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ARTICLE

Museum as a Proper Noun: Representations of the Museum in East Asian Travel Writings in the Late Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

This study explores the first East Asian encounters with Western museums by travelers in the nineteenth century. In contrast with our contemporary familiarity with this institution, these travelers had to translate their new discovery into their own meaningful categories. In translating the word "museum," East Asian travelers composed several words using Chinese character compounds that reveal much about their understanding of the concept in terms of their own culture and language. Moreover, the underlying conceptual categories they invoked shaped their perception of the displays they saw in the various museums they encountered. We see their struggle to settle on a shared term for "museum" so that Kume Kunitake (1839-1931), for example, differentiated the British Museum, the Mauritshuis Museum, and the Swedish Nationalmuseum by employing different common nouns. However, their insights, bewilderment, and even their "misunderstandings" offer us an opportunity to reconsider the modern museum from an external perspective.

Keywords: museum; East Asia; travel writing; Western civilization; modern institution

Museums are everywhere and seem natural to us. Although specific images, experiences, sentiments, thoughts, or academic opinions may differ among individuals, the museum does not regularly create much of a question in relation to its *raison d'être* in our world. Moreover, as almost every introduction to the concept of a museum begins with a description of the *Mouseion of Alexandria*, we have the impression that the museum is of ancient origin and a common institution for civilization. However, when East Asians travelling the West in the nineteenth century visited the buildings called "museum" for the first time, they were perplexed to account for that space. This article explores these East Asians' perplexities at the very moment of their encounter with museums. How would Western museums appear to strangers from a world without museums?

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, in reaction to Western military forces in the region, East Asian countries sent their emissaries and students to Western countries in order to better face the threat. Following the dispatch of a delegation by the Tokugawa regime (1603-1868) in Japan to the United States for the first time in 1860, East Asian officials and students increasingly flowed to the West.[1] Whatever their motivations, whether

[1] For a general introduction to these travels, see W. G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven and London, 1995); Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain:*

they sought political or commercial diplomacy, a Western education, espionage, or general travel, these visitors from the East paid much attention to the institutions and technologies they encountered in the West and many of them recorded their experiences in travel literature.[2] This article examines these Chinese, Japanese and Korean travel writings on the West, mostly written in the second half of the nineteenth century, among which we selected especially those from so-called the "encounter stage."[3] During this short period of encounter, some East Asian travel writings, as Marion Eggert explains, "neither assimilated nor exoticized" the West but observed Western civilization in a relatively objective manner, while maintaining their own cultural background.[4] Their perspective as observers of "Western civilization" is, in fact, quite rare in history since most East Asians soon became eager to be a part of the civilization they had encountered.

Among things Western that East Asians encountered during their travels, they naturally placed a special focus on Western "modernity" which was perceived to be lacking in their own countries.[5] Museums were a striking example of an institution that was "uncommon" to them. Given the lack of concrete counterparts in their own languages, they had to invent new words and explain them in their own terms in order to make themselves understood by fellow countrymen. East Asians also had, of course, some cultural traditions that could aid in understanding museums, such as material objects worthy of display, buildings that housed valuable treasures, and practices of collecting or appreciation of various artefacts. However, the museums in the centre of major cities in the West were hard to conceptualize based on their prior knowledges because museums were not only spaces that brought together all these functions but also places, as Tony Bennett argues, "where they stood as embodiments, both material and symbolic, of a power to 'show and tell' which, in being deployed in a newly constituted open and public

Early Travel Encounters in the Far West (London, 1998); Jenny Huang Fu, *Qing Travelers to the Far West: Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, 2018). Qing China (1644-1912) started to send its own officials and students to the West from 1866, and a short while later, Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910) sent emissaries to the United States in 1883.

[2] For studies focusing more on East Asian travel literature, see Susanna Fessler, *Musashino in Tuscany: Japanese Overseas Travel Literature, 1860-1912* (Ann Arbor, 2004); Xiaofei Tian, *Visionary Journeys, Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012); Naewon Chaung 정내원, "한국 근대 초기 서구 견문록 연구" [A study on Western travel records in the early modern Korea] (PhD diss., Korea University, 2024).

[3] Although the "encounter stage" is not a strictly defined periodical term, many related studies place the early encounter period at approximately ten to twenty years following the first official mission to the West. See the studies referenced in footnotes 1 and 2. The travel writings read are: Muragaki Norimasa, *Kenbei shisetsu nikki* (1860); Fuchibe Tokuzō, *Ōkō nikki* (1862); Okada Setsuzō, *Kōnishi oki* (1865); Nomura Fumio, *Seiyō bunkenroku* (1865); Bin Chun, *Chengcha biji* (1866); Nakai Ōshū, *Manyū kitei* (1866); Shibusawa Eiichi, *Kōnishi nikki* (1867); Wang Tao, *Manyou suilu* (1867); Zhang Deyi, *Oumei huanyouji* (1868); Zhi Gang, *Chushi taixiji* (1868); Kume Kunitake, *Tokumei zenken taishi bei-ō kairan Jikki* (1871); Narushima Ryūhoku, *Kōsei nichijō* (1872); Guo Songtao, *Shixi jicheng* (1876); Xu Jianyin, *Ouyou zalu* (1878); Yugilchun, *Sŏyu gyŏnmun* (1883); Min Yŏng Hwan, *Haech'ŏn ch'ubŏm* (1896); Kim Man Sou, *Chubŏp kongsagwan ilgi* (1901). The year between parentheses is the year of departure of their travels to the West. The detailed citations are provided in the footnote where each work is mentioned.

[4] Marion Eggert, "Discovered Other, Recovered Self: Layers of Representation in an Early Travelogue on the West (Xihai Jiyou cao, 1849)," in Joshua A. Fogel, ed., Traditions of East Asian Travel (New York and Oxford, 2006), 71–2.

[5] This article limits its usage of the terms "modern" and "modernity" to refer specifically to the historical period in the West beginning in the late eighteenth century, when new political, economic, social, and cultural orders began to emerge. There is also general agreement among scholars of museum history that the new types of public museums in the West were established between the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, in line with these "modern" developments. See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London, 1995), 19–20; Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: art, politics, and the origins of the modern museum in eighteenth-century Paris* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 8–10; Nick Prior, *Museums and Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture* (Oxford, UK, 2002), 35–6; Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK; Malden, MA, USA, 2011), 47–8.

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space, sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state."[6] Facing this complexity of the museum, these visitors from the East realized their limitations of perceiving Western institutions through their existing linguistic and conceptual toolkits.

In examining comments on Western museums found in the East Asian travel writings from the "encounter stage," this article explores the cultural and intellectual backgrounds that East Asians brought with them when they first faced actual museums in the West. Several historical studies have addressed this subject.[7] However, these scholars, primarily from East Asian studies, have been more interested in the way museums were adopted and "correctly" assimilated. Many comments, thoughts, and interpretations of museums have been appreciated merely as discourses that allow the scholar to evaluate a writer's encounters with difference. Moreover, recent studies apply their own definition of the museum in the analysis of these accounts, employing a static conception which presumes something transcendent and ahistorical.

