[page 1]

**Korea in the White City: Korean Participation in the World’s Columbian Exhibition of 18931**

Daniel Kane, Honolulu

Introduction and Background: The World’s Fair

One historian of the subject has written that the phenomenon of the world’s fair in the late 19th century was the manifestation of “great historical confidence” on the part of Western imperial nations.2 Since the mid-19th century, and especially since the Paris exhibition of 1889, world’s fairs had become not only global showcases of national achievement, but venues for non-Western nations to present themselves to, or be presented by, their foreign audience. These two aspects were not at all contradictory. There should be no mistaking the fact that these fairs and expositions, which found their inspiration in London’s Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, were Western in conception, organization, and orientation. That is, despite the active involvement of increasing numbers of non-Western nations (and colonial holdings), the fairs were more than anything a showcase of Western achievements in the arts, sciences, and industry, and the inclusion of non- Western nations and peoples evolved more as a showcase, at times blatantly entertaining in aspect, of the “other” as foil to more “civilized” Western norms, the superiority of Western mores and achievements, and even the skill of Western sciences in categorizing the world’s diversity. This aspect of the world’s fair has been examined with increasing interest in the last twenty-five years, in great part due to the tremendous academic influence of Edward Said’s Orientalism in reexamining the motivating factors behind Western constructs of the non-Western. In this contemporary reexamination of the fairs, and their representation of the other, a few salient themes have presented themselves worth mentioning briefly. [page 2]

One was the “Victorian” penchant for the exotic, and more specifically for equating culture with place. This was a phenomenon that evolved particularly after the Paris Exhibition of 1867, when non-Western participants were first included on a large scale. This inclusion of non- Western representatives was predominantly entertaining in aspect and served to add to the fairs’ attraction (and revenues, for they were increasingly commercial in nature) by titillating their audiences with views and tastes of the exotic and bizarre. This tendency can be discerned in the words of the American diplomat Horace Allen when he expresses his hope that the colorful native Korean outfit would “add to the attraction” of the exhibit, or else of “entertaining an exhibit for that department [the Women’s Building] from this land of female seclusion”.3 This aspect is even more clearly witnessed, in the case of Korea, with the original plans for the Korean exhibit at the Paris exposition of 1900, where a native Korean street display was planned, complete with “teahouse, open air performers and acrobats”.4

The inclusion of the native display also served to add to the fair’s “authenticity”, that is the accuracy and totality with which it was able to “recreate” the native scenario, whether it be Cairo or Tokyo, a Chinese temple or a Filipino village. Though ostensibly educational in purpose, allowing the fairgoer to learn about a foreign country and its culture without the troublesome necessity of having to actually travel there, the non-Western display often in fact became purely theatrical in aspect.

Further, to differentiate both their entertaining and exotic aspects, the non- Western displays were routinely set apart from the more “serious” portions of the fair, that is the displays of Western arts and sciences. After the 1867 Paris exposition it was customary that a certain portion of the grounds be set aside as an area of national displays, particularly of underdeveloped and colonized areas of the world that would lend the scene an air of exoticism and picaresque thrill. There the displays of non-Western nations were [page 3] presented to the fairgoer as curiosities and oddities, to be gawked at, flirted with, and indulged for a short time. An emphasis was placed on their primitiveness or their gaudiness, all in contrast to the more refined and rational aspects of Western culture. The Paris Exposition of 1889 caused a sensation by its depiction, or rather recreation, of an exotic Cairo street, complete with camel riders and dilapidated buildings for effect. The “Midway Plaisance” was the primary attraction and crowd-pleaser at the Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893.5 Along its half-mile dusty pedestrian thoroughfare could be found such amusing distractions as a Chinese “joss house”, Persian theater, or live Eskimos, all of which contrasted sharply with the rational layout and design of the rest of the fairground, with its imposing neo-classical architecture, expansive (and paved) avenues, and geometrical arrangement. Despite its contemporary aspersions to being the locale where one could “study humanity in all its aspects”, the Midway Plaisance was foremost a place of diversion and entertainment, and one that more than pulled its weight in making sure the fair turned a profit. One contemporary seems to sum up the period attitude towards the Midway and its attractions:

There was about the Midway Plaisance a peculiar attraction for me. It presents Asiatic and African and other forms of life native to the inhabitants of the globe. It is the world in miniature. While it is of doubtflil attractiveness for morality, it certainly emphasizes the value, as well as the progress, of our civilization. There are presented on the Midway real and typical representatives of nearly all the races of the earth, living in their natural methods, practicing their home arts, and presenting their so- called native amusements. The denizens of the Midway certainly present an interesting study to the ethnologist, and give the observer an opportunity to investigate these barbarous and semi-civilized people without the unpleasant accompaniments of travel through their countries and contact with them.6

Another aspect of the fairs was their sense of cosmopolitanism, though again this was done under the ultimate assumption of Western superiority. [page 4]

The expositions increasingly served as venues for international conferences on cultural and intellectual matters, bringing together scholars and officials from a wide range of backgrounds and intellectual training. World’s Fairs in the nineteenth century began increasingly to celebrate diversity to an extreme. Chicago was no exception and the fair would serve as the venue for, among many others, the International Congress on Anthropology and the Conference on World Religions, where Japanese Shinto priests and Catholic bishops exhibited the unique aspects of their respective raiths.

Finally, perhaps too much emphasis has been placed lately on the intellectual-cultural-imperial aspects of the fairs and not enough on the economic. It is not too much to say that one of the primary motivations behind holding a fair, at least by the late nineteenth century when the gatherings had grown to monumental size and scope, was commercial. It was a moneymaking endeavor that to succeed required not the bland displays of farm machinery and agricultural products but the amusement and distraction of games and the “exotic”. Further, a successful fair could not only assure lucrative revenues but reflected well upon the successful and modern nation that had organized and pulled it off. In this respect the fair of the 19th and early 20th centuries may be likened to the modern Olympic games, rich in profit and status. Indeed, the modern Olympic Games were first revived in the context of a World’s Fair-the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900-and may be called the successors to the World’s Fair in many respects.

Having said all this regarding Western “uses” of the international fair, and Western conceptualizations of the non-Western participant, it would be going too far, and indeed would be playing into these very 19th century assumptions of Western superiority, to reject or neglect the idea that non- Western nations too brought their own agendas to the international fair. I believe Japan presents the strongest instance on this. From soon after its[page 5]

opening to the outside world Japan took advantage of the international exposition to both display and promote to the outside world its refined traditional culture (and promulgate the concept of an essential “Japaneseness”), while at the same time showcasing its rapid industrialization and modernization. In effect, the Western fair allowed Japan to kill two birds with one stone, by offering it a venue for promoting and reinforcing its own national identity-a concept always rooted in the traditional-and to sell itself as a modern, industrial, and eventually imperial power. Japan’s participation, alongside its new ally Great Britain, in the Anglo-Japanese Exposition of 1910 communicated Japan’s emergence as an imperial power on par with its Western counterparts with a clarity that figures on industrial output could never accomplish.

As another example, one may look at China and the Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893. Coinciding with a rising crescendo of anti- Chinese sentiment in America in the early 1890s7 a group of Chinese- Americans pooled funds to organize a Chinese exhibit at Chicago in 1893 (China itself having refused to participate). One obvious motivation behind this was to familiarize non-Chinese Americans with aspects of Chinese culture, and in this way to improve the position of Chinese-Americans in a land and society increasingly hostile to their presence (or at least in Chicago by placating fair officials who would have been desperate for a Chinese exhibit of some sort). Whether or not they succeeded of course is another matter, but such are examples of ways in which participating nations or national groups might use the fair to their own specific ends. This aspect should be kept in mind even in the midst of larger and more blatant arguments regarding the representation and misrepresentation of “the other” at the fair. In should be kept in mind particularly in the case of Korean participation at Chicago in 1893, as we shall see.The purpose of this paper, the first of two examining Korean participation [page 6] in World’s Fairs, is to examine Korea’s presence at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition. What motivated Korea’s participation and determined its display? What were the popular reactions to the Korean exhibit? To put it more generally, how are we to understand the presence of a Korean delegation at the World’s Columbian Exhibition? It is on these issues I hope to shed some light.

In its history as a united and independent state Korea would participate in only two World’s Fairs, first at Chicago in 1893 and then at Paris in 1900. Only seven years apart, the circumstances surrounding Korea’s participation in these two international gatherings stand in marked contrast. An examination of those circumstances offers the modern viewer insights not only into the domestic political situation in Korea and the mounting pressure of international rivalries through the 1890s, but also into Western attitudes towards Korea at a time when that country was really only first becoming familiar to the West. The experience of the fairs tells us something about Korean aspirations too as it made its painful, and ultimately tragic, transition to a modern world.

The last decade or so of the 19th centuiy was not an auspicious one for the kingdom of Korea. Still fresh from a failed attempt at reform (“The Kapsin coup” of 1884)8 ,the 1890s opened with Korean policy adrift and intrigue- ridden, with foreign powers the increasing and vociferous arbiters of its national will. After using its troops to suppress the Kapsin uprising China enjoyed an influence over Korean affairs unprecedented even in traditional tributary times. Great Britain occupied Korean’s Kumun Island from 1885 to 1887 to check what it viewed as menacing Russian advances on the peninsula. Japan, who had half-heartedly supported the reform-minded rebels of Kapsin, remained China’s main rival on the peninsula. Setting aside the more vague threat posed by Great Britain and other Western powers, Japanese ambitions on the peninsula were faced with two [page 7] formidable roadblocks-China and Russia. But through the mid-1890s it was Japanese-Chinese rivalry that dominated affairs on the peninsula. Despite Korea’s nominal independence as stipulated in the 1876 Kanghwa Treaty, China maintained an anxious desire to preserve its historical influence in Korea. From 1885 and the arrival of Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) as chief Chinese representative to Korea, China set out upon an unabashed course of establishing its hegemony, to a degree unknown in traditional times, and to this end repeatedly and effectively interfered with the functioning of the Korean legation in Tokyo, established in 1887, in the United States, established in 1888，as well as in Europe. From 1885 Chinese trade also began to make marked inroads into that of Japanese merchants. Whereas 1887 saw Japan’s exports to Korea almost three times that of China, by 1892 the two countries split the Korean trade almost equally.9

Augustine Heard (1827-1905), the American minister to Korea from 1890 to 1893，summed up the contentious atmosphere on the peninsula shortly before his final departure from Seoul, writing, ‘‘Discontent is rife, and there is an uneasy feeling that an outbreak of some sort cannot long be delayed.”10 That same year Japan increased diplomatic pressure on Korea for the payment of large indemnities for ostensible losses incurred by Korea’s halt of bean exports in the autumn of 1889. As the Korean delegation was heading to the Chicago World’s Fair it was confirmed that Japan would oversee the minting of a new Korean coinage, an ominous sign of things to come.

China’s determination to thwart Japanese influence in Korea would finally bring those two countries to blows in 1894-95, ostensibly over the domestic Korean Tonghak uprising. But the Chinese defeat in 1895, rather than resulting in Japanese domination of Korea, only cleared the way for further encroachments by Russia, Japan’s other rival in the region[page 8]

The period after 1895 then became one or heightened Japanese-Russian rivalry, offset by the lesser designs and geopolitical maneuverings of the Americans, French, and British, that would find their most dramatic of many climaxes in the murder of Queen Min and the harried flight of King Kojong to the Russian legation in February 1896. Only after 1898 did Russian interest in Korea begin to wane as the czar and his policymakers began to focus more on Manchuria and their new railway and commercial rights there.

