

PICTORIAL POSTCARDS OF A COLONIAL CITY: THE "DREAM- WORK" OF JAPANESE IMPERIAL- ISM

Won Gi Jung

Introduction by Yumi Moon, Associate Professor of History, Stanford University

The Japanese empire produced many kinds of visual sources in governing its colonies. Won Gi Jung focuses on postcards of colonial Korea collected in the LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago, analyzing their pictorial narratives and the contexts in which they were made and consumed. Comparing Japan's case with Western colonialism, Won Gi associates the flourishing postcard industry with the development of modern tourism in the Japanese metropole. He also accentuates Japan's interest in using foreign tourism to present positive images of its empire to the world. For this reason it was the colonial state of Korea, rather than private studios, that produced the postcards, carefully curating the images of main tourist sites in Keijō (present-day Seoul) and elsewhere. Won Gi also discusses several publications by Western tourists who visited colonial Korea and offers a balanced commentary on the colonial state's "dreamlike" representation of Keijō.

Pictorial Postcards of a Colonial City: The "dreamwork" of Japanese Imperialism

Won Gi Jung

It's because she found only one or two 'Korean-made' products... The [Australian] mistress wanted to purchase *Joseon* costume for female, but she couldn't find any ready-made clothes. She said, "How come I cannot find even **one pictorial postcard** made by Koreans?"¹

Blooming cherry blossom trees adorn the streets of spring-time Keijo.² A Shinto shrine, dedicated to the Japanese sun-goddess Amaterasu, stands with dignity at the center of the city.³ Street signs and brochures written in Japanese fill a crowded marketplace.⁴ Tourists saw these landscapes in pictorial postcards sold at train stations, private studios, or near historical sites in colonial Korea. Postcard craze spread across the globe in the early 20th century. And Korea, one of the colonies of the Japanese empire was no exception from the product of global tourism.⁵ During the colonial period of twentieth-century Korea, it was common to see the names of Japanese publishers like Wakijaka Shoten, Manazuru & Co., or Hindoe Shoko printed on Korean pictorial postcards.⁶ However, as the Australian mistress in the quotation above despaired, not a single pictorial postcard was made by Koreans.

The Japanese empire exerted overarching authority in presenting colonial Korea to the world. For instance, the Japanese-operated Manchuria Railway Company, established early in

1 "Korean-made", *Tong-a Ilbo*, September 28, 1935.

2 "Cherries at Shakei Garden" in *Keijo* series (1939), LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

3 "Keijo Shrine" in *Keijo* series (1939), LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

4 "View of Honmachi Street" in *Keijo* series (1939), LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

5 Hyung Il Pai, "Staging 'Koreana' for the Tourist Gaze: Imperialist Nostalgia and the Circulation of Picture Postcards," *History of Photography* 37, no. 3 (2013), 302.

6 "Postcard Collection of Colonial Korea," LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

the colonial period, had constructed Korea's major railways, the main mode of transportation used to travel between Korean cities. Moreover, Tetsudoshō, the Japanese Department of Railway, published the first official pocket-sized guide books about Korea.⁷ The postcard industry was just one aspect of Japanese control of tourism in Korea. The absence of a single Korean-made postcard demonstrated the extent to which the Japanese monopolized the industry, determining the narratives of tourism.

The realistic landscapes photographed in Japanese pictorial postcards represented the ideal state of the colony as imagined by the Japanese empire. Esteemed art historian W. J. T. Mitchell once compared landscape to “the dreamwork of imperialism” that “disclose[s] both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unexpressed resistance.”⁸ Building on Mitchell's insight, this paper will identify what constituted the “utopian fantasies” of the Japanese colonial state in Korea by analyzing the images of the pictorial postcards produced between 1918 and 1939. By historicizing these postcards in the context of Japanese imperial policy and ideology, this paper will illustrate how the urban landscapes of colonial Korea portrayed by Japanese postcards omitted the “fractured images” of colonial reality, thereby shaping a biased visual narrative of its colonial rule in Korea.

Previous studies of pictorial postcards portraying colonies across the globe have focused primarily on the visual representation of indigenous female bodies. Algerian poet and art critic Malek Alloula's 1986 photographic essay, *The Colonial Harem*, largely contributed to this trend. In his book, Alloula exposed the voyeuristic gaze of colonialism by describing French pictorial postcards portraying the bodies of Algerian women.⁹ By criticizing the postcards' exoticization of female bodies, Alloula influenced future studies of pictorial postcards from different colonies. Anthropologist Annelies Moors expands on Alloula's insight, illustrating how postcards of Israel and Palestine “inevitably generate

7 The Department of Railways, *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia* (Japan, Tokyo: 1913).

8 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 10.