Let us examine an example of how historians have previously evaluated these accounts. For instance, Lin Zhen (1824-?), a Qing dynasty Fujianese tradesman who composed a well-read account of his travel to the United States left a short comment on an American museum he visited in 1847, saying, "In the Hall of the Display of Antiquity bright lamps create fanciful reflections, like colourful clouds at dawn" and he added the annotation, "They have a hall where wonderful things from all the world are collected and everybody can find amusement with them; in an upper story lamps are suspended that are turned by a mysterious mechanism; their changing appearance is quite a sight."[8] Lin's description of the museum, regarded as the first comment by someone from East Asia on a museum, focused on the colourful illumination of the building, rather than on the museum itself, or on the objects displayed on the spot. A recent study pointed out that his observation was off the mark since it failed to note the "quintessential" features of the museum such as its display of objects or its openness to the public. It also argued that this sort of "misunderstanding" toward museums was gradually "overcome" in subsequent generations.[9] This criticism is, however, based on the premise that modern museums are endowed with essential and unchangeable features and that East Asian's conceptualizations at that time should serve to contribute to "our" own contemporary understanding of the museum as an ideal. Consequently, Lin's observation is regarded as superficial and pointless, and dismissed as a "failure" in Chen's article.[10] It might be true that Lin's observations diverge from our own in his identification of the "modern" aspects of the museum, but we may wonder why such a contemporary recognition of these features are retroactively deemed necessary.

[6] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 87.

[7] Gotō Sumio 後藤純郎, "万延元年遣米使節と博物館, 図書館の見聞" [The Shogunate Mission of 1860 to the United States and its Museums and Libraries], *Journal of Educational Research* 24 (Japan, 1990); Xie Xianliang 谢先良, "晚清域外游记中的博物馆" [Museums in the Travel Notes Abroad during the Late Qing Period] (MA diss., China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, 2009); Chen Shi-Ru 陳室如, "晚清海外遊記的博物館書寫" [The Writing of Museum in Late Qing Overseas Travel Notes], *Journal of Chinese Literature of National Cheng Kung University* 54 (Taiwan, 2016).

[8] Lin Zhen 林鍼, "*Xihai jiyou cao* 西海紀遊草," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu* 走向世界叢書 [*From East to West: A Preface to Going Towards to the World*] revised edition, ed. Zhong Shu He 鍾叔河, 10 vols. (Changsha, 2004), 1:16. The English translation quoted was from Marion Eggert, "Discovered Other, Recovered Self," 87. Although the writing convention of East Asian words in English journals is to transliterate the pronunciation of each national language, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, this article writes Chinese characters or each national written language together side-by-side when it is necessary. This is not only because this article deals with subtle differences generated by the translation of original words but also because it contributes to facilitating the understanding of texts among the East Asian readership.

[9] Chen, "The Writing of Museum," 141–2.

[10] Chen, "The Writing of Museum," 142.

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Several recent studies have examined these writings on Western museums from the perspective of museology.[11] However, due to the very nature of museological research, these writings on the museums and East Asian cultural contexts have often been interpreted merely as part of the process of "musealization" and the development of actual museums in East Asia. For instance, Chang Wan-Chen briefly addressed the influence of cultural references in East Asia at that time, such as collection and preservation practices of material objects or gardening displays. However, these references were explained in relation to the museums that were later constructed in East Asia and the connection between these references and the traveller's perceptions of museums was not sufficiently explored.[12] This article, by contrast, examines their comments and thoughts on museums as independent viewpoints separate from the "musealization" process that took place after their travels.

The museum in the nineteenth century has been identified as a clear marker of modern society. Numerous studies have explored the close connections between the rise of modern museums and the formation of nation-states, imperialism, the public sphere, national and cultural identities, individual modality, natural science, and academic disciplines.[13] Some East Asian visitors to museums in the nineteenth century might have heard or read about the concept of museum in the limited set of texts describing a rapidly changing world but this offered only limited help in understanding the complex nature of this emerging institution. Therefore, the museums described in East Asian travel writings can be regarded as actual sites of encounter between a newly materialized institution in the West and East Asian ways of perceiving things within the global context of the nineteenth century. By exploring this point of intersection, this article offers East Asian perspectives on museums before the "musealization" process and provides an opportunity to view Western museums through the eyes of outsiders. It also seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the "properness" of modern museums tied to a specific historical period.

After introducing the context for these writings on museums by East Asian travellers this article will offer several examples of their translations of the museum in their travel writings in order to comprehend their initial understanding of what they encountered. Next, we will explore three intellectual frameworks these East Asians applied in perceiving things before encountering museums. This will enable us to identify the incompatibilities between these epistemologies within the space of nineteenth century museums.

Background

Most of the early visitors to the West were government officials or their entourages. Even the students were mostly sent by central governments or regional powers such as the Satsuma domain in Japan.[14] Whether the writer was traveling as a member of government or not

[11] Yajima Kunio 矢島國雄, "我が国の博物館創設事情をめぐって" [A Hypothesis on the Background of Museum Origin in Japan], *Museum Study* 22 (Japan, 2010); Chang Wan-Chen, "A cross-cultural perspective on musealization: the museum's reception by China and Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century," *Museum & Society* 10:1 (2012); Komami Kazuo 駒見和夫, "万延元年遣米使節団が出合ったミュージアム" [The Museums Toured in United States of America by the 1860's Japanese Delegation], *Museum study* 30 (Tokyo, 2019).

[12] Chang, "A cross-cultural perspective," 21–3.

[13] See Stefan Berger, "National museums in between nationalism, imperialism and regionalism, 1750–1914"; Tony Bennett, "Museums, nations, empires, religions," in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius eds., *National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750–2010* (London and New York, 2014); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*; Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*; Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities," in *Oxford Art Journal* 14/2 (1988), 57–68; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York, 1995); Christopher Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines: Art and Archaeology in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 2009).

[14] See Huang Fu, *Qing Travelers to the Far West* for the travels by purpose. For details on the students from Satsuma domain, see Andrew Cobbing, *The Satsuma Students in Britain: Japan's Early Search for the "Essence of the*

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resulted in significant differences in writing. For example, in describing his visit to the Louvre, Wang Tao (1828-1897) focused on his personal experience of the space, wrote that it was "particularly famous with lofty halls and spectacular towers, its appearance is extraordinarily magnificent" and recounted an anecdote "when I visited the gallery, I saw several girls come in and start painting. ... I lavished praise on her works there and then. As she was acquainted with my guide, she gave one of her paintings to me. I was very grateful."[15]

In contrast, government officials and students attempted to be comparatively dispassionate and objective in their writing, even though the writing itself was not in the form of an official report. Indeed, their descriptions were, in general, factual and written with restraint, not only because the Confucian culture of writing preferred factual description to emotional and fictional stories, but also because they had a sense of responsibility that they should convey the condition and reality of Western civilization to their compatriots. Okada Setsuzō (?-1876), a member of Japanese delegation to France and the UK in 1865, wrote, for instance, about the Louvre that, "this museum is situated next to the imperial palace, which widely collected new and old objects from all over the world. From ancient artefacts that date back to the prosperous period of Rome and Greece to a number of celebrated paintings, it divides all these objects by category in different show rooms." Then he continued to refer to the displayed objects and concluded with the remark, "they allowed people, regardless of who they are, to see the exhibition on given days of the week because the government established this house in order to broaden the people's knowledge on things."[16] This example is typical of the form of writing by officials describing museums, in which they mention the building, the exhibition and then add a brief comment on them.

