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# Visualizing Seoul's Landscapes: Percival Lowell and the Cultural Biography of Ethnographic Images

Hyung Il Pai

*Scenic views of Seoul's palaces, gardens, and gates have attracted scholars, collectors, artists, conservators, and millions of tourists for more than a century. As iconic markers confirming and promoting national identity at home and abroad, the physical monuments as well as their images reproduced as postcards, posters, and dioramas are embraced as tangible sources of the continuity of Chosŏn dynastic traditions and popular "must-see" destinations. This article investigates one of the oldest intact photographic collections of Korea assembled by Percival Lowell in 1883–84. As the first American diplomat armed with a camera, he is known to have taken the earliest portraits of King Kojong, photographs of the inner sanctums of palaces and gardens and officialdom, and snapshots of street life in and beyond the capital's gates. Lowell's 1885 publication, Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm, published by the leading literary press in Boston, Ticknor and Company, was well received as the first eyewitness account of Korea richly illustrated with twenty-five full-page original photographs. At the time, Lowell's travelogue was not only regarded as the definitive scholarship on Korea but also influenced the circulation of ethnographic images of the "the Land of the Morning Calm" in the Western imaginary. This article analyzes the subjects and objects of his "camera-eye" as not only personal mementos of Lowell's trip but also as the earliest visual guides to the Hermit Kingdom that had just opened up to the outside world.*

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## VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

Excavating the biography of historical ethnographic images has been the subject of vigorous anthropological debates since the publication of the groundbreaking volume *Anthropology and Photography* in 1992.<sup>1</sup> Since then, pioneering scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards, Christopher Morton, James Ryan, and Anne Maxwell have demonstrated that as soon as the camera was invented in the 1840s, in England's and France's colonial governments' land survey teams, academic institutions, exposition organizers, and imperial museums dispatched both professional and amateur photographers to record anthropological and archaeological fieldwork in the newly discovered colonies.<sup>2</sup> Their research also revealed that by the early twentieth century, in every part of the globe, photography was quickly adopted and embraced by locals—including the ruling class and businessmen—from colonial administrators, newspaper editors, engineers, architects, and transportation companies to the enterprising tourist industry—as the main tool to map the geography, natural resources, historical monuments, and indigenous peoples' lifestyles/customs and to catalog arts and artifacts in order to show off their finds to their citizens back home as well as to their colonized subjects.

At the same time, as museum curators have observed, despite the widespread deployment of photography for “scientific” reporting and communications, and as empirical evidence in the identification, classification, and exhibition of the ethnographic “Other,” the majority of photographic and print collections were found to have been neglected in the vast storage bins of the world's oldest public and private museums and research institutions including the British Royal Anthropological Archives, the Smithsonian, the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Harvard University's Peabody Museum. This is because for more than a century anthropologists, as well as curators, whose academic backgrounds and training focused on highlighting the antiquity and beauty of sculptural arts, ceramics, paintings, and exotic objects had not understood the technological, artistic, and ethnographic value of photographic archives.<sup>3</sup> However, in the past two decades, with a newly found appreciation for print media as vital material resources and as time capsules reflecting and refracting the daily lives of the world's citizens and social conditions not represented in textual records, anthropologists are engaged in unearthing the aesthetic, racial, commercial, and cultural biases inherent in the production, manipulation, and dissemination of visual knowledge. For example, recent publications have paved the way for a new means of “seeing” postcards and artistic staging of representative “native types,” represented by Hawai'i's hula dancers, seductive Japanese geishas, Taiwanese aborigines, and Korea's Hermit Kingdom, costumed and staged to appeal to the imperial travel gaze.<sup>4</sup>

Today, the rapidly expanding field of visual anthropology encompasses a wide range of disciplinary perspectives including art, architecture, art history, geography, physical anthropology, and tourism and works closely with curators

in charge of print archives at both public and private museums from the Getty Museum, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal's Canadian Centre for Architecture, Tokyo University Museum, and the National Folk Museum in South Korea.<sup>5</sup> The authors' and museums' collaborative efforts began with provenance research—identifying the name/s of the cameraman or photo studio, printer, date, place, subjects, places, equipment, etc.—since most of the glass plates, photographs, postcards, stereographs, posters, photo albums, dioramas, and travel guidebooks were found to have been either discarded or deteriorating in boxes.<sup>6</sup> Their interdisciplinary approach investigating photographic archives as material, artistic, and technological objects have revealed the following broad trajectories reflecting the intertwined agendas of the producers, collectors, and distributors of ethnographic images in the past century.<sup>7</sup>

Much like museum objects, the glass plates and print media were donated by the same empire-building politicians, aristocratic patrons, learned societies, field researchers, and individual collectors who had funded and participated in archaeological expeditions, anthropological fieldwork, and tourist reconstruction projects of newly discovered ruins in the Middle East, India, and Cambodia.<sup>8</sup> Because contemporary Victorian-era explorers, surveyors, and scholars assumed that artifacts, ruins, and aborigines observed, mapped, recovered, and recorded in field photographs reflected an unvarnished version of reality, they were collected and displayed at expositions and museums as “scientific proof” that the more “authentic” and “antiquated” remnants of man's past were to be found in newly discovered lands where “backward” races incapable of progress continued to live a “primitive/prehistoric” existence well into the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, expeditionary photography, a century before the advent of digital cameras and computer software, was artificially manipulated by hand-drawn coloring techniques, printing mechanisms, and, thus, choreographed to serve racially charged colonialist agendas as well as to advance “scientific and civilizing” missions in order to justify imperial territorial claims.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, to this day, “universalism” and social evolutionary perspectives have influenced the global circulation of stock images of “natives” ranked into the three classic stages of man's evolution: primitivism, barbarism, and civilization.

Finally, historians of photography have emphasized that all popular genres of photography and print media such as postcards, photo albums, and pictorial magazines such as *National Geographic* must be studied in their totality, since we cannot ignore the fact that photojournalism, commercial photography, and scientific magazines have a shared common visual genealogy.<sup>11</sup> The global spread of photographic technology also coincided with the arrival of mechanized vehicles such as steamships and other developments such as transcontinental railways, the Suez Canal, and the establishment of postal services, all of which stimulated an insatiable demand for novel sights of peoples and places on the part of publishers, readers, consumers, and travelers. By the 1860s, when the portable camera became available to the amateur, a new globetrotting vocation,

since dubbed “photojournalism,” was born. Francis Firth (1822–98), William Stillman (1828–1901), Roger Fenton (1819–69), and Felice Beato (1832–1909) represented its pioneers who accompanied British and American troops advancing into new geographic frontiers. In addition to disseminating graphic images of military campaigns such as the Crimean Wars, the Indian mutiny, and China’s opium wars for imperial commissioners, photojournalists specialized in selling souvenir albums filled with panoramic views of “must-see” destinations such as the Acropolis, the Nile Valley, and the Taj Mahal to soldiers, colonialists, and their families living back home.<sup>12</sup> These lavishly bound and pricey albums were also designed to appeal to the tastes of the fashionable elite who had the financial means to navigate the sublime beauty of the “timeless” landscapes along the itineraries of the “Grand Tour,” such as England, France, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, and farther east to Japan.<sup>13</sup> During the peak popularity of worlds’ fairs staged in the capitals of Vienna, London, and Paris, as well as the colonial metropolises during the 1890s–1900s, the most visually striking global architectural landmarks mentioned above were often reproduced as replicas and/or miniaturized as worlds’ fairs’ pavilions resembling “picturesque” postcard views and served as both advertising and marketing tools to sell exotic curios as well as a wide array of consumer goods.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the advancement of photographic technology and anthropological fieldwork paralleled empire-building, global travel, and the development of commercial media, which have exerted an enduring aesthetic, historical, and visual impact on who and what became selected for the “camera’s eye.”<sup>15</sup>

