Nature as Spectacle: Photographic Representations of Nature in Early Twentieth-Century Korea

Myeong-Jun Lee & Jeong-Hann Pae


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At the turn of the twentieth century, landscape photography began to emerge as a new way to represent nature in Korea. Landscape photographs of the Korean peninsula were printed in modern media, such as the daily newspaper Maeilsinbo, the public cultural magazine Cheongchun, and picture postcards. This article explores the photographic representation of nature in Korea in the 1910s. Landscape images of the period were rooted in the visual regime of the camera obscura, and they often borrowed techniques and themes from Korean traditional landscape painting, or sansuhwa. The photographic medium was important in shaping new perceptions, aesthetic experiences, and discourses on nature. This article examines several categories of landscape photography, including images of scenic and historical places, idyllic and bucolic scenes, and urban parks. These categories were common in Korean western-style landscape painting and art photography of the 1920s, and continue to be seen to this day in Korean visual culture.

Keywords: early Korean landscape photography, visual regimes, sansuhwa, Maeilsinbo, Cheongchun, picture postcards, camera obscura, stereoscope

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Email for correspondence: june2@snu.ac.kr
early 1900s, landscape photography emerged as a new form for the visual representation of Korea. With the advent of photography, landscapes across the Korean peninsula that had formerly been the main subject of traditional landscape painting, sansuhwa, were now represented by mechanical means. The entire country was photographed and the images appeared in public media such as picture postcards, illustrated newspapers, and cultural magazines. Numerous picture postcards, including the above image, were sold on the burgeoning photography market as souvenirs for foreign tourists. The daily newspaper Maeilsinbo, produced by the Japanese Governor-General of Joseon after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, carried landscape photographs of the Korean peninsula in almost every issue. In addition, the public cultural magazine Cheongchun, produced by the prominent historian and advocate of the Korean independence movement Choe Nam-seon, published landscape photographs in every issue.

The visual imagery published by these media outlets and photographers of the early 1900s facilitated new representations of the countryside for diverse audiences, including Japanese expatriates, foreign tourists, and the domestic public. Thus, landscape photography played a pivotal role in shaping modern public perceptions of the natural world.

In general, the representation and consumption of modern landscape photography in Korea has been interpreted in terms of the Japanese colonial occupation of the peninsula. The precise production dates of picture postcards, which survive in better quality than the illustrated press publications, are unknown.

1 – Maeilsinbo and Cheongchun have precise, published dates that are publicly available, although we cannot identify the exact date of the photographs reproduced in their pages. The precise production dates of picture postcards, which survive in better quality than the illustrated press publications, are unknown.

Japanese in order to assert political ideologies supportive of their rule; this cultural atmosphere was particularly prominent in the 1910s, immediately after the annexation of Korea. However, there are other possible approaches to the visual representations of this period. Aside from the Japanese empire’s media, the contemporary nationalist magazine Cheongchun carried similar landscape photographs. Thus, we need to examine other representations of the natural world in order fully to comprehend the era’s visual culture.

This article explores photographic ways of representing nature in early twentieth-century Korea. Specifically, we argue that the rapid dissemination of photography brought about an unsettled, incomplete transition in the representation of nature from traditional sansuhwa into two modern modes of vision: the camera obscura model of photography, and the autonomous model exemplified by the stereoscope. New ways of representing nature included traces of the previous dominant visual media, sansuhwa. Of primary concern in this article is the period of the 1910s, when conventions of photographic landscape were being established in Korea. These representations became models for the photography of nature and have reappeared continuously ever since.

Landscape Photography

In the history of Korean visual culture, the genre of landscape tended to be perceived as equivalent to that of the actual world. For example, the word sansuhwa, referring to traditional landscape painting, and the word geurim, referring to pictures, were used interchangeably with the term gyeongchi, which referred to natural scenery. This general interchange of closely related terms appeared in public media as early as the 1910s. On 8 March 1912, the newspaper Maeilsinbo published a photograph of a picturesque landscape near Hangang (Han River), appended with a somewhat long caption printed in Korean calligraphy (figure 2).