Although Japan, China, and Korea each retained their unique culture for a long time and faced different historical circumstances in dealing with Western powers, they shared a common cultural space, the so-called "Sinosphere." Even though the Sinosphere is primarily defined by the use of classical Chinese, this categorization does not rely solely on the common use of this literary language. In general, the meaning of Sinosphere is mostly identical with the Chinese word "漢字文化圈" (the Chinese character cultural sphere or East Asian cultural sphere) which also puts stress on the culture generated by the common use of the language.[17] Their travel writings on the West in the early stage should be contextualized in this cultural space. Within this Sinosphere, the classical Chinese language and Confucianism (or Confucian culture) have been, in general, pointed out as the major common features. Most East Asian travellers of the time could read and write classical Chinese so that they could communicate with each other by means of a written "brush conversation" despite the differences between their spoken languages. They often exchanged information about the West when they met each other during their

West" (London, 2000). The exceptions are the cases of Nakai Ōshū (1838–1894) and Nomura Fumio (1836–1891) whose travel to Europe were financed by private sponsors and Wang Tao who was personally invited by the missionary and great sinologist James Legge (1815–1897). On Nakai, see Robinson Eleanor, "Unsung Hero of Anglo-Japanese Relations," *Social Systems* 10 (Kyōto, 2007); on Wang, see Wai Tsui, "A Study of Wang Tao's (1828–1897) *Manyou suilu* and *Fusang youji* with Reference to Late Qing Chinese Foreign Travels," (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2010).

[15] Wang Tao 王韜, "*Manyou suilu* 漫遊隨錄," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu*, 6:85. The English translation was quoted from Wai, "A Study of Wang Tao's," 506.

[16] Okada Setsuzō 岡田摂蔵, "*Kōnishioki* 航西小記," in *Kengai shisetsu nikki sanshū* 遣外使節日記纂輯 (Tokyo, 1930), 3:493.

[17] See, Wang Hui, "'Modernity' and 'Asia' in the Study of Chinese History," in Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey eds., *Across cultural borders: historiography in global perspective* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford, 2002), 322; Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Time and Space* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), 4–5.

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travels and also referred to books on the West, written by writers from neighbouring countries.[18] Additionally, most of them were, at the very least, familiar with Confucian classics, philosophy, and culture, even though we cannot regard them all as Confucian literati, strictly speaking. In their travel writings, they liked to quote phrases from the Confucian classics and often composed rhymed verses in classical Chinese.

The cultural identity of these travellers as members of a common Sinosphere in writings on the West played as important a role as their national identity, at least in the first stage of their travels to the West. This is the reason why we can categorize all these writers as belonging to a broader single intellectual group in spite of all their differences in nationality, region, profession, social class and specific mission. Furthermore, we can approach their travel writings and perceptions of modernity in terms of macro-civilizational encounters between the East and the West as well. Their experiences of the West were, for their part, historically unique and special in the sense that such large-scale travel across civilizational boundaries had been unprecedented up until then.

Searching for a proper word for museum

Even though East Asians at the time were mostly surprised by new things encountered in the West, they could provide a name for most of them in their own written language. For example, when they saw a port in Europe, even if its size, structure or function were completely different from their Asian counterparts, they just used the Chinese character "港" (C: gang, J:kō, K:hang) which means "port" and could simply add further description to explain the differences. Similarly they used the existing Chinese words "文學" (C:*wenxue*, J: *bungaku*, K:*munhak*) to translate "literature" although their contextual meanings in the West and the East were quite different from each other.[19] Likewise, they could match most of the institutions they saw, referring to them as government, hospital, army base, shipyard, train station, mint, monument, or using conceptual words such as nation-state, civilization, science, society, nature etc., with their own words. There had been, however, no such thing as a museum in their homeland, and accordingly, they had no name referring to it. Since they were told the museum was one of the must-see spots in major cities in Europe, these travellers had to invent words to describe what they saw. Although several studies have mentioned the existence of various translations for museum in mid-nineteenth century East Asia, they have failed to provide comprehensive and in-depth analysis of this lexical diversity.[20]

In the early stages, especially before the 1870s, some transliterated the word "museum" directly into their writing system. "ミセーム" [misēmu] in Japanese or "妙西恩" [miaoxien] in Chinese are examples of this expedient resorted to by travellers when faced with places such as museums that lacked an equivalent in East Asia. Alternatively, some of them described the museum without specifying its name. For example, Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1931), who visited Europe as a member of Japanese delegation to the International Exposition of 1867, spoke of "the place where the real forms of animals were gathered" when he visited the natural history museum

[18] Matthew Fraleigh, "航西の東道主人—成島柳北「航西日乗」とそれ以前の海外紀行文" [Eastern Guides to the West: Narushima Ryūhoku's *Kōsei nichijō* and its overseas travelogue predecessors], *Kyōto daigaku kokubungaku ronsō* 8 (Kyoto, 2002), 66–8.

[19] Much work has been done on the relationship between Japanese modernization and translation of Western concept words. See Federico Masini, *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898* (Berkeley, 1993) for the general reference. Especially concerning to translation of "literature," see Karatani Kōjin, trans. by Brett de Bary, *Origin of Modern Japanese Literature* (Durham and London, 1993); Suzuki Sadami, trans. by Royall Tyler, *The Concept of "Literature" in Japan* (Kyōto, 2006).

[20] Xie Xianliang, "Museums in the Travel Notes Abroad," 16–7. Alternatively, it is also aptly summarized in English in Chang, "A cross-cultural perspective," 16.

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in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.[21] Bin Chun (1804-1871), a member of the first delegation from Qing dynasty to Europe, wrote about the *gongsuo* 公所 (public office) to describe his visits to the National Museum of Sweden and the Swedish Museum of Natural History.[22] Both Shibusawa and Bin were visiting Europe between 1866 and 1867. However, each had official missions to carry out within a short span of time so their visits to museums were rather perfunctory and they showed little interest in them.

The group that was more interested in the museum tried to translate individual museums in their own terms. They adapted familiar words for translation based on similarity with institutions they already knew or created new words by deploying classical Chinese characters according to the primary objects each museum displayed. Nomura Fumio (1836-1891) referred to the British Museum as a *hōko* 寶庫 (treasure repository)[23] whereas Zhang Deyi (1847-1918) referred to it as *jixinyuan* 集新院 (new collection complex).[24] Nakai Ōshū (1839-1894) called the National Museum of Agricultural Products in St Petersburg a *nōkiin* 農器院 (agricultural tool complex)[25] and Okada Setsuzō created the word *kōbutsukan* 礦物館 (mineral house) to refer to the Museum of Mineralogy (Musée de Minéralogie) in Paris.[26] Guo Songtao (1818-1891) used the word *hualou* 畫樓 (picture gallery) for the National Picture Gallery in London, and *huaguan* 畫館 (picture house) for the Louvre.[27] Xu Jianyin (1845-1901) called the Technological Museum in Berlin a *gezhiyuan* 格致院 (science complex)[28] where he saw how electric light bulb worked.[29] Nomura visited Madame Tussauds waxwork museum in London, which he called as *rōzōjō* 臘像場 (wax statue yard).[30]

The naming pattern primarily affixed characters referring to the objects displayed such as some treasure, mineral, or picture, together with a character indicating the style of building such as house, complex or hall. This combination of Chinese characters is a common way of creating terms for something with no equivalent in East Asia. As a result, their translations of the museum were framed by the kind of object it contained and the physical form of the place. Since they were just short-term travellers, they did not have much time to understand the unique complexity of the museum as an emerging institution. They could not accommodate the exact concept of museum in their translations but formed an approximate understanding of the museum as a physical building displaying objects.