In short, the decade of the 1890s was characterized by mounting Korean impotence in its foreign policy and by a growing sense of fear and despair for its national integrity. This trend is as noticeable in the vacillating and fear-driven policies of Korea’s King Kojong, a man who despite his learning and traditional upbringing in the ways of Confucian kingship was at a loss as to how to deal with the bewildering pace of modern events, as in the frenetic dispatches of the foreign diplomatic corps.

The popularly led Tonghak Revolt of 1894, the uprising that triggered the Sino-Japanese War, may be understood as another reaction to this pitiable state of national affairs. It was a revolt that came to be as much about anti- foreignism and political reform as about religious toleration. The first sign of renewed Tonghak revolt came in fact as the Korean delegation to Chicago was en route, when in March 1893 Tonghak faithful petitioned in front of the royal palace in Seoul for the termination of official persecution.

The rising voice of nationalism certainly constituted another response, as increasingly conscientious Korean intellectuals and writers began to opine publicly upon their nation’s downward spiral, and for whom Kim Ok-gyun (1851-1894), living in exile in Japan following the failed Kapsin revolt, constituted a figurehead and rallying point.¹¹ As the decade progressed reformist thought became more pronounced, culminating in the formation of[page 9] the Independence Club in 1896 and its broad appeal for political and social reform in 1898.

The Korean presence at the two world’s fairs, that of 1893 in Chicago and 1900 in Paris, I believe constitute two other such reactions, albeit official ones. In the midst of this prolonged crisis at century’s end, the opportunity to promote its own identity and to speak in its own voice in an international environment must have seemed a rare and welcome one to a Korea and its king increasingly threatened by the tide of international rivalries that was engulfing her. Chicago and Paris beckoned with opportunities for Korea to introduce itself to an outside world that knew practically nothing of her, that still referred to her, almost twenty years after opening to the outside world, by such sobriquets as the “Hermit Kingdom” or “Hermit Nation”, suggesting the country’s timidity and passiveness, or else alluding to her only in the geopolitical sense-of a Korean “question” or a Korean “problem” to be solved rather than as a national entity and advanced culture in her own right. What’s more, Korea’s participation at Chicago and Paris, despite the kingdom’s precarious financial and political situation, may be seen as attempts to augment its ties to Western nations in the face of increasing Japanese, Chinese, and Russian pressure. This being said, however, Korean success in representing itself, rather than having itself represented, was more successful in Chicago than Paris, though period observers could not have agreed less.

Horace Newton Allen

In the story of Korea’s participation at Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition there is perhaps no better starting point than with a man. Not much has been written about Horace Newton Allen (1858-1932)- missionary, physician, writer, businessman, influence-peddler, diplomat, royal confidant considering the tremendous influence he possessed with Korea’s King Kojong (after 1897 Emperor Kwangmu), and the influential hand he had in Korean affairs in the two decades from 1884 to 1905. It [page 10] would be Allen to whom King Kojong would habitually turn in moments of need and crisis vis a vis the outside world, and he would be decisive in Korea’s participation in the 1893 World’s Fair at Chicago. A brief glance of the man and his career is called for.

An Ohio Presbyterian with a long and distinguished American pedigree stretching back to the founding American colonies (and including Ethan Allen), a young Dr. Allen first arrived in Korea in 1884 from China, where he had served for two years as a medical missionary in Nanjing and Shanghai. For Allen and his young wife and newborn, the move was welcome. They had found China inhospitable and hostile to foreign missionaries. Allen, who has been described as temperamental and impatient, had higher hopes for his new posting. What he could not have foreseen was that he was arriving in Korea at a time of both crisis and opportunity. With approval from the Korean king, always suspicious of the infiltration of more Christian missions, Allen was appointed physician to the legation of the United States, as well as of England, Japan, and China (primarily to conceal his missionary activity), while becoming at the same time the first Presbyterian missionary in Korea. Only a few months after his arrival the perhaps ill-starred but certainly ill conceived Kapsin revolt broke out in December 1884 Allen won the lifelong confidence of King Kojong when he saved the life of Queen Min’s cousin Min Yong-ik from life- threatening wounds inflicted by the would-be coupists. The coup attempt quickly fell apart as Chinese and Korean troops reestablished control.Thereafter Allen became a sort of unofficial advisor to the king on foreign matters. He set a personal precedent by accompanying the first Korean diplomatic delegation to the United States in 1887 on the heels of the “Treaty of American-Korean Amity” of 1882. The American gunboat carrying Allen and the embassy left Chemulpo (Inchon) despite Chinese attempts to thwart its passage. Allen would be associated with the Korean legation on Iowa Circle in Washington, D.C. for nearly two years, as sort of unofficial advisor, before being appointed by President Benjamin Harrison[page 11] as secretary to the American legation in Seoul in 1890, at the request of the Korean king himself.12 Allen would go on to serve as secretary to legation and then as minister until his resignation and return to the United States in 1905 at the time of the Japanese protectorship. Even in retirement he would serve briefly as agent of Kojong in attempts to muster United States opposition to the Japanese protectorship. In gratitude for his years of service, at his retirement Allen was awarded by then Emperor Kwangmu (King Kojong) the T’aiguk First Class, the highest order of merit that could be bestowed upon a foreign representative.13

In 1890, upon Allen’s return to Korea as secretary to the American legation, it is safe to say that Kojong was glad to have him back. Informal meetings between the two were frequent, with Allen proffering his advice on such matters as Korean-Japanese relations and railway construction, while continuing to serve as court physician. In September 1892 Allen applied for leave of absence from his duties in Seoul for the following year in order to “visit the United States on the occasion of the World’s Columbian Exposition”.14 A few days later, in an audience with King Kojong, Allen broached his plans for leave the following year and was surprised to hear the Korean king’s sudden enthusiasm for sending a Korean delegation to the planned fair in Chicago. Describing the audience in a dispatch to Washington soon afterward, it is apparent that the king’s decision was sudden and unexpected.15

Why the sudden change in King Kojong’s attitude towards the Chicago fair? Before that can be answered one must address the rather important point of if, and when, Korea was first invited to participate. If one could determine the larger chronology behind Korea’s September 1892 decision to send a delegation it might go far in answering why they decided to do so, and what they hoped to gain. But the task of piecing together Korea’s decision to go to Chicago is not such an easy one16.

Allen had written in September 1892, “...it seemed recently that it would be impossible...to induce this government to prepare and send an exhibit”.[page 12]

As Allen’s choice of words indicate, Korea had previously been invited, or at least had heard of, the planned Chicago spectacle before Kojong’s sudden decision that month to participate.

We know that President Benjamin Harrison, on Christmas Eve 1890， issued official letters “inviting foreign nations to come to the Exposition...[and] accompanied by a letter of the Secretary of State, containing regulations for foreign exhibitors.”17 We also know from diplomatic correspondence between the American legation in Seoul and the Korean Department of Foreign Affairs that in May 1891 a special commissioner from the planned World’s Columbian Exposition arrived in Seoul in the person of Gustavus Goward, one time secretary of the American legation in Japan. On behalf of the Director General of the Chicago exposition Horace Allen requested a domestic passport for the American commissioner to proceed to Suwon and Pyongyang and other points “in pursuit of his special mission”.18 After this visit, however, we hear no more of Goward, and it is never clear, at least in any records to light, of what his “special mission” entailed, nor if he proffered an official invitation to the Korean king, though he certainly must have. At any rate, in February 1892 Horace Allen himself received credentials as an Honorary Commissioner of the World’s Fair from Walker Fearn (1832-1899)，Commissioner of the Department of Foreign Affairs for the World’s Columbian Exposition.19 It seems certain that this would not have been done had not Korea indicated a desire, though clearly not firm, to participate, thus necessitating an acting, credentialed representative on the ground in Seoul. The American periodical, Manufacturer and Builder for March 1892, includes Korea in its listing of “Foreign Participation” at the World’s Fair. Unlike most of the other listed nations, however, Korea has no dollar amount fixed in the “appropriations” column of the same list, suggesting its involvement was still quite tenuous. China, which did not end up participating in any ofticial capacity, is also listed, also with no dollar amount given.20 The most likely conclusion to all of this then is that Korea, like other nations, received the official invitation[page 13] of 1890, perhaps hand-carried by Mr. Goward, and though enthusiastic never provided a firm response one way or the other. Considering the small size of the exhibit that was eventually sent (and King Kojong’s concern with cost), it is easy to surmise that Korea may have initially shown interest in the World’s Fair, say in 1891，receded from its earlier position in the face of fiscal crises, only to suddenly decide once more to participate when Kojong heard that Allen would be physically attending the exposition.

Obviously then, one key factor in Korean participation seems to be the special personal relationship between Kojong and Allen, one based upon personal trust and service going back nearly six years, years spent for Allen in the service of the Korean king and nation, both in Korea and the United States. Realizing that Allen would be traveling himself to the fair, and knowing Allen’s experience leading a Korean team to the United States, helped convince Kojong to go ahead with dispatching a Korean exhibit. Korea in 1892 had virtually no presence overseas. Korean emigration to the United States would not begin until 1903 and the Korean legation to the United States remained highly fettered by Chinese interference. It is reasonable to assert that only the personal and hands-on assistance of someone like Horace Allen could make Korean participation a reality. This scenario would be repeated in 1900, when the personal offices of Collin de Plancy, the French minister in Korea (not to mention almost total French funding), would prove instrumental in getting the Koreans to Paris.

“The Bean Crisis” and the Specter of Japanese Dominance

I believe another factor behind Kojong’s decision to send a Korean delegation to Chicago relates directly to the political situation in Korea at the time. As mentioned earlier, 1889 saw a prolonged diplomatic crisis of sorts open up between Japan and Korea over the “bean issue”. In that year the governor of Hamgyong province, Cho Pyong-sik, halted the export of beans on the grounds that the combined factors of a poor harvest and Japanese over-buying threatened imminent shortage of this important Korean staple. [page 14]

A similar embargo on exports was affected in Hwanghae province that same year. Because the Korean governor had failed to give the one-month notice such action required under Korean-Japanese treaty provisions, and because the Japanese claimed Korean charges of over-buying were false to begin with, the Japanese soon pressed claims for the compensation of lost revenue. Despite the Korean government’s quick repeal of the ban on bean exports, they were effectively stopped until April 1890. The ensuing drama concerned indemnity demands by the Japanese, for pecuniary losses to Japanese merchants estimated to have accrued as a result of the ban, indemnities that amounted to over 200,000 yen.21 Diplomatic negotiations ensued during the next two years without satisfactory result. In January 1893 the original negotiators for both sides were replaced, the Japanese minister-negotiator being succeeded by Oishi Masami, who came to view the entire issue as a question of national honor, and who clearly, as it became apparent, lacked the tact of a diplomat. With Oishi’s appointment Japanese pressure increased measurably, with negotiations taking a decided turn for the worse and at times deteriorating into personal insult.