Figure 2. Unknown photographer, untitled, photomechanical print. Reproduced from Maeilsinbo (8 March 1912), 3. Research Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul.
Photographic Representations of Nature in Early Twentieth-Century Korea

The caption, similar in form to a traditional Korean poem, contains a detailed description of the photograph; specifically, it includes poetic, first-person narration that ‘asked a question to a boy who rode a cow under a naked willow on a pleasant spring day after a frigid winter: what about the scenery of Ogang?’. The boy replied that if [the narrator] did not see the gyeongchi, [she or he would at least be able to] see the geurim [instead of the actual landscape]. This example indicates that there was some confusion regarding the use of different words with reference to visual representations. Koreans often used the terms sajin (photograph) and geurim (picture) interchangeably, and both visual representations were regarded as equivalent to the actual natural landscape.

Foreign language dictionaries at the turn of the century demonstrated the use of these terms. In 1890, A Concise Dictionary of the Korean Language, the first English–Korean dictionary, included the word ‘photograph’, translated as sajin, and the word ‘picture’, translated as sajin and geurim. In 1891, the English–Corean Dictionary: Being a Vocabulary of Corean Colloquial Words in Common Use, the second English–Korean dictionary, translated the word ‘picture’ as geurim and hwasang, and the word ‘photograph’ as hwasangbakhidha, which was defined as ‘being taken by [a] picture’. In the early twentieth century, photography was no longer translated as geurim but as the specific mechanical visual medium termed sajin. For example, in the English–Korean Dictionary of 1914, the third English–Korean dictionary,7 the words ‘photograph’ and ‘photography’ were translated into sajin and included several examples of the word in use (for example, as instantaneous photography, as stereoscopic photographs, and as photography of science or art). Furthermore, in the same dictionary, the word ‘picture’ was defined as visual representation, geurim and dohwa, including specific examples such as ancient pictures, comic pictures, and picture exhibitions. In addition, foreign dictionaries of the day included the words ‘landscape’ and ‘scenery’, which were mostly translated into gyeongchi, punggyeong, and sansu, denoting scenery of the actual world. However, when we consider the above-mentioned example published in Maeilsinbo, landscape representations via pictures and photography in Korea in the 1910s were often equated with the actual physical landscape in terms of the description and perception of aesthetic experiences.

More visible and immediate evidence that landscape photography imitated landscape painting rests in the lavishly ornamental frames that adorned published landscape photographs. Landscape images in Maeilsinbo in the 1910s were often framed with attractive illustrations, such as cherry blossom patterns in the form of a window (figure 3). The frames were exquisitely crafted to attract subscribers’ eyes to the landscape photograph, as if it was a work of art (that is, a landscape painting). In other words, landscape photography, similar to traditional visual media, sought to satisfy the visual curiosity of the public. Thus, the landscape photographs reproduced in Maeilsinbo portended the rise of Korean artistic photography in the 1920s.

The Transition of Visual Technologies

Inherent in the photographic representation of nature was a new way of seeing. In order to understand this transition in early twentieth-century Korea, we first need to assess the same process as it occurred in western visual culture. The relationship between visual representation and the perception of nature has been one of the central subjects of western art history and landscape theory. Not until landscape painting was invented did the notion of land itself begin to be considered in pictorial terms in earnest. In short, visual representation played an important role in shaping notions of landscape. In order to depict realistic scenery, landscape painting generally adopted the conventions of linear perspective, which not only enhanced the depiction of detail but also embodied an epistemological regime premised on a dominant beholder who recomposes pictorial space toward a vanishing point and
thus ensures a united visual field. In western painting, a long period elapsed before
the eventual widespread acceptance of linear perspective. However, according to
Jonathan Crary, a profound breach in visual culture – specifically, the transition
from the ‘camera obscura’ model based on linear perspective to an ‘autonomous or
subjective model’ derived from new optical devices and techniques, exemplified by
the stereoscope – occurred in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, Crary argues
that this emergent way of seeing was distinct from previous frameworks:

If perspective implied a homogeneous and potentially metric space, the
stereoscope discloses a fundamentally disunified and aggregate field of dis-
junct elements. Our eyes never traverse the image in a full apprehension of the
three-dimensionality of the entire field, but in terms of a localized experience
of separate areas.\(^1\)

When we consider this transition and apply its lessons to the relationship between
beholder and nature, it is appropriate to consider both modes as premised on a
dominant subject (that is to say, an observer). However, while the former allows
the observer to concentrate on homogeneous pictorial space, the latter makes the
observer experience an assemblage of different local spaces within a single repre-
sentation. In other words, the autonomous model allows the observer to disengage
herself from represented nature.

As art historians have established, the camera obscura had already been
introduced to the Korean peninsula in the eighteenth century during the Joseon
Dynasty (1392–1897), via the Qing Dynasty in China.\(^2\) Korean painters such as
Gang Se-hwang and Gim Hong-do attempted to apply camera obscura-like effects
to their sansuhwa.\(^3\) The technique, however, was used to enhance the realistic

10 – Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the
Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the
Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, MA: MIT
Press 1990.


12 – For a description of the introduction
of the camera obscura into Korea, see Jang
Jin-seong, ‘Joseon Hugi Hoehwawa Camera
Obscura: Seoyang Munnude Daehan
Munhwajeok Hogisimui Yangsang’, Dongak

13 – Yi Seong-mi, Joseon Sidae Geurim
Sokui Seoyang Hwalbeop, Seoul: Sowadang
2008.
The widespread distribution of landscape photography in the early twentieth century, generally
admitted, this may amount to a situation unique to Korea given its geo-political location between the
empires of China, Japan, and Russia. Landscape photography based on the model of the camera obscura
influenced western-style landscape painting, including the choice of subject matter, the composition,
and even the atmospheric effects. Thus, in Korea, landscape photography in the early twentieth century
played an important role in establishing linear perspective for landscape imagery, and more notably in
shaping and promoting concomitant perceptions of nature in accordance with the epistemological
regime of the camera obscura.

To fully understand the transition of the visual regime pertaining to the depiction, perception, and
even aesthetic experience of nature in Korean visual culture, it is important to consider the relationship
between the landscape and the spectator in western-style landscape painting, 'sansuhwa', and landscape
photography. In western visual culture in general—for example, in historical landscape paintings of
the seventeenth century and picturesque scenes of the eighteenth century—incidental figures, or
staffage, are often included in landscape representations. These figures can be roughly divided into
two general categories: 'actors', who engage with the landscape represented in the picture plane; and
'spectators', who contemplate the scenery. Spectators, in particular, tend to be positioned in the
foreground before the actual landscape. As such, the figure acts as a surrogate spectator who
contemplates a distant scene whose characteristics are reduced to static or pictorialised elements.
The figure mediates the space between the observer, or viewer of the work, and the depicted landscape that constitutes the primary subject of the painting. The foreground spectator implicates the viewer, encouraging the contemplation of the landscape in accordance with this viewpoint.

On the other hand, 'jingyeong sansuhwa'—Korean 'true scenery' or 'true view'—paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—did not always include human figures in the picture plane. Of course, when figures sometimes appear in such works, the effect is similar to that of western landscape paintings. In Korea, however, the traditional aesthetic experience of nature is known as wayu, which literally means 'lying down on the floor and visiting scenic places'. Specific attention must be paid to the fact that the figure occupies a relatively small portion of the entire picture plane; furthermore, the figure is generally situated in the middle distance or background. Thus, in 'sansuhwa', the figure is fully embraced by the entire landscape and functions as an agent for multi-sensorial experiences of the natural scene; in contrast, western landscape paintings invite the beholder merely to contemplate the landscape (figure 4). Admittedly, this may amount to generalisations of rich and diverse visual cultures, but it serves to foreground, for the purposes of this article, the profound differences between western and Korean traditions of landscape painting.

