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PARTICIPATORY LEARNING SPACE: SOUTH
KOREAN EXPERIENCE

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MUSEUM AS A (DE)COLONIZING AGENCY AND PARTICIPATORY LEARNING SPACE: SOUTH KOREAN EXPERIENCE

Hong Lee

Seoul National University

Dae Joong Kang

Seoul National University

Seungeun Kim

Museum of Japanese Colonial History

Abstract

Seeing the museum as a public space for adult learning and education is not new, but always requires a contesting perspective when it comes to the continuing socio-political and historical oppression from colonial experiences. This paper explores the process of building a new history museum in South Korea that had suffered from Japanese colonial occupation from 1910 to 1945. The authors outline how the Center for Historical Truth and Justice (CHTJ), a vanguard civil organization dedicated to historical research on the Japanese colonial period and social action against colonialism, arrived at the 2018 opening of the Museum of Japanese Colonial History (MJCH) in Seoul. Generating and using a series of dialogues, suggested in institutional ethnography, the authors couple the topic of decolonization with the MJCH building process to interrogate the meaning of decolonization in contemporary South Korean society as well as learning for the identity formation of the new museum at the CHTJ. The paper discusses the museum educators' continuing performative role for public pedagogy to create the participatory museum.

Résumé

Bien que l'idée du musée comme espace public pour l'apprentissage et l'éducation des adultes ne soit guère nouvelle, elle demande toujours la présence d'une perspective opposée dans le contexte de l'oppression sociopolitique et historique des expériences coloniales qui se poursuit jusqu'à nos jours. Le présent article explore le processus de construction d'un nouveau musée de l'histoire en Corée du Sud, qui a souffert de l'occupation coloniale japonaise de 1910 à 1945. Le texte raconte comment le Center for Historical Truth and Justice (CHTJ), un organisme civil à l'avant-garde

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voué à la recherche historique sur la période coloniale du Japon et sur les actions sociales contre le colonialisme, s'est retrouvé au Museum of Japanese Colonial History (MJCH) lors de son ouverture en 2018 à Seoul. En générant et en utilisant une série de dialogues suggérés par l'ethnographie institutionnelle, ce texte associe la question de la décolonisation au processus de construction du MJCH afin d'interroger la signification de la décolonisation dans la société sud-coréenne contemporaine et d'approfondir les connaissances sur la formation de l'identité du nouveau musée au CHTJ. Cet article aborde le rôle toujours performatif du personnel éducatif de musée dans le contexte de la pédagogie publique et de la création de ce musée participatif.

Introduction: Museum and Colonialism

Building a new museum is one answer to the questions of what to remember from the past and how to educate for the future. It is also a collective action intertwined with identities, historicity, and often socio-political controversy, which in turn reveal the given society's orientations and values in symbolic form. It is a project embedded in what Jordan and Weedon (1995) called "cultural politics," a questioning of "Whose culture shall be the official one and whose shall be subordinated? What culture shall be regarded as worthy of display and which shall be hidden? Whose history shall be remembered and whose forgotten?" (p. 4, emphasis in original). It is also a matter of designing a publicly accessible place and space to achieve learning outcomes through archives, exhibits, and activities among participants. The museum is one of the most prominent educational institutions for exercising public pedagogy (Borg, Cauchi, & Mayo, 2003; Borg & Mayo, 2010; Giroux, 2000, 2003, 2004; Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2009).

In this paper, we focus on the Center for Historical Truth and Justice (CHTJ), a vanguard civil organization dedicated to researching, documenting, and taking actions to correct the historical record regarding the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–1945). After publishing books on the Korean collaborators' deeds during the occupation and leading social action with the South Korean public for over two decades, the organization recently opened the Museum of Japanese Colonial History (MJCH) on August 29, 2018, in Seoul, South Korea. On the same date of 1910, Japan annexed the Korean peninsula. As an outcome of the CHTJ's efforts, the MJCH is the first civil museum in South Korea founded solely by private citizens' individual contributions (Kim, 2018).