Even before his arrival in Seoul in February 1893 Oishi’s name was already known as the author of a pamphlet entitled Nippon no ni dai seisaka ‘ “The two great political aims of Japan”. It was hardly complimentary to Korea, its language in fact quite unabashedly belligerent. To quote but one portion of Oishi’s tract,

According to my view, Korea is already fallen; she exists only because the other powers have not yet taken her ...Corea is now a state almost devoid of any hope of recovery...Even American Indians and African savages have spears and rifles in their houses, they have the valour to prevent the intrusion of other tribes. In Corea it is not so. She is like a house without walls…there is no preparation in Corea to defend the country and the people have no valour required for their national defense. They say there are five or six thousand foot soldiers in Seoul; but in reality, there are no more than one or two thousand. And these are soldiers without intelligence; without valour, not even so good as our jinricksha men...22[page 15]

Perhaps it should come as little surprise then that in March 1893 Oishi recommended to his superiors that Japanese troops occupy Inchon and Pusan.23 All this motivated the French minister to Korea to report to his superiors that, “when we consider the country [Korea] in its relations to the other powers, it looks like a goat under the feet of a furious tiger. “24

Another witness to these events as they unfolded, and deteriorated, in 1892-1893 was the American minister Augustine Heard. In an article published about two years after these events, Heard openly questioned the notion that Japanese intentions in Korea were paternalistic, and argued the folly of any uninformed pro-Japanese opinion in the West. Remembering the period of Oishi’s tenure beginning in February 1893，and his frustrated efforts (“with more energy than courtesy”) to gain the sought for indemnities, Heard writes that “Mr. Oishi would be delighted to have a pretext to interfere by force in Korea”.25 Heard even goes on to speculate that the hand of the Japanese may be in the Tonghak uprising. Despite Heard’s misplaced suspicions on that final point, his reflections ao illustrate the period of diplomatic crisis that began to develop after January 1893. Such Japanese insistence upon indemnities was only the latest symptom of growing Japanese commercial encroachment upon Korea, but it is not too much to speculate that this latest tempest over bean embargoes served as bitter reminder of Japanese encroachment upon national sovereignty in general, and made clear to King Kojong the necessity of shoring up friendships elsewhere.

“Great America” was one obvious place to turn, and Korea’s participation at Chicago one such way to underscore their mutual friendship, as first made manifest in the Korean-American Amity Treaty of 1882. Kojong’s official message to President Cleveland, sent along with the World’s Fair delegation, would express the Korean king’s hopes “to strengthen and increase [the] friendship and commercial relations between our two countries.”26

Kojong’s sudden change of heart also seems to provide further evidence of that monarch’s heavy reliance upon foreign advisors to instill him with the[page 16] confidence to act, at least on an international level. This is a pattern that would be repeated during the period of Russian influence in 1896-1897 after the failure of the Kabo Reforms and again in 1898 when Kojong sought the aid of French and other Western troops to offset increasing Japanese and Russian pressures.27 But not to be disregarded is the indication it also gives of the Korean monarch’s desire, albeit diffident and somewhat unsure, to join the international community at the World’s Fair, and not to maintain an entrenched conservative and isolationist attitude.

Korea had missed several boats when it came to participation in world’s fairs. Japan had been displaying its national culture and “progress” at such gatherings since Vienna in 1874, and China longer still. Indeed, for Japan the world’s fair would become a preferred showcase for its industrial and social development. In 1892, however, Korea rang familiar in most Western ears as a locale of intrigue in an area ripe with international rivalries, or perhaps as one of the latest frontiers of American missionary activity. As noted earlier, Korea was also still widely viewed as a “hermit nation”, despite its ostensible openness to all foreign intercourse. By going to Chicago and paracipating in a World’s Fair Korea might hope to break free from this conceptualization of itself as isolated, ana in so doing assert itself as an independent nation by giving a Western audience a concept of its identity as “Korea”, rather than merely a “Korean problem”. Following upon the establishment of a Korean legation in Washington, a presence at the fair would also shore up American ties at a time when foreign friendships seemed increasingly vital.

Organizing an Exhibit

Allen immediately, if somewhat reluctantly, accepted King Kojong’s charge to lead the Korean team to Chicago.28 Displaying an initial enthusiasm, Kojong went about (as Allen mentioned) organizing an appropriate display and choosing representatives. To lead the Korean delegation to Chicago King Kojong chose Chong Kyong-won(鄭敬源1841-?)[page 17] SEE ILLUSTRATION 1), who despite his middle-age had only passed the special literary examination for state office pyulsi mungwa (別試文科) in 1890, and was subsequently appointed to the Office of Special Advisers hongmungwan (弘文館) before being named as kyumsaseo (兼司書) - a royal tutor in the household of the crown prince. His international career would begin with a brief sojourn as secretary in the Korean consulate in Tianjin in 1891. By 1893, though still rather fresh to officialdom, he had risen through the ranks with remarkable speed. His designation to lead the Chicago delegation may be interpreted as a sign of royal confidence in his abilities and loyalties. This would be confirmed soon upon his return to Korea from Chicago in early 1894, when he was sent south to deal with the Tonghak Uprising then rocking the Cholla Provinces. He clearly had (or was seen to have) reformist tendencies, perhaps strengthened by his brief sojourn in Chicago and Washington, for during the 1894 Kabo Reforms he was named to an important post on the newly established Deliberative Council kunguk kimuchoe (國軍機務處), which went on to spearhead an agenda of radical reform measures, and then Minister of Justice pubmuhyuppan (法務協辦) in the moderate-progressive Kim Hong-jip cabinet.29 After the failure of the Kabo Reforms and the retrenchment of the Korean government, Chong was named vice-governor of Pyongyang (also a traditionally coveted post and a clear sign of royal favor), from whence he disappears from the historical record. At any rate, in early March 1893 (Western calendar), in an audience with King Kojong, he was granted a commission as chulpumsamudaewon (出品事務大員) Royal Commissioner of the Korean Delegation to Chicago.30 Along witn Chong, King Kojong appointed two others as part of the Korean delegation, to which a third would be added later. Chong was also given on this date the royal greeting that would eventually be transmitted to President Grover Cleveland in May 1893. It read in part:

His Majesty, the King of Great Chosun, says: It is now ten years since we sent our embassy to America to ratify our treaty, which was the first treaty we ever[page 18] made with Western nations. Since that time our relations have been very friendly. Now, having heard that America will celebrate the Four Hundredth Anniversary of its discovery by holding the World’s Columbian Exposition, to which, with other

treaty powers, we have been invited: I hereby appoint my loyal subject Jeung Kiung Won [Chong Kyong-won], the Vice President of the Home Office, to represent Korea on this occasion, as Royal Commissioner, and to strengthen and increase our friendship and commercial relations between our two countries.

I further instruct him to convey to the President of the United States my compliments and congratulations.31

Interlude: Amedee Baillol de Guerville

November 1892 saw a curious visitor to Seoul and the royal compound in the person of Amedee Baillol de Guerville (1869-?), or simply A.B. de Guerville as he was known to his American audience. At this time de Guerville, a remarkably young man considering his charge, had already made a name for himself as an itinerant lecturer and journalist (SEE ILLUSTRATION 2). Despite his current anonymity, his brief life saw his acquaintance with kings, emperors, presidents, and popes, as a commissioner for the Chicago World’s Fair, newspaper correspondent, and eventual co- owner and editor of the monthly Illustrated American. A relapse of tuberculosis, and a scandal involving unpaid debts and the abandonment of his young wife, saw his return to Europe in 1899. Then, following two travelogues, and a short pamphlet on tuberculosis, in 1906 his pen falls silent and he vanishes, in all likelihood from a final fatal relapse of his chronic disease.32

In 1892, however, de Guerville was dispatched to Japan, Korea, and China as a Special Commissioner for the World’s Fair to encourage participation at Chicago.33 As such he seems to be part of a second public relations offensive in Northeast Asia, the first one being that of Gustavus Goward in 1891. His duties seem mostly to have involved audiences with heads of state and important officials, where he put on his trademark magic lantern show (a[page 19] medium he would later use regularly in his New York lectures), which besides “American cities and scenery” included images of past fairs, namely that of Paris in 1889. The magic lantern show he gave to an audience of Li Hungchang and family at Tianjin in the autumn of 1892 caused quite a sensation, as would be the one given to the Japanese emperor and empress.34 In mid-November 1892 de Guerville arrived in Seoul to make his pitch to King Kojong and Queen Min. The American Minister Augustine Heard’s request for a royal audience for de Guerville was soon granted. De Guerville still recalled ten years later how the queen, upon seeing the magic lantern views of Chicago and Paris, and particularly of the Women’s Building, “became highly excited and quitting her hiding place [from behind a screen meant to conceal her and her ladies-in-waiting from view], approached the white curtain on which the views were being displayed. She touched it with her finger and asked for a thousand explanations. She gave the strong impression of a woman of great intelligence and will.”35 Allen, though disappointed in de Guerville’s apparent lack of knowledge on the logistical details of the fair, was impressed himself with the lantern show and wrote to Walker Fearn of Queen Min’s strong interest in the Women’s Building. Queen Min was apparently impressed that Japan had agreed to put together a women’s exhibit to send to Chicago and Allen held out hopes (not to be realized) that Queen Min might in her turn contribute the same for Korea. He writes, “Her Majesty was quite impressed with the Women’s Building and Mrs. Palmer’s [Bertha Palmer, chief commissioner for the women’s exhibit] work, as well as the fact that the Empress of Japan was taking such an active interest in the women’s department, and I have hopes yet of entertaining an exhibit for that department from this land of female seclusion.”36 Queen Min’s strong interest in the fair, notably in light of Japan’s heavy commitment, no doubt hardened King Kojong’s resolve to send a Korean delegation.

But logistical problems plagued the Korean exhibit from the start. Allen encountered some difficulties in acquiring a decent amount of floor space in[page 20] the Arts and Manufacturers Building, the hoped for inclusion of a women’s exhibit was not forthcoming, and most seriously, there were problems with funding. Though Kojong assured Allen in January 1893 that the Korean team would be given $6000 to cover expenses, with a further $2000 to be sent on later, this doesn’t seem to have been the case.37 The treasury coffers were said to be empty in November 1892 and we know American workers in Korea were filing formal complaints with the American minister concerning unpaid wages.38 According to diplomatic correspondence in late 1892 it took a loan on a Japanese bank at Chemulpo to keep up the expenses of the Korean mission to Washington and two more loans from a Chinese merchant association in Seoul just to keep total fiscal crisis at bay.39 The American Minister Heard was somewhat dismayed to hear in March 1893 of Kojong’s decision, upon reading an official description of the fair that had been translated into Chinese for his perusal, to augment the Korean delegation by one official delegate and a ten-person band. Heard wrote home, “if I had known of the intention to send them earlier I should have been disposed, if not to discourage the project, [then] to point out the very considerable expense which would be caused by it - expense which this country is ill able to afford”.40 Apparently there were no funds forthcoming for the imminent departure of the Koreans and their crates of displays. Minister Heard telegraphed on to the San Francisco Customs Office requesting a waive of customs duties for the Koreans as he himself had no authority to advance any funds, meanwhile the Korean delegation in Washington made a similar request.41 The American reporter John Cockerill also seemed to have some information regarding the pecuniary difficulties of the Korean delegation, namely that they arrived in America with a “minimum of ready cash”, of which more shall be said later.

Allen departed for the United States in mid-January 1892. In a final pre- departure audience with Kojong the Korean king seems uneasy that Allen might not return, further evidence of Allen’s privileged and unique position vis a vis the Korean monarch. Kojong requests that, failing to obtain a good[page 21]position in the American government, Allen should “go to his [the Korean] Legation as Secretary or come back here and take service in his [the Korean] government. That I must not give up Korea.”42

Chicago Bound

The Korea delegation eventually left Korea from Chemulpo in late March 1893 on the S.S. China bound for Yokohama and San Francisco. In Yokohama they were joined in their voyage by some members of the Japanese delegation to Chicago (it is unfortunate that we have no record of any interchanges between the two parties). The more important members of the Korean delegation received cabin accommodations, the rest, including the ten-person band, were put in steerage. Their arrival in San Francisco about two weeks later was met by some curious publicity. We know mostly only of the American reaction, while the Korean voices remain virtually silent.