While landscape paintings generally mediate between the observer and the represented scene using figures in the foreground, landscape photography can only reproduce this relationship by placing figures in the actual world. In other words, photography is more limited in establishing an aesthetic distance between the beholder and the scene, unless the photograph is intentionally manipulated. With regard to the arrangement of the figures and the landscape in photographic space, landscape photography in early twentieth-century illustrated publications in Korea frequently positioned the landscape in the background of an image, while figures contemplating the distant landscape occupied a large portion of the foreground (figure 5). This technique, an established convention of western visual...
culture, enables the viewer’s conceptualisation of the photographic space and the physical distance between the figure and the landscape. In this way, landscape photography no longer followed the traditional way of seeing, perceiving, or experiencing nature embodied in *sansuhwa*. Rather, landscape photography began to generate a new way of seeing in which the landscape became a static object of the observer’s contemplative gaze.22

It is notable that the camera obscura model and the autonomous visual model were so closely intertwined in Korea, and appeared simultaneously at the beginning of the twentieth century. Stereoscopic imagery was not widely available in Korea at

22 – This relationship epitomises Jay Appleton’s prospect-refuge theory, in which an observer views scenery without risk (i.e. without exposing himself or herself to others, or by placing himself or herself at a distance from the scene). See Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons 1996, 63–137.
the time, but the format was popular with foreign visitors seeking views of local culture. Landscape photography in the public press of the time demonstrates that the autonomous model was gaining ground. In the 1910s, Maeilsinbo carried several landscape photographs that bore the visible traces of manipulation. One photograph, for example, entitled Zoological Garden on one Warm Spring Sunday (figure 6), depicted a famous public park in Gyeongseong (present-day Seoul). The viewer’s gaze is first drawn to two young girls dressed in traditional Korean costume (the figures seem to be cropped and then reassembled intentionally), which leads the viewer’s gaze to the background scene of cherry blossoms in full bloom. Because of the evident traces of assemblage, the photograph resists perception as a unified pictorial space; it enhances the disjunction between the figures and the scene. This image is a prime example of how the conventions of linear perspective were being transformed by the autonomous model. As Crary has pointed out, figures in the foreground become objects of spectacle in the stereoscopic model. The aforementioned landscape photographs featured ‘uncivilised’ or ‘pre-modern’ people such as yangban (the traditional ruling class or gentry), gisaeng (dancing girls), or peasants, to name a few common subjects. As such, the autonomous mode of representation was conscripted to, and consistent with, the political views of the Japanese colonial authorities.

Embodied Discourses on Nature

As we have seen, landscape photography produced new ways of seeing, perceiving, and experiencing nature in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century. What subject matter, then, did the medium principally address? How did photographers represent nature? What visual tropes emerged and influenced the political situation of the Korean peninsula? The history of visual culture demonstrates that a new medium tends to borrow from and mimic the pictorial features of established media. One well-known example is the pictorialist movement, where practitioners imitated the formal elements of painting. Likewise, early Korean landscape photography often emulated the subject matter and conventions of its predecessor,

sansuhwa. Korean visual culture of the early twentieth century was transformed by the conditions and circumstances that allowed landscape photography to simulate sansuhwa. For example, the contemporary photographers of the day, such as Gim Yong-won, Hwang Cheol, and Ji Un-yeong, generally belonged to the ruling classes, or yangban (gentry) and jungin (middle class), who were well acquainted with the established principles of traditional paintings, including sansuhwa. Furthermore, in the late Joseon Dynasty, famous scenic locations in the Korean peninsula, which had been the primary subject matter of sansuhwa and typically produced and consumed by the ruling classes, often appeared in pungsokhwa, or traditional folk paintings – works undertaken by members of the general public. Landscape photography, with its ability to depict the world realistically in a readily affordable product, began to emerge as a substitute for landscape painting in order to satisfy a public desire for images of famous sites.

