashes and limitations of anti-Orientalist interpretations, the concepts of premodern and modern in visual technology are redefined, not as binary criteria based on universalized standards but as a multilayered continuum through which a larger picture of the local version of modernity can be unveiled. It also problematizes existing approaches to the study of the early photography that has been overshadowed by the master narratives of Orientalism, and knowledge and power. With a premise that the introduction of photography in Korea largely diverged within local historical conditions but shared some historical commonality with the historical experiences in Europe and the United States, the chapter positions the early photography within a broad picture of visual transformation in subject matter, genres, mediums, and the social system. The unique nature and characteristics of the early photographic archive of Korea from this period is also addressed, along with the technical and commercial evolvement of photography in the nineteenth-century world.

The second chapter investigates the historical development and emergence of new classes, or the disintegration of the existing class system, as major consumers of cultural and visual modernity with a hybrid identity from the angle of two hundred years of visual and social changes in Korea. This chapter presents the controversial case studies of public animosity toward the camera and photography, expressed in public riots, the Studio Riots of

1884 and the Baby Riots of 1888, and offers alternative interpretations. The chapter employs the concepts of xenophobia and superstition along with photographic practices, and argues that xenophobia and superstition were not direct products of the period. Instead, they were incidents that manifested the tensions between the rational foreigner and the irrational locals that evolved over a long period of time and were reproduced by various agents with different agendas, ranging from the Japanese colonial government to Korean nationalists to postcolonial modernists.

Chapter 3 further showcases new interpretations and approaches and introduces additional analytical tools. It first examines how the modern visual form of photography became visual statements and repositories of modern desires, emotions, fantasy, and self-identity of individual Koreans, within which the traditional and the modern intersected and criss-crossed on various levels. For example, the Haircut Edict sparked a major increase in the demand for portrait photographs, stemming from the natives' desire to record their traditional identity using a modern visual tool.

On the view from the exterior, I observe that photography brought a major shift in the focus of visual culture from the previous traditional literati-centered to a national and people-based one. Along with visual democracy per se, at least on the level of visual display photography recreated Korea as a highly homogenous community—culturally, socially, and politically--that shared traits of clothing, food, customs, housing, and social and political systems. It was an extensive visual contour that created, in my term, *limitational* boundaries of culture that demarcated Korea vis-à-vis the world outside, in particular Japan and China. I argue that this photographic rendition of looking at Korea as a culturally independent state

from the outside actually came about before Koreans consciously began to articulate themselves as a modern nation by reinventing their traditions.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore in chronological order Chosŏn's official modernization related to its formation of visual policies as a modern nation and Kojong's body politics , first the Chosŏn dynasty (1876-1896), followed by the Taehan Empire (1897-1910). In Chapter 4 the nature and boundaries of Chosŏn's visual modernity in photography are examined through the windows of Kojong's modernization drives from the opening until the beginning of the Taehan Empire. The ambiguity in the court policies and the tensions between the traditional *ŏjin*s (portrait paintings of king) and *ŏsajin* (portrait photos of king) are addressed, and the meanings and significance of Kojong's personal photographic adventure and the country's first pioneering photographers are discussed.

The final chapter investigates the visual regime of the Taehan Empire, and how the regime negotiated between the old foundation and the new civilization in their visual policy. This chapter examines how this ancient regime was rediscovered as a suitable modern state and reinvented through the rigorous implementation of symbolic power. Through this research I argue that photography was integrated into the regime's strategic calculation as a secondary device to its traditional visual tools, rather than a primary one, in its display as a modern state.

CHAPTER ONE

Problematizing the Photographic

The paintings, insomuch as they survived, did so only as testimony to the art of the painter. . . . All the artistic preparations of the photographer and all the design in the positioning of his model to the contrary, the viewer feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark of accident, the here and now.

Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 1933

Visual records played an increasingly important role in circulating information around the world throughout the nineteenth century. Thus much research has been conducted about the social and cultural transformations triggered, influenced, and spread in conjunction with the visual revolutions in the Western world.[33] Regarding the early photography in the non-Western world, however, the scholarly discussion dwells mostly on how the images of non-Western society served the West's social and cultural needs, desires, and understanding of the world. These works seldom directly address native experiences, reception, and impact of photography in the regions beyond the West. This stance cannot but

[33] Some major works on nineteenth-century photography include: Peter Turner, *History of Photography*, Exeter Books (1987); G. Freund, *Photography and Society*; Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd. (1973); Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) and "A Short History of Photography" (1931); Martha A. Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. (Harry N. Abrams, (1991); Richard Rudisill, *Mirror Image, The Influence of the Daguerreotype on American Society*, University of New Mexico (1971); Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India,* Univ Of Minnesota Press (2012); Anthony W. Lee, A *Shoemaker's Story: French Canadian Immigrants, Enterprising Photographers, Rascal Yankees, and Chinese Cobblers in a Nineteenth-Century Factory Town*, Princeton University Press (2008); Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, ed., Getty Research Institute (2013); Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters, and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France*, Yale University Press (2001); Tanya Sheehan, *Doctored: The Medicine of Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, Penn State University Press (2012); Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy*, Univ. California Press (2009).

lack the native's own experiences and gaze, often generating biases toward the native cultures. The stories of the localization of the newly arrived historical technology and visual commodities as objects of the foreign, as well as objects of consumption, thus demand independence from the modern critical theories applied to Western experiences and require new discursive frameworks that can directly address the issues of the image world of the local society.

This chapter problematizes the long-standing views of the master narrative over the early photography and examines different perspectives and voices that have been marginalized and suppressed within that narrative system. It first raises questions about the knowledge production of early photography in Korean studies that has been entangled with the master narrative, colonial legacy, and postcolonial politics, within which the notions of modernity and technological universality are reconsidered at various local levels. Being marginalized and suppressed by the master narrative was not limited to the local voices. The chapter introduces the gazes and voices of Westerners that were deemed ambiguous, and thus often marginalized. The chapter also introduces and examines the visual commercial products of the period such as stereo cards, cards-de-viste, and postcards that were predominantly viewed as vehicles to disseminate racialist and imperialist views around the world.

Clashes of Values and Mechanisms

The nineteenth century was a century of struggle for Chosŏn, which faced both internal and external crises. Peasant uprisings and political disunity tainted the court's leadership domestically, while imperial powers were encroaching on the peninsula. The

Chosŏn government considered Christian activities dangerous and threatening to national security at the turn of the nineteenth century, leading to two major persecutions of Catholics, the Sinhae Persecution (1791) and the Sinyu Persecution (1801). In 1866 the Pyŏngin Persecution erupted to a point that it provoked the French government to make landfall on the coast of Chosŏn. Not only France but also Britain, Russia, the United States, and Japan began to haunt the coastlines of Chosŏn, recording a total of twenty-five occasions in the name of either coastal surveys or invasions before its opening in 1876.[34] By the onset of the second half of the century, Chosŏn was overwhelmed with a series of foreign threats expressed in words and actions that eventually led to the country's opening in 1876.

Until the opening, the lives and images of Korean people were rarely viewed outside Korea. Historically unknown or distorted images of Koreans were rectified only with the import of photography. Yet the visual world created with photography, a Western technology transmitted mainly via Japan, posed tremendous challenges to Koreans in terms of values and technical adaptation. As a local solution to the uncertainty that the opening of the country and subsequent modern changes produced, the Chosŏn court chose a somewhat defensive but synchronistic approach of *Tongdo sŏgi* ("Eastern ways and Western tools") to maintain continuity with the past while controlling the speed of social transformation. The localization of photography was imbued with an optimism since it embodied the vision of civilization and enlightenment that both the Chosŏn court and its people longed for; however, as a foreign/imperial import photography was also permeated by suspicion and resistance among native Koreans.

[34] From 1816 to 1876 a total of twenty-five skirmishes were recorded on the coastlines. The participants included Russia (1), United States (6), France (4), Britain (11), and unidentified ships (3). *A History of Korea* by Association of Korean History Teachers (2010), p. 190.

Before 1876 Chosŏn Korea was rarely viewed and visualized in the West, except in some maps, mainly due to its policy of seclusion. Some maps did relatively better than others; notably the maps such as *Old Maps of Japan* (1655) by Martino Martini and *Royaume de Corée* (1737) by the French cartographer Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville indicated that Korea was a peninsula. In particular, d'Anville presented Korea as a country of ginseng. He likely referenced Hendrick Hamel's 1670 travelogue that introduced Korean ginseng and possibly Jesuit father Pierre Jartoux's report on Korean ginseng in 1702 for his map of Korea[35] (Figure 1.1).

Compared to some geographical representations that tried to delineate the topography of the Korean peninsula, the images of the people living in that space were extremely rare and misleading.[36] The earliest example of a Chosŏn man drawn in the West was by a well-known artist of the day, Peter Paul Rubens, in 1617. He allegedly drew a historical figure named Antonio Corea, who left Chosŏn as a war slave of Japan after the Imjin War of 1592 and managed to travel to Europe as a trader and interpreter. How Antonio Corea came to sit for the famous painter during this period has still not been identified, and Rubens's portrait titled "Man in Korean Costume" also raises questions in regard to whether

[35] At the corner of the map d'Anville drew himself with a bundle of ginseng in his hand. This signified the country as the Oriental hub for ginseng. In his travelogue Hamel reported that ginseng was used as a medicine and produced in northern Korea, then sold to Qing China and Japan. See the section on the Japanese interrogations after his escape from Chosŏn in *Narrative and Description of the Kingdom of Korea* (1670). D'Anville may also have been aware of French Jesuit father Pierre Jartoux's report on ginseng with their sample drawings, which started the Pacific diffusion and triangular trade of ginseng between China, early settlers in North America and the Iroquois Indians in the eighteenth century. Father Pierre Jartoux submitted a report titled "The Description of a Tartarian Plant, called Gin-seng, with an Account of its Virtues" to Jesuits' Procurator General in 1711. It was translated from French to English and published in 1713 by the Royal Society of London and also became widely available again within the book titled *Travels of the Jesuits into the Various Parts of the World* authored by John Lockman, published in 1743.
More for the triangular trade, see "Ginseng: Its History, Dispersion, and Folk Tradition" by Beth Goldstein in *American Journal of Chinese Medicine*, Vol. 3, No. 3. 1975. pp. 223-234.

[36] Lee Ton-su, "A comparative study of visual images on Korea by Koreans and Westerners, 1860-1920." *Han'guk ŏnŏmunhwa kyoyukhakhoe*, Vol.2008, No.1 (2008), p. 116.

his clothing is authentically Korean, despite the fact that his face resembles that of a Chosŏn man[37] (Figure 1.2). The Western depiction of Chosŏn people following Rubens's Chosŏn man may not satisfy connoisseurs both in approximation and number of works. In particular, the idea that the Korean people and clothing lack a distinctive character was prevalent, as seen in the examples such as an early nineteenth century woodblock print titled "Koreans Unknown" (Figure 1.3) and a mid-nineteenth century illustration "King and Queen of Corea" (Figure 1.4) published in the book *Corea, the Hermit Nation* by William Elliot Griffis in 1882. Both of them are excessively imaginative. "Koreans Unknown" delineated Koreans as tall and chubby half-naked folks in tropical clothing, surrounded by a tropical environment[38] while "King and Queen of Corea" shows Chosŏn king and queen wearing Chinese-style gowns.

It was Korea's exposure to photography that revised the distorted images of the interior of Korea, when documents of realistic images were disseminated. This occurred officially as late as the mid-1870s in accord with the country's new foreign policy. Following its introduction photography rapidly became the most preferred visual method of imaging and imagining Korea, not only by non-Koreans but also Koreans. Korean people began to objectify themselves through seeing and being seen through the modern lens. For the first time the life of Korean people laid a foundation for a comparison with that of others.

Camera technology was an import from the West via Japan and China. It was foreign

[37] Stephanie Schrader, *Looking East: Ruben's Encounter with Asia* (exhibition catalog), ed., Paul Getty Museum (2013), pp. 1-11.

[38] The woodblock print was created by St. Sauveur in 1806 and was part of a national series. As for the illustration "King and Queen of Corea," see *Corea, Without and Within* by William Elliot Griffis in 1882, p. 211.

visitors, not the Chosŏn people, who first ushered in modern visual technology to Korea. Defining the nature and meaning of the notion "foreign" in the late Chosŏn is crucial to exploring not only the history of modern visual transmission, but also the Chosŏn people's changing consciousness on the modern changes taking place in the country. Most foreigners came to Korea with camera equipment; used photographs for their books, articles, and newspapers; and sometimes produced photographs as personal souvenirs. In the beginning Korea's response to camera technology seemed dilatory, passive, and even neglectful. However, photography soon infiltrated and penetrated many cultural domains of Korea as discourses, rumors, and ideas as well as images and material culture. This research poses questions regarding how the modern visual technology of photography made its way into Chosŏn society and created an image world of its own, and how it wove diverse but fragmented images into Chosŏn's modernity. To answer these questions one must use a few stepping-stones toward the destination. The first is to rethink and redefine overused but still problematic concepts such as modernity and technological universality based on Korea's experiences.

The modern is often loosely defined as a concept vis-à-vis pre-modern times or societies. When the modern is confined to a phenomenon conjoined with industrialization and capitalism, providing a point of time and condition in a linear history of social progress, the West is conceived as advanced and civilized. In this perception, the modern appears to be a common historical path that every society is destined to follow to reach a state of enlightenment and civilization according to Western standards. In this line of thought the West presents a prototype for modernization for all societies, and a failure to modernize in a timely fashion translates into the subject society's inferiority. For a century the majority of

Korean historians have shared this perspective.

However, even within postcolonial studies scholars have increasingly defied and refuted the overextended generalization of this modernization theory. Many of today's theorists believe that its linear interpretation of social progress is oversimplistic. In recent years the notion of modernization or Westernization as a universal path seems to be gradually being replaced by the idea of multiple paths to modernity, especially in studies of non-Western societies.[39]

To avoid the perpetuation of Western domination as an international norm for modernity, Alexander Woodside argues that the term "modern" was fatally compromised by its provincialism from the outset and that Western modernity took away East Asian modernity. He describes how three East Asian countries—China, Korea, and Vietnam—had achieved rational modern systems before the coming of Westerners. He also observes that under the cross-cultural enterprise of Confucianism, China, Korea, and Vietnam had developed mixed, plural, and localized systems. In these countries feudal elements such as hereditary monarchs and slaves existed; however, they did not hinder but coexisted with the pursuit of an elite meritocracy. The merit-based bureaucratic systems of these countries, Woodside insists, demonstrate rationalized polities, bureaucracies, and welfare—concepts that a contemporary modernized society strives to achieve with its derivatives such as cybernetics and system engineering. These systems, he argues, were conceived, practiced and tested for centuries in East Asian countries starting as early as the eighth and ninth

[39] Anthony Gidens emphasizes "local paths" or "particularizing forces" propelled by the globalizing forces of modernization. Even within the Western world, appropriation of knowledge did not happen in a homogeneous fashion because each society had different levels of power and self-reflexity. *Consequences of Modernity* (1990), pp. 63-64.

centuries.[40]

According to Woodside, the loss of modernities in East Asia rather began with their military defeats in their battles against the French, British, and Japanese in the nineteenth century. This historical experience of loss and defeat generated an internalized sense of inferiority, and inflicted the people with a belief that "outsiders could redeem the promise of the East Asian past." He claims that this is "why East Asians at the end of the twentieth century, far from challenging the foundation of the Western Enlightenment rationalism, give it a Salvationist flavor."[41] He poignantly notes the irony that though the Enlightenment and rationalism have been challenged and dismantled in Western academia, East Asians have not yet disengaged themselves from the hegemony of Orientalist perception. Consequently, a paradigm of "failure" still haunts histories written about Asia. Woodside's observation seems quite relevant to Korea's experience. Korea's modern encounters with the West and colonization have created significant complexity, ambiguity, and paradox in its people's attitude toward its modernity. Thus even historical narratives of Korea written by contemporary historians often display signs of loss and defeat.

More pronounced approach in congruency with Woodside's analysis is found in the work of Partha Chartergjee. Charterjee, reflecting India's modernity, acutely asserts that "the same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity." The historical dilemma and paradox stemming from colonial rule have caused uncertainty in understanding the past and the present. When Western modernity

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[40] Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities: China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Hazards of World History* (2006), pp. 1-16.

[41] Ibid., p. 20.

is accepted as a norm, ambiguity finds no place and is ignored or dismissed as trivial. However, Chaterjee contends that "ambiguity does not stem from any uncertainty about whether to be for or against modernity. Rather, the uncertainty is because we know that to fashion the forms of our modernity, we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others."[42]

Histories of once-colonized countries can hardly be discussed without rethinking the notions of modern, modernity, or modernization since the weight of these terms heavily affected their people's psychology. Korea experienced a tumultuous period of unavoidable encounters with the West in the mid-nineteenth century, and then its neighbor entered as a colonizer at the turn of the century, prescribing and subjugating Korea's modernity under its colonial projects to a great extent. Thus modernity's ambiguities and paradoxes were inevitably embedded and written in the country's visual culture, especially in Korea's interactions with and reactions to the modern visual technology of photography. The study on the early photography from pre-colonial Korea provides an emblematic example of modernity trapped in the colonial dilemma. This research offers an approach to reclaiming the once-colonized locals as creators of their own modernity, not forever consumers of colonizers' modernity, through the window of modern visual technology.

For the Korean people modernization or Westernization was a two-faced Janus. Koreans strove to materialize the value in their soil, and at the same time resisted it due to its connection with modern brutality and imperial incivility. Since the opening of the country in the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of modernization inspired many Korean intellectuals

[42] Partha Charterjee, "Our Modernity," p. 20. Published by the South-South Exchange Program for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Rotterdam/Dakar, 1997.

and politicians. Although incorporation into the “universal” norms of modernization involved destruction of traditional, social, and cultural orders and practices and even the political integrity of the local, it spread out of Koreans’ control. The only option they could choose was to devise strategies for coping with it. The negotiating motto *Tongdo Sŏgi* (Eastern ways and Western tools) was frequently heard among intellectual and political leaders in their attempts to avoid being overwhelmed and victimized in front of imminent storms. Notwithstanding the motto’s implicit declaration of Korean superiority and subjectivity in philosophical and ethical modes, it served as more of a device to check swift Westernization through selective adaptation. It was shaped by local policies as well as public acceptance/resistance that adapted Western norms to local agendas and necessities.

In their modernizing efforts throughout this period, the Korean government tried to maintain continuity rather than discontinuity with the country’s past. It wanted to renew the notion of national identity among its people and tried to shield them from the ferocious upsurge of the modern and the imperial. Thus in the minds of most Koreans of this period, modernization conjured up a nationalist feeling against foreign infringement as well as dreams of civilization and self-rule. Especially in the early photography, ambiguities, paradoxes, and uncertainties abounded and often burst out as violence and destruction in allegedly pre-modern manners, as well as fantasy, desires, and imitations in emblematic modern modes of behavior and consumption.

Technology is the most salient feature that defines photography. Some scholars have posited that science and technology are extensions of the thoughts and minds of people, not the agents that created them in the first place.[43] A photograph is a chemically generated

[43] P. Brey, “Theorizing Technology and Modernity,” *Modernity and Technology*. Eds. Thomas Misa, Philip Brey and Andrew Feenberg. MIT Press (2008), pp. 33-71.

image operated by camera technology, and is often viewed as fundamentally technological. In line with this, many observers use technological transmission and acceptance as a barometer for the degree of modernity. Some even think that the level of visuality of a society can be a parameter for measuring the level of modernity in a society. In this view, a society becomes more modern when it produces and consumes more images.[44]

For instance, Philip Brey, a scholar of history of science and technology, presents a Eurocentric perspective with which he maintains that modernity and technology were mutually formative and constructed. He argues that technologies became an integral part of the infrastructure of modernity insomuch as it is deeply ingrained in its institutions, and reorganizing the industrial system of production, consumption, surveillance, and military power. It also shapes cultural symbols, categories, and practices.[45] Based on European experience, Brey correlates historical and social contexts with the development of modern technologies. He insists that technological products of modernity bear the imprint not only of the behaviors of actors immediately involved in their construction, but the larger sociocultural and economic conditions within which they developed. From Brey's viewpoint, the official introduction of photography in Europe in 1839 was not something abrupt or completely surprising. Instead, it had been longed for as the social and cultural conditions of that time in Europe became ripe for a new form of visual expression to accommodate the needs of emerging social groups.

The matter concerns how scientific knowledge and technology operated in a society

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[44] Visuality became intertwined with contemporary life, and it is not easy for contemporary people to imagine a life without it. Susan Sontag admits that the level of visuality in the twentieth century gradually became "a widely agreed-on diagnosis of a society's modern-ness." In other words, "a society becomes modern when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images." *On Photography*, p. 153.

[45] Brey, pp. 33-71.

that had different historical conditions and was not necessarily waiting for the emergence of that particular technology. While visual modernity outside Europe shares some of Europe's historical experience in the formation of new viewers, consumers, and markets, non-European experiences of the camera and photography deserve an independent investigation on the nature of this translocal technology on the local level. This is especially important due to the fact that the technology was a foreign transplant, not a native product, that could complicate and even contradict European experiences. In such an analysis the photographic discourse can be open to embracing multiple layers of personal, social, cultural, and transcultural stories of the time.

Challenges in the study of the Korean photography are more complex due to its colonial and postcolonial entanglements in history writing. First, knowledge production regarding early photography in contemporary Korean scholarship demonstrates a noticeable quantitative imbalance in comparison with later periods. More problematic is the fact that their interpretation of the visuals has mainly been dominated by the notions of Western gaze and subjectivity. This may be understandable in that Westerners and the Japanese, not Koreans themselves, took the initiative in the early production of photographs in Korea. In contrast, the native acceptance and integration of the technology were neither active nor speedy enough.

Japan's colonial rule may be another element hampering the progress of scholarly discourses about Korea's early photography. Japanese colonial rule placed Korea's visual experiences under regimented colonial discourse from 1910 to 1945. However, Japan's influence on photography of Korea was visible from its introduction in the mid-nineteenth century. Japan was the source of learning and emulation for the first Korean photographers,

and the presence of Japanese photographers and photo studios were prominent in Korea during the period when Korean native counterparts were absent. Starting in the 1890s, some Japanese commercial studios enjoyed business success in Korea. For example, the gradual increase of commercial photo studios owned by Japanese reached the point that they regularly advertised their studios in newspapers beginning in 1899.[46]

The colonial influence on or intervention in the interpretation of pre-colonial photography is very conspicuous. Evidence indicates that some discourses on pre-colonial photography were even formulated during the colonial period a couple of decades after their origin, not only with the infusion of the Japanese colonial policy but also through nationalist Koreans' reproduction of the stories of pre-colonial Korea. These colonial interpretations later became fixed as standardized knowledge of pre-colonial Koreans and their mode of behavior in postcolonial Korea.

The early photography in pre-colonial Korea became fraught with stories of the shamanistic worldview of Koreans, rather than being presented within nuanced social and cultural stories of Korea. Often photography-related historical events are simply viewed as isolated episodes or anecdotes, losing the opportunity to become an essential part of local history. This perspective does not recognize that, although the material presence of photographs seemed meager and the visual consumption was limited, photography directly and indirectly resonated in the cultural and social spaces of Korea.

[46] The first newspaper advertisement about a photo studio was for Japanese studio Saeng'yŏngkwan. It announced the opening of the studio on May 22, 1899, in *Hwangsŏng Sinmun*. The first Japanese studios in the 1880s were owned by Kai Kunji (1882) and Honda Shunosuke (1883). Their business targeted Koreans as well as resident Japanese. A few studios such as Saeng'yŏngkwan (1894), Amchŏn (1898), Bongsŏnkwan (1899), and Okchŏndang (1899) were in business in Seoul in the 1990s as well. See Choi In-jin (1999, p. 183) and Lee Kyung-min (2008, pp. 83-90).

Photography primarily relates to its materiality in the sense that cameras and printed images in circulation and consumption are indispensable. Yet if the discussion is limited only to its materiality, it does not capture holistic pictures of *photographic practices* induced by the introduction of the technology and its concomitant circulation of ideas and news as well as images. It is true that the domestic circulation of photographic images was often obstructed and the technology was only infrequently used by the natives; however, instead of being mere objects of the photographic gaze, Koreans often actively intervened and engaged in negotiating photographic affairs and production. They vigorously absorbed information about their new "cultural Others" and started to develop a consciousness of seeing and being seen by them. In some sense *photographic practices* may more powerfully attract researchers' attention since they often show the possibilities of new interpretation of the society and the people. The paucity of material presence in the hands of Koreans at this time should thus not be utilized simply to endorse photography's absence or near absence as a social and cultural medium during this new photographic era. Photography as translocal technology constituted the locals' particular experiences of imaging and imagining others. In particular, its visual archive available today provides a powerful and unique window into the documentary realism of the period that speaks about the lives of the local natives.

Documentary Realism in the Gaze of Others

Many visual critics have claimed that the photographic representation of Korea and its people from this period contributed to the formation of fixed images of Korean culture and objectified the country by using the discursive weapons of knowledge. The two decisively influential conceptual tools in postcolonial studies are in operation in this

argument, including Edward Said's Orientalism and Michel Foucault's knowledge-power relations. Strongly influenced by the conceptual foundation of postcolonial study, contemporary research on the early images of Korea frames them with the concepts of imperialists' gaze and the politics of representation. Thus their argument centers on the discourse that they imagined Korea as nothing but a premodern, uncivilized, exotic land.

According to Edward Said, the offensiveness of the Western imperial gaze originated from photographers' both conscious and unconscious sense of their Western civilization's superiority. In *Orientalism* Said argues that fundamental distinctions between the Orient and the Occident existed, and that this was deeply rooted in the psyche of individual imperial subjects. They were manifested in various mediums such as texts, images, and the arts as well as colonial laws and policies that operated to serve imperial causes. Thus it worked through and even against the imperial subject's conscious effort to tolerate and be open to colonized culture because he/she would never lose the relative upper hand of "flexible positional superiority."[47] Said's points provide an important foundation for postcolonial scholarship in colonial photography. While Said provides relational views of the West and the East, Michel Foucault analyzes more fundamental webs that created domination in the modern world. He argues that the archive consisting of objects, documents, and images is already a construct of a discourse and that one must dig up the archive to unveil a bigger system in operation. According to Foucault, historical objects are always incomplete, unstable, contaminated, and dominated by discourses.[48] As a result, photographic archives

[47] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978). p. 7; *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), pp. 240-241.

[48] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault notes that with the innate challenges that the archive poses, it is possible for one to describe it only when one stays outside the discourse in which the archive stands (discursive discontinuity) and has temporal and spatial distance from the archive; pp. 130-131.

are innately unstable and exist only as part of the knowledge that harnesses the larger argument, which is hidden.

This does not mean that anti-Orientalist discourse fails to improve an understanding of political implications embedded in the relationship between the West and the East. Foucault's deconstructional method and Said's structuralist Orientalism provide an important discursive power in studying Korea's early photography. Instead, it is more an issue of comparability of the theories to local histories and their dominance that causes intellectual and psychological arrest in history writing. As Partha Charterjee insists, if the close complicity between modern knowledge and modern regimes of power persists, the history of once-colonized countries can never be taken away from "universal modernity" by the West and will never be taken seriously as a producer of its own modernity.[49] His argument provides a sound counterargument against the prevailing research method and perspective regarding the early Korean photography.

Since its introduction photography was viewed as a mechanical record written with light and chemical reaction, and it quickly earned a reputation for magically duplicating the real. However, that does not suffice to claim that photographic images are always true and objective. The objectivity of photography is more ambiguous since not all things can be photographed, and photographers subjectively choose what to take. In other words, photography operates by human action as the agent who selectively records. This is the point that makes anti-Orientalist theory persuasive. It is also undeniable that this is the point where anti-Orientalist discourse seriously overshadows local perspectives of the photographic experience.

[49] Partha Charterjee, "Our Modernity," p. 14.

Whereas human selectivity dramatically compromises the photograph's objectivity, once the shutter clicks the mechanical process of copying temporal reality is put in place. At least this was the case in the nineteenth century when, unlike today, almost none of the technical choices for image alteration were possible. Due to the limited technical possibilities of photographic manipulation or editing, the early photographs, despite the inevitable arbitrariness of the photographer, were strictly tied to and dictated by historical moments. Although they "can never quite make the past fully dimensional, they assist in some measure to visually reconstruct it."[50] The problematique of this chapter, despite the contiguity of Orientalist reading of images, started with the suspicion that the interpretation of the early photographs of Korea demonstrates an imbalance between the two intricately different but inseparable faces of photography, weighing photography's arbitrariness too highly over its historicity.

Some of the most controversial photographs from this period are the sexualized images of Korean women. These images of bare-breasted Korean women were widely circulated during the period and criticized in later scholarship as a gendered imperialist gaze. Some of these images were staged and others were not. The images, taken by Japanese photographers, were reproduced as postcards and circulated widely (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). It is apparent that the photographers intended to expose the Korean women's breasts in order to serve the desire of the viewers' gaze. That is, they objectified Korean women as powerless sexual objects in an exotic, premodern life, through which the country was also

[50] A. Tankha, "Frame(s) of Reference," *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.2 (Autumn 2009), p. 119.

gendered vis-à-vis the masculine West or Japan.[51] When these images were widely publicized in South Korea during the 1990s, many felt they were humiliating because they had believed that Chosŏn had successfully enforced the Confucian ideology on women as having the virtues of womanly behavior and chastity. To the disappointment of many contemporary Koreans, the assumption that Chosŏn women would not have appeared in public with bare breasts could not be supported. Many foreign observers of the period commented in their travelogues about Chosŏn women's short jackets that allowed them to often expose part of their breasts. For example:

> Her condition is somewhat better than that of many of Korea's poor, for she is sure of food and shelter, which is far more than thousands can say. As a rule, she is treated well, and her condition does not specially excite our pity. She will be seen carrying water home from the well on her head, and not only will her face be uncovered, but there will be a startling hiatus between her short jacket and her waistband which leaves the breasts entirely exposed. One recent writer on Korea leaves the impression that this species of indecorum is characteristic of all women on the streets of Seoul, but of course this is a libel.[52]

> The costume of the women is in some respects peculiar to the capital. The upper garment consists of an apology for a zouave jacket in white or cream material, which may be of silk lawn, lawn or calico. A few inches below this begins a white petticoat, baggy as a sail, touching the ground upon all sides, and attached to a broad band. Between the two there is nothing except the bare skin, the breasts being fully exposed. It is not an agreeable spectacle, as the women seen abroad are usually aged or infirm.[53]

> A tiny jacket, usually white, red, or green, completes the wardrobe of most Corean women; one peculiarity of which is that it is so short that both breasts are left uncovered, which is a curious and most unpractical fashion, the climate of Corea, as we have already seen, being exceedingly cold—much colder than Russia or even Canada.[54]

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[51] Lee Kyung-min in *Kyŏngsŏng Caught in Photographs* (2012), pp. 267-272; Kwon Hyŏk-hee in *Postcards Mailed from Chosŏn* (Minŭm-sa Publishing, 2005), pp. 63-71.

[52] Homer Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (1906), p. 136.

[53] Angus Hamilton, *Korea* (1904), p. 36-38.

[54] Savage Landor, *Corea or Choson, the Land of Morning Calm* (1895), p. 61.

> Female dress is made up of a very short jacket, loose baggy under-trousers, and over the trousers a petticoat, reminding one much of the Western article. Though this last is provided with an ample waistband, and is swathed high upon the body as it will hold, without the faintest respect for anatomical structure, it sometimes fails to meet the rudimentary bodice by two or three inches, and a slot exposing the breast is the result. I may add that such unfortunate exposure is not intentional, and is only to be seen among that class whose lot is to draw water at the wells.[55]

> Among many of the lower classes where care is not exercised, the upper and lower garments separate and there is an exposure of the breasts that is disgusting to Europeans, but when Koreans have been spoken to in regard to the matter they fail to see much difference in this from the very low "full" dress of society women in America. The genteel classes, however, are particular in these details, and although they only meet those of their own sex or family, seldom permit unnecessary exposure, and even the dress of the dancing girls is perfectly modest.[56]

Many of these foreign observers of Korean women with bare breasts approached this practice from a socioeconomic angle. They wrote about women with little means and of lower-class status who were prone to unintentional breast exposure during their everyday labor. Some native sources prove the existence of this practice, notably the paintings by the eighteenth-century court painter Shin Yun-bok and the nineteenth-century painter Kim Jun-gŭn (Figures 1.7 and 1.8). On May 30, 1906, *Cheguk sinmun* published an article that criticized the then-popular short jackets among women:

> Females' jackets these days are not appropriate. Even for males, it would be unpleasant if bare skin is revealed. Nothing more than can be said about women. In our country these days females' jackets have only sleeves but nothing covers the body. Even a well-behaving woman can hardly avoid revealing her red skin or waist due to the short length of jackets. It is very strange even to us who are used to it, not to mention those who see it for the first time. It is obviously not a humane appearance.[57]

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[55] Percival Lowell, *Chosön, the Land of Morning Calm* (1885), p. 404.

[56] Horace Underwood, *The Call of Korea: Social, Political and Religious* (1908), p. 60.

[57] *Cheguk sinmun*, May 30, 1906.

Kwon Hyŏk-hee offers an academic response that sheds light on the nature of the postcard images made by Japanese photographers. He points out that the images of sexualized women are not unique to Korea and images of breasts can be found in other colonies such as African and Arabian countries. He argues that these postcard images of Korean women with bare breasts were staged for the purpose of entertaining the gaze of the viewer.[58] Cho Hee-jin joined the debate and highlighted the practical purpose of having a short jacket, especially among the lower class women, in order to be able to feed babies immediately with less hot milk from uncovered breasts.[59] The most widely accepted explanation was that it was a sign of pride for having given birth to a son. A combination of Cho's theory concerning the practicality of breastfeeding and the preference for sons in Confucian society could have encouraged these women to proudly uncover their breasts.

In contrast, Chŏn Po-kyŏng argues that without historical evidence that can directly speak to the practice, the devices of memory have revised the ways in which we remember it. She contends that the practice was first noted by foreigners as an exotic scene, and then brought into the missionaries' hygienic discourse on clothing during the pre-colonial period. It was later resurrected by the Japanese for colonial discipline in reconstructing the memory and history of premodern Korea. According to Chŏn, the practice had almost disappeared by the 1920s and 1930s, precisely because of Koreans' awareness of the gazes of others—the

[58] Kwon Hyŏk-hee (2005), p. 228.

[59] Cho Hee-jin, *Gentlemen and Piercing*, East Asia Publishing (2003), pp. 76-77.

missionaries and the Japanese—on the practice. However, the discourse itself has been occasionally reproduced and reimagined even until present day.[60]

Regardless of which interpretation is true, the crucial point is that all accounts—either Confucian, pragmatic, or socioeconomic—acknowledge the existence of the practice. The provocative images of Korean women with bare breasts were exaggerated and essentialized by Japanese commercial photographers to the point where these images misrepresented the general lives of Korean women. Nevertheless, the representation of the practice was neither groundless nor nonsensical. It was a representation of an exotic practice for the eyes of outsiders of the period, as well as contemporary Koreans, that was eventually mass-produced as tourist commodities. For today's Koreans, however, it should provide a moment to discover, in Roland Barthe's expression, "what-has-been" there in history. Such images provide new information about the social and cultural life that offers a better understanding of the period.

Japanese and Western anthropologists visited Korea to collect records of material culture. Similar to all historical sources, the purpose and materials collected were multifaceted. Many photographic images were gathered to justify their racial and imperial superiority. Some photographers may have taken images simply to document a disappearing culture and lifestyle. Although the Orientalist intent exists in images of this kind, some are still useful in understanding the local culture and society and resist a blanket generalization, especially when it comes to the study of local experiences. Different interests, views, and

[60] According to Chŏn, the first written record of the Confucian account was publicized by French diplomat Hippolyte Frandin. She argues that Frandin's caption "Chosŏn woman's bragging of her son" was the beginning of the account. Frandin visited Korea from 1892 to 1894 and wrote the book *En Coree* in 1902. "The Politics of Memory on Women's Breast Pictures in Joseon: The Story that Their Mini-jackets became a Sign of Bragging about Their Baby Boys," Chŏn Po-kyŏng, *P'eminijŭm yŏn'gu*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (April 2008), pp. 125-157.

intentions existed between individuals and nations. Without accepting complexity and nonconformity in the archive, and without providing differing interpretations on them, mere criticism in the grand narrative only obscures out understanding of the period.

Marginalized and Suppressed Visions

Photography was one element in the rise of racial science and empowered physical anthropology in the nineteenth century. The scientific mode of photography accredited racial types of photographic renderings created and circulated by British, American, and German eugenicists at the turn of the century.[61] Images of indigenous people in Africa, Australia, and Asia were examined in terms of categories such as type, class, and race, and used for "cultural framing of political categories" in Europe and America.[62] Maintaining an ideal and cost-effective distance from the colonized was an important practical colonial policy, and the photograph was one of the few tools to accomplish this.

Scholars such as Ann Stoler caution against approaching the colonial archive with assumed binary categories, such as "colonizer" and "colonized." In her study on the Dutch Indies, she problematizes the assumed existence of the clear division of identities and argues for mutual constitutiveness thereof. In particular, Stoler emphasizes the centrality of the private and the intimate relationship in the formation of the colonizer-colonized

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[61] Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1870-1940*, Sussex Academic Press (2008), p. 21.

[62] Before photography was available Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), a German physiologist and father of physical anthropology, established the field using comparative anatomy to compare racial types. Since the mid-nineteenth century, photography was extensively used to create "types" or specimen photographs. Arthur de Gobineau published *The Inequality of the Human Races*, which declares the superiority of the white Aryan race. Carl and Frederick Dammann's *Ethnological Photographic Gallery of the Various Races of Man* (1876) demonstrates an entanglement of racial science and anthropology through photography; *The People of India*, an eight-volume work compiled by the British government between 1868-75, replaced paintings of Indian "types" with over 400 photographs and descriptions of every Indian group and caste. Harry Johnstone's *British Central Africa* (1897) similarly employed photographs to demonstrate African racial nature.

relationship.[63] The early photographic archives of images also do not fit into clear-cut discourses on the assumed colonial world. Instead, they often demonstrate ambiguity and paradox, especially when viewed through negotiations with our present across the spectrum of time. Visual products by John Thomson, a well-known nineteenth century geographer and photographer, provide a good case study.

Thomson traveled and photographed many Asian countries including Siam, Cambodia, Vietnam, Penang, Singapore, and China. Many have agreed that he provided visual contributions to the clarification of racial types and categories on Asian races through which the West's Oriental gaze on Asia took shape. Understandably, his works have not escaped criticism due to his Orientalist views. Ironically, in a 2010 traveling exhibition titled *China through the Lens of John Thomson 1868-1872*, Thomson was recognized as having presented accounts of Chinese people based on the human aspects of life. His photographs were reassessed as transcending the causal illustration of idiosyncratic types.[64] The exhibition, featuring over 150 images of China and Chinese people, was curated and displayed by the Beijing World Art Museum and traveled in and outside China.

Commenting on the exhibition, Rosalind Morris admitted that Thomson's visual narratives were constructed in social and class terms in Europe, whereas they were constructed in national and racialized terms in Asia.[65] She further observes that "the essence

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[63] Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (2002). Stoler also argues that private and intimate topics, such as sex and domestic issues, were "central to the formation of colonial power structures. Such investigations show that sexual control was both an instrumental image for the body politic ... and itself fundamental to how racial policies were secured and how colonial policies were carried out," p. 78.

[64] "China Through the Lens of John Thomson 1868-1872," *Asian Art*. Online at http://www.asianartnewspaper.com/article/china-through-lens-john-thomson-1868-1872 (retrieved on March 5, 2014).

[65] For more about his photographs of the miserable street life of London see John Thomson, *Street Life in London* (1878).

of the type was tied to the context and the activities of the sitter," and not dominated by the photographer's imperial knowledge.[66] Unfortunately, these two comments seem to contradict each other. Allowing a former imperialist photographer escape censure reflects agony or suspicion. However, her comments could develop into an argument that Thomson's inevitably "racialized" views, caused by the limitations of his time, should not necessarily cause him to fall prey to the overt racial views of imperialism. Indeed, it is possible to see his interest in exploring humans as individuals as well as social and historical subjects in his photographs of both Chinese and British people.

