

# **Experiencing and Constructing New Modern Subjectivities :the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915 and the Government General Museum**

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## **1. Introduction**

The international exhibition and the modern Western form of art museum were introduced into East Asia in the late nineteenth century. They immediately took hold in a modernizing Japan and in Korea under Japanese rule. The adoption of the modern exhibition and museum form in East Asia is entwined, on the one hand, with the birth of the modern nation-state and, on the other, the globalization of cultural forms and the cultural economy. This study explores the global expansion of the Western exhibition and museum and its local development in modern Korea through a focus on the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915 and the Government General Museum.<sup>1</sup>

The Chosŏn Industrial Exposition took place in Seoul over fifty days, from 11 September 1915 until 31 October 1915 (figure 1). It was staged at a moment of rapid modernization and industrialization in Korea that began with the Japanese annexation of 1910 and that brought radical changes in all areas of Korean society, from its politics and economics to its culture. After the Exposition ended, the Art Museum building in the Exposition and its exhibitions led to the creation of the Government General Museum in 1915.<sup>2</sup> The 1915 Exposition and the Museum may have been conceived as political propaganda justifying Japanese colonial rule but, as a cultural machinery and technological spectacle, they generated multiple meanings, some of which worked against the colonial aspirations of the Exposition, marking a crucial turning point in the modernization and homogenization of Korean society.

The Japanese Government General congratulated itself as enormously successful run. In terms of the number of visitors, the 1915 Exposition may have been considered a success. The 1915 Exposition was not the first exposition in Korea. However, until the Exposition, there was no precedent for a public experience of this scale. As presented in these Exposition postcards, it was a very curious spectacle to the Korean public (figure 2). During the period of the Exposition, more than one million visitors attended this event. It was a huge number, considering that the population of Korea at the time was only 16 million.

My particular interest in such a monumental event began with wondering about these pictures. How was it possible to mobilize an unprecedented number of visitors? What did the visitors, especially ordinary Korean people, experience at the Exposition and how did they respond to the Exposition? The questions about visitors led to wonder about the actual workings of the event and about its role as a machinery to capture and reshape visitors as the subject of a new national identity. Especially, this study examines how the Art Museum of the 1915 Exposition shaped the emerging concept of modern Korea, interpellating a new kind of national subject.

## **2. The Modern Forms of Exhibition and Culture in Western World**

The cultural landscape of the modern world owes much of its form and substance to international expositions that were staged in great numbers from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. International expositions hosted by industrialized Western countries were

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Korea” refers in the proposal to the sovereign territory of the Chosŏn dynasty (dating back to 1392 but here referring mainly to the period of the opening of ports:1876-1910) and to the territory of Korea colonized and ruled by the Japanese from 1910 to 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Many buildings erected for international exhibitions also frequently became permanent museums after the exposition closed—as happened with the Field Museum of National History in Chicago.

certain cultural forms characterized by extensive exhibitions that dramatized the culture of colonialism, while seeking to convey a new vision of modern life and glorify the spectacle of commodity production. Since international expositions and public museums are historically intertwined research on international expositions has inevitably been closely related to the study of museums and cultures of display.<sup>3</sup>

The international expositions in Western world served as a cultural tool for imperialism and colonialism and as a platform for evolutionary theories and Orientalist discourse. For the East Asian countries, on the other hand, the international expositions represented great opportunities to position and reposition themselves as active participants in their process of nation-state building and modernization. Also, as Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach examine, public art museums in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Europe could be interpreted in the context of the formation of modern nation-states and associated practices of knowledge production.<sup>4</sup> Like the introduction of international expositions, the adoption of Western form of modern museums in East Asia is entwined with the birth of the modern nation and the globalization of cultural forms. Thus, understanding the history of international exposition and modern art museum in Western world will be crucial to investigate the experiment of these specific cultural forms in modern Korea.