Modernization of Korea on a large scale began with the forced annexation by imperial Japan, including the construction of modern museums. However, the 36 years of Japanese occupation are also engraved as a time of acute pain and sorrow for those who were exploited by the colonial government (Choe & Gladstone, 2018; Lee, 2019). The current generation is left grappling with the legacy of colonialism by facing it squarely. It is their destiny to construct a new identity for the future. The museum, as not just a repository of the static past but a symbolic space reflecting the ongoing negotiation of the given society's conflicts, has a special role in this identity work.

According to Karatani (2017), the formation of modern museums in Japan was an effort to represent and institutionalize the history of Japan as a system of fine art. He noted, "Okakura [the founder of the Tokyo School of Art in 1889] had to view 'the East' as one autonomous world. Furthermore, that world was possible only in art" (p. 71). This

observation illuminates an important link between the museum and Japanese imperialism. First, Japan established a vision to discern itself from the West and created a new national identity by inventing and visualizing its history through the establishment of museums. In other words, museums were the discursive apparatus and arena for imagining and searching for a new Japanese self-identity. Museums were where the imaginary community was formed and maintained. Second, imperial Japan justified its expansion and consolidation of East Asia with this new nationalist identity. Japan imagined itself as the protector of East Asia against the expansion of the European empire. For Karatani, this “oneness” of identity of Asian countries would not have been spoken with such confidence “without Japan’s military victory” in the Russo-Japanese war (pp. 73–74). Moreover, this vision was maintained by the modern discipline of art and the institution of the museum.

The museum in Korea assisted in what could be conceived of as the modernization of Korea. The first few museums in Korea were founded by the Governor-General of Chosen, the chief agency of the Japanese colonial government in the Korean peninsula, on the palace grounds of the fallen Joseon dynasty. They exhibited relics, artworks, and modern objects ordered, classified, and rearranged to exemplify colonial government, reinforce a single identity of East Asia, and spread Japanese imperial ideology (e.g. Choi, 1999; Guk, 2013; Lee, 2004; Park, 2009). The process of modernization may have cast a progressive image of the society, but it was entwined with the dark pages of Korean history. Modernization in the name of industrialization and urbanization during the post-colonial military dictatorship and authoritarian economic development was often paralleled with oppression and coerced acceptance. The Korean people, especially those who were socio-economically unprivileged, suffered from the despotism that arose through the weaving of modernization, enlightenment, and social progress (Hwang, 2006; Kim, 2016). In post-colonial South Korea, so-called colonial modernity has been at work everywhere (Yang & Choi, 1999).

Museums for the most part hegemonically exhibit history from the victor’s perspective. However, if today’s museum is to no longer belong to this type of socio-political hegemony, as Mouffe (2013) envisaged, then we in South Korea need to answer a question, posed by Yoon (2004, p. 249): “Doesn’t the characteristic quality of ‘colonial modernity’ reveal itself in the form of oppression and acceptance?” Yoon was querying how the continued reproduction of colonial structures in South Korea is made possible by the colonial episteme, and vice versa. In the museum context, this is a question of how we can decolonize Korean museums and make them contribute to decolonizing the colonial episteme in the wider society. It is challenging work, not just devising a new form of curatorship/pedagogy, but creating a different museum to exercise and achieve decolonized agency in the field. This is similar to the work of Pollock (2007), who called for the re-framing of the modern museum. Because “we inherit histories which position us...we can think about them, deconstruct their terms, and displace the boundaries in a constant work that neither idolizes nor decries but reworks the inherent possibilities of the museum as public space” (p. 2). Decolonization is, in the end, a task of moving beyond the thought and practice based on the modernist, colonial dual categories such as dominance versus subordination, collaboration versus resistance, and technical modernity versus liberational modernity. It requires creating something new, something different. Decolonization is about deconstruction and reconstruction.