Among the many foreigners who visualized Korea in the late nineteenth century, Arnold Savage Landor (1865-1924) was also distinctive in that he delved into Korean life before others did. An English explorer, painter, and anthropologist, he traveled throughout the world and visited Korea in 1890 and again in 1893-1894 without any professional mission. In his book *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm*, written in 1890 and published in 1895, Landor tried to challenge the general theory of human migration and racial purity of this time:

> For anyone interested in types and crosses, I really do not know of a country more interesting than Cho-sen. It seems as if specimens of almost every race populating Asia had reached and remained in the small peninsula, which fact would to some degree disprove the theory that all migrations have moved from the east towards the west and from north to south, and never vice versa.
>
> If you take the royal family of Corea, for instance, you will find that the king and queen, and all the royal princes, especially on the queen's side (the Min family), are as white as any Caucasian, and that their eyes are hardly slanting at all, and in some cases are quite as straight as ours. Members of some of the nobler families also might be taken for Europeans. Of course the middle classes are of the Mongolian type, though somewhat more refined and stronger built than the usual specimens of either Chinese or Japanese; they are, however, not quite so wiry and tall as their

[66] Rosalind Morris, *Photogaphies East*, p. 3.

> northern neighbors the Manchus, with whom, nevertheless, they have many points in common.[67]

Landor did not refrain from making racial comments and categorizing the Korean people. To the great dismay of many social revolutionists and eugenic anthropologists of his time, he claimed that all races--white, Mongolian, and even black--were part of the Korean race. Furthermore, he tried to explain class using racial terms, stating that Korean noblemen possessed traits similar to European whites, while middle-class Koreans resembled Mongolians and the low class the black "race." Regardless of the validity of Landor's argument on Koreans' racial similarity to whites, typing and classification were irresistible to those educated in Europe during this period.

Landor's rather free observations about Korean people also provide a view that contradicted stereotypes of Koreans around 1890, in which Koreans were portrayed as superstitious xenophobics who rioted violently against foreigners. Landor stated that Koreans were cheerful, curious about new things, outgoing, and friendly:

> I was sketching one day outside the east gate of Seoul, and, as usual, was surrounded by a large crowd of natives, when a good-natured old man with a kindly face attracted my attention, as he lifted up in his arms a pretty little child, on whose head he had placed his horse-hair transparent hat, and asked me whether I would like to paint the little one so attired in my picture. . . . The Coreans, like the Japanese, are extremely quick at understanding pictures and drawings, and I was much gratified to notice the interest displayed by my *auditorium* for never before had I seen a crowd so pleased with work of mine. My last experiences in the sketching line had been among the hairy savages of the Hokkaido, among whom art was far from being appreciated or even tolerated, and portrait-painting was somewhat of a risky performance; so that when I found myself lionized, instead of being under a shower of pelting stones and other missiles, it was only natural that I felt encouraged, and really turned out a pretty fair sketch so far as my capabilities went.[68]

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[67] Arnold Savage Landor, *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm* (1895), p. 46.

[68] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

The Koreans whom Landor met freely engaged with foreigners in nonharmful and interesting activities. The fact that a Korean old man even voluntarily offered his grandchild as a sitter for Landor's pictorial rendition was almost unthinkable given that the Baby Riots, allegedly caused by xenophobic Koreans, had occurred two years before in downtown Seoul.

Landor frequently ventured out by himself to sketch and became famous in the town, eventually being invited to draw portraits of officials and the royal families. His sketches of Korean people were published in his book *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm*. Likely prompted by his deep interest in intercultural racial construction, his drawings, especially most of his portrait drawings, adopted a close-up side angle that effectively exaggerated the differences in facial bone structure, skin color, hair-dos, and beards, through which he tried to expose racial as well as social traits (Figure 1.9). This was a typical method used by anthropologists to derive maximum racial traits from an image. In an extreme effort to highlight the physical traits of individuals, Landor's artistic renderings ended up like caricatures, thus making some question the accuracy of his visual renderings. In particular, Landor's portrait of Min Yŏng-hwan shows quite a gap from Min's photographic rendition (Figures 1.10 and 1.11). Despite the fact that his racial comments on the Korean people were not subjugating, Landor's visual renderings are subject to Orientalist criticism when taken out of their original context. His visual rendering contradicted his textual explanation, leading some critics to align them with other Orientalist images.[69] Toward the end of his book Landor attempted to make even broader comparisons and generalizations about Koreans (heathens) and his people (Christians):

[69] Intermedium communications between different types of visuals, such as photographic renderings and paintings or illustrations, were common. Landor was trained in drawing and painting in Paris; there is a

Looking, therefore, at both sides of the medal, the man of Cho-sen may have a great many bad qualities from our point of view, yet he also undoubtedly possesses some virtues on which we who are supposed to be more civilized and more charitable, cannot pride ourselves. Believe me, when things are taken all round, there is after all but little difference between the Heathen and the Christian; nay, the solid charity and generosity of the first is often superior to the advertised philanthropy of the other.[70]

Thomson and Landor formed their own views on different cultures and peoples, rather than being limited by the predominant visual practices as a norm. The ambiguity and paradoxes lingering in their micro-level visual and textual works demand a far more complex reading than that previously given.

The Photographic Gaze in Commercial Products: Stereo Cards, Cards-de-visite, and Postcards

In the nineteenth century photography quickly replaced conventional drawings and paintings in Europe. One of the major changes in the visual arts was the popularity of photographic commodities such as stereo cards, cards-de-visite, and postcards. They signaled a revolutionary shift from the limited possession of authentic paintings to mass possession of mechanically reproduced images.[71] In an age of imperial expansion and world travel, they were the most popular visual commodities. Through the consumption of these commodities the images of exotic culture and people were constructed as Others while they contributed to the formation of cultural framing by Western societies.

possibility that he learned visual racial renderings from artists and photographers. For criticism on his paintings see Lee Young-A in "A study of Western's viewpoint on the body of Korean: Focusing on *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm* by Savage Landor," *Homo Migrans* published by Imininjong yŏn'guhoe, Vol. 3 (Nov. 2010).

[70] Arnold Savage Landor, p. 282.

[71] Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (1974; English translation by David R. Godine in 1980), pp. 10-11; Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936).

In the West stereo cards were a popular form of home entertainment and a social pastime from the 1840s to the 1930s. They were designed to create an illusionary three-dimensional effect out of two-dimensional images by placing two identical images side-by-side in a stereo viewer. This viewer, the stereoscope, was officially created by Sir Charles Wheatstone in 1833 in Great Britain before the official beginning of photography. In the 1850s it began to incorporate photography into stereo card production and became even more popular.[72] Various subjects were made into stereo cards, most notably travel around the world that displayed all sorts of exotic scenes that might not otherwise have been viewed domestically. These cards were boxed as themed sets; a large number of photographs of Korea were made into stereo cards.

Most stereo cards of Korea were produced and distributed from the 1880s until the 1910s by American companies such as Underwood & Underwood Company,[73] Keystone View Company,[74] and C. H. Graves. Underwood & Underwood Company and Keystone View Company were the biggest producers and distributors, and sold millions of stereo cards worldwide. Rose Stereograph Company, an Australian company, also produced Korean stereo cards.[75] These companies either dispatched photographers to different parts of

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[72] Sales of stereo card reached their peak between 1902 and 1935.

[73] Underwood & Underwood was founded in 1881 by two brothers, Elmer Underwood and Bert Underwood, in Ottawa, Kansas. It became the largest stereo view producer in the world, circulating over 10 million views a year at the turn of the century. They actively incorporated news photography as the popularity of stereo cards waned in 1910s. U&U produced a set titled *1904 Korea through the Stereoscope.*

[74] It was founded in 1893 by B. L. Singley, a former salesperson of Underwood & Underwood, in Meadville, Pennsylvania and remained in business until 1963. It became the largest producer and distributer of stereoscopes in 1905.

[75] Rose Stereoscopic Company was founded in 1880 by George Rose in Melbourne, Australia, and took over 9,000 stereoscopic images in thirty-eight different countries. Rose visited Korea in 1904 and took forty photographs that were published in a catalog by the Korea-Australia Foundation in 2004 under the title *1904 Korea through Australian Eyes* by Munsung Printing Company (2004). For more on his activities in Korea and

the world or hired freelance photographers who were already in the field. Traveling photographers also sold their pictures to multiple companies and museums as well as individuals. Significantly, Herbert George Ponting (1870-1935), one of the traveling photographers, took hundreds of stereo images of Korea and sold them to both Underwood & Underwood and the Keystone View Company.[76]

Traveling photographers also sold the same images to multiple companies and individuals. For example, George Rose, the founder of Rose Stereoscopic Company, sold some of his later stereoscopic images created for his company to the Keystone View Company. The single largest public collection of stereo cards of Korea is housed in the Library of Congress in Washington DC, which has approximately 300 stereo cards of Korea by different producers, out of which about 200 are available online.[77] These stereoscopic images were predominantly taken outdoors, and depict scenes of cities, villages, mountains, rivers, fortresses, palaces, gates, and markets with myriad nameless people.

Cards-de-visite, 2.5 x 4.12 inches in size, were another popular visual format of printed paper. The slightly larger cabinet cards, 4.25 x 6.5 inches, were mostly used in Europe and America. These were introduced in 1854 and were designed to accommodate a portrait image with a record of personal contact or message. They gained collectible value when companies began to print photographic portraits of prominent people on the cards.[78]

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evaluation as a photographer, see the short biography "George Rose (1861-1942)" by Rodney Hall in *1904 Korea through Australian Eyes.*

[76] Terry Bennett, *Korea Caught in Time* (Garnet Publishing Limited: UK, 1997), p. 24.

[77] The Library of Congress's Print and Photography collection and other holdings have roughly 300 stereo cards. One hundred and seventy-five images were digitalized and are available on the Library's Web site.

[78] Gary W. Clark, *19th Century Card Photos: A Step-by-Step Guide to Identifying and Dating*, published by Phototree.com (2013), pp. 2-3.

Although they were not common outside Europe, the United States, and their colonies, Kojong reportedly gave his portraits (called *ŏjin* in Korean) to foreign dignitaries as souvenirs throughout this period.[79] Upon the introduction of photography, the respectful term *ŏjin*, denoting the king's portrait paintings, was often used to generally refer to the king's photograph and only rarely specified as *ŏsajin* (king's photograph), which causes some confusion in identifying the exact format of them. Notwithstanding the lack of decisive support that no empirical objects have been discovered to confirm this, it is assumed that his portrait souvenirs must have been a form similar to cards-de-visite or cabinet cards.

The modern postal service helped accelerate consumption of photographs by allowing postcards to be mailed. Becoming a popular tourist activity, postcards emerged as a popular medium for communication as well as a souvenir later in the nineteenth century. At the turn of the century the burgeoning international travel industry resulted in a renewed interest in postcards with photographic images. In Korea this coincided with the increase of commercial Japanese photo studios that began to produce most photographs of Korea in this period.

The first postcards of Korea were produced around 1900 when the Korean government began promoting Korea to foreigners.[80] Unfortunately few of the original postcards made by the Chosŏn government have been found. On the other hand, many postcards manufactured by Japanese vendors and the Japanese colonial government

[79] Yun Ch'i-ho made observations on taking, receiving, and sending portrait photographs. On December 23, 1885, Yun wrote that "I saw the King's portrait cherished by the wife of the U.S. consul today. I mailed her portrait picture to Court Lady Ha with a message."

[80] Kwon Hyŏk-hee, "Origins and Production of Postcards with Photographic Images" (2009), pp. 19-21.

throughout the pre-colonial and colonial periods have survived. Meiji Japan utilized visual mediums as state apparatuses to educate and modernize their people as a subject of the empire, signaling the emergence of the emperor-centered society of surveillance.[81] After 1905 when its protectorate over Chosŏn began, the same strategy was applied to Korea as their new colony. In particular, Japan printed and circulated official postcards to commemorate major state events such as the inauguration of Emperor Sunjong in 1907, the signing of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, and the beginning of colonial rule in 1910. These postcards were designated as *sijŏng yŏpsŏ* (postcards of contemporary politics). The colonial government made use of them to advertise their colonial policies and achievements in "modernizing" Korea.[82] In addition to Japanese and Western visitors, Koreans purchased the postcards under colonial rule and postcard production exponentially increased during the first decade of the colonial period. In 1918 the Postal Service Office produced over 330 million cards in just two months.[83]

The image content and the use of the medium found in the postcards of Korea, in particular those manufactured by Japanese studios, need to be understood in line with Japan's early history of photography, which germinated in the 1860s following its opening. A Venetia-born photographer, Felice Beato, made crucial contributions to its development when he settled in Yokohama. He became famous for his presentation of colorful exotic images that adopted the Japanese painting style of the floating world (*ukiyo-e*) to create sexual fantasies of young Japanese women. His products reflected a Western construct of

[81] Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*, pp. 141-142.

[82] Kwon, Hyŏk-hee, *A Journey to the Modernity through Postcards*, p. 33.

[83] On December 11, 1918, *Maeil Sinbo* (Daily News) reported under the title "One hundred million postcards are about to be printed" that the annual increase of postcard consumption had reached the point that the Postal Service planned to print one hundred million postcards for 1918, an increase of 2 million from 1917.

Orientalism. Highly respected by critics and consumers, he succeeded in establishing a genre called Yokohama-style photography.[84] This genre is characterized by staged images that were hand colored for a more dramatic presentation of scenes and objects. Yokohama photography was produced on postcards around 1900, and many were purchased in Korea. Korean consumption of picture postcards soared after the advent of new technology. For example, on December 6, 1901, an advertisement in *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Imperial Capital News) reads: "Folklore picture postcards are now on sale at Okchŏndang Studio. They are good for new year gifts."[85] It was around this time that the major Japanese postcard publisher and distributor Hinode Co. and many other Japanese photo studios opened their businesses in Korea.[86] On January 7, 1902, *Hwangsŏng sinmun* reported that a Japanese studio, *Saeng'yŏngkwan* (Live Picture Studio), offered painted photographs.[87] This indicates that Japanese commercial studios in Korea were using Yokohama-style techniques. One can safely conclude that these techniques were utilized in Chosŏn's *p'ungsog yŏpsŏ* (folklore postcards). The subject matter of Chosŏn's folklore postcards is wide ranging and includes landscape, architecture, villages, people, jobs, fortresses, towns, and nature. Some contained controversial images with gendered and racialized representations of Korea and its people.

[84] Eleanor Hight, "The many lives of Beato's 'beauties'" in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, Routledge (2002), pp. 126-158. Hight argues that Beato's photographs of young Japanese girls were not merely representations of the exotic gaze of the Western male, but sites of many intersecting gazes, such as the sexual gaze of Japanese males and the politico-economic gaze of the Meiji State.

[85] *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Imperial Capital News) on December 6, 1901.

[86] Six photo studios were run by Japanese photographers within the capital in 1901. Choi In-jin lists them as Kikuta Studio (菊田寫眞館), Iwata Studio (岩田寫眞館), Tanaka Studio (田中寫眞館), Murakami Tensin Studio (村上天寫眞館), Keijo Studio (京城寫眞館), and Horiuchi Studio (堀□寫眞館); p. 218.

[87] *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (Imperial Capital News), January 7, 1902. Saeng'yŏngkwan was started by Murakami Kojiro, who came to Chosŏn as a journalist to cover the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95. He opened a studio in 1894. See Lee Kyung-min, *Kyŏngsŏng Caught in Photographs*, p. 86.

There were other popular forms of visual communication devices, such as trade cards and advertising cards. Commercial companies often adopted them as marketing tools since these items could help boost business. In conjunction with these items, one interesting image appeared in an advertising postcard produced by Singer Co, the American sewing machine company that was expanding its international market in Europe, Africa, and Asia. For the Korean market they produced an advertisement card (Figure 1.12, circa 1905) that depicted a traditionally dressed Korean couple. The woman in this image sits at the sewing machine while the man, presumably her husband, stands next to her. This couple supposedly conveyed an enlightened modern couple in which the husband helps his wife with domestic chores while they together control the Western machine. Considering the strict Confucian norms that distinguished men's responsibilities from those of women, this card must have presented a radical and even awkward change to many still-patriarchal consumers when it was produced around 1905. However, the existence of a man in the image was necessary because in Korea Western technology as a symbol of modernization was regarded as appropriated first and foremost by male intellectuals. Whether intended or not, the visual presentation of such a new couple could spur the collapse of the traditional gender division. For Korean consumers the sewing machine was an attractive modern medium that united a husband and a wife around modern technology beyond Confucianism.

Singer Co. promoted itself within the domestic market as a liberal modernizer and civilizer for less-civilized, less-modern customers in other countries, and conveyed the message that they were achieving this sacred mission through spreading advanced American products. However, in their new markets outside their home country, Singer carefully considered the local culture in creating their advertising cards. The Korean postcard can be

contrasted to a Japanese postcard in the same set, in which a Japanese woman is sewing a Western-style suit (Figure 1.13). Her project is neither for her husband nor for domestic use, but for export. She was serving as part of the country's manufacturing industry, sewing presumably for a white man. The visual image catches the subtle ambivalence and complexity that crisscrossed the issues of gender and society across cultural lines.[88]

Scholar Mona Domosh has written about early marketing histories of American international companies, and argues that these companies adopted innovative marketing strategies in countries in which the United States engaged in commercial expansion. Although they were not completely exempt from criticism of imperialist intrusion to local markets and cultures, or the arrogance of the pompous civilizer, the visual and textual messages often complicated the racial lines of civilization and at times contradicted the hierarchy of civilization. These messages even hint at the possibility of "Others" becoming "white" through their desire and consumption of Western products. Domosh sees these marketing visuals as developed for foreign markets but also circulated widely within the United States, presenting the "narrative of imperial progress" that these companies were making in the world. At the same time, they suggest alternative ways of understanding and seeing Otherness.[89]

These modern visual devices, either three-dimensional or two-dimensional, participated in constructing a generation of new observers of the period in both the

[88] Mona Domosh, *American Commodities in an Age of Empire*, Routledge (2006), p. 74.

[89] Ibid., p. 92. Domosh makes it clear that this does not mean that "Singer Co. was promoting women's rights in the United States or was working to challenge the dominant views of a fixed racial hierarchy. However, its very practical economic view of the world's potential consumers, driven by its need for increased profits and combined with the evolutionary notion of continuous change that was integral to the discourse of civilization—that is, that people's subjectivities could change through time—created a corporate world view of malleable identities, applicable to other races and both sexes." Domosh describes this mode of imperialism as "informal imperialism" or "commercial empire."

“civilized” and “civilizing” world. In so doing, they created imaginary geographical terminals in the minds of people around the world along with formal geography.

Conclusion

The geographical existence of the country was long known to outside world, but its interior—land and people—had not been adequately viewed, visualized or understood until the late nineteenth century when photography was introduced in mid-nineteenth century. The early photography of Korea provides a case of racial and anthropological renderings of the Western or imperial views while its documentary value as historical archives has been suppressed. However, the definition of the “modern” stipulates the nature of the modern image world, and within the definition a notion of singular modernity is forcefully defied in today’s scholarship. The issues of modernity in non-Western and once-colonized countries demands the possibilities of approaching past archives in a way free from the Eurocentered notion of modernity and the discursive context it was put in for several decades. Recent scholarship has opened them up to examine the topics of non-Western countries from their own local advantage and allow better understanding of their local experiences. This chapter examined the voices, discourses, and views that were ambiguous and unsuitable, and thus marginalized and made invisible within the master narrative system. Interestingly, these were not limited only to native views and voices.

The Opening was conducive to Korea’s full exposure to Western science and technology. Along with the influx of Western goods, people, and technology, a generation of new observers and consumers emerged and translocal knowledge and technologies took effect in the local culture. The exposure to Western science and technology transformed

Chosŏn's historical mandates as well as the nature of the technology within local historical contexts, a subject that is examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

The Modern Image World: Korean Experiences

What is real is not just the material item but also the discursive system of which the image it bears is part. It is to the reality not of the past, but of present meanings and of changing discursive systems that we must therefore turn our attention.

John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 1993

This chapter examines the formation of Korea's modern visual world of the late nineteenth century as a synchronistic product of social changes from the two preceding centuries, and Koreans' interactions with Western ideas and visual technology after the opening. The historical developments of these two issues are explored as factors that defined Korea's modern visual world of which early photography was part. The chapter analyzes the social and cultural demographic changes that brought about a new generation of observers, who emerged from eighteenth-century visual and intellectual traditions and became conspicuous and responsive to modern visual practices in nineteenth-century Chosŏn.

Since their introduction, the camera and photography were viewed with suspicion for various reasons. However, that local suspicion was often translated as a consequence of ignorance and a source of violence. This chapter specifically revisits the totalizing evaluation of Koreans directly related to photography, and examines the notions of xenophobia and superstition embedded in the discourse of the early history of photography through two case studies of controversial historical episodes--the Studio Riots of 1884 and

the Baby Riots of 1888.

The Emergence of New Observers of Modern Visuals

Scholars of historical photography have noted that before the appearance of photography in mid-nineteenth century Europe, significant changes in the perception of people and social structure were already underway in the European world. This reflected changes in industrial technology and urbanization that demanded a new cultural form of visual expressions. In Korea the changes and the dismantling of the social status system began to develop as early as the seventeenth century. In particular, cultural and artistic developments such as the emergence of realistic renderings of *Chinkyŏng sansu* (true-view landscape paintings) and the popularity of the nativist genre of paintings in the eighteenth century saw a new generation of Koreans who were educated, professional, wealthy, and attracted to the new forms of consumption and visuals.

Scholar Jonathan Crary points out that "during the first few decades of the nineteenth century a new kind of observer took shape in Europe radically different from the type of observer dominant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[90] The new trend involved unrivaled mobility and exchangeability that allowed a new valuation of visual experience.[91] Similar to what had occurred in Europe, many historical changes observed prior to the 1876 opening in Korea were heralded by social changes in the preceding period in Korea. More

[90] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), p. 4.

[91] In Crary's use of the term, the "observer," unlike the "spectator," is a passive onlooker in the Latin root. It refers to people embedded in a system of conventions and limitations but who actively sees within a prescribed set of possibilities; pp. 5-14.

fundamental changes had started to develop as early as the seventeenth century in the social status system and the country's eighteenth-century visual tradition. These changes dictated how Chosŏn's distinctive experiences in the second half of the nineteenth century came about, with a new class of social participants who were fervent explorers of modern visuals.

The Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) was a Confucian society based on a social hierarchy that largely consisted of four classes—*yangban* (scholar-officials), *chung'in* (secondary class), *sangmin* (commoners), and *ch'ŏnmin* (slaves). *Yangban*, literally meaning "two rows" in reflection of the positions of civil and military officials in their audience with kings, consisted of meritorious elites who enjoyed political positions and possession of large agricultural estates. A hereditary monarch and his aides, the *yangban* bureaucrats whom he appointed to divergent administrative posts following their successful performance in the national examination, ruled the country together. However, the constant struggle for balance of power between the two power sources was unavoidable. As many historians have argued, dynastic political games within this tension played a decisive role in maintaining a political balance and prosperity for the over-five-hundred years of Chosŏn's history.

Chung'in was a common designation for a secondary class group made up of those who were more prestigious than commoners but less than *yangban* in their vocations. People in this class served in a wide range of jobs, such as aides to local magistrates, translators, medical doctors and pharmacists, technicians, accountants, and low-class military officers, positions that were often inherited. The majority of s*angmin* were peasants, but the class also included merchants and artisans. At the very bottom of the social structure were slaves, both public and private, as well as a smaller group of untouchables such as butchers, courtesans, shamans, and entertainers.

In principle, Chosŏn society allowed social mobility within its social class system: *chung'in* and *sangmin* could attain the nobility of *yangban* through meritorious state exams. However, how realistic and achievable this upgrade was in reality can be another question. Historians such as Lee Ki-baek even argue that Chosŏn's hierarchy system never operated in a rigid manner. According to them, the increase in agricultural productivity and commercial activities after the two foreign invasions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially assisted by the circulation of coins,[92] accelerated the social changes with the rise of new classes and the decline of the traditional ruling elite class. Consequently, commoner landlords emerged with wealth and power, and the *yangbans* were relegated from government officers to peasant-farmers. Social changes of this kind portended the social upheaval that the country experienced in the following century.

Many agree that the Chosŏn dynasty enjoyed its highest point in art, culture, and intellectual life in the eighteenth century during the reigns of kings Yŏngjo (r. 1724-1776) and Chŏngjo (r. 1776-1800). The development of the nativist artistic genre during this period has significant implications in the discourses of photographic acceptance and dissemination. As a Confucian state, Chosŏn had retained a strong literati painting tradition in which painting became a useful tool for philosophy through the drawing of idealized scenes rather than the depiction of actual scenes in reality. In contrast, eighteenth-century Korea witnessed a realist trend in painting, specifically landscape painting. This renovation derived from Korea's rediscovery of its own identity.

This transformation occurred in the aftermath of the two transnational wars in Chosŏn in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that reshaped the order of East

[92] After the 1678 minting of the copper coins known as *sangp'yŏng t'ongbo* (ever-constant treasure), large quantities of coins continued to be issued. By the end of the seventeenth century coins were in use throughout the country. *Korea Old and New: A History* edited by Carter Eckert and Lee Ki-baik (1991), p. 230.

Asia.[93] Over the duration of the Imjin War (1592-1598), Japan's power drastically ebbed upon Toyotomi Hideyoshi's death, which led the country into war and eventually the emergence of the Tokugawa bakuhu. On the continent, the Ming dynasty collapsed partly because it exhausted resources in the Imjin War but received no military support from Chosŏn following the Qing's defeat of Chosŏn in 1637. With the collapse of the Ming and the rise of the Qing, Chosŏn intellectuals were disturbed by the fact that China was invaded by the "barbarian" Manchus. Diplomatically, the invasion of Manchus (1636-1637) and its rise as Qing China signaled the beginning of Chosŏn's reprobation of Qing China.

Aesthetically, Chosŏn intellectuals began to look for a new form of artistic expression because the idealized landscapes prescribed in Chinese manuals no longer existed as a model for them to emulate. They started to look at the natural surroundings of their country and depict them as seen by their own eyes. Based on a sense of the self as an "imagined community"[94] and an inner search for national subjects as the only legitimate torchbearer of Confucian tradition, the Chosŏn dynasty began to experience strong tendencies toward Koreanization in artistic expression.[95]

This new artistic movement was led by both *yangban* literati and *chungin* painters.

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[93] The foreign invasions occurred two centuries after the country's foundation and marked a turning point in the history of Chosŏn. To consolidate society in the aftermath of the wars, Chosŏn society experienced remarkable changes, especially those driven by agricultural renovation, urbanization, commercialization, and industrialization. This led to gradual changes in social demographics. For example, the advancement of agricultural technology saw the rise of production of not only main crops, but also special commercial products such as ginseng, tobacco, and cotton. With increased agricultural productivity, the private economy grew in scale both domestically and with China and Japan. Chosŏn also took part in commercialization with regional merchants who emerged in international trade, such as Ŭiju merchants with Chinese silver, the Kaesŏng merchants with their famous ginseng products, and the southern Tongrae merchants with Japanese copper. *Korea Old and New: A History*, p. 162.

[94] Benedict Anderson*, The Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991).

[95] Ahn Hwi-joon, "The origin and development of landscape painting in Korea," *Arts of Korea* published by Metropolitan Museum of Art (1998), pp. 323.

Scholar-painters led by Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759) turned to a characteristically Korean style of landscape painting, the so-called "Chingyŏng sansu painting" (true-view landscape painting), based on real locations and moving away from a Chinese style of the idealized general landscape.[96] Chŏng Sŏn was born into a fallen *yangban* family and became a court painter, a profession typically taken by *chung'in*s, because of his artistic talent and also his poverty. His famous paintings "Inwang chesaekto" (Storm Lifting Over Inwang Mountain) and "Kŭmgang chŏndo" (The Diamond Mountains) exhibit his unique composition and forceful brushstrokes. Reaching its peak in the eighteenth century, this genre is known for depicting the beauty of the actual Korean countryside[97] (Figure 2.1). This realistic trend was also found in portrait paintings, particularly those by Yun Du-sŏ (1668-1715) and Kang Se-hwang (1713-1719) (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). These paintings indicate that the conventional ritualistic functions of portrait painting had also undergone changes.

Genre painting also flourished during this period. Kim Hong-do and Sin Yun-bok were the most famed masters. As court painters, they depicted the banal and reveling scenes from the everyday life of ordinary people who had never before been the object of artistic expression and production. Kim Hong-do was famous for the themes of the workaday life of people in the fields, harvest, labor, and community events, as seen in "Mu'ak" (Dancer with Musicians) and "Ssirŭm" (Wrestling). In contrast, Sin Yun-bok's works touched on the mores of townspeople, mainly women as shown in "Mi'into" (A Beauty) (Figures 2.4 and

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[96] Art historians have criticized the discourse of *chinkyŏng sansu* as having been developed as a counterdiscourse to the dominating colonial theory of Chosŏn's lack of creativity. For example, to prove her theory art historian Park Eun-soon argues that Choi Wan-su, the main architect of the *chinkyŏng sansu* theory, had to drastically limit not only the diverse social and cultural dynamics of the eighteenth century, but also the artistic world of Chŏng Sŏn by providing only related proofs. See Park Eun-soon, "A critical review on research on *chinkyŏng* landscape paintings" (2006).

[97] Yoo Ga-hyun and Sung Jong-sang, "Research on Cultural Scenic Landscape in Chinkyŏng Sansuhwa: Centering around Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn's Works," *Han'guk chogyŏngakhoeji*, Vol. 37 No.1 (April 2009), pp. 87-99.

2.5). Regarding the notable turn of subject matter in artistic expression during this period, art historian Chŏng Byŏng-mo describes how the topics of genre painting drastically expanded to embrace expressions of repressed sexuality, emotions, gender and concubinage, corrupt religion and status conflicts, and public culture and arts, which were mostly shared by the lower classes . He argues that they were not produced simply for pleasure but as indicators of the modern spirit.[98]

Genre painting's tradition of depicting the lives of commoners continued into the next generation of genre painters such as Kim Jun-gŭn (under the penname of Kisan). He actively responded to foreign visitors' demand for images of Korea in the late nineteenth century. Kim was "an export-painter" who successfully sold his paintings at trade ports, Pusan in the 1880s and later Wonsan in the 1890s. Many foreigners who wrote about and photographed Korea during this period bought his paintings. Kim's paintings were popular and well appreciated by foreign clients, notably James S. Gale who hired Kim to draw indigenized images for his Korean translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Ch'ŏllo yŏkchŏng). German businessman H. C. Myers bought one hundred paintings by Kim and exhibited them in the Ethnographic Museum in Hamburg, Germany, in 1895. This marked the first solo exhibition by a Korean artist in the Western world.[99] Unfortunately, little is known about Kim's personal life beyond his large number of paintings now housed in many museums in Europe and America.[100] Kim's paintings and the eighteenth-century genre

[98] Chŏng Byung-mo, "A Comparative Study on the Genre Paintings of the late Chosŏn period and the Ukiyoe of the Edo Period," *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndae misulsahak,* Vol.7 (1999), pp. 119-156.

[99] Boudewijin Walraven. "Korean Genre Paintings in the Netherlands and around the World." *Traditional Korean Painting*. YBM Sisa Publishers (1983), pp. 67-81.

[100] There are about over a dozen museums outside Korea that hold Kisan paintings, and nearly 1,000 Kisan paintings have been identified to date.

paintings show distinct continuity and affinity in subject matter that stretch even to a multitude of photographic images taken by foreigners, implying some mutual influence and construction between the native and the foreign.

The first pioneers of new visual forms in Chosŏn were the *sirhak* (practical learning) intellectuals. Studying Western technology and science through books and materials from China, *sirhak* intellectuals inspired the ideas of the opening and modernization. In his book *History of Photography in Korea,* Choi In-jin introduces some of the *sirhak* intellectuals as the first explorers of the idea of *camera obscura*. Well-known *sirhak* scholar Chŏng Yak-yong (1762-1836) first coined the term *ch'lsil paryŏansil* (lens in dark room) to denote the concept of the *camera obscura*, and Lee Kyu-gyŏng (1788-1856) and Choi Han-ki (1803-1879) used the concept to explain their scientific ideas.[101] Some of them actually tried to build darkrooms and experimented with the *camera obscura*. Among them, Lee Ki-yang (1744-1802) was known as a harbinger who had drawn portrait paintings from the images projected through the *camera obscura*. Unfortunately his paintings are no longer available.

In the eighteenth century the demand for portrait paintings in the midst of social changes saw artistic expressions becoming increasingly naturalistic and realistic. Lee Myŏng-ki (fl. 17??) is believed to have successfully integrated this trend into his work and perfected the realistic style in the eighteenth century. Scholar Lee T'ae-ho has recently claimed that Lee Myŏng -ki drew some of the portrait paintings from the *camera obscura* by projecting objects through a dark chamber against sunlight to get a more precise vision.[102]

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[101] Choi In-jin, *History of Photography in Korea, 1631-1945*, p. 40.

[102] Chŏng Yak-yong explained *camera obscura* with his theory of *ch'ilsilgwanhwasŏl* (a theory of drawing a picture by looking through a darkened box) in his book *The Collected Works of Yŏyudang* and mentions that a portrait was drawn off the *camera obscura* at half the size of the actual sitter. Lee T'ae-ho argues that the painter here must have been Lee Myŏng-ki and the sitter was Yu On-ho. For further discussion see Lee T'ae-

Based on an analysis of unique brush strokes, spatial division, and unprecedented details that were not possible otherwise, Lee T'ae-ho suggests that some among his about ten portrait paintings extant today, such as "Portrait of Yu On-ho" (1787) and "Portrait of Sŏ Jik-su" (1796), are examples demonstrating the use of perspective through the *camera obscura*.

Lee T'ae-ho also introduces another uniquely styled painting by the painter, "Portraits of the Three Brothers in the Cho Family," which was drawn "to commemorate the success of all three brothers in the state examination." "The three brothers," he continues, "are seated in a triangle, with the eldest in the middle and the two younger ones on either side"[103] (Figure 2.6). Lee states that their poses are reminiscent of photographs taken in photography studios in present day. This was one of the early signs that figure paintings had gone through some transformation, from exclusively formal and ritualistic to private and commemoratory. Lee Myŏng-ki's quest for a more objective and natural mode in paintings in eighteenth-century Chosŏn may not be very different from early photographers' preoccupation with realistic visions in Europe during the same period. Both tried to achieve realistic visions of their own as demanded by their own historical times.

In Confucian ideology commerce and trade were viewed as improper occupations for scholars. As a result, Chosŏn *yangban* were shunned from involvement in commercial activities, to their financial detriment. In contrast, middle-class people had increasingly more material access through trading and commercial activities, and gained advantageous positions economically and socially. These social dynamics continued to exert an important influence in the society after the opening. They were manifested in very conspicuous ways

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ho "The changes of portrait paintings in the eighteenth century and the *camera obscura*." *Chosŏn Portrait Paintings Revisited* (a conference proceeding, 2007).

[103] Lee T'ae-ho, "Portrait Paintings in the Joseon Dynasty: With a Focus on Their Style of Expression and Pursuit of Realism," *Tasanhak*, Vol.45. No. 2 (summer, 2005) pp. 107-150.

through Kojong's reform initiatives and, in particular, photography-related projects.

Historian Kyung Moon Hwang insists that Korea's path to modernity was paved largely by individuals who embraced intellectual and technological influences from overseas, and that the growth of this "secondary-status group," in his term, eventually contributed to Korea's transition to capitalism. If this view is correct, the *chung'in* class largely overlapped with a group of these individuals. During this period of social agitation, the *chung'in*, who were confined to "trivial mundane jobs," rose to play leading roles in various fields in society.[104] They were educated through Chinese classics and worked within the bureaucratic system. They could assume new roles with relative ease and took government positions as policy writers, reformists, or government-sponsored trainees sent to overseas to learn new knowledge and technology. Translators were necessary to accompany emissaries overseas, and could become medical doctors in modern medicine, schoolteachers, newspaper writers, engineers, or business owners. In other words, their mundane jobs enabled them to be well versed in and adeptly appropriate the changes of the time. Many read books by scholars from the *sirhak* (practical learning) party, an intellectual movement against neo-Confucian orthodoxy. These very ambitious minds contributed to the development of the Practical Learning.

The official abolishment of the status system was announced during the Kabo reforms in 1895. Although vanquished by this impressive political measure, status restrictions between the *yangban* and the secondary class represented by *chung'in* had been lifted in the 1880s by King Kojong. This reform allowed *yangban* sons to enter technical professions, which had previously been held exclusively by *chung'in* and despised by the

[104] Kyung Moon Hwang, *Beyond Birth: Social Status in the Emergence of Modern Korea*, pp. 339-341.

yangban literati as trivial and mundane jobs.[105] As a result, many sons of the *yangban* class made downward choices and were admitted to "professional" schools to become translators, medical doctors, teachers, and technical experts, including photographers. In fact, two of the three pioneers of Korean photography, Kim Yong-won (1842-?) and Ji Un-yŏng (1852-1935), who were sent on government-sponsored overseas training, were from the *chung'in* class while the last, Hwang Ch'ŏl (1864-1930), was a *yangban* literati who had once been appointed as the magistrate of the County of P'och'ŏn after serving as a private tutor for one of the royal princes. Social changes coupled with modern developments clearly undermined the dominant social system.

Public Animosity toward the Camera

The social and cultural changes and challenges that occurred during Korea's encounter with modernity and the West in the late nineteenth century were massive and unprecedented. They penetrated the daily lives of people, and their responses were mixed and complex, ranging from enthusiastic openness to outright rejection. Indeed, many suffered while others found new opportunities to rise up in the society.

Empirically and epistemologically, photography's representation of the period, accentuated the differences and distinctions. Distrust and suspicion of photography as well as desire and fantasy thus registered not only on the photographic image itself, but also in the stories and information or rumors surrounding it. In that sense, the two public riots in the

[105] Foreign language education was popular with *yangban*. In 1883 the *Tongnumhak* was established as a modern educational institution for English, Japanese, and arithmetic, and in 1886 became the Yugyŏng kongwŏn, or the Royal College of English. The children of both *yangban* and *chungin* attended the Yugyŏng kongwŏn. Its curriculum included foreign languages, math, the natural and physical sciences, geography, history, political science, international law, and economics. The students were required to pass a final test after three years and were given government positions upon graduation. In 1894 the school graduated 112 students, mostly children of high-ranking officials. See Leighanne Kinberly Yuh's *Education, the Struggle for Power, and Identity Formation in Korea, 1876-1910* (Ph.D. dissertation, 2008), pp. 88-90.

1880s related to the camera and photography demonstrated a common and easy way to discuss the Korean people unless the multiple layers of the discourse formation over a span of a century were examined more closely. This section analyzes the two riots to explain the complexity of the changes and challenges that the Korean people faced in this period.

Within discourses on and experience of photography of this period, the idea of foreignness was innate, ubiquitous and intense. The camera gaze was not simultaneously reciprocal because cameras were mostly possessed by foreigners. The unbalanced gaze stemming from the divide of technological possession between the gazer and the gazed was linked to the more complex and fundamental inequality and frustration that often existed outside photography. Thus the problem often lay outside Koreans' relationship with the foreigners who possessed the technology. Nonetheless, camera technology was often associated with strong antipathy against foreign intervention, and spurred grave distrust and even disturbances among the Korean public during this period. As is widely known, the interpretation of photography as a source of supernatural power was not unique to Korea; stories of animosity as well as of magic and cures involving the camera and photography were observed in most countries, including Europe and America.[106] Notwithstanding this commonality, the way these episodes unfolded historically was uniquely local. In Korea photography was often at the center of public upheaval against foreigners.

[106] The stories of magic and superstition related to photography were actually rampant around the world and not limited to negative and destructive rumors. As a method of integrating and expanding the market, photographers in America often created a collaborative mode of business arrangement with other businesses. For recent research see Tanya Sheehan's inquiry into the early history of relationship between medicine and photography in nineteenth-century Philadelphia. She argues that photographers were invited into the process of healing because people believed in the representational power of magic in their photographic portrait when depicted as healthy and strong. Photographers thus participated in constructing fair skinned, healthy bodies free of blemish or injury for patients. *Doctored: The Medicine of Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (2011).