Although some travellers tried to classify museums by giving them different names, they did not develop a comprehensive concept of museum as a category. Kume Kunitake (1839-1931), for instance, who visited many museums in America and Europe with Japanese delegation, used a whole range of different names: *zōgakan* 藏畫館

[21] Shibusawa Eiichi 渋沢栄一, "*Kōnishi nikki* 航西日記," in *Taifutsu nikki* 滞仏日記 (Tokyo, 1928), 149.

[22] Bin Chun 斌椿, "*Chengcha biji* 乘槎筆記," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu*, 1:125–6.

[23] Nomura Fumio 野村文夫, "*Seiyō bunkenroku* 西洋聞見録," in *Meiji bunka zenshū* 明治文化全集 (Tokyo, 1992), 17:211.

[24] Zhang Deyi 張德彝, "*Oumei huanyouji* 欧美环游记," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu*, 1:703.

[25] Nakai Ōshū 中井桜州 (or Naikai Hiromu 中井弘), "*Manyūkitei* 漫遊記程," in *Meiji bunka zenshū* 17:305.

[26] Okada, "*Kōnishi oki*," 493.

[27] Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾, "*Shixi jicheng* 使西紀程," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu*, 4:151, 849.

[28] *Gezhi* 格致 is an abbreviated form of *gewu zhizhi* 格物致知 (lit., investigating the object and the extension of knowledge), which had been adapted as a Chinese translation of Western science in the late nineteenth century. This will be discussed again in later part of this paper. For further discussion in depth on the translation of *gezhi*, see David C. Wright, *Translating Science: The Transmission of Western Chemistry into Late Imperial China, 1840–1900* (Leiden, 2000), 8–9; Benjamin Elman, "From Pre-modern Chinese Natural Studies 格致學 to Modern Science 科學 in China," in Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, eds., *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China* (Leiden, 2004), 50–3.

[29] Xu Jianyin 徐建寅, "*Ouyou zalu* 歐遊雜錄," in *Zouxiang shijie congshu*, 6:662. It seems that Xu visited the museum in the Technische Hochschule [Technical High School] at Berlin.

[30] Nomura, "*Seiyō bunkenroku*," 212.

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(painting storage house) or *shūgakan/in* 集畵館/院 (painting collection house or complex) for the Mauritshuis in Den Haag, the National Art Gallery (Nationale Kunst-Galerij) in Amsterdam, Wagener and National Gallery in Berlin, Alte/Neue Pinakothek in München; *hakukokan* 博古館 (house of a broad range of antiquities) for the Museum of National Library of France (Richelieu), and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and National Archaeological Museum in Florence; *hakubutsukan* 博物館 (house of a broad range of things)[31] for the British Museum, the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden, the Royal Cabinet of Rarities (Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden) in Den Haag, the Altes/Neue Museum in Berlin, the National Museum of Denmark, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, the Vatican Museum, and the Natural History Museum of Bern.[32]

Kume's classification of museums may have been ambiguous, but it is likely that he divided them into three categories according to exhibitions of museum. Firstly, he recognized museums or galleries for paintings as one category and called them "painting/picture storage house." Although Japan had no such an institution as Western art galleries or art museums, they did have their own culture of painting appreciation, as well as buildings to store them. It is not certain if there were exclusive storage locations for paintings and that these words were in use at that time in Japan, but these Chinese words were familiar enough to signify these galleries and museums without any further explanations. Secondly, he made a category for archaeological museums with ancient artefacts. He stated that just after having visited the Uffizi *hakubutsukan* 博物館, he went to a *hakukokan* 博古館 which was the archaeological museum in Florence. The different naming suggests that these two types of museums were not recognized as belonging to the same category in his eyes. Thirdly, the term *hakubutsukan* was used in two ways; one referred to the natural history museum and the other one indicated large-sized general museums such as the British Museum, Alte/Neue Museum in Berlin, the Uffizi Gallery and Vatican Museum, where various types of objects were exhibited in one place. In Kume's perspective, three museums, for example, the British Museum, Mauritshuis Museum, and the Swedish Nationalmuseum were not considered to be buildings with the same function or concept since they exhibited their different objects in different order.

Kume used, for example, "painting storage house" when he referred to the Mauritshuis Museum in Den Haag because the exhibition of this museum did not fit the original

[31] The English translation of *hakubutsu* (博物, C: *bowu*, K: *bakmul*) or *hakubutsukan* (博物館, C: *bowuguan*, K: *bakmulgwan*) is highly problematic in the argument of this paper since these words functioned as linguistic references in grasping actual museums. However, there are difficulties in designating one as a fixed translation in that the meaning of these words has not only varied according to the context but also changed meaning over time in East Asia. Moreover, since these words were adopted as translations for Western natural science and other museums from the late nineteenth century, translating these words here into English is, so to speak, to re-translate the translation. Although many English translations to be found in previous studies, we use verbatim translation as much as possible for several core words in this article to elucidate the established frames East Asians had before they encountered actual museums. Verbatim translation also has the advantage in consistently deriving related words such as 博物志 (Account of a Broad Range of things), 博物家 (a broad range of things scholarly), or 博物學 (the study of a broad range of things) despite the fact it might sound a bit awkward in English.

[32] Kume Kunitake 久米邦武, *Tokumei zenken taishi bei-ō kairan Jikki* 特命全権大使米欧回覧実記, 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1878) in Japanese National Diet Library Digital Collection (DOI: 10.11501/761502-761506): the Mauritshuis (3:170), the National Art Gallery in Amsterdam (3:174), Wagener and National Gallery in Berlin(3:224), Alte/Neue Pinakothek (4:170), the Museum of National Library of France (2:46), the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (3:169), Nationalmuseum in Stockholm (4:122), National Archaeological Museum in Florence (4:192), the British Museum (2:74) National Museum of Natural History in Leiden (3:168), Royal Cabinet of Rarities in Den Haag (3:170), Altes/Neue Museum in Berlin (3:222), National Museum of Denmark (4:100), the Uffizi Gallery (4:191), Vatican Museum (4:212), Natural History Museum of Bern (5:66). The page numbers are "frame numbers" (コマ番号) on each volume's web pages.