According The San Francisco Chronicle reporter, the Koreans arrived “arrayed in the curious silken gowns of the Coreans, and they wore the strange black hats, which look more like pieces of oddly shaped and perforated stovepipe than anything else.” 43 Apparently, Allen’s expressed hopes concerning the curiosity the native dress would elicit were not misplaced. No sooner settled into their rooms, and no doubt exhausted by their long journey and feeling overwhelmed by their foreign surroundings, a Chronicle reporter arrived for an interview. The Koreans, according to the American reporter, spoke in their “queer language” and their hotel desk was found strewn with “papers with strange hieroglyphics on them”.44 In interviews with Commissioner Chong and the newly appointed charge d’affaires ad interim to the Korean mission in the United States, Yi Song-su (李承壽1846-?), initial Korean impressions of America are gauged. Charge d’affaires Yi is careful to steer any questions away from sensitive, i.e. political, topics, reacting to the reporter’s inquiry concerning “Russian intrigues” and current conditions in Korea, by indicating “the Korean [page 22] government was very strict about having its representatives talk, because so many misleading statements have been made”. Commissioner Chong, whom the reporter describes as representing “the Hermit Kingdom at the World’s Fair”, expressed his hope to “learn much in this country regarding great inventions and the advancement of the arts and sciences”. It was perhaps the ten-man delegation of Korean musicians that elicited the most curiosity, and they are described as a “very jolly lot of orientals.”laughing and dancing much of the time”. We can see from this initial reaction to the Korean delegation that their attraction to the American reporter came mostly from their exotic air, the oddity of their speech, dress, and mannerisms. Months and even years after the Korean arrival accounts of the Korean delegation in the United States for the Chicago fair would be circulating. They would share a view of the Koreans as curious and exotic. The New York Tribune would run a story several months later, apparently passed down through word of mouth, entitled “The Coreans not used to Interviews”, in which an account of the Korean response to a request for an interview is described, along with the curious Korean answers, given in the “kindliest words-in Oriental fashion”.45 Two years after the fair a reporter for The New York Herald, in an even more fantastic account of the Koreans at Chicago (in which Korea is still described as the Hermit Kingdom), described the Korean penchant for gambling and drinking as well as the unlikely trials of the Korean delegation in Chicago, which come off like elements in a picaresque novel.46

The Great Cosmopolitan Event: Chicago, May-October 1893

Six days after leaving San Francisco the Koreans arrived in Chicago, the long journey from Seoul to Chicago taking, at the end of the 19th century, Just under 26 days. As in San Francisco, the Koreans attracted the immediate curiosity of the local press, which, notified by wire, were waiting to report on their arrival. Chicago reactions fairly mimicked those in San Francisco. The Korean musicians were again a source of attention. They were[page 23]compared with the “Javanese people on the plaisance” [Midway Plaisance], and performed “strangely on tom-toms, instruments that look like either a mandolin or a guitar, and big gongs”. Commissioner Chong, for his part, makes it strictly known that the Korean musicians are not to play for revenue but to add to the dignity of the Korean commissioners.47 Throughout these interviews it is usually the Korean Charge d’affaires Yi who speaks on behalf of the entire delegation. He comments on the overall Korean delegation to Chicago, “I have heard that no Corean [sic] people will come to the Fair. It is decided that the two Commissioners and the native band shall be the representation, and these, with our exhibit, will be sufficient to show the interest we have in the big Exposition.”48

Until now a virtually unknown entity, misrepresentation and ignorance of Korea in the American press and public is not hard to find. Besides a curious explanation of the Korean flag, given in the Chicago Daily Record (in which the symbols of the i-ching displayed on the flag are given as the four compass points, etc.), one newspaper account actually described Korea as an island! This account, centered on the arrival of the Korean commissioners in Chicago, goes on to puzzle over the Koreans themselves:

It would be difficult for me, not acquainted with the various types of nationalities, to determine exactly what the Coreans are. In eyes and general appearance they somewhat resemble the Japanese; the complexion, however, is of a much more dusky hue. The dress is rather picturesque, at least so far as the most distinguished among them are concerned. It consists of a long black robe somewhat clerical in style and material and a curiously shaped black hat, which gives sufficient room for a display of an ample provision of coal black hair.49

Another description of Korea that appeared in a period guidebook to the fair goes on in rather fantastic terms to describe that country as,

...the seat of one of the most despotic governments in existence. Until very [page 24] recently the reigning monarch was held in such sacred esteem that the mere mention of his name by one of the common rabble was regarded as a capital offense. Even the courtier, pampered and petted, found that to allow himself to be caught in the royal presence otherwise than prostrate until bidden to rise meant certain death.50

The Koreans would have their work cut out for them.

Twenty-six cases of goods accompanied the Korean delegation to Chicago. Arriving in Chicago on April 29, the Korean display was in no way prepared, despite its relatively small size, by the time of the fair’s official opening on May 1st. Even by late May Allen writes to the State Department requesting an unpaid 60-day extension of his leave, “...as the Exposition is not yet in good running order and the Korean officials are anxious for me to remain a little longer”.51 Such an extended delay seems difficult to believe, judging from the limited size of the Korean exhibit. More likely, based upon the audience that Commissioner Chong would have with Kojong upon his return, the Koreans were a little overwhelmed by the crowds and the vast foreign metropolis, and felt a little more secure with Allen around. Most of the Korean team spoke not a world of English, Charge d’affaires Yi having already proceeded on to Washington and his official posting. For interpretation needs they were to rely primarily on a Mr. Pak Yon-gin, who was in the United States for naval training.52

On a side note, shortly after the fair opened Commissioner Chong was the curious visitor to a rancorous meeting called by the fair’s organizers to debate whether or not to keep the turnstiles open on the Sabbath. An amused Chicago newspaper carried a sketch of the dignified Chong in official dress gazing perplexedly over the proceedings. “No doubt”, the paper mused, “he [Chong] wondered at the queer, noisy, and deceitfull ways of the western barbarian, for there were strange doings before his slant eyes during the session. It must have been more of a circus for H.R.C.M. Commissioner Jeung Kiung Won [Chong Kyong-won] than that of Col. [page 25] Buffalo William’s Wild West Show.”53 Commissioner Chong has not left us his impressions of the proceedings but perhaps he would recall them a year later back in Korea during the contentious months of the Kabo Reforms.

The Korean exhibit was set up in the Arts and Manufactures Building, an engineering marvel of its day, contributing perhaps more than any other structure to the architectural legacy that was “The White City” of the summer of 1893 (so nicknamed for the overwhelming sense of whiteness the fairground’s classically inspired buildings lent to the city). It was the largest open building ever constructed, able to accommodate five Brooklyn Bridges and 80,000 people, and served as an anchoring presence for the fair on the shores of Lake Michigan. One visitor described it as “greater than the whole exposition at Philadelphia [in 1876]. About the top of the dome of one building the walk is an even half mile... I was dazed at the magnitude of the building and at the marvelous variety of odd, instructive, and beautiful articles on exhibition.”54 As the somewhat official Book of the Fair, which appeared not long after the fair’s opening, described the Arts and Manufactures Building, it contained “...a comprehensive display of the choicest specimens culled from the manufactured products of all the nations, with the allotments of space among many thousands of participants reduced to a minimum, that justice might be done to the greatest number and room afforded for all the most worthy exhibits”. The description goes on, “Here also may be noted the cruder products of countries whose manufacturing industries are yet in their infancy, such countries as Zanzibar and the Orange Free State, as Madagascar, Korea, and Siam”.55 Korea, then, was clearly set aside (unlike Japan or even China) as a primitive and developing country- interestingly enough included among a group of nations many of who were already colonized. Apparently enough of the Korean display was in place by May first, when the official opening of the fair took place in a less than encouraging atmosphere of rain and yellow mud. Newly inaugurated President Grover Cleveland presided, and after the opening speeches came the march of nations concerning which one reporter wrote how “The[page 26] foreigners of all nationalities in their distinctive costumes attracted a great deal of attention; but none more than the Indians atop the Administrative Building ...and the Koreans with their long flowing robes of bright colors and queer-looking headdresses. The confusion of the popular mind with references to the distinction between Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans, etc., was amusing”.56 The President and his entourage made a symbolic tour through the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, where, upon passing the unfinished Korean exhibit, the Korean band received him with some native music.57

Impressions and Reactions

Compared to Japan and China, Korea went all but unnoticed at the fair. Enough survives however to give us a taste of the display and of the reactions, both Korean and Western, to it. The small size of the Korean exhibit meant all its products were predominantly arranged in one place, rather than dispersed around the various exhibition halls.58 The Korean exhibit itself was built somewhat to resemble a traditional Korean structure, complete with colorful painting and ceramic tile roofing. Inside the open pavilion-like structure the most visible displays were perhaps of a gentleman’s dress, official military uniform, firearms, Korean musical instruments, and a tiger’s pelt.59 [SEE ILLUSTRATION 3] Mostly the items consisted of daily household curios such as combs, fans, dinnerware, and smoking pipes. The official directory to the fair actually describes it as “bric-a-brac and curios”.60 An account in the Chicago Daily Record’s guide to the fair provides a comparatively full description of the Korean exhibit. After giving a rather inaccurate explanation of the symbolism behind the Korean national flag and a rundown of the displayed items (including a cannon purportedly used in the American attack on Korea in 1871) the reporter stumbles upon a telling detail:

The young Korean in charge of the exhibit has evidently become tired of

answering hundreds of times a day the same questions by different visitors. [page 27]

Consequently, to the corner of a map showing Korea and the neighboring

countries he has attached a paper headed “Questions Answered”. Many of them

are here reproduced:

- ‘Korea’ and ‘Corea’ are both correct, but the former is preferred.

- Korea is not a part of China but is independent.

- The Koreans do not speak the Chinese language and their language resembles neither the Chinese nor the Japanese.

- Korea made treaties in 1882.

- Korea has electric lights, steamships, telegraph, but no railroads.

- Koreans live in comfortable tile-roofed houses, heated by flues under the floor

- Korean civilization is ancient and high; area 100,000 sq. miles; population 16,000,000; climate like that of Chicago, country mountainous, mineral wealth underdeveloped, agricultural products, chiefly rice, beans, wheat and corn.61

What is interesting about this account is that it gives us a hint as to what foreign visitors to the Korean exhibit were most curious about, but more importantly perhaps it reveals what the Korean representatives themselves wanted most to impart about their own country-namely that it was politically independent and culturally unique.

The Chicago fair offered a wealth of subject matter for the writers of picaresque children’s stories, and dozens of them indeed found inspiration among the throngs on the Midway Plaisance or in the view from the world’s first Ferris Wheel. In one such book, Elsie at the World’s Fair, the story’s heroine Elsie, the matriarch of a large southern family, upon exiting the Guatemala building suddenly expresses her “particular interest in Korea just at the present”. “Elsie’s” description borrows heavily from the Chicago Daily Record’s account given partially above and the author quite likely never visited the Korean booth (or that of Guatemala for that matter) but nevertheless found in its description interesting fodder. Of the Korean booth she writes, [page 28]

...[it] is small but crowded with exhibits. The Korean Royal Commissioner- with the singular name of Jeung Kiung Won - has charge of it.