In this paper, we position the decolonizing practices of museums as active spaces of pedagogy not to rediscover the educational value of the museum, but to follow the line of thought that critical researchers and practitioners recently have paved for the active role

of adult and lifelong education in the museum (e.g. Borg et al., 2003; Clover, Sanford, & Bell, 2016; Clover, Sanford, & Butterwick, 2013; Mastai, 2007; Mayo, 2013). For example, Clover (2018) exemplified critical reflective learning activities among participants in art museums around the issues of environmental protection, war, and conflicts. Borg et al. (2003) problematized the space of the national museum from a critical perspective and addressed the renegotiation of the hegemonic relationship between the exhibition and surrounding community members. The so-called community-engaged curator is to "announce a pedagogy based on the realisation that horizontal interactions with communities are essentially educational in nature" (Borg & Mayo, 2018, p. 113). Other researchers also shed light on the learning aspects of the museum from the visitor's experience in terms of social participation (Silverman, 2010; Simon, 2010), museum pedagogy (Hein, 1998), visitor analysis (Falk & Dierking, 2013), and the museum's active role in society (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2007; Weil, 2002).

Taking a critical approach in viewing the museum as a pedagogical institute, the purpose of this paper is to explore the building process of the MJCH, including founding organization CHTJ's longtime social movement, to overcome the remnants of the Japanese occupation of Korea in terms of making meaning of decolonization in the South Korean museum and society. More often than not, decolonization in Korea concerns the collective recognition of imperial Japan's colonial oppression as a matter of truth and responsibility. However, decolonization has never found a viable resolution, nor a clear-cut boundary in history. The issue becomes more complicated with Korean collaborators with Japan who survived in contemporary South Korea. We would like to couple the topic of decolonization with the MJCH building process to interrogate how the meaning of it was deployed, for decolonization was an object of reflection and learning to the CHTJ.

We posed the following two questions to examine the CHTJ's historical journey to build the MJCH. First, how did the CHTJ as a civil organization dedicated to a social movement of decolonization arrive at opening and operating the museum? We explored this trajectory in parallel with the broader Korean socio-political development to capture the social meaning of decolonization. Second, what kinds of values, ideologies, and concepts were colliding in the process of opening the MJCH? We assumed that these interactive issues provided ample collective learning opportunities for CHTJ's staff to form and develop the identity of the MJCH, which cannot but reflect the negotiation and reconciliation with the concept of decolonization.

Note on Method

The data we generated, collected, and used in this study are mainly from a series of dialogues. These dialogues were what Smith (2005) called "experiential accounts [that are] permeated with the social relations and social organization" (p. 129), the "primary dialogue" (p. 142) of institutional ethnography. Our methodical approach can be categorized as institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005, 2006), since we collected and analyzed (inter-)individual utterances to explicate the museum as a social institution. We address how the CHTJ and MJCH as a pedagogical institution have contested the given practice of the museum that was established and reinforced throughout colonial and post-colonial Korean society. This approach seems to be a bit different from the typical institutional ethnography study that treats experiential accounts as an entry point to disclosing the ruling relations that

organize and coordinate people's everyday experience (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). Unlike the typical institutional ethnography that approaches the data in terms of the dichotomy of emancipatory versus regulatory social relations (Walby, 2007), we connected our experiential accounts with the discourse of decolonization/deconstruction of the existing museum practice for "the secondary dialogue" (Smith, 2005, p. 142). In other words, we treated the primary dialogue in this study not as containers of the hidden social relations, but as generative utterances to "open up the possibility of being resistant, transformative, and contestable" (Giroux, 2000, p. 356). This approach enabled us to contour and interpret the trajectory of the CHTJ and MJCH toward a new museum learning and public pedagogy (Giroux, 2000, 2003, 2004; Sandlin et al., 2009).

Three types of dialogue happened during the preparation period of the MJCH opening. Firstly, the first and third authors worked as key staff members of the CHTJ. The first author joined the CHTJ as a visitor program designer six months before the opening of the MJCH. The third author has been working for CHTJ as an archivist since the late 1990s. The first and third authors carried on a series of dialogue with each other to construct the CHTJ's institutional and historical experience toward the establishment of the MJCH, which took place in seven sessions from March to November of 2018. The transcript of the dialogues, mostly reflective narratives about the CHTJ's history, was shared with the second author, who led the analysis from the perspective of decolonization. Secondly, the first and third authors also organized a series of working group dialogues with the entire staff of the CHTJ to explore the insiders' thoughts on various topics regarding the MJCH opening preparation. The working group dialogues took place with four groups for eight weeks. Thirdly, we also obtained internal documents related to weekly staff meetings and advisory committee meetings. The internal documents we used in this study contained the verbatim transcriptions of the meetings.