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meaning of *hakubutsu* (a broad range of things). Accordingly, his views on the museum up until then were still characterized by the original meaning of "a broad range of things." However, from the late nineteenth century, this word "博物館" (C: *bowuguan*, J: *hakubutsukan*, K: *bakmulgwan*) eventually emerged as a common noun throughout East Asia and remains the standard translation for museum to this day. In this translation, however, the traditional meaning derived from the idea of "a broad range of things" has faded out whereas the meaning of this word has become almost identical with that of the Western museum.

Intellectual Contexts

Visiting the British Museum in 1867, Wang Tao described its exhibition as follows: "there were all kinds of birds, animals, reptiles, plants, fruits, fine selections from the mountains and unusual items from the lake and the ocean, which were neither mentioned in *Bowuzhi* 博物志 (Account of a Broad Range of Things) nor demonstrated in *Zhenwankao* 珍玩考 (Study of Rare Curios), nor detailed in *Gegulun* 格古論 (Issues in the Investigation of Antiquities)."[33] Wang mentioned three Chinese books that were unable to provide sufficient information about the displayed objects in the British Museum. These three books represent the traditional taxonomy of things in the world, including natural products and artefacts, through which East Asians at first apprehended objects organized and displayed in the museums they visited. As the analysis which follows suggests, these three widely embraced cultural, intellectual, and conceptual frameworks are essential for understanding the interpretive strategies of these visitors.

1. The Investigation of Things

The main doctrine related to things in Neo-Confucian culture was epitomized by the word "the investigation of things" (格物) which was represented as the first of the eight serial steps to become an ideal man of virtue according to one of the ancient Confucian classics, *the Great Learning* (大學). This motto, suggested as a means to "attain knowledge" (致知), defines the fundamental relationship between man and things in Neo-Confucian philosophy. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a central figure in Neo-Confucianism, explained that "the 'investigation of things' is to reach to the utmost principle in affairs and things" and "if you want to reach to the knowledge, facing the object thoroughly investigate the principle of the thing."[34] Although there have been endless interpretations and debates on the meaning of this word, Zhu's interpretation constituted the main theoretical basis in East Asian epistemology before the nineteenth century.

Regarding our discussion, three points here are remarkable, especially in Zhu's interpretation of the word. Firstly, although the word "格物" has been usually translated into English as the "investigation of things," but this does not fully capture the meaning of the original. In the neo-Confucian context "格" is a more comprehensive and multi-layered concept to be translated merely as "investigation." The original meaning of "格" was concerned with the well-shaped tree or a wood frame from which the secondary meanings have been derived, such as "frame," "structure," "latticework grid," "established custom," "formalities" and as a verb, "bring to pattern," "to systematize," "to frame," "come to grips with," "to reach" etc.[35] In fact, these meanings are not distinct from each other

[33] Wang, "*Manyou suilu*," 102. The English translation of *Gegulun* (Issues in the Investigation of Antiquities) is quoted from Elman, "From Pre-modern Chinese Natural Studies," 34.

[34] The translations quoted were taken from Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* (Cambridge Mass., 1986), 92.

[35] Paul W. Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Leiden, 2015), 131.

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but are layered at once in this character, in which, roughly speaking, the meanings of "frame" and "human perception" are essential in establishing the nuance. This character implies a more fundamental *a priori* and epistemological relationship between the human observer and the things themselves whereas "investigation" in an English language context suggests a more specific, empirical and definite action on the part of the investigator.

Secondly, the meaning of "things" (物) includes both material objects and unseen forces. James Legge pointed out how a man can reach the ultimate knowledge of things and affairs at once, which include the phenomena of physics, metaphysics, and the events of history.[36] However, the problem Legge posed here was based on his western linguistic mapping of "things."[37] In Zhu's context, material things and immaterial affairs were not articulated as Legge thought but always entangled with each other so that one could not think of "the purely material" object with this conceptual approach. Moreover, the "物" here premises things and affairs which are recognized by human perception, which means that "物" cannot be independent from a value system in the eye of beholder.

Thirdly, the "investigation of things" is an act, teleologically stipulated. As represented in Zhu Xi's famous epigram, "the property (of matter) is identical to the principle (of the universe)" (性卽理), Neo-Confucian philosophy posited that every "thing," both material and immaterial, contained the invisible principle, or else was the product of the principle. Therefore, it's not necessary to investigate every material object and immaterial affair to reach an ultimate knowledge of things since one can apprehend the principle of the universe by thoroughly understanding a property of a thing.[38] In addition, the "investigation of things" is a moral act as well. As mentioned above, it was the first word put in the eight-consecutive maxims necessary to become a man of virtue, able to discipline himself, take care of his own family, country, and eventually pacify the whole world. Thus, the "investigation of things" is closely related to, or includes self-reflection, moral teleology, and the social responsibility of the ideal man.

Consequently, in the culture of Neo-Confucianism, an object tends to be contemplated as a phenomenon rather than a material entity since the thing we see is, as they thought, the manifestation of an invisible principle in operation. Accordingly, one can investigate the property of an object only in its original environment. For instance, a stuffed lion beside a stuffed polar bear in a natural science museum cannot be an object for "investigation" because this lion has been displaced from the functioning field of the principle. In this sense, a museum display in which displacement and artificial taxonomy of things were indispensable, was not a spectacle likely to lead East Asian travellers to their understanding of the utmost knowledge of "the principle." They were, naturally, more interested in exhibitions showing the functioning of objects. Guo Songtao praised Westerners' capability for the "investigation of things" when he saw what he described as two large stone plates facing each other, that transmitted sound at the Louvre.[39] He was also impressed by English "investigating" scholarship when he explored the aquaculture system and its installation in the London aquarium. Xu Jianyin showed an interest in an exhibition on how an electric light bulb worked at the Technological Museum in Berlin.[40]

In addition, most East Asian travellers were embarrassed when they encountered dead human bodies or skeletons including ancient mummies in various Western museums. To

[36] James Legge trans. and annotated, "The Great Learning 大學," in *The Four Books* 四書 (Reprinted in Shanghai, 1933), 358.

[37] See Benjamin Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 2005), xxix-xxx.

[38] For a more detailed discussion on this issue, see Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2008),163–6.

[39] Guo, "*Shixi jicheng*," 357, 850.

[40] Xu, "*Ouyou zalu*," 662.

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them dead human bodies were something more than a material object to be shown to the public. Muragaki Norimasa (1813-1880), a Vice-Ambassador of the first Japanese Embassy to the United States in 1860, showed his abhorrence and said, "Even though it is necessary to exhibit human bodies for exploring the truth, juxtaposing them with birds, animals, insects and fish left me at a loss for words and sweating bullets" when he saw the petrified human bodies displayed in the Smithsonian Museum.[41] Looking at dead human bodies and skeletons displayed in the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, Kim Man Sou (1858-?), the Korean minister in France, was also shocked and said, "the graceful rule of the king should also reach up to the world of the dead." Then, when debating the issue with someone who defended the display on the grounds of medical progress, he deplored, "now 'the way of life protection (衛生之道)' destroys the human benevolence that grieves death."[42] Kim criticized the display of this museum in his own ethical terms and in terms of the general benefits for humankind, which suggests that his attitude towards the object was derived from a Neo-Confucian epistemology.