9 Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

particular kinds of knowledge about and sensibilities toward those depicted.”¹⁰

Hyuk-Hui Kwon’s 2005 study, *Postcards from Joseon*, drew attention to a similar dynamic in the history of colonial Korea. In her book, Kwon focuses on Japanese pictorial postcards of Korean people, especially women, to show how postcard images exoticized and infantilized indigenous Koreans, shedding light on the exploitative gaze of the Japanese colonizers.¹¹ Historian Hyung Il Pai further describes how this imperial gaze was extended to indigenous culture and monuments in her 2013 article on the early picture postcard views of Korean historical monuments: Pai demonstrates how the postcard images produced in the early stage of colonization shaped “a timeless image of Korea” and emphasized the pre-modern qualities that evoked nostalgia in Japanese consumers.¹² Pai’s study on the Japanese tourist gaze on Korean monuments resonates with what historian E. Taylor Atkins’ expressed as “the politics of curation” in his book *Primitive Selves*. Atkins’ work analyzed how the Japanese empire used historical monuments to legitimize colonization by presenting Japan as the caretaker of the Korean culture. Both Pai and Atkins critically assess the ulterior motives of Japanese Imperialism in the visual portrayal of colonial Korea.¹³

Building upon Pai’s insight on the postcard’s portrayal of the urban landscapes of colonial Korea, this paper analyzes the postcards produced in the later period of the colonization since the late 1910s. A survey of the growing tourism industry in Japan and colonial Korea demonstrates that external factors largely determined the development of modern tourism in both countries. For the purpose of this study, I focus on the pictorial postcards of

10 Annelies Moors, “Presenting People: The Politics of Picture Postcards of Palestine/Israel” in *Postcards, Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, ed. by David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 93.

11 Hyök-hüi Kwon, *Chosŏn esŏ on sajin yöpsŏ (Postcards from Joseon)* (Seoul: Minumsa, 2005), 174.

12 Hyung Il Pai, “Staging ‘Koreana’,” 301.

13 E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreana in the Japanese colonial gaze, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 145.

colonial Korea's capital city: Keijo (Kyungsung, in Korean).¹⁴ Transformations in postcard portrayals of colonial Korea reflected the colonial regime's intent to rebrand its colony by introducing so-called "cultural rule" after the violent suppression of a nationwide anti-colonial movement in 1919. Peaceful cityscapes of Korea in pictorial postcards obscured the political unrest that swept the colonial society and presented an image of the colony closer to the ideal "dreamwork" of the Japanese empire.

Pictorial Postcards: The Byproduct of Modern Tourism

Tourism in colonial Korea developed as an extension of tourism in Japan. In late-eighteenth-century Japan, the maintenance of road systems and development of new currencies improved travel conditions, and the popularization of domestic tourism established pre-Meiji tourist culture.¹⁵ The pilgrimage to the Ise Grand Shrine, a shinto shrine devoted to the sun goddess Amaterasu, was one of the favorite routes for Japanese tourists. Vendors selling souvenirs and inns accommodating visitors mushroomed along the roads connecting the shrine to the rest of Japan. But tourism remained limited to a small number of Japanese, such as aristocrats, merchants, and Shinto or Buddhist pilgrims.¹⁶

The demographics of tourists started to change as Japan opened its doors to Westerners, especially after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. From its early stages, the state was a major investor of tourism, actively targeting foreign visitors, such as diplomats and businessmen, to improve the budding empire's global reputation.¹⁷ The state involvement in establishing Kihinkai, the Welcoming Society (1887), and the Japanese Tourist Bureau (1912) exemplified the state's strong interest in controlling foreign tourists' experiences in Japan.¹⁸ Profit from foreign currencies served as an obvious monetary incentive for the rapidly modernizing state, as shown by Minister of Finance Sayaka Yoshio's support of the 1907

14 In order to prevent any confusion, I will use the Japanese spelling of the two cities discussed in this paper, unless the primary sources cited used a different name.

15 Ki-Jae Sö, *Chosön yöhaeng e ttödonün cheguk (Japanese empire in Joseon travel)* (Seoul: Somyöng Ch'ulp'an, 2011), 30.

16 David Richard Leheny, *The Rules of Play: National Identity and the Shaping of Japanese Leisure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 52.