In this regard, the “new museology,” focusing on the birth of Western museums involved in the rise of the nation-state, offers important frameworks to examine the issues on international exhibitions and modern museums, modern nation-state, and its subjects.<sup>5</sup> The emergence of Western public art museums, the shift from princely collection to public museum in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, coincided with securing state power and experiencing citizenship. These museums prompted the visitor “to assume a new ritual identity and perform a new ritual role,” by encountering “the state itself, embodied in the very form of the museum.”<sup>6</sup>

Yet my understanding of this museum visitor as a new subject of modern nation-state owes a large debt to theoretical concepts and analytical models drawn from the writings of Michel Foucault, especially in relation to his conceptions of disciplinary apparatuses and panopticism. Foucault’s conceptions, such as the archaeology of knowledge, the politics of space, and the workings of governmentality, have been highly influential in shaping the field of museum studies. The best-known iteration of this perspective came from Tony Bennett. His conception of “the Exhibitionary Complex” has provided a framework for examining international expositions and modern art museums as an apparatus of governmentality through which notions of citizenship and national character are inculcated. In his analysis on the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, for example, Bennett has sought to combine Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony with Michel Foucault’s analyses of the subjection of individual bodies in the spaces of a disciplinary architecture. As a complex amalgam of discipline and spectacle that works to transform a populace into “a voluntarily

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<sup>3</sup> Museums such as the Smithsonian participated actively in world’s fairs, creating exhibits that later became part of the museums’ permanent displays. Buildings erected for world fairs also frequently became permanent museums after the fair closed—as happened with the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The founding of the Tokyo National Museum dates to the first Japanese national exposition held by the Ministry of Education Museum in 1872. The Art Museum and its exhibitions in the 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition also led to the creation of the Government General Museum after the Exposition ended.

<sup>4</sup> Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3, no. 4 (1980), 448-69.

<sup>5</sup> See Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995); Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Carol Duncan, *ibid.*, 26.

self-regulating citizenry,” the Great Exhibition had a profound influence on the development both of museums and of expositions.<sup>7</sup>

Foucault’s analysis of the “Panopticon” as an apparatus of power provides a particularly important model for analyzing the spatial and visual structure, mode of address, and effects of subjection of the 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition and the Government General Museum. Foucault’s account of the relationship between vision and knowledge in panopticism has had considerable influence on the analysis of public displays, since it provides a systematic account of the effects of power and knowledge of spatial arrangements that orchestrate looking. For Foucault, the orchestration of the act of viewing in the Panopticon generates a field of power that excludes any reciprocity: the occupant of the cell cannot see if they are being viewed, while the occupant of tower at the center can view each cell unseen. As a result, the occupant of the cell must act as if they are being observed at all times, disciplining their own actions in anticipation of being under surveillance.<sup>8</sup>

The disciplinary machinery of the Panopticon, which works to produce self-regulating subjects, pervades modern institutional relationships. As Timothy Mitchell points out, examples of the Panopticon and similar disciplinary institutions were developed and introduced in colonial places such as India and Egypt. For the Japanese government, Korea similarly provided “the opportunity to help establish a modern state based on the new methods of disciplinary power.”<sup>9</sup> Like the Panopticon in Foucault’s analysis, the Exposition and the Museum involve a hierarchical distribution of space and visibility that creates power relations. Like the Panopticon, too, the Exposition and the Museum aim at the disciplining, training, and normalization of its inmates—the visitors.<sup>10</sup> I will therefore explore the Art Museum in the 1915 Exposition and the Government General Museum as the site of a shifting power struggle, producing knowledge and shaping its subjects as the citizens of a modern state. By extending such an analysis to Korea, this study will go beyond this European and North American focus, providing a test case for the wider validity of the theoretical perspective.