From this "investigation of things" point of view, neither these new buildings called museums, nor the omnifarious displayed objects were intended for "investigating." The museum did not arouse much interest among these visitors who had an explicit moral roadmap that took them from the "investigation of things" to a "pacification of the world" in the end. According to them the museums lacked a "humanistic" orientation. By translating the museum as "house of a broad range of things" rather than "a house for the investigation of things," the museum was denigrated, at the symbolic level, to a building intended to merely collect various objects of the world to broaden "miscellaneous" knowledge.

2. A Broad Range of Things

Before being finally selected as a translation for the concept of the museum in the late nineteenth century, the word "a broad range of things" (博物) reflected one of the traditional attitudes towards material objects in East Asian culture. The character "博" generally meant "to the broadest degree possible, broad, wide-ranging, extensive, or vast."[43] The word "博物" signified, accordingly, "a broad range of things," or "knowledge about them" according to the context in which it is used. A representative example of the usage can be found in the title of the famous book, *An Account of a Broad Range of Things* (博物志) compiled by Zhang Hua (232-300) in third century China. It was rather a re-edited compilation of old texts on an extensive range of things including natural objects, geographical knowledge, imaginary beings, origin of words and names, historical events, and fictional stories. Although it was not at all systematic or rigorously categorized, this book together with what scholars called "a scholar or a school of a broad range of things" (博物家) would come to play a role in, especially, interpretations of natural objects of the world. Thus, the word "a broad range of things learning" (博物學) was also selected as a translation for "natural science" in the nineteenth century.[44]

[41] Muragaki Norimasa 村垣範正, "*Kenbei shisetsu nikki* 遣米使節日記," in *Kengai shisetsu nikki sanshū* (Tokyo, 1927), 1:118; See Komami, "The Museums Toured in United States of America," 19–20 for the varied interpretations on this Muragaki's comment.

[42] Kim Man Sou 김만수, trans. by Ku Sa Hoe 구사회, 대한제국기 프랑스 공사 김만수의 세계여행기 [*Travel Writing over the World, written by Kim Man Sou, the Korean Minister to France*] (Seoul, 2018), 101–2.

[43] Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary*, 27.

[44] For historical examples of *bowu* including the late nineteenth century, see Chang, "A cross-cultural perspective," 17; Natascha Gentz, "From News, *Xinwen* 新聞, to New Knowldedge, *Xinxue* 新學: Newspapers as Sources for Early Modern Chinese Encyclopaedias," in Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Rudolf G. Wagner, eds., *Chinese Encyclopedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought* (Berlin, 2014), 63–5. See also

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"A broad range of things" had, however, a somewhat negative nuance in the traditional context, especially compared to "investigation of things" which was considered to be a more intellectual and virtuous practice. In fact, *An Account of a Broad Range of Things* was classified as "trivial/miscellaneous discourse" (小說) in Chinese literary history, in contrast with "meta/grand discourse" (大說) which usually meant philosophical, political or historical discourse. Therefore, a "scholar or a school of a broad range of things" suggested a scholar or a school knowledgeable about a broad range of things which were "trivial and miscellaneous." They were, in general, regarded as scholars who were interested in collecting fragmentary facts on things and its textual evidence instead of pursuing the "true" value of Confucius.

However, "scholars of a broad range of things" enjoyed comparatively higher status in Japan than in China or Korea. Confucianism had been the official doctrine of the government in Qing China and Chosŏn Korea so that Confucian way of learning had been more authoritative and widespread than in Japan. Japanese "medicinal material learning" (本草學) instigated by *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (A Classification of Medicinal Material, 1596)[45] compiled in the late Ming period, had especially shown remarkable development and the social influence of "natural science" during the Tokugawa regime (1603-1867).[46] However, even though this scholarship might have contributed, in some measure, to enhancing a "scientific" way of thinking and deepened understandings of "nature," it was basically practiced as a subdivision of "a broad range of things" concept which was, in turn, framed within the established scholastic system. There was, indeed, a specific group of people who were researching varied subjects, but they lacked potential to extend their knowledge to offer technical innovations. In addition, with its narrow scope of "medicinal material learning," it was difficult to comprehend the general concept of museums which have displayed not only natural objects but also various artefacts, artistic works, and even human beings themselves.

Since the mid-eighteenth century in Tokugawa Japan, fairs with temporary exhibitions, namely, *honzōe* 本草會 (a medicinal material fair), *bussankai* 物産會 (a products fair) and *hakubutsukai* 博物會 (a broad range of things fair) had been held sporadically in major cities.[47] The basic idea of these fairs was to "exhibit" real objects to people with the same interests and to share knowledge on various objects. In the "medicinal material fair," for instance, merchants, scholars and consumers displayed samples, exchanged information, and did business with herbal medicines on the spot. At the *hakubutsukai* led by Yoshida Jakusōan from 1837, the list of displayed objects consisted of imported craftworks, herbal medicine, minerals, antiquities, letters, books, animals, fish, and fossils.[48] Though the exhibition's purpose and criteria are unclear to us, what they had in

Benjamin Elman, *On Their Own Terms*, 57–60 on differences between "a broad range of things learning" in the Chinese context and contemporary natural science practice in Europe.

[45] *Compendium of Materia Medica* is the most used for English translation of this book title. Elman used "*Systematic Materia Medica*" in his book. Elman, *On Their Own Terms,* 30–1. However, this article newly translated it into English as *Classification of Medicinal Material* to meet the translation principle of this article. See the footnote 31.

[46] For the historical development of *honzōgaku* (medicinal material learning) in Japan, see Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago and London, 2015).

[47] These fairs have been frequently pointed to as the historical origin of Japanese modern museums. See Seki Hideo 関秀夫, 博物館の誕生: 町田久成と東京帝室博物館 [*The Birth of the Museum: Machida Hisanari and the Tokyo Imperial museum*] (Tokyo, 2005), 53; Yajima Kunio, "A Hypothesis on the Background of Museum Origin in Japan," 11–3; Kanayama Yoshiaki 金山喜昭, "物産会から博覧会へ 一博物館前史と黎明期を辿る一" [From *Bussan-e* to Exposition - Tracking Japanese Pre-museum Era and its Early Days], *Museum Study* 30 (Japan, 2019), 1–7.

[48] This fair was held eighteen times between 1837 and 1859. Onitsuka Mei 鬼束芽依, "考古学の先駆者としての吉田雀巣庵—『尾張名古屋博物会目録』を通して" [Yoshida Jakusōan as a Pioneer of Archaeology - the

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common was that they consisted of objects that were material and tangible. Due to the very nature of these *hakubutsukai*, where only material objects were displayed, the traditional meaning of "a broad range of things" evolved accordingly, and came to refer to material objects, exclusively. These fairs obviously functioned as a linguistic and cultural bridge that facilitated Japanese understanding of Western museums and exhibitions in the mid-nineteenth century. However, these exhibition fairs in Japan were all privately and temporarily organized, small-scale, club-like gatherings. Compared to contemporary European museums, for example the British Museum or the Louvre, they lacked, most of all, physical buildings that could ensure permanence and social agents that could establish it as a form of public infrastructure.