Two widely known incidents involving cameras and public mobs occurred in the middle of the turbulence in the 1880s. They were known as the photo studio attacks during the Kapsin Coup in 1884 and the Baby Riots of 1888. In the first incident, a Japanese-run photo studio was attacked by enraged Koreans who singled out the Japanese as the masterminds of the coup. In the following event Koreans rioted against foreigners after a series of tragic deaths of Korean children. Photography and camera were central to both incidents. However, no actual photographs surfaced or were in actual circulation in either event. It was believed that the violence in both events was triggered by superstitious rumors targeting foreign communities that possessed cameras and photographs. Public ignorance of photographic technology may have been an issue in both incidents, yet it is not clear to what extent ignorance of technology was the driving force that pushed rumors into acts of violence. Furthermore, this cannot fully explain the repercussions of the incidents, especially because of the lack of reliable local sources.

Although these incidents have been depicted as irrational, some evidence hints that these incidents occurred not because people in the capital had blindly reacted to imaginary threats of modern technology; rather, they may have taken action out of their own interests and concerns. It is also crucial to note that the widely circulated stories could have been fabricated to a great extent over a prolonged period of time, even after the incidents. The following chart shows that though they actually occurred in different historical and social settings four years apart, the two incidents were framed within similar visual discourses, which may further buttress this claim:

	Studio Riots of 1884	Baby Riots of 1888
Triggered by	Kapsin Coup (political)	A foreigner’s photo taking and mysterious deaths of Korean girls

		(social)
Rumors involved	Cameras taking human spirits away	Foreigners making photos out of the eyeballs of Korean children
Danger posed (real or imagined)	Royal family, state sovereignty (real)	Individual Korean homes with children (imaginary)
Target of public violence (real or imagined)	Enlightenment Party members, facilities related to Enlightenment Party members and Japanese, including photo studios in downtown Seoul (real)	Westerners and Japanese (real or imaginary)
Geographical location of incidents	Center of the capital	Outside the capital→ throughout the capital
Foreign countries involved	Japan and China	Americans→all Westerners or foreigners
Settlement	International conventions	Entering of Foreign Fleets; King's edict

Over a decade later, a similar incident called the "streetcar riots" occurred, involving the modern technology of a streetcar. The public rioted after allegedly believing that the electric wires of the streetcars killed a boy because it interrupted the organic flow of energy in town. In an analysis of the incident under the frame of agency and exploitation, Min Suh Son contends that "superstition itself was not antithetical to modernization. Rather, the act of identifying superstition was an act of othering that played an important role in the nineteenth century civilizing process" in the Western world. He further argues that "belief in superstitions continued to exist in modern societies, not always in conflict but often in great harmony or at the very least ambiguity, within a rational and scientific worldview."[107] Son's analysis sheds some light on rationalizing the irrational rumors and beliefs in the public

[107] Min Suh Son, p. 127.

space that surrounded early photography in Korea, while it differs in that the process of othering occurred within, not outside, the country.

The Studio Riots

The year 1876 marked a radical departure in Korea's history of modernization. King Kojong signed the Treaty of Kanghwa that granted Japan extraterritorial privileges in Korea and demanded that the Chosŏn court open three trade ports to the Japanese. Treaties with other countries followed, and Western civilization entered the country through various channels. His own administration and military units were also revamped by Chosŏn's emulation of modern systems. This included sending Korean envoys on study missions abroad, and appointing foreign officers to various government posts.[108] The influx of Western technology and goods may have provided the means to "enrich the country and strengthen the army"; however, at the same time it opened the country to dangers and threats to the Korean lifestyle and sovereignty.

Despite all the measures taken to strengthen the country, Kojong's reform efforts in the early 1880s were not effective or well understood by the public.[109] Intertwined with complex domestic power struggles, two failed political disturbances—the Military Mutiny in 1882 and the Kapsin Coup in 1884--brought about Qing China's intervention in Korean

[108] Between 1882 and 1904 the Chosŏn government hired about 340 foreign employees to serve as advisors, administrators, technicians, educators, and military trainers to modernize its governmental system. Japanese were the most hired (104), followed by Americans (53), Russians (45), British (42), and French (37). Only eleven Chinese worked in the Chosŏn government. Around 63 percent of them were nationals from either Europe or the United States. The most well known include P. von Möllendorff (1882-1885, German), McLeavy Brown (1893-1905, British), O. N. Denny (1886-1890, U.S.), and W. F. Sans (1899-1904, U.S.). Kim Hyun-sook, "Yellow-haired Westerners become government employees of Chosŏn" in *The Modern: Encounter with the Strangers,* Kwangch'ang Publishing (2013).

[109] *Korea, Old and New: A History*, pp. 201-202.

politics, which consequently induced Japan to compete with China in Korea. Qing China and Japan set up commercial operations within Korea and competed over various benefits. As changes became more visible, struggles and conflicts between the native and the foreign increased and added anxiety to the already troubled domestic politics.

In the 1880s the notion of "*kaehwa sasang*" (enlightenment thought) exerted a powerful influence on *yangban* officialdom, bringing reaction and resistance.[110] Responses varied on how to approach enlightenment and civilization. For example, King Kojong was a gradualist who believed that Korea should preserve its traditional values while mastering the Western technology, a concept known as "Eastern ways and Western tools." On the other side, a group of ambitious young men led by Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yŏng-hyo, Sŏ Kwang-bŏm, and Hong Yŏng-sik, members of the Enlightenment Party, were frustrated by the speed of progress in the country's modernization. They sought to immediately abolish the social status system, reform political establishments by emulating Japan's Meiji Restoration, and achieve genuine national independence for Korea by ending China's interference in Korean affairs.

The 1884 Kapsin Coup was a major event carried out by these frustrated young radicals. Believing that they were supported by the Japanese legation to initiate radical changes, they attempted a coup to eliminate the pro-Chinese Min clan. This occurred during the opening ceremony of the country's first postal office. However, the coup enjoyed a mere three-day-ascendancy, and ironically ended up bringing more Chinese influence to Korea. The failed coup resulted in a setback for the country's reform efforts since many liberal

[110] Ibid., p. 208.

reformers involved in the incident were either killed or exiled.[111] Over the following ten years Chinese meddling in Korean affairs "limited Korea's contact with the outside world, hindered its reform efforts, weakened the position of Korean reformers, and in general contributed to the country's lack of preparedness for the challenges to its sovereignty."[112]

The Korean public saw the coup as the result of a conspiracy with Japan. Public anger boiled up at the news of the coup because they believed that the state's sovereignty had been endangered by the impurity of Japan-backed young reformers who held political power. At the height of their anger the public stormed the houses of Enlightenment Party members. Predictably, their anger was directed next to Japanese establishments, such as the military base, shops, and people. The country's new modern facilities operated by party members, such as Pangmun'guk[113] (Office of Culture and Information), were also in danger. The incident caused the temporary discontinuation of the *Hansŏng sunbo*, a thrice-monthly gazette that was the country's first modern newspaper, since the newspaper was started by coup member Pak Yŏng-hyo on the advice from a Japanese authority, Inoue Gakukoro. A historical narration vividly attests to the threat the Japanese experienced:

> That night, the Japanese legation was very disorderly. Japanese residents, both businessmen and legation workers, residing in different parts around the town rushed

[111] "Japan proposed a simultaneous withdrawal of Chinese and Japanese troops from the peninsula. Japan's leading statesman, Ito Hirobumi, went to China to negotiate the matter with his Chinese counterpart, Li Huang-chang and the resulting Convention of Tientsin was signed on April 18, 1885. Although the Convention removed the foreign troops from Korean soil, China intensified its intervention by appointing Yuan Shih-k'ai as Director-General Resident in Korea of Diplomatic and Commercial Relations and assigned him the mission of preventing any future political disturbance or diplomatic development harmful to Chinese interests." *Korea Old and New: A History*, pp. 210-212.

[112] Michael Seth, *A History of Korea*, p. 242.

[113] Pangmun'guk was first established in August 1883 to print the *Hansŏng sunbo*, the nation's first newspaper, that was published three times a month. Following a fire in 1884, it was relocated and reopened in 1885 as a weekly gazette, the *Hansŏng jubo*. Due to growing deficits, it was incorporated into Tongli Kyosŏp Tongsang Amun (the Office for Management of Foreign Affairs) in July 1888.

> into the legation for safety after being chased by Chinese soldiers and Koreans. . . . the Japanese military camp on the hills of Namsan was fired too.[114]

Hwang Hyŏn (1855-1910), a Confucian intellectual, wrote about the events and described the public raid on Japanese legation: "Townspeople were outraged about the fact that the Japanese conspired with the Enlightenment Party members, so they set fire to their embassy and killed whatever Japanese they ran into." By the time the mob stormed the legation the Japanese ambassadors Takejoe and Pak Yŏng-hyo had already fled the capital to Inchŏn and taken a ferry to Japan. Instead of these men, the public found a huge wooden box with a sign "Taepyŏngkwan" (Box of Great Peace) in the legation. Hwang Hyŏn wrote that "the box was a container to carry Kojong to Japan." Finding no enemies in the legation, the mob needed other places to discharge their anger,[115] and rushed to Japanese-related facilities.

Around March 1884, there were at least four photo studios in downtown Seoul. Three were owned by Korean individuals, Kim Yong-wŏn (1842-1892), Ji Un-yŏng (1851-1935), and Hwang Ch'ŏl (1864-1930), and the last by a Japanese photographer, Honda Shunosuke.[116] Honda Shunosuke's photo studio became a public target during this turmoil. People rushed to his house/studio and destroyed his camera equipment. According to some

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[114] *Kyŏngsŏngbu Sa Vol. I* (History of Seoul) provides extensive details about what happened to Japanese residents and the Japanese legation. The list of victims during the incident includes the name of Honda Shunosuke; p. 552. The quote here is from the Chindan Hakhoe publication, but it seems that they referred to *Kyŏngsŏngbu Sa Vol. I* for details. Chindan Hakhoe, *History of Korea Vol. VI* (1965), p. 656.

[115] Hwang Hyŏn, *Maech'ŏn Yarok,* December 1884. This research used the translation in contemporary Korean, published by Sŏhaemunjip (2006).

[116] Terry Bennett, *Korea Caught in Time*, pp.16-17. According to Choi In-jin, Japanese photographers settled in Pusan as early as 1876 and some opened studios in Seoul around 1880. Kai Kunji opened his studio near Mt. Namsan in 1882 with the help of Kim Ok-kyun, the mastermind of Kapsin Coup. Kunji ran his studio for over twenty years in Korea, but no information is available regarding what happened to him during the Kapsin chaos.

secondary accounts, the three studios owned by Korean photographers were also raided and destroyed. Of the four, Honda Shunosuke's studio suffered the most serious damage during the raids. A report in *North China Herald* stated:

> The Japanese photographer was absent from home on business on the 6th, and was never seen afterwards. He was probably killed when trying to reach home. In the evening, some Chinese (not soldiers) broke into his house and his wife was raped by ten men. They were then going to kill the children, when another Chinaman came in, stopped them, and took them to their house. They were brought under a Chinese military escort and sent to the U.S. Legation the next morning. They are now in Japan.[117]

By this time photography was established in the country. Many intellectuals and government officials had experienced cameras in person within and outside the country. Acknowledging the utility of this new technology, the Chosŏn government sponsored the establishment of the first photo studio, Ch'waryŏng-guk (Bureau of Photography) run by Kim Yongwŏn, in 1883. In March 1884 Kojong invited Percival Lowell, an American diplomat and scientist, and Ji Unyŏng, a Korean photographer who was sent on a government mission to Japan to learn photography in 1881, to the court to take his first photographs (see chapter 4 for a discussion of Kojong's first portrait photographs). During his three-month stay in Chosŏn from March to May 1884, Lowell took many photographs to record the lives of the Korean people, and published the images in his book *Chosön: The Land of the Morning Calm: a Sketch of Korea*. In this book he wrote that he often chased after Korean people that he wanted to photograph and tenaciously persuaded them to sit for him.

[117] *The North China Herald*, January 14, 1885. The periodical was published weekly as an official journal for British consular notifications during China's encounter with Euro-Americans in Shanghai, a city at the forefront of developments in Chinese politics, culture, education, and the economy.

Lowell made important observations on the Korean people and their interaction with camera technology in his book. He stated that taking images of people on the streets was no problem at all. He confessed, however, that he ran into some problems when he wanted to take pictures of women. In one instance he chased after a woman in street who fled to her house. He tried to persuade the male members of her family to bring her out and sit for his camera. However, the Confucian-educated lady did not want to face a foreign male with a camera. He finally complained, "It was entirely a question of sex that had stood in our way. In Korea there is so far as I could judge from numerous instances no superstitious fear of being photographed such as exists in China where with the image it is believed is taken away a part of the personality."[118] Lowell's observations provide highly relevant information about the Korean people in downtown Seoul and their reactions to the camera in 1884. They reflect the fact that the people in downtown Seoul had been sufficiently exposed to camera technology by then, which was before the raids on the studios later that year. Lowell's firsthand account can serve to restrain researchers from extending groundless allegations and rethink the nature of the pubic violence on the photo studios.

The antagonism toward the Japanese studio can be traced back even before Honda opened his business in town. Since the country's opening, Japanese activities using cameras in Korea were quite conspicuous, especially in mapmaking. Their surveying activities around Korea looked either imperialistic or suspicious during this period. The Japanese surveyors and geographers participating in the Japanese military's projects used cameras. Koreans viewed their activities as cutting off or damaging the spirits of mountains, towns, and the nation.

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[118] Percival Lowell, *Chosön: The Land of the Morning Calm; a Sketch of Korea,* pp. 313-314.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Japanese Army, Japan published a series of maps of Chosŏn, most of which included advanced visual technology, photographic imagery taken from the field. Included in the series are "*Chosŏn jŏndo*" (Map of Chosŏn) (1875), "*tongaean Chosŏn-do*" (East Coast of Chosŏn) (1875), "*Chosŏn kangwadodo*" (Map of Chosŏn's Kanghwa Island) (1876), "*Kŏjedo mit hansando*" (Map of Kŏche Island and Hansan Island) (1876), and "*Chosŏn'guk Pusan-hang*" (Map of Pusan Port in Chosŏn) (1877).[119] Considering that maps are an indispensable source for military strategy and state resource management, Koreans viewed Japanese surveying activities around the country with suspicion.

The raids likely occurred because Koreans disliked Japanese intervention in Korean politics and their use of photography within the country, not out of superstition. It is important to understand this in the context of the Japanese mapping activity. In Japan the modern field of geology commenced with the establishment of the Tokyo Imperial University in 1876, the same year the trade treaty with Chosŏn Korea was signed. The university started to produce researchers such as Koto Bunjiro, a graduate of the first class of the Geology Department and an influential colonial mapmaker.[120] Even before the first geology graduates, the Japanese Army Ministry established an independent geographical survey bureau within the Imperial Army in 1878 and began to dispatch secret surveying teams to Chosŏn. These researchers and military officers conducted secretive expedition activities, like digging in the ground and measuring mountains and rivers with surveying

[119] Nam Yŏng-wu, *Ilcheŭi hanbando ch'ŭngyangch'imyaksa* (History of Japanese Invasion through Surveying of the Peninsula)," Pŏmmunsa Publishing (2011), pp. 26-27.

[120] Yajima Michiko, "Bunjiro Koto, the Father of Geology and Petrology in Japan (小藤 文次郎一日本の地質学・岩石学の父)," *Earth Science* (Chikyu Kagaku), 61 (2007), pp. 155-159.

equipment that included camera tripods. These activities likely provoked suspicions among villagers that could easily develop into an aggressive reaction from a dramatic catalyst.[121]

The nation's first photo studios had connections with Japan. For instance, the earliest photographers learned photography in Japan and one opened his studio with assistance from a Japanese friend. The studio buildings were even Japanese-style two-story houses. Accordingly, a combination of cameras and Japanese may have been viewed as a strong sign of Japanese meddling in Korea. The attack on Shunosuke's studio can thus be better understood once its primary motive is read as a consequence of Koreans' anti-Japanese feeling rather than Koreans' shamanistic misunderstanding of camera technology.

The public raids on the first studios run by fellow Koreans can also be explained in this context that all three photographers were exposed to Japanese photography to varying degrees. Notably, Kim Yong-wŏn opened his studio with direct Japanese assistance, Ji Un-yŏng studied photography in Japan, and Hwang Ch'ŏl made trips to Japan to purchase camera supplies. If the camera and photography had been the main cause of public anger, then the Korean photographers and other foreigners in possession of cameras would also have been the actual targets of the raids. The rioters allegedly targeted the three studios run by Korean photographers but no reliable cross-referencing sources exist, only somewhat unreliable secondary sources. The story of the pubic attack on Ji Un-yŏng's studio was reconstructed based on photography historian Choi In-jin's 1975 oral interview with Ji's son Ji Sŏng-ch'ae.[122] Hwang Ch'ŏl's story was included in *Ŏmun'gong chŏn'gi*_(A Biography of Minister Ŏmun), written by his son and published in 1954. Similarly, this book was based

[121] Nam Yŏng-wu, p. 27.

[122] Choi In-jin (1999), p. 124.

on Hwang's son's memory of his father's oral stories from several decades before and proved to have numerous inaccuracies. For instance, the description of the incident at Hwang's studio is a collage of the 1884 Kapsin Coup and the Child Kidnapping of 1888. Hwang's son wrote, "In October of the same year,[123] the Kapsin Coup occurred. The angry public rushed to my father's house and destroyed camera supplies and equipment. It was because of the rumor that photo-taking would reduce one's life span and foreigners made photographs with the eyeballs of the children they kidnapped."[124] Hwang's son likely compiled various stories he heard from his father or other sources to describe "the incident" in his father's biography. In case of Kim Yong-wŏn, no record confirms what had happened to his studio. Kim opened Ch'waryŏng-guk in 1883, but had to leave it when he was assigned to a new royal mission to Russia. He left the country before the Kapsin coup.

Due to the lack of reliable records, the stories about the first native photo studios were supplemented by oral histories and memoirs written decades later. In sum, there is not enough evidence to accept the contemporary account that Koreans mobbed all photo studios in town out of fear and ignorance regarding modern camera technology. The first studios of the nation may have been closed in a broader historical context following the Kapsin coup since it is true that, owing to its failure, the country's modernization efforts suffered severely. The Kapsin coup caused lasting damage, particularly to the country's official efforts to build a modern visual culture.

[123] This is also inaccurate since the Kapsin Coup occurred in December 1884.

[124] Record on the year of 1884 from *Ŏmun'gong Chŏn'gi*.

The Baby Riots

After the Opening, Chosŏn signed treaties with many countries. In the late 1880s dozens of foreign legations were concentrated around the present Chŏngdong area, creating the feeling of a miniature world.[125] Westerners with cameras in downtown streets were no longer a rarity. In the summer of 1888, however, the Korean public battled the foreigners following a rumor that Westerners kidnapped and killed Korean children to cook them into chemicals needed for cameras. Charles Chaillé-Long, a former captain of the U.S. Army and then Secretary of the U.S. legation, was at the center of the turbulence. In June 1888, Chaillé-Long lost a number of photographic negatives of Korean children he had taken days before. Shortly after, a girl's disfigured body was found in town. It was rumored that the girl was one of the children in Chaillé-Long's photographs.[126] The hysteria about the murder case escalated when another girl was also found dead a few days later. Both girls were alleged to have been photographed by Chaillé-Long, and a rumor connecting the Western camera and the killing of Korean children was formed: Westerners kidnapped children to use their eyeballs for solutions needed for their cameras.

There were serious repercussions following the murders. It is known that the natives' anger toward foreigners was directed at foreign legations, residential areas, schools with foreign teachers, and missionary facilities such as orphanages. However, it is impossible to know how widespread the rumor was and whether or not Koreans' reactions were directly

[125] Hayashi Takeichi (林武一) worked at the Japanese legation in Chosŏn between 1888 to 1891, and identified the total number of foreigners residing in Seoul as 1,268. *Chosŏn'annae* (朝鮮案□, the guide to Chosŏn) (1891), pp. 9-11. From his experience as a Japanese consul in Chosŏn and an amateur photographer, Hayashi posthumously published a photo catalog, *Chosŏn'guk chin'gyŏng* (朝鮮國眞景, the true view of Chosŏn), in 1892. In the year of 1886, direct foreign Korean trade including imports and exports was recorded as $2,978,410; in ten years that total jumped to $11,260,024. Isabella Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors* (1898), p. 464.

[126] Charles Chaillé-Long, *My Life in Four Continents* (1912), p. 349.

tied to the incidents. It is also unclear how the rumor developed and increased the problems. Chaillé-Long, who was at the center of the rumor, was terrified. He recalled:

> The capital was soon in a ferment, and the missionary compounds were surrounded by excited and riotous populace. Telegrams were sent to Chemulpo by the United States and French Legations, asking commandants of vessels of war in port to send a relief dispatchment. There being no response, it was concluded that the wire had been cut or the message intercepted. I thereupon mounted a fleet horse, accompanied by two Corean guards, and left Seoul before sunrise.[127]

The tension grew to the point that the U.S. Navy dispatched sailors and marines to protect American missionaries. The Chosŏn court protested this military intervention, and had to make an announcement to subdue the uproar:

> Recent rumors about child kidnapping in many villages claim that foreigners buy Corean children to boil and eat. It is heard that child stealers are being frequently caught and mobbed in the streets. If it is true that foreigners do so, then it is outrageous. As the foreign office in change of diplomatic affairs, we would not hesitate to accuse them. However, we have not collected any convincing proof for that. It is sad but if there are ferocious thieves who trade, attract or eat children, they should be knelt down on the spot and reported to our office. Then this office will get together with foreign legations to punish whoever the thieves and cannibals are, regardless of their nationality. It is our sincere hope in this announcement that our people not be agitated by spreading rumors but first seek proof by investigation.[128]

In the announcement the foreign office's position did not sound sufficiently confident and strong to many foreign residents. In fact, the first half of 1888 was quite a period of ordeal for the foreign community, in particular the missionary community. After its smooth settlement and expansion in Korea since the opening, on April 22 the Chosŏn

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[127] Ibid., p. 350.

[128] *Foreign Ministry Document*, Vol. 17 #151 (June 18, 1888), titled "Official Announcement on the Rumors of Foreigners' Cannibalism of Children." Chaillé-Long also included the government announcement in his book as he understood and remembered it: "Recent rumors recite that foreigners buy Corean children to boil and eat. Child-stealers are being frequently caught in the streets. Foreigners come from a calm, candid, and civilized part of the world. How can such people eat children? Such rumors are like that a tiger entered the town three times. How is it possible that such lies can fill the ears of the people?" *My Life in Four Continents*, p. 350.

government issued two official documents announcing a ban on any proselytizing activities, including both Protestants and Catholics, unless the missionaries were given permission by the Chosŏn government. At the same time, they were also notified that the Chosŏn court had decided against granting French missionaries permission to build Catholic churches.[129] Squelching the complaints of the foreign community, the incident subsided within a few days without any injuries or major damage to property. Even a minor shooting incident and a fire reported in the area were found to be only accidental.[130]

Regarding the background of the incident, the government announcement and Chaillé-Long's explanation share a similar understanding. A xenophobic rumor spread that involved the kidnapping and killing of Korean children, and it caused public outrage. Different from Chaillé-Long's recollection that the turmoil was related to his photographs of children, though, the government's announcement addressed rampant child kidnapping in town as a serious social problem. It completely dismissed the allegation of killing and eating children as ludicrous and nonsensical. While admitting that it was a serious social issue, the court urged its people to not be fooled by the rumored cannibalism by foreigners. On the following day, King Kojong also ordered the arrest and punishment of those responsible for the child kidnapping.[131]

The international community characterized the Chosŏn court's responses as laggard and disheartening, while pointing fingers at others as the criminal behind the act. Chaillé-

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[129] *Foreign Ministry Document*, Vol.10 No.517, titled "Regarding the Ban of Christian Religion" (April 22, 1888), sent to the U.S. Embassy; Foreign Ministry Document, Vol. 17 No. 1, titled "A Notice on No Permission on Requested Building of a Church by French Missionaries" (April 22, 1888).

[130] Lilias H. Underwood, *Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots: Life in Korea* (1904), pp. 17-18.

[131] "Arrest and punish the true criminal about the incidents of child kidnapping," June 19, 1888, *The Veritable Records of Kojong Period*.

Long dismissed the allegation that the rumors in Korea were "the same old story used in China against the missionaries" and suspected that this heinous incident may have been linked to the domestic power struggle:[132]

> Children were stolen, kidnapped and killed (presumably by order of the Tai-Ven-Keun, the King's father, an old conspirator, and a heartless, cruel old man). The mutilated bodies of the children were thrown into the streets to excite the populace to mutiny.[133]

It was true that Taewŏn'gun, the king's father, conspired to regain power from his son. Thus the political rumor may have empowered Chaillé-Long's suspicions; many Westerners who resided in Seoul at the time were convinced that Taewŏn'gun may have plotted the brutal incident in order to undermine the power of Kojong and Queen Min.[134]

There were other theories as well, stories that pointed fingers at others within the foreign community. Foreigners such as George Gilmore and Horace Allen argued that it may have been part of an international intrigue, in particular by Chinese. Gilmore, a teacher at Yukyŏng Kongwŏn, believed that the Chinese ambassador in Seoul took advantage of

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[132] Chaille-long was talking about the Slanders fo Tenjin. In June 1870 the angry Chinese public in Tenjin killed French and Russian diplomats and their wives, ten nuns, and about fifty Chinese workers in a missionary-run orphanage. They allegedly believed that the Westerners and Catholic sisters created medicine out of children's dead bodies. Bunzō Kubota, (窪田文三)'s *Diplomatic History with Other Countries*, Tōkyō : Sanseidō, 1928, pp. 209-222.

[133] Charles Chaille-long, *My Life in Four Continents*, London: Hutchinson, (1912), p. 349; Charles Sauer, *Within the Gate*, p. 117-118; George Lenson, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 118-119; Lillias Underwood, *Underwood of Korea*, p. 75; Fred Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese*, p. 136; Martha Huntley, *To Start a Work*, pp. 132-133.

[134] In her book *Fifteen Years among the Top Knots*, Lillias Underwood wrote: "Another event of interest, which occurred during these first months after my arrival in Korea was the excitement culminating in what was called "the baby riots." Similar troubles in Tientsin, China previously resulted in the massacre of a number of foreigners, including Jesuit priests, nuns and two or three French officials"; p. 15.

frequent illegal child kidnappings and sales to agitate the Korean public through the rumor:[135]

> The Chinese, since the Koreans have looked so readily toward Western civilization, seem to have repented urging them to open up the peninsula, and so in all possible ways except that of open coercion have endeavored to impede the Koreans' progress. The Chinese ambassador, or "resident," as he calls himself, is heart and hand in rapport with this policy of obstruction. Consequently, by all arts and devices, in which he is an adept, he endeavors to combat the tendency toward opening up the country. For instance, in the summer of 1888, it was found that some boys had been stolen and sold into slavery. This is an act not often accomplished, but it is done sometimes. There was an excitement quite widespread at the time, and the Chinaman spoken of above fanned the spark into a flame of excitement by subtly spreading abroad the report, first, that the Japanese had bought the children and cooked and eaten them, then that the foreigners bought them to make medicine, and then that the eyes of the victims were used in making photographs. As the pages of this book testify, the author was a dabbler in photography, and this report was brought to his ears. The capital was in a ferment of excitement; the populace scowled from beneath lowering eyebrows whenever foreigners were seen in the town.[136]

Gilmore blamed Yuan Shikai, Qing's Imperial Resident in Korea, for creating rumors to demonize Japan and Western countries, and pointed out that child trafficking was an existing social issue. In 1934, almost half a century after the event, the Japanese Governor-General's office published a historical record of Seoul covering a span of its history of over three thousand years titled *The Kyŏngsŏngbu sa* (History of Special Province of Kyŏngsŏng), in three massive volumes.[137] The first volume introduced the story of the

[135] Horace Allen wrote: "Baby Eating—In the early days one of these periods of excitement started with a malicious rumour, circulated by certain Chinese in Seoul, to the effect that foreigners were in the habit of devouring native children and of using their eyes to make medicine. It was a rumor similar to this that caused the fatal riots in Tientsin in the early seventies and as my then predecessor at the legation, the American minister himself, was credited by these Chinese with having roast baby on his table, he was obliged to summon a guard for his protection." *Things Korean*, pp. 226-227.

[136] George Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital with a Chapter on Mission* (1892), pp. 82-83.

[137] *Volume One* deals with history from the prehistoric period to about 1905 (791 pages); *Volume Two* deals with the colonial urban projects in the period for 1906 to 1914 intended to transform Seoul into a modern city (1,121 pages); *Volume Three* introduces development in the city administration by year, covering the period 1914 to 1919 (985 pages).

Baby Riots of 1888 as an incident plotted by the Chinese and mainly targeting the Japanese people. It is titled "A colossal incident of child kidnapping and the instability of Kyŏngsŏng (Seoul)":

> In the 25th reign year of Emperor Meiji (1888 CE), the rumors such as foreigners kidnap and kill children, cook them to make chemicals or soup to eat, or use them to make camera materials went around. Koreans, believing these rumors as true, started to react against foreigners and their Korean employees. Among them, those foreigners in Chŏngdong area who were known as middlemen in sales of children were under imminent threat of attacks. American and French missionary activities witnessed a huge challenge in their proselytizing activities too. Koreans also suspected Japanese in this; thus prohibited children from entering Chin'gogae [Japanese resident area]. Later it got worse, so even parents were cautious when coming into the area. As their hatred toward Japanese intensified, some even threw stones at Japanese homes. The Deputy Consul Hasikuchi issued a warning that Japanese should take extra caution in relationships with local Koreans, stay reserved, and try not to make trips outside the resident area.[138]

The book provides a picture of the Japanese experience in the incident rather than giving a general narrative about it. It mentions that Japan, the United States, France, and Russia dispatched a military unit in case of emergency. At the same time, just like Gilmore's speculation, the book singles out Yuan Shikai as a suspect behind the plot of this misery, noting that he wanted to take control of the Chosŏn court by agitating Koreans with rumors that the Japanese were behind the incident. The massive colonial project of rewriting the history of major Korean cities extended beyond Seoul to include others such as Mokpo, Inchŏn, and Taegu. These projects were intended to highlight and propagandize the transformations and modernization that the colonial regime brought to these cities.

Rumors and scandals have long been part of politics and served as effective tools for the practice of exclusion and distinction.[139] It seems that the Japanese and Chinese were

[138] *The Kyŏngsŏngbu sa* Vol. I, based on the Korean translation published in 2012, p. 560.

[139] Korsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney & Capetown, 1820-1850*, p. 11.

preoccupied with consuming rumors related to the camera in demonizing each other. A few years earlier than the 1888 incident, *The North China Herald* reported a similar rumor accusing the Japanese that somewhat foreshadowed both the studio attacks and the Baby Riots:

> The terrible Japanese intended to draw blood from Corean girls and children for the purpose of concocting medicine. So great was the alarm among the maidens in the Capital that many betook themselves to flight, and others actually got married off post-haste without caring much what sort of husbands they were getting so long as they could save themselves from the impending danger to the unwed.[140]

The rumor was widely spread in China by the print media, but reliable Korean sources do not confirm whether the rumor actually circulated within Chosŏn. Foreign observers left some records on the Baby Riots, but their records were not readily available to then contemporary Koreans because they were published in foreign languages outside Korea, mostly at different points of time in later periods. According to them, not all rumors were related to the camera. However, no Korean sources exist today that attest to the validity of the rumors; thus most of the local memories about the incident known as the Baby Riots were constructed heavily based on the records produced during the colonial period.

The rumors in the Baby Riots blamed different foreign communities as well as Korea's internal politics. Even though rumors of this kind were actually in circulation, it is unclear what the direct causes of the public actions were because mass riots can be triggered by one thing and augmented by another. In the age of world travel, rumors traveled from country to country, and became localized by mixing and modifying different ingredients to serve the local needs. Indeed, rumors that cameras were cannons to shoot people, required

[140] *The North China Herald*, August 31, 1883.

photographic solutions made from the cooked eyeballs of dead children, and took human spirits away, or that foreigners boiled and ate children were not unique to Korea. Nevertheless, they now became tools to describe Koreans of the period. It is intriguing to see how the rumors were modified and processed beyond the time of their propagation. The questions of why and when these rumors reemerged in later periods also deserves serious inquiry.

Evaluating pre-colonial Korea was necessary for both the Japanese colonial government that needed to justify their rule, and Korean nationalists who needed to explain their colonial subjugation. The colonial government tried to prove that Chosŏn was inferior, corrupt, and premodern. Korean nationalists wanted to awaken fellow Koreans from the ignorant practices of the past that, they believed, eventually contributed to the fall of the nation. The colonial documents often recorded the tension surrounding the Japan's geographical investigation, with Koreans' superstitious belief in geomancy (*fengshui*) from the previous century. One document written by a Korean nationalist must be understood in this context. Kŏ Sangch'an was one of the main contributors to the modern literature magazine *Byŏlgŏnkon* (Another World), published from November 1, 1926, to March 1, 1934. It was one of several native nationalistic magazines aiming to enlighten the Korean people and promote cultural modernization through education and literature. In an article titled "Thirty Seven Years Ago, Japanese Photographers," Kŏ related what he had heard thirty-seven years ago (probably around 1895-96) from his servant, who rushed home from the mountains:

> There came Japanese to the back of Mr. Wang's house. I (the servant) saw them while picking up wood in the mountain. They were wearing a black Western suit, a black hat, a pair of weird black shoes, and they were digging a hole on the mountain to set up a shiny machine with legs (now I realize it was a camera). I think it is a kind

> of cannon. I heard people saying before that foreigners bring cannons around with them and they shoot it from here, it can destroy a mountain ten *li* away. What shall we do if they shoot it in our town? They were also digging the ground, probably cutting the flow of the mountain spirit.[141]

When Kŏ wrote the article in 1933 photography was no longer the object of superstitious suspicion, it was a means to celebrate and record important moments of life on a personal level, and was a complex colonial device of invisible control.[142] Kŏ was walking a fine line in this article, differentiating, through his servant's voice, modern people from the ignorant pre-colonial Koreans of the previous century who did not understand camera technology. In so doing, Kŏ indirectly provoked the nationalist sentiment of his contemporary readers by indicting the secretive expeditions conducted by Japanese in Korea in the previous period. The indictment was delivered only under his disguised ridicule of his fellow Koreans of the previous period.

On May 23, 1936, *Chosŏn jungang ilbo* (Chosŏn Central Daily) featured a story on the fiftieth anniversary of a missionary girls' school, Ewha School, and printed some episodes from its early history. With an enlarged title "Making Camera Equipment using Human Eyeballs – What is the Use of Education for such a Dreadful Race!," they introduced an ignorant Korean parent of the 1880s, mimicking their voice "Those big-noses will feed you, but how can we trust our daughter to the horrible bastards who eat the flesh of our children and use their eyeballs for camera equipment? What do you mean by learning from them?" The article did not include the source. This exact episode was again reproduced in postcolonial publications such as *Eighty Years of Ewha School,* published in 1967. True or

[141] Kŏ Sangch'an, "Thirty Seven Years Ago: Japanese Photographers," *Byŏlgŏnkon,* (May 1, 1933).

[142] According to the Tax Report published by the Japanese Governor-General in 1930, there were 1,887 registered photographers around the country and photo taking had been incorporated into the social, legal, and cultural aspects of colonial life. Lee Kyung-min, *Chegug ŭi lenjŭ*, p. 100.

not, unlike the mouth-to-mouth spread of rumors in the nineteenth century, the power of the modern print media such as newspapers and magazines brought immeasurable repercussions to the delivery of the "news" and "memories" of the past.

The most notable case that produced nationwide readership in postcolonial South Korea was the writings of journalist Lee Kyu-t'ae. Lee was one of the most influential figures who had written books and thousands of short columns in newspapers on the yet-uncharted issues of Korean identity, culture, and thought in the 1960s. He had addressed many topics about "Koreanness," but without much depth or reliable evidence to support and prove his arguments. Nonetheless, his columns were very popular. They were short in length (often no more than 300 words), provoking, fun, sensual, and often appealing to the Korean psyche; they were designed to be easily consumed by everyday newspaper readers.

In a 1968 column Lee wrote about the 1888 Baby Riots and published it in his book in 1969. Unfortunately, in his book *Kaehwa Paekkyŏng* (A Hundred Scenes from the Opening Period), Lee Kyu-t'ae merely copied the colonial publication *Kyŏngsŏngbu sa* (quoted on the earlier page) to discuss the incident.[143] His columns were the first to popularize this incident to the public and since then it has been widely reproduced. Lee's column has also been cited as a reference for discussing this incident by scholars of photography.[144]

Lee's articles about Koreans were first published in the *Chosun Daily* as a special edition throughout 1968, and published in six volumes in 1969. In 2001, thirty years after their first appearance, the *Chosun Daily* edited and republished them, this time in five

[143] Lee Kyu-t'ae, *Kaehwa Paekkyŏng (Vol. 3),* (1969), p. 198.

[144] Choi In-jin, (1999), pp. 124-126.

volumes supplemented with a number of photographs. For some reason this particular article on the Baby Riots was not included. In the introduction to the 2001 series, Lee blatantly states the purpose of his articles: “My articles published in the Chosŏn Daily in 1968 were originally intended to help Koreans overcome the crisis of the Korean culture resulting from the reckless acceptance of Western culture during the opening period.”[145] Lee and the *Chosun Daily* seemed to have two very definite assessments of Korean society in the late 1960s. First, Korean culture in the 1960s was in crisis, and second, this was mainly caused by pre-colonial Koreans’ recklessness in accepting Western culture. Considering that Korea was still coping with the legacy of thirty-six years of colonial rule and the devastation of the Korean War and national division, Lee’s reality check on Korea’s main problems from the pre-colonial period not only sounds no less far-reaching but also gives the colonial period an excuse.

With the increase of foreign goods and technology after the opening, the Korean public had no effective means to defend against and resist the massive wave of foreign intrusion and influence. Notwithstanding the turbulent reality, some evidence indicates that the townpeople’s perception of modern technology, at least when it came to camera technology, was rapidly progressing to being receptive and participatory in the 1880s. Through the reproduction and building-up of the rumors by foreigners and colonialists as well as Koreans during the periods of the incidents, before and after the liberation, the studio attacks and the Baby Riots became indelible parts of historical memories. They were deeply ingrained in the minds of contemporary Koreans, serving as evidence of the ignorance and primitiveness of Korean people in the nineteenth century.

[145] They were also translated into English under the title *Modern Transformation of Korea* for overseas distribution. “Introduction,” *Lee Kyu-t’ae’s Kaehwa Paekkyŏng* (2001).

As we have stated, Koreans' reaction of public mobbing and violence also were not necessarily premodern expressions of shamanistic rejection of modern ideas and technology, as they are often portrayed. In the colonial discourse on the transmissions of technologies such as electricity, medicine, trains, and photography, native struggles were often framed as the patterned conflict between premodern vs. modern, or ignorant vs. civilized. However, the Korean public was aware of the dubious nature of foreign activities in their land, and their distrust burst out when responding to the rumors. Selected rumors survived time and history thanks to the colonial need to remember them, and continued to be reproduced and reimagined even without engaging with any material object of a photographic image.

Conclusion

Scholars have analyzed Chosŏn's path toward capitalist modernity as having failed to form a consolidated bourgeois class with a strong and solid foundation that could have brought the country to a different dimension of modernity.[146] Instead, secondary status groups rose to take some responsibilities as emerging new petite bourgeoisie. With their participation, however, Korea's experience of the modern was bound to generate diverse and complex responses. Photography was one of the areas in which the roles of *chung'in*s and those *yangban*s who managed to embrace a new hybrid identity were prominent. In this process it is important to note that not only upward choices but also downward choices in technological acceptance were ways of asserting and expressing their "modern" sense of self and their desires.

