On the tenth day of the first month of the Xuantong emperor’s second year, also seen as a cold February day of 1910, the organizers of China’s first nation-wide exposition published a special advertisement in their preparatory tri-monthly. It was a call for individuals interested in a new kind of education and, indeed, a new calling—namely that of “personnel” (shiwu yuan). As the recruiting advertisement read, a special institute was to be established in order to train students in the arts of display and management so that they might serve the exposition when it opened in Nanjing during the upcoming summer. Prerequisite requirements were specific: an education equivalent to primary school of the senior grade, an age of nineteen years or older, an examination, and a pledge that once having been admitted the applicant would indeed join the school. The curriculum was to be devoted to six main topics, including the principles of science, display and decoration, accounting, mandarin Chinese (guoyu), introductory English, and the rules of the exposition itself. Benefits for the student were also carefully touted. Students would not only receive an education, but also a credential that, as the ad promised, would “introduce your good service to those looking to fill the staffs of product display halls

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1 Research for this study was funded by the American Council of Learned Societies, the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China, and through the support of an An Wang Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University. I am grateful to the many who have contributed useful feedback and criticism during its evolution through several workshops and conferences. I particularly wish to thank Joan Bristol, Michael G. Chang, Paul Cohen, Madeleine Y. Dong, Robert DeCaroli, Fa-ti Fan, Dorothy Ko, and Randolph Scully, as well as three anonymous readers for Late Imperial China, all of whom have so generously shared their time, invaluable comments, and critiques.

2 Listed in Chinese as gao deng xiao xue. With terms of educational institutions set forth and revised as part of the Qing state’s New Policies project, regulations dictated that upon completion of the school level of junior grade (chu deng xiao xue) a student might earn the opportunity to attend these educational institutions of the senior level, or, alternately, attend a professional school that would train students in a particular line of study, including agriculture, commerce, or industrial arts and handicrafts. See Brunnert and Hagelstrom 1912, 214.
and business organizations of every locale.” A salary, not enumerated, was also briefly mentioned.3

The authors of the advertisement were seeking personnel to serve an event imagined as both a classroom for national development and as a new kind of spectacle that could accomplish such a pedagogical aim. This event was the Nanyang “Encouraging Industry” Exposition (Nanyang quanye hui) that was held, to debated views of its success, during the summer of 1910.4 Sponsored by the Qing state as well as private investors, the Nanyang Exposition was the first Chinese exposition of a national (and ultimately international) scope. It was not, of course, the first effort towards displaying Chinese objects before viewers of expositions elsewhere. Both state organizers and private collectors had made displays of Chinese objects, artwork, and items of trade available to viewers at international expositions starting with presentations at London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 and at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867. At least twenty-seven more events would follow in which China participated before the fall of the Qing dynasty, with China’s participation in these events officially overseen by the Maritime Customs Service. Official presentations of Chinese objects would be offered in a world tour of expositions that included, among many others, Philadelphia in 1876, Melbourne in 1880, a visit to the New Orleans World Industrial and Cotton Expo in 1885, Nashville and Omaha in back-to-back years (1897 and 1898), as well as in French Indochina in 1902 and Osaka in 1903, as well as presentations at the prominent expositions of Paris and London.5

With the 1898 move towards reform and a Qing “New Policies” program at the turn of the twentieth century, exhibitions also began to be organized on the metropolitan and provincial scale within China itself. Sichuan held its first exhibition in 1905, while the cities of Tianjin and Wuhan both followed with major exhibitions in 1907 and 1909 respectively. The Qing state also reorganized and renewed its efforts towards exhibitionary projects in the

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3 QYHXB, no. 7 (February 19, 1910). Also noted was the fact that no tuition would be charged for the school, although students were warned to be prepared to spend four or five yuan per month for food and lodging at an exposition dormitory.