This article investigates the personal, political, and social backgrounds in the formation of Percival Lowell’s (1855–1915) archives at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), where sixty photos depicting Seoul’s street views, palace architecture, and Chosŏn Dynasty royals/officials are preserved. From a historian of photography’s perspective, this is a very rare find, for this set, personally donated by Lowell to the museum, represents one of the oldest troves of ethnographic photographs of Korea in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, unlike the majority of Korea’s early printed images, we can identify not only the photographer but also the location, years, distribution, and cataloging information, which can then be cross-referenced to the twenty-five reproductions, captions, and descriptions included in Lowell’s travelogue, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea* published in Boston in 1885.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, in contrast to any other surviving nineteenth-century visual collections on Korea, the student can track down the biography of the image by revealing the intent of the cameraman, the circumstances of the photoshoot, and last, but not least, to identify its subjects and location settings. Lowell’s archives are significant for the study of visual anthropology because, at present, the study of Korean print media of any genre, subject, or historical period is in its infancy as compared to the more accessible and well-documented countries such as India, Japan, and China for the following reasons.<sup>18</sup> First, the peninsula, due to its geo-

graphic and political isolation, had opened its ports in the 1880s, three centuries later than the rest of Asia which welcomed European travelers, traders, missionaries, photographers, journalists, and anthropologists. Therefore, at present, only a fraction of surviving photographic records have been studied by scholars and curators.<sup>19</sup> Second, following the Sino-Japanese (1895) and Russo-Japanese Wars (1905), photo studios and printing presses were dominated by Japanese entrepreneurs and printing companies hailing from Japan's commercial centers and a handful of colonial metropolises in Seoul (Keijō) and Pusan.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, many library and museum finds were cataloged under Japanese headings and, for close to a century, were not recognized or updated by librarians or curators as a separate category. Third, though, for decades, Japanese colonial-era (1905–45) printed books, newspapers, magazines, and photos had been mined as primary sources by historians and journalists, only a handful of art historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have investigated visual aids such as cartoons (*manhwa*), illustrations (*saphwa*), pictorial magazines, and postcard views.<sup>21</sup> To complicate matters for the student of photography, beginning from the early Colonial Period and well into the postwar era, pre-twentieth-century photos of Korea, because of their relative scarcity compared to other regions, have been reproduced in textbooks, exposition displays, and museum catalogs and recycled as postcards and stereoview cards without proper identification of the photographers/photo studios, printers, years, and in some cases country of origin, making it nearly impossible to establish the provenance necessary for research.<sup>22</sup> The following article, as far as the author is aware, is the first attempt to describe the historical and social circumstances that enabled Lowell to capture such vivid portraits of the "Other" in a brief but highly productive span of a three-month trip to Seoul between December 1883–March 1884.

### PERCIVAL LOWELL AND CAPTURING IMAGES OF "CHOSŎN" IN 1883

Percival Lowell (1855–1916), the Harvard-educated scion of a Boston Brahmin family, is remembered today as an avid astronomer who built his own observatory in Arizona to map the canals of Mars at the turn of the twentieth century. What is less well known is that, prior to his controversial career as an explorer of distant planetary worlds, he was widely admired as a globe-trotter, an engaging travel writer, a public speaker, a photographer, and an expert on Japan's religions with several books to his name.<sup>23</sup> Like many of his peer group, all privileged young men belonging to a tight circle of wealthy and worldly Bostonians, he went to boarding school in Paris and summered in the Swiss Alps with his parents August Lowell and Kathryn Bigelow Lowell. As a firm believer that travel was the best way to seek knowledge, his Bohemian tendencies began during his student days when he spent his time visiting the famous cities and sites along the "Grand Tour"

from the British Isles and Southern Europe to Palestine and Syria in the mid-1860s.<sup>24</sup> After graduating from Harvard College, he worked in the family business as expected but then became bored with the restrictions of Bostonian high society and took off to live in Tokyo from 1883 to 1893.<sup>25</sup> Once there, his close cousin from another Boston Brahmin clan, William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926), a respected connoisseur of Japanese art and a physician, introduced him to like-minded polymaths and world travelers including two Harvard alumni—zoologist and founder of Japanese prehistoric archaeology Edward S. Morse (1838–1925) and art historian and philosopher Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853–1908)—and noted linguist Basil Hall Chamberlain (1853–1935).<sup>26</sup>

In the annals of modern Korean history, Lowell's achievements occupy a special place for three reasons: (1) he served as a broker of US-Korea diplomatic relations in 1882; (2) he was the first Westerner invited to Seoul as a royal guest of King Kojong (1852–1919); and (3) he was the first photographer to take a picture of the king (figure 1) and his heir, the later King Sunjong, on two separate occasions in the inner sanctums of palace grounds.<sup>27</sup> Lowell's name is often cited as the first Westerner appointed by King Kojong as a special foreign envoy to accompany the first Korean mission sent to US president Chester A. Arthur in 1883. Lowell's official title, foreign secretary and counselor to the Korean Special Mission to the United States of America, belies the significance of this embassy



**Figure 1.** H. M. The King of Korea. Reproduced from *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm* (1886), frontispiece. Photographer: Percival Lowell (1884). Original albumen print, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Photography Library. NRICP relic no. 2893.



whose trip represented the first formal overture of friendship toward the United States following the ratification of the 1882 Treaty of Amity and Commerce when the kingdom first opened three ports (Chemulp'o, Pusan, and Wönsan) to the outside world.<sup>28</sup> Though Lowell is reported to have hesitated at first, after realizing its importance and with the understanding that his own bilingual (Japanese/English) secretary, Miyaoka Tsunejirō, could accompany him, Lowell decided to accept full charge and control of the “most important legation from a new country that has visited the US since the opening of Japan.”<sup>29</sup> Imitating earlier fact-finding missions dispatched by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 1860s, the mission was composed of high-ranking royal family members such as Min Yōngik, who, despite his young age of twenty-five, was appointed as the minister of the mission as well as younger career bureaucrats who were fluent in Japanese.<sup>30</sup> Lowell as tour guide and translator escorted the eight-member team (figure 2) who set sail from Yokohama on August 18, 1883, and crossed the continent by rail to their final destination, Washington, DC, for an audience with President Arthur.<sup>31</sup>



**Figure 2.** Percival Lowell and the Eight Members of the Korean Mission (1883). Signatures and title read, top row from left to right: Kyong Keung, Thok Chen, Yu-kil Chun, KyangChal and Pyong Sue. Bottom row, from left to right: Hong Yong Shik (Vice Minister), Prince Min Yong Ik (Minister Plenipotentiary), Soh Kong Bom (Secretary to Prince), Percival Lowell (Escort to US). Photographer: George Clayton Foulk (1856–93), American Geographic Society Library Print Collections, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Library, 8.5 in × 10.5 in.