The Museum as a Site of Decolonized Learning

Reflectively Situating the CHTJ Beginning in Recent History of South Korea

In 1995, 50 years after liberation in 1945, South Koreans demolished the old colonial government building, a symbol of Japanese occupation, on the palace grounds of the Joseon dynasty in Seoul. As the building had housed the National Museum since 1986, it also represented delayed decolonization efforts in South Korea. The demolition happened in the middle of significant socio-political transitions in South Korea, starting with the student-led June Struggle of 1987. Political power was handed over from military dictators to democratically elected civilians, and numerous democratization measures were adopted. A new wave of decolonization movements was imminent as victims of forced mobilization under Japanese occupation began to speak out. In 1991, Haksun Kim broke the silence and came forth to testify about her life as a sexual slave in Japanese military camps during the Pacific War. Until then, war crimes had never been told, not even by the victims themselves, and remained part of an unspeakable history. The CHTJ was founded in 1991. Built on the late historian Jongguk Lim's archive of Korean collaborators with imperial Japan, the CHTJ set its mission to continue to document the collaborators and propagate the social movement against colonialism ("Chwi-ji-yeon-hyeok," n.d.).

In the 2000s, there were escalating calls to address social justice and human rights issues during the past military regime. Politics also reflected such an air of change, and state-wide initiatives to reveal and correct the dark history of Korea began. A series of national commissions were initiated to shed light on the deeds and records of personal victims of the military regime, followed by subsequent movements for decolonization. The Commission on Verification and Support for the Victims of Forced Mobilization under Japanese Colonialism, the Committee for the Inspection of Collaboration with Imperial Japan, and the Commission on Support for the Victims of Forced Mobilization to Foreign Countries by Imperial Japan during the Pacific War were organized in 2004, 2005, and 2008, respectively, each to reveal and come to terms with Japanese violence perpetrated during the colonial period.

CHTJ's Early Exhibitions as Social Movement

In the late 1990s through early 2000s, the CHTJ, at the forefront of the decolonization movement, became interested in public exhibition enterprises. The primary mission of the CHTJ was to finalize and publish the *Biographical Dictionary of Pro-Japanese Collaborators* (henceforward, the *Dictionary*). On the other hand, the CHTJ was also searching for new ways to share its work with the general public once the *Dictionary* was published. The exhibition was one of the activities the CHTJ found to be useful. In these early years, their exhibitions were crudely made in a rush. Exhibits were mostly cardboard panels on which pictures were attached by hand. The materials were cut from old magazines and blown up in copier machines. In the same fashion, collaborators' writings in praise of imperial Japan were reprinted without commentary or explanation. As the CHTJ staff considered exhibitions as easy and simple social outlets, they did not have high expectations or sophisticated plans for the displays.

Surprisingly, Korean audiences demonstrated a powerful affinity for these crude exhibitions. The response was nothing less than shocking. Some of the exhibitions toured even to Pyongyang, North Korea. The CHTJ estimates that up to 300,000 people visited the early exhibitions, which remains the record draw for its exhibition efforts. The CHTJ's exhibitions sparked a hidden historical sensibility in the public. In some of the local communities where the exhibitions toured, people volunteered to propagate the *Dictionary* in their neighbourhood. Some people came to know the pro-Japanese collaborators from their hometowns through the exhibitions. With their proven success and effectiveness, the CHTJ's exhibitions increased in scale and encompassed a broader range of topics. From 1995 to 2015, the CHTJ presented over 30 exhibitions, and in 2015 alone, there were as many as three special exhibitions. Based on the accumulated experience, the CHTJ announced its vision for a permanent exhibition space in 2011 ("Sik-min-ji-yeok-sa-bak-mul-gwan," 2017).