17 Ibid., 54.

18 Sö, *Chosön yöhaeng*, 30-31.

Hotel Development Law. The Hotel Development Law, according to Yoshio, would “remove at least some of the obstacles that are impeding flows of incoming visitors.”¹⁹

The state also had an ulterior motive in its intervention in the tourist industry. As a latecomer in the wave of modernization and industrialization, the Japanese state had to prove itself worthy of joining the ranks of other modern nations. For example, in the Japanese parliament’s 1929 debate over a bill for national support of the hotel industry, the House of Peers argued that “the purpose of international tourism had to be the creation of international understanding and the improvement of Japan’s global image.”²⁰ The non-negligible social benefits of modern tourism drove its development in Japan. The state used tourism to shape its national image presented to the rest of the world, developing its soft power as a budding empire striving to compete in the global arena of imperialism.

The Japanese pictorial postcards emerged in the context of this burgeoning modern tourism. With scarce visual information about distant regions, countries around the world used the pictorial postcards as the primary visual medium through which images of foreign cities and nature could be reproduced and circulated.²¹ Light and cheap, the pictorial postcards were collectibles that tourists could bring back to their countries or include in their travelogues and show off to other tourists they met during the trip. The postcard industry had thrived in Japan since the Japanese government legalized the domestic private production of postcards in 1900.²² Even though the shortage of paper supplies during the First World War put restraint on the growth of the industry, after the end of the war, Japan constantly published new pictorial postcards.²³

Keeping pace with the credo of *naichi encho* (extension of the mainland), the Japanese colonial state expanded its tourism policies to its colonies, including Korea. Before the colonization of

19 Leheny, *The Rules of Play*, 59.

20 Ibid.

21 Paul D. Barclay, “Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire: Image-Making in Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule” *Japanese Studies* 30, no. 1 (2010), 82.

22 Kwon, *Chosŏn esŏ on sajin yŏpsŏ*, 92.

23 Ibid.

Korea in 1910, Japanese colonizers viewed the peninsula more as a migratory settlement location than as a tourist spot. The signing of the Kanghwa Treaty in 1876 and the subsequent installation of extraterritorial Japanese settlements encouraged the migration of Japanese to Korea.²⁴ The victories in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War further accelerated this process of migration by enabling the establishment of the Southern Manchuria Railway Company in 1906 and the Oriental Development Company in 1908.²⁵ The number of Japanese settlers showed a steady increase throughout the early 20th century, becoming the largest ethnic group among the non-Korean population.

It was during the 1910s, after the official annexation of the colony, that Korea emerged as a tourist spot endorsed by the Japanese empire. As its colonial territories expanded overseas, the empire had to display not only itself, but also its colonies to visitors. Japanese colonial policies imitated its Western counterparts through bureaucratic control of colonial development. Railroad infrastructure, for instance, became the backbone of the economic geography in colonial Korea, like the European colonies in South Asia and Africa. It was not a coincidence that Tetsudoshō, the Imperial Department of Railways, published an English-written travel guidebook called *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia*, in 1913.²⁶ In the context of globally trending twentieth-century imperialism, the guidebook can be read as the Japanese empire's strategy to present colonial Korea as a territory of the Japanese empire to Westerners. Following the state's initiative, Japanese tourism magazines like *Tabi*, first published in 1924, introduced transportation routes and amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, in colonial Korea to the Japanese public.²⁷

As tourism developed in colonial Korea, private photographic studios based in Korea joined the booming postcard industry, filling their vendor stands with a series of postcards packaged in envelopes.²⁸ The earliest production of pictorial postcards in

24 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 120.

25 Sō, *Chosŏn yōhaeng*, 140.

26 Ibid., 142.

27 Ibid., 301.

28 Kwon, *Chosŏn esŏ on sajin yōpsŏ*, 96.

Korea dates to 1889, but for decades since then, the production had been limited to a small number of Japanese photographic studios.²⁹ The postcards were centered around several themes: indigenous Korean customs and culture, nature or historical attractions, and urban landscapes. Of these subjects, the most widely reproduced images of early-twentieth-century Korea portrayed indigenous Koreans and their customs - particularly the young, female, or old Koreans. One of the most frequently appearing images in the postcard series during this time was a female Korean with bare breasts.³⁰ Another trope in early pictorial postcards of pre-colonial Korea was to juxtapose the backwardness of the colonial subjects with the old monuments of Korea. In these photos, an innocent-looking young Korean or old man wearing pre-modern traditional Korean attire stood next to palaces or historical monuments of the Joseon Dynasty.³¹ Such positioning, according to Pai, accentuated the incapability of the Korean race to survive in the global trend of modernization. Korea was too old as a medieval dynasty but too young as a modern nation-state. Either way, it needed help from a mature caregiver who can provide guidance in the process of its transformation.³² The Japanese empire, with a successful record of modernization, was the perfect candidate for that role. Pictorial postcards from the pre-colonial period communicated such imperial projects through subtle visual languages.