Upon his return to Tokyo, in gratitude for his services rendered in the United States, the king invited Percival to be his personal guest in the winter of 1883–84. Lowell's short trip, which lasted about three months total and included a brief stay with the first US counsel Lucius Foote (1826–1914) in Chemulp'o, was best appraised by Abbott Lowell (1856–1943), Lowell's younger brother, "[t]here he [Percival] spent the winter under strangely favorable conditions; one of the first men of the European race to enter the country with an official position and no official duties or restraints, and a couple of officers detailed to take care of him by constant attendance on his movements. In fact, he seems to have been more free than anyone in the land."<sup>32</sup> However, what is interesting is that at the beginning of his trip, Percival had very modest expectations, as evidenced in a letter to his mother written on December 20, 1883, just after landing in Chemulp'o. Percival writes that his main purpose was "to study the land a little and then return overland either to Pusan" or "after some traveling in the interior, Gensan [Wönsan]," which shows how ignorant his understanding of the road conditions in Korea was at the time.<sup>33</sup> Based on the contents of Lowell's correspondence to his family that winter, by all accounts he had a "grand old time" being visited and entertained abundantly and made many acquaintances and some warm friends. On top of that he was informed by the king that his well-being was always in his thoughts. Lowell felt that he had been treated with great hospitality and kindness and that he had been looked upon as a friend of the government and cared for in corresponding style.<sup>34</sup>

### **VISUAL GUIDES TO *CHOSŎN, THE LAND OF THE MORNING CALM: A SKETCH OF KOREA***

Lowell is reported to have picked up the camera while residing in Tokyo during the early 1880s, a critical decade when pioneers such as Ogawa Kazumasa (1860–1929), who had studied in Boston, was responsible for importing the latest techniques of dry plate, photoengraving, and the collotype printing process into photo studios and retail outlets in Yokohama, then the undisputed center of professional photo studios where amateurs such as Lowell learned their craft and bought their equipment.<sup>35</sup> According to Lowell's biographer, David Strauss, Lowell had once fondly referred to photography as "a very catching epidemic," no doubt referring to the popularization of photography with the introduction of the handheld camera and the dry plate.<sup>36</sup> Lowell himself continued to use a tripod (figure 3), but he also enjoyed the convenience of the dry plate and accordingly fitted his rental house in Tokyo with a dark room in order to develop his pictures from Korea.<sup>37</sup> In a letter dated February 17, 1884, not long before he left Seoul to return to Japan, he had written to his sister Bessie, bragging, "I have already taken fifty-three negatives of scenes in and about Söul, groups and individuals. I am not only expected by the Coreans [*sic*] but urged to write a book; but as I have a wholesome dread of publications I reserve my decisions. I am to send a present to His majesty a collection of my photographs printed in Japan upon my return."<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 3.** Percival Lowell and Corean Group. Photographer: Asa M. Matice (1884). Reproduced from original glass plate negative, 5 in  $\times$  8 in. Reprinted courtesy of John Dowling Collections, Syracuse, New York.

Two years after his winter vacation in Seoul in 1885, Lowell published his first book, titled *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea*—a 412-page tome featuring two fold-out maps and twenty-five full page plate reproductions—which was received with enthusiasm because he had given Americans their first glimpses of a far-off “Hermit Kingdom.” Here for analytical purposes, a handful of Lowell’s most widely known and studied images representative of nineteenth-century genres such as royal portraiture and art and architectural photography were selected for in-depth discussion.<sup>39</sup>

Lowell’s photograph titled “H. M. The King of Korea” is currently recognized as the oldest surviving portrait of King Kojong to circulate in the foreign media (figure 1). Lowell’s photographs of the monarch and his son marked a revolutionary moment in the genre of royal portraits because they broke with centuries-old traditions of court painters’ creating objects of worship for state rituals in three significant ways.<sup>40</sup> First, as we can see in figure 1, in clear contrast to the accepted protocol of standardized royal portraits of a seated monarch, the king is smiling slightly for the camera and standing upright in his winter boots on steps covered with an Oriental carpet. His benign expression and posture shows that he was consciously crafting his own image and specifically targeting a world audience. Lowell has also centered the king between two large ceremonial burners in the shape of Chinese *ding* tripods, which since antiquity have symbolized political legitimacy and imperial power.<sup>41</sup> Kojong is framed by the columns of the Nongsuk Pavilion, one of the most scenic spots in the gardens of Ch’angdŏk Palace. Behind the king, we can glimpse the contours of the rounded back of a Victorian-era chair, signifying that it was a ceremonial space to welcome Western guests.<sup>42</sup> The staged parlor and garden setting decorated with imported props befitting his royal status and tastes in *objets d’art* was designed

to boost the image of the king as the legitimate crown symbol of Chosŏn as well as a “modern-day” monarch who was happy to greet a European guest from afar. Art historian Haengga Kwŏn, based on her reading of the contemporary royal archives, emphasizes that Kojong by his thirties had familiarized himself with European conventions and the exchange of royal portraits brought back by his ambassadors who had collected them while on their trips. Therefore, he had understood that the new medium of photography was being utilized as the latest tool for fashioning royal identity, establishing diplomatic ties, and becoming the new communication tool for advertising national prestige in the modern age. For that purpose, Kojong had deliberately extended an invitation to a foreigner to come to his palace residence and made himself and his son available for the camera on two separate days, March 10 and March 13, 1884, in order to produce portraits to distribute them to the foreign embassies.<sup>43</sup> After his interview/photo sessions with Lowell, the king’s passion for photography led to him to actively commission several official portraits of him and his son Sunjong.<sup>44</sup> In fact, between the years 1883–84, the first three Korean-owned photo studios to open in Seoul belonged to Kim Yongwŏn, Chi Unyŏng, and Hwang Ch’ŏl, all of whom had once worked as bureaucrats in the Foreign Office or as court painters endorsed by the crown.<sup>45</sup>

Second, from Lowell’s viewpoint as a man who by all accounts was quite a dandy himself, was keenly aware that photography was a medium adapted to projecting details of fashion such as clothing, shoes, and especially hats in conveying personality, tastes, and status. Therefore, Lowell took great care to convey his own impressions of the king’s physical appearance as a young man and his royal attire to the reader as follows: “He was a man about thirty. In stature, he was rather under average Korean height than over it. He may have been five feet even inches without his shoes. He was dressed in what resembled, in general, the court dress, and differed from it only in the details. His hat was somewhat similar to the officials; but instead of being black was of a very dark blue color.”<sup>46</sup> Third, Lowell, by including the king’s never before seen visage prominently in the frontispiece of his book, *Chosŏn*, proves himself to be a savvy self-promoter grabbing the rare opportunity to introduce his VIP status to the world as a royal insider.<sup>47</sup>

Last but not least, Lowell’s photograph of the king signaled the birth of Korean royal photography, a medium which was enthusiastically embraced by the following generations of royal family members, including his heir, Prince Sunjong (r. 1907–10); his youngest son, Prince Yi Ŭn (1897–1970); and his Japanese consort, Princess Masako Nashimoto (1901–89).<sup>48</sup> Imitating Japan’s Imperial Household Agency (*Kunaishō*), the Government-General (1910–1945) deployed the medium of royal portraiture as a tool through which to encourage racial assimilation, imperial propaganda, and political legitimization in order to promote the 1910 Japanese annexation as one of a predestined reunion between two imperial families to a worldwide audience.<sup>49</sup>

As a benefactor of royal patronage, Lowell was also the first foreigner given permission to freely photograph the closed-off grounds and buildings of both the Kyŏngbok (Old Palace) and the Ch’angdŏk (New Palace). Consequently,

the contents of five chapters of *Chosŏn*—chapter 4, “A Walled City”; chapter 5, “Watch: Fires on the South Mountain”; chapter 11, “The Government”; chapter 16, “Presentation at Court”; chapter 25, “Architecture”; and chapter 27, “Landscape Gardening and Palaces”—are focused on introducing the general layout of the capital as well as its strategic location, diverse architectural forms, social functions, and religious symbolism.<sup>50</sup> Lowell’s confident appraisals of buildings, gates, and fortifications that he had never seen before or studied demonstrate that as a former student who excelled in the classics and art history, he had an implicit understanding of how art, iconography, and architecture had served as tools and symbols of empire building, political legitimization, and royal propaganda for five millennia going back to ancient Egypt.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, according to chapter 27 on “Landscape Gardening and Palaces,” the king had taken care to assign Lowell a secretary from the Foreign Office to be his personal escort who also supplied him with the latest palace gossip on the Machiavellian deeds of the king’s father. Upon hearing of the power-hungry Regent Taewŏn’gun (1820–98), whose failed coup (Imo Kullan) in 1882 resulted in his abduction to China, Lowell observed “there was no love lost between the two.”<sup>52</sup> Due to the painful memories of Kojong’s childhood and current strained relations with his own father, Kojong had never returned to the Old Palace, and so, when Lowell walked in “the appearance of the palace sadly bespoke its desertion.”<sup>53</sup> Despite the sparse winter grass and unkempt grounds, Lowell was nonetheless impressed with the majesty of the hundreds of palace buildings and courtyards. The Kyŏnghoeru (Banquet Hall) pictured in figure 4 was Lowell’s favorite spot because, in his own words, the concept of “half gardens, half parks—which occupy the space not otherwise built over, reflected the peculiarity of the far-East that the domestication of Nature—to use a term which seems best to express the artificial shaping of Nature for man’s private enjoyment.”<sup>54</sup> To add local color to the emptiness of the palace grounds, Lowell convinced six members of the Foreign Office to pose for him. He lined up five of them, alternating white-costumed civil officials with the darker blues of military rank and one other man who, judging by his outfit, seems to be either a Chinese envoy or a translator. Another young man who is not dressed in official uniform and is probably a palace servant is positioned in the lower left corner of the frame situated on the front of the steps leading up to the balcony of the pavilion. Lowell coordinated the placement of scattered officials at different locations, distances, and angles to add more height to the standing columns, elegant slanting roofs, and the straight rising walls on the right, and thereby, lending a greater sense of scale, depth, and monumentality in the eyes of the beholder.<sup>55</sup>