### **3. Globalizing the Cultural Forms : Exposition, Exhibition, and Museum in Modern Korea**

#### **1) Introduction of Exposition/Exhibition/Museum into Korea**

Just as the international expositions in the nineteenth century had been very conscious representations of a universalized conception of capitalist progress and modernity, so the 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition was conceived, from the beginning, as both showcase and instrument of development and modernization. In the decades since the unequal treaty that opened Korean ports to commerce and trade, modernization had become an urgent issue among the reformist officials of the Chosŏn dynasty. Above all, they saw international expositions as one of greatest embodiments and central symbols of the Western model of modernization and civilization.

The forces driving Korean “modernization” in the late Chosŏn and early colonial periods were more complex than is often assumed. In the twenty years following the 1876 treaty, the policy of the Chosŏn administration was to try to follow the model of Japan’s successful modernization program. International expositions offered opportunities for Korea to enter the so-called civilized and modernized world and, by promoting Korean

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 62-63.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1977), 195-228.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), x.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 206-213.

participation, King Kojong and his reformist officials sought to represent modernization as compatible with Korea's conditions and interests, just as, in the early Meiji period of Japan, industrial expositions (*hakurankai*) and emporia (*kankoba*) had presented modernization as essentially bound up with the development of the institutions of the nation-state and industrial capitalism.

In order to trace how the conception of the international exposition came to be imported into Japan and Korea and how it came to shape plans for the 1915 Exposition, it is necessary to survey late nineteenth-century writings on Western civilization and on international expositions by Korean and Japanese authors. It was the Japanese scholar, Fukuzawa Yukichi, who, on the basis of his experience as a member of the Tokugawa government's mission to Europe, penned the first discussion of the idea of international expositions in Japanese literature, in his book, *Seiyo Jijo (Things Western)*, published in 1866.<sup>11</sup> Fukuzawa argued that international expositions represented important opportunities for the international exchange of knowledge and technology, inspiring Japanese government agencies to sponsor industrial fairs as a means to encourage industrial development. This reinforced the image of expositions as spectacular embodiments of the process of *bunmei-kaika* or cultural enlightenment.

Fukuzawa's writings exercised a significant influence on reformist officials not only in Japan but also in Korea. In 1895, *hakurankai*, Fukuzawa's term for "exposition," was translated into Korean as *pangnamhoe* by Yu Kil-chun, a Korean reformist politician and pupil of Fukuzawa who was largely responsible for introducing Japanese conceptions of cultural enlightenment and modernization into Korea.<sup>12</sup> Yu Kil-chun was also one of pioneers of the introduction of Social Darwinism into Korea. In its heyday in the 1900s and 1910s, Social Darwinism functioned as an all-explaining ideology that was invoked by almost all groups campaigning for modernization in Korea. Indeed, for young Korean intellectuals seeking to understand the fundamental principles of the 'enlightened and civilized' world, Social Darwinism became synonymous with the discourse of modernity itself.<sup>13</sup> It thus provided an important ideological support not only for Korea's modernization program but also for Japan's colonial project, such as the 1915 Exposition.

Knowledge of expositions did not, however, enter Korea solely through Japan. Korea participated in both the World Colombian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago and the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris. In addition, following the establishment by King Kojong in 1902 of the Provisional Exposition Department, smaller industrial expositions had also been staged in Korea itself in 1906 and 1907.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, throughout this period, extensive newspaper coverage of international expositions built momentum for the planning of a major exposition in 1915. Since *Hansŏngsunbo (Seoul News)* published the first seminal article on international expositions, "The Exposition Theory," in 1884, *Chegukshinmun (Empire News, 1898-1910)*, *Hwangsŏngshinmun (Hwangsŏng News, 1898-1910)*, *Mansebo (Manse News, 1906-1907)*, *Gonglip Shinbo (Public News, 1905-1909)*, *Shinhan Minbo (New Korean News, 1909-1916)*, *Daehan Maeil Shinbo (Great Korean Daily News, 1904-1910)* had discussed the discursive space of international expositions. This broadening debate show how Western and Japanese models of international expositions came to be conceptualized both as the way to modernize the Korean nation and as the justification for

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<sup>11</sup> East Asian names are written according to standard East Asian usage, citing family name first.

