



The First Images of Korea in Spanish Media: von Hesse-Wartegg and Sanín Cano

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The image of Korea among Hispanic speakers has seen enormous changes during the 20th and 21st centuries. This article looks at the first photographically illustrated reports from Korea published during the first decade of the 20th century in the magazine *Hojas Selectas. Revista para todos* (Madrid–Barcelona) in 1902 and 1910. It was a publication that also was disseminated throughout Latin America. In particular, we compare photographs of Korea taken by Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg, an Austrian traveler, with a set of anonymous images included in an essay by the Colombian diplomat Bartolomé Sanín Cano. These illustrated reports came right at the time of changes that the Joseon dynasty underwent in an effort to avoid Japanese colonization, along with a growing interest in getting to know the “other.” Hence the different perspectives adopted by an Austrian author and a Colombian one, and their possible impact on Spanish-speaking audiences, are explored here.

TWO VIEWS OF KOREA

The importance of images as a means to disseminate information is fundamental. In the era of the internet and various mobile applications, the production, circulation, consumption, and photographic analysis of events, people, places, and cultures have become an integral part of our daily lives. This production and dissemination of images however is nothing new. In the era of picture-postcards, roughly the first half of the 20th century, there was also an interest in disseminating images, although objectives, means, and messages differed from current ones.

During the 19th century Spanish newspapers and magazines, which were usually distributed throughout the Spanish-speaking world, would occasionally

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mention the Kingdom of Korea. Aside from special attention to attacks on Christian missionaries, these references mainly dealt with the tensions between Russia, Japan, and China that were centered on the Korean Peninsula. Toward the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th, however, Korea itself became the central topic of several reports illustrated with photographs. Events, such as the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and then the Russo-Japanese War (1904), with all their preliminary prolegomena and aftermath, captured the public's attention and prompted an interest in viewing the Korean reality with photographs and prints.

The production and dissemination of images of Korea began with the arrival of cameras on the peninsula with the first Western travelers and their publications. The genre of travelogs had much to do with the dissemination of the early Korean images at that time, as proven by Percival Lowell's works or extensive collections of tourist postcards, for example. In relation to these travelogs, there already exist some studies that analyze and focus on the cultural stances from which the early travelers, mainly Anglo-American and German speakers, described Korea and Korean people (e.g. Hong 2010; Kim 2004, 2006; Ko 2005; Park 2002). Nevertheless, the photographs taken by these travelers have not gained much attention in academic circles (Kwon 2013; Pai 2014, 2016). Pai Hyung Il suggests some of the main reasons for that lack of attention: "This is because for more than a century anthropologists, as well as curators, whose academic backgrounds and training focused on highlighting the antiquity and beauty of sculptural arts, ceramics, paintings, and exotic objects had not understood the technological, artistic, and ethnographic value of photographic archives" (2016). Photos have nevertheless been one of the media used to learn and develop a visual imagination of the world since the mid-19th century by people who had no means to travel the world themselves. It became a widely used tool of the early travelers and researchers of the "Orient" interested in documenting the reality of those places, people often supported by state institutions with an interest in Oriental regions (Behdad 2016). The simplification of production, thanks to the Kodak camera, and the interest of colonial powers in using images for their purposes multiplied the number of photos on subjects and landscapes of these colonial spaces (Landau 2002). Some of the photos then became the material for different media productions, like magazines, books, postcards, etc., challenging and even transforming the original meaning and/or intention that motivated their taking in the first place (De Saint-Ours 2021).

The study of production and circulation of the first images of Korea in the Hispanic world has not attracted academic attention until now, though we can show the effects of circulation in the reinterpretation of images, sometimes from an anti-imperialist stance. This study thus argues that the commercial setting of *Hojas Selectas* not only reproduced an Orientalist discourse but also offered a platform for the introduction of an anti-imperialist visual discourse, through reinterpretation of circulating images, at a moment when Spanish-speaking audiences were still forming their understanding of Korea and its people.

This article aims to analyze the introduction of the first images of Korea in the Hispanic press, as a first step toward understanding the process of constructing discourse on Korea in the Spanish-speaking world. The article focuses on the discourse and photographs that illustrate the articles produced by von Hesse-Wartegg and Sanín Cano. Both reports, published in the magazine *Hojas Selectas. Revista para todos*, are remarkable as being the first published photographic collection from Korea in the Spanish press. Furthermore, these photos are presented in that magazine to illustrate extensive reports entirely devoted to Korea, one produced by von Hesse-Wartegg, ten pages long and with eleven photographs taken by the author himself (Hesse-Wartegg 1902, 609–619), and another by Sanín Cano, which has five pages and includes six images (Sanín Cano 1910, 945–949). Thus, to understand the image projected in the articles we need to consider the relationship with the juxtaposed text (Polezzi 2012). Both articles were published in a monthly issue having about a hundred pages and later included in the annual compilation volume that was sold through subscription in Spanish-speaking countries. These then were the first images of Korea to be reach the Spanish-speaking public.

HOJAS SELECTAS. REVISTA PARA TODOS

The magazine *Hojas Selectas* (“Select Sheets”) and its contradictory subtitle *Revista para todos* (“Magazine for Everyone”) was a monthly publication, founded by Pablo Salvat and printed in Barcelona between 1902 and 1921. It soon became one of the most important illustrated magazines in Spain in that era. Page dimensions were 25.5 × 18.5 cm, with each issue generally having about a hundred pages, and a lot of space devoted to images. Each page had at least one photo or drawing, sometimes in different inks. Images could occupy a whole page, although more typically they ranged from 20 to 50 percent of a page. The magazine regularly reached Latin America through subscriptions handled by bookshops (Castellano 2005, 97–108).

One of the noted features of the magazine was the quantity of high-quality illustrations, including photographs, drawings, and prints both in color and b & w (in addition to advertisements). The articles ranged from politics to literature, with special attention paid to Latin American countries where the magazine was a great success. More specifically, it dealt with “folklore, stories, trips and travel, photography, women’s gazette, natural history, artistic information, scientific information, historical information, literature, dramatic literature, festive literature, music, comical cartoons, prose, poetry, contemporary politics, theater as well as traditions and legends” (Celma Valero 1991, 118). Among its contributors were notably American writers, such as Rubén Darío, so as to attract the Latin American readership.