It is also telling that he chose to caption this image the “Palace of Summer,” because in his eyes the pavilion’s architectural finesse with “two stone causeways spanning the narrowest part of the pond joining the central island to the grounds without,” rivalled the beauty and grandeur of the more well-known Old Palace of Summer (aka Yuanming yuan) in Beijing.<sup>56</sup> Due to their nostalgic, “picturesque” appeal, decaying beauty, and desolate atmosphere of expansive courtyards and buildings encircled by stained walls, Lowell’s palace architecture photographs



**Figure 4.** The Lotus Pond of the Palace of Summer. Reproduced from *Chosŏn: The Land of the Morning Calm* (1886). Photographer: Percival Lowell (1884). Original albumen print, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Photography Library. NRICP relic no. 2905.

became the most widely circulated photographs in these genres in the foreign media. Only twenty years after Lowell's departure, the layout of the palace grounds were irrevocably damaged with the arrival of Government-General architects and engineers who began several decades of relandscaping projects to remake downtown Keijō into a tourist-friendly exposition and modern museum space, which was then followed by the massive construction of the Government-General Headquarters (Ch'ongdokpu), which opened in 1925.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, Lowell's image as the oldest known photograph detailing the original architectural and spatial scheme of the lotus pond and adjacent buildings is an invaluable resource for the student of palace architecture.<sup>58</sup>

Outside the palace, like many of his peers with fond memories of the "Grand Tour" circuit of ruins and museums, Lowell's tastes naturally gravitated toward monumental art including the Wŏngaksa Pagoda, Seoul's oldest standing Buddhist relic, the Red Arrow Gate, and the main city entrance, the South Gate.<sup>59</sup> Of all of the capital's landmarks, Lowell was most intrigued by the unique construction, colors, design elements, and symbolic meaning of the Red Arrow Gate (figure 5), named after the rows of distinctive arrow-shaped spikes placed across the top of gate's columns.<sup>60</sup> Lowell's *Science* article, simply titled "The Hong Sal Mun or the Red Arrow Gate," begins with a concise introduction to the Red Arrow Gate as

[o]ne of the most striking characteristics of Far-Eastern architecture is the singular respect to approaches. The means, it may be said, is itself the end. It is not so much



what you are to reach, as how you are to reach it that the Korean deems important. The practice is one branch of the all-pervading ceremonial. To his mind, the dignity of an object is best preserved by rendering access to it imposing. . . . As being the first and outermost as the “singularly odd and strikingly unique structure and to the students, it derives still further interest from being purely Tartar.”<sup>61</sup>

In Lowell's time, the word “Tartar” was widely used as a generic term for Mongols or cultural elements originating along the vast steppe regions spanning across Central Asia, Russia, and Northeast China. He speculated that the gate's original form had probably been derived from some of the earliest Tartar forms of spirit worship and thus may have once symbolized the demigod status of the king who had reigned over the official classes. However, in Korea's case, unlike the *torii* of Japan, which served as portals to Shinto shrines, Lowell observed that the Red Arrow Gate had been transformed into a mark of magistracy.<sup>62</sup> Though he writes that Korea's form lacked the graceful curves, the diversity of materials, or mystic meanings of its Japanese counterpart, nonetheless, he made a very serious effort in figure 5 to show off the gate's clean lines rising in all its “solitary grandeur”—not connected with either walls or buildings—it stands alone and apart. In addition, in order to emphasize the height of the gate's column, Lowell included rows of houses on either side. He also artfully arranged a motley gang of curious onlookers, from street urchins jostling to get a closer view of the camera to a young man leaning below the left column and beyond,



**Figure 5.** The Red Arrow Gate. Reproduced from *Chosŏn, The Land of the Morning Calm* (1886). Photographer: Percival Lowell (1884). Original albumen print, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Photography Library. NRICP relic no. 2906.

a row of white-clad pedestrians, and one covered woman strolling toward the camera. In the foreground, in order to enhance the “quaint grotesqueness” of the gate, he has also included three able-bodied males and their merchandise.<sup>63</sup>

The man on the left is holding on to a rolled up straw mat and a big mourning hat, and the two fuel peddlers are leading their bulls bent over under the heavy weight of branches piled high. Lowell’s picture is visual confirmation of contemporary historical records that, by the nineteenth century, fuel for cooking and heating had to be transported from afar due to the severe deforestation of Seoul’s closest mountains, giving rise to a powerful guild of fuel merchants coming in and out of city gates. Like many foreigners before and after him, Lowell’s interest in the sources of Seoul’s fuel was sparked by his first sleepless night in a Chemulp’o inn, tossing and turning over the burning furnace effect of an *ondol* floor at full blast.<sup>64</sup> The cluster of people, lumber, and animals passing under the skeletal frame of the gate columns rising high above the main road imparts a lively sense of sustained movement of pedestrians going about their daily business activities along the main thoroughfare of Seoul.

## CONCLUSION

In the past century, Lowell’s travelogue has largely been relegated to the bins of history, only to be “rediscovered” in the past decade by a handful of scholars in literature and missionary history. Unfortunately, these authors’ publications have merely rehashed tired platitudes condemning Lowell for his racial prejudices in his characterization of the “backwardness” of the Chosŏn people.<sup>65</sup> Kim Chong-gap, writing in a journal dedicated to “Nineteenth-Century English Literature,” accuses Lowell of titling *Chosŏn* as “The Land of the Morning Calm” in order to support his main thesis that the “impersonal” nature of all Far Eastern races had created a country full of “sleep-walking” citizens who resembled living fossils trapped in the early morning fog.<sup>66</sup> In this sense, Lowell’s depiction of government officials, peasants, and merchants and their servants as being uniformly “lazy” and “selfish” and only concerned about their next meal ticket did not deviate from the mainstream Western view of a kingdom in a state of severe and irreparable decline due to centuries of isolation imposed by an ineffectual and corrupt government incapable of change or progress.<sup>67</sup> Consequently the postcolonial literary scholarship has largely dismissed the contents of *Chosŏn* as imagined “Orientalists’ fantasies” and derived from a sense of racial superiority informed by the then trendy social evolutionist theories advocated by Herbert Spencer.<sup>68</sup>

Though this may very well be the case, it is important to note here that the same critics who have rejected the contents of *Chosŏn*’s narrative as a work of creative fiction by yet another displaced writer hailing from New England, and therefore, lacking in historical veracity, have ignored the material evidence consisting of twenty-five full-page plates of Lowell’s own photographs, which,



unlike his writings, have continued to live on in the popular imagination. Even a century after Lowell's passing, his most visually striking photographs have been reproduced and recycled in a wide variety of printed formats including missionary accounts, travel guidebooks, photo albums, textbooks, and even folk museum exhibition displays as authentic views of the long lost Hermit Kingdom. Such imperceptive biases, ignorance, and lack of appreciation for visual materials is also prevalent among the majority of anthropologists who have traditionally understood ethnography as text-based and who consequently are blind to not only the images themselves but also to the acceptance of photographs as artifacts deserving in-depth study and stylistic and cultural analysis.