Compared with such postcards, which Pai categorized as “the first-generation picture postcards,” which underscored the backwardness of the Korean civilization, pictorial postcards produced after the late 1910s portrayed a modernized image of colonial Korea.³³ What distinguished the post-annexation postcard industry from the market populated by private studios was the colonial state’s active participation in the production of pictorial postcards. These pictorial postcards were the primary medium through which people experienced, either directly or vicariously, colonial Korea. Cityscapes portrayed in the pictorial postcards of Keijo exemplified the new Korea as imagined by the colonial state. The transformation of images reflected the changes in tourist

29 Pai, “Staging ‘Koreana’,” 302.

30 Kwon, *Chosŏn esŏ on sajin yŏpsŏ*, 206.

31 Pai, “Staging ‘Koreana’,” 304.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 303.

narratives describing colonial Korea. This new framing of the narrative, primarily driven by the colonial state, carried over into the shift in the portrayal of colonial Korea by private studios and postcard publishers.

Curating of the Colonial Landscape

To commemorate state anniversaries, Tetsudoshō and the office of the Governor-General of Korea (GGK) often issued pictorial postcards featuring Korean cityscape, culture, and industries. The postcards were effective tools of propaganda, shaping the presentation of the colony to tourists. Cityscapes portrayed in the pictorial postcards of Keijo exemplified the new Korea as imagined by the colonial state and Japanese postcard publishers. It demonstrated the successful modernization achieved by the timely intervention of the colonial state.

A postcard series with the title of “New Joseon,” published by the GGK, exemplifies the dominant narrative of such state propaganda. Estimated to be produced between 1925 and 1933, the set consisted of five postcards about Korea’s nature, industry, and performance art. “New Joseon” introduced Korea as a historical tourist spot and economic hub of the Japanese empire.³⁴ In the series, one postcard, titled “Jyurakubi no toshi, Keijo shigai,” (Figure 1) described the landscape of Keijo with a paragraph-long caption in Japanese:

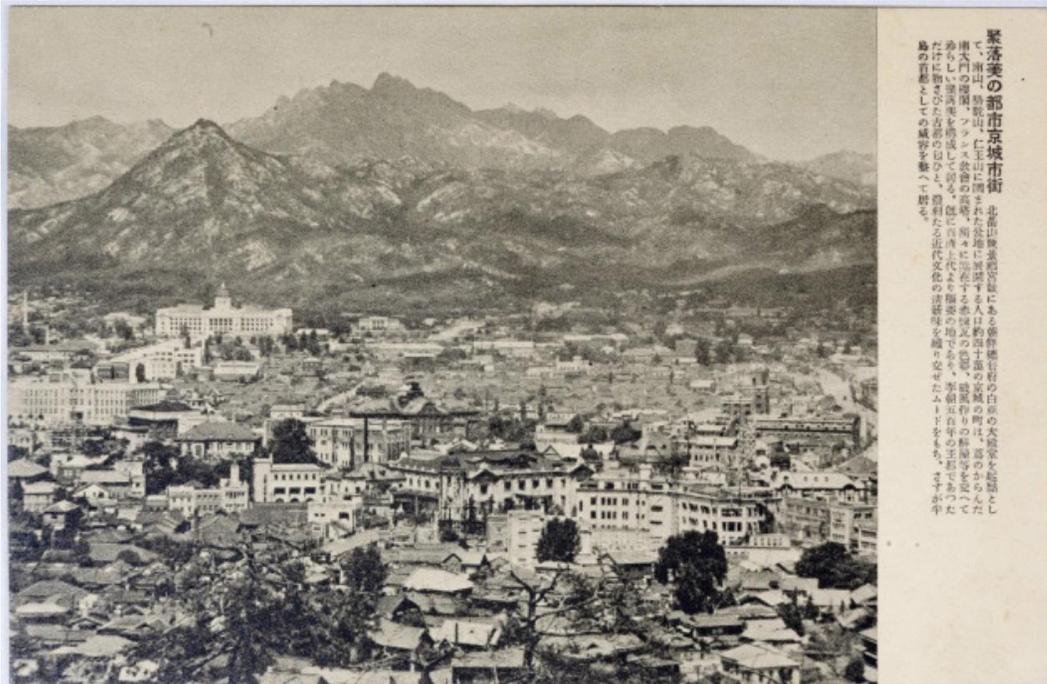


Figure 1) “Jyurakubi no toshi, Keijo shigai,” in *New Joseon series*, 1925-1933. LUNA Archive.