Hojas Selectas welcomed articles covering various regions of the world, and East Asia was of course represented. The annual issue of 1902 included an article on China (Clark 1902, 42–51), as well as one on the Chinese and Japanese influence on European art (Bruning 1902, 513–528). Shorter notes on different

practices, but without images, such as men's hairdressers or windmills in China, were published. Furthermore, besides the article on Korea from 1902, the magazine published an extensive article (Anonymous 1907) on the Japanese occupation of Korea and even an article on Korean clothing. The editorial policy of the magazine, as well as its international reach in the American Republics, makes the articles and photographs on Korea especially important, as they were heavily involved in the construction of Korea's image throughout the Latin American world.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS BY VON HESSE-WARTEGG

The article "Corea, relación de viaje ilustrada con doce grabados, reproducciones de fotografías del autor" (Korea, illustrated travel records with twelve prints, reproduction of photographs by the author, 1902) was the first Spanish publication to present images of Korea. Baron Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg (1854–1918) was a prolific writer who, besides his diplomatic activities, published around 40 books. These he wrote when traveling to the places he described, such as Mexico and Andalusia, reading up on their history and sometimes interviewing local authorities (Trautmann 1984, 411). In fact, he was one of the best-known world travelers, travel writers, and scientists around the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th (Dutz and Dutz 2017). His book, *Korea: Eine Sommerreise nach dem Lande der Morgenruhe 1894. Mit zahlreichen Abbildungen und einer Spezialkarte Koreas mit den angrenzenden Ländern* (1895; "Korea: a summer journey to the land of the morning calm. With numerous illustrations and a special map of Korea and the neighboring countries"), was published a year after his trip; its original edition had 220 pages. The author acknowledged in its Preface that he had access to two key works on Korea at the end of the 19th century before making his trip, specifically *Histoire de l'Eglise de Corée précédée d'une introduction sur l'histoire, les institutions, la langue, les mœurs et coutumes coréennes: avec carte et planches* by Charles Dallet (1874), and also *Corea: The Hermit Nation* by Griffis (1894; originally 1882).

The collection of 29 photos taken by the Austrian noble in 1894 and appearing in his book on Korea forms, one of the oldest visual items for the study of 19th century Korea. Although von Hesse-Wartegg visited places already known to Europeans, his book is the first detailed description of Korea to appear in German (Lautensach 1945, 50). But this book was neither translated into Spanish nor published in Spain or Latin America, highlighting the focus of this study. Besides this collection of photos, there are 25 others taken by the American diplomat Percival Lowell, which illustrate his book *Chosön, the Land of the Morning Calm* (Lowell 1885). Both von Hesse-Wartegg and Lowell had photographed King Gojong, public officials, and ordinary people. They also took pictures of monuments and palaces, streets, and landscapes. Both these collections of photos circulated around Europe at the time the American's book appeared in London and Boston in 1885. The set of 11 photos included in von

Hesse-Wartegg's article were the first ones to reach the Spanish and Latin American public.

For a travel enthusiast like him, Korea was a great challenge to visit. He claimed (1895) that "Korea froze in time and, therefore, it now represents an immense opportunity." Thus the photos are presented as snaps of this frozen land. It should be noted that cameras were not everyday elements in Europe or America, and were much less common in Korea, as Kodak cameras were only patented in 1888.¹ Von Hesse-Wartegg's travels got him into some difficult situations; for example, when he tried to photograph a palace and several soldiers in uniform came to confront him, arms in hand, shouting at him and gesticulating whilst blocking his entry. Von Hesse-Wartegg kept the camera in its case then, as he thought that the guards might have mistaken it for a weapon or a bomb. However, the soldiers then acknowledged their unfounded fears and volunteered to be photographed, thereby being immortalized by the Europeans, as he narrated (*ibid.*, 44). Furthermore, the Austrian diplomat on several occasions mentions his Kodak, which always hung over his shoulder, even when sailing in a small boat to the island of Ganghwa (*ibid.*, 45).

KOREA AND THE KOREANS, AS SEEN BY VON HESSE-WARTEGG

Von Hesse-Wartegg presents Korea from an orientalist perspective, as one might expect, highlighting the otherness, the lack of autonomous historical transformation, and comparative inferiority to European countries or regions. The Austrian described Korea as a country frozen in time, a small China of the Ming dynasty still stuck in the 17th century. He went on to predict that if Korea were in the hands of "the West" it would have been able to "flourish extraordinarily." He believed that if Korea had been known to the Europeans earlier, it would have already become a prosperous country. For this reason, he regretted that Korea remained "completely closed" to foreigners until 1876.

The photographs that go with von Hesse-Wartegg's article are selected from his aforementioned book on his travels to Korea. This selection creates a visual description of the country, to include photographs related to King Gojong (a portrait, a photo of a royal procession, and a copy of a royal signature), landscapes (the Gates of Seoul, a beach in Busan), portraits (a man in "ordinary" costume, two portraits of women and a group of bureaucrats at the Ministry of Finance), and finally some objects (a palanquin, a string of cash). The choice of subjects and the framing of the photos support his interest in showing Korea as an exotic place, even though it is impossible to completely conceal certain Euro-American elements present in the images. These, along with the text, present readers with Korea as a country belonging to the Orient, and hence in need of external influences for its development. This is especially seen in the depiction of people and urban landscapes as well as in the representation of the Monarchy and their entourage. During von Hesse-Wartegg's stay in 1894, the country was governed by King Gojong, who the Austrian deemed a cowardly leader dominated by "women of his harem, eunuchs, priests and mandarins." The selection included one image of the sovereign, following the

prevailing pictorial tradition for the depiction of the royal figure (Figure 1), despite the King having already photographed himself and distributed a self-portrait in European clothes (Anonymous image 1890b). Von Hesse-Wartegg however chooses to highlight the traditional aspects of king and state.

In addition, a photograph of the royal procession, with the subtitle "The King touring the city," shows the royal palanquin surrounded by a bunch of servants, crossing the Gwangtonggyo Bridge over the Cheonggyecheon stream (Figure 2). This image shows two groups clearly differentiated by their clothing and location within the frame: there were members of the procession occupying the entire width of the bridge, showing their superiority in the way they march. In addition, children and pedestrians, identified by their white clothing, appear to be cleared from the main road to the extent that one of them had to get up on one of the pillars of the bridge so as to be able to see the procession.

In regard to the images of the cities, of both Seoul and Busan (Figures 3–5), the backwardness of the city and its lack of material development are emphasized. The figures show areas dominated by small and poor constructions, such as houses with thatched roofs, interspersed among buildings with tiled roofs. This choice by the author must be considered deliberate since other graphic evidence shows large numbers of buildings well-kept in thriving areas that prompt a different image.² This unrepresented diversity indicates



EL REY DE COREA

Figure 1 *The King of Korea (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

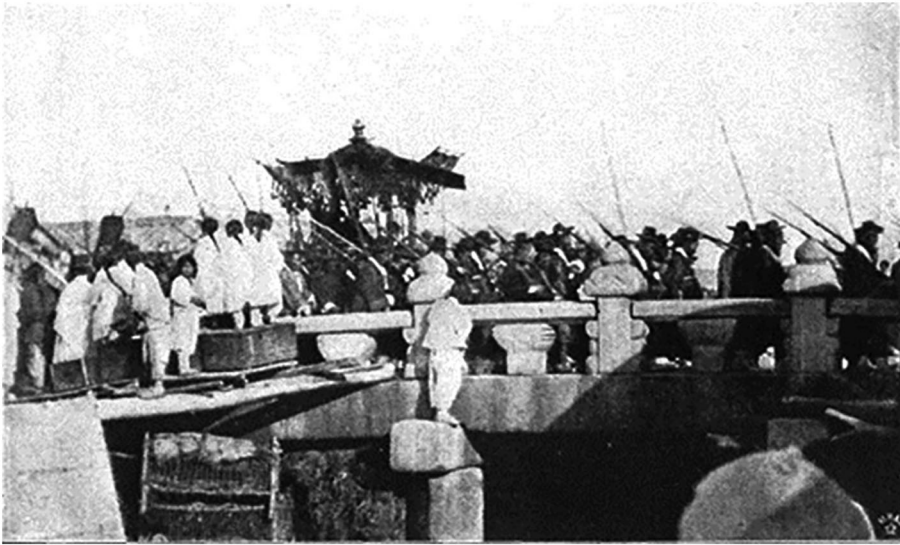


Figure 2 The King touring the city (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

editorializing in their selection, reflected in the publication of *Hojas Selectas*, to support the idea of a backward Korea.