When *Chosön* was first published by the preeminent Boston publisher of literary luminaries, Ticknor and Company, in 1885, its contents received mixed reviews. On the other hand, Lowell achieved considerable fame for the quality of the twenty-five reproductions which he developed himself for the publication. Upon Lowell's return to Boston via Japan in 1884, the Boston Society of Amateur Photographers awarded him its prize for "highest excellence" for his collections of Korean photographs. *The Nation*, the oldest running magazine devoted to American politics and culture (1865–present), in reviewing Lowell's *Chosön*, judged the photographs as "no mean addition to our stock of knowledge" and concluded that they were "the most valuable portion" of the book.<sup>69</sup> *Chosön* was printed two more times between 1886 and 1888, of which the third and last edition only included five full-page reproductions probably due to production costs since *Chosön* was hands down the most expensive of all of Lowell's publications. According to a price listing included in the front jacket of his most popular book on the Orient, *Soul of the Far East* (Houghton, Mifflin, and Co. Boston and New York, 1888), the same publisher advertised *Chosön, the Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea* in several different editions, covers, and binding formats:

CHOSÖN: THE LAND OF MORNING CALM. A Sketch of  
Korea. Illustrated. 4to, gilt top, \$5.00; half-calf, \$9.00; tree calf,  
\$12.00; *Library Edition*. 8 vo, gilt top, \$3.00; half calf, \$ 6.00.

The main appeal for the reader, then and now, is, first, Lowell's engaging reporting style further enriched by his lively snapshots of a far-off land populated by a wide range of "aboriginal" subjects from royalty, officialdom, and common folk poised in their original geographic and occupational settings.<sup>70</sup> Second, the chapters of *Chosön* and accompanying images were arranged in an easy to digest manual with an extensive reference index for touring the "Oriental City."<sup>71</sup> Lowell, as a seasoned globe-trotter chose a guidebook format so that it could be consulted on the road and at home thereby targeting the expectations and tastes of upper-class Bostonians eager to discover a new geography, climate, and itinerary of "must-see destinations."<sup>72</sup> Third, as a mathematician and classicist by training,

even when Lowell's camera lens was focused on human subjects such as the king, officials, and street peddlers, he always made sure that the background included recognizable landmarks such as government buildings and city gates as well as construction materials and engineering details (stone masonry, columns, roofs, doorways) or decorative elements such as window screens, animal sculptures, and straw mats. These design and decorative elements were included to further enhance the rich textures, exotic charms, and grainy allure of each frame. In addition, in many of Percival's panoramic views of palace buildings, gardens, ponds, gates, courtyards, and wall enclosures (figure 5), the contours of Seoul's Northern mountain ridges can be seen clearly etched against a cold wintry skyline, no mean technological feat for an amateur who had just picked up the camera.

Fourth, Lowell was the first Western observer who was conscious of entertaining his readers by including humorous personal anecdotes interwoven into "manners and customs," of a land ranging from royal intrigues, power struggles in high office, the position of women, nightlife, demon worship, costumes, hats, language, etc. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, due to the popularity of *Chosön*, Lowell for a time was widely respected as an authoritative figure and was consulted on all things "Korean" by the American media even after the 1910 Japanese annexation of Korea.<sup>73</sup> Last but not least, Lowell's photographic vision, teeming with ethnographic details, must be recognized as the first eyewitness reportage not only chronicling but also taking snapshots of the daily lives and subsistence activities of a wide cross-section of Seoul society from the king, high officials and shopkeepers to the lowly *kisaeng* for hire.<sup>74</sup>

In summary, Lowell's potent mix of keen observational skills, dynamic photographs, wry humor, and self-confessed love for "exploration and romance with the unknown," distinguishes *Chosön* from other contemporary travelogues and authors who had very different agendas.<sup>75</sup> The books written by notorious trader Ernst Oppert (1832–1903) and armchair missionary writer William Griffis (1843–1948) are prime examples of publications which relied on information and descriptions taken from secondary sources while their illustrations were reproduced lithographic reprints taken from widely available stock images of the Hermit Kingdom already in circulation at the time.<sup>76</sup>

In historical hindsight, one still wonders how Lowell could have succeeded in gathering enough materials to fill thirty-seven chapters and 402 pages covering a wide range of subjects from language, government, architecture, religion, the position of women, customs, hats, and costumes. At the time, it was well documented that he spoke neither Korean nor Japanese, and furthermore, his trusted secretary and translator, Mr. Miyaoka, was reported to have been deathly ill, and therefore, Lowell decided to leave him in Chemulp'o to be taken care of by the American Consulate. Here we have to rely on his brother Abbott's testimony that Percival may have picked up key intelligence from the US Legation, the multilingual and well-connected German diplomat Paul George von Möllendorf (1847–1901), and possibly an English schoolmaster who had been there a short

time.<sup>77</sup> As a royal guest, Abbot speculates Lowell was also permitted to have extra privileges such as having his own private residence next to the Foreign Office and a personal Japanese cook skilled in both Japanese and European cuisine. But, most important, Abbott believes his brother's freedom to investigate his subjects and best shooting locations were due in part to his brother's ability to do as he pleased. To begin with Lowell rejected the usual mode of transportation which was a covered palanquin for VIPs and instead walked everywhere. Percival was allowed to roam around the city streets at all hours of the day and night without guards. Even at night, he was an honored guest at several official banquets held in and outside the city premises giving him ample opportunities to mingle with both the high and low of Seoul society.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the king had given him the best gift possible—that is, the time and space to interview and photograph his subjects wherever and whenever.

Figure 3 corroborates the biographic details of Lowell's love affair with the camera since his tripod occupies the center of the frame. Lowell is sitting on the ground looking off into the distance presumably contemplating his next route after consulting what looks like an unfolded map weighed down by the lens cap of the camera and a bottle of Bass Ale.<sup>79</sup> He has surrounded himself with a large group of local males of various ages with various hairstyles and wearing a wide variety of clothing, caps, and finely woven horse-hair *kat* described in detail in *Chosŏn*'s chapter 31, "Hats."<sup>80</sup> More important, except for Lowell, all of the subjects are looking curiously at the cameraman.<sup>81</sup> The overall composition testifies that Lowell was comfortable assuming the classic pose of the Victorian-era anthropologist staking his authority in the field surrounded by his subjects. Regrettably, despite the wealth of political, historical, and anthropological knowledge we can glean from *Chosŏn*'s plates—except for the royal portraits discussed above—Lowell's photo archives have not been studied in any systematic manner by art historians, anthropologists, museum curators, and/or collectors. They may have been ignored because Lowell's prints were regarded as "amateurish," since his images do not conform to the aesthetic conventions or high production value of the Japanese souvenir photo albums manufactured by commercial studio artists such as Felice Beato. Beato's photo albums were much desired by collectors then as well as museum curators organizing exhibitions today.<sup>82</sup> However, as we have seen, it is undeniable that Lowell's surviving photos possess fresh insights into ethnohistorical knowledge as well as architectural vistas never before recorded in any other photo archives dating to the nineteenth century. The fact that the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (NRICH), a division of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage Administration (Munhwajae-ch'ŏng) of the Republic of Korea has registered all sixty of Lowell's MFA images with a sequence of unique National Research Institute of Cultural Properties (NRICP) relic numbers demonstrates his photos have been reappraised as artistically, historically, and technologically worthy of being included in the prestigious inventory of the South Korean national cultural properties registry.<sup>83</sup> By investigating a small

sample of Lowell's images of Seoul, this article has attempted to formulate new visual approaches to contextualizing the historical, ethnographic, and cultural impact of Korea's early photographic images.