*Keijo, located in a plateau surrounded by Mt. Nam and Mt. In-Wang, is a city with the population of 0.4 million. At the center of the city is the ivory-white hall of the Government General of Korea, which is located on the site of Keifuku palace near Mt. Buk-Ak. The cityscape, adorned with Namdai-mon, the French church, sporadic textures of red bricks, and Korean stores with gable roofs, presents jyurakubi [idyllic beauty]. The city has been an important political site since the Paikche era. Formerly the capital city of Joseon Kingdom, Keijo, together with the rusty smell of an old city and spiritual beauty of modern culture, reveals its splendor as the capital of the peninsula.*³⁵

The caption first mentioned the presence of the GGK building that replaced Keifuku Palace. The location of the building had a political significance, because the palace had long been considered as a symbol of the royal court. The replacement of the Keifuku, a national monument, with GGK, an emblem of colonial architecture, was a physical representation of the empire’s subjugation of Korea. The caption then described a hybrid landscape of the city, where one can see “Nandaimon,” or the South Gate of Keijo, “a high tower of French Church, sporadic textures of red bricks, and Korean stores with gable roofs.” Keijo was a hybrid city where both past and present, modern and traditional aspects coexisted.

The hybridity of the city portrayed in the postcard reflected Japan’s assimilatory policies introduced in the early 1920s. The March 1st Movement in 1919, the largest independence movement of the colonial period left a serious dent in the Japanese empire’s public image. The movement shocked the GGK and forced the colonial state to reexamine its policies in colonial Korea. Assuming its duties in September 1919, the newly appointed Governor General of Korea Saito Makoto introduced a reform package which came to be known as “cultural rule.”³⁶ Saito’s reform sought “to enhance the development of the peninsula and the prosperity of its people, both prerequisites to the Korean people assuming a status of equality with their Japanese counterparts in preparation for

35 “Jyurakumi no toshi, Keijo shigai” in *New Joseon series*, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

36 Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 126.

assimilation.”³⁷ On the surface, the “cultural rule” got rid of policies that unsettled many Koreans critical of the oppressive governance of the colonial regime. For instance, the regime lifted restrictions on Korean-language publications, allowing indigenous newspapers and magazines to flourish during the 1920s.

But policies on the ground only partially reflected what the new administration promised. While Korean students enjoyed wider opportunities, the reform maintained segregation between Korean and Japanese students in education.³⁸ The GGK authorized publication of three new vernacular newspapers and private magazines, but they were all subjected to preemptive and post-publication censorship.³⁹ The “cultural rule” of the colonial state promised assimilation of Korea with Japanese, but what actually happened disillusioned Koreans anticipating a more full-blown reform. While Korean students enjoyed wider opportunities, the reform maintained segregation between Korean and Japanese students in education.⁴⁰ The GGK authorized publication of three new vernacular newspapers and private magazines, but they were all subjected to preemptive and post-publication censorship.

The urban landscape portrayed in the GGK postcard visually represented the irony of the Saito administration's assimilatory policies. According to the postcard, Keijo was a city consisting of “textures of red bricks” and “Korean stores with gable roofs,” allowing both old and new, oriental and occidental cultures to coexist in a single space.⁴¹ This mixture of different architecture, nature, traditional and modern aspects altogether constituted “*jyurakubi*,” roughly translated as the “idyllic beauty” suggesting the integration of Korean and Japanese neighborhoods.

The visual language of the photo and the caption, however, rejects any possibility of the colonial city reaching the level of Japanese cities. The postcards' juxtaposition of mountain ranges and the city, however, created a distance between the city from

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 128.

39 Min Ju Lee, “The Circumstance of the Korean Press under Japanese ruling and the Formation of Discourse on Freedom of the Press in the 1920s,” *SNU Journal of Communication Research* 43, no. 1 (2006), 84.

40 Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea*, 128.

41 “Jyurakumi no toshi, Keijo shigai” in *New Joseon series*, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

modernity. Moreover, according to the caption, Keijo was a city that had “the rusty smell of an old city,” retaining the remains of the bygone days. The caption emphasized Keijo’s pre-colonial features to suggest the conservative nature of Koreans, often criticized by Japanese critics as an obstacle to the colony’s modernization. The construction of buildings with modern architectural style and city planning could somewhat transform the physical look of the city, but “the rusty smell” will never go away. It is an indelible sign of the civilization’s backwardness.