‘That’s a funny name, uncle,” laughed Ned.

“And yet our names may have just as funny a sound to him,” Violet said, smiling down at her little son...

They passed in and found a good many sights which interested them- banners and lanterns, a bronze table and dinner set...white and blue vases...There was a map showing Korea and adjacent countries, and attached to it was a paper headed, “Questions Answered”...

After reading the list of points already cited to the rapt family members, the youngest girl Rosie can sincerely remark upon leaving the small exhibit, “I am glad we came...for I know a good deal more about Korea than I did before, and find it a far more interesting country than I had any idea that it was.”62

In his newspaper article mentioned previously, John Cockerill, who likely had connections to both Allen and de Guerville, gives us his sense of the Korean display’s poverty (though he got the details wrong), “Our seductive agents for the Fair presented the Corean King with a request from our government for an exhibit, which impressed His immature Majesty with the idea of a command. He hastily knocked together a rather inexpensive collection of Corean junk and shipped it off to Chicago”.63

The Book of the Fair was somewhat more positive concerning the Korea’s exhibit (if not its king):

The representation from Korea (Corea), on the contrary, is unexpectedly full and interesting and was prepared and forwarded under the direct supervision of the king himself. That despotic monarch...was filled with the worthy desire of extending his enterprises. Hence this curious exhibit of the industries of these little-known people, which includes a large number of agricultural products, cotton, silk, grass and hemp faorics, tanned skins, paper, clothes, furniture, etc....The main interest attaching to the fabrics, which are generally of a poor [page 29] quality, is in the curious mixture of cotton, hemp, silk and grass all woven together in the same piece. There is also a full set of culinary utensils and table furniture，including one of the king’s own brass dinner sets; a complete smoker’s paraphernalia; numerous court costumes, ancient armor, weapons, horse trappings, musical instruments, and a full display of native jewelry and a valuable collection of old pottery which the monarch proposes to present to some American museum.64

The Book of the Fair’s descriptive of Korea goes on,

...even the so-called hermit kingdom, though yet secluding herself from the influences of western civilization, has sent commissioners and an exhibit to the World’s Fair...the king entrusted twenty-five or more tons of exhibits, most of them taken from the royal palace, which illustrate the customs and industries of this strange and isolated nation, whose monarch, ministers, and people have probably more confidence in the United States than they have in any of the foreign powers.65

It is interesting that Korea is yet described, almost twenty years after its opening, as a “hermit kingdom...secluding herself from the influences of western civilization”. This seems to be the general American image of Korea at the time. Whatever Korean intentions might have been, Korean was almost unanimously perceived in period accounts as being an isolated, if peaceful, nation only now timorously venturing out. One Chicago paper even headlined an article on Korea at the fair: “Korea’s Doors Open” - this nearly twenty years after the Kanghwa Treaty!66 Indeed, the prevailing attitude seems to be that Korea’s opening to the world came in 1893 not 1876. From the American viewpoint at least, perhaps they were right.

Divided Lovalties: Yun Chi-ho

Surely the most interesting and revealing reaction to the Korean display that has come down to us is that of Yun Chi-ho (1865-1945), at the time[page 30]finishing a prolonged period of study in the United States, who passed through Chicago en route to Japan and Korea.

The irony has been observed elsewhere that young reform-minded Koreans at the turn of the 19th century turned largely to Japan, their future colonizer, as the model of reform and progress. Ironic not only because Japan would eventual colonize Korea and deny it the very status of independent strength it was hoping to achieve by emulating her, but ironic in that Japan would justify its annexation as necessary in order to modernize a Korea that was incapable of modernizing itself But as a fellow Asian nation with close historical ties to Korea, it was felt that Japan offered the best model for the successful adaptation of traditional Asian values to the modern industrial world. It was a confidence that would find its first tragic conclusion during the failed Kapsin revolt of December 1884, when plotters put their ultimate hopes for success in the support of Japanese troops in Korea. It was an attitude, however, that would play into eventual Japanese colonization in 1910.

Yun had received an early Western-style education in Japan when he proceed there in 1881, at the age of sixteen, in the entourage of the “Gentlemen’s Tour Group” which King Kojong dispatched to Japan, in one of his periodic spells of progressivism, to observe and report on Japanese modernization. Yun opted to stay on in Japan to receive a more formal and Western education, returning to Korea in 1884 as interpreter for the first American minister to Korea, Lucius Foote. Though his English at this point was far from the polished Victorian prose it was to attain in his later journals, Foote felt confident enough in his young abilities to hire him. Yun was suspicious of Chinese aspirations in Korea, suspicions he soon made clear to Minister Foote, and suspicions that were founded as much upon his aversion to what he saw as China’s canon of anti-progressive traditional ideas (namely Confucianism), than in that country’s political machinations. In 1884 the failed “Kapsin coup” attempt by members of the “Progressive Party”(Kaehwa tang), with whom Yun had established links in Japan, [page 31]derailed moderate reformist trends by the monarchy and resulted in a conservative retrenchment. Though any significant connection between Yun and the Kapsin plotters has never been established, Yun’s father, who was appointed to an important government position in the short-lived Kapsin government, was in fact tarnished by his association with the would-be coupists. As a result, in 1884 Yun, seeing his immediate prospects in Korea spoiled by his father’s involvement, opted again to go abroad, this time to Shanghai. There Yun matriculated at the American Methodist run Anglo- Chinese College, and it was there that he converted to Christianity in 1887. Finishing his studies in Shanghai, Yun was able to procure a recommendation and the necessary funding to study at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he undertook a two-year course in theology. From 1891 to 1893, Yun studied at Emory University in Georgia, where his studies took a more humanist tack. Nevertheless, upon completion of his period of study at Emory Yun was determined to return to Korea and establish a Christian and “manly” church in Korea to awaken a slumbering nation.67 On his journey homeward he made a point of visiting the Chicago fair.

Two basic sentiments animate Yun in the summer of 1893. One was a patriotic fervor, made perhaps more intense by homesickness and a love augmented by nostalgia and distance. The other was a strong Protestantism that manifested itself in an emphasis on self-reliance, masculinity, hard work, austerity, and a belief in progress. Yun, on his train voyage to Vancouver following his visit to the fair, feels some sympathy for the destitute Native Americans he sees along the tracks, yet at the same time blames their miserable lot on their lack of initiative and “enterprising spirit”.68 In Washington, during a visit to the Korean legation building on Iowa Circle, he feels a patriotic swelling of the heart upon entering “the lovely precincts over which my national colors waved”, while at the same time loathing the photograph of the Korean delegation, seeing in their faces “looks of supreme stupidity and beastly sensuality”.69 In these early[page 32] writings Yun very much equates all that is traditional about Korea with all that is backward, regressive, repressive, and even sinful. The ideals of progress and of Christian virtue have become very much melded in his young mind, sentiments indeed quite native to America at the time.

Yun was not well received by the Korean delegation at the fair. In fact he wasn’t officially received at all, something that only added to his mostly negative critique of the Korean delegation and display. This perhaps had less to do with any abject stupidity and bigotry on the part of the Korean commissioners, as Yun imagined, than with the natural reluctance of government officials to deal with someone linked, however remotely, to Kapsin. Commissioner Chong refused to greet Yun when he visited the delegation’s apartments shortly after his arrival in Chicago in September 1893, but apparently did not object to Yun’s loitering around the Korean exhibit at the fairgrounds. Despite his frustration with the Korean exhibit, which he calls paltry and full of the “crude and dull productions of Korean skill”, Yun is continually drawn back to its place in the Arts and Manufactures Building, where he spends several days in the course of his brief visit to Chicago. It is this dichotomy of sentiments that best illustrates Yun’s dilemma. On the one hand fiercely patriotic, he is on the other practical. While loving his homeland unconditionally, he also loathes its shortcomings. These sentiments, of unconditional patriotism and progressivism, of love and disdain, needn’t of course be contradictory, but the dilemma for Yun, and the young Korean reformers of his time is that they were, or very much seemed to be. Yun writes in one entry, “Went to the Corean Pavilion at 11 a.m. and stayed there until 5 p.m.! Why and what for? I can’t explain; only I couldn’t get away from there, miserable as the exhibit is.”70 But elsewhere he explains his actions somewhat, “While I could not help blushing at the poverty of the Corean arts etc. the sight of the Corean flags had a strong attraction to me.”71 On one visit he feels humiliated “not to find a Corean flag in any of the buildings from whose roofs fly the colors of almost every nation”, adding, “Ah! Yet I shall not know the depth and[page 33] breadth of the degradation and shame of Corea till I get into her capital.”72 Ashamed and frustrated as he might be by Korea’s lack of progress, the non- judgmental love of country remains.

Yun’s more practical side comes through in his appraisal of the other exhibits. Though he dismisses the Chinese temple and theater as “stupid”, he is highly impressed by the national pavilion of the Japanese, adding, “Well may a Japanese be proud”.73 Yun also does not hold very high opinions of the Korean representatives, except for the American-schooled Mr. Pak. He writes, “Mr. An, one of the Coreans having charge of the exhibit, is a fair specimen of the degraded humanity of Corea. He is dirty, lazy, dull, filthy in mouth and in morals. Mr. Chung [Chong], the chief commissioner, is said to be stingy and bigotted [sic]. Mr. Pak is the best of the whole lot. He knows that Corea is in a pitiful condition.”74 Recalling a long exchange with Mr. Pak later, Yun writes, “the corruption of the Corean government, the Chinese encroachment and kindred topics formed the principle burden of our conversation. He advised me not to call on any Coreans as that will remind them of the “rebellion” and of the part which I was and is supposed to have taken in it thus endangering rather than helping my future welfare”.75

Rather than see the fair as an attempt to join the world, Yun sees in it only a reminder of Korea’s miserable plight. In one extended entry, goaded by his visit to the exposition, he writes of Korea:

It suffocates me (literally) to think, that there is a country of 80,000 sq. miles where millions of souls can not think or say or act as they please; where talents have no market; ambition, no sphere; patriotism, no play; where infernal despotism breeds and nurses generations of slaves, beggars and idiots; where men are dying in life and living in death; where moral and material putrefaction and filth are destroying thousands every year. How long will this political hell last? (I beg pardon of Hell for degrading it by comparing Corea with it.)76

In Yun we may witness the continually crushed national hopes of a younger progressive generation, in stark contrast to the official stance, which[page 34] was one of more conservative and gradual change, which emphasized peaceful coexistence rather than radical change. Both were obviously concerned with Korea’s independence, and took a just pride and concern in Korea as a nation. What separated them was what separates most- varying visions of the future and how to get there.

Diplomatic Salvo: September 5,1893

The Chicago fair ended on October 21,1893. But before the turnstiles stopped the Korean delegation would gain one more burst of publicity in a lavish dinner it threw on September 5,1893 for the World’s Fair Commissioners, and in honor of King Kojong’s birthday, at the luxurious Auditorium Hotel in downtown Chicago. It is an all but forgotten incident but one I believe of prime importance to understanding the Korean presence at Chicago.