## NOTES

I want to thank Ellen Takata, former curatorial research fellow for Asian art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, current PhD student in history of art and visual culture at the University of California, Santa Cruz, for her expertise and support in providing me research access into Percival Lowell's archives in preparation for this article.

1. See Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography (1860–1920)*; and Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, "Introduction: Anthropology, Photography, and the Archive," 337.

2. See Elizabeth Edwards, "Objects of Affect"; Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions*; Christopher Morton, "The Anthropologist as Photographer"; James Ryan, *Picturing Empire*; and Joan Schwartz and James Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place*.

3. To this day, museums continue to collect and exhibit highly exoticized and eroticized objects such as fertility dolls, magical figurines, sculpture, and warrior masks emphasizing racial differences indexed by body types, facial features, costumes, and hairstyles, and thus, perpetuating centuries-old "ethnic tableaux" of indigenous peoples from Africa, Asia, South America, and the Pacific. See Arnie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography"; and Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin, eds., *Images and Empires*.

4. Paul D. Barclay, "Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire"; Jane Desmond, "Picturing Hawai'i"; Luke Gartlan, "Types or Costumes? Refraining Early Yokohama Photography"; David Odo, *The Journey of "a Good Type"*; and Hyung Il Pai, "Tracing Japan's Antiquity."

5. For a discussion of the curatorial process of museum collections and exhibitions, see Takeru Akazawa et al., *The "Other" Visualized*; Claire Lyons et al., eds., *Antiquity and Photography*; Maria Pelizarri, ed., *Traces of India*; and Kwŏn Haengga, "Ilche sidae up'yŏn yŏpsŏe nat'anan kisaeng imiji" [The image of the *kisaeng* in postcards printed in colonial Korea].

6. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs, Objects, Histories*; and Christopher Morton, "Photography and the Comparative Method."

7. The patterns revealed in the production, exchange, and distribution of photographic images mirror earlier findings on the global circulation of commodities observed by Igor Kopytoff and other authors included in Arjun Appadurai's edited volume, *The Social Life of Things*.

8. For the historical and political background in the evolution of British, French, and German imperial cultural institutions, archaeological fieldwork, and heritage management in the nineteenth century, see Michael Falser and M. Juneja, eds., "Archaeologizing" *Heritage? Transcultural Research*; and Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus*.

9. For a critical survey of the staging of colonial expositions and the evolution of museums, see Arnie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*; and Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions*. For a history of colonial anthropological fieldwork and ethnographic collections in the mid-nineteenth century, see George Stocking, ed., *Colonial Situations*.

10. For a recent summary of the most contentious territorial disputes generated by the ethnic origins, meanings, and interpretations of archaeological sites and artifacts waged among the many competing religious, ethnic, and political factions in order to lay claims over sacred terrains in Palestine and Israel, see Nadia Abu-El Haj, *Facts on the Ground*. For a historical survey of Japanese colonial archaeological research and the historical legitimization of the 1910 annexation of the Korean peninsula, see Hyung Il Pai, *Re-surveying the Ruins of Japan's Mythical Homelands*.

11. For an expert analysis and insider's look into the complex negotiations among publishers, editors, sponsors, photographers, and writers working at the hundred-fifty-year-old best-selling travel and adventure magazine, *National Geographic*, see Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, eds., *Reading National Geographic*.

12. In the past decade, the prodigious output of globe-trotting Anglo-Italian photographer Felice Beato has been the subject of large and small museum exhibitions in the United States and Japan. See the following catalogs by David Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty*; Eleanor M. Hight, ed., *Felice Beato*; Anne Lacoste, ed., *Felice Beato*; and Yokohama Kaikōshiryōkan [The port of Yokohama Historical Museum], ed., *F. Beato Bakumatsu Nihon shashinshū* [Catalog of Felice Beato's photographs dating to the late Tokugawa era].

13. Eleanor M. Hight, "Japan as Artefact and Archive"; Allen Hockley, "Packaged Tours"; *Felice Beato's Japan*; and Lynn Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*.

14. For an overview of the Victorian-era background to the politics and economics of World's Fairs, see Peter H. Hoffenberger, *An Empire on Display*.

15. The most extensive research to date has focused on the production and global circulation of the medium of the postcard, which emerged in Europe in the 1870s as the most popular form of communications, propaganda, and advertising due to its infinite variety of subject matter and attractive design as well as for its convenience, efficiency, portability, and affordability. See Elizabeth Edwards, "Greetings from Another World"; and Christraud M. Geary and Virginia Lee Webb, eds., *Delivering Views*.

16. According Ms. Lee, the curator of Lowell's archives, there are two other known sets of Lowell's Korea photos; sixty-six images at the Boston Athenaeum and thirty glass plate negatives at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona, where Lowell spent his last years. The MFA and Athenaeum sets are nearly identical with a few exceptions. See Heejung Lee, "Cataloguing Percival Lowell's Photographs of Korea."

17. Percival Lowell, *Chosōn, the Land of the Morning Calm*.

18. Jeffrey Cody and Frances Terpak, eds., *Brush and Shutter*.

19. The most studied genres such as war commemoration, photojournalism, family portraits, commercial photography, and architecture have been cataloged by the following authors, collectors, and museums: Ch'oe Injin, *Han'guk sajinsa 1631–1945* [A history of Korean photography 1631–1945]; Kungnip Chungang Pangmulgwan [National Museum of Korea], *Kungnip Chungang Pangmulgwan sojang yuri kōnban* [Gelatin plates in custody of the National Museum of Korea: The royal palaces of Chosōn]; and Yi Hongūn and Yi Tongūn, eds., *Han'guk kūndae sajin sojangp'um sōnjip* [The Korean photographs from the museum collection, 1880–1940].

20. Kwōn Haengga, "Kūndae sigakch'eje ūi hyōngsōng kwajōng: Ch'ōngil chōnjaeng chōnhu ūi Ilbonsajinsa ūi sajin hwaltong ūl chungshim ūro" [The constitution of modern visuality in Korea: Focused on works of Japanese photographers around the time of the Sino-Japanese wars].

21. For an overview of the historical, anthropological, and political backgrounds to the production and distribution of the most popular genres of early postcards of Korea, see

Kwŏn Hyŏkhŭi, “Ilche sidae sajin yŏpsŏe nat’anan chaehyŏn chŏngch’ihak” [The politics of representation in Japanese colonial-era picture postcards]; Kwŏn Hyŏkhŭi, *Chosŏn esŏ on sajin yŏpsŏ* [Postcards from Korea]; and Hyung Il Pai, “Navigating Modern Seoul.” The largest collection of postcards in South Korea is at the Pusan Museum, which has reproduced its collections of travelogues, brochures, and postcard sets depicting the many famous places and customs dating from the 1920s and 1930s. See Pusan Museum, *Sajin yŏpsŏ esŏ mannan kwan’gwang myŏngso* [Famous places seen in postcards]. For a searchable online database of Japanese Empire postcards, see the Skillman Library at Lafayette College, Digital Scholarship Services, “East Asia Image Collection.”

22. Terry Bennett, *Korea: Caught in Time*.

23. See David Strauss’s compilation, *Percival Lowell: Collected Writings on Japan and Asia*, 1:i–ix.

24. Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 5–7; and David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*, 58.

25. David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*, 26–49.

26. In the preface to *Chosŏn*, Lowell dedicates the book to his cousin, W. S. Bigelow, and his mentors, Morse, Chamberlain, and Fenollosa, expressing his gratitude for all their kindness and help. See Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn*, preface, vi.

27. See Haengga Kwŏn, “King Kojong’s Portrait and the Advent of Photography in Korea,” 59–61.

28. Article 2 of the 1882 US-Korea Treaty stated that “the High Contracting Powers may each appoint Diplomatic Representatives to reside at the Court of the other, and may each appoint Counselor Representatives at the ports of each other, which are open to foreign commerce, at their own convenience”; cited in Gary Walter, “The Korean Special Mission to the United States of America in 1883,” 117.