A closer look at the caption’s description of Keijo’s cityscape also reveals the colonial state’s stance towards Christianity. In 1911, the colonial state arrested Korean Christian leaders, American and British missionaries, “falsely accusing them of conspiring to assassinate Terauchi Masatake, the first Japanese Governor-General of Korea.”⁴² The colonial state was mindful of criticism from Christian institutions, often backed by the political support from western governments. The colonial state’s persecution of Presbyterians during the March 1st movement met backlash from missionaries like Horace H. Underwood, who meticulously documented the atrocities committed by the colonial police force.⁴³ Conscious of such criticism from the western missionaries, the Saito administration loosened regulations that had limited missionary activities in colonial Korea.⁴⁴

The inclusion of the French Church in the caption could be read as the GGK’s gesture to restore its public image. By mentioning the presence of “a high tower of the French Church,” the postcard signaled the colonial state’s endorsement of religious freedom, ostensibly guaranteeing the safety of Christian missionaries in colonial Korea. Echoing this political gesture, a tourist guidebook published in 1920 also assured that the empire tolerated religious institutions. The chapter “Keijo” in *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia* had a separate section about “Churches and Mis-

42 Jimin Kim, “Representing the Invisible: The American Preceptions of Colonial Korea, 1910-1945,” PhD Dissertation, (Columbia University, 2017), 91-92.

43 Wi Jo Kang, “The Presbyterians and the Japanese in Korea,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985), 62, 1 (Spring 1984), 42.

44 Ibid., 45.

sions,” which listed Christian institutions operating in the city.⁴⁵ The section, however, did not mention the violent history of the colonial regime’s persecution. Both in the postcard and tourist guidebooks, the GGK presented a sanitized narrative of its governance in colonial Korea. The cityscape of Keijo, embracing symbolic sites like the French Church, showed no hostility towards the western missionaries.

The visual language and textual description of Keijo’s cityscape in the GGK postcard represented a significant departure from the “first generation postcards.” The panoramic portrayal of the city celebrated the successful modernization of the colony by the empire. The postcard also included a subtle political gesture to western missionaries, which had been showing constant criticism over the regime’s treatment of Christians in the colony. But its carefully curated description of the city also precluded any possibility of the colony’s complete assimilation into the empire. As long as the “rusty smell” of the old dynasty lingered in the city, Korea could never be the equal of Japan.

The Selective Memory of Tourism

Commercial postcards published after the March First movement echoed the colonial state’s portrayal of the Korean cityscape. These tourist narratives silenced the history of the colonial state’s violent suppression of anti-colonial uprising. Nowhere in those postcards we can see the tumultuous records of Korean independence movements.

Colonial Korea was not the only place among the empire’s colonies where a political upheaval brought a drastic shift in the narratives of tourism. Paul D. Barclay’s study on Taiwanese postcards demonstrates that political upheaval could recast the visual role of the colonized. Barclay points out that after the 1930 Wushe Uprising, during which the reports on the violent slaughter of Japanese settlers and on intra-Taiwanese tensions were spread widely, formerly common postcard themes, such as “head hunting, Indigenous martial prowess (with firearms), and Han-Indigenous combat in the mountains,” were “absent in post-Wushe imagery.”⁴⁶ The case of Taiwanese postcards shows that tourism in Japanese

45 The Department of Railways, *An Official Guide to Eastern Asia* (Japan, Tokyo: 1920), 55.

46 Barclay, “Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire,” 104.

colonies constantly adapted to fluctuating political situations in colonies. When the indigenous uprising posed a real threat to the colony's stability, publishing the exotic, militant images of Taiwanese tribes would have only reinforced the tourists' concern over the region's safety. Instead, the Japanese private studios quickly adjusted their marketing strategy by removing such photos from their postcard series.

The postcard series of colonial Korea after the March First movement also display similar patterns of sanitization as the post-Wushe imageries. In particular, the curation of the images in the series, which mixed the cultural symbols of Korea and Japan, underscored the assimilation of the colony to the Japanese empire. A postcard series called "Keijo," published between 1925 and 1933, presented a peaceful and Japanized urban landscape. Included in this series were the postcards of famous tourist attractions, such as the Independence Gate and Pagoda Park, both of which were the iconic locations of the anti-colonial movement.⁴⁷

However, pictorial postcards included none of this history. The postcard "The Independence Gate" (Figure 2) merely stated the fact that the gate was constructed to commemorate Korean independence from the Qing dynasty.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the postcard "Pagoda Park" (Figure 3) described it merely as a "unique park"