<sup>12</sup> Kil-chun Yu, *Soyu Kyonmun (Journey to the West)* (Tokyo: Kyojunsha, 1895).

<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Tikhonov, *Social Darwinism and Nationalism in Korea: the Beginnings (1880s-1910s): "Survival" as an Ideology of Korean Modernity* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 11.

<sup>14</sup> The Japanese-Korean Merchandise Exhibition and the Chosŏn Railway Exhibition took place in 1906. The following year, the Kyung Sung Exposition was staged by the agriculture and commerce-industry ministry of the Taehan Empire (1897-1910).

colonial annexation.

Just as the notion of “exposition” was imported to Korea through the Japanese conceptualization, the terms, *misul* (fine art), *misulgwan* (fine art museum), and *pangmulgwan* (Museum) were firstly introduced into Korea in the process of the modernizing project. The terms first appeared in the report of Chosŏn official group for inspection of Japanese modernization projects written by a reformist official, Pak Chŏngyang in 1881. After observing the Japanese government agencies and the national industrial exposition in Japan, Pak Chŏngyang explained the role of *Naimushō Hakubutsukyoku* (Museum Station in the Department of the Interior) in the report: “*Hakubutsukyoku* (Museum Station) is an agency to investigate of old objects and antiques, to preserve *fine art* works, and to promote and manage *museums*.”<sup>15</sup> He also used the translated term “*misulgwan*” from the Japanese word, *bijutsukan* (fine art museum), mentioning the exhibition buildings for the Japanese national industrial exposition in 1881. The introduction of the concepts, fine art and fine art museum, was, therefore, conjunct not only with the notion of international expositions, but also with conception of modernization, civilization, and cultural enlightenment.

*Kŏnbaeksŏ* (petition for reformation projects to King Kojong) written by another reformist official, Pak Yŏnghyo, in 1888 also shows how the importation of Japanese conceptions of exposition, fine art, and museum was bound up with the national code for civilization and reformation, toward a powerful nation-state. In the petition, Pak Yŏnghyo suggested the establishment of a museum system as part of reformation and modernization projects. To set up such a museum in Korea, he argued, would be a unique opportunity to position the Korean nation as a highly civilized country equivalent to Western power as well as to Japan. The reactive development of Korean nationalism marked a profound ambivalence, representing both an attempt to resist outside forces of modernization and an attempt to take them over.

While the institutions of the Japanese colonial state framed Korea’s economic, social, and cultural transformation since annexation in 1910, therefore, this does not mean that modernization was purely an imported or imposed process. Due weight must be given to the Chosŏn dynasty’s modernization programs before annexation, including its participation in World expositions and its cultural modernization projects during the Taehan Empire period from 1897 to 1910, if we are to understand how the idea of the international exposition impressed itself so forcefully on Korean people and how the 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition could mobilize an unprecedented number of visitors.

## 2) The 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition

The annexation of Korea established Japanese economic and political hegemony over East Asia. but also insinuated the legitimacy of Japan imperialism as the agency of the modernization of a backward region. 1915 thus presented a landmark from which to look back over a quarter century of modern Japan. Terauchi Masatake, the first Japanese Governor-General of Korea, believed that the exposition would spectacularly display the success of the Chosŏn Sotokubu (the Japanese Government General of Korea) not only to the Korean people but also to those Japanese officials who remained skeptical about the annexation.

The 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition cannot be viewed as an impartial representation of the state of Korea after five years of Japanese rule. It was a staged event whose rhetorical form and unifying argument have to be understood. The

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<sup>15</sup> Chŏngyang Pak, *Nongsangmusŏng Samujangjŏng* (The Report of Department of Agriculture and Commerce –Japanese Department of Agriculture and Commerce and its sections), 1881.