29. This passage is taken from the biography of Lowell, penned by his younger brother Abbott, who quotes from a letter that Sturgis Bigelow wrote to their father. See Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 12.

30. Based on the general records of the department of state, Min Yong Ik’s letter of appointment, translated by Lowell, “was to assist . . . in transaction of all the affairs concerning the mission, whether by way of giving advice or by way of assistance in the execution thereof.” See Gary Walter, “The Korean Special Mission to the United States of America in 1883,” 101. The mission also included the vice-minister, Hong Yŏngsik, then vice president of the Foreign Office (Tongni kimu Amun), and the leaders of the progressive party Yu Kilchun and Sŏ Kwangbŏm (see figure 2) who had formerly studied abroad in China and Japan. The embassy traveled on the transcontinental railways to San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and on steamships to cross the Atlantic to Europe. In Washington, they met with the US president, the secretary of state, and military and naval officers as well as visited government institutions such as post offices and the departments of education, treasury, and agriculture; manufacturing sites such as shipyards and factories; and various other locations such as hospitals, museums, theaters, and department stores. After, a nine-month-long trip, the mission members finally returned to Chemulp’o via Nagasaki on May 31, 1884. Their luggage was filled with many souvenirs such as Western suits, leather gloves, carpets, as well as commemoration photos. Gary Walter, “The Korean Special Mission to the United States of America in 1883,” 100–108.

31. Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 11.

32. *Ibid.*, 15.



33. Ibid., 13.

34. Ibid., 16.

35. According to the following experts, Yokohama was the center of Japanese photography in the 1880s. Therefore, by then it was not unusual for the arriving traveler in Yokohama to immediately head for a photo studio, buying photos of places one had not yet seen as well as having his own picture taken. See Naoyuki Kinoshita, "The Early Years of Japanese Photography"; and Frederic A. Sharf, "A Traveler's Paradise."

36. David Strauss, emeritus professor at Kalamazoo College, is the author of the most extensive biography of Lowell published to date. With the cooperation of Lowell's descendants and Harvard University Houghton Library, David Strauss has also compiled the corpus of Lowell's publications on East Asia in five volumes, including important articles, meeting minutes, and public lectures as well as personal correspondence from his sister (the renowned poet Amy Lowell) and noted Japanologists such as Lafcadio Hearn and William F. Grifis. See David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*; and David Strauss, ed., *Percival Lowell: Collected Writings on Japan and Asia*.

37. David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*, 80.

38. Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 16.

39. The three genres of photography mentioned here trace their formalism, design elements, and technical origins back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when lithographic techniques practiced on a wide variety of mediums were developed by enterprising commercial presses who eventually came to dominate print culture industry and albums of fine arts reproductions for the European mass market. See Stephen Bann, ed., *Art and the Early Photographic Album*.

40. For succinct overview of Chosŏn Dynasty royal portraiture by art historians, see Sunmie Cho, "A Perspective on the History of Korean Portrait Painting"; and Jeonghye Park, "Court Paintings on the Crown Princes of the Joseon Dynasty."

41. I have not been able to track down documentation of how such an elaborate pair of late-Qing, imperial-style, enameled, cloisonné burners made their way into Kojong's possession. My first guess is that the pair may have been brought back as imperial gifts bestowed by the Qing court since a score of tributary missions journeyed to Beijing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Or the pair may have been purchased via traders through Chemulp'o when thousands of Qing Palace treasures such as jade, textiles, lacquer, gold, and bronze were already in wide circulation in the world curio market due to extensive looting of the Summer Palace by French and British troops in the early 1860s. Kojong's vessels most closely resemble a stereograph titled "Enamels from the Emperor of China's Palace," and included among the inventory of more than 400 treasures for the Exhibition of 1862 at Fontainebleau's Chinese Museum, where they still remain today. See Lilian Li, "The Garden of Perfect Brightness."

42. Haengga Kwŏn, "King Kojong's Portrait and the Advent of Photography in Korea." 59–61.

43. Ibid., 76–77.

44. Ch'oe Injin, a prolific author and collector of early Korean photographs, believes that he has found evidence that Chi Unyŏng was the first native royal photographer since Chi had delivered copies of his photographs to the king six months prior to the arrival of Percival's sets. Ch'oe's main evidence relies on the personal diaries of Yun Ch'ihŏ (1864–1945), who was then serving as an interpreter and secretary to the court. According to Yun's entries dated March 16, 1884, Yun had escorted Lowell in around 11 a.m. and he left by 5 p.m. on March



13, 1884. On that same day, Yun had also observed that Chi was also present. Whatever the case may be, it is important to emphasize here that unlike Lowell's portrait, Chi's surviving shots of the king and his heir show them wearing identical outfits. The photographs were shot in the same shooting location, but the subjects were seated instead of standing, and the images most likely never circulated outside of Korea. See Ch'oe Injin, *Han'guk sajinsa 1631–1945* [A history of Korean photography 1631–1945], 110 and 444; and Hō Chinsōk, "Han'guk 1-ho sajin'ga ka chigūn Kojong sajin ch'ajatta" [The discovery of the first photographer to take Kojong's portrait].

45. All three had also accompanied fact-finding missions abroad and found the opportunity at treaty ports such as Tianjin, Shanghai, and Yokohama to study photographic techniques. They also acquired additional technical skills and chemicals working for Japanese commercial photo studios, which had opened up shop in Seoul, P'yŏngyang, and Pusan following the Sino-Japanese wars in the 1890s. See Ch'oe Injin, *Han'guk sajinsa 1631–1945*, 91–115; and Kwŏn Haengga, "Kūndae sigakch'eje ūi hyōngsōng kwajōng."

46. Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, 158.

47. As an avid photographer, Lowell's two meetings with a camera-friendly and photogenic king blossomed into a mutual love affair. From his perspective, the king's passion for self-portraits was a welcome reprieve since for two months prior Lowell had encountered many citizens who had never seen a camera. In many cases, they were so curious that they either crowded him (see figure 5), making it difficult to take a clear shot, or ran away in fright.

48. The couple's arranged wedding celebrations in 1920 were hyped as the biggest social media event of the day and were commemorated in several official postcard sets issued throughout the empire. See Yi Kwi-yōng, ed., "Kungnip Kogung Pangmulgwan Sunjong hwangje ūi Sōbuk sunhaeng kwa Yōngch'in wang Wangbi ūi ilsaeng" [Emperor Sungjong's inspection tour to the northwest and the life of Prince Yōng and his consort].

49. The annexation ceremonies were documented in officially commissioned photo albums printed by the premier printing press of the day, the K. Ogawa Company, and issued jointly in Tokyo and the colonial capital of Keijo. See Sugi Ichirōbei, ed., *Heigō kinen Chōsen shashinjō* [Commemoration photo album of the annexation of Chōsen].

50. Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, 154–60.

51. Allan Ellenius, ed., *Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation*.

52. Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, 290.

53. *Ibid.*, 289–90.

54. *Ibid.*, 297.

55. Hyung Il Pai, "Monumentalizing the Ruins of Korean Antiquity," 336.

56. Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, 291.

57. For a critical analysis of Japanese colonial government urban planning projects and relandscaping of Seoul, see Todd A. Henry, "Respatializing Chosŏn's Royal Capital."

58. Out of the grand total of twenty-five full plates included in *Chosŏn*, Lowell labeled twenty-one plates after their principal architectural locations and/or translations of Korean names such as: "Morning in the Old Palace Grounds" (p. 6), "The Audience Hall" (Keunjōngjŏn, p. 100), "The Foreign Office" (p. 116), "The Pagoda" (p. 188), "In the Main Street—Soul" (p. 218), "The Pillars of the Palace of Summer" (p. 270), "In the New Palace Grounds" (p. 296), "Temple in the Valley of Clothes," (Segŏmjōng, p. 310), and "Beyond the Northeast Gate" (p. 360). See Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*.