CHTJ's successful exhibitions are related to the social atmosphere of the time. In the late 1990s, the CHTJ started to publish a number of books, including *Chinilpa 99in* (*Ninety-nine Pro-Japanese Collaborators*, 1993) and *Cheongsanhaji Motan Yeoksa* (*Unresolved History*, 1994). These efforts were reactions against the retrogressive neo-conservatism of the era, which sprouted not only in Korea but also in Japan. Starting in the early 1980s, the Japanese government contested its past violence by amending its public-school history textbooks to whitewash its imperial history (Guex, 2015; Shin & Sneider, 2011). In

the 1990s, some historians emphasized the positive effects of Japanese colonialism, asserting that Korea was modernized through Japanese assistance (e.g., Kohli, 1994; Lim, 1999). We think this emphasis not only caused an academic debate (e.g., Haggard, Kang, & Moon, 1997) but to a degree redeemed political leaders connected to pro-Japanese collaboration. With these leaders, a totalitarian ideology recurred in the forms of patriotism and anti-communism in post-colonial Korean politics. A case in point is the late president Park Chung-hee, an ex-officer of the Japanese Army during the colonial era. He is one of the most prominent figures of the *Dictionary*. Park assumed political power by a coup d'état in 1961. Obsessed by anti-communism and patriotism, Park and his successors suppressed freedom of speech and tortured and imprisoned political dissidents. They even committed a civilian massacre, the deadliest crush of the Gwangju Democratic Uprising in 1980.

Decolonization in its Broader Meaning and Learning Within

The recurrence of state violence under the military dictatorship was similar to the abuse of power by the colonial army and police. Decolonization, therefore, has to do with the human rights issue and socio-political democratization. Decolonization, coupled with human rights, came to be understood in a broader contemporary South Korean context beyond the historical issue of the past. The social sympathy toward the victims of the Japanese colonial era found solidarity with those of the post-colonial state violence. As such, the CHTJ's activity was a part of the broader human rights movement. Exhibitions by the CHTJ functioned as communal sites for sharing sympathy and struggle for an identity against long-standing colonialism in South Korea. Touring exhibitions provided gathering places for the local public to express, share, and sympathize with its hitherto unspoken emotions.

The CHTJ's exhibitions were chosen under the influence of and as a reaction to heightened civil authority, a new social focus on state violence, and conservative views of history. The exhibition was a space for sympathetic consensus to grow. In this regard, we think the MJCH, as an outcome of the CHTJ's efforts, is not an institution to educate and enlighten the public, but an engine for the struggle, negotiation, and learning that happen, propagate, and are promoted within CHTJ. The preparation period of the MJCH provided learning opportunities for the CHTJ. The learning was situated (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the recent South Korean context of overcoming an aggressor-victim dichotomy and moving toward an inquiry into existential understanding. The learning was also reflective (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Miller, 2000) in the form of internal questioning to search for an identity of the new museum. The MJCH symbolizes the learning outcome of the decolonization process, not only for the CHTJ itself but for South Korean society.

Two Discourses in Dispute: Didactic versus Participatory Museum

A Struggle Within

After the announcement of its plans for the MJCH in 2011, the CHTJ raised a total of \$1.25 million (equivalent US\$), a number suggesting a highly successful campaign that is unheard of in South Korean social movements. In addition, CHTJ members donated around \$115,000 (equivalent US\$) per month on average. Helped by this fundraising success, the

MJCH could define itself as the first museum in South Korea to be opened based solely on the support of private citizens, without any need for monetary aid from the government.

Apart from the financial aspect, the CHTJ had to cope with a philosophical challenge from deep within. The problem was to negotiate with the idea of the museum that the CHTJ staff had maintained for so long, an ideal that an educated person can influence and change the general public. The CHTJ leadership is primarily dependent on history researchers, in whose minds the museum is a device for spreading necessary knowledge to the general public. Especially for the senior members, the exhibition was regarded as another classroom teaching-like activity. One staff member asserted, "I think we shouldn't give too much focus on the second floor [where the exhibition was planned]. What is a museum to us researchers? The second-floor space isn't for the researchers. For us, it is the fifth floor [where classrooms were planned]" (working group dialogue, April 12, 2018).