Exposition explicitly promoted the idea of Japan's superiority over Korea, emphasizing Korean "backwardness" and seeking to present an attractive picture of industrial development and progress by colonial rule. At the same time, however, the Exposition remained a political and cultural battlefield across which different versions of modernization and cultural enlightenment strove to shape a national identity for Korea.

It may well be true that, as existing studies generally insist, the Chosŏn Sotokubu played the leading role as organizer of the 1915 Exposition. This does not mean, however, that the Exposition was shaped solely by Japanese interests and visions. A number of Korean officials, merchants, and vendor groups – the Sponsor Association of Seoul, for example – were closely involved in the planning process and sought to advance interests and ideas that were not always compatible with those of the Japanese government. Thus, the 1915 Exposition became the site of a shifting power struggle, as the Japanese colonial government officials, exposition officials, publicists, and local Korean residents all attempted to use the Exposition to assert their own visions of the proper relationship between modern Japan, a modernized Korea and the world.

According to the official report, there were seventeen pavilions in the 1915 Exposition, including the First Pavilion (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, and manufacturing and craft), the Second Pavilion (economy, civil engineering, education, medical and hygiene, police, and prison), additional special pavilions (machinery, railway, colonial achievement, colonial company, foreign exhibit, and art museum), a grand event hall, and facilities such as rest areas and shops selling local products.<sup>16</sup> The 1915 Exposition was not only an exhibition of industrial products but also a space in which specific forms of colonial knowledge were produced, particularly in the displays of anthropology and folklore. Such displays revealed the Japanese interest in documenting and controlling Korean traditional culture in the 1910s, particularly through the importation of Western ideas of anthropology.<sup>17</sup>

The colonial rhetoric operating as a powerful tool to control the colonized was explicitly visualized in the Exposition, particularly through the representations of Korea and Japan. Such representations were deeply controversial. For example, the exotic view of Korean Kisaeng (Keisha) presented in the official poster, in postcards, and in the entertainment hall represented a Japanese version of Orientalism that provoked intense dispute over the colonial imaging of Korea (figure 3). However, Korean antiques and artworks on display in the Exposition Art Museum—the first major public art exhibition in the history of Korea—betrayed the complexity of competing attitudes toward tradition and modernity, national identity as a modern nation which has its own culture and heritage and as a colonized nation.

### **3) Art Museum and Government General Museum**

Such complexities concerning tradition and modernity, national identity between Korea and Japan, and colonialism and modernization were nowhere more evident than in the Exposition Art Museum. The Art Museum and the Government General Museum after the 1915 Exposition provide a window onto the development of Korean nationalism along with civilization and cultural enlightenment involved in newly translated terms, such as *misul* (fine art), *misulgwan* (fine art museum), and *pangmulgwan* (museum).

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<sup>16</sup> Chosŏn Sotokubu, *Shisei gonen kinen chōsen bussan kyōshinkai hōkokusho (The Reports on the 1915 Chosŏn Industrial Exposition)*, Volume 1 (Seoul: Chosŏn Sotokubu, 1916).

<sup>17</sup> In 1915, the year of the Exposition, a Japanese police official named Imamura Tomo published a study, *Chosen fuzoku shu (Customs of Korea)*, in which he argued that it was a Japanese obligation to enlighten the "weak and defective" Korean people. It also reveals the broader intentions of the Japanese colonial government in planning the 1915 Exposition, the political propaganda to justify Japanese colonial rule.