Due to Chosŏn's fall and Koreans' subsequent subjugation, the historical discourses about the opening period have been overshadowed by the following thirty-six years of

[146] Min Suh Son, pp. 108-109.

colonial rule. At the same time, the marriage of photography and racial science in the nineteenth century provided fuel to the postcolonial discourse under the master narrative that has occupied knowledge production of Korean history for the past century. Within the grand discourses, the local history of photography often remained a collection of inconsistent anecdotes or episodes. The stories about early photography are fraught with rumors and violence because its function was not well understood by local people since it was used by foreign imperialists, or because the stories were deliberately remembered in that way. This chapter problematized two widely known stereotypes of Koreans of the period: Koreans were xenophobic and superstitious. In doing so, it explored Western visitors' travelogues and visual images of Koreans produced by foreigners. Also, the two cases of public animosity related to photography were reexamined to see to what extent they reflect historical fact, how they were recreated, and when fabrications took place.

The findings of this chapter show that the ambiguous and contradictory gazes and voices of Westerners as well as Koreans have been marginalized or misinterpreted. The case studies of the two public riots in the 1880s did not uncover any decisive historical sources from the period, but evidence of reconstruction of the stories in later periods. The majority of the rumors involving the riots were reproduced throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods, long after the actual incidents. The act of Othering Koreans of the pre-colonial period, using superstitious rumors and visual technology, was committed by different actors: not only nationalist Koreans but also Japanese for different purposes. Their agendas varied from imperialist or colonialist to nationalist or postcolonial nation building.

Future research on how the rumors involving early photography played out in the colonial and postcolonial society of Korea would help reveal the nature of contemporary

knowledge about the pre-colonial period through the window of visual technology. It is true that the attractiveness of realistic photographic images and the cultural meanings attached to them inspired an increasing number of Koreans, leading them to participate in more photographic experiences in the 1890s, which will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

New Photographic Horizons

In Asia, photography often appears to illuminate the past as a space of the dead and of those who are condemned to death, of the defeated and the ravished. But an attentive eye also discovers it to be the space of endurance, of fantasy, and of self-making.

--Rosalind Morris, *Photographies East*, 2009

The unprecedented pressure and changes during the opening era caused a range of emotions, including intense longing, desire, fantasy, and resistance. Koreans' perceptions of the world were rapidly changing as they perceived time and space, self and others, and identity as individuals and collective community in a different way. Newly introduced mass media such as newspapers, magazines, and photographs undeniably instigated these social and cultural changes as well as recording and reporting them.

This chapter discusses how the modern visual form of photography became the visual repository of modern desires, emotions, fantasy, and self-identity of individual Koreans as well as visual statements for Korea as a culturally homogeneous community to an extent. The photographic archive of the period is examined to explore alternative interpretations as a display of concepts such as visual democracy, *limitational* representation, and counter-conduct as a device of national resistance for Koreans with the assistance of Japanese commercial studios in the marketplace. The chapter also examines the

first phase of native participation in photography through the stories of three Korean pioneers in photography

Desire, Fantasy, and Self-Exorcising in a New Visual Form

At the turn of the century the physical appearance of downtown Seoul was drastically transformed by rows of electric poles, streetcars, modern postal offices, Independence Park, Western-style hospitals and schools, and students and soldiers walking the streets in modern uniforms. Moreover, foreign legations, foreign schools, missionary stations, and churches were concentrated in the downtown areas of Seoul.[147] At that time running into 'big-nosed and blue-eyed' foreigners with cameras as well as Asians from Japan and China was not uncommon.

French anthropologist and poem Georges Ducrocq (1874-1924), who visited Korea in 1901, described a *yangban* house decorated in European style. His observations demonstrate the level of availability of imported goods and commodity consumption practiced by some wealthy Koreans. In his 1904 travelogue Ducrocq describes an imaginary but very realistic visit to a Korean *yangban* home:

> Despite the tradition of their own which is longer than the one of Europe, some *yangban*s venture a European lifestyle. We are ushered into a brick stone house with framed glass windows. The host would treat us with tea in British silverware. He would smoke cigars and have a Swiss cuckoo clock hanging on the wall. … He would probably have French poplar trees in the garden and his flowerbeds are filled with carefully nurtured geraniums and French roses. He will pick a bundle of rose branches to present them to us as most *yangbans* know that it is one of the finest entertainments for important guests.[148]

[147] Min Suh Son, *Electrifying Seoul: The Culture of Technology in the Nineteenth Century Korea*, (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 2008), pp. 76-78.

[148] Georges Ducrocq, *Pauvre et Douce Coree*, H. Champion, Libraine: Paris (1904). This quote is a translation from its Korean edition, *Karyŏnhago chŏngdaun nara Chosŏn* (2006), p. 118.

The circulation of Western goods and commercial ads with vivid illustrations in the print media contributed to changing the concepts of time and space, self and others, and tradition and modern in the minds of the Korean people. However, unlike many other imported commodities the camera was violent as well as tempting. It generated a certain level of animosity and suspicion as explored in the previous chapter, and at the same time engendered the visual fantasy of imagination and desire for self-expression. The presumed xenophobic superstition of Koreans did not seriously affect Korean people's acceptance of the camera and modern visual reality in the 1880s and 1890s; rather, they immediately took root in the unconscious and conscious of human desires at the turn of the century.

Several newspapers were in existence in the capital during the 1890s, and a few more newspapers, magazines, and local gazettes were established in the next decade, yet photography had not yet been incorporated into journalism. The government was keeping a low profile in incorporating photography as an official medium, and since the Kapsin Coup the institutional basis for native photographers had been lost or discontinued. Thus it was mainly through Japanese commercial studios in town and foreign photographers that photography penetrated the cultural and social life of the Korean people. Despite logistic limitations, more people took photographs as a way to remember and commemorate special moments, such as birthdays, weddings, and school and family gatherings, as well as portraits. Photographs of this nature demonstrate that photo taking became the pinnacle of family celebrations and social gatherings for those who could afford its expense. Photography was an agent that produced a material proof as well as a device that facilitated collective cohesion and memory for their memorable moments in life.

While the number of people who were engaged in photography as patrons was increasing, many Koreans did not actually see their own images. Within the frames of the images, most appeared shy, reserved, and nervous in front of camera. However, if they didsee their own images they were probably abashed by the unaccustomed clarity and fidelity of the photograph and fascinated by the magical reflection of self, as Walter Benjamin puts it.[149] This magic and mystery of the photographic experience did not result from the photographer's gaze embedded in the images. Instead, it came from their unique *photographic practices*, such as gathering in one place, getting ready to stand before the camera, checking each other's physical appearance, arranging the spatial locations in order to be properly gazed on and represented, spending a few moments standing unusually close to each other, and awkwardly gazing into the camera lens, following the photographer's 1-2-3 sign. The process came along with their trust, or suspicion at times, in the truth of the photograph. Throughout the participatory process, people must have imagined and projected their own desires and fantasy in the photographic images. The shutter click just allowed them and others to preserve the moments in material reference.

The photograph's power as a device for recording and remembrance was confirmed when Koreans lost their most-cherished Confucian corporal practice. The Kabo cabinet's 1895 Haircut Edict was an "attack on top-knots" and caused a sudden surge of demand for portrait paintings, which eventually led to the popularity of portrait photographs and commercial studios.[150] Keeping the body parts intact, including hair, was one of the fundamentals of Confucian teaching in Chosŏn. Indeed, hairstyles and clothing are obvious

[149] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," pp. 199-216.

[150] Choi In-jin (1999), pp. 171-172.

forms of differentiation and assimilation.[151] The top-knot was a particular hairstyle adopted by married Chosŏn men. Top-knots were vertically built up with twisted hairs at the center on the crown of head. Standing proudly perpendicular, they were often ornamented with amber, jade, or other beads and covered with hairnet or *manggŏn*. Along with the hats called *kat* worn by Korean men, the top-knot was viewed by foreigners as one of the most interesting native appearances of Korean people. However, the significance of the top-knot was more deeply rooted than its simple appearance. First, it was a privilege of married men as the head of the family, the most fundamental and important unit in Confucian culture. Furthermore, it was a sign of sacredness that had been handed down through generations since only those with top-knots were eligible to bear family names and perform religious rituals for ancestor worship.

This was a symbol of self-esteem and manhood for Korean males, but was also a point of pride for Koreans who despised the Japanese and Qing Chinese hairstyles. Given the Korean people's hostility toward the Japanese, many people thought that "the enforced cutting of the hair was an attempt to compel them to adopt Japanese customs and make them look like Japanese."[152] Reflecting this sentiment, the *Korean Repository*, a monthly English-language magazine, reported that "much enmity was manifested towards the Japanese, resulting unfortunately often in murder. Some of this hostility is traditional, dating back to the terrible devastation of the country and the frightful sufferings of the people during the Japanese invasion three centuries ago."[153]

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[151] Hyung Gu Lynn, "Fashioning Modernity: Changing Meanings of Clothing in Colonial Korea," *Journal of International and Area Studies*, Vol.11, No. 3, Special Issue, 2004. p. 76.

[152] *Korean Repository Vol. III* (1896), p. 270.

[153] Ibid.

The pro-Japanese Kim Hong-jip (1842-1896) cabinet was heavy handed in trying to banish this custom overnight. They made King Kojong and the crown prince cut their hair first so that all ministers and soldiers were forced to follow. The law was applied nominally only to the official classes, soldiers, and police. Within Seoul and Chemulpo, the edict was implemented by force to every male, as seen in the accompanying photograph (Figure 3.1). Facing the imminent loss of their top-knots, people ardently wanted to preserve their traditional identity by seizing the moment in visual images. Along with photographs, portrait paintings, which had previously been a privilege of the ruling class, became extremely popular among new middle-class men.

When Kojong decided to flee to the Russian legation in 1896 about three months after the announcement of the edict, the king nullified the edict, stating, "The matters of dress and way of wearing the hair are trivial. The pro-Japanese cabinet's violence against the cultural subtlety embedded in top-knots only encouraged anti-Japanese sentiments, creating a nation-wide repercussion including the formation of the Righteous Army. Thus, the people can do as they please." When Kojong returned to his palace a year later, he completely abolished the edict on haircuts.[154] Regarding the turmoil caused by the Haircut Edict, the *Korean Repository* records that all soldiers, police, and people rallied in support of the king, and the Kim Hong-jip cabinet utterly collapsed. Not only had the attack on the top-knot been repulsed, its supporters were also annihilated.[155] The *Korean Repository* perceptively

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[154] Kojong's order stated, "Abolish the edict and all of its related orders made on November 15, 1895." The edict of November 15, 1895 here indicates the Haircut Edict. *The Veritable Records of Kojong Period* on August 12, 1897, 34th Year of the Reign.

[155] *Korean Repository Vol. III*, p. 272.

anticipated that top-knots would disappear not by force but as Koreans eventually chose a more convenient way of living:

> In the local areas where the top-knot was never abolished, it is nonsensical to say that it has been restored. It simply remains. In Seoul where all of them were cut off, the most casual observer will see that all classes are resuming it as fast as their growing hairs will permit. … Some of the more sensible and advanced Koreans, realizing that the foreign hairstyle is much more convenient and comfortable, will adhere to it and I trust that in time the top-knot will disappear.[156]

As the article anticipated, the top-knot hairstyle disappeared within a couple of decades as modernization moved on. However, the edict prompted many people to visit commercial photo studios to have their portraits taken. The popularity of commercial studios at the turn of the century created new photographic professions and a new market for visual economy, though still limited in scale, while portrait paintings rapidly lost currency not only within the government but also in the civil community.[157]

Portraits from this period show how the semiotic codes of the modern and the traditional intersected and compromised on various levels, creating a new visual identity that individual sitters desired. Most photos were taken as a frontal image with the entire body within the frame. Korean clients likely demanded this because it was the basic visual norm and the language that Chosŏn's portrait painting tradition had articulated. They dressed formally from head to toe, with formal hats such as *kat* or *chŏngjakwan* for men, in traditional *hanbok* or official dress, creating an image of the most authoritative, intellectual, and honorable representation of the self. Although their bodies were presented in highly native and traditional cultural codes, the background of the photograph was decorated in Western style. Items such as Western-style tables with vases of flowers were included, or

[156] Ibid.

[157] Choi In-jin (1999), p. 172.

they sat on Western-style chairs to create a modern look. They often put their hands on the table, making natural gestures of dominating or mixing with the Western environment. This modern visual currency was what they were buying in the photographic venture (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

These patterned photographic images were capitalized on and codified desires planted in the popular consciousness. Without realizing it, Koreans were participating in homogeneous cultural behaviors optimized by universal conditions of new visual technology. Photography was gradually being transformed from an item of suspicion and resistance in the 1880s to an item of desire, fantasy, and pleasure in the 1890s. In the 1890s the photo studios became the main locus of photographic practices. Due to the high cost of production and limited availability, photo taking was still a luxury and remained a distant item of longing for many Koreans.[158] Through this process of self-exorcising, they were negotiating their new complex identities as modern citizens. Photographic experiences, direct or indirect, were not limited to creating a fantasy of their past and present; it also for served to actuate dreams for the future.

Visual Democracy and *Limitational* Representation

At the end of the century photography operated at the grassroots level, and its visual representation signaled the birth of a modern citizenry and the rise of nationalism. Ironically, Chosŏn's national decline coincided with the birth and rise of Korea's first modern citizens and nationalist movements. Manmin'gongdonghoe (Ten Thousand People's Assembly) was

[158] In 1900 a small-sized photograph print cost 1 *wŏn*, a medium size 2 *wŏn*, and a large size 3 *wŏn*. At that time a sack of rice cost about 3.15 *wŏn*. These prices decreased in 1908: small 50 chŏn, medium 1 *wŏn*, and large 4 *wŏn*. The cost of the same sack of rice rose to 8.56 *wŏn* in 1908.

the most noteworthy phenomenon to first advance the notion of democracy and the sense of community based on equal participation and rights regardless of their birth. The year 1898 was historical since Manmin'gongdonghoe, first organized under the auspices of the Independence Club in 1896, separated its operations from the Club. In particular, the meeting on October 29, 1898, set a milestone in defining the transformation the Empire was undergoing. It was to discuss a proposed constitutional monarchy, which was to be submitted to Emperor Kojong. People of all classes and professions attended this historical meeting that was officially opened by then Chairperson of the Assembly Yun Ch'iho (1865-1945) and the Privy Council member (Ŭijŏngbu ch'amjŏng) Park Chŏng-yang (1841-1905). When the podium was opened to volunteer speakers, Park Sŏng-ch'un, a former butcher, stepped up to the podium and addressed before the crowd of over 10,000 people. He said:

> I am from the lowest class and the most ignorant man in Chosŏn. However, I do know what loyalty to king and the state means a little bit. Thus I think the best way to save our people from foreign intervention is that the government and people unite together. I should remind you of a metaphor. Many sticks can create a much stronger hold together than what just one stick can do. So I wish that we, the government and the people, all unite together, repay Our Majesty's grace and save the state for generations to come![159]

Introducing himself as a butcher, Park urged the government officials, *yangban*s, and the crowd to unite to overcome the national crisis against foreign intrusion and safeguard national security in the name of His Majesty's grace. A year before, *The Independent* pu-blished a critical article that stated, "The Kabo reforms deslaved all butchers and they have now become like commoners. In commerce, high class and low class have no difference.

[159] Chŏng Kyo, *Taehan'gyenyŏnsa I* (History of the Last Years of Korean Empire I), (1910), p. 282; Shin Yong-ha, *Tongniphyŏphoe yŏn'gu* (A Study on Independence Club, Ilchogak Publishing (2006), p. 131. Some contemporary historians view modern Korean history as overshadowed by colonial history, thus the important moments prior to the colonialism have been reduced or completely ignored. Many view 1898 as the year that transformed Korea from a Confucian world to a secularized modern world. See Chŏn In-kwon, Chŏng Sŏn-tae, and Lee Sŭng-won, *1898, Munmyŏngŭi chŏnhwan* (1898, Change of Civilization) (2011).

Butchers were granted a due heavenly right, but some ignorant people still view them as of low birth."[160] The Kabo reforms abolished the social status that prevented butchers and other lowest-class people from advancing in society. However, this was neither widely publicized nor practiced in reality yet. As a butcher, Park Sŏng-ch'un put together petitions for the government to widely publicize the new social status reform, and also to give butchers permission to wear the hats that were worn only by males of the classes above commoners. The government responded positively to his petitions and took action accordingly. Thus his speech before the Thousand People's Assembly on that day had a very special historical meaning as a symbolic proof that the Chosŏn society officially practiced the abolishment of the social classes in public.

Park was from the lowest of the low-born *ch'ŏnmin*. He later became the first elder in a Protestant church as a former butcher in 1911. Seeing him standing at the podium before the crowd would have been unthinkable and impossible even a few years earlier. It was a thrilling moment in which all who were present to acknowledged a rebirth of Koreans as modern citizens who were equal regardless of their origin and class. However, this does not mean that Chosŏn was already an equal society. This incident had been planned by the organizers of the Assembly to demonstrate how modernized and open they were. Nevertheless, it shows that Korea had started to escape from the predicaments of the old social status system. People were becoming political agents regardless of their status or work.

Several photographs from the gatherings of the Thousand People's Assembly exist, but with no detailed information of photographers and exact dates (Figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6). Further research on these images should follow as more archival evidence become available.

[160] *The Independent*, June 6, 1897.

The visual prisms of the research will contribute to revealing more detail on how the modern concepts of national identity and nationalism were mustered among individual Koreans through the use of modern photographs.

As with the images of the Thousand People's Assembly, one of the distinctive aspects of this period's photographic archives is that an overwhelming number of images depict the lives of common people. The visual exposure of that stratum of the population was unprecedented in Korea. The visual construction of this magnitude and exactitude of common people's lives and landscape was produced for the first time in Korea's history. The excessiveness of images detailing everyday life that was made possible through the mechanical reproduction of visuals led to a form of visual democracy. The end effect of the modern visualization of the country was to reposition the focus of the national culture from a historically elite-centered domain to the mundane life of common people, at least in visual terms. This is one of those "unseen, not yet realized truths of a world-transforming process" that photography disseminated around the world.[161] The visual contours of Korean culture and life during this period came to occupy the central place in the Korean people's imagination of their country's past and identity. Through wide circulation and internalization among Koreans, the photographs from this period constructed, to a great extent, the notions of nation and culture within the minds of Koreans in later periods. It also provided the foundation for the lasting images of the country's traditions that are known today.

Before the introduction of photography, painting was the major device to record ceremonies and rituals in Korea. Court painters were responsible for documenting the

[161] Rosalind Morris, *Photogaphies East*, p. 5.

court's life in drawings and diagrams. For that purpose they had to master drawing bamboo, landscapes, people, animals, and flowers, as well as calligraphy. Calligraphy was a scholarly medium for demonstrating one's spiritual sensitivity as a cultivated human being. Scholars' paintings emphasized visualization of one's inner virtues rather than a skillful representation of objects. Talented amateur scholar painters, not professionals, were more often ideal when they successfully combined scholarship and literary knowledge in their brushstroke. The most popular theme of scholarly paintings, or *yangban* paintings, was landscapes.

Coming from the strong literati landscape painting tradition, the rapid rise of folk paintings in the eighteenth century was a liberal development and even a deviation from the Confucian propriety. This change occurred in correlation with social transformations inspired by the increased commercial activities and demographic changes of the period. Previously, the lives of commoners and slaves had hardly attracted any attention in visual representation. Their exposure to photography in the late nineteenth century was revolutionary in many ways.

Not all the people in these new images were willing participants in photo taking. Most were anonymous participants who probably never saw the printed photos that they posed for. Likewise, many commoners in the eighteenth-century paintings of Kim Hong-do (1745-1806) and Shin Yun-bok (1758-?) may not have seen the paintings that portrayed their lives because they could not afford to buy them, or because these paintings were not meant for commoners. However, a crucial difference exists between people in the eighteenth-century folk paintings and those in the nineteenth-century photographic images. Unlike those in Kim's and Yun's paintings, in photographic images people often formed the photographic background. They were the focus of the camera, but not necessarily a subject

of the focus. Furthermore, they were made to signify types of place, culture, class, gender, and race for consumption outside the country. Thus the people in the images often read as awkward, aloof, shy, and uncomfortable as they filled the background of images. However, this seeming passivity should not be taken as their indifference to the camera and the world that the camera represented. In fact, the anonymous Koreans in the images were encountering modern visual technology in their own ways, but their experiences were made invisible and silenced at the moment.

The thousands of images of people in photographic backdrops were taken outdoors, depicting people on bustling streets. These images tried to capture the essence of Korean life and culture, either out of simple curiosity or for documentary purposes. In most cases the setting of the camera did not involve or did not allow elaborate staging or control of the crowd; most of the images were produced based on photographers' limited choices.[162] These images have to be examined differently from staged and controlled images because they possess the factors that grant them the power of documentary realism.

In line with this, it can be argued that the mechanized gaze of the camera created extensive cultural contours of Korean lives and landscapes through the visualized prism. Without producers' conscious intention or awareness, the camera drew considerable visual scrutiny about the country's life and culture that had been constructed and lived in the peninsula for centuries. For example, clothing predominantly of white linen; housing with straw-tethered roofs or roof tiles; and top-knot hairstyles for men, long braided hair for children, and raised hairdos for married women were among the conspicuous and repeated

[162] As for historicity of images, Roland Barthe also argues that the images taken naturally are more revealing. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 32.

themes throughout the country. This was where Korea was being "recreated" as a highly homogeneous—culturally, socially and politically—community.

The people frozen in the visual frames come from all classes, ages, and genders. Outside Korea many of these images of common people were juxtaposed in binary discourses of exotic and premodern natives vis-à-vis the civilized West or civilizing Japan. In so doing, the visual appropriation of Korea not only constructed the *representational* discourses that colonial photography often argues, but also delineated the *limitational* boundaries that demarcated Korea's cultural, racial, social, political, and geographical particularities in regard to the world outside, particularly against those of China and Japan. The visual articulation of Korea as a culturally identifiable unit would not have been possible if there had not already been a high degree of cultural and political integrity or a considerable degree of homogeneity within the country.

Thus I argue that the idea of an enclosed community or a constitutive concept of Korean culture and nation was first invoked through the visual contour *from outside*, instead of from *within*. This was done without invoking the shared glorious past and even before the beginning of discursive articulation of the nation in the late 1890s *from within*. It was possible only because the cultural contours first delineated *from outside* were constantly fed, supported, and negotiated by centrifugal forces of the natives *from inside*, creating a sort of a visual equilibrium on the cultural periphery. Thus the most radical potential of the photographs of commoners from this period lies in their documentary value, despite the Orientalist criticism.

Photography as Counter-conduct:
From an object of suspicion to nationalist device

The modern nation-state is not an isolated notion, but is packaged with many other modern programs that vary historically and locally. However, the bottom line is a fundamental change in people's thinking about the world, their self, and others. This means that a modern nation-state is a grassroots phenomenon backed by the "modern" consciousness of people living within a national boundary as much as it is a political and ideological one. Thus building an abstract notion of the nation-state or nationhood involves the process of internalizing it in the minds of people. Some material symbols that the state constituted were used as tools to communicate messages of nationalism, independence, resistance, and anger among the public themselves. An interesting factor in the case of the Taehan Empire, which spent a great deal of state energy to invent the state's symbolic system, was that some of the modern media, particularly photography, grew without any direct involvement or support from the state. They were cultivated as devices for creating collective memory, sharing collective identity, and bolstering popular resistance against foreign intervention by people, nonstate actors.

In order to analyze the characteristics of particular forms of resistance from Korean people in relation to photography, this research employs a Foucaudian concept, counter-conduct. As means to explain the crisis and decline of pastoral society, Foucault introduced multiple concepts of resistance. According to him, counter-conduct is neither just resistance as the reverse image of power nor a political struggle. "Counter-conduct" differs from "misconduct," which only refers to the passive sense of not conducting oneself properly, or "disobedience" or "dissidence," which involve active political refusal and struggle against the political party or structures of sovereignty. It is also different from "revolt of conduct," which is refusal to a specific conduct in nonpolitical and noneconomic form. In Foucault's

definition, "counter-conduct," is a struggle against the process implemented for conducting others. Thus it actually allows people to act in the general field of politics or power relations. People can pick out a dimension or a component of counter-conduct.[163] Foucault accepts that counter-conduct takes place through interactions and exchanges in social environments, and through certain behavioral patterns and ways of life. This research focuses on the fact that, before photography was formally established as a cultural force, Korean people discovered photography's potential to change the outcome, though not significantly, of the power relationship within the limits of their modern cultural and social environment and began to use it as a device of soft resistance during this period.

The concept of counter-conduct was chosen after careful consideration of the feasibility and applicability of theoretical devices to my period and case. In fact, both postcolonial theorists, Edward Said and Michel Foucault, provide analytical tools for the existence of resistance. However, in Said's case he uses the concept of "contrapuntal readings" that presupposes two simultaneous factors: imperialism is in operation, and the resistance of the colonized to imperial power.[164] However, Korea was not under any official direct colonizer-colonized relations during the period. Foucault also acknowledges the inseparability of power and resistance, saying that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[165] In Foucault's general notion of power, however, the enemy of resistance is

[163] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, Palgrave (2007). Foucault explained that counter-conduct is found in mad people, delinquents, and patients, as well as in asceticism in pastoral society; pp. 191-204.

[164] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 66-67.

[165] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality:* vol. 1*, An Introduction* (1984), pp. 94-95.

invisible, evasive, and omnipresent with no beginning or ending. The political resistance of Korean people during this period required a concept that does not necessarily refer directly to the colonial relationship, but permits resistance within the system with an immediate target of resistance. The concept has to incorporate dynamic interactions among not only Korean nationalists and the native public but also Japanese studios, photographers, and distributors in China and the United States, and Japan's governing power trying to regulate and control them. Foucault's counter-conduct was found to be effective in explaining interactions and exchanges on multiple levels of the social environment.

The roles and participation of nonstate actors in formulating social and national life was paramount during this period. They constituted the source of dynamic social transformation at the turn of the century. Experiencing a shift from the pro-Japanese government to the Taehan Empire government in the late 1890s, public reaction and resistance to the impending foreign influence started to divide between violent and soft forms. Education and mass media are good examples of soft forms of resistance or resistance within the new modern system that was developed during this period. Photography, previously the object of strong suspicion and rejection, was no longer prey to irrational rumors at the turn of the century; instead, it was developed as an effective apparatus for native counter-conduct among the public, while being integrated into the cultural practices of individuals' lives.

The protectorate of 1905 marked a major shift of symbolic power from the state to nonstate actors. After this time it was nonstate actors who upheld the concepts of nation building and nationhood at the time of the lost nation. In 1905 Min Yŏng-hwan, a diplomat

and a minister of the empire, committed suicide at the news of the signing of the Protectorate treaty, leaving a touching letter to fellow Koreans.[166]

> Alas! The nation's shame and people's disgrace have come to this point where our people are in the midst of a life and death struggle. Usually, those who demand to live die, and those who pledge to die live, so gentlemen, how can you not be stirred into action? Yŏng-hwan alone by dying repays the Emperor's grace and offers apology to his twenty million fellow countrymen, his brothers, so that even if Yŏng-hwan dies, he is not dead but without fail will help you gentlemen from the netherworld. If you, my fellow brothers, make one million times more effort, strengthening this will and spirit, exercising your learning, making an all-out effort with a resolute mind and restore our freedom and independence, then the dead will rejoice from afar and laugh. Oh, do not lose one iota of your desire; these are my parting words to my twenty million fellow countrymen of the Taehan Empire.

Min was known to have "fainted several times and vomited blood" at the news and mobilized a few like-minded officials to appeal to Kojong to annul the treaty. However, he was instead forced to retire and these efforts were silenced by Japanese interference. Min chose to end his life as an act of resistance and loyalty, an action that many others followed. Min's death was mourned by multitudes of his countrymen and foreign envoys, and his funeral was performed with dignity (Figure 3.7). Hwang Hyŏn recorded on Min's funeral in his book *Maech'ŏn Yarok*, "his body was bid farewell by the crying crowds from the court officials on the top to servants, housewives, street baggers and monks. Their wailing shook

[166] Upon his death, the letters were found in Min's clothing together with six calling cards. Five were addressed to the diplomatic representatives of China, Great Britain, the United States, France, and Germany. One addressed to fellow diplomats reads: "Yŏng-hwan has failed his country and the state of the nation. His plan for the people has come to an end. Only by dying can he repay the Emperor's grace and apologize to his twenty million fellow countrymen. He is already dead. Our twenty million citizens may be annihilated in the midst of their struggle for survival. Noble envoys, how can you not recognize Japan's purpose and also ignore Japan's actions? Noble envoys, Your Excellencies, if only you will take public opinion seriously, report to your esteemed governments and people, and assist our people's freedom and independence, even I, who am dying, will rejoice in the other world and be grateful. Oh Excellencies! Do not look upon Taehan lightly nor mistake the utter sincerity of our people." From the translation by Michael Finch in his book *Min Yŏng-hwan, The Selected Writings of a Late Chosŏn Diplomat* (2008), pp. 271-272.

the hills and fields. From Chŏng-dong to Han River, the imbricated crowds covered the streets. It has been long since we saw the crowds like this in the funeral."[167]

After his death the room where he took his life was kept intact with his bloodstained clothes and the knife he had used. In July 1906, eight months after his death, people reported that they discovered four stalks of bamboo trees growing under his clothes from beneath the floor. People believed they grew from Min's blood and began to call them "blood bamboo." Regardless of the story's validity, Min's blood bamboo became big news around the country, and people flocked to the house to see it. The nationalist civilian club *Taehan Kurakpu*, established in 1905, invited a photographer from the Japanese-run Kikuta Photo Studio to take photographs of the blood bamboo. The studio edited the photo together with Min's portrait photograph and created a photo print. The caption reads, "Blood Bamboo of Late Loyalist Min Yŏng-hwan, July 15th in the 10th Year of Kwangmu Reign, Photo Humbly Taken by Kikuta Photo Studio"[168] (Figure 3.8).

Then contemporary artist Yang Ki-hun drew the blood bamboo and also made it into a woodblock print. *Taehan maeil sinbo* published the images of the painting and the woodblock in its July 17 edition. In the same month the blood bamboo was put on public view, and the paintings and photographs were distributed widely through newspapers and commercial sales, signaling the kindling of counter-conduct of grassroot Koreans.

In 1907 Kojong tried to appeal the injustice of the protectorate to the World Peace Conference in Hague, Netherlands by sending secret missions, which failed due to Japan's

[167] Hwang Hyŏn, pp. 364-365.

[168] The original label in classical Chinese reads: "故閔忠正公泳煥血竹, 光武 10 年 7 月 15 日, 菊田寫眞館謹寫." Also see "Songs of Blood Bamboo – Kyŏjŏng Min Yŏng-hwan" by art historian Choi Yŏl, *Naeirŭl yŏnŭn yŏksa* (No. 49, December 2012), pp. 212-241.

interception. As a consequence, Kojong was dethroned by Japan's Resident-General. His supporters tried to disseminate his photo portraits, hoping to use the public power to restore the throne. This alarmed the Protectorate Resident-General and made him take legal measures to stop the spread of the portraits. He introduced the Meiji Japan's legal stipulations on the use of media materials into Korea. The new legal restriction was called the Kwangmu Newspaper Law, and controlled the production and circulation of "obscene" and "suspicious" materials within the country. This marked the first case of media control in Korea's modern history and was applied to newspapers and all print materials, including photographs. It allowed the banning any material that was deemed to threaten national security, diplomatic secrets, or peace of the society. The law applied much stricter rules than earlier censorship and registration requirements and targeted Korean media.[169]

Along with photographic images of nationalists, the national flag *T'aegŭkki* was the most popular device used by nonstate actors in the forming of national life. By 1905, it had earned an image as a national symbol, and was used to represent the state within Korea and abroad. Since the establishment of the protectorate, voluntary nonstate actors began to use it as a symbol of resistance. *T'aegŭkki* was empowered when combined with other nationalist elements.

The most noteworthy case that represented a combination of nationalist contents and modern visual tools is the one of An Jung-gŭn's assassination of Ito Hirobumi on October 25, 1909, a period when the Japanese protectorate had been strangling normal life in Korea. At a train station in Harbin, Manchuria, An Jung-gŭn, a Catholic nationalist activist, assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the former prime minister of Japan and then-Japan's Resident

[169] For differences between the Kwangmu Newspaper Law and the Meiji Newspaper Law, see: "A Comparative Study between the Kwangmu Newspaper Law and the Meiji Newspaper Law," by Han Yŏng-hak in *Han'guk ŏnron hakbo*, Vol.55 No.1 (February 2011), pp. 242-251.

General in Korea. Ito was the major architect of Meiji Japan's politics and served four times as prime minister in the Meiji cabinet. At that time he had just finished his four-year tenure as the first Resident-General of Korea under the Japanese Protectorate and was en route to Russia for a meeting with the Russian finance minister. An was immediately apprehended by Japanese police and executed four months later. The incident provoked the Japanese government's fury on the unruly Korean nationalists, especially because they were facing unceasing public resistance around the country. They eventually used the incident as a pretext for accelerating the official annexation of Korea on August 29, 1910.

An Jung-gŭn became the most iconic figure for Koreans due to his patriotism and heroic act. Less known, however, is the fact that as news of the assassination spread, so did his photographs, which included images of him in prison, his cut fingers, and the Korean national flag drawn with his blood from the cut fingers (Figures 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11). A few days prior to the incident, An and his colleagues produced the photo images of his cut fingers and the Korean flag drawn with his blood to distribute to public. Once the assassination was executed as planned, the Japanese photo studios acquired the photographs, made them into postcards, and sold them in and outside Korea. The photographs of An in the custody of the Japanese prison authority were likely taken by Japanese jail officers. According to the *Taehan mail sinbo* on Nov. 12, 1909, the image of An in custody was distributed by the Japanese protectorate government through the police stations as a warning to Koreans and as an example of a terrible criminal. However, the images made their way out of this official circle into the hands of Japanese commercial studios.[170]

[170] The *Taehan mail sinbo* report from Nov. 12, 1909.

Demand for these visual items soared within the country following the assassination. An became the most cherished figure of the time to Koreans within the country and overseas. Nationalist movement organizations in China and the United States printed and sold postcards with his images to raise funds for their independence activities. The Japanese authority found this disturbing and banned the production, circulation, and possession of An's images, using national security as their rationale. On March 31, 1910, *Taehan mail sinbo* reported, "Some Koreans were selling reproduced postcards made with An Jung-gŭn's photographs. As they were so popular, the Police Bureau of the colonial government banned the sale of the postcards and confiscated the remaining postcards, saying that the postcards are threats to national security."[171]

This confiscation caused the production and sales of these images to go underground, but their popularity continued. What is more interesting is that those who were actively involved in the reproduction and sales of the images of Japan's primary public enemy were mostly Japanese commercial photo studios and print shops that had better printing facilities than their Korean counterparts. By this time the photography business was heavily commercialized. Photographic contact zones had moved from the initial people-to-people contact basis to a commercial realm, and formed around commercial studios. Toward 1910 more and more commercial photo studios run by both Koreans and Japanese had spread around the country. Since photo taking was still not an inexpensive activity and many Koreans could not engage in it, An's episode demonstrates how the cultural desire for material possession of popular items and regional capitalism operated together to

[171] Ibid., March 31, 1910. The *Taehan Mail Sinbo*'s March 29 article says "Japanese photo studios reproduced An's photographs and sell them within and outside the country." Within a week, the same newspaper again reports "Now a great number of Koreans are buying the photographs of An. In particular, in the Pyŏngyang area, 300 copies of An's image were sold out in a second and many more people were ordering the photograph in photo studios." The *Taehan mail sinbo*, April 6, 1910.

disseminate the images on demand beyond national borders and sometimes even beyond national interests.

The sharing of visual evidence brought an unknown hero's patriotic act down to a personal level and helped the Korean public connect their individual emotions with the shared reality and history of their state. While it was a harbinger of imperial gazes, photography was transformed into a material medium or a device of counter-conduct that reinforced national identity and hardened ethnic resistance among Koreans. The general public was more effectively trained to participate in national resistance through possessing photographs.

Photographic performances or counter-performances can be observed in An and his colleagues, Korean and Japanese commercial studios, Japanese authorities, and many Koreans within the country and abroad who utilized the images for their own needs, both personal and communal. They demonstrate multiple crossings over imagined and unimagined borders of the nation, national interests, and religious decrees at this particular historical juncture. In the process, temporal photographic contact zones sporadically expanded and became transnational. The modern legal dimension of media control was also involved, and especially the commercial zeal shown by Japanese studios in regard to An's patriotic images attest to the fact that the business was profitable enough to justify taking the risk of being accused of treason. It reached a level that threatened the Japanese colonial authority, and thus immediately became an object of suppression. The Japanese protectorate authority, well aware of the power of photography as a tool for mass propaganda, decided to apply the clauses of the Meiji Japan's "Media Control Act" in 1907 in order to ban the photographic practices related to An's images of Koreans and those who were supporting

and encouraging them. However, due to photography's reproducible nature, the images continued to spread and were continuously consumed throughout the colonial period.[172]

Photography during this period shows that most of the Korean public participated in this new visual form not by direct practice but by possession, due to the still-high cost of photo taking. The images that were purchased and possessed were constructed at the crossroads of historical, personal, and communal interests. Various formats of photographic products such as prints, postcards, newspaper ads, and artistic reproductions such as woodblock prints became efficient vehicles to convey messages to the broad populace.

The building of the nation-state was a grassroots phenomenon backed by the "modern" consciousness of people living within a national boundary. Thus the abstract notion of the nation-state or nationhood involves the process of internalizing it in the minds of people. Min Yŏng-hwan's and An Jung-gŭn's cases demonstrate how this new form of visuality linked nonstate actors with different interests through the articulation of Korean nationalism.

[172] The images of An inspired similar nationalist acts amongst young Koreans throughout the colonial period. *Dong-A Daily Newspaper* reported on the attempt of assassination on the governor-general by a Korean man named Song Hak-sŏn. During the investigation, Song confessed that he grew up seeing the photographs of An and admired him. *Dong-A Daily Newspaper*, May 2 and July 26, 1926.

The First Pioneers of Photography

The official exposure to photography started with the opening, especially with the establishment of the photo studios by native Koreans in the early 1880s. However, unofficial level exposure took place much earlier than this. Even when photography was legally banned by the country, many Koreans experimented with the camera outside the country. People who traveled to Japan and China on diplomatic missions, in particular, often ventured out for photo taking. The oldest pictures of Koreans known today were taken as early as 1863 in Beijing, China by a delegation led by Lee Ŭi-ik. Lee and his people explored a Russian-owned photo studio in Beijing and went on a three-day-long adventure of photo taking (Figure 3.12). They could not bring the photographs home because their adventure was not sanctioned by the government; however, Lee made detailed observations on their experience in his official report, *Yŏnhaeng ch'orok*.[173] It is interesting that the Chosŏn envoy's "devious" adventures on government-sponsored overseas trips were neither punished nor unreported in official documents. Although the emissaries warned that the photographs could not be brought into the country until the opening, experimentations of that kind were not discouraged.

When King Kojong acquired political control from his father in 1873 he had just turned twenty-two. While his father's reform program was a conservative one aimed at perpetuating the royal authority and secluded from foreign influence, Kojong's reign

[173] As a winter emissary to Qing China, Chosŏn dispatched a delegation of seventy-five, led by Lee Ŭi-ik, in 1863. They arrived in Beijing in March and marveled at the influence of Western materials and technology. They were fascinated by photography and took their own photographs in a Russian photo studio, which included individual portraits and group photos (six exist today). Lee considered it exciting and exotic, especially since it was not permitted in Chosŏn. His Western experience was included in his official report, *Yeonhaeng ch'orok*, with careful observation of camera operation and the photo-making process. After this, photo taking became almost a ritual for emissaries overseas. See Pak Ju-sŏk's "First Encounter with Photography: Discovery of Photographs of Lee Ŭi-ik and his 1863 Envoy to China," (*Photo Journal AURA*, 2008).

presented a dramatic contrast. Pressured into open-door policies by increasing domestic enlightenment forces and threatened into trade and commerce by foreign powers, Kojong opened up the trade ports, signed treaties with foreign powers, and began to take measures to modernize his cabinet and country.