4 The choice of name for the exposition was both closely linked to the location and its sponsoring official, namely Duanfang, who was stationed at the city of Nanjing while serving his dual role as both governor-general of the Liang-Jiang region and grand minister of trade for the southern ports (Nanyang dachen). From the start, however, plans for the exposition were aimed at the inclusion of all provinces north and south, as was recounted in the very first of exposition circulars. See NYQYHTG, no. 1 (February 1909), 13. For an excellent overview of the exposition itself, and particularly the ways it could serve a Qing state seeking to capitalize politically upon provincial or regional rivalries, see Godley 1978.

5 There is, of course, an extensive literature of research devoted to (or intersecting with) a history of expositions and world’s fairs. While there are many titles that might be listed, those among the most useful to readers of this study might include Bennett 1995, Greenhalgh 1988, Mitchell 1988, and Rydell 1984.
course of the creation of a Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry. The Ministry established its own permanent exhibition hall for commercial goods in Beijing in 1906, after announcing late the previous year that it would relieve the Maritime Customs Service of its management of China’s presentations abroad. As the Ministry took over this latter duty, one that had been previously belonged to the European and American officials of the Customs Service, it promulgated new regulations designed to both guide and encourage provincial preparation for participation in international expositions. The directive instructed would-be participants to work with their local commercial office (shangwu ju) or chamber of commerce, an effort that would be overseen by provincial governors and by the Ministry itself. The new regulations also promised that exhibitionary goods would be granted duty-free transportation, while the Ministry, through its offices at an exposition, would assist participants as they worked to display their wares abroad. Participation in fairs at home and abroad was, indeed, warmly enthusiastic.

The Nanyang Exposition of 1910 would emerge not only as the culmination of this late Qing activism in the realm of the exhibition but also as an event that displayed—materially and rhetorically—the imaginings of both a national and global order. It was an event that fit closely within the context of the “New Policies” program, offering yet another site for the effort among, or competition between, the Qing state and provincial constituencies amidst the reconstruction of a neo-Confucian imperium as a national polity. The timeline for the broader New Policies program is well-known, including key changes made or promised with the abolition of the civil service exam in 1905, the Qing announcement of plans to create a constitutional monarchy in 1906, along with a nine-year plan presented in 1908 for the promulgation of a constitution and the establishment of provincial and national assemblies. Organizers of the Nanyang Exposition imagined the event as an even more comprehensive assembly, one that offered an unparalleled opportunity to mobilize a citizenry to serve the nation in its most fundamental cause at the turn of the twentieth century: survival. A new mandate was heralded in terms of a global arena of competition, changed times, and the priorities dictated by a market age.

The event’s managing sub-director, Xiang Ruikun would articulate these concerns in a speech to the very same personnel who had answered the call of the February advertisement. Standing before the recruits at the training school’s

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7 One noted historian of China’s expositions has described the last decades of the Qing dynasty as a time of “expo fever” across the empire. Ma Min 1995, 293.
opening, Xiang stressed that they should not be called students, precisely because they were to become something else—namely “personnel”—which, as he explained, was a new term just as “exposition” was a new business for China. Xiang further urged this class of personnel to focus in particular on the issue of “habits.” Noting that the habits of China’s people differed greatly, with regional and rural vs. urban differences being quite pronounced, Xiang warned that these differences were a factor in a lack of unity for the nation. “Each nation must have its own national habit,” Xiang reminded his audience. He then followed with a comparison of the manner and habits of various nations, as he had it, one that invoked a clear line. “The manner of the people of powerful nations [qiang guo] is known and understood,” Xiang explained, whereas “the manner of the people of defeated nations [wang guo] is utterly different: hastening after wealth and profit like the Jewish people, dependent like the manner of the Koreans, clamorous like that of the Poles.”

8 Bad examples were not merely found abroad, as Xiang’s audience was carefully informed. China itself, in his view, needed to be rid of its most problem-atic and widespread habits. Xiang defined these habits as a threesome, each manifested by a different group in the society. He chastised students for their apparent tendency to emphasize theory rather than practice. He attacked the “sordid merchants” for their “most contagious” tendency to scheme for profit and, through this action, to undermine public interest. Finally, he noted the tendency of officials to perform in a way that was merely perfunctory—unlike properly trained personnel who were both quick and concerned with practical needs. A new breed of personnel, Xiang announced to his inductees, would exhibit requisite traits: composure and trust, diligence and industrious habits, and patience. Personnel were the people, Xiang indicated, who would save China from joining the ranks of defeated nations. It was personnel, he urged, who would “bring China into a new world.”