59. *Ibid.*, 76. For a discussion of the century-old controversies surrounding colonial-era preservation policies, the 2008 arson, and the grand opening of a replica of the South Gate in 2014, see Hyung Il Pai, "Gateway to Korea."

60. Lowell's photos and descriptions of the Red Arrow Gate appeared in two different publications. Details of the Red Arrow Gate were first published in the pages of *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm*, 262–66. Later, the gate was included in an article by Lowell featured in *Science*, the prestigious illustrated journal, which then and now publishes the latest reports on the findings of America's most prominent scientific societies. See David Strauss, "The Hong Sal Mun or the Red Arrow Gate."

61. *Ibid.*, 438.

62. It is important to note here that despite Lowell's self-confident claims as a student of comparative religions, he was mistaken in his assumption that the gate had lost its original religious connotation and that "everything and anybody who is a somebody worked for the state." See Percival Lowell, *Chosŏn*, 262–64. If Lowell had ventured outside the capital he would have noticed red arrow gates marked entrances to many other kinds of buildings including Confucian shrines, schools (*hyang-gyo*), and ancestral tombs.

63. *Ibid.*, 264.

64. *Ibid.*, 65–67.

65. See Han Kimun, "Kaehanggi sŏngyosadŭl ūi Sŏul insik" [The missionary's understanding of Seoul in the period of the port openings]; and Kim Paegyŏng, "Kaehanggi sŏyang chisigindŭl ūi Sŏul insik Lowell, Gilmore, and Bishop" [Western Intellectuals' understanding of Seoul at the end of the nineteenth century focusing on Lowell, Gilmore, and Bishop].

66. For a critique of Lowell's assessment of Far East races, see Kim Chonggap, "Ch'owŏlchŏk kip'yo rosŏ 'Choyonghan ach'im ūi' Pŏsibŏl Rowel ūi *Chosŏn*; *Choyonghan Ach'im ūi nara* ["The morning calm" as the transcendental signifier in Percival Lowell's *Chosŏn: The Land of the Morning Calm*].

67. For a contemporary travelogue, see Isabella L. Bird, *Korea and Her Neighbours*. For a historical overview of French Orientalism and European perceptions of the Hermit Kingdom, see Frederic Boulesteix, *Ch'akhan mikaein Tongyangŭi hyŏnja* [The good primitive: The wise man of the Orient].

68. See Yunte Hwang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 27–30; and David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*, 133–50. In contrast with literary scholars, diplomatic historians such as Young Ick Lew and U Namsuk hold positive views of Lowell's contributions. See Young Ick Lew, *Early Korean Encounters with the United States and Japan*; and U Namsuk, *Pŏsibŏl Rowel kwa Chosŏn* [Percival Lowell and *Chosŏn*].

69. David Strauss, *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Society of a Boston Brahmin*, 81.

70. In the past decade, museum curators and collectors have tracked down hundreds of royal photo albums, individual portraits, and official postcards issued of royal family members (*Hwangsil sajin*). These items have been preserved not only in Korean archives such as the Changsŏgak (Academy of Korean Studies) but also in Japan and far-off institutions such as the Smithsonian. The many surviving photographs indicate that Kojong was, in fact, the most photographed monarch in Korean modern history due to his long reign and his keen interest in the art of photography. Yi Gwiyŏng, ed., *Taehan cheguk hwangsil ūi Ch'osang 1880–1989* [Photographs of the Taehan imperial family]; and Yi Hongŭn and Yi Tongŭn, eds., *Hanguk kŭndae sajin sojangp'um sŏnjip*.

71. For a discussion of Orientalism and European travel literature, see Mark Mazower, "Travellers and the Oriental City, c. 1840–1920." For a survey of the Japanese colonial tourist industry and the impact of travel guides, see Hyung Il Pai, "Travel Guides to the Empire"; and Hyung Il Pai, "Navigating Modern Seoul."

72. Lowell's other scenic approaches included harbor views titled "Korean Boats in the Harbor in Fusan," "River Suburbs of Söul (*Map'ö naru*)," "An Outlying Branch of the City Walls Crossing a Steam," "The Pagoda (Wöngaksaji)," and "In the Main Street" to name a few. See Percival Lowell, *Chosön*, "List of Illustrations."

73. David Strauss, ed., *Percival Lowell: Collected Writings on Japan and Asia*, vol. 1.

74. According to the pages of *Chosön*, Lowell arrived in Korea already familiar with the ways and customs of the Japanese geisha having spent some time in their company while he was in Tokyo. During his winter trip to Seoul, he became smitten with a certain *kisaeng* named Fragrant Iris, whom he met at several banquets given in his honor. It seems the pair became close enough that she posed for him riding a horse when she accompanied Lowell's party on an overnight trip to the Flower Stream Temple (Hwagye-sa) beyond the northeast city gates. See Percival Lowell, *Chosön*, 238–49, 369–70, and plate "The Fragrant Iris." For a recent overview of nineteenth-century origins of geisha photography and the "male gaze," see Mio Wakita, *Staging Desires*.

75. Lowell, writing in 1910, more than twenty-eight years after his 1882 trip, remembered his Korean experience fondly:

It was my fortune to visit this land once and to dwell there for a winter as a guest of the Government at a time when to do so savored of romance. For nothing could have been more out of the world, more like a fairy tale come true, than this secluded, cut off corner of it. In character certainly it suggested anything but a butterfly, nor had Japan then thought of capturing the country for its own collection. Dormant it had been for centuries: sleeping oblivious of the world without, in the long lethargic trance of the chrysalis. (David Strauss, ed., *Percival Lowell: Collected Writings on Japan and Asia*, 1:ix.)

76. Ernst Oppert, the author of *The Forbidden Land: Voyages to Korea* (1880) was a German trader and notorious braggart who had plotted to rob the grave of the father of Taewön-gun in his attempt to force trade negotiations in 1867. See Sunju Kim, "Representing Korea as the 'Other.'" William Griffis, the author of *Corea, the Hermit Kingdom* (1882), was an educator, missionary, and an armchair anthropologist based in Tokyo who had never set foot in Korea until decades after his publication.

77. Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 18.

78. Percival Lowell, *Chosön*, 238–49 and 367–70; and Abbott L. Lowell, *Biography of Percival Lowell*, 15.

79. John Dowling, "Introduction to the Voyage of the USS *Juniata* (1883–1885)," 140.

80. Percival Lowell, *Chosön*, 332–47.

81. This photo of Lowell was taken by a naval officer, Asa M. Mattice, Chemulp'o (who was on board the USS *Juniata* when it anchored off Chemulp'o (Inch'ön) harbor, one of the warship's many ports of call during a three-year-long naval expedition to the Far East (1883–85). For a discussion on the USS *Juniata* and naval expeditions, see Robert Bickers, "An East Asian Circulation"; and John Dowling, "Introduction to the Voyage of the USS *Juniata* (1883–1885)."

82. A set of albumen silver prints shot by Felice Beato during the first American naval incursions (*shinmi yanggyo*) around Kanghwa Island between May and June 1871 are recognized as the oldest photographs of Korea's coastline. Beato took these photos when he was hired by the US Navy to accompany officers on board the USS *Colorado*, one of the five warships on a punitive expedition for the sinking of the merchant ship the *General Sherman* in 1866. For an overview of US military strategy in 1871, see Thomas Duverny,

"Field Survey of the United States." One of Beato's photos, a striking image of a floating Korean junk was also chosen for the cover of the Getty Museum exhibition catalog titled "Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road." See Anne Lacoste, ed., *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road*. For analysis of Beato's photos in Korea, see Ch'oe Injin, *Han'guk sajinsa*, 61.

83. See the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, MFA catalog listings of MFA Lowell's Korean photos (unpublished October 10, 2013).

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