On the other hand, exhibition programs in the past were handled by the field activists in the organization, who valued the inherent quality of exhibition as a space for social communication. Although the activists clearly showed a different mindset from the senior staff and historians who proposed a community kimchi-making event in the MJCH to attract people (internal document of staff meeting, April 12, 2018), the activists still lacked understanding of their experience in terms of learning and different forms of education when they thought of a museum as an extension of a textbook. One activist argued, "If the *Dictionary* is abstract, the museum is concrete. The lives of the people in the *Dictionary* should be unfolded [through exhibits]" (working group dialogue, April 12, 2018). However, those activists did not have a clear understanding of why the exhibitions had drawn so many people and resulted in unexpected outcomes in the past.

Moreover, this lack of understanding caused uneasy feelings among some staff about the MJCH project. One staff member stated, "I feel confused about our organization. It began [with the notion of] the research as a social movement, but it has been changing gradually. I want to see this [the opening of MJCH] as a soft landing, but don't we need to establish a new value [for CHTJ]?" (working group dialogue, March 29, 2018). Other staff felt that the efforts could not re-enact a social response like in the past. Also, looking into the future, there was widespread concern within CHTJ about their readiness to open themselves up to the public. Until this point, they had been connected only to highly motivated adults who had actively sought out their exhibits. Once the museum opened, however, visitor demographics would be considerably different. They would have to deal with young children, families, students, and casual visitors who might not be interested in the CHTJ's agenda.

Most staff agreed that the CHTJ had to reorient itself toward a broader public, but they were very uncertain about what could be done and whether the change would be worth the risk of endangering their integrity. In one of the working group dialogues, when asked to speak about the education programs for the future museum, a participant responded, "[By education], do you mean programs for kids?" Another said, "Members, children, and students. Everyone is important, of course, but personally, I saw too much disturbing fuss...[I wish everyone would] think more about an intellectual audience rather than the general public or sightseers" (working group dialogue, April 12, 2018). They knew that young visitors were crucial customers in the long run, but at the same time, they were feeling inexperienced and at a loss and would rather have kept their focus on their existing demographic and shut their doors to potential new visitors.

As many adult educators have noted, reluctance to change when facing a new challenge is a common obstacle to both individual and organizational learning (e.g., Boud & Walker, 1993; Mezirow & Associates, 1990). Museums are no exception, especially for those with a long authoritative history (Simon, 2016). This challenge was of fundamental importance to the CHTJ, which identified itself as and took pride in being an organization sustained by citizens. How do we define public participation, to what limit, and who are the “public” whom we serve? The MJCH was the battleground where the CHTJ’s identity was challenged and reconstructed, rather than a safe place to keep and honour their past achievement.

Unlearning: Four Models of the New Museum

All of the concerns of the CHTJ staff boiled down to the dilemma between the ideas of the didactic versus the participatory models of their museum. The former considers the museum as a conduit to convey expert knowledge to the public. It reflects a research organization’s identity. The latter think of the museum as a space open to and responsible for the public. The museum itself is what the staff and the public create together. This dilemma was revealed in its preliminary conceptual models of the museum under review. There were three different models before arriving at the final, current one. The internal document prepared for the advisory meeting on June 22, 2018, outlined the three previous models. The models were not chronologically ordered, but demonstrated the progression of the organization’s thinking.

The first model was called the “History Museum of People’s Lives,” highlighting the lives of ordinary people of the colonial era. With this model, which was born out of the success of early shows, the CHTJ wanted to reinvoke the social response that previous exhibitions provided. The idea was to present the lives of ordinary people in history up front so that visitors would associate their own experiences with the ones in the past. At the heart of this model was the call for overcoming the conventional and didactic museum pedagogy that tried to deliver as many historical facts as possible to highlight the struggle between Japan and Korea.