On the other hand, the natural tendency of travelers to compare lands they visit with their own led von Hesse-Wartegg to suggest that the central part of Korea, around Seoul, reminded him of Franconia and Swabia, in southern Germany, and that the capital reminded him of Stuttgart: at the time Seoul too had around 350,000 or 400,000 inhabitants. The Korean climate also reminded him of Germany, although with more extreme temperatures, both in summer and winter. He praised the fertility of the soil in the southern parts.

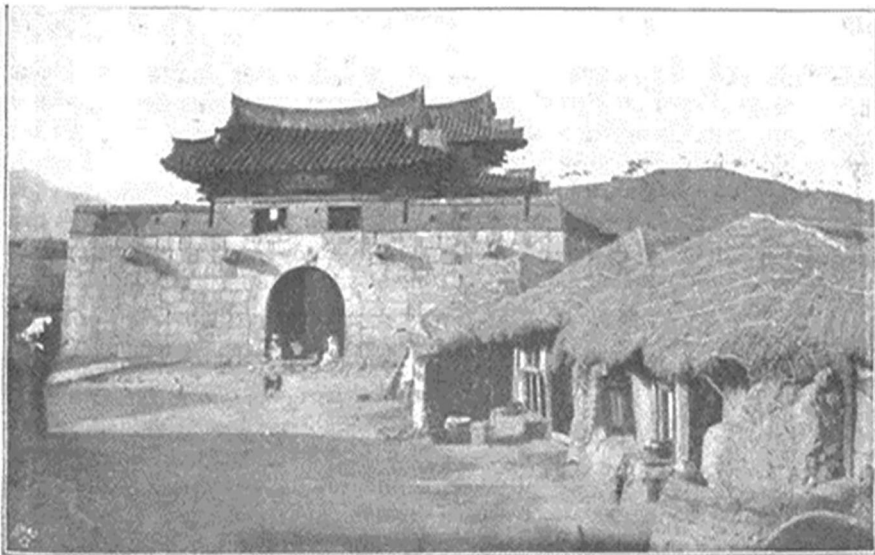
The image of alterity is reinforced with photos, such as the portrait of three bureaucrats titled "In the Ministry of Finance" (Figure 6). In this photo three men dressed as members of the *yangban* elite, differing vastly from the Western image of a ministry and its public officials, wearing ties in offices. Any representation of a Ministry of Finance at the end of 19th century in Europe or any representation of public servants in such ministries helps make the contrast that struck readers. However, despite the interest in showing the more exotic side of Korea, these photos cannot help but reflect on the introduction of Euro-American material culture in the peninsula. Thus the wall-clock inside the ministry.

Furthermore, von Hesse-Wartegg insisted that the administration was only in the hands of noblemen, for whom work was considered a dishonor. Several times in his article, he alluded to high public officials of the old administration, referred to here as "mandarins" (*Mandarine* in German)—the same word that was used for Chinese officials. To emphasize the brutality of Korean governors he pointed out that in 1866 the King ordered the slaughter of French missionaries and "2000 indigenous Christians." He also castigated Koreans as being



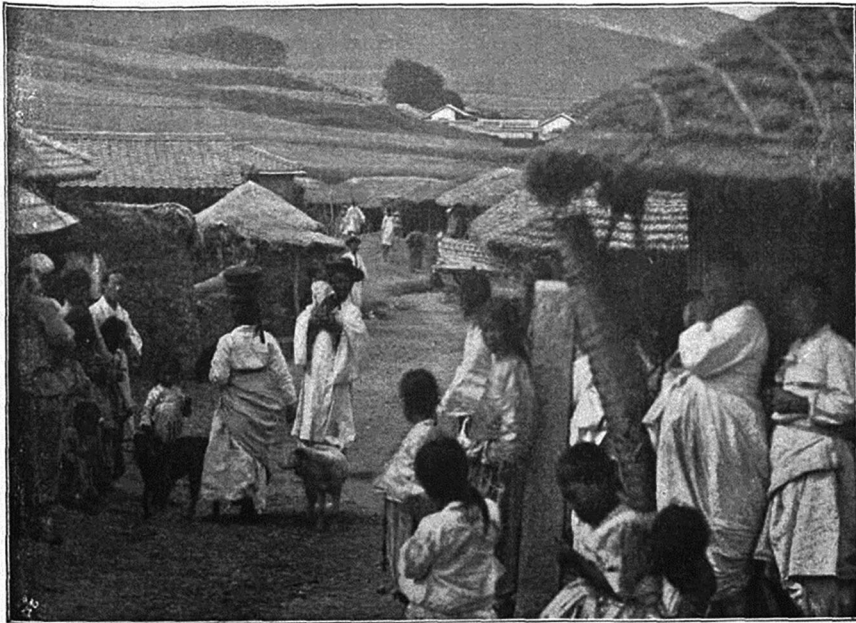
VISTA DE FUSÁN

Figure 3 View of Busan (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



PUERTA DEL OESTE DE SEÚL; Á LA DERECHA, CASAS COREANAS

Figure 4 East Seoul gate. On the right, Korean houses (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



ALDEA COREANA DE LAS INMEDIACIONES DE CHEMULPO

Figure 5 Korean village in the vicinity of Chemulpo (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



EN EL MINISTERIO DE HACIENDA

Figure 6 In the Ministry of Finance (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

“indolent, lazy and depraved,” men who do not know how to make use of fertile soils. Yet he nevertheless believed that Koreans had not always been so barbaric, even though not up to the standard of Chinese civilization.