9 The event that his audience would serve, the Nanyang Exposition, reveals the complexities of the mission Xiang had set forth as well as the means by which he and others believed national success might be achieved. While the figure of Xiang on a podium heralding “personnel” as a vanguard class for the nation may appear ironic to the pen-pushers of a later day, it does mark a new moment. Xiang Ruikun himself represents the rise of a new figure among China’s elites, one who sought to master and unite innovative techniques of the commercial realm with the propagandist spectacle of nationalism. Working together with the managing director of the exposition, Chen Qi, Xiang and

8 “Gao shiwuyuan,” QYXH, no. 8 (March 1, 1910), 2b.
others actively worked to bring new techniques of exhibition and display to serve a national order. Exposition managers such as these worked to encourage attention to the varied techniques of exhibition that were beginning to be purveyed in museums and department stores elsewhere at the same time. In their own project, they would pursue an extravaganza, one that would unite the crowd in a recognition of the nation as well as the market for which it stood. Indeed, their project illustrates the degree to which those two realms had become conflated, globally, during the first decade of the twentieth century. The exposition was presented then as both a classroom and a spectacle, a site in which late Qing elites sought to present a vision of a competitive nation that would survive amidst the colonialist traps of a global, industrial economy.

An examination of the Nanyang Exposition provides a view of a relatively unexamined group among the evolving elite of the late Qing period. Active as global sojourners, China’s exposition managers appropriated new (and hybrid) forms of spectacle as well as rapidly evolving institutions of display informed by innovations in commercial technique. While such efforts would not be fully realized until a later day, the managers of the Qing dynasty’s first exposition were already working to mobilize a new exhibitionary culture (or “exhibitionary complex,” as Tony Bennett has suggested). Their goal was to secure a future for a Chinese nation through the assembly and critical study of objects and, ultimately, through the popular celebration of this spectacle as the citizenry’s collective mission. The Nanyang Exposition thus offers a case study through which we can observe the technical innovations of an evolving commercial elite, as well as their vision of a new Chinese nation defined within the interrelated context of global colonialism and a rising market capitalism. Indeed, Xiang Ruikun and his colleagues sought to unite the innovations of modern commercial arts with the pedagogical intent of exhibition, all in the service of a national mission for survival. Historically, as it happened, the Nanyang Exposition would also reveal the unexpected complexities of spectacle itself.

The Mobilization of Objects and Observers

In February of 1910, organizers of the Nanyang event published an editorial, “The Place of the Exposition in Xuantong’s Second Year.” The editorial opened with a vivid description of the heightened anticipation for political change that had been created in the preparation for a constitutional government that same year. “Everyone is watching [lit. ‘a thousand eyes are staring’],” the author noted, “and the multitudes are... waiting.”

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11 QYHXB, no. 7 (February 19, 1910).
undertaken or intended for the process of constitutional preparation, the essay
described the new census and population registers, establishment of local taxes
and new laws and courts of justice, preparation for local self-government, prov-
incial budget estimations, import-export registers, and the establishment of
sub-prefectural, county, and circuit police. The exposition was a part of these
new efforts to systematically appraise and reinvent the Qing polity.

Organizers of the Nanyang Expo also viewed the event as central to a specific
national cause: global competition and survival. Initial calls for the Qing court
to support the event came from its most prominent advocate, the bannerman
official and Liang-Jiang governor-general Duanfang in 1908. He urged the
court to consider the success of not only the United States and Europe, but
also of Japan in channeling and encouraging competition as a means to gain
success in agriculture, industry, and commerce. Expositions were a central
part of this process, Duanfang argued, linking Japan’s “speed on the road to
success” (one that had “astonished” the nations of the world) to the fact that
Japan had already held a significant number of its own expositions.12 The men
directly responsible for the management of the event would further articulate
the mission to large audiences of merchants, industrialists, academics, journal-
ists, and officials in the cities of Nanjing and Shanghai during the spring of
1909. Both of its top managers, the managing director Chen Qi and assistant
director Xiang Ruikun, worked to encourage an activism among participants
that reflected their own experience in an embrace of the commercial arts. Not
older than thirty years at the time he took responsibility for management of
the Nanyang Exposition, Chen Qi had already attended the St. Louis World’s
Fair in 1904 and had returned as a vocal critic of the management of China’s
displays at that event.13 Having also accompanied Duanfang on the Qing’s
investigative mission abroad in 1906, entrusted with assisting the investigation
of industrial and military affairs in foreign nations, Chen was a well-placed
and ambitious manager for the task.