Meanwhile in Qing China, a considerable number of Westerners had already worked as merchants, missionaries, or in other roles, especially in southern China from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Recent Chinese studies have shown that the word *bowuyuan* (博物院, complex of a broad range of things) or *bowuguan* (博物館, house of a broad range of things) had already appeared in Chinese literature as translations for museum even before the first Japanese mission to the United States in 1860.[49] The earliest example of "complex of a broad range of things" was found in *Meilige heshengguo zhilüe* 美理哥合省國略 (A Brief Account of the United States of America, 1838) written in Chinese by the American missionary Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801-1861).[50] However, Bridgman did not use this term as a common noun to translate "museum," but to refer specifically to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia Museum, of which Bridgman likely had a precise image in his mind. Being cited by successive geographical works including *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (An Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms, 1843) and *Yinghuan zhilue* 瀛環志略 (A Brief Account of the Globe, 1850) published in China, the words "house of a broad range of things" or "complex of a broad range of things" began to be recognized by many intellectuals, even in Japan and Korea.

When the first Japanese delegation visited the Patent Office Museum and the Smithsonian Museum in the United States in 1860, they first mentioned the word "house of a broad range of things" in their travel writings. It is not certain whether this word originated from the "broad range of things fair" in the Japanese context or from the Chinese book *Haiguo tuzhi* that they carried with them during their travels.[51] In either case, various objects in these museums were understood within an existing framework of "a broad range of things." Though overwhelmed by the massive scale of the buildings and their exhibitions, their reactions to the museum were comparatively apathetic and even sceptical in comparison with their response to other Western facilities or infrastructure. After describing animals and birds of the Zoo in the Jardin d'Acclimatation, Paris, Fuchibe Tokuzō, an entourage participating in the first Japanese embassy to Europe (1862), added, for example, the comment that "if 'a broad range of things scholars' were here, they would admire it."[52] Self-identification as a social elite made them differentiate themselves from "a broad range of things scholars" who only

List of Exhibition of *Hakubutsukai* in Nagoya], *Research Bulletin of Seinan Gakuin University Museum* 8 (Japan, 2020), 43–8.

[49] Chen Jian-Ming 陈建明, "汉语'博物馆'一词的产生与流传" [The Creation and Circulation of the Chinese Term '*Bowuguan*'], in Zhu Feng Han 朱凤瀚 ed., *The Association of Chinese Museums Conference 2005 Papers* (China, 2005), 211–8.

[50] Li Fei 李飞, "再论汉语'博物院'一词的产生与流传-兼谈E考据的某些问题" [A New Discussion on the Creation and Circulation of the Chinese Term "*Bowuyuan*": Also on Issues of E-Textual Research], *Southeastern Culture* 256 (China, 2017), 104–5.

[51] See Gotō Sumio "The Shogunate Mission of 1860 to the United States and the Museums and Libraries," 5–8 for the details of their first encounter with American museums.

[52] Fuchibe Tokuzō 淵辺徳蔵, "*Ōkō nikki* 欧行日記," in *Kengai shisetsu nikki sanshū*, 3:42.

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pursued knowledge of a broad range of things. Over time, however, they began to realize that the museum was not a building that simply juxtaposed a broad range of things. In this very moment of realization, however, the word "house of a broad range of things" had begun to signify the "museum" of the West.

3. Trifling with Things

While Zhu Xi's philosophy remained, generally speaking, the dominant ideology in East Asia up until the nineteenth century, the attitude towards things at a cultural level was not necessarily based on the framework of Zhu's abstract philosophy. Especially since the seventeenth century, the emergence of "evidential research" (考證學) on the intellectual scene gave rise to new approaches to the thing beyond the principle of meta-discourse.[53] The accumulation of capital, a long period of relative peace, the importing of Western science and academic scholarship, the development of large cities and the printing industry – all these features had intricately intertwined with each other as part of the rise of material culture, which also brought about significant changes of perspective on things.[54]

The culture of "trifling with things" (玩物) played a certain role in perceptions of the Western museum. This word, in fact, had long been considered as an act that diverged from the path of a man of virtue in Confucian culture because it was thought to result in one "losing the will" (喪志). "Trifling with Things" meant to have an obsession with material objects and was often referred to in the compound phrase "trifling with things and so losing the will" in works referring to Confucian morality. However, this word was historically redefined in the cultural context of the sixteenth century onwards, thanks to the rise of material culture. It came to refer to the collection of various objects from antiquity, artwork, craft products, or natural objects such as stones, flowers, and animals, which could be enjoyed with one's own eyes and hands. This changing attitude towards the material object was based on private possession and personal penchant for it. There might be a sense of "collectionism" as well as a primary form of exhibition but the relationship between the subject and the object was intrinsically different from that of the Western museum, which premises the existence of public.[55]

Dong Qichang (1555-1636), a painter, a calligrapher and an art critic in the late Ming period in China, systematized collecting as well as appreciating antiquities in his book *Gudong shisanshuo* 骨董十三說 (Thirteen Stories on Antiquities).[56] Dong classified them into four categories of objects worthy to collect and appreciate. The first category was comprised of objects made of precious minerals such as gold and jade; the second included artistic works such as paintings, calligraphy, epitaphs, and sculpture; the third were artisanal crafts such as porcelain and lacquerware; the fourth included instruments, swords, mirrors and inkstones. Dong was, however, very careful not to contradict Zhu's orthodox views on things and suggested that the practice of "trifling with things" could, in fact, be justified under Zhu's framework of "investigation of things."[57]

[53] This historical transition was well discussed in Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1984).

[54] For material culture of Ming China, see Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, 1998); Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368-1644* (Honolulu, 2007).

[55] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 46–7.

[56] Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford, New York, 1997), 160–2.

[57] Cai Qingde 蔡清德, "博雅好古 清浊交错 - «骨董十三说»等所见董其昌之雅俗与真赝观念" [Fondness for Elegance and Blend of Refinement and Vulgarity: Dong Qichang's Views on Refinement and Vulgarity, the Genuine and Forgery in His Thirteen Topics on Antiques], *Chinese Journal of Design* 273 (China, 2016), 22–3.

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Thanks to the comparatively peaceful international environment since the mid-seventeenth century in East Asia, the culture of collecting and appreciating objects bloomed in both Korea and Japan. In Chosŏn Korea, for example, powerful, rich, royal families in the capital Seoul, started to collect rare and precious items, some of which were imported from China and Japan.[58] The culture of "trifling with things" was rediscovered as the pastime of a noble man, and even as a means to pursue the "investigation of things." Collectors, those obsessed with specific objects, and small groups of "connoisseurs" emerged as key players, leading cultural trends in many aspects from the eighteenth century and they created markets and business with those artefacts.[59] Moreover, this culture of "trifling with things" also began to develop in international networks. Many Korean diplomatic envoys to Qing China as well as to Tokugawa Japan had personal relationships with Chinese and Japanese intellectuals from the eighteenth century, through which they widely discussed about "trifling with things."[60]

Many East Asian visitors in the nineteenth century had their own reasons to find appreciation for the objects in Western museums that relate, unsurprisingly, to the intellectual and aesthetic values, some of them broadly common to educated elites in the region. What they called "things to trifle with" in their travel writings usually meant manmade artefacts made in the age of Roman antiquity or even older, but sometimes it also signified artwork, crafts, treasures, specific forms of stones (*suiseki*), and even living creatures such as plants and animals. Unlike "a broad range of things" which was more concerned with acquiring knowledge, "trifling with things" could only be defined with respect to personal taste and a sense of aesthetics or, to put it more precisely, to the capacity to generate pleasure. "Trifling with things" and the collectionism it promoted in East Asian culture, was basically a private activity, which was based on personal possession of the object.