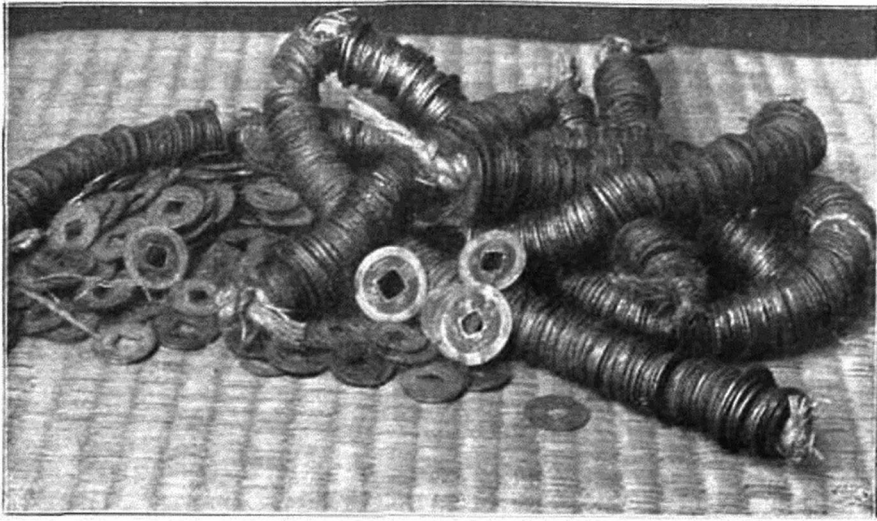
This author also spoke of other material elements to define cultural differences between Koreans and Europeans, as for instance, with the presentation of the palanquin or money, highlighted in the text by photos. He identifies palanquins (Figure 7) with the everyday life of the mandarins, stating that the “mandarins ride in palanquins of white cloth and are always accompanied by many; the officers are on horseback.” These conveyances helped to convey the idea of elitism, by showing a contrast between the dirtiness of the carriers and the palanquin itself. Moreover, this image of exclusivity and elitism would be yet more accentuated by contrasting the official court of the governor of Zhili, Li Hongzhang. The author stated, “the procession of a Korean general arouses great curiosity and impressed me much more than the one that accompanied Li-Hun-Chang in Beijing in his visits to the emperor.” Meanwhile, the photo of the money (Figure 8) illustrates differences in the elements of the material culture, especially because of its hanging in long strings.

This idea of contrast and alterity that von Hesse-Wartegg constantly presented also appears in individual male and female portraits (Figures 9 and 10). The models pose alone and separated, their local dress highlight. Descriptions of the men’s dress clearly imply a negative view of them (Figure 11). He began with the color, noting the contrast between “the dreadful filth of their streets” and the fact that “men are always dressed in white.” He continued to stress



PALANQUÍN COREANO

Figure 7 Korean palanquin (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



DIEZ MARCOS (1250 PESETAS) EN ANTIGUA MONEDA COREANA

Figure 8 Ten Marks in the old Korean currency (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

the alterity for his European readers, even lying when he states that “those people have not started using buttons yet,” or that “garments are not sewn, but glued, and this system is susceptible to unpleasant catastrophes on rainy days.” There are many specimens in ethnographic museums showing sewn rather than glued clothing and the use of buttons (Shim 2001, 77–86).

It is interesting to note that the photo captions emphasize how these models represent the group with titles, such as “Ordinary Korean costume” to represent the male, or “Village Woman” for the female portrait. Nevertheless, von Hesse-Wartegg chose a member of the privileged *yangban* class as his male representative. Despite the baron’s effort to “exoticize” his images Western elements do not go unnoticed; as with the portrait in which the male figure leans on a table. This definition contrasts with the images of women and their dress (Figures 9 and 10). Von Hesse-Wartegg pointed out that Korean women were confined to the farthest corner of their hut because, as he put it, “in few countries are women in a worse condition than in Korea.” Thus, he says, “while men walk around doing nothing in front of their houses, women work from dawn until late at night,” and he adds, “they are slaves to their husbands.” He remarks too that they hardly had any dealings with their husbands (“their lords and masters”) and that not even sisters interacted with their brothers. The attention that von Hesse-Wartegg’s text devotes to women, to their oppression, but also to their role as mothers or wives and to their clothing, is striking. This understanding of the situation of women was not only explored by von Hesse-Wartegg; other German travelers, in particular Emma Kroebe, also took note of the clothing, even comparing it to that of Arab women who wore the *hijab* (1909).

The selection, framing, and content of von Hesse-Wartegg's photos in combination with his texts underlines the author's effort to present an exotic image of Korea and its people. Whether representing the political power or the Korean society, the otherness is the dominant characteristic coming out of the photos. In addition, they are presented within an intellectual framework that stresses the cultural inferiority of Korean society and the potential benefits of their falling under Western influence. From that influence, however, to colonial domination is but a short step in the argumentation.

KOREA AS SEEN BY SANÍN-CANO

Bartolomé Sanín Cano (1861–1957) was a prolific Colombian author, diplomat, and collaborator for different newspapers and magazines, such as *Hojas Selectas*. In particular, for this last publication, he wrote an article that we are looking at here, titled: "Dos pueblos absorbidos. Finlandia y el Imperio de Corea" (Two Absorbed Peoples. Finland and the Korean Empire), published in 1910. An intellectual and politician, he combined his journalistic and essay activities with involvement in the Colombian government. He collaborated with a large



MUJER DEL PUEBLO

Figure 9 Village woman (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



MUJER COREANA EN LA CALLE

Figure 10 Korean woman on the street (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

number of American and Spanish media throughout his life, including the Spanish *El Sol*, *La Voz*, and *Nuevo Mundo* and magazines, such as *España*, *Nuestro Mundo*, and *Hojas Selectas*; while in Argentina he collaborated with *La Nación*, *Caras y Caretas*, and *La Revista de America*. He was also a frequent contributor to Colombian newspapers, such as *El Espectador* and *El Tiempo* (Andrés García 2018, 408). His activity in the public sphere started under the Presidency of Rafael Reyes and continued with his appointment as Colombian consul in London in 1911, followed by his election to the Colombian National Congress, and finally as minister plenipotentiary to Argentina from 1933 to 1935 (*ibid.*, 419). Politically Sanín Cano developed a clearly liberal and anti-imperialist profile during the Panama separation (*ibid.*, 544–545). Upon the approval of the Monroe Doctrine, the USA became increasingly interventionist in the Central American and Caribbean region. At the end of the 19th century, Theodore Roosevelt used this doctrine to justify the invasion of Cuba (1898) and then again in the Venezuelan crisis of 1902–1903. It is within this context that, under the watchful eyes of the U.S. government, the Isthmus of Panama separated from Colombia. Sanín Cano, like contemporary Colombian society in general, experienced the separation of Panama in a traumatic way, expressing his



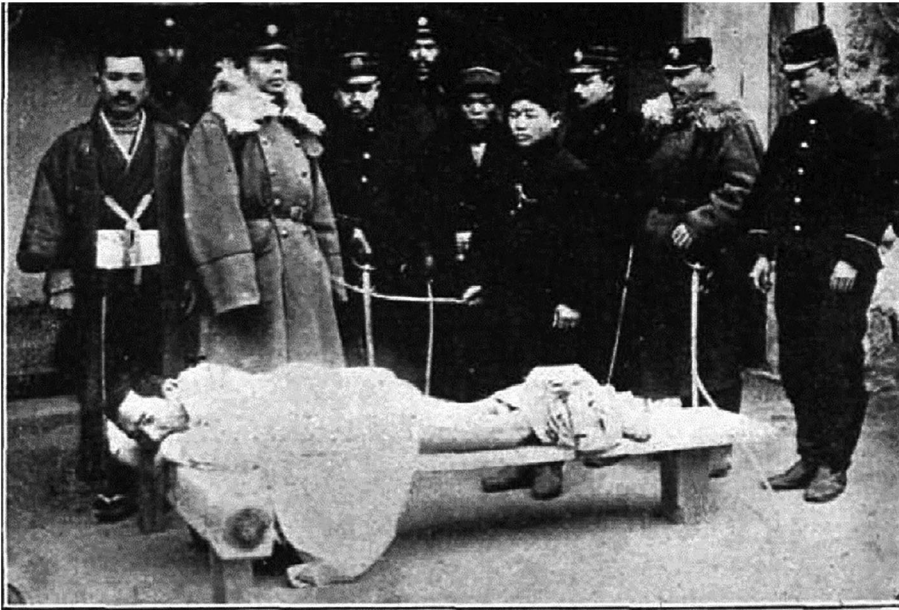
TRAJE ORDINARIO DE LOS COREANOS

Figure 11 Ordinary Korean costume (1902). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

criticism toward imperialist policy in general and the U.S. policy in particular (*ibid.*, 547–548). His contribution to *Hojas Selectas* and the clear criticism he makes of both the Russian and the Japanese imperialist advances on the Korean and the Finnish people must be understood within this context.