While Fukuzawa's writings on international expositions exercised a significant influence on reformist officials in Korea, it was another Japanese scholar, Okakura Tenshin, who exercised a decisive influence over the formation of the Exposition Art Museum and the Government General Museum. As an imperialist, emphasizing "the unity of the Asian cultures" and the leading role of Japanese culture as "a museum of the whole Asian civilization," Okakura argued that the establishment of art museums and the documentation of Korean traditional culture play a significant role in the successful colonialization of Korea. In 1912, he suggested the Governor-General Terauchi to erect a permanent art museum building for the 1915 Exposition, which will become the Government General Museum after the Exposition ended.<sup>18</sup>

Following Okakura's advice, the Art Museum was constructed as a permanent, two-storied Renaissance style building, unlike other temporary exhibition pavilions (figure 4). In the nineteenth century, many Western museums were built by using a variety of architectural styles to evoke the theme of civilization, such as Greek, Roman and Italian Renaissance forms.<sup>19</sup> With the triumphal and magnificent architectural style, Western museums in Europe and the United States put in their claim to the heritage of Western civilization and their national pride. This adoption of the Western style of museum architecture in the 1915 Exposition implies Japan's identification with the West and Western civilization.

As the exterior of the building, the inside of the Art Museum and object displays were organized by the process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation of Western museums.<sup>20</sup> While the Korean treasures and antiques from the ancient Three Kingdom of Korea (57 B.C.–668 A.D.), Unified Silla (668–935), Koryŏ (918–1392), and Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) were displayed in the Art Museum building, contemporary artworks by Korean and Japanese artists were put separately in the annexe, the Reference Museum. A total of 1,190 antiques and art objects were exhibited in the Art Museum and these exhibits had been submitted by private collectors and Buddhist temples for the exhibition.

Visitors to the Art Museum passed through the Art Museum garden with the stone pagoda and statues, and encountered the Renaissance style entrance of the Museum. Inside the Museum, they entered to the main hall decorated with stone statues of Buddha and Bodhisattva, Buddha wall relief, and a ceiling painting of the fairy. The exhibition rooms of the first and second floor displayed various Buddha statues, celadon porcelains, white porcelains, jewelry, Buddhist temple bells, musical instruments, censers, bronze wares and bells, metalworks, lacquer wares and chest, wood furniture, Buddhist sutras including *Tripitaka Koreana*, the famous Buddhist scripture collection carved on over eighty thousand woodblocks, printing plates, and books. There was also a separate exhibition room for literati and genre paintings by famous painters in Chosŏn dynasty, such as Kim Chŏnghŭi, Kang Sehwan, Chŏng Sŏn, and Kim Hongdo.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Hiroki Nagashima, Yachio Wada, and Kizō Fujiwara, *Chōsen no kaiko (Memoirs on Korea)* (Keijō-fu: Chikazawa Shoten, 1945, Reprint Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō, 2010), 262-280

<sup>19</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 111-38.

<sup>20</sup> See J. J. Long, *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 27-29: "The object is first removed from its cultural, historical or intersubjective context and made to stand, in metonymic fashion, for a larger abstract whole. It is then subjected to a system of classification so that the ordering of the collection itself overrides the specific histories of the object and its conditions of production and use."

<sup>21</sup> Shunsui Inada, "A Glimpse at the Art Museum of the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition," *Journal of Archaeology* 6, no. 3 (November, 1915), 65-68.

Before the exhibition of the Art Museum, a very limited public was permitted to see fine artwork collections or exhibitions. Two art exhibitions organized by Japanese painters in Korea showed Japanese and Korean paintings in 1910 and 1911; however, they were staged for a small number of Japanese visitors, rather than for general Korean public. While the Iwangga Museum, which began as the Emperor's Museum in Changgyeonggung (Changgyeong Palace) in 1908, was open to public in 1909, it had a much smaller audience. It is important, therefore, the Art Museum of the 1915 Exposition Museum was the first major public art museum open to ordinary Korean people on large scale. After the Exposition ended, in the same year, the Art Museum became the Government General Museum (figure 5), comprised of 6 exhibition rooms: Buddhist artworks, Nangnang (the ancient Korean kingdom), Three Kingdom and Unified Silla, Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasty, special objects, and paintings. These museums changed the concept of fine art and exhibition, from the exclusive preserve of the privileged class and conventional private appreciation to the popular spectacle and visual attraction open to everyone. A number of visitors, now, witnessed Korea's national culture and civilization through the ages.