The 1876 signing of the Kwanghwa treaty also marked the first official photographic record produced by Japanese photographer Kawata Kiichi (河田紀一), who accompanied the Japanese delegation. A total of twenty-seven photographs were compiled into a photo album, with images of Japanese military ships anchored at the trade port Pusan, the landing and procession of the Japanese delegation on Kanghwa Island, the Korean delegation, the signing in Yŏnmudang, and various sites of Kanghwa Island including the town, fortress, and villages (Figures 3.13 and 3.14).

The treaty was signed by delegations headed by Sin Hŏn from Chosŏn and Kuroda Kiyotaka (黑田清隆) from Japan, and the representatives left daily records on the negotiation process and signing. On January 30, 1876, Sin Hŏn's record in his personal record of the mission, *Simhaeng ilgi* (Diary of a Journey to Kanghwa), noted that the Japanese delegation offered a photo-taking opportunity but he had to decline:[174] "Miyamoto Okazu sent a message saying that 'Among our delegation, there is a very skillful photographer. I will send him right away if you want to take a photo.' So I sent a response that 'I am very thankful for your suggestion but I am not feeling well and can't stay sitting outside for long and I will have to let this chance go.'"

[174] Simhaeng was an old name for Kanghwa. *Simhaeng ilgi* is Sin Hŏn's record of the period from January 7 to February 4, 1876 of the delegation's negotiation and signing of the treaty with their Japanese counterpart.

The delegations exchanged many gifts. The gifts sent by the Japanese delegation included some paintings and a photo album of major tourist locations. After looking through them Sin expressed awe about the photographer, saying that "it was amazingly precise and the photographer must have established his fame through this."[175] Japanese delegate Kuroda's record in *Sasŏn ilgi* (Diary of Envoy to Chosŏn) has some discrepancy in the records of the same day: "We sent Kawata Kiichi with camera equipment as the Kanghwa Magistrate requested."[176] Four days later the treaty was signed and the delegations were photographed.

In the early 1880s, within a few years of the opening, three photo studios were open for business in downtown Seoul. They were short-lived due to political as well as personal turmoil. Unfortunately, their stories have not been the focus of much study, mainly because of the lack of available information. Nonetheless, it is clear that they pushed the horizon of visual modernity through creating the face of the nation. Further research and new sources in the future will bring more light to their stories.

All three Korean photographic pioneers shared the commonalities of unique backgrounds in social status and education, strong ties to King Kojong and his modernization policy, and short-lived engagement in the photography business. They were the direct beneficiaries of Kojong's modernization drive. The stories of all three are directly or indirectly related to the 1884 Kapsin Coup. This section examines their dedication and limitations in the making of a modern vision in the early period of photographic history.

[175] *Simheang ilgi: The Treaty of Kanghwa Recorded by Chosŏn*, Purŭn Yŏksa Publishing (translated and published in 2010), pp. 296-297.

[176] Ibid., pp. 364-365.

Kojong's reform intended to introduce modern techniques and self-strengthening tools, of which photography was one. The government initially viewed photography as a means of assisting its modernization drive, believing that it would promote policies and diplomatic relations. It invested in training people overseas and opening photo studios. Kim Yong-wŏn and Ji Un-yŏng, two of the three pioneers of photography in Korea, were sent to Japan to study photographic technology and related sciences as members of the government-sponsored overseas study, whereas Hwang Ch'ŏl learned it from his own personal interest by visiting China and Japan. Kim Yong-wŏn and Hwang Ch'ŏl opened their studios in 1883 and Ji Un-yŏng in February of the following year. Kim Yong-wŏn first experienced photography as a member of the Gentlemen's Mission in 1876, during which he was assigned to purchase technical devices such as machinery, guns, and ore. On returning home he was introduced to Japanese photographers in Pusan through the Japanese envoy Hanabusa Yoshitada. Kim joined the 1881 envoy to Japan to learn Japan's advanced technical fields. This time he stayed behind to learn chemistry and sorting techniques of gold and silver that were necessary for producing glass plates and sensitizer for the camera.[177]

On February 14, 1884, *Hansŏng sunbo* advertised Kim and Ji's studios:

> Last year, Kim Yongwŏn who had served as an *uhu* established Ch'waryŏng-guk (the Photography Center) in Jŏ-dong. He invited a Japanese, Honda Shunosuke, to help him open it. This year, Ji Un-yŏng in Ma-dong, who served as a low officer of Oemu Amun (Office of Foreign Affairs) established Ch'waryŏng-guk. It is known that the skills of all three are highly delicate.[178]

[177] Lee Eun-ju. "Introduction of Photography Technology during the Opening Period and Its Influence: Focusing on Kim Yongwon's activities," *Jindan Hakbo*. 2002, pp. 160-163.

[178] *Hansŏng sunbo* (the Capital Gazette), February 14, 1884. *Uhu* is an upper-middle level military position.

Kim Yong-wŏn's Ch'waryŏng-guk (the Photography Center) was located in Jŏ-dong, near Myŏngdong, in downtown Seoul. After assisting Kim Yong-wŏn in opening his studio, Honda Shunoske opened his own studio in Supogyo near Mt. Namsan in Seoul, which later became a target of public outrage after the Kapsin Coup. The question of whether Kim Yong-wŏn's Ch'waryŏng-guk was a government-sponsored organization or a completely private one has still not been confirmed, due to the limited record. Kojong sent Kim Yong-wŏn on a secret mission to Russia in December 1884. He could not return from the mission and died in exile in 1891. Little is known about what happened to the studio except that it was closed down.

Lee Eun-ju has written a detailed article about the nature of Kim's Ch'waryŏng-guk, focusing on whether it was established as a government branch or a privately funded commercial studio. She argues that the government trained Kim in Japan as part of the state's modernization drive; it is thus highly likely that his Ch'waryŏng-guk was at least a half-governmental and half-private entity and possibly a completely governmental unit.[179] However, some scholars oppose this interpretation. Kwon Haeng-ga points out that chemistry and ore-related studies were the primary official mission assigned to Kim in Japan. As a result, the study of photography would have been more of a byproduct of his personal interest rather than his primary assignment from the government. According to Kwon's explanation, Kim's opening of a photo studio can hardly be interpreted as a direct product of government support.[180]

[179] Lee Eun-ju, pp. 160-163.

[180] Kwon, Haeng'ga (2005), pp. 32-33.

Ji Un-yŏng learned Chinese classics from Kang Wui, who was a disciple of the famous literati and innovative calligrapher Kim Chŏng-hee. He participated in a liberal literary club called *Yuk'kyo Sisa* (Yuk'kyo Poetic Gathering) that included reform-minded *chungin* interpreters, technicians, and administrators.[181] In 1882 he was sent to Japan as a member of the apology envoy headed by Park Yŏng-hyo after the Imo Mutiny. Taking advantage of his experience in Japan, he learned photography from Heimura Tokubei in Kobe. In the following year he made another trip to Japan for the same purpose.[182] Upon his return in February 1884, he opened his own studio and photo supply store in Ma-dong, across the Chongmyo in today's Chongno. In the following month Ji photographed King Kojong and the crown prince with Percival Lowell, an American diplomat and scientist.

The Japan-sponsored Kapsin coup of 1884 shocked the Chosŏn government's modernization drive, and an infuriated crowd inflicted serious damage on the nation's first photo studios. Ji was associated with the reformers who organized the coup, but he was outside the country visiting Japan when the coup took place in December 1884. Despite his association with the convicted coup leaders, King Kojong commissioned Ji with the assassination of Kim Ok-kyun, the mastermind of the coup who fled to Japan when Ji came back to Korea. Ji followed the royal order and left the country. The assassination was not accomplished and Ji was put into exile by the king until 1895. After that he vanishes from the photography-related records; he was known to have spent the rest of his life as a painter.

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[181] *Yuk'kyo Sisa* started as a literary club for a small number of *chungin* administrators right after the Opening. It grew into a reformist association that attracted reform-minded intellectuals across the classes and played a leading role in modernizing the country. The leading intellectuals, such as military personnel Kang Wui and interpreter Oh Kyŏng-sŏk who learned from Kim Jŏng-hee, linked the traditional Party of Northern Learning (Pukhak pa) and the reformist general. Yuk'kyo refers to a village behind the current Kwangkyo in Seoul. Chŏng Ok-ja, *A Study of Chungin Culture in Late Chosŏn* (2003).

[182] Choi In-jin (1999), p. 108.

Kim Yong-wŏn and Ji Un-yŏng, both of *chungin* origin, did not leave any photographs that can be attributed as their work except for Ji's portraits of Kojong and the crown prince that will be discussed in the next chapter. Unfortunately the royal missions also interrupted their professions as photographers. In contrast, Hwang Ch'ŏl, a reform-minded *yangban* who was talented in calligraphy and drawing, self-sponsored his study on photography and dedicated himself to the new visual form for about ten years until the Kabo reforms in 1894. When the Kabo reforms began he was appointed as a local magistrate and a couple of government positions thereafter, and thus left his photo studio business. His public life in government appointments was not peaceful at all, but he appeared to have found refuge in photography and drawings in his later life. He is also known to have had a close relationship with Ji Un-yŏng.[183]

Hwang first learned photography in 1882 in Shanghai, China, and opened a photo studio at his house in Daean-dong, Seoul in 1883. According to his biography written by his son, his photo studio was damaged during the 1884 coup but reopened in Pukch'on in 1886. Hwang made great efforts to research and introduce camera technology to Chosŏn in the early 1880s. From 1883 to 1894 he photographed palaces, architecture, streets, scenes of the four gates at the entrance of the capital, and village life. This coincided with the period when foreign visitors started to capture images of Korea around the country and publish them in books, postcards, and stereographs outside Korea. Unlike the two other pioneers, over eighty

[183] Yun Bŏm-mo, "Introduction of Photography to Korea and Pioneer Hwang Ch'ŏl," *Han'guk kŭndaemisul: sidaejŏngsin'gwa chŏngch'esŏngŭi t'amgu* (2000), pp. 92-93.

photographs produced by Hwang were inherited by his son and many of them are available today.[184]

Hwang used his photographs of major sites around town as souvenirs for foreign diplomats visiting Korea. He must have deemed these sites as representative of the Chosŏn dynasty or worth remembering. Creating visual souvenirs for foreigners to promote national images of Chosŏn was quite an innovative idea. Hwang may have learned it from his overseas trips to China and Japan. However, these activities were viewed with suspicion by some government officials. Hwang was accused of espionage, but soon released thanks to the help of Min Byŏng-sŏk, a member of the Min clan.[185] Ironically within a few years the Chosŏn government followed Hwang's pioneering activity by producing photographs for diplomatic consumption. Notably, in 1900 it hired Charles Aleveque, a French teacher staying in Korea, to produce postcards with images of palaces and street scenes for foreign visitors.[186]

Hwang Ch'ŏl was also vocal about the gloomy future of Tohwa-sŏ (Office of Maps and Paintings) in the age of modern visual technology, and petitioned the government to replace it with photography.[187] The petition was not accepted at that time, but Tohwa-sŏ

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[184] Much of the record of Hwang Ch'ŏl's activities relies on Hwang's biography by his son. Hwang Ch'i-mun *Ŏmun'gong Chŏn'gi* (A Biography of Minister Ŏmun), (1954).

[185] Yun Bŏm-mo, pp. 82-83.

[186] Choi In-jin (1999), p. 107.

[187] *Ŏmun'gong Chŏn'gi* (A Biography of Minister Ŏmun), written by his son, Hwang Ch'i-mun, in Japanese in 1954. It was reorganized and translated into Korean by his grandson, Hwang Tae-yong, in 1990. The book introduced his espionage case and petition to Tohwa-sŏ as follows: "1883, Twentieth Reign Year of King Kojong (20 years old): Hwang renovated a part of his house and opened a photo studio. He made visits to take images of palaces and major landscapes to distribute them to friends and foreign visitors. Someone accused him of spying on national security information for foreigners and he appealed to the King and Queen by explaining the similar practices of foreign countries. He was acquitted of the charge. At that time, Hwang also petitioned to the King, saying, 'Please abolish the Tohwa-sŏ and replace it with photographs,' and the king responded he would wait until a later day." Yun Bŏm-mo, p. 83; Choi (1999), p. 160.

soon faced the fate that Hwang had predicted. Hwang clearly had a precise understanding of the status of visual transformation and its power in the country.

Hwang Ch'ŏl has left some interesting photographs that demand in-depth study. His studio work from the early 1880s on women and children strike viewers not only because of his skilled photographic technique but also because of the way he dealt with the subject matter—sensitive and delicate subjects in colonial photography in particular (Figure 3.15). His photographs provide an interesting vantage point vis-à-vis foreigners' images of Korean women and children. Also, his landscape images such as Kwanghwa-mun that depict the architectural grandeur of the gate with Mt. Pukhan in the background and the images of downtown Seoul were the sites most frequently visualized and typified in many foreigners' photographs in this period (Figures 3.16 and 3.17).

Although Hwang's works were only available in limited quantity, they raise some important questions for further research, such as whether his photographic work was a discovery of his own culture and landscape or a representation thereof, and whether as a native photographer the similarity of his choice of subject matter to that of many foreigners was a coincidence. These questions lead to a troublesome question on the borderline between the native gaze and the foreign gaze, whether they overlap, and if so, when and why they do. Most of all, it is hoped that further research will help answer whether these photographs also contributed to the fixation of images of Korea. With great potential for future research, Hwang Ch'ŏl's photographs, along with Kim Jun-gŭn's export genre paintings, shed light on answering how the stereotypes of Koreanness were formulated, produced, and reproduced with/out interactions and mutual influences between the local and the foreign.

The first age of the native photo studios concluded as both Kim Yong-wŏn and Ji Un-yŏng were diverted to Kojong's secret missions to Russia and Japan, and Hwang Chŏl's public service after 1895 interfered with his photographic activities. Over the course, Tohwa-sŏ gradually lost its functionality and in 1894 was downgraded from the auspices of the Ministry of the Rites to a unit under the Royal Library (Kyujang-gak). Its name then disappeared from the government organization structure around 1903 after the completion of the second *Ŏjin* Togam.[188] However, the decline of Tohwa-sŏ did not lead to the creation of a photography unit in the government. The Chosŏn court continued to use photographs by hiring a couple of affiliated Japanese photographers who had studios in downtown Seoul.[189] Interestingly, the official government records maintain their consistent silence on this practice as well.

Conclusion

For the first eight years from the opening until the Kapsin Coup, the reform effort of King Kojong was ambitious and massive. In 1880 Kojong reshaped his cabinet with a new highest-level office, the Office of Management and State Affairs (T'ongni Kimu Amun) to oversee and coordinate the government's reform programs. Foreign missions to Japan, China, and the United States were dispatched to observe and learn from the forerunners, and foreign advisors were hired to renovate or begin modern programs in various sectors of the government including the military, foreign affairs, finance, postal service, and customs. The

[188] According to Lee Eun-ju, the exact date of Tohwa-sŏ's official abolition is unknown. Based on *Jŭngbo Munhŏn Bigo* (Expanded References of Literatures) published between 1903 and 1908, it records: "Tohwa-sŏ was established in the early Chosŏn dynasty but does not exist any longer." Lee speculated that it was abolished sometime between 1902 and 1903. Lee Eun-ju, p. 166.

[189] Among the six studios run by Japanese photographers in the capital in 1901, Murakami Tensin Studio was a royal affiliate that took most court photographs. Choi In-jin (1999), p. 218.

state also established new factories or units of production that incorporated modern technologies in textiles, paper, telegraph, nurseries, ranching, cigarettes, issuing money, coal mining, wine making and brewing, and even making rice cakes. The gradual incorporation of modern education was also put in place.

The first photo studios were established in the early 1880s, but none created sustainable links with the Pangmun'guk (the Office of Culture and Information), a government office, for the possibility of publishing in newspapers, nor was photography linked to the Chŏnhwan-guk (Office of Printing Money) to provide photographic images for use in printing paper money. Thus photography was not really functioning within a sustainable network of organization. In short, the initial institutional effort to incorporate photography failed to create a lasting impact on the country's visual and media culture at the institutional level.

However, early photography in Korea prevailed in the minds of Korean people with the changing concepts of time and space, self and others, and tradition and modern while struggling to take root within the institutional realm of the government. The Japanese commercial studios popularized portrait photos and became places where people went for images of commemorative pictures, recording pictures, wedding pictures, or funeral pictures. In particular, issues such as the Haircut Edict that abolished their most-cherished Confucian practice of top-knots sparked the sudden increase of demand for portrait paintings and photographs to record their traditional identity in visual form. Thus the portraits of this period show the patterned combination of the semiotic codes of the modern and traditional on various levels, through which Koreans participated in homogeneous cultural behavior. Due to the material and logistic restrictions of photography during this period, their

photographic practices often centered around the nonmaterial dimensions of desire, fantasy, and animosity, as well as possession of mass-produced images, rather than the direct practice of photo taking.

To contemporary observers the abundance of photographic images that display the lives of common people and landscapes of Korea suggests a major visual shift in cultural focus, from elite centered to commoner centered. In fact, the ongoing social changes of the period speak to the spread of the notions of equality and democracy, as found in the example of the Ten Thousand Assembly's meetings. Most of all, photographic penetration into the social and cultural lives of Koreans was paramount in their growing sense of nationalism in resisting foreign domination. Photographs of figures and nationalist items circulated widely as forms of counter-conduct, a soft form of resistance in the Foucaudian sense, through an international network of commercial studios led by Japanese and overseas Koreans in nationalist movements. All in all, photography, despite the lack of an institutional and commercial foundation, responded to the needs and concerns of Koreans during this early period.

CHAPTER FOUR

King Kojong's Body Politics and Photography, 1876-1896

In negotiating the old and the new to create a visual regime, King Kojong was salient as a decision maker as well as a connoisseur himself. The nature and boundaries of Chosŏn's visual modernity resonated in his reform drives. However, when it comes to evaluating his modernization policy, most discourses and research tend to largely focus on the political and ideological aspects of the regime. Within this context, the revolutionary transition of visual culture initiated by the monarch has been overshadowed and downplayed by his eventual failure in safeguarding the country's sovereignty from colonial rule. Kojong's initial modernization program included overseas training of native photographers, establishing the country's first photo studio and printing office, hiring foreign professionals in the administration, and the building of many government institutes that incorporated modern skills. He personally welcomed these visual adventures.

However, the Chosŏn court's official visual approaches were ambiguous, anachronistic, and even contradictory in practice while Kojong publicly broke many traditional norms. Over the course of the visual transition from Chosŏn's *ŏjin* (royal portrait painting) tradition to a mixed form of royal representation, there was a noticeable gap between Kojong's initial visual drive and the subsequent implementation of official policy, and a clear dissonance between royal photographic practices and the relevant court records.

The inconsistency of the court's approach to photography has thus made evaluation of the Chosŏn court's visual regime in this period challenging. However, a reading of historical documents through the silence, dissonance, and ambiguity allows one to argue that during this period the Chosŏn court maintained a consistent approach to its visual policy. Within this approach, photography was accepted as one of the important cultural symbols for modernization although it was not adopted as an official state device as Meiji Japan did, the country from which Chosŏn learned photography.

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the visual regime and Kojong's body politics, this chapter examines the transition and influence of the royal visual culture in relation to the modern visual technology of photography, and reconsiders its historical and cultural implications. In doing so, it evaluates the royal photographic adventures and new visual policy as hybrid modern approaches that were effective until the establishment of the Taehan Empire in 1897.

Visual Tradition of *Ŏjin*: Presence through Absence

Chosŏn was a Confucian state built under revolutionary Confucian ideologies. The scholar-officials of *yangban* were the founders and rulers of the Chosŏn dynasty. They designed the country to be a centralized bureaucracy centered on hereditary kings, in which kings could exercise power only through political negotiations with the ruling scholar-officials that dominated the state bureaucratic system. Chosŏn kings did not hold sufficient power and their subjects in the court challenged the kings, which occasionally resulted in feuds.[190] The royal portrait paintings, *ŏjin*, were developed as a visual apparatus to display

[190] Michael Seth, *A History of Korea*, p. 152.

and bolster the king's political power, legitimacy, and mandate of heaven. Along with theatrical performances, the symbolic meanings of *ŏjin* were built around their material presence and visibility as well as the absence and invisibility thereof.

A king was equal to the state in traditional society. Royal portraits were thus one major apparatus by which the state could maximize the extrapolation of the royal power through the medium of royal body. Due partly to the internal power balance or to secure a stronger position in the political seesawing at court, Chosŏn kings lavishly spent state resources to externalize the symbolic greatness of monarchs. This was done through the painting of portraits of incumbent as well as deceased kings and, in conjunction with them, holding extravagant ceremonies involving complex protocol that created mnemonic sites around the country. Indeed, *ŏjin* production was often accompanied by tension with the king's subjects.[191]

In the Chosŏn dynasty the public was not allowed access to visuals of the king.[192] With no visual reference available to the general public, the king was imagined, revered, and hence enlarged beyond his actual size as the head of state. Contradictorily, Chosŏn kings were actively visualized and their images were used for political purposes. How the Chosŏn court reached out to its people without the exposure of visual references is a story of unique body politics.

[191] Cho In-su, "Production and Dedication of *Ŏjin* in Late Chosŏn," conference paper published by the National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, pp. 11-12. Cho argues that Chosŏn kings wanted to more portraits drawn and dedicated in more *jinjŏn*s, but their wishes were often opposed by their subjects, who did not want to compromise politically on *ŏjin* projects.

[192] Chosŏn had some commonalities with and influenced from China under the umbrella of the Confucian civilization in terms that commoners were prohibited from seeing or possessing the images of emperors. However, in China, more diverse formats of imperial portraitures were produced not only for political purposes, but also for informal purposes for "small groups of friends and associates." Jan Stuart & Evelyn Rawski, *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits*, 2001, p. 38; Dona Ching, *Icons of Rulership: Imperial Portraiture during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)*, 2011, p. 35.

Throughout the Chosŏn period, many *ŏjin* paintings were produced and reproduced through meticulous rituals as material symbols of dignity and legitimacy of royal power. The production of the king's portrait paintings was regularly conducted, highly ritualized, and politicized. The visualized body of the king was monopolized by the state in particular ways that the Chosŏn dynasty developed in its ideological tradition. The term *ŏjin* was used to exclusively denote the king's portraits; it was first adopted in 1713 when King Kyŏngjong commissioned a copy of his deceased father King Sukjong's portrait. According to art historian Cho Sŏn-mi, the term was adopted to consolidate the visual power at the height of the dynasty's efforts to reshuffle and reorganize state power surrounding the monarch in post-Imjin War Chosŏn. Before *ŏjin* was officially selected, several terms were used interchangeably to refer to royal portraits. After deliberative considerations within the court, *ŏjin* was chosen to refer to king's portraits and *jinjŏn* to the pavilions that housed *ŏjin* paintings.[193] Based on the new system of nomenclature, dozens of titles, related terms, and names of institutions were revised and adopted accordingly.[194] Following the introduction of photography, kings' photographic portraits were referred to as *ŏsajin* (a combination of *ŏ* for the king and *sajin* for photography), but the term *ŏjin* was also used to indicate kings' photographic portraits. The concurrent use of the two terms for photographs has added great confusion to the research of the early photography.

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[193] The record on the tradition of *ŏjin* and *jinjŏn* dates back to the Koryŏ period, though the terms appear during this period. According to art historian Cho In-su, Koryo courts drew kings' portrait paintings and stored them in separate buildings, often within Buddhism temples around the country. Cho In-su, "*Ŏjin* production and operation of *jinjŏn* for King Taejo – Focusing on the Reigns of Taejo and Taejong" *Misulsawa sigangmunhwa*, Vol. 3, No. 0 (2004), pp. 122-123.

[194] Cho Sŏn-mi states that terms such *as yŏngjŏng, ŏyong, sŏngyong, wangyŏng, jin, yŏngja, yŏngjŏng*, and *shuiyong* were used interchangeably to refer to the king's portraits until 1713. "A Study on the Production Procedures of *Ŏjin* in Chosŏn," *Mihak*, Vol. 6, No. 0 (1979), p. 5.

Major state projects of *ŏjin* rarely took place, from only a few times to none under each reign. This means that *ŏjin* projects required the consolidation of a great amount of political power and state revenue to plan, produce, dedicate, house, and preserve them. Painting the incumbent monarch required the king to sit for many hours, and court painters wasted many drawings until they agreed on the final version. The *ŏjin* projects sometimes targeted portraying kings other than the incumbent; they often included the redrawing and copying of deceased kings who were powerful and popular, such as King T'aejo, the founder of Chosŏn, and King Yŏngjo, the king of the Confucian renaissance.[195]

For a large-scale *ŏjin* project, a commission called *Ŏjin* Togam (Commission of *Ŏjin* Drawing) was formed to hold unrestricted authority for collecting diverse state resources for the project. Administratively, the Tohwa-sŏ (Department of Maps and Paintings) was a court unit under the Ministry of Rites, responsible for visual materials. Tohwa-sŏ, consisting of two functional units for creating maps (*to*) and paintings (*hwa*), not only operated as the state recorder of small and large national affairs and events, but also educated court painters and led artistic trends in the country. Once an *Ŏjin* Togam (Commission of *Ŏjin* Drawing) was formed, Togam took over the responsibilities of Tohwa-sŏ since the commissions were headed by either the king or one of the highest-ranking officials, which gave the project supreme priority for the consumption of state resources. With the introduction of modern visual tools, in particular photography, Tohwa-sŏ experienced fatal challenges and was dissolved at the end of the century.[196]

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[195] Ibid. Cho Sŏn-mi divides *ŏjin* drawings into three categories: *tosa* (drawings of incumbent kings), *chusa* (drawings of deceased kings), and *mosa* (duplicating existing *ŏjin*s), pp. 5-6.

[196] Kwon Haeng'ga (2005), pp. 32-33.

A large number of *ŏjin*s were produced during the Chosŏn era. However, an ad-hoc *Ŏjin* Togam commission was established only five times throughout the period. It is also noteworthy that two out of the five *Ŏjin* Togams in the country's five hundred years of history were commissioned under Kojong's reign in the late nineteenth century. The first was in 1872 before taking political power from his father, and another in 1900 during the process of empowering the Taehan Empire. These occurred at politically critical junctures of Kojong's regime as well as the Chosŏn dynasty's destiny, and were significant reflections of the body politics through which the state's desperate need of visual authority was deployed.

In 1872 Kojong's father, Taewŏngun, was ruling the country as a regent. Creating the 1872 commission was Taewŏngun's decision. Taewŏngun intended to consolidate the state power that had been stressed by long *sedo* politics by royal consort families and increasing foreign skirmishes. The project was intended to draw Kojong's *ŏjin*s and redraw the founder King T'aejo's *ŏjin*s to commemorate the 480th anniversary of Chosŏn's foundation in 1392.[197] Taewŏngun appointed King Kojong, his twenty-year-old son and king, to direct the commission. Kojong engaged in the project extensively, making numerous decisions and choices as if he was preparing to take political control power from his father, as he did in the following year. This project undoubtedly presented him an opportunity to learn about the symbolic power of the traditional *ŏjin*s as visual devices.[198]

The second commission took place in 1900 at the order of Emperor Kojong. In 1897 Kojong changed the title of the state to the Taehan Empire and announced the so-called *Taehan Chekuk Kukche* (Taehan Imperial System) in 1899, which declared him to be an

[197] *Ŏjindogamŭigwae* (Records of *Ŏjin* Drawings) (1872).

[198] Kwon Haeng-ga (2005), p. 22.

emperor who held administrative, legislative, judiciary, and military power over the country.[199] Kojong needed strong support from his people at the beginning of this new empire and decided to appeal his people with traditional visual authority.

Once *ŏjin*s were drawn and chosen by the king and a handful of his subjects, court painters produced multiple copies of the same *ŏjin* around the country to be stored. The images were sealed off and blocked from viewing except on rare occasions. The finished *ŏjin*s were dedicated at various preservation locations, called *jinjŏn*s, throughout the country. These sites included the capital and several major cities such as Yŏnghŭng, Pyŏngyang, Kaesŏng, Kyŏngju, and Chŏnju.[200] The *ŏjin*s were moved to their destinations through ritualized *ŏjin* processions. When and where these processions passed were carefully planned so that local people along the route, especially those in the *jinjŏn* cities, could come and participate in the state's theatrical event. Once consecrated, *ŏjin*s were enclosed within the walls of the *jinjŏn*.

After being sealed off from public view, the visual power of *ŏjin* emanated from its invisibility, not its visibility. Out of invisibility and the enclosure of *ŏjins*, a tremendous amount of visual and symbolic power was generated through the extensive protocol surrounding them, within which the Chosŏn court successfully managed to equate visual *ŏjins* with the state itself. In other words, *ŏjin*s were never put on public display or subject to personal possession, exchange, or sale.[201] The kings' images were not allowed to be given to foreigners or leave the boundaries of the country, just like the king's body. The dynasty

[199] Records of *Ŏjin* Drawings (1899).

[200] The *Jinjŏn* in Yŏnghŭng, named as Junwonjŏn, was the first *jinjŏn* that was established in Chosŏn Dynasty. Yŏnghŭng is a town where the father of the founding father, T'aejo, lived and King T'aejo was born. It was first designated as a *jinjŏn* in the seventh year of T'aejo's reign. Cho In-su, p. 124.

[201] Kwon Haeng-ga, "King Kojong's Portrait and the Advent of Photography in Korea," *International Journal of Korean Arts and Archaeology*, Vol.5, No.0 (2011), p. 59-60.

hoped that *ŏjin* projects would generate the mythical authority of the kings. Through the conspicuous consumption of royal images, the court could strengthen its power over the people and reinstate the legitimacy of the royal bloodline. This was especially significant when national unity was essential or under threat.

In Chosŏn's painting tradition, portraiture did not simply aim at approximating the bodily appearance of a sitter as closely as possible. Instead, it was intended to portray the spirit of the sitter through the gaze of the painter. They used a combination of realistic representation and a stereotyped template to depict the inner quality of the sitter. Reflecting this tradition, *ŏjin*s depicted kings realistically but at the same time adopted the symbolism of a patriarchal Confucian leader with his body parts, posture, and choice of objects, such as a royal chair and a royal folding screen called *sansu obongbyŏng* (folding screen with a painting of a landscape and the five peaks) (Figure 4.1). Thus *ŏjin* paintings were not completely the painter's creative expressions;[202] they were the result of meticulous teamwork that maximized political symbolism. Not only the *ŏjin*s themselves but also the royal items drawn in *ŏjin*s were abstracted as symbols for the monarch. The royal chair and the royal folding screen were used in place of the king himself at court, reminding people of the kingly presence even during his absence. Through symbolic devices such as *ŏjin*s and kingly objects as well as the accompanying complex rituals and protocol, a Chosŏn king was made omnipresent.

Changing Body Politics: From Invisible to Visible

Before the Taehan Empire, Kojong's visual practices centered around his radical adventures that had broken the traditional visual norms on multiple levels. Kojong took his

[202] Cho Sŏn-mi, "A Pictorial Approach to Chosŏn Portraits," *Mihak*, Vol. 7, No. 0 (1981), pp. 11-12.

first photographs in 1884, which marked a radical transition of the royal body from invisible to visible, from traditional *ŏjin*s to modern photographic *ŏjin*, and from an authoritative monarch to a popular one. This was also revolutionary because it signaled that gazing on the monarch was now permissible. This visual revolution quietly took place overnight without any political debates at the court. Coming from its strong Confucian *ŏjin* tradition and the common court debates on details of royal protocol and appropriate Confucian manners, this unusual silence in the court documents demands special attention in order to understand the broader historical implications of the visual transformation.

Confucianism created a stronghold of Chosŏn society and culture for over five hundred years, within which the body was believed to be a tangible medium for displaying Confucian filial piety to parents and ancestors. Keeping one's body intact and undamaged from head to toe was a Confucian norm required for all.[203] The use of the body for overt political purposes was thus limited to public admonitions, such as displaying the humiliated bodies of criminals as a warning to the public. As the apex of Confucian polity, the Chosŏn court used discretion and developed highly sophisticated, subtle, and indirect methods in using the royal body for political rituals. The public was expected to observe and participate in theatrical processions, celebrations, and rituals that exteriorized their kings' presence and power with the presence of veiled *ŏjin*. By keeping the royal body invisible to the public, the Chosŏn court intended to enhance kingly authority and sacredness. This was one of the ways that the state reproduced its governing system through visual power.[204]

[203] "身體髮膚 受之父母 不敢毀傷 孝之始也" (Our body, hair and skin were given by parents, thus not daring to damage or injure them is the beginning of the filial piety.) *Classic of Filial Piety.*

[204] Cho Sun-mi (1979), pp. 3-23.

Body politics has existed in all societies, but became more forceful and complex in the modern visual world. With the introduction of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, bodies of politicians efficiently reached a broader population through political statements. In Korea the body of the king in the photograph was exposed to the public for the first time in order to generate, revise, or modernize the ideas of "nation" and "nationhood." Photographs of His Majesty were taken by foreigners and circulated outside the country. They were also put on sale and made available for personal possession. This exposure of the royal body was not only unprecedented but also contradicted Confucian ideology. For example, the most idealized visual representation of a monarch in Confucianism was the one sitting in the Bright Hall (明堂), a quiet and secretive location in the court, facing south (南面), out of reach of even his own subjects let alone his people outside the court.[205]

King Kojong played an important role in the transformation of the traditional concepts of *ŏjin* and implementing new modern visual practices. Kojong was known to have enjoyed taking photos himself, and allowed foreign photographers of different nationalities to take numerous pictures of him. Kojong's photo images in various postures, clothes, and locations were produced in diverse formats over a twenty-year period as the king, from 1876 to 1896. Alongside photographic images, his portraits were also produced in Western mediums such as oil painting and illustration. Mixing the mediums, such as drawings from photographs, color painting on photographs, or mixing paintings and photographic images together was unique to this period.

[205] Regarding the legendary Chinese Emperor Shun who was believed to be an ideal Confucian ruler, the *Analects* states, "The one who achieved good rule through doing nothing was perhaps Emperor Shun! What did he do? He conducted himself respectfully, facing due south. That is it." From 15:5 in "Wei Linggong (衛靈公, Duke Ling of the Wei)" of the *Analects*. The *Record of Rites* also mentions "Mingtang (Bright Hall)" in multiple places.

Kojong's photographic images were transformed in three stages, divided by his modern haircut in 1895 and later as a modern emperor in 1897. In the earliest photographs (1876-1894) Kojong appeared, either sitting or standing, as a traditional monarch in *kollyongp'o*, a red robe with a large, round embroidered dragon emblem, which was typical clothing that Chosŏn kings wore for daily activities. During this period his visuality rarely purported to be a device to impress his people; instead, it mostly served diplomatic purposes. It was also around this time that Chosŏn's long tradition of royal *ŏjin* portraits began to decline.

The second stage spans the period from when the pro-Japanese Kabo Cabinet reformed military uniforms and announced the Haircut Edict of *Tanballyŏng* in 1895 until the establishment of the Taehan Empire in 1897. Images of Kojong and the crown prince began to show them with short hair and wearing military uniforms. They cut their hair before anyone else to enforce the edict on the public. It is unclear whether Kojong's haircut was voluntary. No matter how modern and beneficial the edict was, it occurred as a forced reform and was viewed as shaking up one of the most visible and proud fundamentals of Confucian society. The news and images of the haircuts created public uproar, through which Kojong's body entered the nationwide political discourse. The last stage ranges from 1897 through 1907 when Kojong appeared not only in traditional royal clothing but also in Western military uniforms, remaking himself as a modern emperor.

Kojong's attitude toward photography was different from Emperor Meiji (r. 1867-1912), who was known to have disliked photo taking. It is also ironic that the Chosŏn court and Meiji Japan shared a commonality in that both courts had policy approaches that did not match their monarchs' personal tastes on photo taking. The Meiji emperor had only three

official photographic portraits throughout his forty-five years of reign. After the Restoration in 1868, the Meiji government was in dire need of creating a modern emperor system, and lifted the emperor from a religious head sitting in Kyoto to a political head of state in Tokyo. To do this, the imperial body was refashioned into photographic representations that demonstrated political and military rigor and charisma, with a limited number of images. The Meiji emperor neither directed nor engaged the creation and display of his visual regime, whereas Kojong implemented the visual policies.

The very first photograph of Emperor Meiji, taken in 1872, captured him in traditional, extravagant *sokutai* formal court dress[206] (Figure 4.2). Emperor Meiji cut off his top-knot that year and began wearing Western-style clothing the following year. The second photograph, which was circulated both in Japan and the West, was taken in 1873 and shows him in a Western-style dress uniform[207] (Figure 4.3). The most widely circulated photo image of Emperor Meiji was the third one created in 1888 by Italian artist Edoardo Chiossone (Figure 4.4). In this portrait Emperor Meiji presents a very masculinized, active and militaristic image in a Western military uniform, and a huge difference in his physiological and even facial look from the first two photographs. The image is recognized as a reconstruction, not an actual photograph of the emperor himself. Chiossone, an Italian engraver and painter employed by Japan's Mint Bureau, produced this image through three

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[206] See T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 1996), p. 177.

[207] Elizabeth Ives, "The Body Politics: Victorian Fashions as Agents of Social and Political Change in Meiji Japan," *A Fashion and Textile History Blog*, 2009-2010, <http://afashionableexcuse.wordpress.com/articles-and-papers/the-body-politic-victorian-fashions-as-agents-of-social-and-political-change-in-meiji-japan/#_edn10.> (February 16, 2014). According to Morris Low, this particular image first appeared in 1873 in the English-language newspaper *The Far East* that was published in Yokohama for the foreign community. During the newspaper's five-year life from 1870 to 1875, the photograph was published some 600 times. *Japan on Display* (2006), p. 11.

different steps. First, he took a photographic image of his own body and drew Meiji Emperor's head. Second, he combined his own body with the emperor's face to draw the emperor's finished portrait. In this process, Chiossone's Western body became synchronized with the Meiji emperor's face in the drawing. Finally, the drawing was made into a photograph by Japanese photographer Maruki Toshiaki.[208] Despite the laborious visual reconstruction--a process of removing "simulacrum," in Fujitani's words--this image was circulated as the emperor's real photo for a long period in and outside Japan. The project was indeed a cross-cultural and cross-medium recreation that helped raise Emperor Meiji to the central locus of the new state. It effectively helped unite the historically divided nation and educate the people as modern citizens through the meticulous display and control of the emperor's image, in spite of the emperor's personal aversion to the camera.

In contrast, King Kojong was personally open to photo taking, whereas his government's overall efforts in this new technology were never close to the Meiji Japan's assiduous construction of the emperor's image. Additionally, the Chosŏn government did not intend to build an official system of "memoryscape" that could edify the population and turn them into self-disciplined loyal subjects in the Foucauldian sense.[209] There are many reasons for this, including the fact that Chosŏn had only limited resources to incorporate modern media-related technologies. Specifically, they lacked trained professionals and a modern public education system to spread government ideology effectively. Most importantly, the Chosŏn court did not have the urgent need to recreate their monarch as a central political figure since he already was one.

[208] Morris Low, p. 13.

[209] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Colin Gordon ed., (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 78-108.

The Chosŏn court observed their neighbor Meiji Japan, and found that the Japanese court employed visual techniques as a way of promoting an emperor-centered sense of national identity, allowing the central government to extend its authority out to over 280 still-independent domains.[210] In the view of the Chosŏn court, the Meiji Japan adopted the policy because it shared a sense of urgency to lift up the emperor from a concealed religious figure who had resided in Kyoto for centuries to a real ruler of substantial power in the central politics in Tokyo.[211] However, Chosŏn's centralized politics inherited the Chosŏn court system in which hereditary kings were placed at the political epicenter. The Chosŏn court must have realized that their centralized monarchy fit the changing modern world well. Thus the sense of continuum in Korean politics prevailed within the court, as displayed in the motto "Eastern Way and Western Tools." Even the Chosŏn people who participated in radical antigovernment riots and gatherings such as Tonghak Movements and the Thousand People's Assembly rarely supported abolishment of the monarchy.