The second model was titled “Museum of Japanese Aggression” or “Museum of the History of Collaboration.” With this, the CHTJ moved back closer to a conventional historical framework. It aimed to represent the brutal violence under colonial rule and to position history as a conflict between Korea and Japan. This approach was based on the belief that historical facts and artifacts to prove them would be the best sources of learning. This would reflect the traditional idea of museum education.

The third model resembled an academic institution, within which the CHTJ saw its museum exhibition as an extended form of public lectures. These programs had been regularly organized and well managed ever since the CHTJ was founded. This was also the most familiar format for both the internal staff and their well-acquainted customers. However, it overlooked the inherent and distinct potential of the exhibition as a new format of education.

While the second and third models followed the traditional idea of education and educational institutions, there was a fourth idea, namely the “Citizen’s Hall of Historical Justice.” This model, a continuation of the first model to a degree, was the first concrete vision of the current MJCH that was developed in parallel with the practical planning for it. This

model embodied CHTJ's fundraising campaign slogan, "The Museum Built by Citizens." With the slogan, the museum was conceived as the site for social action supported by the community. Using the term *colonial* deliberately in its final name—the Museum of Japanese Colonial History—was quite a bold move, for it was reminiscent of painful historic defeat. This decision was intended to evoke the sympathetic reflection of the viewers by bringing to the fore an examination of life under colonial rule. It also called for an awareness of the contemporary issue of ongoing colonialism and ever-growing neo-conservatism.

Internal debate on how to name the museum illustrates how CHTJ staff tried to earn a socially approved identity. One staff member demanded that the public be invited to propose the name: "This [public participation] process could not be skippable because we have been speaking of building a museum by the hands of the citizens." Another staff member cautioned, "Even the expert historians try to confine us in a narrow scope...won't it [open submission] confine us to their fixed idea [of historical justice]?" (transcript of staff meeting, June 26, 2018) In a sense, this is another example of how the idea of didactic and participatory collided in the CHTJ.

As we have seen, the CHTJ's idea of museum education swung back and forth between the didactic and the participatory models. From a broader perspective, resolving the dilemma between these models could be seen as a process of unlearning the traditional concept. It is the image of the museum that is superimposed by nationalism and state power, which originated in the colonial period and stayed on during the totalitarian era that followed. Establishing a new concept of the museum was an internal struggle for the CHTJ to answer the question of how and for whom does a museum exist.

Toward a New Identity and Independence

In 2011, when the MJCH was first envisioned, it was considered a joint enterprise between the CHTJ and the Seoul Metropolitan Government. The latter was to provide budget and space, whereas the former was to provide the content and operation. The talks between the two parties began with the vision to make use of the old Seodaemun Prison site, the symbolic place of state violence built by the Japanese colonial government and used as a state prison until the 1980s. Though the talks continued for about a year, CHTJ finally scrapped the plan and decided not to rely on government aid due to the systematized bureaucracy that prevented the development plan from going forward. Instead of entrusting itself to the government, the CHTJ ventured into the open fundraising campaign to free itself from state ideology and authority.

When the MJCH held soft openings for a month before the grand opening, there were characteristics of conventional museum display, which still reflects didactic curatorship. The display seemed to hinder a spontaneous engagement of the viewers with the historical narrative. An advisor recommended more blank space and less text for a visitor to reflect on their learning. Another recommended that panel texts be written with questions so that visitors could build their own arguments (internal document of advisory meeting, July 4, 2019). Many staff members of the CHTJ still saw themselves as history researchers or purveyors of knowledge and information.

Despite these limitations, signs of change were evident. The MJCH made guided tours as the default format of visitation to promote communication between staff and visitors. All members of the organization, without exception, were to take equal turns leading the tours

and meeting visitors. With a display renewed during the soft opening period, staff tried to evoke strong sympathy in today's visitors with victims of the past by placing the victims' voices and narratives in the fore. The CHTJ believes that communication and interaction are the best way for visitors to learn. Its well-matured membership program and strong financial status have been crucial in securing the CHTJ's independence and in its transition from a didactic to the participatory institution.