The photographers of the images in Sanín Cano's article are not identified, but a visual analysis allows us to outline some ideas. First, it is unlikely that Sanín Cano took these photos, as there is no record that he ever went to Korea. Otherwise, the magazine editor must have selected the photos. Furthermore, photos reproduced here had previously been published as postcards. The photograph "Flogging sentence imposed on a Korean by Japanese police" (Figure 12) first appeared as a postcard between 1907 and 1918 (Figure 18, Anonymous 1918). Given that the date of Sanín Cano's article is 1910, the date when the photographs were taken could be narrowed down to 1907–1910. Similarly the photo of the Gwanghwamun gate (Figure 13), a location depicted in a large number of postcards with practically identical framing (for instance, Anonymous image 1890a, 1910–1919), which suggests a similar origin to the photo in Sanín Cano's article. Seemingly the photos that accompany his article would have been chosen by the magazine: this commercial enterprise selected and reinterpreted those images to match the meaning intended by Sanín Cano, as will be shown below.

The images associated with his text show a different sensitivity than the selection of images found in von Hesse-Wartegg's. This sensitivity attempts to represent Korea and its people with dignity, recognizing their right to be independent



PENA DE AZOTES IMPUESTA Á UN COREANO POR LA POLICÍA JAPONESA

Figure 12 Flogging sentence imposed on a Korean by Japanese police (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

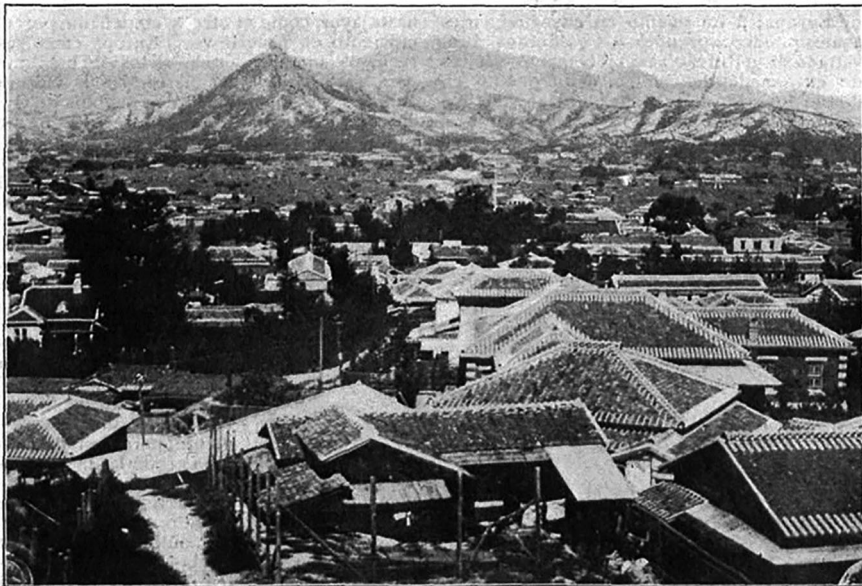


ANTIGUA PUERTA DE SEÚL, CONTIGUA AL PALACIO DE LOS SOBERANOS DE COREA

Figure 13 Seoul's old gate, adjoining the palace of Korean sovereigns (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

people. In regard to the visual image of Korea offered by Sanín Cano, one might identify two types of photography: general urban panoramic photographs and street-level ones with the streets and individuals. Although authorship of the collection of images cannot be attributed to Sanín Cano and the process of selecting the photos may have been done both by the author and/or the editors, one needs to look at the relationship between the text and the images, since it departs from the orientalist ideals of other collections (Pai 2016), and represents a reinterpretation of the images in line with the meaning of the juxtaposed text. In his article in *Hojas Selectas*, Sanín Cano addresses the recent colonization of Finland and Korea, but, after a brief commentary on Finland, he focuses all of his attention on the situation in Korea, as an example of a drift that he interprets as negative.

In particular, the images giving panoramic views of Seoul are taken from different places, showing in the foreground tiled roofs, not thatched ones. The first panoramic photo, which opens the article, is simply identified as “panoramic view of Seoul, capital of the ancient Korean Empire” (Figure 14). The name used for Korea clearly alludes to the great Han Empire. The second panoramic photograph is described as: “Another view of Seoul with the palace where the Russian governor resided during the protectorate exercised by this power (in the foreground on the right)” (Figure 15). This misleading caption reflects a lack of knowledge about the real situation on the Korean peninsula. Its inclusion in the article reminds the reader of the relations between strong

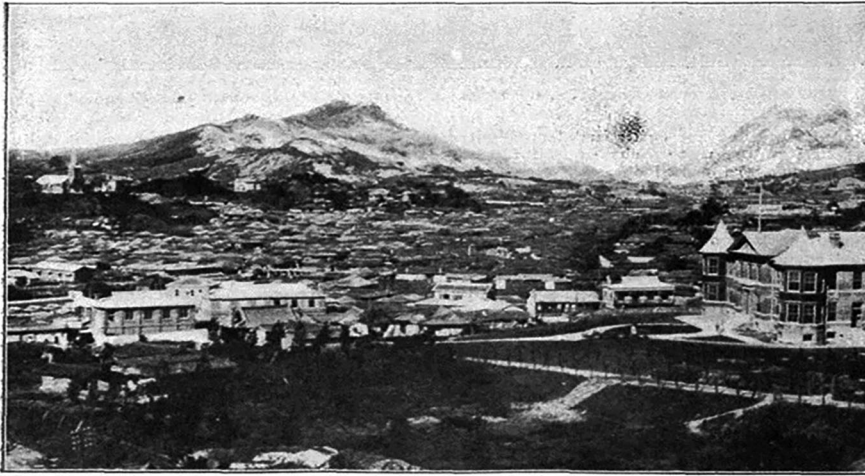


VISTA PANORÁMICA DE SEÚL, CAPITAL DEL ANTIGUO IMPERIO DE COREA

T. IX.

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Figure 14 Panoramic view of Seoul, capital of the ancient Korean Empire (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.