To return one final time to John Cockerill, he writes that the fete was made possible by the sudden arrival of a monetary windfall sent from Korea afforded the indulgence (which supposedly amounted to almost $1500). As a result, according to Cockerill,

When he had satisfied the landlord he [Commissioner Chong] found himself pecuniarily in a condition similar to that of the historic gentleman who came down the Jericho road. He dusted about and raised money enough to secure an emigrant railway ticket to San Francisco, catching his food as catch can. From San Francisco he journeyed to lower Japan in the steerage of a Pacific Mail steamer, and from thence was helped to the south gate of Seoul by the kind contributions of relatives and sympathetic acquaintances. But he had maintained the glory of Corea abroad...and could henceforth talk of the grandeur of his experiences.”77

What was this grand and important affair held in the banquet hall of Chicago’s premier hotel whose guests included Mayor Harrison of Chicago (a month before his assassination) and President Thomas Palmer of the Commission for the World’s Columbian Exposition, as well as Walker Fearn[page 35]and the Japanese commissioner to the fair, Motoudaro, and which apparently left the Korean commissioner destitute? Though of course we cannot dismiss the role that national pride and “face” may have played in hosting such an expensive affair, I believe there is a deeper significance behind it. Even the Korean charge d’affaires in Washington ventured out for the event. Surviving newspaper accounts describe how the Korean officials were garbed in their full court dress. President Palmer offered a toast to the King of Korea with Commissioner Chong responding with his own tribute.78 Chong’s toast is one of the very few insights we have into the official Korean perception of their own exhibit, it went in part:

For about ten years has Korea, formerly known as the Hermit nation, been open to the world. His Majesty was greatly honored by this invitation of the President of the United States to participate in the World’s Columbian Exposition. Never before has Korea taken part in any international exposition, but in response to the urgent request of America, the great friend of Korea, his Majesty has sent his first official exhibit abroad, to make complete the representations of nations. Our small and humble exhibit has its place in the Department of Manufacturers. It is simply for representation and is not offered in comparison with the exhibits of the earth, but is honored in forming a part of those combined exhibits which make the greatest exposition the world has ever seen. We recognize at this exposition the lessons of fraternal union in language, literature, religion, science, art, and the civil institutions of different peoples; and our administration for the educational system of imparting knowledge in all departments is very great indeed. We are sure this exposition will tend to the judicial arbitration as the supreme law of international relations. We have learned many things from all the various nations from for this exposition, and we have already determined to introduce into our country many of those beneficial improvements; and we hope that you also will take back to your country pleasant impressions of Korea.79

As the Korean Charge d’affaires Yi Song-su was present, and surely must have scrutinized and approved of any official comments, the wording of the[page 36] toast is revealing. First, it reflects a Korean desire to introduce itself as an enlightened and open nation. These are no longer delegates from the “Hermit Nation” but from the country “formerly known” as such. It reflects an expressed (whether or not real) desire to learn and to change, that is to join Japan in its endeavor to modernize along Western lines. Such a progressive-sounding attitude by Commissioner Chong (despite testimony to the contrary by Yun Chi-ho), also helps explain Chong’s later role in the Kabo Reforms, and thus the role his “Chicago experience” may have had on subsequent events in Korea though to what extent of course must remain pure conjecture. But most interesting is the expressed hope for “judicial arbitration as the supreme law of international relations”, a desire tied intimately I believe with developments in Korea, where it was soon becoming clear judicial arbitration might be necessary to save her. Indeed, this closing dinner party can be seen not simply as an expression of goodwill and gratitude to the fair’s commissioners, but also, indeed largely, as a political and diplomatic salvo on the part of Korea.

Also revealing is Chong’s explanation that Korea did not come to compete with the grandeur of its exhibit but came rather for the symbolic act of participation itself. Chicago, despite Korea’s minor, indeed nearly overlooked, presence may be seen as a genuine Korean effort to be heard amid the clamor of the fair and midst the growing, international rivalries that were engulfing it back home.

Aftermath and Conclusion

Commissioner Chong’s journey back to Korea would apparently be a saga in itself, if it resembled in any way the depiction John Cockerill later gave of it. However he made it home, in an audience Commissioner Chong subsequently held with King Kojong after his safe return to Korea, the king’s curiosity about the fair is revealed. The conversation displays the relative naivete of Korea and its king to the outside world (no less than American naivete of Korea) and is worth quoting in full: [page 37]

Kojong : In what ways were the American products remarkable?

Chong : They were most highly advanced.

Kojong : All together how many nations participated?

Chong : Forty-seven nations gathered. Japan sent a commission but China had only merchants who set up a shop.

Kojong : Did our country also have a stand?

Chong : Yes, at the fair we had built a small house in Korean style, complete with traditional tile roof.

Kojong : And how large was our exhibit?

Chong : I cannot say exactly, but approximately six or seven kan.80

Kojong : And how were our national products received?

Chong : As this was the first time for those of other nations to see our products, we soon encountered difficulties with the amassing sightseers, more than our managers were prepared to handle. We then used paper to label each item with its name and proper use.

Kojong : And what sorts of things were most popular?

Chong : They [Westerners] were particularly attached to our textiles, folding screens, inlaid mother-of-pearl, and embroidered screens. I even heard that we were awarded a prize but as the certificates were not prepared when we departed I couldn’t be certain of its status. But before returning I did meet with the fair’s commissioner who informed me that both our team of musicians and our products would receive commendations, which would be sent on via Secretary Allen.81

Kojong : How much were our products worth in American dollars?

Chong : About $1140.82

Kojong : And did you leave the remaining items behind?

Chong : I left some with various schools and museums, those items not worth viewing I deposited with the State Council [Uijongbu].83

Here King Kojong seems more concerned with how the Koreans intermingled with the foreign observers and with the rather insignificant[page 38]details of the exhibition, rather than with any larger lessons to be taken from it, notably in the realms of modernization. Commissioner Chong did seem to be keen on at least moderate reform, something his trip to the United States no doubt helped to reinforce. In the wake of the Sino-Japanese War Chong was among many reform-minded Korean officials tapped by the Japanese to spearhead the Kabo Reform effort. His sudden disappearance after the failure of Kabo, along with scores of other pro-Japanese officials, must be telling as well.

Korea’s participation at Chicago must also be viewed in the wider context of its ongoing attempt to liberate itself from Chinese hegemony and Japanese pressure and to assume among other sovereign nations the proper and independent place to which it was theoretically entitled. However paltry Korean participation at Chicago may have been, it is important to keep in mind that it was the act of participation that was of primary importance. As Woody Allen put it, eighty-percent of success is just showing up. Though the memory of a Korean exhibit at Chicago has nearly faded into oblivion, I believe enough material evidence remains to reveal that Korea meant its participation as an overt display of independence at a time of mounting foreign encroachment, and in this sense may be viewed in the context of Korea’s growing recognition of the independence and free initiative that new international realities entitled it. Korea went to Chicago as Korea, not as China’s younger brother. It is worth remembering that China did not go at all.

Intent and effect are not always congruous. Though it certainly seems to have been Korea’s intent to use the fair as a display of national sovereignty and an appeal for international recognition, American reaction to Korea was on the whole a mixture of curiosity and puzzlement. Compared to Korea, not only did Japan and China both receive wider treatment in the Chicago papers (despite the fact that China did not send an official delegation), but also, that treatment was generally more self-assured and focused.84 America had been dealing with Japan and China for decades, Korea was still an[page 39] enigma, though resembling the Chinese and Japanese in appearance their identity was still undetermined. It should be noted briefly, however, that the popular reactions to China and Japan were on the whole decidedly different in tone. Both countries received the full-page treatment in special illustrated supplements put out by such dailies as The Chicago Tribune and the Daily Inter Ocean. But while the Japanese display was praised, that of China (actually set up by private Chinese interests in the United States) was taken mostly as a convenient target for a barrage of anti-Chinese sentiments.85 While Japan was almost routinely lauded in such terms as “the Light of Asia” or the “Britain of the East”, its refined traditional culture and modern industrial and political progress equally worthy of admiration, China was viewed predominantly as a bastion of stasis and unfathomable mystery.86 For its part, Korea remained all but invisible, which in and of itself speaks much. It was, in the growing Western enthusiasm for Japan and its modernization, and in the growth of American and Japanese rivalry in Asia and the Pacific, an invisibility that would be repeated at the Hague in 1907, or at Versailles in 1919.87 It is not too much to make such comparisons.

However, from accounts of Korea that do survive one gets the distinct impression of the strangeness in which the Koreans were perceived. This is in one sense understandable. This was Korea’s first participation in such an event. Yet Korea’s isolation and status as “hermit kingdom” were almost deliberately exaggerated, as if to augment the attraction of their being there at all. It had been almost twenty years since Korea had opened its doors, or had them opened; a full decade since its first diplomatic mission to the United States. With their “queer hats”, “hieroglyphic writing”, “unusual instruments”, and the comparisons between elements of the Korean delegation and displays and things found “on the plaisance”, the Koreans seem almost to have been relegated to the plaisance of the mind if they were not there in fact. They remained throughout an enigma, neither deserving the vilification reserved for the Chinese nor meriting the praise heaped upon the Japanese for their progress towards the goals of “civilized nations”. To [page 40] their American audience Koreans seemed more than anything a benign curiosity.

Korea as an independent nation would participate only once more at a World’s Fair the Universal Exposition of 1900 in Paris, an affair that upon cursory inspection seems so much more successful. In fact, a more detailed examination of the Korean presence at the Paris fair reveals the extent to which Korean attempts at independent initiative and expression had faltered over the preceding seven years, and indeed augured ill for the survival of national independence. Korea bowed out of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition held at St Louis due to the unfortunate condition of national finances.88 Japanese protectorship came the following year. But at the Anglo-Japanese Exposition held in London in 1910 to consummate in a material fashion the alliance between those two island nations, Korea once again made its way to an international fair its display entitled “Residency General of Japan in Korea”, and bordering that dedicated to the South Manchurian Railway [SEE ILLUSTRATION 4].

My special thanks to the Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii and the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies for their generous support of research both in the United States and France. Also, my special thanks to Chang-su Cho Houchins of the Smithsonian Institution for tracking down the scattered Korean exhibits from Chicago and to Andrea Telli of the Special Collections Division of the Chicago Public Library for her insider’s knowledge of sources and photos.

2 Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 7.

3 Allen to Walker Fearn (26 November 1892). Allen MSS.

4 Delort de Gleon to Delaunay-Belleville (25 November 1898). French National Archives (FNA), “Series F/12/4357, Coree”.

5 Irony or not, the former Midway Plaisance now makes up the backbone of the University of Chicago campus; the hot, dusty, and claustrophobic thoroughfare now a peaceful, pleasant, and expansive lawn.

6 “None Can Compare with It”, The New York Times (19 June 1893), p. 5. [page 41]7 This was most clearly heralded by the Geary Act (1892) halting Chinese immigration, and indeed calling for the deportation of many.

8 An attempt by a small core of Korean reformers in the kapsin year (1884) to overthrow what they viewed as an overly conservative and China-oriented Korean government, and to thereby initiate modern reforms. The young coup leaders, some educated in Japan in the 1880s, unwisely placed their confidence in the armed support of Japanese soldiers. Not only was the armed aid not forthcoming by a Japan hesitant to risk military confrontation with China, but the Japanese connection to the Kapsin plotters helped to subsequently undermine the reformist cause in popular and royal eyes alike.

9 Ki-baek Lee, A New History of Korea. Translated by Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 288.

10 Heard to Secretary of State (10 November 1892), in Spencer J. Palmer, ed., Korean- American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), v. 2, p. 303.

11 At least until his assassination in Shanghai by an agent of the Korean government.

12 See “Allen, Horace Newton” in The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, v. 28， pp. 281-282 and Fred Harvey Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese, Dr. Horace Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961).