On the other hand, new reprographic techniques often transform the representations of established visual media. Landscape photography functioned in a number of complicated ways that reflected the varied perspectives of Korean nationalists, Japanese colonial authorities, and foreign residents and visitors, even when the images depicted identical subjects or compositions. Although the milieu surrounding the Korean mediascape of the early twentieth century was rapidly evolving, landscape photography generally focused on five major subjects and concomitant ways of representing nature.

First, scenic and historical sites of the Korean peninsula, such as ruins framed by a picturesque landscape, were the most frequent subject. This way of representing nature owes its origin partly to the tradition of sansuhwa, in which artists would represent historical places enveloped by wilderness. On 11 April 1915, for example, Maeilsinbo featured an article entitled ‘Seokwangsa (Seokwang Buddhist Temple) in Spring: Spring Scenery, Picturesque Wonsanman (Wonsan Bay)’, which was accompanied by a portrait-format landscape photograph (figure 7). The image of the temple surrounded by a pristine forest was reinforced by the text, which presented an historical narrative about the founding of Joseon followed by the anonymous reporter’s somewhat fawning account of nature:

I don’t know whether the scenery is imaginary or reality, as if I were entering a fairy land […]. You can’t say that you took in the scenery of a mountain without seeing Geumgangsan (the Diamond Mountains); likewise, you must not say that you have seen a temple without seeing Seokwangsa. Taking a day trip on Sunday by a special train would be enjoyable and instructive, a lifetime of experience […].

To overcome the limitations of photography, such as the reduction of ideas and experiences to visual data, Maeilsinbo published a series of travel articles. This strategy functioned to attract subscribers to the real-world experience of the sites. As Hyung Il Pai has argued, such landscape representation frequently produced a ‘timeless image of Korea and its people as the most picturesque and ancient land in the Japanese empire’. On the other hand, it is remarkable that the nationalist cultural magazine Cheongchun outlined the advantages of journeying to scenic historical places using photographs almost identical to those published in Maeilsinbo. In an issue published in July 1917, for example, photographs were featured of Chokseokru (Chokseok gazebo) in Jinju and Yeongnamru (Yeongnam gazebo) in Milyang, entitled ‘Scenic Places’ (figure 8). The volume included an article entitled ‘Suyanggwa Yeohaeng’ (Self-discipline and Travel) that expressed the obvious function of the two photographs:

Moderate regular travel is a holistic activity with encyclopaedic knowledge and multiple functions […]. Such travel will teach us much about self-discipline, self-training, and other essential qualities, by which we can gain a great wealth of experience, knowledge, and training. Thus, who would not agree with the opinion that journeying is great self-training?”

24 – On these three early Korean photographers, see Choi, Hanguk sajinsa, 92–115.


26 – Pai, ‘Staging “Koreana”’, 301.

In this case, the photographs were used to support a nationalist ideology that aimed to enlighten Korean youth about Japan’s colonial occupation and encouraged them to learn about Korea’s long history, geology, and local culture. Thus, journeying to scenic or historical sites was considered a cultural activity promoted and mediated through photographic reproductions of Korea’s illustrated press.

Second, idyllic scenery of Gyeongseong’s neighbouring districts frequently appeared in the print media. These representations stimulated a new, refined culture pertaining to the natural world (for instance, taking a walk in the suburbs was seen as part of Gyeongseong’s emerging passion for flânerie). Landscape photographs in this vein depicted not only famous historical places, but also little-known landscapes around Gyeongseong that came to be known by the public as pleasant places to enjoy aesthetic experiences. It is important to point out that such landscape photographs were largely admired and consumed by city dwellers.