One noteworthy thing in comparison to Meiji Japan's tradition of the royal portraitures of this period is the continuation of patriarchal representation in Chosŏn. Conventionally, the royal paintings were restricted only to kings and male members of royal lineage. The patriarchal tradition of royal portraits continued in Chosŏn until 1896, except for one recorded case of the queen's portrait painting, that of Queen Sinjŏng (1808-1890) who reigned as regent for over a decade[212] (Figure 4.5). In paintings and photographs,

[210] James L. McClain, *A Modern History: Japan* (2002), p. 157.

[211] Morris Low, p. 5.

[212] Lee T'ae-ho, *Yet hwagadŭrŭn uri ŏlgurŭl ŏttŏk'e kŭryŏnna* (2008), pp. 208-209. In the book, Lee attributes the portrait to Queen Sinjŏng. Queen Sinjŏng adopted Kojong as her son to make him the heir to the throne and also ruled the country as regent until she handed over the power to his father, the Taewongun, in 1866.

Kojong posed either alone or with his crown prince. His wife, Queen Min, never accompanied him in the images. This contrasted to the practices of Meiji Japan that produced and circulated photographs of the imperial couple. Meiji Japan emulated the model of Queen Victoria and her husband in Great Britain, but reinforced the images of the emperor as masculinized, civilized, and caring by promoting the concept of monogamy to foreigners.[213] The images of Empress Haruko alone, either in traditional or Western dress, were also widely circulated as part of Meiji Japan's attempt to present a civilized and modern image of Japan[214] (Figures 4.6 and 4.7). This does not mean that Meiji Japan did not control the use and spread of the imperial photographs: they distributed the images of the emperor and the empress to schools and government offices around the country and strictly banned their commercial sale. The images of the imperial body were produced to be worshipped by the people in rituals.

The photographic absence of Queen Min raises many questions; it is not clear if Kojong simply followed the long patriarchal tradition of royal portraiture or did so because Queen Min refused to participate in picture taking. Queen Min was known for her dislike of producing any form of her image, allegedly out of fear that it would expose her to danger. In contrast, not too long after the images of Kojong's second wife, Empress Sunhŏn, in traditional as well as Western dress, were circulated while images of the imperial couple of Emperor Sunjong and Empress Sunjŏnghyo were in wide circulation at the turn of the century. Both empresses lived as members of the imperial family when photography was

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[213] Fujitani, pp. 183-184.

[214] Elizabeth Ives, "The Body Politics: Victorian Fashions as Agents of Social and Political Change in Meiji Japan," *A Fashion and Textile History Blog*, 2009-2010, <http://afashionableexcuse.wordpress.com/articles-and-papers/the-body-politic-victorian-fashions-as-agents-of-social-and-political-change-in-meiji-japan/#_edn10.> (February 16, 2014).

demystified and the women were more outgoing. Unlike her adventurous husband, Queen Min was the last queen who upheld the gendered visual codes of traditional royal portraiture.

During the period 1876 to 1896, Kojong's images officially entered the public space through various visual forms including photographs, illustrations, and Western paintings inside Korea and abroad. At least visually, Kojong altered himself from an invisible king who lived only in the people's imagination to a visible one who had an actual body and face. Though his court chose to selectively play both the traditional and modern cards, the realistic images of photograph rapidly replaced the traditional visual forms in the twentieth century.

This change from an invisible ruler to a visible one was a demand of the time. Kojong appears to have willingly taken this uncharted path of becoming a visible modern ruler. It can be said that Kojong's modernization drive, including the visual policy, would not have happened without his firm commitment to compromising long-standing Confucian values and reconstructing the country by adopting new ideas and practices. His photographic outings have often been considered as personal affairs or deviations from his official policy decisions; however, they should be also understood as part of his overall modernization drive and efforts.

King Kojong's First Photographic Adventure

Kojong's first photographic venture in 1884 marked a radical break from the traditional *ŏjin* culture in his visual body politics in many ways. It created a new term, *ŏsajin* (royal portrait photographs), although photographs were also often referred to simply as *ŏjin*. Despite the fact that Chosŏn kings had few private times that could escape being

recorded in *sach'o*, or historical drafts, this first royal photo taking is not included in Chosŏn's official records. While the event itself remains ambiguous, some of the findings in this research invite a new perspective.

Kojong's photo taking must be understood from both a technological perspective and drive for modernization. In his famous "aura" discourse about early photography, Walter Benjamin asserts that the technical limits of early photography made it "desirable to station the model as well as possible in a place where nothing stood in the way of quiet exposure." He views the technical ground of low light-sensitivity in early plates and prolonged exposure time as dictating elements in the photographic aura in early photography.[215] The technical restrictions of early photography also restricted the freedom of sitters. While paintings are more a product of the painter's appreciation of the sitter's physiological and personal characteristics over a long duration, photographs were mechanical products of a very brief moment but after a long preparation by sitters and photographers. The first photo taking of a Confucian monarch must have been a mind-boggling and eye-opening experience, both for the sitter and the photographers. It also raises questions in the mind of this researcher, such as how the photographers gained control of the sitter for a long duration of outdoor exposure, what motivated the sitter to undertake this visual venture, what new knowledge this experience taught Kojong about camera technology as well as the Western culture it represented, or how the experience changed his views on them.

[215] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography." Benjamin further argues that the synthesis of photographic expression was achieved through the long immobility of the model caused by technical restrictions in the early photographs and that these early examples "exercise a more penetrating, longer-lasting effect on the observer than photographs taken more recently." He saw an aura around them, a medium that gives their glance depth and certainty; pp. 203-207.

The historical event of Kojong's first photo taking was organized upon the request from an American scientist and advisor, Percival Lowell, who was visiting Korea at Kojong's invitation in appreciation of his dedicated work assisting Pobing-sa, the eight-men diplomatic mission to the United States in 1883. Lowell helped Pobing-sa as a guide for their three-month long trip to America. He was an astronomer who founded the Lowell Observatory in Arizona that later discovered the Pluto, but was also an author of many books, including *Chosön, the Land of Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea*, published a year after his 1884 visit to Korea.[216] During this visit Lowell was granted the honor of serving as photographer at King Kojong's first sitting for a camera.

During his four-month long stay in Korea, Lowell not only took photographs of Kojong and the crown prince but also took over one hundred additional images, twenty-five of which were published in his book. Most of the photographs were donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, his hometown.[217] With visualized images of Korea from witness narrations and on-site photographing, the book was the first of its kind to introduce Korea to the West.[218] Some of his photographs were repeatedly duplicated in later publications by other authors, probably playing a role in creating "stereotyped" images of Korea. Lowell's portraits of Kojong were circulated widely under the captions "Chosŏn's king" and "an Asian king."

[216] Percival Lowell. *Chosön, the Land of the Morning Calm: a Sketch of Korea*, Boston: Tickner & Co., 1885.

[217] Most of his pictures were donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and a survey of these photographs was conducted by the National Institute of Cultural Property of Korea in 2004. See their catalog *Arts of Korea in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, published in 2005.

[218] William Griffis published the book *Corea: the Hermit Nation* in 1882, three years earlier than Lowell, and published the second volume of the book titled *Corea Within and Without: Chapters on Corean History, Manners, and Religion* in 1885. The illustration is from the 1885 publication. The author neither visited Korea nor provided a realistic view of Korea's royal couple in the book.

In the historic royal photo taking, Lowell was accompanied by Ji Un-yŏng, a Korean photographer, and Yun Ch'i-ho, a reformist politician who was then an interpreter for the inaugural U.S. ambassador Lucius H. Foote. The event was held on March 10 and 13.[219] A total of six portrait images were produced from the two-day event, four of Kojong and two of the crown prince (Figures 4.8~4.13). They posed in an outdoor pavilion called Nongsuchŏng within the Yŏnkyŏngdang Residence in the Ch'angdŏk Palace, one of five grand palaces in the Chosŏn dynasty.

The Yŏnkyŏngdang palace was built in 1828 as a typical scholar's house with a theatrical open space for ailing King Sunjo (r. 1800-1834) to retreat and be entertained. Kojong used the palace to rest and often received an audience or held banquets for Western dignitaries there.[220] Nongsujŏng is located in northeast corner of Yŏnkyŏngdang. In the photographs the latticed windows in four directions were folded up and a pair of incense burners lavishly decorated with mother-of-pearl were placed on both sides of the stairs to the platform of the pavilion. A chair was used for the sitters in the four images. Nongsujŏng is a small, beautiful pavilion constructed from unpainted natural wood. It is charming, but not the ideal location to represent the grandeur of the royal prestige. Why Kojong chose the backyard of a civilian-style house over many other beautiful palace buildings that would demonstrate his kingly grace and power remains unknown.

One of the interesting aspects of this royal photographic venture was the official record on it. Chosŏn was recognized for its meticulous documentation of court affairs through its *Chosŏnwangjo Sillok* (Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty), *Sŭngjŏngwon Ilgi*

[219] *Diary of Yun Ch'iho*, dated March 10 to 13, 1884.

[220] Sa Jin-sil, Kim Bong-ryŏl and Yun Jŏng-sŏp, "A Study on Restoration of Yŏnkyŏngdang during the Reign of Sunjo," paper presented at the symposium *Patterns of Traditional Art Stages* (February 2008).

(Daily Records of Royal Secretariat), and the *Ilsŏngrok* (Records of Daily Reflections) that recorded daily activities, including the private life of the king and his family. Kojong's court also maintained records of his affairs. However, none of the official records from his reign provides details on this unusual event. The historical reconstruction of the event relies on the personal records of the intellectuals, like *Dairies of Yun Ch'iho* by the person who accompanied the two photographers. Japanese scholars and officials compiled the *Veritable Records of Kojong* during the Japanese occupation of Korea so it was excluded, along with the *Veritable Records of Sunjong*, in the official listings of the *Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty*, which viewed them as contaminated by the colonial motivations. The silence in all three documents is not mere coincidence. Most likely it was a coordinated intentional exclusion, or the compliers of all three viewed the event as so trivial that it was not worth recording. The latter explanation is unlikely, considering the extraordinary nature of the event as well as the extensiveness of Chosŏn's documenting tradition.

Without historical records, many questions regarding the details of the event will remain unanswered, such as the choice of location, selection of decorative items, Kojong's motive to have photographs taken, interactions between the photographers and the sitters, observers of the event, and, most of all, how his court responded and reacted to his historical "going visible" to the outside world. Nevertheless, it is apparent that this event was set up for an American assistant. Moreover, it is significant that though the event did not make its way into official records, the news was spread in town.

It is possible to speculate that Kojong and his court may have approached the day's photographic event in a different way from his stately affairs. Given the traditions that restricted the unveiling of royal portraits and that they were prevented from being

transported to outside the country, the court would not have approved the case that bypassed so many steps in their traditional protocol. The silence in the court documents, thus, indicates that the event must have been exempt from state scrutiny and probably dealt with as the monarch's private meeting. Considering that everything related to Chosŏn kings was viewed as a stately matter, including their love life, having privacy for this kind of event would have been very exceptional too. Protocol equivalent to those applied to *ŏjin* production was not adopted. What is certain is that Kojong and his court tried to be as quiet as possible about the event.

The second photographer at the site, Ji Un-yŏng, was one of the students sent to Japan under the government scholarships for photographic technology. His photo studio had been open for nearly a month by then, and he had the opportunity to participate in the royal photo taking. Unfortunately Ji's photographs remain hidden as none of the available documents show a clear record of his photographs. Recent attempts to reconstruct Kojong's first photo-taking experience have led to interesting conclusions.

Choi In-jin argues that not all of the six images were taken by Percival Lowell. According to him, Ji Un-yŏng took two of the portraits, one of Kojong and one of the crown prince.[221] This conclusion was based on a simulation of the day's event in Nongsujŏng. Based on comparisons of the two photographers' styles of framing and structuring of space and sitters, through his simulacrum Choi discovered that the six images display two completely different styles. More specifically, he compared the gaze of the native photographer who approached the sitter from an understanding of the *ŏjin* tradition, and that of the foreign photographer who attempted to contextualize the sitter within a cultural background. Choi argues that Ji Un-yŏng's photographic perspective in Figure 4.11 and

[221] Choi, In-jin. *Kojong, Embraced the World with Photography* (2012), pp. 32-38.

Figure 4.13 was compatible with the traditional *ŏjin* paintings because they rendered a great amount of space to the king's and the crown prince's bodies as the central focus of the images. In Choi's analysis, the two pictures generate a political statement similar to the effect of traditional *ŏjin*. In contrast, Lowell used a zoom-out setting to capture as much as possible of the sitters as well as the Nongsujŏng building in which they were sitting. He chose to contextualize the sitters within their cultural background while greatly compromising the focus on the sitters. In Lowell's photograph Kojong's freestanding posture with a tender expression on his face was also a huge shift from his traditional *ŏjin* in which he was depicted as an authoritative fatherly ruler (Figure 4.8). Ji was trained as a court painter, which meant he was familiar with the protocol of *ŏjin*. Lowell, on the other hand, likely looked for some cultural signifiers to represent a Chosŏn king for his audience back in the United States.

Choi also examined Yun Ch'i-ho's record on the crown prince's photograph on March 19, which took place less than a week later. Yun wrote in his diary that he had an audience with Queen Min and the queen was boastful about the crown prince's photograph, asking if Yun had seen it yet. Thus Yun made sure he saw the photograph before leaving the court that day.[222] At that time processing and delivering photographs within a one-week period was not an easy task and would not have been possible unless it had been done in town, likely in Ji's studio. Ji must have expedited the process to present the photos to the royal family as quickly as possible. Lowell sent his photo album to Yun Ch'i-ho in August, who then delivered it to the court.[223] If Yun's dairy on March 19 is accurate, then Ji Un-

[222] Yun, *Diary of Yun Ch'i-ho*, dated March 19, 1884.

[223] Ibid., dated August 27, 1884.

yŏng was the photographer who created the first photographic images of Kojong and the crown prince.

Choi's argument about framing the photographers' renderings around the foreign vs. the native gaze may seem contentious because it only applies to Figure 4.10. It loses ground for Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9. However, Yun Ch'i-ho's dairies and Lowell's letter do support Choi's argument. This research found that the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the site of Lowell's photography collection of Korea, does not house the two images that Choi attributed to Ji's work in their Korean photography collection, a fact that also supports Choi's argument.

Kojong's first photo taking followed the signing of the first treaty with America in 1882 and the arrival of the first U.S. minister to Korea in 1883. Kojong had to spend several hours outdoors on a chilly spring day for his first photographs. In April 1884, as Yun Ch'i-ho testified, Kojong gave his portraits as a gift to the first American Minister Plenipotentiary Lucius Foote and other foreign delegations.[224] Kojong distributed his portrait *ŏjin*s to foreign delegations in the capital. If they were photographs the images must have been copies of the photograph that Ji Un-yŏng delivered on March 19, but unfortunately this cannot be confirmed. Had they been traditional *ŏjin* paintings, they would have been dramatically reduced from a typical 24.3 x 43.5 inches scroll painting to a souvenir-size painting in a picture frame, which is unlikely. On December 23, 1885, during his stay in Shanghai, Yun wrote in his diary, "I saw the Majesty's portrait photograph cherished by the wife of the U.S. consul today. I mailed her portrait photo to Court Lady Ha with a letter."[225] The practice of

[224] *Dairies of Yun Ch'iho*, April 14, 1884.

[225] Yun Ch'i-ho wrote remarks on taking, receiving, and sending portrait photographs. On December 23, 1885, Two months later on February 21, 1886, Yun also wrote, "I woke up at around 8AM. Went out to buy a couple

exchanging portrait photographs on a personal as well as diplomatic level was already prevalent. By the 1890s giving out his portraits to foreign diplomats and visitors, as well as his subjects, had become a court ritual.

The Chosŏn king was no longer an invisible monarch who could only be imagined without direct reference. Moreover, his photographic *ŏjin* was free to travel outside the country. This radical change was first carried out by Kojong himself by unlocking his traditional mystification and advocating his modern image as a monarch during the encounter with the West and the modern. Although perhaps unintended, it was also the beginning of public exposure and circulation of images of the monarch's body outside the palace and the state border.

With the opening, Kojong actively embraced photography within his policies. Kojong had ample opportunities to view many portraits of the royal families and politicians of other foreign countries. In 1876 Kim Ki-su, who led the first mission to Japan after the opening, brought back photographs of politicians and government ceremonies as well as two photo albums of modernized Tokyo.[226] At the same time, the Chosŏn court collected photographs of foreign dignitaries. On February 1, 1881, the *Tokyo Daily* wrote:

> Photographs Wanted by Koreans: An Osaka merchant Yamamoto Botaro (山本房太郎) and an Osaka photographer Nakagawa (中川) sent an urgent parcel of photographs of high-ranking officials of Japan and other countries including Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States upon request from the Korean government. Nakagawa had to travel all the way to Tokyo to collect these

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of necessities such as two picture frames (one for 70 *chŏn* the other for 30 *chŏn*), a pair of gloves for 30 *chŏn*. I hung the Majesty's photograph on the wall and, underneath it, my father's. The weather is cloudy and cold." Yun used the term *sajin* for photographs without causing any confusion.

[226] Despite their unprecedented photo mission Kim Ki-su was hesitant to venture out for many things, including photo taking and only accepted when the Japanese officials persistently offered it. Kim Ki-su and others took pictures in a studio run by Uchida Kuichi. In his official reports, *Ildong Kiyu* and *Journal of Susin-sa*, he wrote that he was puzzled about Japan's hasty Westernization while acknowledging its benefits and Japan's growing power. Also see Choi In-jin and Lee Eun-ju.

> photographs. The motivation of the Korean government is unknown, but they ordered these photographs.[227]

The Chosŏn court hired Japanese intermediaries to collect photographic data about foreign diplomats in Japan. By this time Kojong's portrait, a rarity at that time, was also in high demand among foreign diplomatic circles. The Chosŏn court learned the diplomatic language of visual images and followed its practices.

In 1897, Kojong's photograph officially entered the domestic commercial market. *Kŭrisŭdo sinmun* (Christ News) used Kojong's portrait photo as a souvenir in their subscription promotion. On August 21, 1897, *The Independent* reported:

> In commemoration of His Majesty's birthday, Christ News will issue a special edition and give a gift of His Majesty's portrait to those who buy a one-year subscription. His Majesty is wearing a royal robe and hat in the picture. Upon His Majesty's approval, it was produced in Japan and came out nicely. Those who are not buying a one-year subscription in advance can visit the office of Christ News and pay five *chŏn* for a copy.[228]

This commercial ad was soon revised: "The *ŏsajin* will be given only to those who subscribe *Kŭrisŭdo sinmun* for one year and not be on sale."[229] Regardless of the court control, the royal portraits were subject to commercial exchange and circulation in the public sphere.

Another record that shows Chosŏn emulated the visual practices of photographs as diplomatic device is found in Min Yŏng-hwan's 1897 travelogue. In his travelogue *Haech'ŏn Ch'ubŏm* (Autumn Voyage toward the Sea and the Heaven) Min wrote that on his journey to Russia, Europe, the United States, and Asia he was invited to the Japanese house

[227] *Tok'yo ich'inich'i sinbung* (Tokyo Daily Newspaper), February 1, 1881.

[228] *The Independent*, August 21, 1897.

[229] Ibid., August 28, 1897.

of Alexis de Speyer, a Russian diplomat who had stayed in Korea from 1884 to 1895. Min proudly discovered that Speyer displayed a portrait of Kojong on his wall:

> They invited us to a dinner by sending a coach. The building of the legation was very decorative and lots of food was prepared and served in a very tidy manner. The host and hostess gave us a warm welcome. When Speyer was in Seoul, he had a special honor of receiving the King's *ŏjin* and I found that he still treats the *ŏjin* with great honor. We all looked up the *ŏjin* with reverence and took a big bow with overflowing joy and excitement. We returned to our hotel very late.

Recalling that Speyer had the honor of receiving an *ŏjin* from Kojong during his station in Chosŏn, Min was grateful that Speyer continued to take good care of Kojong's portrait. Min used the term *ŏjin* to describe the portrait, but it must have been a photographic portrait. This is further evidence that using the royal portraits for diplomatic purposes was common practice in the court after 1880s.[230]

The first event led to more frequent sitting and posing before foreign cameras, unleashing Kojong's royal body to modern visual technology that was beyond the control of his political reach. Although still ambiguous, this first photo taking was both a radical break from tradition and a move toward a visual modernity in Korea. Regardless of whether it was motivated by Kojong's personal fondness of camera or with some political intention, it signaled the beginning of modern body politics in Chosŏn. It also provides a prism for looking at some historical debates on Korea's modernity, Kojong's modernization drive, foreign policy, and Orientalist discourses of this time. More importantly, the event was a prelude to Korea's visual modernity that it was about to embark on in the late 1890s.

[230] *Haech'ŏn Ch'ubŏm* (Autumn Voyage toward the Sea and the Heaven) was written on his trip to the inauguration party of Russian Emperor Nicolas II in 1896. His travel route included Asia, Europe, the United States, and Manchu. *Haech'ŏn Ch'ubŏm*, translated into contemporary Korean language (2012), p. 38.

Conclusion

The royal portraits of Chosŏn kings were created and controlled by the court in particular ways. This does not mean that visualizing the Chosŏn kings was not suppressed or discouraged; instead, many *ŏjin* paintings were drawn but were not subject to any type of public display or possession. Regardless of actual display, the royal portraits of *ŏjin* reached the public through extravagant rituals and processions around the country.

Kojong and his court welcomed modern technologies to help create national power and facilitate Chosŏn's entry into the global system. Photography was one of the major initiatives of Kojong's modernization drives. Three native photographers were trained in Japan and China, and opened their studios in downtown Seoul in the mid-1880s, creating a new dimension to the state's modern vision. This period observed an unprecedented modern rupture in Korea, including the public exposure and circulation of the body of the monarch. The king's visuality was no longer hidden but open to the public gaze. Many portrait images of Kojong were produced, reproduced, and multiplied in various formats by people of different nationalities as well as Koreans.

Contrasted with the revolutionary break observed in Kojong's photographic practices and modernization initiatives, what is significant is that the transition from the traditional invisible to a visible modern was made without noticeable debate. The Chosŏn court's official position on photography during this twenty-year period largely appears to be nonchalant and indifferent. Most of the Chosŏn court's official records remain silent on photography-related events. The state viewed photography as one of the indispensable technologies Chosŏn must acquire to enter the modern world, yet it was not certain it could help bolster the aura of the state and the monarch.

The Chosŏn court received and learned photography through Japan, where photographs and images of the emperor were important devices that conveyed the body of the emperor to the people under one centralized polity. In contrast, Chosŏn had achieved and maintained this centralization for centuries. Chosŏn's unique political reality led the state to add modern elements to its monarchy-based aura rather than reinvent a whole new one. Though marginalized in most domestic projects, photography increasingly penetrated the cultural life of individuals, including Kojong himself and many of his subjects. While this tendency continued to permeate, a more complex and visually articulated regime was created in the following period for his new empire—the Taehan Empire established in 1897.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Making of a Modern State and National Gaze, 1897-1910

From the mid-1890s to 1910, the nation struggled to maintain independence as imperial dominance intensified in the Korean peninsula. Facing growing foreign encroachments, Koreans began to articulate themselves as an enclosed community that shared a history, tradition, and political destiny, using the conventional means of texts as well as visuals. The voices and concerns of individual Koreans echoed through the meetings organized by the Independence Club, the actions of the Righteous Army, and newspaper and magazine articles. The majority of the population believed that support for the creation of the Taehan Empire was the only way to maintain national independence. Established in 1897, the Taehan Empire reinvented its symbolic power, centered on Kojong.

This chapter examines how the divergent paths of photography in the public and private spheres converged under the common cause of national defense. This occurred through the new visual regime established by the Taehan Empire and commercialized photography in the marketplace. The main ideology of the Taehan Empire's reform was "*kubon sinch'am*" (maintaining the old foundation with references to new civilization).[231] The imperial reforms were intended to negotiate the old and the new, and maintain the traditional framework by strengthening the imperial authority by virtue of adopting Western-

[231] The Kwangmu reforms started in 1896, even before 1897, the year that marks the formal establishment of the Taehan.

style civilization.[232] Kubon sinch'am was basically an extension of the discourse of "*tongdo sŏgi*" (Eastern ways and Western tools), a dominant discourse in the 1880s. The photographic practices of the state were framed and adapted within this ideology in order to promote modern images of the monarch and the state. Within this line of policy, the country's traditional visual practice was not outweighed by modern visual references; instead, it was further strengthened during this period.

Chosŏn was fully exposed to the global circulation of capital, people, and material culture. The adoption of modern technology and systems created a new cityscape with drastic visual transformation in spaces and landscapes, especially in Seoul. Riding streetcars became an act of participating in such new spectacles and learning new behaviors dictated by the new material culture, such as Western-style clothing and shoes; Western-style furniture, eyeglasses, matches, and liquor; watching film clips called *hwaldong sajin* ("moving pictures") and taking photographs. All these activities came to compose part of people's daily life during this period.[233] A number of Japanese photo studios had already been established in downtown Seoul, and a native photo studio, Ch'ŏnyŏn-dang, was opened in 1907 by Korean photographer Kim Kyu-chin, the first since the early pioneers in the 1880s.

[232] See Kim Do-hyun, "Introduction: The Nature of Reform in the Taehan Empire" in *Reform and Modernity in the Taehan Empire,* ed. Kim Dong-no, John Duncan, and Kim Do-hyun (Seoul: Jimoondang Publisher, 2006), pp. 2-26.

[233] The first moving picture of Korea was taken by Elias Burton Holmes in 1899; the Korean royal family began viewing films regularly sometime between 1897 and 1905. According to *Colorado's Henry Collbran and the Roots of Early Korean Entrepreneurialism* published by Donald Southerton, American railway construction specialists Henry Collbran and Harry Bostwick regularly invited Korean performers to entertain their Korean workers and filmed the performances. Encouraged by the enthusiastic public response, in 1903 they opened the first open-air cinema in Seoul, called the "*Tongdaemun hwaldong sajin so*" (Tongdaemun Moving Picture House) and screened short films that introduced urban life in Korea, Europe, and America. *Colorado's Henry Collbran and the Roots of Early Korean Entrepreneurialism*, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (2012), p. 8. For the photographs related to their businesses in Korea, also see *Bostwick & Collbran in Korea, 1890s-1900s*, Korean Cultural Center of Chicago (2012).

Despite state control over the dissemination of the images of the monarch, this period witnessed the public circulation and sales of Kojong's portraits throughout the country, beyond diplomatic circles. Thus the institutional control and commercial dissemination of imperial images took place at the same time.

Becoming a Nation: Rediscovered or Invented?

The Taehan Empire's tenure witnessed the decline of the state due to a foreign power. At the same time, it experienced an elevated sense of community and public loyalty, and the zenith of national unity among the people, often in the form of resistance. The notions of nation and nationalism are often interpreted as new ideas that came about with the advent of the Western mode of modernization. However, such modernist views cannot fully explain the rise and decline and the unity and resistance of diverse ethnic and political groups. This section examines the genesis of these notions in Korea as a community that had nurtured a strong ethnic as well as political homogeneity throughout its long history.

The Taehan Empire aspired to be a modern state, and its restrictive but unique power was imbued with its modern desires. Yet its particularities stemmed from Chosŏn's historical characteristics of a centralized bureaucracy and culture. These elements also created the characteristics of its reforms, including visual practices. Its adherence to tradition and simultaneous adoption of modernization or westernization was made possible through careful deliberation to strengthen its independence and protect its sovereignty, and requires understanding the regime from the perspective of critical syncretism as put forth by Kuan-hsing Chen.[234] In 1896 *The Independent* introduced its readers to how the notion of "love of

[234] Kuan-hsing Chen, *Asia as a Method: Toward the Deimperialization* (Duke University Press, 2010), p. 101. Chen uses the term "critical syncretism" as an alternative understanding of the subjectivity of the excolonial

the country" (*aeguk*) was expressed and performed in other countries. The newspaper admonished its readers that patriotism was neither traditional nor old-fashioned, but modern:

> Love of country is a major subject in learning. Therefore in public schools of foreign countries, every morning students gather together to salute their national flag, bow to their king's photograph, and shout "Long Live the King." If one learns day and night to love one's country and king as one's duty since youth, love of his/her country will become the most important value over many others even after s/he becomes an adult.[235]

This concept of love for the country was by no means new to readers; however, the methods of expressing it were new, such as bowing to the king's photo or saluting the national flag. Loyalty to the king was often stressed around the birth of the Taehan Empire. Although it preferred a constitutional monarchy or a republic as Chosŏn's new political choice, Upon Kojong's inauguration as emperor, *The Independent* urged people to be supportive and loyal to the emperor and patriotic for the sake of the country's independence:

> Chosŏn is now an empire, not a kingdom, and we are all imperial subjects for the first time since the country's foundation by our founder Tan'gun. Thus each and every person should be resolute to keep the country independent. Now we should support our emperor and think about the ways to have our state properly recognized in world society and remain independent. We should work hard to achieve these goals so that other countries will not threaten our independence or despise us. That would be the only reason for us to change a kingdom to an empire.[236]

The article touched on people's nationalist sentiments and demanded that the people revise their behavior by adopting modern and imperial protocol in regard to the ruler. Their

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state, individuals, and subaltern groups. He states that it does not aim "simply to rediscover the suppressed voices of the multiple subjects within the social formation, but to generate a reproducing neocolonial framework that structures the trajectories and flow of desire."

[235] *The Independent*, September 22, 1896. The same newspaper published an article about Japanese people in Korea celebrating the birthday of the Japanese emperor.

[236] Ibid., October 12, 1897.

aspiration for national independence turned to despair eight years later in 1905, when the news of Japan's protectorate over Chosŏn was released. After learning that some Korean ministers cooperated with Ito Hirobumi and forced Emperor Kojong to sign the protectorate treaty despite the emperor's objections, the arrangement of a Japanese protectorate met extremely intense resistance from the Korean public. The righteous army rose to protest again, and Chang Chi-yŏn, editor of *Hwangsung sinmun* (Imperial Capital News), published an emotionally charged article titled "We Wail Today," deploring the fate of the country. It appealed to his fellow Koreans' nationalist sprit that had been nurtured through a long common history:

> Alas! How deplorable! Fellow countrymen, now slaves to foreigners, are you dead or alive? Should we let the national sprit that has been preserved for four thousand years since the days of Tan'gun and Kija disintegrate overnight? How deplorable! How deplorable! Fellow countrymen! Fellow countrymen![237]

Some officials even committed suicide in protest. As discussed earlier, Min Yŏng-hwan left an impassioned testament to the nation and took his life after learning that the protectorate was irreversible. Min's action was followed by many officials, such as Cho Pyŏng-se, Hong Man-sik, Song Pyŏng-sŏn, and Yi Sang-chŏl.[238]

At the news of the protectorate, Confucian literati urged Kojong and the government to adopt a policy of resistance by penalizing the collaborators who had helped Ito Hirobumi force Kojong to sign the agreement. However, Kojong was reluctant to take any action. Without direct government involvement, the military activities of the *ŭibyŏng* (righteous army) surfaced around the country across classes, jobs, and positions. The resistance

[237] *Hwangsŏng shinmun* (Imperial Capital News), Nov. 20, 1905; translation from *Sources of Korean Tradition*, ed. Ch'oe Lee and first name de Bary, vol. 2, Columbia University Press (2000), pp. 312-13.

[238] *Korea, Old and New: A History*, p. 242.

increased after Kojong's forced abdication in 1907. According to official Japanese statistics, a total of 2,819 clashes occurred between the Korean righteous army and the Japanese army between 1907 and 1910, more than half of them in the peak year of 1908 alone.[239]

Many scholars see Koreans' resistance to the protectorate and the annexation as the earliest signs of so-called "national" interest and nationalism. Scholars such as Andre Schmid pay attention to the advent and frequent use of the term *minjok*, a combination of popular (*min*) and familial (*jok*), after 1905 to mark the beginning of modern nationalistic history writing.[240] Henry Em also argues that *minjok* is a modern construct saying that, "unlike the modern nation-state, the kingdoms of "Unified" Silla, Koryŏ, and Chosŏn were not interested in homogenizing their subjects."[241] The modernist view claims that nationalism is a more recent historical product of particular modern conditions of nation-states. In this discourse, nationalism is viewed to have arisen in response to the coming of the West, and thus, a nation-state is defined as exclusively modern and Western.

In their view, Korea was a status society with a clearly defined vertical hierarchy, and the Korean elite would have considered themselves members of a larger cosmopolitan community centered on China. Thus the idea of nationalism must have been viewed as strange and even uncivilized in Chosŏn, and the Chosŏn dynasty was not interested in nationalizing its subjects. Only when dynastic historiography was replaced by ethnic-nationalist historiography in the early twentieth century did Korea become an ethnic nation

[239] Ibid., p. 244.

[240] Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919*, Columbia University Press (2002), pp. 172-174.

[241] Henry Em, *The Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea*, Duke University Press (2013), 77-79.

minjok inclusive of all Koreans, regardless of gender, class, or race. In this view, modern Korean nationalism was predominantly a product of the postannexation era (1910-1945).

The biggest weakness of this perspective is that it does not adequately account for the rise of intense nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century and its continued establishment throughout the oppressive colonial era and postcolonial Korea. It also provides no explanation of the roles and impact of Korea's centuries-long ethnic and cultural unity in the formation of a strong and modern sense of national identity. If nationalism were exclusively modern and Western, it is ironic that Chosŏn needed modern nationalism in order to defend its ancient regime that had ruled the country for over five hundred years.

Nationalism increasingly views the nation-state as a product of local politics instead of blind adoption of Western practices. In this view, it was developed through concrete local agendas and programs that aimed to create the idea of a homogeneous community in a geopolitical unit, which shares political and territorial destiny and presumably a common past. The stories of when and how the notion of the nation-state or nationhood emerged can be local and often radically dissimilar, making discussion of the nation-state divergent and evasive.

The primordialist view argues that nationalism, especially ethnic nationalism, is not a product of the modern period. Primordialist scholars such as Pierre L. van den Berghe view the nation as different from the state, and as persistent and unmemorable. The society is bound together by ancestral ties, language, religions, and unique culture as much as by utilitarian calculations.[242] In this view, the idea of Korean ethnic unity is natural and based

[242] Pierre L. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, Greenwood Publishing Group (1987), p. 215.

on the same bloodline and a shared past.[243] Advocates of this view would also argue that Korea has maintained a common historic and cultural life, living in a single territory since the beginning of its history. However, scholars such as Clifford Geertz caution on the danger of superimposing the primordialist view on Third-World realities, saying that patterns of primordial diversity and conflicts exist as well as ties. Geertz argues that primordialism has revealed its limitations and is subject to extensive criticism because it is unable to account for the origins, change, and dissolution of ethnic groups.[244]

How then can Korea's desperate modern solution to the problems of the late nineteenth century—establishing an absolute ancient monarchy—be accounted as a national community? Some authors such as John Armstrong and Anthony Smith contend that nations preceded nationalism and that there is continuity between old and modern nations. They aim to bridge native and modern elements with a flexible framework, and argue that the national should be located in a historical sequence of cultural forms of identity. Anthony Smith argues:

> As an ideology and a language, nationalism is relatively modern, emerging into the political arena over a period in the eighteenth century. But nations and nationalism are no more "invented" than other kinds of culture, social organization or ideology. If nationalism is part of the "spirit of the age," it is equally dependent upon earlier motifs, visions and ideals. . . . And, while a new era opens with the arrival of nationalism, it is impossible to grasp its impact on the formation of national identity without exploring its social and cultural matrix, which already owed so much to the presence of pre-modern *ethnies* and the gradual emergence of national states in the West.[245]

[243] Specifically, Koreans considered themselves descendants of Tan'gun, the legendary founder of the country of Old Chosŏn. Shin, pp. 4-5.

[244] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), pp. 264-265. Geertz emphasizes that one needs to pay attention to the primordial diversity and conflicts observed locally, for example in the new irredentist states as seen in cases of unified Bengal, greater Bangladesh or the Malays. Although they are simply viewed in primordial unity, these locales were where both a desire to escape the established civil state and a longing to reunite a politically divided primordial community developed.

[245] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (1991), pp. 71-72.

Smith lists the main attributes that form ethnie as a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific "homeland," and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.[246] According to Smith's argument, nationalism is neither natural, as the primordialists claim, nor only works with the Western modernist model. This gives insight to Korean historians who seek continuity between the old and the modern that created a homogeneous collectivity with a shared sense of identity.

According to Smith, not all nations are invented; some are rediscovered. Smith explains that the stronger and more persistent the preexisting ethnic identity is, the more likely a nation could emerge based on that identity.[247] Drawing on Smith's cultural and historical continuity, historian Lee Yoon-mi argues that the historical transition of this period in Korea was a process of revising a national identity, which, she characterizes, was building *the nation-for-itself* from a *nation-in-itself*, acknowledging the preexistence of national conditions.[248] Thus the discovered Chosŏn dynasty was reaffirmed once more through the establishment of the Taehan Empire. Ironically, Chosŏn's national decline provided headway to testify to the rise of their nationalism.

The Taehan Empire, a State Rediscovered

[246] Ibid., p. 21.

[247] Smith (1991), p. 71.

[248] Lee Yoon-mi, *Modern education, textbooks and the image of the nation: Politics of modernization and nationalism in Korean education, 1880-1910*, p. 29.

The centuries-old sense of public loyalty and national community under the centralized government led the Chosŏn court to stretch their limited resources and energy for a synthesized form of modernization under the motto of "Eastern ways and Western tools." The Taehan Empire maintained the same directives but framed them under the new rhetoric of "Maintaining the old foundation with references to new civilization" (*kubon sinch'am*). During Korean imperial rule, photography was quickly integrated into the private realm and amalgamated with institutional culture. The Taehan Empire's visual representations and consumption were closely connected to the rise of the modern form of citizenry and nationalism. During this period photography was prevalent at the grassroots level, but not very visible at the institutional level.

The subject of the Taehan Empire has recently attracted academic attention and is the focus of intense debate on its historical role. While suspicion that the state prioritized regime security over national security prevails, at the center of active debates are issues such as justifying its return to absolute monarchy, a form of the ancient regime, at the threshold of modernity; the modernity of the regime; and its responsibility for the national decline. This section addresses these issues by investigating the process of the founding of the empire, its modernity as a state, and the nature of the Kwangmu reforms.

Two contentious debates have occupied the attention of many scholars in regard to the modern history of Korea--the causes of the colonization and the meaning of Japan's colonial rule. The second debate is related to two theories of modern empowerment, colonial modernization theory (*singminji kŭndaehwaron*) and internal development theory (*naejaejŏk palchŏllon*) based on self-agency. The core of the first debate seems to deal directly with the roles and responsibility of the Taehan Empire as the last sovereign state before annexation.

Many scholars have evaluated the Taehan Empire negatively, particularly Emperor Kojong's policies and his Kwangmu reforms. These criticisms include his suppression of the Independence Club, the corruption of the government, administrative incompetence, and prioritization of the regime's security over state security. The negative assessments of the Taehan Empire "became more firmly established under Japanese colonial rule" as Japan emphasized its corruption and incompetence to rationalize its colonial occupation.[249]

Regional experiences of integration into modern global systems differ based on their historical standing and position. Japan was a case of a Western model of modern nation-state building where states emerged as a centralized polity from a decentralized and fragmented locality, and developed the power of government by means of modern technologies and devices. The Meiji Restoration was revolutionary in many aspects; one of which is that for the first time Japan experienced a centralized government under an emperor with substantial power. The Meiji government vigorously emulated Western models and orchestrated the westernizing process to transform the country from a feudal to a modern one.[250]

Many view the establishment of the Taehan Empire not as a change of regime but as a self-strengthening move. It is true that Korea experienced no major political changes for about thirty years after the opening. Instead of revolutionary transformation, the Korean monarchy reinvented itself as an absolute monarchy in 1897 by "elevat[ing] the standing of the royal house."[251] This elevation was not done overnight according to the will and wishes

[249] Kim Do-hyun argues that the problems about the negative assessments of the Taehan Empire come from a bigger issue of scholarship on modern history, namely that the historical scholarship focuses on the Enlightenment Party (Kaehwap'a) and its reform movement as mainstream Korean history. "The nature of reform in the Taehan Empire," *Reform and Modernity in Taehan Empire*, pp. 3-4.

[250] James McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, W. W. Norton & Company (2002), p. 179.