47 *Keijo* series, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

48 "The Independence Gate" in *Keijo* series, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

famous for its thirteen-story-high marble tower.⁴⁹ The postcard depicted the people at the park as an innocuous crowd, sitting down under the pagoda and resting in the shade. In other words, the people in the crowd did not pose any threat to the colonizers. By displaying a pristine and composed portrayal of the historical sites embedded with political significance, both postcards replaced the traumatic memories of the March 1st Movement with the peaceful representations of the sites. The caption on the English version of the postcard series well reflected what the tourism industry in Keijo wanted visitors to feel from their travel: “Keizyo, the capital of Korea, is the centre of commerce, and education.”⁵⁰ Tourist industries, reflecting the GGK’s lead, chose what to display and what to hide.

49 “Pagoda Park” in *Keijo* series, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago. The tower did not have thirteen stories, because the upper three stories of the tower had been taken down and placed next to the tower. Both 1913 and 1920 version of *An Official Guide* did not specify the reason behind this damage done to the tower, stating that the top three stories were removed “for some reason.” Pai identified that during the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592, a Japanese general Kato Kiyomasa attempted to dismantle the pagoda and bring it to Japan as loot but abandoned the plan. However, it is unclear why the colonial state chose not to restore this tower. But what John Foord, a special correspondence of *The New York Times*, wrote in April 20th, 1920 in his article helps us to guess at a possible motivation. In the article, Foord mentions that in 1592, “the Japanese army” attempted to “carry off the pagoda to Japan,” but “the process of transfer went as far as the removal of the two upper courses.” However, Foord used the fact that the tower was left like that for 325 years and no Koreans attempted to restore the monument to show “the nerveless grasp of old Korea on the realities of life.” Perhaps, Foord saw exactly what the colonial state wanted people to see.

50 “Pagoda Park” in *Landscape of Keijo*, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.



Figure 2) “Independence Gate,” in *Keijo* series, 1925-1933. LUNA Archive.



Figure 3) “Pagoda Park,” in *Keijo* series, 1925-1933. LUNA

Archive.

In the postcards, the landscape of Keijo was not only tamed and sanitized, but also Japanized. Again, the “Keijo” series included Joseon Shinto Shrine and Nogi Shrine, which commemorated Nogi Maresuke, the commanding general of the Russo Japanese War. The series also featured Hakubunji, a shrine that memorialized Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese Prime Minister who was assassinated by a Korean nationalist in 1909.⁵¹ In another postcard series, published in 1939, the images of Japanese Shinto shrines were also included to depict the urban landscape of Keijo.⁵² The captions of both images read, “the people have deep veneration for the shrine.”⁵³ The apparent Japanese symbols included in the series suggested successful assimilation of the Korean city. The presence of the Japanese religious institutions in the city implied that the residents followed the traditional rituals practiced at the site and accepted the Japanese values and customs.

However, what was portrayed in the pictorial postcards was less reality than a well-constructed fantasy. While the postcards gave the impression that the practice of Shintoism had been well carried out in colonial Korea, its actual situation on the ground was full of troubles and disputes. As of 1925, “Koreans contributed only 17 percent of total parish donations” to Keijo Shrine, showing that Koreans were not particularly devout followers of the Shinto practices.⁵⁴ Police records and news articles during the 1930s also reported on pickpocketing cases during the annual festival procession of Keijo Shrine.⁵⁵ The pictorial postcards omitted these deviations from the idyllic. They functioned as a tool of propaganda that made tourists believe that the city and its people were assimilated into the Japanese empire. Depicted as neither a dangerous nor segregated city, Keijo in the pictorial postcards instead reflected the “dreamwork” of the Japanese empire.

51 “Joseon Jinkuu,” “Nogi Shinsa,” “Hakubunji” in *Keijo* series, LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

52 “Joseon Jinkuu,” “Keijo Shinsa” in *Keijo* series (1939), LUNA Archive of the University of Chicago.

53 Ibid.

54 Todd A. Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese rule and the politics of public space in colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 78.

55 Ibid., 90.

Colonial Tourism: Responses and Significance

Colonial tourism achieved only partial success in propagating the peaceful image of colonial Korea. Depending on their prior understanding about Korea, people had varying opinions about the curated image of the colony. In a short pamphlet published in July 1919, Carlton W. Kendall wrote that “the casual traveler visiting Korea has been shown only the more beautiful aspects of the country,” accusing the Japanese Railway Guidebook and traveler’s pocket volumes of concealing institutionalized atrocities done to the Koreans.⁵⁶ Being an American delegate to “the International Peace Conference in 1915” in Hague, Kendall might have been one of the more vocal critics about the human rights violation of the Japanese empire. Furthermore, the publisher of the pamphlet strongly advocated for Korean independence. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pamphlet is unapologetic about its criticism of the Japanese empire.