13 Allen to John Hay (9 April 1904). Despatches from United States Ministers to Korea (DUSMK). Allen is hardly humbled by the honor, stating in his dispatch that he (Allen) “helped to establish their independence by successfully establishing their legation at Washington” and that as he was “responsible for the chief developments in such large commercial matters as railways, mines, etc. This mark of esteem is therefore not out of place.”

14 Allen to John W. Foster, Secretary of State (13 September 1892). DUSMK.

15 Allen writes, “It seemed recently that it would be impossible？ owing to many causes-to induce this government to prepare and send an exhibit to the rair, but His Majesty on learning that I had applied to my government for leave of absence to visit the Fair began to show more interest in sending an exhibit and has now begun collecting articles which he asks me to receive, pack and ship.” Allen to John W. Foster (12 October 1892). [page 42] DUSMK.

16 A more definitive answer might be formulated but for the fact that the archives of the World’s Columbian Exhibition, whose organizing administrative structure resembled a small government complete with Commissioner of Foreign Affairs (Walker Fearn), are not to be found. Apparently, the fair’s organizing documentation went up in flames as much of the “White City”, including the Administrative Building, burned to the ground in the dry July heat of 1894. What documentation remains today is scattered and largely uncatalogued.

17 Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Book of the Fair, an Historical and Descriptive presentation of the World’s Science, Art and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 (New York: Bounty Books, 1894), p. xxiv.

18 Koryo taehakkyo, Ku-Han guk oegyo munso [Diplomatic papers relating to late Yi dynasty Korea] (Seoul: Koryo taehakgyo chulpanbu, 1965-1973), volume 10, p. 578, 584.

19 Allen to Walker Fearn (18 February 1892). Allen MSS.

20 Manufacturer and Builder, vol. 24, no. 3 (March 1892), p. 50.

21 For a thorough discussion of this “bean affair” see Han Kyo Kim, “The Demise of the Kingdom of Korea, 1882-1910” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962), pp. 190-195.

22 The contents of the inflammatory pamphlet were eagerly quoted in French diplomatic correspondence of the period. See Frandin to Ministre des Affaires Etrangeres (MAE) (15 January 1893). French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (MFAA), “Correspondence Commerciale, Seoul, 1893-1901”.

23 Han Kyo Kim, p. 193. According to Augustine Heard and others, Oishi later approached the Taew?ngun, living in not-so-quiet obscurity in Seoul, suggesting an alliance between Japan, China, and Korea to drive out the Russians, but more to the point to undercut the authority of King Kojong and his ministers. See Young Ick Lew, “Korean-Japanese Politics behind the Kabo-Ulmi Reform Movement, 1894 to 1896”. Journal of Korean Studies 3(1981), p. 41-42.

24 Frandin to MAE (15 January 1893). MFAA, ‘‘Correspondence Commerciale, Seoul, 1893- 1901”.

Augustine Heard, “China and Japan in Korea”. The North American Review, vol. 159，no. [page 43]454 (September 1894), p. 304.

26 Grover Cleveland Papers, series 3，reel 138. As it turned out, iUnited States that a more serious rupture between Korea and Japan was avoided. A period article (in the

midst of the Chicago fair) describes the whole diplomatic incident as a “triumph of the principles of modern diplomacy, as applied to conservative Eastern nations.” “United States as Peacemaker”. The New York Tribune (24 May 1893), p. 4.

27 Indeed, a letter from King Kojong to French President Felix Faure, entrusted with the Korean minister to Europe on the eve of the 1900 Universal Exposition, echoed that sent to President Cleveland, only in stronger tones, even making a vague request for French troops and a defensive alliance. Collin de Plancy to MAE (18 September 1897). MFAA, “Nouvelle Serie/Politiques exterieurs/Francais en Coree, 1897-1902”.

28 “...this is perhaps not exactly the work I was expected to do as Honorary Commissioner, I have agreed to do as he [King Kojong] asks, since otherwise the exhibit may not be sent”. Allen to Foster (12 October 1892). DUSMK.

29 Chong was one of 18 officials named to the Deliberative Council in July 1894. Like many of the other members, Chong held his seat concurrently with another position, in his case Vice Minister of Education, in the Kabo-Ulmi reform government. In his study on the Kabo reform era, Young Ick Lew describes the select members of the Deliberative Council as representing the “political elite of the reformed government of 1894”. See Young Ick Lew, “The Kabo Reform Movement: Korean and Japanese Reform Efforts in Korea, 1894” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972), pp. 228-230. For a short biography of Chong also see “Chong Kyong-won”,in Hanguk chongsin munhwa yoenguwon [Academy of Korean Studies]. Hanguk minjok munhwa tae paekgwa sajon, vol. 19 (Seoul: Samhwa inswae chusik hoesa, 1991), p. 700.

30 Kojong sillok (高宗實錄) [Veritable records of King Kojong], 30/01/24.

31 Grover Cleveland Papers, series 3，reel 138.

32 One curious and informative work, Au Japon, narrates de Guerville’s earlier travels in Japan, Korea, and China as commissioner for the World’s Fair and then war correspondent for the New York Herala during the Sino-Japanese War.

33 Though I can find no mention of de Guerville in existing records of the Chicago fair, his dispatch to the Far East seems to be in the same vein as other commissioners mentioned in[page 44] the semi-official Book of the Fair, “That there should be no possible doubt as to the sincerity of this invitation [i.e. President Harrison’s invitation of Christmas Eve 1890], five commissioners, representing both the national and local authorities of the Exposition, sailed for Europe on the 9th of the following June...When they returned in September they had visited all the northern countries of Europe, Journeying as far as Novgorod, and making it a point everywhere to approach the highest authorities, the Prime Ministers or Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and had been everywhere received with distinction.” [Bancroft, p. xxiv],

34 A.B. de Guerville, “Li Hung Chang, the Viceroy and Master of China”. Frank Leslie ‘s Weekly (15 June 1893), p. 386. De Guerville writes: “The following night a most interesting display took place at his palace, his wives and children being present. I had then a good opportunity of ascertaining that the Chinese do not see our pictures, photographs, and paintings as we do. First, because they cannot understand our perspective [emphasis his], and next, because, having never seen any buildings like those shown to them, they cannot make out what it is. It is necessary to tell them; This is a window, this another, this a door, this a wall; here is the roof and here the ground. And it is very hard for them to believe it.”

35 A.B. de Guerville, Au Japon (Paris:Alphonse Lemerre, 1903), p. 179.

36 Allen to Walker Fearn (26 November 1892). Allen MSS.

37 Allen to Walker Fearn (14 January 1893). Allen MSS.

38 Augustine Heard to John W. Foster (25 November 1892). DUSMK.

39 Frandin to MAE (24 August, 15 November 1892). MFAA, “Correspondance Commerciale Seoul, vol. 7，1886-1892”.

40 Augustine Heard to Walter Gresham (22 March 1893). DUSMK.

41 Ibid; and Ye Cha Yun [Yi Chae-yon] to Walter Gresham (3 April 1893). Despatches from the Korean Legation to the United States.

42 Allen to Walker Fearn (14 January 1893). Allen MSS.

43 The whole of the San Francisco account is taken from The San Francisco Chronicle (23April 1893), p. 2.

44 What he likely saw was the Chinese writing still used in official Korean correspondence and record-keeping. The equation (to the average Westerner) of the odd appearance of [page 45]Chinese writing, and the unfamiliar sound of its spoken language, to something “un¬-christian” and practically immoral was not uncommon during this heyday of extreme anti-Chinese sentiment, notably in California. A Chicago journalist would describe Chinese musical instruments as having names “that cannot be spelled without the Chinese alphabet or pronounced by a Christian” (The Chicago Tribune [24 September 1893], p. 33).

45 “The Coreans not used to Interviews”. The New York Tribune (2 June 1893), p. 7.

46 “Scenes from the Hermit Kingdom”. The New York Herald (22 December 1895)，p. 7. In the same piece John Cockerill goes on to say (though on whose authority is undetermined) that the Koreans arrived extremely strapped for money and “in imminent danger of starving until a German saloon keeper discovered that the extra trade of the thirsty drawn to his place of evenings by the wheezing of the Imperial Band justified him in providing members of the delegation with rice, red pepper and stewed weeds. And so the Coreans lived along and held their place in the great cosmopolitan event”. Cockerill was a well- known newspaper journalist and editor of his day, perhaps best known for his discovery of a young Lafcadio Hearn in 1872. At the time of this article he was serving as a special correspondent for The New York Herald in the Far East. He in all likelihood would have been acquainted with A.B. de Guerville, at this same time a correspondent for the The New York Tribune covering the Sino-Japanese War. It was no doubt to de Guerville that he was referring by “our seductive agents”,for de Guerville, as previously shown, had been acting as Special Commissioner to the fair. He gives de Guerville too much credit, however, for Allen had succeeded in securing Kojong’s promise of participation months before de Guerville’s arrival in Seoul. Cockerill would die of an apoplectic fit in a Cairo barber’s chair a few month’s after this writing.

47 The Chicago Tribune (29 April 1893),p. 2.

48 Ibid.

49 The Chicago Record’s History of the World’s Fair (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Co., 1893)，pp. 223-225; The Daily Inter Ocean (29 April 1893)，p. 3.

50 William E. Cameron, et al. The World’s Fair, Being a Pictorial History of the Columbian Exposition...(Chicago: Chicago Publication Lithograph Co.), p. 591.

51 Allen to Walter Gresham, Secretary of State (23 May 1893). DUSMK. [page 46]

52 Mr. Pak was not part of the delegation formulated by Kojong but was added in America. That Mr. Pak was in the United States as a naval trainee is based upon the word of Yun Chi-ho. According to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis he was never a matriculated student there and I have yet to determine where and in what exact capacity he was training.

53 An account of these proceedings appears in The Chicago Times (24 May 1893), p. 1.

54 The Chicago Tribune (26 June 1893).

55 Bancroft, pp. 140-141.

56 The Japan Weekly Mail [Yokohama] (3 June 1893), p. 655. It is worth noting that besides this account of the Korean dinner (complete with full transcript of Commissioner Chong’s toast),no description of the Korean participation at Chicago appeared in The Japan Weekly Mail.

57 Ibid.

58 Though small exhibits of Korean agricultural products were displayed in the Agricultural Building and a chigye and sedan chair (strangely enough) in the Livestock Building.

59 Most of these items were either donated to or bought up by the Smithsonian Institution after the fair’s completion where they went on to make up the core of that museum’s Korean collection.

60 Moses P. Handy, ed. The Official Directory of the World’s Columbian Exhibition, A Reference Book (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893), p. 134.

61 The Chicago Record’s History of the World’s Fair (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Co., 1893)，pp. 223-225.

62 Martha Finley, Elsie at the World’s Fair (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1894)，pp. 145-148.

63 John A. Cockerill, “Scenes from the Hermit Kingdom”. The New York Herald (22 December 1895), p. 7,

64 The Book of the Fair, p.

65 Ibid., p. 219.

66 “Korea’s Doors Open”. Daily Inter Ocean Illustrated Supplement^ September 1893), p.1.

67 For brief biography in English of Yun Chi-ho see Hyung-chan Kim, Letters in Exile: The Life and Times of Yun Chi-ho (Covington, GA: The Oxford Historical Shrine Society, [page 47]Inc., 1980), pp. 4-73.