From the beginning of the introduction, the conception of fine art and museum was involved in an issue of modernization and a discourse of *munmyŏng kaehwa* (civilization and enlightenment or cultural enlightenment).<sup>22</sup> The visual experience in the exposition and museum was considered as a powerful tool to get knowledge and technologies and to construct a culturally developed and civilized nation based on its own history and culture. According to Suematsu Kumahiko, a museum director of the Iwangga Museum, the purpose of the Exposition Art Museum was "to promote future progress and development by encouraging Korea's own refined fine art."<sup>23</sup> A journal article by Chŏn Yŏngshik shows a similar view on fine art and industrial development: "When you see the displays of the 1915 Exposition, you need a specific perspective of fine art through which to appreciate the exhibits. [...] This multifaceted view encourages not just the fine art itself but also prompts industrial development. Now, we have expositions and exhibitions, such as the 1915 Exposition, as an example and reference, and the future of Korea depends on industrial development."<sup>24</sup> The broadening debates on the conception of fine art, exposition, and museum, reveals the complicated attitudes toward tradition, modernization and industrialization through which images of modernity and progress could be projected.

#### 4. New modern experience and Korean subjectivities

In the modern exhibition space, such as art museums and international expositions, the visitors moved through a programmed experience that captured visitors an ideal member of the modern nation state. Deploying a range of cultural technologies that called into being a self-regulating citizenry, for example, the Great Exhibition in 1851 represented the first attempt to constitute an open public space designed "rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state."<sup>25</sup> Modern art museums were transformed from private art collections into public spaces open to mass population in which the populace would be

<sup>22</sup> *Munmyŏng kaehwa*, a Korean translation of the Japanese term *bunmei-kaika*, had spread rapidly in Korea since the 1880s.

<sup>23</sup> Kumahiko Suematsu, "The Purpose of the Art Museum in the 1915 Exposition," *Maeilshinbo (Daily News)* (Jan., 20, 1915).

<sup>24</sup> Yŏngshik Chŏn, "Korean Fine Art and the 1915 Exposition," *Shinmun'gye (New Civilization World)*, no. 30 (Sept. 1915), 20–21.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 87.

exposed to and learn to emulate new codes of behavior as a new subjectivity of modern nation.

The Great Exhibition was a counter-revolutionary measure, pacifying crowds and disciplining visitors as they took part in its display: “one of the architectural innovations of the Crystal Palace consisted in the arrangement of relations between the public and exhibits so that, while everyone could see, there were vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance.”<sup>26</sup> This disciplinary role is found in the Government General Museum. A newspaper article, “The Opening of the Goernement General Museum,” published in 1915 shows these new codes of behavior, self-disciplinary visitor regulations: “The general visitor notices are as follows: 1) visitors need to show their tickets to the guard at the entrance; 2) visitors are not allowed to bring livestock or baggages; 3) photography and sketch are not allowed without permission; 4) visitors are prohibited from smoking anywhere in the museum except in designated smoking areas; 5) visitors are prohibited from touching any exhibits or displays; 6) visitors are prohibited from any acts of sabotage; 7) security screening is mandatory for all visitors, and will include screening of all bags, equipment, and belongings; 8) Any person who violates any provision of the Museum regulations is subject to dismissal.”<sup>27</sup>

This disciplinary system was developed in the form of museum architecture that allowed the public to inspect and regulate itself. As pedagogical devices based on forms of voluntary organizations, exhibitions and museums promoted a realm of civic society which could be channeled and directed by the state. Thus, international expositions and art museums offered a forum not only for the display of industrial products and artworks but also for the transmission of concepts about modern life and about the status and identities of nations. Visitors to the 1915 Exposition and the Government General Museum were thus called on to see themselves as transformed into the beneficiaries of a new, modernized and industrialized society. In the terms of Louis Althusser, visitors were “interpellated” as a new kind of civic and national subject.<sup>28</sup>