Many East Asian visitors either enjoyed or disliked certain artefacts aesthetically regardless of the original intention of curation. Wang made a comment on the exhibition of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (the National Museum of Scotland at present), "Different species of flora and fauna, precious and strange things, treasured jade and bright pearls are displayed: all looked fabulous and colourful, and all are beautiful both inside and outside."[61] Considering the objects he mentioned, he must have looked around the rooms concerning natural history, but his comment is full of admiration for their apparent beauty. Moreover, Kume described his feeling, "there were figures with elephant heads and human bodies, snake-gods, and beastly demons besides, all of them vile to behold" at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, after having looked at a religious statue from Southeast Asia.[62] These aesthetic and affective reactions were, certainly, incongruent with the framework generated by the museums they visited.[63]

[58] Kang Myŏng Gwan 姜明官, "朝鮮後期 京華世族과 古董書畵 趣味" [The Aristocracy of Seoul and their Penchant for Antique Calligraphy and Painting in the late period Chosŏn], *Dongyang Studies in Korean Classics* 24 (Pusan, Rep. of Korea, 1998) 14–29; Hwang Jung-yon 황정연, "朝鮮後期 書畵收藏論 硏究" [Discourses on the Collecting of Paintings and Calligraphic Works in Late Joseon], *Korean Journal of Jangseogak Royal Library* 24 (Rep. of Korea, 2010), 198–200.

[59] Ahn Dae-hoe 안대회, "조선 후기 취미생활과 문화현상" [Hobby Life and Cultural Phenomena in the Later Period of the Chosŏn Dynasty], *Han'guk Munhwa* 60 (Seoul, 2012), 72–6.

[60] Jung Min 정민, 18 세기 한중 지식인의 문예공화국 [*Republic of Letters among Korean-Chinese Intellectuals in the Eighteenth Century*] (P'aju, Rep. of Korea, 2014).

[61] Wang, "*Manyou suilu*," 125; The English translation was quoted from Wai, "Wang Tao," 558.

[62] Kume, *Tokumei zenken*, 3:169. The English translation was quoted from Kume Kunitake, trans. by Graham H. Healey and Andrew Cobbing, *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871–73: a true account of the Ambassador extraordinary & plenipotentiary's journey of observation through the United States of America and Europe*, 5 vols. (Chiba, Japan, 2002), 3:240.

[63] The taxonomy in anthropological museums in the nineteenth century was structuralized by European perspectives on races, nations, religions, and ethnography. Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31/2 (1989), 222–4; Bennett, *The Birth of Museums*, 81–2. However,

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It was not easy for these travellers to conceptualize the museum since it was beyond their own framework of seeing the world. The museums they encountered were not merely functional buildings but a unique space in which multiple "modern" elements intertwined or integrated in complex, and sometimes contradictory ways.[64] Their confusion regarding museums were, consequently, not only due to their lack of cultural and linguistic references but also due to the multifaceted and complex nature of the museum itself. However, the more their interpretation of the museum solidified, the more their appreciations became, so to speak, "musealized." They came to realize that the museum's exhibitions should be placed in the context of newly formed geographical, historical, anthropological, and European-centred mappings of the world. After viewing the diverse species of animals in the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden, Kume exclaimed, "How strange indeed is the engineering of nature!" which was the very moment that he started to see the world through his brand-new glasses.[65] Through interacting with the spaces organized by various museums, they started, as a result, to discover the "nature" in natural history or science museums, find "beauty" in art museums, apprehend the "nation" or "empire" in national museums, and become aware of global industry and business in industrial museums and expositions: in short, their perspective started to become "modernized."

Conclusion

In the early stage, East Asian visitors struggled to grasp the concept of the museum since they had no similar institutions in their own culture. They tried, at first, to understand it as a common noun by coining Chinese characters that signified the types of objects and building. However, even with their rich cultural references, the Western museum was an interpretive challenge for their language and knowledge system. Even though the buildings they visited were all called 'museum' or similar in each Western language they encountered, they labelled these museums differently according to the sort of objects they contained. Their mission to translate the concept of museum was as difficult as inventing a term that could encompassing dizzying assortment of museums such as the Mauritius museum, the Museum of Mineralogy, Madame Tussauds waxworks museum, the British Museum, etc. To conceptualize the museum as a common noun using this approach was ultimately an impossible feat, and the word "a broad range of things house" was chosen for translating museum regardless of the discrepancies between the original meaning of "a broad range of things" and general features of museums encountered in the West.

East Asian visitors to museums in the nineteenth century had three long-established perspectives on the objects around them, each with its own distinct ontology, as well as a distinct relation between objects and the subjects that encounter them. The "investigation of things" is a philosophical attitude toward "things in place," ultimately for apprehending the principles of the universe. The museum they witnessed was, however, not a space for "investigation" since the objects in museums were not functioning as a part of the "real" world. "A broad range of things" approach described efforts to acquire encyclopaedic knowledge on various objects, which was normally carried out through reading and writing books rather than exploring material objects on the site. Although

Kume's view on this statue is not the least mediated by this perspective but is rather a spontaneous reaction based on his East Asian sense of aesthetics.

[64] For more on the multifaceted nature of modern museums, David N. Livingston, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, 2003), 31–40 and see also the studies cited in the footnote 14 of this article.

[65] Healey and Cobbing, *The Iwakura Embassy*, 3:239–40.

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they were impressed when they saw various real objects with their own eyes, East Asian travellers conceptualized the museum as simply something for "broadening" their pool of knowledge. In contrast, "trifling with things" is an aesthetical practice related to privately collected items. They could selectively "enjoy" some of the objects in museums such as artwork, antiquities, and some natural objects, but this clashed somewhat with the surrounding space of the museum in that they could not possess or even touch the displayed objects.

When East Asians encountered museums in the nineteenth century, they had these intellectual frames for apprehending material objects: "investigation of things," "a broad range of things," and "trifling with things." Although they tried to "investigate," "broaden knowledge of," or "trifle with" some displayed objects in museums, these attempts were only successful when the displayed objects were matched with their areas of interest so that their observations on, or in museums could not but be selective as well as partial. Moreover, most of them disliked the fact that some museums objectified human beings by displaying human bodies and mummies. These three East Asian frameworks for the apprehension of objects obviously were based on a one-to-one relationship between human individuals and objects. In contrast, the museums were themselves mediating the relationship between human individuals and objects in many ways, philosophically, scientifically, or aesthetically by arranging objects in specific ways. The museum was not just a building exhibiting some material objects but a materialized framing device through which visitors structured their understanding of a "modern" order of things. By participating in the space of the museum and internalizing this device, these visitors discovered, for example, a wonder for "nature," discovered the place of their own countries in the order of the Western ethnographic mapping of the globe and might have felt that it was time to change their seemingly "old-fashioned" perspectives on things.

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