[251] Kyung Moon Hwang. *Reform and Modernity in Taehan Empire*, p. 197.

of the monarch himself; instead, it took the form of public petitions and reflected the people's collective desire.

Kojong's imperial project developed after long contemplation and took over a year to execute; it involved not only his men but the mobilization of the population and the media. As early as 1896, a movement called "Using Title of Emperor" started petitions to raise the status of the country to equal to other imperial powers. These requests were submitted by officials, scholars, and organizations, including the Independence Club. This does not mean that there were no objections to the idea.[252] Kojong refused to accept the repeated petitions, stating: "Emperors should have great virtues but I do not. Also, there are so many urgent matters for the country to deal with. Why do you discuss such an uncritical matter?" It was not until the beginning of August 1897 when the petitioning became more intense that he was forced to accept the petitions.[253] The process of elevating the Korean king to the status of emperor included seeking consensus, which justified Kojong's acceptance. This also means that many people shared the fear that Korea had been left with only one option for its survival, which was to grant more power to the ruler to make the country stronger. The monarch revealed that he would be willing to respond to the public's wishes.

In particular, the Taehan Imperial System (*Taehan Chekuk Kukche*), promulgated in 1899, vested a tremendous amount of authority in the emperor, who would hold supreme command over the military, have control over legal jurisdiction including the right to grant clemency and govern and administer domestic and foreign affairs, and oversee state rituals

[252] Opposition came from both sides of the aisle. Confucian hardliners such as Choi Ik-hyun and Yu Rin-sŏk supported the idea of building a strong state but did not favor the use of the title of "emperor," saying that it was against Confucian teaching. Some liberal reformists such as Yun Chi-ho also criticized the "emperor" system, saying that what was important was not the title but the power to uphold the fate of the country.

[253] Han Yŏng-wu, "Ŭlmijibyŏn, the founding of the Taehan Empire, and the Official Records of Empress Min's Funeral," *Han'guk Hakbo* (2000), p. 36.

such as ancestor worship. The empire adopted East Asian practices to represent the images of the emperor and the empire, and implemented Western practices to give it a modernist look. Its eligibility and adequacy as a modern political authority has not been convincing to many scholars until very recently.

According to Max Weber's definition of the state as a compulsory political organization, modern statehood rests on legal and rational authority. Weber distinguishes this modern authority from premodern or traditional forms of authority, stressing formal legal procedures in modern society. In contrast, traditional authority rests on personal ties and the established belief in the sanctity of traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority through them.[254] Korea does not present a clear-cut scenario that accommodates Eurocentric prerequisites. This line of reasoning tries to define a modern state by what it *is* or what it *should be*, rather than how it *came to be*. In this framework, a return to a stronger ancient regime was a mere reflection of the regime's premodern consciousness and anachronistic misjudgment.

Discovering the shortcomings of applying Weber's perspective to Korean history, some scholars have recently tried to reassess the modern nature of Kojong's reforms and redefine Kojong as an enlightened modern monarch whose efforts were frustrated and halted by Japan's imperialist annexation. Historian Kyung Moon Hwang argues that the Japan-backed Kabo reforms relegated Kojong to the background. In addition to it being

[254] Max Weber defines a state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of *physical force* within a given territory." In other words, "the modern state is a compulsory association which organizes domination." "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1958), pp. 78-82.

humiliating, Kojong's flight to the Russian legation effectively initiated the downfall of the Kabo government.[255] An editorial in the Korean Repository for 1896 wrote:

> Moved by the troubles in the country and other considerations not less weighty and important, His Majesty, on February 11th, took the decisive step of leaving the Palace and going to the Russian Legation. There he was free to act and to resume his hereditary and lawful rights and prerogatives.[256]

One year after this Kojong returned to his palace to proclaim himself to be an emperor and his realm an empire. According to Hwang, Kojong may have considered it more urgent for national security to secure Chosŏn's equal footing with other countries by escaping the depredations of the imperialist rivalry over Korea. As Kim Do-hyun observed:

> The rationale behind proclaiming Kojong as emperor was intricately connected with the goal of establishing the empire's authority and independence. The establishment of an empire whose sovereignty rested on the monarch was not simply a matter of increasing the ruler's authority but was a political means to ensure the country's independence as well as a moral obligation to maintain its sovereignty amidst the meddling of the great powers. In other words, the recognition of the monarch's power through the strengthening of imperial authority was the country's way of emphasizing its independence.[257]

The question of modernity in the Taehan Empire poses more challenges since much of the literature dismisses it as feudal and traditional. In their quest to find modernity in the history of Korea, scholars have looked at either the colonial period (colonialist discourses) or the period before the nineteenth century for the "seeds" of modernity.[258] Recent

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[255] Kyung Moon Hwang, "Governmental Growth in the Taehan Empire Era: Origins of the Modern Korean State," *Reform and Modernity in the Taehan Empire* (2006), p. 197. On the same day as the king's flight to the Russian legation, Kojong ordered the arrest of Kobo ministers Kim Hong-jip, Chŏng Seung-ha, Cho Hi-yŏn and Yu Kil-jun, calling them the "four enemies." Kim Hong-jip and Chŏng Seung-ha were killed by an angry mob and their bodies were displayed in a downtown street. Han Yŏng-wu, p. 20.

[256] *Korean Repository Vol. III*, p. 272.

[257] Kim Do-hyun, p. 13.

[258] The scholars who support this perspective include Shin Yong-ha and Kang Man-gil.

scholarship emphasizes the empire's autonomous and independent efforts in the age of imperialism and attempts to excavate the modern nature of its reform projects. These scholars reassess the Taehan Empire's reform policies and historical standing from the vantage point of its own modernist efforts, rather than from the colonist or postcolonial views.[259]

Kwangmu reform plans were similar in many ways to those of Kabo supporters and the Independence Club, except that the Kabo reforms represented the strong influence and vested interest of Japan. Japan was the first foreign power to exploit Korea since the opening. Japan's economic position in the peninsula seemed to suffer right after the failed coup of 1884. By the early to mid-1890s, Japanese economic activity in Korea had reached an astonishing level.[260] China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95 brought a long history of Chinese influence in Chosŏn to an end, and enabled Korea to enact a sweeping series of reforms under Japanese military pressure and interference.

Besides Japan's vested interests in Korea, most of the officials in the Kabo reforms were leading figures who had studied and lived in Japan or America. These people shared a common vision of modernizing Korea through emulating the systems of Meiji Japan and the United States. The Kabo reforms were carried out in three different stages during 1894 and 1896 while the nation was in a state of shock following the annihilation of the Tonghak peasant army as well as the assassination of Queen Min. Consequently, the Kabo cabinet faced bitter opposition despite the many modern reforms it facilitated. In particular, Korean

[259] Revisionist scholars include Kim Yongsŏp, Song Byung-gi, Lee T'ae-jin, and Lee Minwŏn.

[260] By the 1890s Japanese commercial establishments existed in overwhelming numbers throughout the open ports of Inchŏn, Pusan, and Wŏnsan. In 1896 210 of 258 such businesses were Japanese-run. Japan also dominated the carrying trade in Korean waters. Out of 1,322 merchant ships with a gross tonnage of 387,507 entering Korea's ports in 1893, 956 ships with a tonnage of 387,224 were Japanese. In sum, 72 percent of vessels and 78 percent of the tonnage was under the Japanese flag. See *Korea Old and New: A History,* p. 215.

hatred toward Japan was intensified with the order to cut top-knots; coupled with the queen's assassination this gave rise to the second round of a "righteous army" militia movement around the country.[261] The Kabo reformers tried to establish Korea as an independent nation, especially from China, by abrogating the unequal agreements Korea had signed with China.

The Kwangmu reform actually inherited many projects from the Kabo reforms rather than abandoning them. Most of all, they agreed with the Independence Club in many areas, including the necessity of reform, the importance of education, the development of human talent, industrial promotion, and the formation of a constitutional government centered on the emperor's sovereignty.[262] The Taehan Empire aimed to achieve the same goals by strengthening state legitimacy through charismatic leadership, modernization projects and the building of nationalism. These tactics created lasting effects on people and proved influential even during foreign rule. In particular, the extraordinary outbursts of nationalist feeling and resistance by the Korean people at the time must be explained through an examination of the reform directives of the Taehan Empire.

The notion of a nation-state is rooted in concrete and positivist conventions as much as it is imaginative and conceptual. State power is exercised not only through extraction and coercion, but also through soft symbolism. In fact, symbolic power makes possible the sustained extraction and coercion. Visual technology and devices registered in Korea's national experience. The Taehan Empire conducted complex negotiations to renew its subjectivity and nationhood through the acceptance, accommodation, rejection, and exclusion of modern visual apparatuses.

[261] Ibid., p. 229.

[262] Kim Dong-no, p. 66.

Reinventing a State: Bolstering with Symbolic Power

All states have symbols that represent them and that exercise a certain representative power over their population.[263] Modern states in particular are often characterized as symbolic repositories as much as military, political, and economic accomplishments.[264] They rigorously invest in symbolic and cultural apparatuses for a governmentalized state in which people submit to state authority without question. It has even been said that historical struggles over the legitimate exercise of military, political, and economic power are actually found to be struggles over the exercise of symbolic power.[265] If the Taehan Empire rediscovered an ancient regime as the answer to the modern world, it was assiduously reinvented through its symbolic power.[266] According to Bourdieu, in the modern world symbolic power is something that confers additional value-added power above and beyond the specific form and amount of power. It operates at both the conscious and unconscious levels through the appearance that no power is being wielded at all, which makes possible the state's extraction and coercion.[267]

[263] The literature on modern state formation differentiates symbolic power from cultural power. Cultural power figures in existing theories of modern state formation primarily as ideology, while symbolic power is often described as persuasion. This research does not necessarily distinguish as the two since they overlap to a great extent in the exercise of visual devices.

[264] Pierre Bourdieu contends that "the symbolic capital is nothing other than economic or cultural capital" in the formation of state power. Thus once it is created, it has logic and autonomy within the structure. "Social Space and Symbolic Power" in *Sociology Theory,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 1989), p. 21.

[265] Mara Loveman. "The modern state and the primitive accumulation of symbolic power," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 110, No. 6 (May 2005), p. 1652.

[266] James McClain also believes that Meiji Japan employed an ancient symbol to justify the overthrow of the old order and legitimize revolutionary policies; p. 154.

[267] According to Bourdieu, legitimization of the social world through symbolic power is not the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; instead, it results from the fact that

Sociologist Mara Loveman argues that the symbolic power of the modern state became functional only through a process of legitimizing its authority from a series of struggles based on the state's infrastructural penetration and administrative ordering of everyday life. She contends that "through practices of standardization, classification, codification and regulation, modern states not only naturalize certain distinctions and not others, but they also help constitute particular kinds of people, places and things." However, as she admits, we "know a bit how the state exercises symbolic power in the modern world but we know relatively little about how the modern state accumulated symbolic power."[268]

Using Loveman's standards, the cooperation and coordination between state and nonstate actors, including the Independence Club and print media such as *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, *Kŭrisŭdo sinmun*, *The Independent*, and *Taehan maeil sinmun*, enhanced the state's symbolic power. This resulted in a greater overall capacity for the state to order social life, as previously observed during this period.[269] However, Loveman downplays the importance of the interconnection between the state and the society and the roles of nonstate factors when she assumes that it "can be consequential for subsequent trajectories of state formation than has generally been recognized."[270] Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, recognizes modern states as the primary repository of symbolic power, but emphasizes that the exercise of symbolic power may not be a complete monopoly of modern states. He professes that

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agents apply structures of perception and appreciation to the objective structures of the social world. Ibid., p. 21.

[268] Mara Loveman, p. 1679.

[269] Ibid., p. 1663.

[270] Ibid., p. 1678.

states are simply contenders for particular symbolic prizes and referees who authoritatively proclaim and enforce the rules of the game.[271]

The previous government, the Chosŏn dynasty, also used various symbolic materials, signs, and protocol to signify the king, the royal family, and the state. Similar to other nations of the period, the Taehan Empire came under great pressure to expand its national and imperial symbols that corresponded to their modern state system and signified state subjectivity and national desires. Their historical standing at the threshold of the nineteenth century demanded that the empire strategize approaches in the symbolic construction of the modern state, which had to be different from those found in European culture or elsewhere.

The Taehan Empire has a special historical standing due to the tradition it inherited from the Chosŏn dynasty, which had created a deep-seated mentality of "moral order for state authority" in the people. Chosŏn developed a sophisticated government administration through which its people had internalized the existence of state authority. According to Loveman, bureaucratic rationalization of many state aspects is the most prominent barometer of the success of modern state building. The modern state's capacity to wield symbolic power through mundane instruments such as censuses, maps, and museums, as exemplified by Benedict Anderson, was actually a "hard-won privilege."[272] Unlike most countries in Europe and Asia, the Chosŏn dynasty had built a unified bureaucratic system, and the monarchical state was the norm for hundreds of years. State legitimacy and the necessity of the monarchy were seldom seriously challenged, even after its encounter with the West and serious debates on political transformation in the late nineteenth century. Even

[271] Ibid.. p. 1657.

[272] Ibid., pp. 1654-1655.

during the radical coup (the Kapsin Coup) in 1884, popular upheavals (the Tonghak Movement) in 1894, foreign-backed reforms (the Kabo Reforms) in 1895-96, and civil disobediences (the Ten Thousand People's Assembly) in 1897, the monarchy was by and large accepted as the status quo. When Kojong consolidated his power in the Taehan Empire, seeking popular legitimacy as the ruling entity from the general public was not an issue. This situation is distinctive when compared to that of Meiji Japan, where more conscious and institutionalized efforts were required to create legitimacy. Instead, Kojong's urgent task was to gain recognition as a "proper" government working for the people in accordance with the Confucian morals of the mandate of heaven, and transform to the government into a modern empire.[273]

Although the government did not need to create a new conception of the monarch and the state among the people, they did need to create an image of an enlightened modern monarch in a modernizing independent state for the outside world. Thus symbolic and cultural projects were built around and based on ideological calculations that were performed in two different dimensions for two heterogeneous audiences—domestic and foreign. In this context, "Maintaining the old foundation with references to new civilization" became the ideological foundation for its domestic projects while balance in diplomacy (*kyunse oegyo*) provided the guidelines for their foreign relations.[274]

[273] Kojong's popular sovereignty was challenged by radical reformers and members of the Independence Club. However, considering the longstanding rivalry between monarchs and government officials throughout the Chosŏn dynasty, Kyung Moon Hwang sees the emergence of the Korean empire as a temporary victory of the monarchy over the new elite. "Governmental Growth in the Taehan Empire Era: Origins of the Modern Korean State," p. 198.

[274] Diplomacy loomed large in Kojong's policy for strengthening the state since the opening. Kojong wanted to balance the imperial powers and make Chosŏn a neutral state like Switzerland. However, he was often criticized for initiating diplomatic measures without first implementing self-strengthening reforms that would buttress a tenable foreign-affairs strategy.

Kojong and his officials in the Taehan Empire were determined to create visual displays befitting the empire by adopting both traditional and modern mediums to promote their ideas for domestic and diplomatic consumption. Certain modes of behaviors and ways of thinking that the new empire desired were reinforced through different modes of cultural production. They inherited and upgraded some old symbols from the previous period, but also adopted new modern visual symbols. Some objects were completely new to the empire, such as stamps that required the establishment of a new modern postal service, but others were adopted from the existing culture with some modifications for modern practices, including money, uniforms, and a national flag.

The state's use of *T'aegŭkki*, the modern national flag of Korea, was invested with the general concept of the state, dictating to the people's minds and bodies. *T'aegŭkki* was first promulgated in May 1882. Originally Pak Yŏng-hyo, head of the apology mission sent following the Imo Mutiny, was believed to have drawn the first flag design in September 1882 while on the boat *Meiji Maru* to Japan, and hoisted the flag in front of his hotel building in Japan. This was believed to be the first official use of the Korean national flag. However, recent research has revealed that a Korean flag discovered in the United States predates Pak Yŏng-hyo's flag by almost two months. The study concluded that *T'aegŭkki* had been drawn by an English interpreter, Lee Ŭng-jun, in May 1882 on Kojong's order to have a modern flag when the country signed a treaty with the United States in May 1882. According to this research, the first *T'aegŭkki* was hoisted with the U.S. flag during the signing of the treaty and sent to the United States through R. W. Shufeldt. This flag was

dated July 19, 1882, and is believed to be the one that Shufeldt brought to the United States.[275]

Throughout the 1890s the government used *T'aegŭkki* on various domestic, military, and diplomatic occasions to symbolize the emperor and the Taehan Empire. Textbooks were used to educate people about the national flag, instructing them on when and how to use it. Newspapers and writers participated in this effort in the 1890s, and *T'aegŭkki* earned the image of a national symbol. Photographs from 1905 show that *T'aegŭkki* was used to welcome Alice Roosevelt, the U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt's daughter, who was traveling through Asia with a delegation headed by the Secretary of War William Taft on a mission to end the Russo-Japanese war. Her delegation arrived in Korea on September 19, 1905 (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

The symbolic power of the state became visible with its merit system in which the state recognized "nationalist" acts by its people. They also issued commemorative stamps, minted coins with state symbols, and reshaped the urban space with electrified streets and streetcars. With the same political intentions, they reorganized royal tombs, revised court rituals and protocol, rebuilt some palace buildings, performed splendid royal events attended by huge audiences, and commissioned the country's last *Ŏjin* Togam.

As Kojong and his ministers sought popular recognition of the Taehan Empire, the symbolic preparation for the new state was embarked on very early, even before the beginning of the empire. In 1895 Kojong reformed the country's royal music and dance used

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[275] Lee T'ae-jin. "Kojong's Making of a National Flag and Political Ideology of One-ness of King and People," *Revising the Kojong Period* (2000). Art historian Mok Su-hyŏn gives credit to the argument that there were discussions between Kim Hong-jip of Chosŏn and Ma Kŏnch'ung of China over the design of the flag. Also see Mok Su-hyŏn, "The Origins and Transition of National Visual Symbols during the Taehan Empire," pp. 296-297.

in state rituals, presumably to elevate the position of the royal house through the splendid display of state rituals. After his February 1897 return from the Russian legation, he established an office of state protocol called Kyochŏn-so under the Privy Council, and created a new system of protocol and regulations.[276] Following the empire's establishment in October 1897, Kojong launched a number of state events to demonstrate imperial authority and prestige. These events were publicized through the new print media, and were reinforced through the modern education system.[277] These visual spectacles were intended to revise and consolidate people's collective memories as the emperor's loyal subjects.

First and foremost, the Taehan Empire built Wŏn'gudan (Altar for the Heaven), the most symbolic architecture of an empire, to declare Kojong as a son of heaven. This enabled people to directly worship him as an emperor, which had previously been an exclusive privilege for Chinese emperors. Before dawn on October 12, 1897, Kojong went to Wŏn'gudan and declared himself an emperor. Starting with Wŏn'gudan, the government spent significant effort and resources to produce spectacles of state rituals and splendid royal processions in spaces where special collective memories were created.

Alongside the construction of Wŏn'gudan, Emperor Kojong wanted to perform a funeral for his wife, who had been assassinated by the Japanese on October 8, 1895. At noon on the first day of his reign as emperor, he elevated the status of his deceased wife to empress, and three days later announced her state funeral would be held over two days on November 21 and 22. For no apparent reason Queen Min's funeral had been previously canceled several times in the two years following her death. Regardless of people's feelings

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[276] Han Yŏng-wu, p. 31.

[277] Kim Ki-ran, "A Study of the Taehan Empire as a Theater State," *Ŏmun Nonch'ong* Vol. 51, No. 0 (2009), pp. 399-432.

about Queen Min, the assassination of the queen was a sign of contempt for the nation and evidence of foreign meddling, especially by Japan.[278] This incident, along with the Haircut Edict, incited all Koreans—conservative or reformist, ruling class or commoners—to rally behind Kojong against the Japan-backed Kabo reformers in 1895-96. The queen's funeral was an extremely sensitive and critical political issue for both the Kabo officials and Kojong's people, but was not performed until the birth of the Taehan Empire.

Empress Min's funeral was carefully planned for a variety of political agendas. All the steps and procedures were splendidly visualized in great detail, from preparation to completion. Seven copies of *The Royal Records and Drawings of Empress Min's State Funeral*, a set of five volumes, were created after the funeral and stored in seven different royal archives around the country. The funeral was performed by a total of over ten thousand people and viewed by thousands of spectators over the two days. The procession was escorted by soldiers in Western uniforms and followed by officials, court ladies, and foreign dignitaries. The imperial house invited an extensive list of foreign dignitaries to the event. As Horace Allen recalled:

> The foreign representatives were invited to be present at this burial, for their reception a row of neat little houses had been especially erected, together with a dining hall, which latter was placed in charge of the keeper of the French hotel in Seoul. The ceremonies of the interment took place at night and we were expected to do our sleeping between times. It was chilly weather but each little house had its tiny stove, while beds, blankets, chairs and tables, were furnished for our convenience. Each minister had with him such official guests as he had announced beforehand he

[278] Kojong and anti-Japanese leaders, mostly Queen Min's kinsmen, saw Russia as a source to help Chosŏn in preventing Japanese domination. Meanwhile, Japan was desperate to restore its influence in the Korean court. Miura Goro, Japanese minister Inoue's successor, masterminded the brutal assassination of Queen Min on October 8, 1895. Fearing international condemnation, Japan recalled Miura, Sugimura, Oakmoto, and forty-five other Japanese involved in the murder to stand trial in Japan. They denied the Japanese policymakers' involvement but admitted that "the Queen should be disposed of when you enter the Palace." Okamoto, as director of the entering party, gave orders that the "fox be disposed of." They were ultimately not convicted due to "insufficient evidence" and freed after a month. For their trial in Japan see Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (1960), pp. 317-321.

> would invite. A number of naval officers from one of our ships at Chemulpo accompanied me officially. . . . Much of the day was spent in getting started and in making our slow progress to the cemetery. Soon after our arrival we were served with an elaborate meal, after which we spent the night in attending the numerous ceremonies with the ruler and his court as well as in getting snatches of sleep.[279]

According to Allen, the level of attention given to the foreign dignitaries was astounding. Kojong and his people tried to maximize the benefit of their presence by repeatedly exposing them to the elegant and sumptuous display of his new empire.

Historian Han Yŏng-wu compares the event to the funeral of King Chŏngjo, one of the most popular Chosŏn kings. The drawings of the initial ceremony of the funerals display 2,035 men at Empress Min's funeral while only 1,440 men attended that of King Chongjo.[280] A total of 5,538 men participated in the procession that carried the palanquin enshrining Empress Min's coffin. This included 1,530 men who carried the coffin; 977 participants who were selected from the capital; and 3,031 men from outside the capital. Han Yŏng-wu emphasizes that the public participation in the royal funeral was unprecedented.[281] Indeed, Kojong intentionally visually displayed strong national support through having representatives of his people carry the body of Empress Min. The inclusion of the public in his royal procession was obviously a populist attempt to publicly manifest his political vision of the state of the people.

Empress Min's funeral was aided by the state's modern outlook but observed in harmony with the state's highest royal protocol. Every detail was recorded in *The Royal Records and Drawings of Empress Min's State Funeral.* However, no record shows that the

[279] Horace Allen, *Things Korean* (1908), pp. 154-155.

[280] Han Yŏng-wu, p. 51.

[281] Ibid., p. 47.

government produced official photographs of the event, but several photographs produced by foreigners and unknown photographers are available today (Figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5).

Considering that Kojong intended to utilize the empress' funeral for his political agenda, the absence of official photographic record needs some examination. First, the government may have been incapable of facilitating it financially, but this is not a plausible explanation given the extravagant execution of the event. Second, the government may have underestimated the impact of modern visual technology. Third, although they were well aware of the benefits of realistic images, it may be that the government purposely did not facilitate it since the event was a funeral. Fourth, they may have clearly discerned that the effectiveness of photographs for domestic consumption was limited due to the underdeveloped network of the mass media. Fifth, it may be that they intentionally kept the event as traditional as possible and did not mention photography in their recordkeeping. Historian Lee Yun-sang notes that, in general, the Taehan Empire largely relied on traditional or East Asian approaches for their domestic audience because they believed the traditional methods would be more appealing to Koreans and more effective in transforming them into imperial subjects.[282] Though absent from the official records, the photographs of the funeral are available today and provide a realistic view of the magnitude of the event.

After the funeral Kojong conducted conspicuous processions to visit his wife's tomb in Hongnŭng, located outside the downtown area, by riding the streetcar. According to Min Suh Son, although this was the primary motive for the court to take on the high construction costs of the first streetcars, it "reaffirmed the ties being forged between the empire and goals of modernization to make the image of empire synonymous with technological progress."

[282] Lee Yun-sang, "Projects Designed to Elevate the State and the Emperor during the Taehan Empire," *Hanguk hakbo*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2003), p. 81.

Besides the tomb park, the procession site outlined by the streetcars' steel rails was also memorialized as an imperial space that played a part in re-encoding Seoul's space.[283] The emperor often made theatrical processions across town, surrounded by hundreds of soldiers and large crowds. Angus Hamilton, who observed a procession of the imperial family to the newly erected Temple of the Ancestors in 1903, recorded in great detail the grandeur of the procession and the festive atmosphere among the public.[284]

The making of loyal imperial subjects was also performed through modern educational programs. As in other parts of the world, modern education emerged as an important state apparatus to promote the symbolic powers of the state. With the beginning of the public education system from the Kabo reforms, elementary school curriculums were created along with new textbooks. A number of textbooks were published around this time. Three major textbooks, *Kungmin sohak* (Citizen's Elementary Textbook, 1895), *Sohak tokpon* (Elementary Readers, 1895) and *Sinjŏng simsang sohak* (New Elementary Textbook, 1896), described the nation's new independence from China, the importance of education, and the introduction of heroic figures, as well as math, natural science, geography, and Western stories.[285] Loyalty, patriotism, and the virtues and modes of behavior for modern citizens were carefully built in the curriculum.

These books used many illustrations and drawings to help students easily understand new concepts and modes of behaviors. For example, a chapter in *Sinjŏng simsang sohak*

[283] Min Suh Son, p. 75-76.

[284] Angus Hamilton, *Korea* (1904), pp. 65-70.

[285] For ideological analysis of the elementary textbooks see Park Seung-bae's article, "A study on political Ideology reflected in the curriculums of elementary textbooks from the Kabo Reforms," *Kyogwagwajŏng yŏn'gu*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (2011), pp. 1-22; for nationalist discourses in the textbooks see Yi Yun-mi's *Modern education, textbooks and the image of the nation: Politics of modernization and nationalism in Korean education, 1880-1910*, Routledge (2000).

includes images that displayed the modern look of the state, with soldiers in Western uniforms and streets lined with Chosŏn's national flags (*T'aegŭkki*) to celebrate the king's birthday. The book explains the historical background of the monarch's birth and rise to the throne, and teaches specific ways to celebrate the monarch's birthday: "September 8th is Mansu Sŏngjŏl, the monarch's birthday. The people should take the day off and congratulate him by raising the national flag in front of their doors."[286] The following page displays an illustration of a street full of fluttering Sinjŏng Sinjŏng Sinjŏng and people celebrating Kojong's birthday (Figure 5.6). Another chapter introduces King Yŏngjo and his benevolent and people-loving personality, followed by an illustration of him at court with his people reverentially responding to him[287] (Figure 5.7). King Yŏngjo was a popular monarch, known for his fair employment of officials across political factions and for opening channels through which the public could make their voices heard by the court. Kojong and his governing are neither addressed nor visible in this chapter. Despite his absence in this chapter inserted between those on Kojong and his court, Kojong was consistently invoked through Yŏngjo's story and illustration, and also throughout the book.

The Taehan Empire invested in emperor's birthdays, which served as important political and cultural platforms to unite the nation under one theme. Kojong's birthday in 1898, following the foundation of the empire, was celebrated to an exceptional degree due to the continuous efforts to inculcate the people with a modern mode of imperial citizenship through the media and education. *The Independent* reported:

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[286] *Sinjŏng simsang sohak*, p. 17 (front and back), Vol. III (1896). Kojong attempted to use his birthday as a tool to show off imperial prestige. In particular, the 1902 celebration marked the fortieth anniversary of enthronement and turning fifty years old, and was lavishly prepared with major *ŏjin* drawings and nationwide celebrations lasting half a month. Many foreign visitors in Korea wrote critically about the event.

[287] Ibid., p. 14 (back).

> In former years, the day was celebrated only in the Palace. The public in general never thought of making it a national holiday. Within the past few years, however, Koreans have learned, thanks to the introduction of foreign ideas, to observe the birthday of their sovereign in a manner which even those who think that the old is better regard as an improvement from the popular indifference of the bygone days. . . . People seemed to take more interest in the day than ever before, and the celebration was decidedly more enthusiastic and widespread than that of last year.[288]

Celebrating monarch's birthdays with extravagant parties and events was not new in the Chosŏn court; however, celebrating it as a public holiday including raising the national flag made it different from past practices. It was designed to be a means of tying people to a growing sense of common identity, and to the founding of the Taehan Empire.

In 1901 Kojong turned fifty years old. Festivities were observed around the country with the display of national flags and the chorus of "Long Live the Majesty! Long Live the Majesty!" heard everywhere. On July 10 a party was prepared by the Independence Club members and attended by the people, including schoolteachers and students who sang at the event. The empire used the party to introduce the country's newly formed Western military band under the tutelage of German composer Franz Eckert. The band consisted of twenty-seven instruments; domestic and foreign guests were astonished that such music could be rendered by Koreans on foreign instruments after only four months' practice. This anniversary was marked with the casting of a commemorative silver medal, bearing on one side the picture of a crown and on the other the lines "A silver medal in honor of the fiftieth birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Ta-han. The fifth year of Kwang-mu, the ninth moon, the seventh day." This was written not in Chinese, but in the Korean alphabet, indicating that Hangŭl was no longer held in disrepute in official matters.[289] Franz Eckert

[288] *The Independent*, September 13, 1898.

[289] *Korea Review* (1901), pp. 210-211.

was commissioned to write a national anthem, *Taehan Cheguk Aeguk-ga*, which was premiered on Kojong birthday the following year. Eckert's band performed regularly in the court and downtown Seoul for the public, adding to the modern and artistic sound.

The Taehan Empire's numerous state projects also included Kojong's imperial inauguration, the building of Independence Gate and palaces, and posthumous entitlements of royal house members.[290] The symbolic powers of sites were designed to enhance or create renewed appeal of a modern state for the public by capitalizing on Chosŏn's traditional protocol. The imperial body politics surrounding the various formats of *ŏjin* production is the most interesting example of symbolic power, and clearly demonstrates the Taehan Empire's direction in visual policy.

Imperial Body Politics: The Visualizing of Emperor Kojong

The most important symbolic energy was deployed around the body of the emperor to portray him as a powerful modern ruler. The images of Emperor Kojong were a visual extension of his stately manifestation and should be understood within a broad spectrum of his state visions and self-identification. With the beginning of the Taehan Empire, the visual representations were directly controlled by the government. Unlike the previous period when Kojong freely posed for foreigners' cameras, his imperial reign in the ten years from 1897 to 1907 witnessed a relative reduction of Kojong's photographic representations while conventional forms of visual mediums such as *ŏjin* and Western oil paintings increased.

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[290] The construction of the Independence Gate to replace Yŏngeunmun (Appreciation Gate) was built to welcome Chinese envoys. This "thanking Chinese grace" was an example of Korea's state-building efforts as a nonstate actor. The article published on December 30, 1897 in *The Independent* applauded the erection of the Independence Gate, reporting: "The neat-looking white granite arch stands there silently yet bespeaking volumes of the laudable spirit of patriotism and energy of the members of that club. The arch is one of the most conspicuous signs of progress and development of public spirit among the natives."

Photography was not a rarity, and Kojong and his people understood the effect of the camera and photography. The decline in reproducible photographs and the rise of conventional paintings was a regression as far as photography is concerned, but this interpretation is valid only when it gives full attention to the silence and lack of records in official textual and visual documents. However, the circulation of his visuals did not actually diminish during this period; rather, the circulation of his images as a ruler of the nation and sometimes as a tribal leader of Asia was widespread, including abroad.

Many foreigners described Kojong as gentle and kind, but also as a passive and pliable man. This estimation may be correct for his earlier years, but after turning fifty he was seen as a decisive, politically smart, and even manipulative monarch. As the main architect of the Taehan Empire, Emperor Kojong presented himself as a monarch blessed with traditional East Asian virtues, including being frugal, benevolent, wise, modest, people-loving, and charismatic. Even Kojong's ascendance to the imperial throne was carefully aligned with an expression of Kojong's humility and benevolence toward his people since it came about following the people's repeated petitions.

While being well aware of possible policy options, the choices of available apparatuses were made with careful calculations, within which the imperial court disapproved of the monarch's unnecessary exposure to the public and commercial activities through visual representations. Although they recognized the pragmatic value of photographic images, they wanted to keep the emperor away from excessive secularization caused by the dissemination of reproduced visuals. Although the Taehan Empire used many symbolic apparatuses, it limited the official use of the emperor's photographs mainly to diplomatic occasions. Different from the previous era when foreigners initiated photo taking

of Kojong, in this period the empire patronized modern visual productions of Kojong. They produced not only traditional *ŏjins*, but also Western-style portrait paintings.

The following table lists visual representations involving Emperor Kojong in various mediums during the period 1896-1907. It is limited only to those that the court officially commissioned and thus were produced directly from a sitting by the emperor. They consist of traditional *ŏjins*, photographic images, Western oil paintings, and watercolor paintings. It should be noted that many more visuals of paintings, illustrations, and drawings exist that were produced outside governmental control, such as those drawn from his photographs or copied between mediums, but these are not included in the list.

Period	Photograph	Traditional *Ŏjin*	Other Mediums
1) Nov. 1896	Kojong by L. B. Graham[291] (Figure 5.8)		
2) Aug. 1897	Kojong by Lilias Underwood[292] (Figure 5.9)		
3) 1898			Oil paintings by Hubert Vos[293] (Figure 5.10)
4) Ca. 1900	Kojong by Morris Courant or unknown[294] (Figure 5.11)		

[291] *Korean Repository*, November 1896, p. 571. It reported, "The photogravure portrait of His Majesty published by us this month was reproduced from a photograph taken by Mrs. L. B. Graham of the United States Legation who is a skillful and enthusiastic amateur photographer and to whose kindness we are indebted for a copy. We are also under obligations to the Hon. C. Waeber, H. I. R. M's Representative, for obtaining for us from the King his permission to publish the picture."

[292] Lilias Underwood, *Fifteen Years Among the Top-knots* (1904).

[293] Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Korea.

[294] Constance Taylor, *Koreans at Home* (1905).

5) Ca. 1900	Kojong, crown prince and Prince Yŏngch'in by Morris Courant or Unknown[295] (Figure 5.12)		
6) Ca. 1900	Kojong and the crown prince by Karl Lewis or unknown[296] (Figure 5.13)		
7) 1901		Multiple *ŏjin* paintings by Ch'ae Yong-sin[297] (Figure 5.14)	
8) May 1902		Multiple *ŏjin* paintings by court painters[298]	
9) November 1902		Multiple *ŏjin* paintings by court painters[299]	
10) 1902			Watercolor painting by Joseph de la Nézière[300] (Figure 5.15)
11) 1904-5	Portrait pictures of Kojong and Sunjong[301] (Figures 5.16 and 5.17)		

[295] Collection of the Art Museum of Sowon University, South Korea.

[296] According to Kwon Haeng-ga, this picture was taken by Karl Lewis, a Yokohama-based photographer, and made into postcards. A copy of the postcard was found in Guimet Museum in France. See Kwon, "Portraits of Emperor Kojong," PhD dissertation, p. 73.

[297] Ch'ae Yong-sin, one of the last court painters, discussed his experience as the main court painter for the 1900 and 1901 *ojin* projects in his book *Bongmyong Sagi*, published in 1914.

[298] Cho Sŏk-jin and Ah Jung-sik drew the *ŏjins* of Kojong and the crown prince. All paintings drawn this year vanished during the Korean War and only remain as records in the Official Records of *Ŏjin* Production (1902).

[299] *Ŏjindosa sisŭngnok* (Minuets of Ŏjin Production), recorded and published in 1902.

[300] Published in *L'extreme-Orient en Image*, 1903.

[301] Collection of the Freer and Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C.

The photograph (Figure 5.9) taken by Lilias Underwood, wife of Presbyterian missionary Horace Underwood, had a special purpose. On the surface, it was taken to provide Kojong's photo as a complimentary gift to new subscribers of Underwood's missionary newspaper *The Kŭrisŭdo sinmun*. Kojong's special favor to the Christian organization came about because the missionary community worked to maintain an amicable relationship with Kojong and the government in order to create a favorable environment for their missionary activities in Korea. On the other hand, Kojong wanted to use the distribution of the photo as a device to enhance his political ground. On the king's birthday in 1897, two months before the declaration of the Taehan Empire, the Christian community proactively called for meetings to offer special prayers for the king:

> The forty-fifth birthday of the King fell this year on Sept. 2. The day was pleasant and there were the usual congratulations from Korean officials and foreign diplomats. A few of the Christians suggested assembling in several places of worship to offer special prayers for His Majesty. Dr. H.G. Underwood, with characteristic promptness, issued a request to several churches in the city and then called a general meeting in the empty hall at Mo Ha Kwan, where the Independence arch is to be erected. The Editor of THE INDEPENDENT, Dr. Jaisohn, heartily entered into the plan and announced it in the issue of his paper, the 1st instant. This meeting gave an opportunity for the people to show their affection and loyalty for their king.[302]

The photo was taken when Kojong was in need of public support to establish and strengthen the empire. Underwood persuaded him to break the political stalemate by using visual power to mobilize public support for the founding of the empire. In return for his support, Underwood earned political justification for his missionary activities.

Two Western painters, Dutch painter Hubert Vos and French painter Joseph de la Nézière, were invited to draw oil paintings of Kojong in a real life setting (Figures 5.10 and 5.15). Vos was a portrait painter who had earned fame in the New York art circle. He

[302] *Korean Repository* Vol. I, pp. 370-371.

traveled in Japan, Indonesia, China, and Korea, and drew Java's Sultan Boeminotto, Chinese officials Li Hung-chang and Yuan Shi-kai, and later the Empress Dowager. In Korea Kojong commissioned an oil portrait painting in 1899. Vos obtained permission to keep a second copy of Kojong's portrait. *Hwangsŏng sinmun* notes that Vos may have sent paintings to the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelles. Whether the portrait was actually sent and displayed had remained questionable until the 1970s. According to art historian Kim Young-na, who discovered a Vos exhibition catalogue for the Exposition Universelles, Paris in 1979, the portraits of Kojong, Min Sang-ho, Li Hung-chang, and Yuan Shi-kai were included in the display. However, their portraits were found in a section called "Society, Economy, and Hygiene" that was dedicated to portraits, photos, and charts for the purpose of comparing the races and social patterns of different countries.[303]

This catalogue of Hubert Vos's work also shows that Kojong's painting, along with that of Min Sang-ho, was later displayed at the Union League Club (New York) in February 1900, the Corcoran Art Gallery (Washington D.C.) in December 1900, and Holland House (U.K.) in November 1944.[304] Without the imperial court's notice, the emperor entered into Western discourses of race and civilization as a cultural Other for the Western gaze. This portrait painting of Kojong was lost during the fire in the palace library in 1904.[305]

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[303] According to Kim, the Korean portraits were not in the Korean Exhibit or at the art exhibition. Instead, their names were found in section 110, "Public or Private Movements for the Welfare of the People" and Kojong's name was found in group 14, "Society, Economy, and Hygiene," which was dedicated to portraits and charts that compare races and social patterns of different countries. See the chapter "The First Encounter with the West: Korean Exhibits at the World Expositions" in Young-na Kim, *20th Century Korean Art* (2005), pp. 56-57.

[304] *Hubert Vos, Dutch-American Painter*, an exhibition catalogue (June 16-August 15, 1979), Stamford Museum and Nature Center, Connecticut.

[305] Very recently there was a claim that a photograph of this painting was discovered in the court library. If this is true, it can be speculated that photography was used as a visual record keeping tool or that the image was distributed as the emperor's portrait. This could open up a new dimension of discussing photography in the court during this period, but the facts are yet to be confirmed.