OTRA VISTA DE SEÚL, CON EL PALACIO EN QUE RESIDIÓ EL GOBERNADOR RUSO DURANTE EL PROTECTORADO QUE EJERCIERA ESTA POTENCIA (en primer término á la derecha)

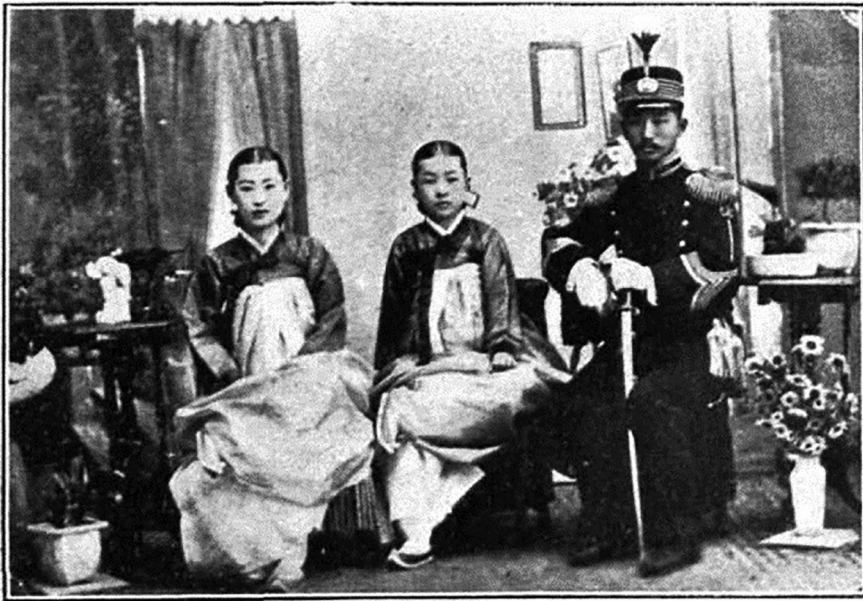
Figure 15 Another view of Seoul, with the palace where the Russian governor resided during the Protectorate exercised by this power (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

and small countries suggested by Sanín Cano, but not necessarily in terms of development.

The other four photographs represent two groups and another two street-level scenes. The two groups prominently display Japanese soldiers and policemen. The first one is captioned “Japanese officer visiting a wealthy house in Seoul” (Figure 16) and could be read as a contrast between the uniform of the Japanese officer and the traditional *hanbok* of both girls, conjuring up an idea of traditional Korean *vs.* modern Japan. While the *hanbok* may have looked exotic to the readers of the magazine, many other elements in the photo would resonate with their visual culture, softening and familiarizing the contrast. Among these elements, the chairs particularly stand out as something relatively novel in Korean life. A whole set of small tables, adapted to the new height of the chairs in the room, can also be noticed. In addition, the setup of hosting the Japanese officer would bring some equilibrium to the relationship between colonizer and colonized, softening the imbalance of power.

The second photo is captioned “Flogging sentence imposed on a Korean by Japanese police.” Here we clearly see the imbalance of power between Japanese and Koreans (Figure 12). The person about to be flogged was identifiable Korean since only Koreans were allowed to get physical punishment under Japanese colonial rule. (This only changed after the March 1919 protest and a new policy in the Peninsula.)

This photograph was reproduced and circulated at some length once it was taken. It became a picture postcard so that its circulation was linked in part to the activity of numerous travelers willing to purchase it. This postcard stands



OFICIAL JAPONÉS DE VISITA EN UNA CASA ACOMODADA DE SEÚL

Figure 16 Japanese officer visiting a wealthy house in Seoul (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

as a clue to how it could have been eventually reproduced in the magazine. It is also evidence of how *Hojas Selectas* played a role in the reinterpretation of that image. If as a postcard the image was meant to show something curious from a distant land, once inserted in Sanín Cano's article it exemplifies the oppression that Korean people suffered under Japanese rule, describing their conquest of Korea as "the ambition of a barbarian empire until yesterday."

The two remaining photographs in Sanín Cano's article show images at street level in Seoul. One photo with the caption, "One of the main streets of Seoul, the center of commerce in the capital," depicts a developed urban area (Figure 17). The electrification of the city, the urban organization of the space, the quality of the buildings, and the commercial activity in the scene give the reader an impression of Seoul as a dynamic city. It is interesting to note the choice of showing quality buildings rather than the thatched-roof houses shown in von Hesse-Wartegg's book. Finally, the Latin characters seen remind the reader of the adaptation that the Korean population had to make, in response to the increasing presence of European visitors, reinforcing an idea about Korean adaptation to new circumstances, as elsewhere.

The photo captioned "Seoul old gate, adjoining the palace of Korean sovereigns," represents Gwanghwamun (Figure 13). This view is imperceptibly a type of photography already embedded in much more novel relationships than the image itself might lead one to suspect. The image itself shows an iconic



UNA DE LAS PRINCIPALES CALLES DE SEÚL, CENTRO DEL COMERCIO DE LA CAPITAL

Figure 17 One of the main streets of Seoul, the center of commerce in the capital (1910). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

place in Seoul. The representation of Gwanghwamun and the monster protector *haetae* in the foreground appear in various collections of postcards that were in circulation then. Economic interests foster the production of this image and its subsequent international distribution. This image did not simply represent the curious vision of a traveler but the editorial and forces of the tourism industry of the time, making it into an icon. It is also another evidence of the circulation of these images and their editorial selection by *Hojas Selectas* to complete Sanín Cano's article.

Ultimately his article is a resolute plea against imperialist expansion, contextualizing visual narrative, when he states that "the world accepts, or at least strong countries take it for granted, that imperialism is the course of political life and that it is necessary to accept the solutions imposed from time to time by this trend." He adds that "Egypt, Panama, Herzegovina, Finland, and Korea mark the beginning of an unfortunate course." This reference to Panama is a reminder of how the author, as a Colombian, experienced first-hand the results of such politics, when Colombia had to deal with the secession of Panama with U.S. assistance. However, this anti-imperialist vision is not confined to Colombian intellectuals but is part of a tradition in much of the Hispanic world. In particular, a famous writer and politician of the time, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, does not have any objections in stressing that Japan's objective was to dominate most of Asia and that this could not be achieved without the support of what he calls "the white powers," which, according to the writer, were basically Great Britain and the United States (Blasco Ibáñez 1924 [1976], 265–295).

This criticism continues when he counterposes the concept of homeland to that of the state and affirms that imperialism implies the destruction of the homeland. It thus shows how Jews and Poles, despite not having a state, are capable of holding on to their homeland. Meanwhile, the "subject of an empire has to divide his affections between the empire itself, partly constituted by the small ethnic group, uncoercible, which becomes little less than an abstract idea, and their homeland." Sanín Cano completes this idea by adding "the more the empire expands, the weaker the idea of homeland becomes." The supremacy of the nation as a preferential element over the state and his critique of imperialism is clearly suggested when he qualifies both: "The intensity of patriotic sentiment only persists in small states, and that is why an anonymous writer has said that imperialism is a plebian tendency based on low-profit needs, while love for the homeland, based on blood ties and tribal aspirations, is an exalting and noble instinct."