These representations inspired residents to stroll in Gyeongseong’s neighbourhoods in search of refuge from the hustle and bustle of city life. In general, the natural world was idealised as quiet, tranquil, romantic, and picturesque – an escape from noisy and complicated Gyeongseong.
Maeilsinbo suggested several neighbourhoods for readers to stroll around. For example, on 19 July 1919 the newspaper published a photograph of the picturesque scenery of Cheongryangri, located east of Gyeongseong. City dwellers could easily reach Cheongryangri from Gyeongseong by tram. The photograph was accompanied by a detailed description: ‘[W]e are stifled by boiling hot weather. Where is the fresh air and the vast plains? Cheongryangri is filled with fresh green and lush pines [. . .]. Green pines are reflected in the water, through their leaves the valley wind blows gently from the north’.

This imagery conveys a sense of picturesque scenery in which lush trees are mirrored in crystal-clear, silent water. This emphasis on contemplation is not common in sansuwha, but rather was probably influenced by contemporary Japanese representations of nature (which in turn imitated and applied western conventions of art photography).

Third, public urban parks, which offered a modern way to experience and enjoy nature, became prime subjects for landscape photographers. Urban and amusement parks across the Korean peninsula, including Tapgol gongwon (Pagoda Park), Namsan gongwon (South Mountain Park), and Changgyeongwon (Changgyeong Garden), became popular destinations for Korean and Japanese visitors (figure 9).

The public park had not previously appeared as a pictorial subject in Korea. This new way of enjoying nature was promoted as a refined pastime that residents of Gyeongseong were encouraged to pursue. For example, Changgyeongwon, the most famous contemporary attraction in Gyeongseong, was opened to the public in 1909. In the spring, when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom, visitors came in droves to view the scenery of the former royal palace. On 24 April 1917, Maeilsinbo featured an article titled ‘New Record for the Highest Number of People Visiting Zoological Garden’. This article stated that 12,966 visitors attended the palace that day, which amounted to almost one-tenth of Gyeongseong’s total population. The author of the article claimed ‘it’s a wonder that citizens of Gyeongseong do not lack artistic taste’. Furthermore, according to Maeilsinbo, such places had become popular sites for school picnics.

Fourth, images of nature combined with modern structures frequently appeared in the visual culture of early twentieth-century Korea. Infrastructural projects, such as railroads and bridges over the Hangang, constructed with the use of new civil engineering methods, were presented as icons of civilisation. Such themes were among the most common photographic subjects of the period. On 10
July 1917, for example, Maeilsinbo published an article titled ‘The Largest Pedestrian Bridge of Joseon’. The author described details of the bridge and emphasised its new construction method as a truss bridge. Such engineering techniques were seen as important because they promoted the perception of a modern conquest of nature.

On 7 October 1917 Maeilsinbo featured several articles accompanied by exceptionally large photographs about the bridge’s dedication ceremony (figure 10). One article featured an interview with an engineer of the Governor-General of Joseon, responsible for the construction of the bridge’s foundations. The interviewee stated ‘the columns supporting the bridge, as you see, [...] are the fruits of state-of-the-art technology. [...] [They] can support heavier objects and offer protection from devastating floods’. The motif of modern technologies helping to avert the devastation of natural disasters was commonplace in the Japanese empire, but Korean nationalists opposed the cultural politics of this strategy. The Japanese employed this subject to highlight the grand achievements and benefits of their colonial rule, while nationalists used the same subject to emphasise domestic prosperity and resistance to imperial occupation. In particular, photographs of the bridge tended to place one end in the foreground and the other in the background as a vanishing point, giving the composition a strong sense of spatial depth.