Discussion

Relying on the Foucauldian concept of power and knowledge, Hooper-Greenhill (1992) raised a series of questions to propose an idea of post-museum: "What counts as knowledge in the museum?...What is the role of the visitor and what is the role of the curator?...How are 'museums' constructed as objects? Or, what counts as a museum?" (p. 3) These were enduring questions on the path to the opening of the MJCH. The CHTJ's publication and exhibition efforts to overcome colonialism in South Korea involved learning to answer those questions. This learning undoubtedly paralleled a broader social movement for democracy.

We think the MJCH is the new agency in the ecology of South Korean museums, for it is a "public" museum founded solely by the donations of citizens for public causes, such as socio-historical justice, democracy, and human rights. Those buzzwords are often converged into decolonization in South Korean society. Since adopting an exhibition as the experimental format for social movement in its early days, the CHTJ learned that exhibition helped mobilize a community of supporters, which involved an identity formation around sympathy for the victims of colonial and post-colonial Korea. The identity of the MJCH is not confirmed through a predesigned didactic display, as the pain and sorrow of the victims are hardly representable and deliverable through a packaged display. In a sense, learning with "difficult knowledge" needs a different museum structure, as Frenkel (2007) noted:

It requires art practices and museum structures that allow space and time for difficult knowledge to remain dilemmatic, unresolvable, evoked rather than stated and made present to the imagination through a mix of absence, indirection, and incompleteness that brings the viewer out of passivity, and makes the world, the world of art, scholarship, and social engagement, a place where the difficult is understood to be at home. (p. 129)

The MJCH was an outcome of the CHTJ's internal dilemma and negotiation. Being a participatory museum is not about being agile and keen to develop a social agenda or executing interactive programs designed for specific audiences. Instead, it requires a radical reimagination of the museum. It requires learning to deconstruct the given artifacts, thoughts, and even the museum itself. Therefore, museums are "dangerous sites" where we are allowed to "actively engage in history and participate in the making of its meaning... [as a result] to enter into a fresh relationship with the past so we can assume responsibility, feel connected, and claim it as our own" (Lee, 2009, p. 292). The CHTJ learned and is still learning to cope with challenges to make the MJCH open and participatory.

This learning is pivoting around the concept of decolonization. Decolonization work, in the case of the CHTJ and MJCH, was expanded to include participation in struggles for pursuing social justice in evolving socio-political contexts. By this extension, CHTJ could

move beyond the dichotomy of false versus correct and/or acceptance versus resistance. This work is closely related to the notion of public pedagogy that is "designed to understand the social context of everyday life as lived relations of power" (Giroux, 2000, p. 355). The CHTJ's experience tells us that decolonization of the museum is not limited to its curatorial content. By beginning its exhibition experiments and discovering the museum as a practical *form* of social engagement, the CHTJ was able to concentrate on self-reflection, internal politics, and negotiation, resulting in the MJCH as a decolonization agency. In this sense, decolonization is in the *form* of how we look at and speak about history. To read cultural sites and phenomena as the act of speech was a strategy of public pedagogy. Giroux (2000) understood agency as "the linking of capacities to the ability of people to intervene in and change social *forms* [emphasis added]" (p. 353). According to Barthes (1957/1972), "The more a system is specifically defined in its *forms* [emphasis added], the more amenable it is to historical criticism" (p. 111). By focusing on *form* rather than content, stripping the conventional meanings from concepts is made possible. Decolonization in the museum is all about enacting, not negating, the colonial period to be discovered, contextualized, contested, and reimagined. It requires the ceaseless *performance* of the museum educator. Judith Mastai wrote about the museum educator's working condition in her unpublished essay "Performing the Museum: Education, Negotiation, Art Galleries and their Publics":

I now describe it as a performance in the sense that, every day in many ways, my colleagues and I are engaged in performing a continually emerging institutional subjectivity. Change is not an interlude, but a condition of our work...Setting the stage for the negotiation of transformative possibilities rather than rehearsing old certainties is the mark of a contemporary museological practice. (as cited in Frenkel, 2007, p. 124)

This performance is possible by connecting with the everyday lives of the contemporary museum participant. This is also a way of opening up a new dimension of museum pedagogy beyond truth claims and curatorial disciplines.

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