Nevertheless, only the minority of observers voiced such criticism over the empire’s ostensible attempts for coverups. More westerners shared similar views with people like British journalist John Otway Percy Bland, who sympathized with the Japanese empire.⁵⁷ Having been deeply involved in settler communities in China, Bland pitied the Japanese who had to rule the Koreans, who “firmly decline to admit the superiority of Japan’s intellectual culture.”⁵⁸ Like Bland, many westerners were persuaded more by the empire’s capability to modernize Korea than the Koreans’ potential for self-improvement. H. S. Crowley, in his contribution to *Tong-a Ilbo* on November 12th, 1926, pointed out that the views of the historical monuments in Keijo were disrupted by “ugly street

56 Carlton W. Kendall, *The Truth about Korea* (Shanghai: China Press, 1919), 12.

57 What he meant by “the International Peace Conference” is a bit vague. As far as I have found, the only international conference held in Hague was the International Congress of Women. The conference dealt with a variety of issues, such as women and war, actions for permanent peace, and diplomatic cooperation.

“Reference on Korean Situation,” *Korea Review*, vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1922), <https://bit.ly/2FSDozw> (accessed on November 23, 2018),

58 John O. P. B., *China, Japan, and Korea*, (New York, Scribner’s Sons: 1921), 242; “Bland, John Otway Percy,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://bit.ly/2S9XG94> (accessed on November 23, 2018).

advertisements.”⁵⁹ He then praised the state’s decision to restore and manage the historical places and urged the people in charge of the project to continue their efforts.⁶⁰

Koreans’ attitudes were more complicated than Kendall’s skepticism or Bland’s advocacy. In response to Crowley’s contribution, a Korean editorialist criticized the colonial state for showing “a political bias in restoring the historical monuments.”⁶¹ For instance, giving the example of Genbu-mon, he claimed that the state showed preference in the preservation of the monuments by their significance to the Japanese empire, denouncing its “vulgar practice” of favoritism.⁶² He argued that, “for fear of the eyes of the foreigners” like Mr. Crowley, the state must examine itself and correct its discriminatory policies. Such roundabout rhetoric exemplified the Koreans’ strategy to undermine the authority of the colonial state. His ambiguity allowed him to be critical about the Japanese colonizers and their policies on tourism.

These examples from pamphlets, books, and newspapers demonstrate that colonial Korea was a space where the empire’s narrative and counter-narratives competed. The Japanese empire was mindful of its public image and devised various strategies to improve it. The landscape images in tourism reflected the empire’s intervention in the presentation of colonial Korea through its curation of what to remember and what to forget.

The transformation of the postcard images of colonial Korea in the late 1910s showed the empire’s departure from its original narrative that focused on the inferiority and backwardness of the Koreans. The GGK postcard reflected the changes in the colonial state’s reform policies that aimed for the nominal assimilation of the indigenous. Furthermore, a pristine and peaceful landscape of the cities in the commercial postcards silenced the memory of the March 1st Movement. The empire redeemed its missteps in its policies by presenting the pacified cities by showing the generosity of the Japanese empire as a benevolent caretaker of the Korean nation.

59 “Ugly street advertisements and monuments covered with piles of tiles,” *Tong-a Ilbo*, November 12, 1926.

60 Ibid.

61 “On the restoration of historical monuments,” *Tong-a Ilbo*, November 13, 1926.

62 Ibid.

The power of pictorial postcards as a medium relied on the authenticity of the photographs. The GGK and the private publishers selected scenes of the colony, pulled them out from the original context of the Korean history, and restructured a narrative that fit into their utopian fantasies. Unless one had prior information about the atrocities of the Japanese empire, as Carlton W. Kendall did in 1919, tourists visiting Korea just believed what they witnessed. The fractured images of the colony were concealed from the eyes of the tourists behind the serene landscapes.

Colonial Korea was a space where multiple narratives in competition co-existed. The analysis of the landscapes portrayed in Japanese pictorial postcards corroborates Mitchell's claim that any portrayal of landscape, however neutral it may seem, is political. As one of the narratives about colonial Korea, the reality portrayed in the postcard series was, like a delicate pottery lying behind the sheet of glass in a museum, a narrative isolated from the actual living conditions under the colonial rule.