Finally, photographs of foreign sites were widely available in Korea at the time. Maeilsinbo and Cheongchun published images of cosmopolitan cities in Europe and the USA, whose planned and organised cityscapes, with boulevards, public squares, and parks, were represented as the height of civilisation. The regular, geometric representation of urban places was in accordance with the visual logic of the camera obscura (figure 11). Images of overseas wilderness, such as waterfalls, were another frequent subject in the popular press. On 19 July 1914 Maeilsinbo printed a series of images entitled ‘scenic places worldwide’, which included a photograph captioned ‘Splendid Appearance of Niagara Falls in the Northern District of America, the Greatest Waterfall in the World’. On 27 July 1916, a photograph of Niagara Falls with a similar caption reappeared in Maeilsinbo (figure 12). The photograph included an instruction to ‘please read the following article first’, and a statement that ‘the water power of the Falls [is] more than the total manpower of Joseon’s population [and] drives the train a long distance’. The

Figure 10. Unknown photographer, Hangang (Han River) Pedestrian Bridges over the Which Will Be Opened to the Public on 7 October, photomechanical print. Reproduced from Maeilsinbo (7 October 1917), 1. Research Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul.
article details the process of converting the power of the Falls into electricity, which promoted the growth of nearby cities.36 In contrast, Cheongchun printed images of western wilderness, including Niagara Falls, in order to enlighten the youth of Joseon about foreign countries.37

**Conclusion**

Korean landscape photography of the early twentieth century demonstrated significant changes in the representation of the natural world. On the one hand, photography depicted scenic locations in ways similar to that of the previous dominant medium, known as sansuwhwa, in terms of composition, subject matter, and pictorial expression. On the other hand, photographers
also produced new ways of perceiving and experiencing nature by taking as their subjects the emergent urban parks and natural sites of Korea. Furthermore, the phenomenon of representing the observer as an object of spectacle in the photograph was consistent with the political agendas of the Japanese colonial authorities. Koreans were represented as uncivilised, ‘pre-modern’ subjects, disjunctively positioned in the foreground of the photographic space. Thus, the postcard examined in the introduction to this article exemplifies the unsettling transition of Korean modern visual culture into a new perception and experience of nature.

In the 1920s, with the advent of pictorialism, Korean photographers endeavoured to elevate the medium to the status of an art form. Numerous landscape photographs of unspecified natural sites became popular subjects, reflecting the inner world of the photographer and her or his status as an artist. Amateur groups of art photographers held public photography competitions that were frequently sponsored by private newspaper companies such as *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Joseon Ilbo*. Concurrently, Korean painters who had studied in Japan embraced western-style landscape painting, although *sansuhwa* remained the dominant pictorial style in Korea.

The methods used and subjects adopted to represent nature in the early twentieth century continued to circulate in Korean landscape photography throughout the 1920s. In short, the new mechanical means of representing nature accustomed viewers to several specific modes of landscape representation. Whereas *sansuhwa* had been restricted to the ruling classes, the mass production and low cost of landscape photographs – whether reproduced in the popular press or on picture postcards – granted the general public access to scenic destinations and urban leisure sites popular with tourists and day-trippers. The strategies used by landscape photographers may be almost one hundred years old, but the motifs and compositions established in this era continue to inform representations of nature in South Korea to this day.

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38 – As Seo Yu-ri noted, western-style landscape paintings of Korea in the 1920s began to depict ‘nameless’ nature, which was distinguished from existent nature with a proper name that *sansuhwa* generally depicts. This tendency implies that nature in representations was no longer an object from which the intelligentsia had to decipher the established traditional meanings, but a purely aesthetic object in which the observer experienced landscape itself without prior knowledge. Seo, ‘Geundaejeok Punggyeonghwaui Suyonggwa Baljeon’, 103–04. This tendency is often found in photographic imagery and paintings of the 1920s – a transition that had already emerged in Japanese visual culture. According to Li Takanori, linear perspective generated an epistemological regime that allowed the public to perceive actual space homogeneously. This visual regime in Japanese culture was established during the Meiji era, when landscape painters depicted unspecified locations rather than particular places. For an account of this topic in Japanese visual culture, see Li, *Hyōhō kūkan no kindai*, 57, 60, 278.