The first public museum in modern Korea, the Iwangga Museum established by King Sunjong, was also open to public in 1909. In principle, however, this royal art collection and the 1915 Exposition Art Museum as a public museum suggest politically and socially different discursive spaces, while both museums intended to serve the needs of enlightenment and modernization. The royal art collection identified the Korean nation as the king’s realm, but the Art Museum in the 1915 Exposition identified the nation as an abstaract entity, a nation-state, even though it was under the Japanese colonial rule.

According to many newspaper articles at the time of the 1915 Exposition, Koreans were identified as a new collective of the “people” rather than the subjects of the old monarchy. It may refer to a collective identity negating distinctions of class, gender, age, or religion. In doing so, the Japanese Government General may act as the provider and mediator of that revolutionary potential. But, this new form of identity needs careful examination, especially given that the outbreak of the March First Movement took place only four years after this exposition. The modern subject in Korea emerged not through the simple adoption of Western technologies, economic forms and categories of thought or

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<sup>26</sup> Tony Bennett, *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>27</sup> “The Opening of the Goernement General Museum,” *Maeilshinbo (Daily News)* (Dec., 12, 1915).

<sup>28</sup> Althusser argues that “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transform’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing.” See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 171-175.

Japanese colonial projects, but through a distinct process of cultural translation internal to East Asia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Korean colonial subjects were not merely a backdrop to the story of the formation, development, and governance of Korea. It was not a Japanese enterprise alone.

## **5. Conclusion**

Modernization is often too readily equated with Westernization, but this simplistic formula cannot explain the complex phenomenon of modernization in Korea. The modern subject in Korea emerged through a distinct process of cultural translation and experiment of cultural forms. This represented a radically different path to modernity that depended on a number of determining conditions. The 1915 Exposition Art Museum and the Government General Museum show the processes of negotiation and conflict surrounding the drive to modernization in early twentieth-century Korea and shaping the transmission of the idea of a homogenized Korean national identity. These specific cultural events reveal how Western and Japanese models of international expositions and museums came to be conceptualized both as the way to modernize the Korean nation and as the justification for colonial annexation. The 1915 Exposition Art Museum and the Government General Museum contributed to the emerging conception of modern Korea and called into place a new kind of national subject. They not only constructed social messages but also called into place a new kind of Korean national and civic subject through its orchestration of the display of national culture and art objects into a modern form of spectacle that was unprecedented in Korean culture.

Given the colonial relation between Korea and Japan—a neighboring nation, not a distant Western power—the question of Korean national identity at the time of the Exposition becomes very complicated. Even while the Japanese colonial government was seeking to remake civic identity in Korea, a resistant Korean nationalism was also being born as a response both to Western penetration and to the Japanese invasion, both of which posed threats to the traditional political, social, and economical order of Korea. The discourse of national identity is thus not unified or monolithic: there was not just one nationalism—rather, internally conflicted nationalisms crossed a political landscape of struggle and dispute. Analysis of the Exposition as an agency through which the new national subject was called into place, thus, needs to recognize this in tracing the new national narrative it offered

This case study allows us not only to investigate the development of museums and exhibitions in East Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also to address the local forms and practices shaped by national as well as transnational forces. The museums in modern Korea thus appear as a hybrid space of reciprocal exchange rather than as the one-sided imposition of Western colonialism. More importantly, it attempts to shift the focus to the colonized and to the various ways in which the colonial encounter shaped the identity and experience of the colonized.



Figure 1 The Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915



Figure 2 Postcard for the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915



Figure 3 Poster of the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915



**Figure 4 The Art Museum of the Chosŏn Industrial Exposition of 1915**



**Figure 5 The Government General Museum**