This passage therefore makes it clear that the homeland is the basic and fundamental element to which attention should be given, ideally limited to a defined space to ensure the unity of the nation. This critique of imperialism clearly informs Sanín Cano's treatment of both Japan and Korea.

Sanín Cano defines Korea and Japan by saying that "Korea is a barbaric nation, according to the European concept," "recently" conquered by a "barbaric empire" and "determined for the moment to make Europe see how its moral and material resources enable it to follow the course set for world culture" as a clear critique. He does not fall into the pro-Japanese colonial discourse by accepting the superiority of the latter over the Korean people (Pai 1994, 25–48). In this sense, the author suggests a relationship of equality between the Koreans and the Japanese when pointing out that in the Korean case, "the annals of its existence are as old as those of Japan." He expounds on this idea of equality by locating the origins of both Korean and Japanese cultures in China, declaring that "[Korean] culture is a reflection of Chinese culture, moral encouragement for the Japanese people through the centuries." This definition of the Chinese source for Japanese culture could have been a reference to previous writings along that line, like those by Ernest Fenollosa (Cabeza and Almodóvar 2004, 75–99).

Sanín Cano's explanation for the colonization of the Korean peninsula clearly establishes the difference between both nations. He identifies Korean pacifism as the reason for their colonization, stating that "the fault that the Koreans now atone for by the loss of their freedom, or the faults, if we want to be more precise, are their inordinate love of peace and their predilection for which Europe contemptuously calls them indolent." Special mention should be made of the fact that this cultural definition of the Koreans refers to pacifism as the cause of their colonization, yet it does not carry negative connotations. On the contrary, Sanín Cano points out that the Koreans "considered war to be a savage thing." This vision of the Korean people would fully fit with the author's perspective on the right of nations to retain their independence, as he expresses regret that the "small nationalities, weak peoples and coveted territories unfit to be governed by their inhabitants, will disappear as the strong

nations try to fulfill what is their manifest destiny.” The anti-imperialist message of the text and criticism of the Korean people’s loss of freedom is a fundamental aspect for analyzing the photos that accompany the article and for gauging the level of consistency between the images and the text.

SOME CONTRASTING VIEWS: FROM ETHNOCENTRISM TO ANTI-IMPERIALISM

The text and images associated with these two articles in *Hojas Selectas* show a substantial difference in the image they present of Korea. That provided by von Hesse-Wartegg repeatedly stresses the exoticism and backwardness of Koreans, based on an ethnocentric view of civilization. In fact, he characterizes Koreans as frozen in time while adding that they had been incapable of developing since the 17th century. Thus the photographs that accompany the text, taken by the author himself, aim at conveying this idea, focusing on the filth of its inhabitants (Figure 7) and the badly constructed mud houses. Such a view of East Asia was relatively common among German or Anglo-Saxon authors at the start of the 20th century. Hence, Sanín Cano’s point of view is strikingly different. He has much more empathy for the Korean people in his text, and its photos offer a much more balanced perception of Korea and the Koreans. In fact, they neither seek out exoticism as much as those of von Hesse-Wartegg, nor aim at presenting the Korean people as weak and lagging, but instead show us a more modern country. The photos in Sanin’s article present Korea as a new colony with an evident contrast between the colonizers and the colonized. At the same time, though, these images limit the exoticization present in other collections.

The photographs found in both articles make clear these different views of Korea, as can be established from a comparison of various elements, such as the representation of the urban setting, the women, and the violence. Von Hesse-Wartegg’s article presents, from his photos, an obsolete, chaotic, and filthy city. For the representation of one of the city entrance gates (Figure 4), he chooses a frame in which a group of houses with thatched rooves are displayed, highlighted in the foreground, contrasting with the grandeur of the gate itself. This option was intentional on the author’s part, given his aims at presenting a particular view of the houses and the city, and highlighting the poverty and the existential difference when compared to his European readership. This view undoubtedly coincides with the author’s own description in calling Seoul “the dirtiest city in the whole of East Asia,” and more particularly a “dirty labyrinth of alleyways with dilapidated one-room mud huts.” Nonetheless, this contrasts with the decisions taken by the editors of the magazine regarding the images inserted into Sanín Cano’s article.

The perspective of Seoul included in Sanín Cano’s article represents it as a kind of modern city, visually not much different in a certain way from those the Spanish-speaking public would be familiar with. First, he chooses photographs with tiled roofs in the foreground, rather than huts with thatched roofs as in those of von Hesse-Wartegg. These gabled and hipped roofs, although

not akin to European or Latin American houses, show some similarity. The image of modernity and a degree of cultural proximity are present in elements, such as the electricity poles, one of the latest additions that cities of the time were incorporating. In fact, in the case of Seoul, it was the first big East Asian capital to have an electricity supply, ahead of Tokyo and Beijing (Son 2006, 267–298).

The representation of women in both articles offers a strong contrast. Von Hesse-Wartegg tells us that Korean women are kept hidden from the public eye, using a woman of the local aristocracy as his model, with her face almost completely covered (Figure 10). This image would approximate the situation of Korean women to that of Arab women covered with the hijab, an idea already present then among German travelers (Hong 2010, 168). This image stands beside an image identified as a “Village Woman” in the caption (Figure 9). Von Hesse-Wartegg represents with these images the traditional seclusion and the limited freedom of women, as his text explains. His criticism of Korean women’s oppression is praiseworthy for us, but, as with the case of the houses, he implies a somewhat biased and self-interested view. Nowadays we know that the situation of Korean women then depended greatly on their social status since there was a range of personal situations in regard to freedom of movement, activity outside the home, or interaction with males (e.g. Han 2004; Pettid 2011). Nonetheless, in von Hesse-Wartegg’s images, the idea of isolation is emphasized by framing portraits of women alone. The image in Sanín Cano’s article, where two women are represented as members of society, is different (Figure 16). The caption clarifies that the soldier was a Japanese officer and the two women were the hostesses at a wealthy home in Seoul. This group representation suggests a strong contrast with the idea of isolation as von Hesse-Wartegg had presented. Also noteworthy is the calm pose of the two young women, as opposed to the hieratic attitude of the Japanese soldier. The women give the impression that they feel more comfortable when posing than the soldier does. The clothing of these individuals follows a trend of continuing to wear traditional costumes, while the man is in a European-style military costume. Nevertheless, the place where the group sits reminds us immediately of a Westernized place, with the three of them seated on chairs and surrounded by high tables, curtains, and a set of vases with plants. This background would surely be able to bring the magazine’s reader closer to that environment, with its many recognizable elements, despite the exoticism of the dresses.

The third relevant aspect in the representation of Korea, one that raises clear differences, is the presence of features related to violence. This is a characteristic that von Hesse-Wartegg’s collection of images in the *Hojas Selectas* article completely ignores, despite the fact that, in his book, he had published a chapter dedicated to “Justice, Prison and Torture” (von Hesse-Wartegg 1895, 176 ff.). This chapter included two scenes of corporal punishment on convicts. Their captions are “blows to the tibias,” and “judicial administration: corporal punishment” (*ibid.*, 176–177). The existence of such photos and even their publication in the book, suggest that a deliberate decision had been taken not to

include them in the magazine article. It is interesting to read how, after describing some instances of execution by beheading, the chapter ends by praising the Japanese for bringing order to such practices (*ibid.*, 178). The author makes clear his dislike for methods of punishment and has a favorable view of Japanese influence in the matter. Thus von Hesse-Wartegg's interpretation of this practice would clearly be a negative one (Figure 18).