68 Yun CH’’I-ho’s Diary, pp. 188-189 (14 October 1893).

69 Ibid., p. 147(14 August 1893).

70 Ibid., p. 180 (28 September 1893).

71 Ibid., p. 169 (24 September 1893).

72 To be fair, Yun had either misrepresented the situation or missed the large Korean flag that in fact occupied a central place above the crowded floor of the Arts and Manufacturers Buildings, as a surviving photograph shows.

73 Ibid., p. 179 (28 September 1893).

74 Ibid., p. 180 (28 September 1893).

75 Ibid., pp. 180-181 (1 October 1893).

76 Ibid., p. 182 (7 October 1893).

77 “Scenes from the Hermit Kingdom”. The New York Herald (22 December 1895)，p. 7.

78 The Chicago Tribune (6 September 1893)，p. 2.

79 The Japan Weekly Mail (7 October 1893)，pp. 406-407.

80 or about 50 square feet

81 According to the fair’s organizers, awards were not “competitive” but awarded to commend a displayed article’s “independent and essential excellence”. For this reason, there was only one category of medal and diploma. The Korean display garnered six medals and seven diplomas. World’s Columbian Exposition, Final Report of Executive Committee of Awards (Chicago: World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893), p. 4，44.

82 It was not uncommon for national exhibits to sell their wares at the end of the exposition. In one documented example, the Smithsonian paid $10 for three Korean furs. This was a price much less than “we would have to pay a dealer for them”, wrote one museum curator. Frederick W. True to G. Brown Goode (18 October 1893), Smithsonian Institution Archives，Accession 27829 [Korea].

83 Kojong sillok, 30/11/09.

84 A.B. de Guerville, having gone to China in hopes of convincing it to participate, was given a cold welcome. News of the Geary Act had just reached China and Li Hungchang suggested to de Guerville that rather than a delegation he send a Chinese fleet over, “to teach the American people how to respect China!”(AJB. de Guerville, “Li Hung Chang”). [page 48]

See in particular the full-page article on the Chinese display in The Chicago Tribune (24 September 1893), entitled “Freaks of Chinese Fancy at the Fair”. For a fuller treatment of the reactions afforded the Chinese and Japanese exhibits see, Robert Rydell, “The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 : Racist Underpinnings of a Utopian Artifact” in Journal of American Culture 1 2 (Summer 1978):253-275.

86 See for example, “The Light of Asia: Japanese Civilization Will Benefit the Continent”. The Daily Inter Ocean Illustrated Supplement (20 September 1893), p. 3.

87 When Korea would make futile appeals to the “judicial arbitration”- broached at the Auditorium Hotel in 1893- for the elimination of the Japanese imposed protectorship (in the case of the Hague in 1907) and then Japanese colonization (at Versailles in 1919).

88 Allen to John Hay (25 November 1903). DUSMK.

**Bibliography**

Bibliographies and General Reference

American Libarary Association. The Books of the Fairs: Materials about

World’s Fairs, 1834-1916，in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. Chicago:American Library Association, 1992.

The National Cyclopedia of American Biography

Hanguk Chongsin munhwa yonguwon [Academy of Korean Studies].

Hanguk minjok munhwa tae paekgwa sajon, 27 vols. Seoul: Samhwa inswae chusik hoesa, 1991.

Newspapers

The Chicago Tribune

The Chicago Times

The Daily Inter Ocean [Chicago] [page 49]

The Japan Weekly Mail [Yokohama] Manufacturer and Builder The New York Herald The New York Tribune Pearson’s Popular Monthly The San Francisco Chronicle

Manuscript Collections and Archives

Despatches from the Korean Legation to the United States.

French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, “Correspondence Commerciale, Seoul, 1893-1901”; “Nouvelle Serie/Politiques exterieurs/Francais en Coree, 1897-1902”.

French National Archives, series F/12/4357 [Exposition Universelle, 1900], Coree.

Grover Cleveland Papers (microfilm).

Horace Newton Allen Manuscript Collection, New York City Public Library.

James W. Ellsworth Ephemera Collection, Chicago Public Library.

Kojong Sillok(高宗實錄) [Veritable Records of the Reign of King Kojong].

Koryo taehakgyo. Ku-Hanguk oegyo munseo(舊韓國外父文書)[Diplomatic

papers relating to late Yi dynasty Korea]. 22 volumes. Seoul: Koryo taehakgyo chulpanbu, 1965-1973.

Samuel Waters Allerton Papers, Chicago Historical Society. [page 50]

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

United States Department of State. Despatches from United States Ministers, Seoul, Korea.

William Elliott Griffis Papers, Rutgers University Library.

Books and Articles

Bancroft, Hubert Howe. The Book of the Fair, an Historical and Descriptive presentation of the Worlds Science, Art and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. 2 vols. New York: Bounty Books, 1894.

Cameron, William E., et. al. The World’s Fair, Being a Pictorial History of the Columbian Exposition Containing a Complete History of the World- renowned Exposition at Chicago; Captivating Descriptions of the Magnificent Buildings and Marvelous Exhibits, such as Works of Art, Textile Fabrics, Machinery, National Products, the Latest Inventions, etc., etc. with a Description of Chicago, its Wonderful Buildings, Parks, etc. Chicago: Chicago Publication Lithograph, Co., 1893.

The Chicago Record. The Chicago Record’s History of the World’s Fair. Chicago: Chicago Daily News Co., 1893.

The Department of Publicity and Promotion, World’s Columbian Exposition. World’s Columbian Exposition 1893, Official Catalogue. Vol. 8. Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893.

Finley, Martha. Elsie at the Worlds Fair. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1894.

Flinn, John J. Official Guide to the World’s Columbian Exposition. Chicago [page 50]

Columbian Guide Company, 1893.

Greenhalgh, Paul. Ephemeral Vistas, The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988.

de Guerville, A.B. Au Japan. Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1904.

- “Li Hung Chang”. Leslie s Illustrated Weekly 83 (September 10,1896):171

- “Li Hung Chang, the Viceroy and Master of China”. Frank Leslie s Weekly (15 June 1893):386.

Handy, Moses P., ed. The Official Directory of the Worlds Columbian Exhibition, A Reference Book. Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893.

Harrington, Fred Harvey. God, Mammon, and the Japanese, Dr. Horace Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961.

Heard, Augustine. “China and Japan in Korea”. The North American Review Volume 159, No. 454 (September 1894):300-308.

Hinsley, Curtis. “The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition•” In Ivan Karp and Steven Larvine, eds. Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Kim, Han-Kyo. “The Demise of the Kingdom of Korea, 1882-1910”.

Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962.

Kim, Hyung-chan. Letters in Exile: The Life and Times of Yun Chi-ho.

Covington, GA: The Oxford Historical Shrine Society, Inc., 1980.

Lee, Ki-baek. A New History of Korea. Translated by Edward W. Wagner[page 52]

with Edward J. Shultz. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Lew, Young Ick. “The Kabo Reform Movement: Korean and Japanese Reform Efforts in Korea, 1894”. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972.

- “Politics behind the Kabo-Ulmi Reform Movement”. Journal of Korean Studies 3(1981):3-38

Mitchell, Timothy. “The World as Exhibition”. Comparative Studies in Society and History. 31 2(April 1989):217-236.

- Colonising Egypt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Palmer, Spencer J., ed. Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States. 2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

Rydell, Robert W. All the World’s a Fair, Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

-”The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893: Racist Underpinnings of a Utopian Artifact”. Journal of American Culture 1 2 (Summer 1978):253- 275.

Tenkotte, Paul A. “Kaleidoscopes of the World: International Exhibitions and the Concept of Culture-place, 1851-1915”, American Studies 28 1 (Spring 1987).

Yun, Chi-ho. Yun Chi-ho ilgi [Yun, Chi-hos Diary]. Seoul: National History Compilation Committee, 1974. [page 53]

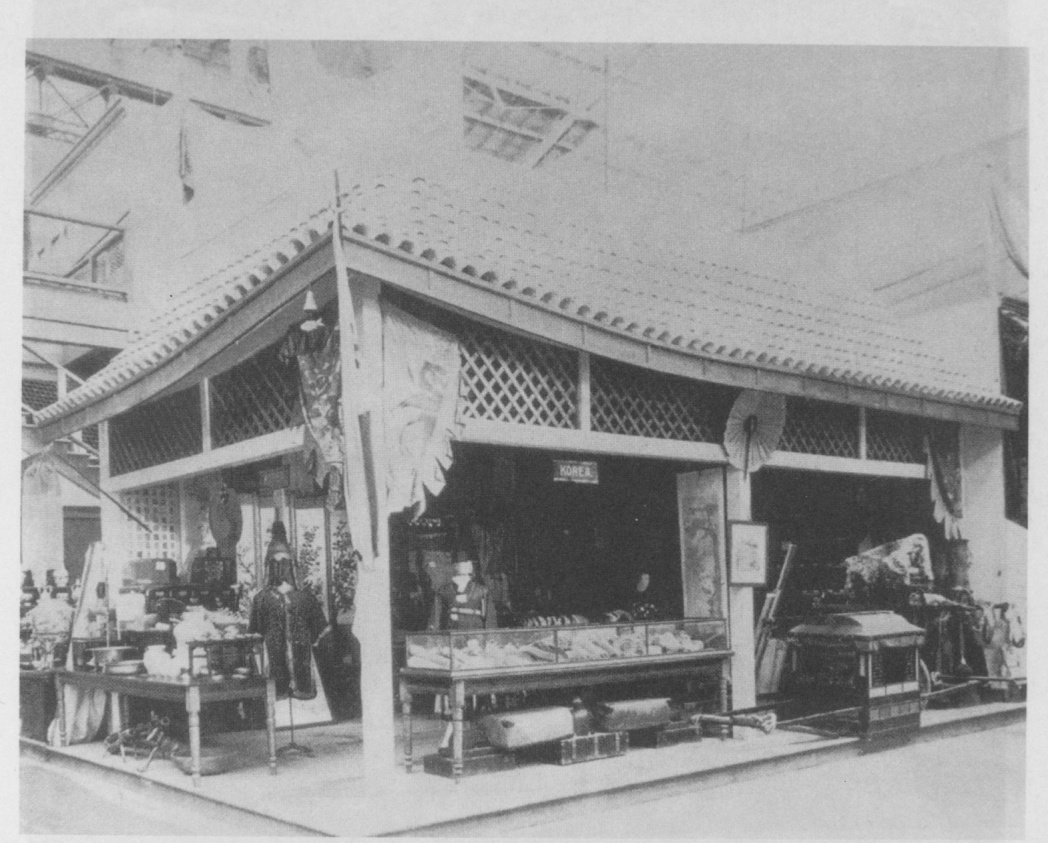


#1 The Royal Korean Commissioner to the World’s Columbian Exhibition,

Chong Kyong-won (1841-?) [page 54]



#2 Amade’e Baillol de Guerville (1869-?), Journalist who in 1892 visitied the Korean court in promotion of the World’s Columbian Exhibition. [page 55]



#3 Korean booth in the Arts and Manufacturers Building,

World’s Columbian Exhibition, 1893. [page 56]



#4 The “Korean” display at the Anglo Japanese Exposition of 1910. Actually it was called the display of the “Residency General of Japan in Korea”

and constituted a portion of the Japanese exhibit. Notice the rising sun motif on the overhanging canopy. [page 57]



#5 An unidentified member of the Korean delegation to the World’s Columbian Exhibition, 1893. Kane/Korea at the World’s Fair [page 58]