The photographs in Figures 5.12 and 5.13 show Kojong in Western uniform, representing him after the establishment of the Taehan Empire as a military leader in a uniform decorated with medals and embroidered insignia on the chest. Among these photos, the image of Kojong and Sunjong in Figure 5.13 was most widely circulated during the period because it was produced as a postcard by a Japanese photo studio. At the turn of the century postcards and stereographs were two commercialized forms of photographic images, and images of Kojong and his royal family were undoubtedly the most sought-after by commercial photographers. By this time the Korean people had started to consume postcards, but due to lack of documents, it is not possible to fully examine how the images were created or disseminated, or how it affected the native perceptions.

The portrait photographs of Kojong and Sunjong currently housed in the Freer and Sackler Gallery in the Smithsonian Institution are also noteworthy images (Figures 5.16 and 5.17). Unlike many other photographs where Kojong is dressed either in traditional royal robe or Western military uniform, in photograph Figure 5.16 Kojong is dressed in a traditional imperial robe loaded with modern symbols as if signaling the empire's awareness of the new era of imperial rivalry. A copy of this photograph and one of the crown prince were given to Alice Roosevelt in September 1905 during her audience with Kojong, and donated to the Freer and Sackler Gallery in 2010 by her granddaughter.[306] Alice Roosevelt's visit to Korea was made four months before the execution of Japan's protectorate. Not

[306] Alice Roosevelt, accompanied by William Howard Taft who signed the Katsura-Taft Memorandum in Japan. Before coming to Korea, she made a state visit to Korea via China and Japan en route to the Philippines in 1905. She and her envoy were treated with the highest honors by Kojong's court in order to secure U.S. support against Japan. Yet Japan and the United States had already signed a secret agreement to recognize each other's sphere of influence in Korea and the Philippines respectively. Kojong focused on the United States by implementing the financial concession plan. He considered American proposals in railways, telephones, and gold mining to build good relations and agreed to more terms with the United States than with others. Despite his efforts, the United States preserved good relations with Japan and maintained a position of noninvolvement toward the "Korea problem."

knowing the secret arrangements made between Taft and Katsura, Kojong and his administration viewed her visit as a political opportunity to impress the United States as a possible savior.

In the image Kojong is surrounded by a folding screen on which chrysanthemums and cherry flowers, the symbols of Meiji Japan, are portrayed in full bloom. Kojong's face, imperial robe, and medals were extensively retouched with paints but were poorly finished. In contrast, the retouching of the chrysanthemums and the edges of the folding screen were done with extreme care and thoroughness. It is surprising that it served as an imperial gift to the state's highest foreign guests since it was "a strange combination of skill and sloppiness."[307] One cannot help but suspect that the retouching could have been done while the portraits were in Alice's possession.

Regarding the somewhat puzzling combination of the Korean emperor with a Japanese-style screen, Kim Soo-jin, who has researched folding screens of this period, acknowledges the availability and actual uses of Japanese folding screens along with Korean screens within the Taehan imperial court. She states that the Japanese folding screens embroidered with themes of flora and fauna or famous landscapes were in high demand as export items in Europe with the popularity of the Japonisme. Using the court inventory, Kim confirms that the government had a total of eight Japanese folding screens in their collection, some acquired by the Taehan government and some given as gifts by the Japanese court.[308]

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[307] A description was provided by David Hogg, a photo archivist at Freer and Sackler Museum of Asian Art, who examined the donated objects.

[308] Kim Soo-jin, "Embroidered Japanese screens introduced to the Chosŏn court during the modern transition," *Misulsa Nondan*, Vol. 36 (June 2013), pp. 91-116.

The Korean court outsourced the task to Japanese photographers such as Murakami Tensin, instead of hiring full-time court photographers. There were many Japanese commercial photo studios and Kojong must have posed more frequently than ever at functions and rituals on their request, if not commissioned by the court. Yet many did not survive the tough times.

Most of Kojong's visual representations of this period aimed to charm viewers' minds within a traditional framework. There were four official *ŏjin* projects ordered in 1901 and 1902, three of which were portraits of Kojong. The two official *ŏjin* projects in 1902 were launched to address tremendous challenges to his political life. Specifically, they came after Kojong had to dissolve the Independence Club and the Ten Thousand People's Assembly, which had originally supported Kojong's imperial project, due to their demands for a parliament and civil rights. There was even an attempt to usurp the throne. Thus the *ŏjin* projects, officially intended to commemorate Kojong's fiftieth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of his reign, aimed to cope with these internal challenges and gather strength. Kojong made a total of sixty sittings over two months in 1902, fifty for the first one and ten for the second.[309] This demonstrates the importance with which he viewed visual projects in his effort to reconsolidate power. All seven paintings were created, but all were destroyed in the fire during the Korean War.

The Taehan Empire used binary approaches in visual policy. Traditional visual practices continued for domestic consumption while photographs were produced mostly for diplomatic representations. Despite strict control of the monarch's body, images of the emperor were reproduced and copied across the mediums, from photographs to illustrations and paintings to photographs. The empire was unable to control this dissemination. One

[309] Kim Sun-il, *Tŏksugung* (1991), p. 110.

good example was the case of Vos's painting in the Exposition Universelle, Paris. As foreign pressure intensified beginning in 1905, Kojong and his court became more confined, with no diplomatic options or resources available. The nation-building project started by the state witnessed the strong emergence of nonstate actors, who continued to support Kojong as the most important symbol of the Korean state and the source of nationalism.

Conclusion

Compounded with criticism about the Taehan Empire, its "failure" in modern visual policy has often been used as an undeniable indicator of the empire's incompetence. Despite its eventual failure in preserving sovereignty, the Taehan Empire's modern reforms and state building in fact cultivated nationalism as an ideological tool for modernizing the state and to foster citizens' loyalty through symbolic and visual apparatuses. The empire adopted various visual apparatuses to strengthen its symbolic power and formulate their own national gaze. Inherited with popular consent, it involved not only intangible ideas and policies, but also took material form such as the flag, songs, clothes, coins, and pictures that promoted symbolic ideals of nationhood and Koreanness. These were used repeatedly to reinforce the concepts of state and nationhood among the people, and of sovereign equals between states.

Emperor Kojong embraced a radical break from traditional practices. At the same time, he appealed to and capitalized on the idea of tradition to build a strong modern nation within the imperial system. His policy directives based on "Maintaining the old foundation with references to new civilization" also applied to Taehan Empire's visual initiatives. Various state symbols and portrait paintings, including traditional and Western ones, were used as the paramount visual devices to represent the state's ideology, whereas photographs were used mostly for diplomatic purposes.

The images of Kojong captured in prints and picture frames dramatically secularized the state inside and outside the country. Visual secularization did not happen in a vacuum within the circle of Kojong and his court; instead, it came in response to social changes that called for popular support and awareness. On the verge of imminent foreign threat, the Korean people reconstituted the nation to fight for national community by utilizing the

state's symbolic devices and employing modern material culture, such as photographs. In spite of the colonial dislocation of the official government, many of the state symbols of the late Chosŏn have survived as visual and material apparatuses. These help to invoke a sense of nationhood in the minds of Koreans during colonial rule, and some survive today in postcolonial Korea.

CONCLUSION

The opening of Korea was a political decision made by King Kojong, who was under foreign pressure. However, the ensuing consequences of the opening went beyond the political realm and penetrated the lives of individual Koreans. The changes people experienced at the grassroots level were unprecedented, stemming from capitalist integration and foreign encroachment. The introduction of new ideas and technologies, and increasing traffic of people and goods from outside the country required Koreans to negotiate with new values, ideas, and notions of subjectivity and identity that challenged their present norms. This dissertation employed early Korean photography as visual images and historical narratives to formulate a new perspective about the period and Korea's own paths to modernization. This research contends that these historical documents are more extensive than mere image contents but encompass photographic practices, discourses, and technology.

There have been debates on how to view the camera and photography, including whether they are a veritable engine of visualization or an imaginative one. Postcolonial studies have proven that the latter prevailed in the relationship between the West and the Orient, and relied heavily on the analysis of image content. In contrast, this dissertation argues for the significance of the former by bringing the photographic experiences of the natives to the scenes of historical photography. The frontispiece image, titled "Seoul Street

Scene," was taken by Percival Lowell in March 1884 during his visit to Chosŏn. Within the photograph Koreans of different genders, ages, and classes who happened to be in the street on that day flock around a Western machine called a camera. The people were captured in their own positions, possibly following Lowell's requests Lowell. However, it seems that curiosity may have led some of them to crane their necks or even step out of the crowd to get a better view. This was a moment when a Western gaze was appropriating Koreans, but also myriad Korean gazes scrutinized the camera and the foreign photographer. In the process they began to formulate a sense of their changing world.

The nineteenth-century photographs of Korea were exchanges and encounters of multiple gazes within which not only the imperial Western gaze and the retrogressive Korean gaze crisscrossed but also multifold gazes of individuals of various backgrounds, intentions, and nationality were entwined. The detective gazes of native Koreans are found in numerous images. For example, in a widely circulated photograph taken by Felice Beato, a Korean man with a top-knot who was onboard the U.S. ship General Sherman during the U.S. invasion in 1871 posed for the camera holding his own elongated pipe, a handful of empty beer bottles, and the English periodical *Every Saturday*. In the United States this image was consumed as an awkward display of an uncivilized Korean native encountering Western civilization in the late nineteenth century; later in the postcolonial reading it became a sign of Western mockery of and invasion into Korean daily life through commercial goods. In the image the Korean was not only being seen, but he himself was seeing, observing, and experiencing the new environment, casting a curious gaze at the camera. The world before and after this experience must have seemed quite different to him. However, due to the fact that it was not taken by a native photographer it has not been

incorporated into Korean's photographic history. Kojong, a monarch in Confucian Chosŏn where the long-standing *ŏjin* tradition still suppressed his visibility, was also an agent who ushered in the radical transformation in visual regime during this period, often posing freely for cameras of foreign photographers with a gentle smile.

The flattened image content, the materials preserved today, also flattens the narrative within the frame, fending off stories that are untidy, although more exuberant and pertinent, because they exist beyond and outside the visual frame. Thus what happened among sitters, producers, and consumers of photographs has remained by and large unexplored as an ambiguous space somewhere between execution and representation.

The scholarship on Korea's modernity has been a product of ideological struggles in postcolonialism as much as a cultural construct derived from the desire to indict the Western imperial gaze over the Orient. Fraught with discourses of failure, superstition, and premodernness, the evaluation of Korea's pre-colonial period from 1876 to 1910 has been largely colonized and discredited both by the immediate conqueror, Japan, and native Koreans in liberated Korea. Interestingly, the early photography has offered a discursive rapprochement between Korea's cold war reality and the twentieth-century intellectual enlightenment on the imperial legacy, through which scholars from different historical views and disciplines have spoken for somewhat uniform analysis and criticism on the early photographs.

Within twentieth-century scholarship early Korean photography has been dismissed as foreign and imperial because these photographs were taken predominantly by foreigners. The wavering presence or near absence of native photographers and photo studios in the period became proof that the period was void of native narratives and experiences involving

photography. Thus Said's Orientalism and Foucault's theory of knowledge and power have fashionably occupied the most scholarly inquiries about early photography. With these master narratives, the images became overly ideologized and deemed insufficient to properly historicize the period outside the boundaries of these discourses. However, the archive is a rich repository for contemporary Koreans, especially since it provides evidential glimpses of traditional Korean culture and lives in visual forms and supplies historical information that no document can provide. The psychological tug-of-war between the pervasive antipathy to the archive and the practical temptation thereof has only grown larger by being neither acknowledged nor addressed in the field of Korean studies.

This dissertation drew from that scholarship but challenges the dominant approach toward the archive with a desire to understand the period and the lives of native people through the window of visual documents. It offers a major shift in angle and focus, from one of the West over Koreans to the Korean gaze and life visualized in and around the images. It has done this by problematizing the current scholarship, historicizing the photograph and photographic practices of the Korean people, and suggesting new approaches and interpretations to the photography of the period.

The research on Korea's early importation and adoption of photography provides mixed and complex stories. They show how photography was a channel of negotiations oscillating between acceptance and resistance, and a space of conduct and counter-conduct between native Koreans and different social groups, both native and foreign, with divergent agendas. Therefore what came alongside the "representational" imperial gaze was also a product of various contact and interactions between individuals of different classes, professions, races, and genders, as well as domestic and foreign people.

The power of reproduced images is corroborated through communitywide sharing of the same images, in particular for targeted aims. Historians agree that the concept of a nation and a shared sense of nationhood were generated by outside forces through the realization of difference between the self and others. The arrival of Westerners and the Japanese as bearers of a “new” civilization in the mid-nineteenth century shaped and complicated the Chosŏn people’s sense of community with the Opening in 1876. However, it is challenging to empirically historicize Korea’s ascent as a modern nation and the rise of a sense of nationalism due to the paucity of reliable primary materials, especially the lack of documentation of the daily lives and behaviors of the public. Thus most scholars have viewed the Japanese protectorate in 1905 as the provider of a nationwide momentum that allowed Koreans to demonstrate their earliest nationalistic signs.

This dissertation argues that those signs can be discovered much earlier through the visual history. Previously Chosŏn’s Others (mainly China and Japan) were not close enough to pose imminent and constant threats. However, with the rise of Japan in the peninsula after the Sino-Japanese War in 1884-85, foreign encroachments increased and Koreans’ complaints and distrust intensified. The notions of nation and sovereignty began to be generated through multiple mediums; for example, the images of the modernized body of the monarch as the face of the nation dramatically secularized the state. The visual practices of Korean people since the 1880s and the dissemination of materials such as photographic images and textbook illustrations in the mid-1890s demonstrated sporadic but strong signs of Koreans’ sense of the enclosed community vis-à-vis foreigners.

The acceptance of photography by the Korean public paralleled the socioeconomic transformation of the society and often sparked major resistance, becoming the object of

outright rejection in the 1880s. From speculations of a shamanistic nature as seen in the allegation that the camera could take one's spirit away to public assaults on foreigners, cameras and photography inflamed public fury, allegedly out of premodern ignorance. Yet most cases were too complex to be judged in such a simple way. In particular, the two case studies of the public riots not only demonstrate an acute sense of foreign intrusion but also illuminate how the discourses objectifying the natives as xenophobic or superstitious have been reproduced and expanded to accommodate colonial as well as postcolonial agendas. This shows that photography's flexibility and malleability, both in images and discourse, induced pundits and scholars to use the early visuals to discuss the period.

The discourse on early photography in Korea belongs to broader historical narratives and cannot be reduced to image content or a single interpretation or narrative. Indeed, early photography sheds a different light not only on important understanding of the social and cultural lives of Korean people, but also on the strategic nature of the modernization drives of the Korean government (both Chosŏn and the Taehan Empire). The absence of official records about photography, contrasted with Kojong's ardor for personal photographic practices and related policy implementation, leaves ample space for reevaluating the nature of Chosŏn and the Taehan Empire's reform policies as well as for examining the guidelines compiled in the *Kojongsillok* or the *Veritable Records of Kojong*.

Korea became extensively visualized with the introduction of photography during the opening. Early photography effectively reveals that Chosŏn Korea was not a reclusive or calm nation as described by some book titles, but a society and culture that was full of busy, dynamic lives. In fact, until the Russo-Japanese War and the start of the Japanese protectorate rule when images of Korea began to be shown as a serious political subject, the

photographic renditions of Korea predominantly focused on the lives of the common people of Korea. Except for some explicit anthropological and racial renderings, most photographic images provided a positive record of the lives of Korean people from the period. It is interesting to compare and contrast native Korean renderings, visual and photographic, with those of Westerners and Japanese. Kim Jun-gŭn, an active painter in major trade ports, and Hwang Ch'ŏl, who shared his photographs with foreign dignitaries, were both deeply engaged in appropriating Korean lives and landscapes in their visual mediums. One question for future research could be to address how their renderings differ from, crisscross, or overlap with those of foreigners. This will shed critical light on the cracks and limitations of the binary master narrative on the visual modernity of Korea, and also contribute to the process of deobjectifying and decolonizing the photographic archives and discourses.

Early Korean photography is an organic and evolving archive that has great potential to grow and draw new interpretations and new approaches in the study of Korean history. It is also the field where contemporary interests, both ideological and scholarly, drive the readings of the archive. Nevertheless, it offers a visual window into Korea's past that allows the viewer to see how Koreans lived, rather than simply how they were gazed on and portrayed by others. Often overlooked or used for ideological reasons, the early photography will continue to serve as a wealth of information about Korea's past. This dissertation aims to shed light on this valuable source of Korean history and open a path for further inquiry.

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APPENDIX

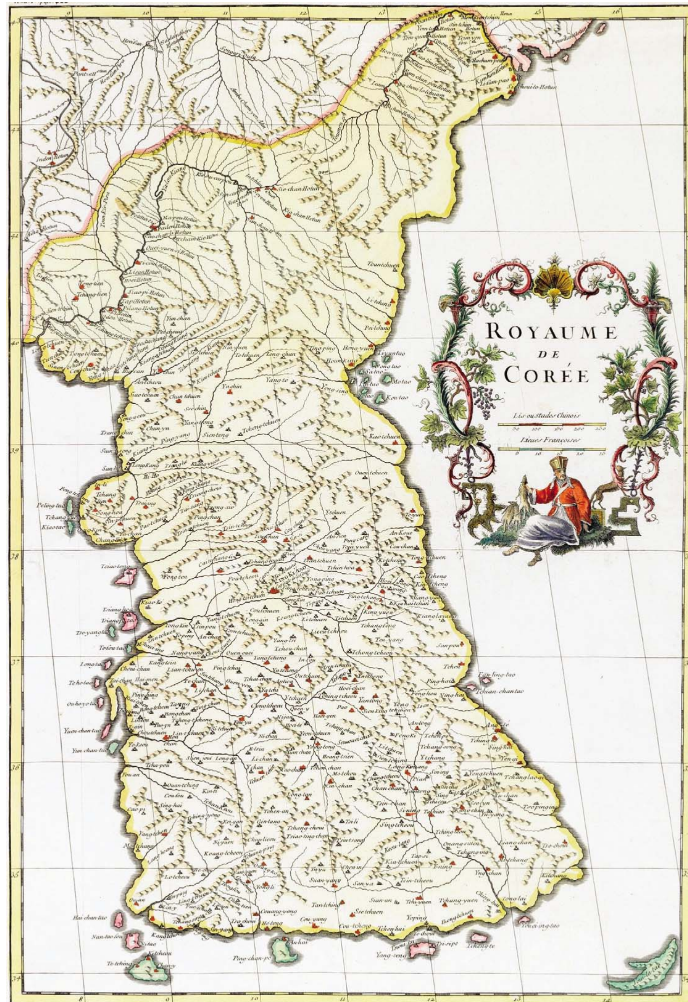

Figure 1.1. "*Royaume de Corée*." A map produced by the French cartographer J.B.B. d'Anville (1737).

Figure 1.2. "*Man in Korean Costume*." Portrait painting by Peter Paul Rubens in 1617. Courtesy of the Paul Getty Museum, California.

Figure 1.3. "*Unknown Koreans*." Woodblock print by Robert Sayer in 1806. 8.5cmx11.5cm. Private collection of Paik Sŏng-hyŏn.

Figure 1.4. “*King and Queen of Corea*.” An illustration published in the book *Corea, Without and Within* written by William Elliot Griffis in 1885, p. 211.

Figure 1.5. Photograph of Korean woman with open breast. Studio staged. Produced and circulated as postcard by a Japanese studio. Also published under a title “Native Dress” in Angus Hamilton’s book *Korea* (1904), p. 15. Late 19th Century.

Figure 1.6. Photograph of Korean woman with open breast. Studio staged. Produced and circulated by a Japanese studio in late 19th Century.

Figure 1.7. Painting by Shin Yun-bok. 18th Century. Courtesy of National Museum of Korea.

Figure 1.8. Painting by Kim Jun-gŭn. Late 19th Century.

Figure 1.9. Figurative Renderings of Korean People by Savage Landor. Published in his book *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm* in 1895.

Figure 1.10. “H.R.H. Prince Min Young-Huan.” Painting by Savage Landor. Included in his book *Corea or Cho-sen: The Land of Morning Calm* (1895).

Figure 1.11. Realistic Rendering of Min Yŏng-hwan in Portrait Photograph. Photographer unknown. Late 19th Century.

Figure 1.12. “*Korea*.” An advertising postcard produced by Singer Co. around 1905. Used with Permission of Mona Domos from her private collection.

Figure 1.13. A Trading Card of Japan. Produced by Singer Co. around 1905. Used with Permission of Mona Domosh from her private collection.

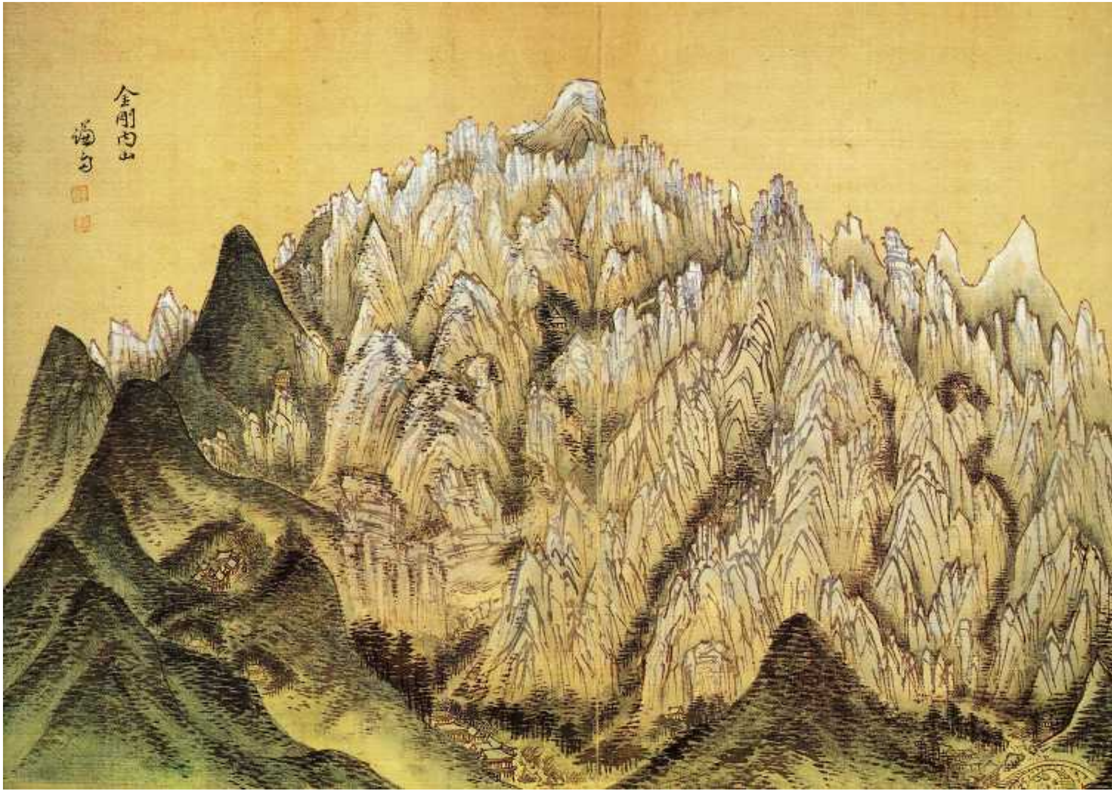

Figure 2.1. "*Kŭmgang chŏndo* (The Diamond Mountains)." A True View Landscape Painting by Chŏng Sŏn in 18th Century. Courtesy of Kangsong Museum.

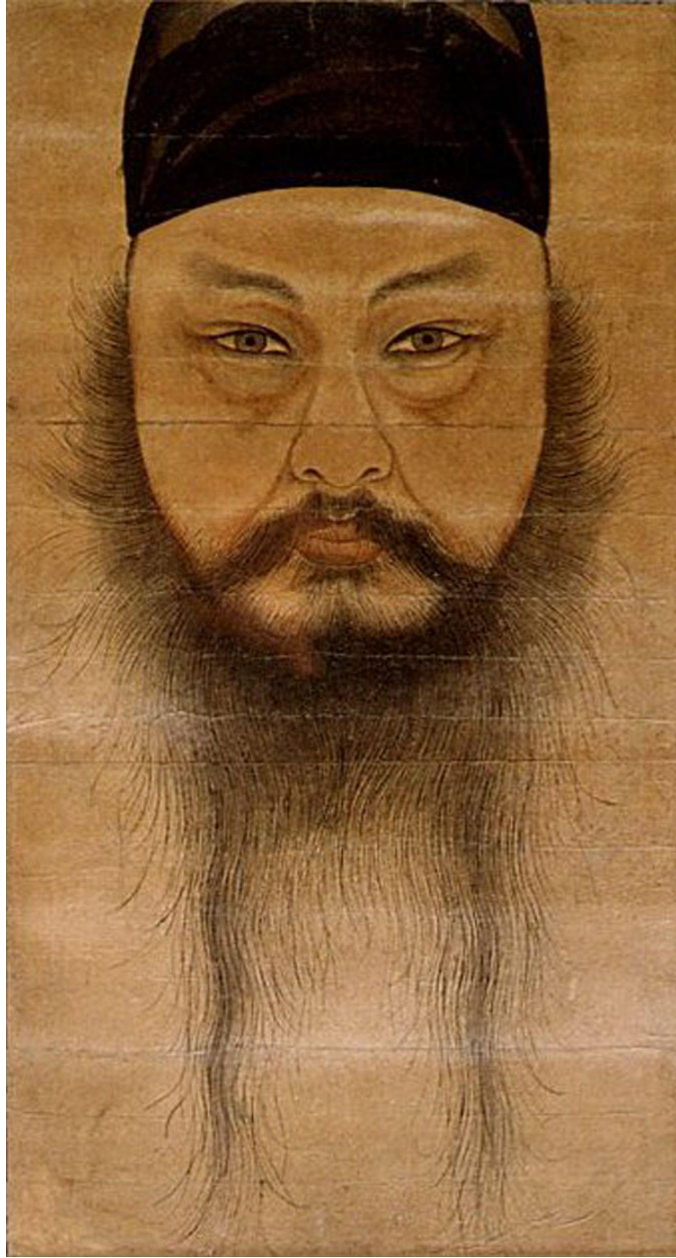

Figure 2.2. "*Self-portrait*." Painting by Yun Du-sŏ. Late 17th Century.

Figure 2.3. "*Self-portrait*" by Kang Se-hwang. 18th Century.

Figure 2.4. "*Ssirŭm*." Folk painting by Kim Hong-do in 18th Century. Courtesy of Museum of National Art in Korea.

Figure 2.5. "*Beauty*." Folk painting by Sin Yun-bok in 18th Century. Courtesy of Museum of National Art in Korea.

Figure 2.6. "*Three Brothers in the Cho Family*." Painting by Lee Myŏng-ki. Color in Silk, 42cm x 66.5cm, National Treasure #1478. Courtesy of National Folk Museum of Korea

Figure 3.1. Photograph of a man being forced to cut his top-knot during the implementation of the Haircut Edict. Photographer unknown. Around 1895.

Figure 3.2. Photograph of Yun Ung-yŏl, Military Official of the Senior Third Grade. Photographer unknown. Photographer unknown. Around 1880. From the book *Korea Caught in Time*.

Figure 3.3. Photograph of a Korean Aristocrat. Photographer unknown. Photographer unknown. Around 1890. From the book *Korea Caught in Time*.

Figure 3.4. Photograph of a gathering of the Ten Thousand People's Assembly. Photographer unknown. 1898.

Figure 3.5. Photograph of a gathering of the Ten Thousand People's Assembly.
Photographer unknown. 1898.

Figure 3.6. Photograph of a gathering of the Ten Thousand People's Assembly. Photographer unknown. 1898.

Figure 3.7. Photograph of the Funeral of Min Yŏng-hwan. Photographer unknown. 1905.

Figure 3.8. Photographic print of Blood Bamboo. The label reads, "故閔忠正公泳煥血竹, 光武 10 年 7 月 15 日, 菊田寫眞館謹寫" (Blood Bamboo of Late Loyalist Min Yŏng-hwan, July 15th in the 10th Year of Kwangmu Reign, Photo Humbly Taken by Kikuta Photo Studio). Produced by Kikuta Photo Studio. 1905.

Figure 3.9. A postcard designed with *T'aegŭkki*, and the name of the state written in An Jung-gŭn's blood and his photographs. 1909.

Figure 3.10. "*Endurance*." Photograph of a calligraphy written by An Jung-gŭn with his cut finger image. March 1910. National Treasure No. 569-18.

Figure 3.11. Photograph of An Jung-gŭn in jail in Russia. Photographer unknown. 1909.

Figure 3.12. Photograph of the 1863 envoy to Beijing, China. The oldest photograph of Koreans handed down to today. Taken by a Russian photographer. 1863.

Figure 3.13. Photograph of the main gate of Yŏnmudae in Kanghwa Island. The delegates from both parties are entering the meeting place to sign the treaty. Taken by Kawata Kiichi. February 1876. Kyujanggak Library.

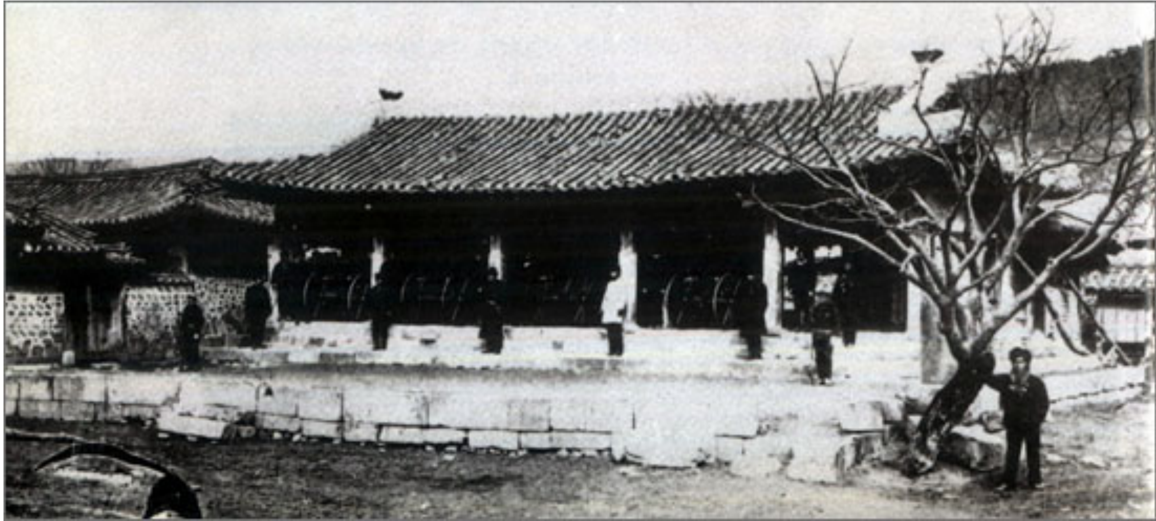

Figure 3.14. Photograph of the building within Yŏnmudae where the signing of the treaty took place. Taken by Kawata Kiichi. "February 1876. Kyujanggak Library.

Figure 3.15. “*Women and Children*.” Photograph taken by Hwang Ch’ŏl. 1880s.

Figure 3.16. “*Kwanghwa-mun*.” Photograph taken by Hwang Ch’ŏl. 1880s.

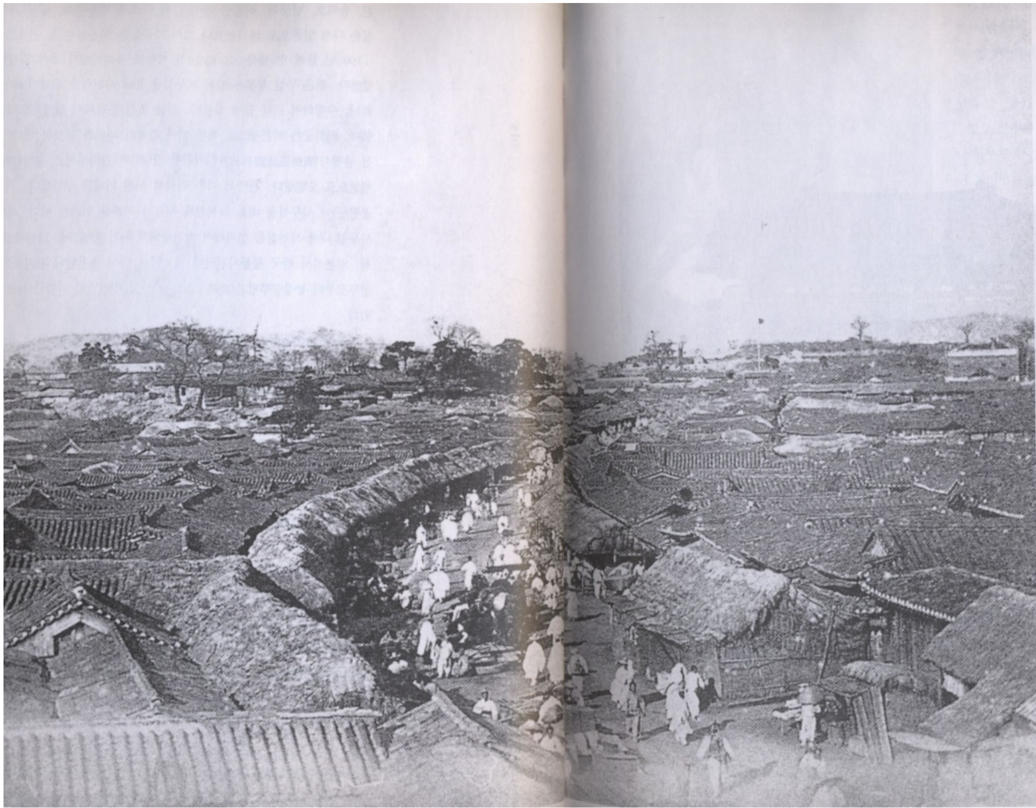

Figure 3.17. “*Streets in Downtown Seoul*.” Photograph taken by Hwang Ch’ŏl. 1880s.

Figure 4.1. Photograph of *sansu obongbyŏng* (Folding Screen with Painting of Landscape and the Five Peaks) and the royal chair.

Figure 4.2. Photograph of Emperor Meiji in traditional, extravagant *sokutai* formal court dress. 1872.

Figure 4.3. Photograph of Emperor Meiji in a Western-style dress uniform. 1873.

Figure 4.4. Image of Emperor Meiji as a result of cross-medium reconstruction. 1888.

Figure 4.5. Portrait painting attributed to Queen Sinjŏng (1808-1890) by Lee T'ae-jin. Late 19th century. Private Collection.

Figure 4.6. Photograph of Empress Haruko in traditional dress. Before 1886.

Figure 4.7. Photograph of Empress Haruko in Western dress in 1886.

Figure 4.8. Photograph of Kojong by Percival Lowell. March 1884. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Figure 4.9. Photograph of Kojong by Percival Lowell. March 1884. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

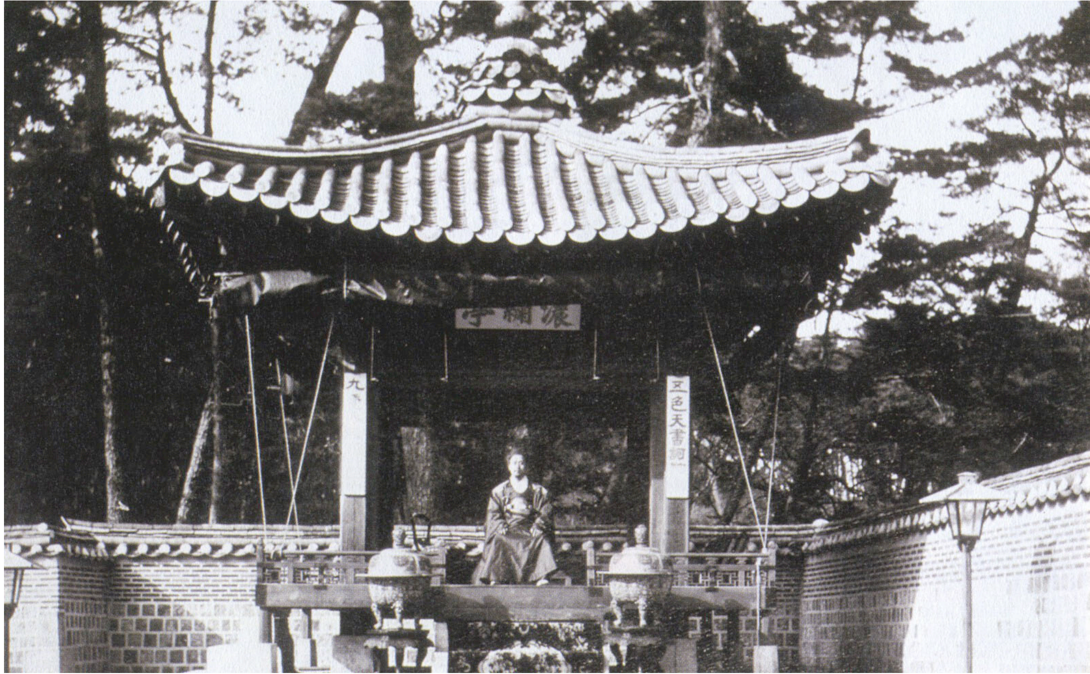

Figure 4.10. Photograph of Kojong by Percival Lowell. March 1884. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Figure 4.11. Photograph of Kojong either by Percival Lowell or by Ji Un-yŏng. March 1884. Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives.

Figure 4.12. Photograph of Crown Prince by Percival Lowell. March 1884. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Figure 4.13. Photograph of Kojong either by Percival Lowell or by Ji Un-yŏng. March 1884. Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives.

Figure 5.1. "*Children Welcoming the Arrival of Alice Roosevelt and her delegation*." Photograph taken by William Dickerman Straight in 1905. Courtesy of Cornell University Library Collection.

Figure 5.2. “*Children Welcoming the Arrival of Alice Roosevelt and her delegation*.” Photograph taken by William Dickerman Straight in 1905. Courtesy of Cornell University Library Collection.

Figure 5.3. Photograph of Empress Min's funeral procession. Taken by a French teacher Charles Aleveque. 1897.

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上大君主陛下계옵셔。建陽元年前四十四年(壬子、開國四百六十一年)에。誕生ᄒᆞ사建陽元年前。三十二年甲子(開國四百七十二年)에登極ᄒᆞ옵시니。그ᄯᆡ

Figure 5. 6. Illustration of a street full of *T'aegŭkki*. From the textbook *Sinjŏng simsang sohak*. Page #17. Published in 1896.

Figure 5.7. Illustration of King Yŏngjo at his court. From the textbook *Sinjŏng simsang sohak*. Page #14. Published in 1896.

Figure 5.8. "*His Majesty, The King of Korea*." Photograph taken by L.B. Graham in 1896. Published in *The Korean Repository* in November 1896. Collection of Ewha Womans University Library.

Figure 5.9. Photograph titled "*The King of Korea*." Published in *Fifteen Years among the Top-knots: Life in Korea* in 1904.

Figure 5.10. Portrait of Kojong by Hubert Vos. Oil painting. 1898. Courtesy of Museum of Contemporary Arts in Korea.

Figure 5.11. Photograph of Emperor Kojong in Western uniform. Photographer unknown. Around 1900.

Figure 5.12. Photograph of the royal family. Prince Yŏngch'in (Left below), Emperor Kojong (Left) and the crown prince (Right). Photographer unknown. Around 1900.

Figure 5.13. Photograph of "*Emperor Kojong and the Crown Prince*." Also produced as postcard. Photographed by Murakami Tensin or unknown. Around 1900.

Figure 5.14. *Ŏjin* paintings by a court painter Ch'ae Yŏng-sin. 1902.

Figure 5.15. Painting of Emperor Kojong by Joseph de la Nézière. Water color. 1902.

Figure 5.16. Photograph of "*Emperor Kojong*." Photographer unknown. Around 1904. Courtesy of Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 5.17. Photograph of "*Crown Prince*." Photographer unknown. Around 1904. Courtesy of Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art, Smithsonian Institution.