This view contrasts with a suggestion in Sanín Cano's article. His article includes a photograph of the punishment of a Korean man by Japanese police (Figure 12). Although the ethnicities of these people are not identified in the photograph itself, their clothing immediately suggests that the sentenced man was a Korean and the floggers Japanese. The inclusion of this photo and the content of the article itself further highlight the oppression that the Japanese Empire was exerting over Koreans. Hence the image would further support the text's negative view of imperialist practices, by giving an explicit image of the brutality and violence involved.

Ultimately the idea the Austrian's photographs offer is that Korea was poor and backward, while the photos in Sanín Cano's article convey a more favorable and nuanced view of the situation within the context of an anti-imperialist discourse. Between the moment at which von Hesse-Wartegg took his photos and the publication date of Sanín Cano's article, about 15 years had elapsed. This period saw an important transformation in the Korean peninsula. However, the difference between both groups of photographs goes further, since they reflect a substantial difference in the perspective from which the

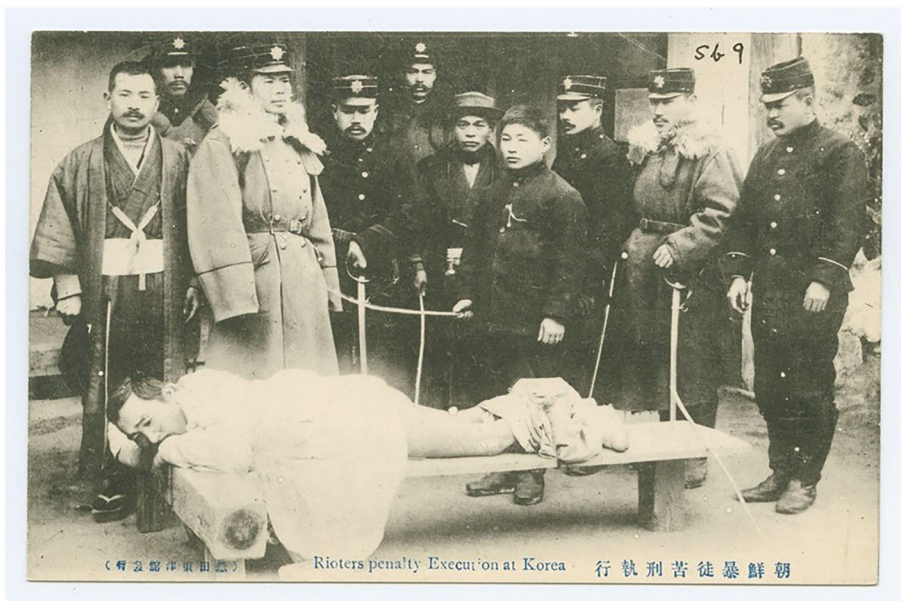


Figure 18 Rioters' penalty Execution at Korea (1918). Source: Anonymous (1918). Images from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

country was regarded. While von Hesse-Wartegg focuses on poverty and backwardness, Sanín Cano focuses on anti-imperialism, in this case by presenting the Japanese as ruthless invaders. In short, Bartolomé Sanín's article departs from the standards and ideas of the time. This is all the more striking when such sensitivity must be placed in the context of the great propaganda campaign being waged by the Japanese Empire to justify its occupation and its "civilizing" mission on the peninsula.³

CONCLUSION

This research has focused on the first long, informative articles published in Spain that dealt exclusively with aspects of the Korean reality, introducing the first visual presentation of Korea. These were photos of people and urban spaces at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. We have noticed how, following editorial policy, *Hojas Selectas* first introduced an article translated from German and then included another article from the Spanish-speaking world itself.

The countries of origin and experiences of both authors are important in understanding cultural biases in the accounts and images of colonial environments. Von Hesse-Wartegg shares a view of a Korea characterized by poverty and an incapacity to govern itself; a view presented from a position of superiority and shared by other travelers of the time (Hong 2010, 155–174). Conversely, it is noticeable how Sanín Cano's position is significantly different. This author comes from a different cultural background and has suffered the dismemberment of his homeland, due to American intervention in conjunction with the conservative Colombian oligarchy. That previous experience explains the author's criticism of Japanese imperialism and the sympathy that he evinces toward the Korean people.

This drift in the editorial policy of *Hojas Selectas* is also a remarkable factor. Although each author may have had personal reasons for writing an article on Korea, there is a clear editorial evolution of the magazine, where the view coming from the Spanish-speaking world takes precedence. The magazine not only published a modern image of Korea but also gave a voice to Latin American intellectuals and writers. From this point of view, Sanín Cano's article allows us to think that Spain and the Hispanic world began to develop a different point of view, more critical of the process of colonization of Korea and about Korea itself. Certainly the Hispanic author offers a strong criticism of Japanese imperialism while showing his empathy and advocacy for the Koreans. At the same time, it is worth noting that Sanín Cano's article is not so very ethnocentric when compared to that of von Hesse-Wartegg, a man who constantly takes the moral and intellectual high ground.

We have also seen how *Hojas Selectas* participated in and animated the circulation of images from distant places as a form of enterprise. As some of Sanín Cano's images show, the magazine purchased such images in circulation as postcards, for example, to complement the articles it needed to illustrate. In that process, the magazine became fundamental for the construction of a visual

idea of faraway places, such as Korea. However, in that repurposing of an image from one format (picture postcard) into another (image within an article), the interpretation of the image was adjusted. Sanín Cano's critique of imperialism led readers to look at the images in his article in such a light too, and what could have been presented originally as exotic memorabilia of strange punishments, in Sanín Cano's article has become a critique of the brutal methods of an empire. It was the commercial interest of the *Hojas Selectas* editors to include more Latin American authors that led them to include anti-imperialist discourse, such as Sanín's. This position was not unique to Sanín, as other intellectuals, such as Blasco Ibañez (Domenech, Martín-Casares, and Kang 2023), and politicians, such as Emilio Castelar in the Spanish-speaking world share it, representing an alternative view to the dominant discourse in other European countries.

NOTES

1. In 1888 George Eastman developed and marketed a camera model that used a flexible roll of preloaded article with a capacity of 100 exposures. The ease with which it was able to take photographs revolutionized the medium, making it accessible to a large number of people, among them von Hesse-Wartegg.
2. Percival Lowell's collection of images, for example, already shows, despite its Orientalist vision, more developed areas, as Pai shows in Figures 1, 2, 4, and even 5, in her article (Pai 2016).
3. The colonial government of Korea devoted a great, determined effort to portray the Koreans as people stuck in tradition and incapable of developing on their own. However, this view evolved along time (Pai 2010, 2013).

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