Assisting him was Xiang Ruikun, a graduate of the Industry and Commerce
Department at Japan’s Meiji University and a member of the commercial
division of Duanfang’s staff in Nanjing. In later years, with the arrival of the
Republic, Xiang would himself come to serve as president of China’s National
Associated Chamber of Commerce. Later, after Yuan Shikai’s unpopular move
to become emperor in 1915, Xiang would retire from duties in Beijing and
return his home province of Hunan to organize factories, a commercial acad-

13 See Cai 2001. A native of Zhejiang Province, Chen Qi graduated first in his class at the Jiangnan Army
Academy.
Objects, Spectacle, and a Nation on Display

Like others who would assist in the exposition project, Chen Qi and Xiang Ruikun had pursued a global education which matched participation in public spectacles with the curriculum of new commercial institutions and endeavors. Indeed, by the turn of the century, China’s elites had begun to actively pursue the dual enterprise of the commercial arts and nation-building. Chen Qi and Xiang Ruikun themselves embraced similar concerns while also working to propagate a specific understanding of the power of material display as a means to achieve multiple ends. While China’s turn-of-the-century managers of expositions have generally been overlooked, a recovered history of Chen Qi and Xiang Ruikun provides a view towards an early history of the kinds of spectacle so peculiar (and significant) to the modern period: namely, a vision of a mass spectacle rhetorically and materially associated with production and consumption, inextricably tied to the intertwined logic of nation and market. Their vision of the Nanyang “Encouraging Industry” Exposition was one that would use material spectacle as a means to advertise both the necessity and promise of the modern link between the two. Meanwhile, at the same time that the Nanyang Exposition’s managers promoted the exposition as a site dedicated to the theme of production, they also promised a spectacle to be consumed. These two concerns were intimately linked, as those who envisioned the exposition saw it, to the necessity of creating a citizenry trained in seeing, educated in evaluating and observing a people’s productions while at the same time inviting them to accept the discipline of the job through the promise of spectacle itself.

The first step in the project of the exposition was an ambitious one—a survey of the material products of the Qing empire. The Nanyang Exposition began with the dissemination of instructions for local assembly of products and display items during the early spring months of 1909. All provinces and major ports were directed to organize preparatory committees with explicit instructions to recruit their members from among local officials, chambers of commerce, agricultural societies, and industrial organizations, as well as from among the chiefs of major companies, prominent journalists, and provincial merchant-gentry who had displayed “enthusiasm for the public good” (rexin gong yi).

Meanwhile, throughout the provinces native products and objects were to be assembled by local officials and gentry for a planned inspection by specially commissioned officers. Deputized for a one- to two-month tour

16 NYQYHTG, no. 1 (February 1909), 17–21.
of duty, depending upon the size of the area to which they were assigned, these inspectors would investigate local goods and objects and also recommend items for display at the provincial-level expositions to be held late in the same year.

The inspectors’ material survey of the empire, one county at a time, marks a shift from an established tradition of inventory to be found in Qing gazetteers. This varied literature, in its devotion to the geography, history, noted lineages, institutions and arts found in particular localities, often contained sections that expounded upon the material goods and “local products” or “material products” (tuchan, wuchan) native to a place. While some of these texts’ authors were content to provide simple lists of local products and resources—various fruits and grains, medicinal plants, ores, birds and beasts—many others wrapped their local products in extended citations, pulling descriptions and detail from a host of textual sources. In many respects, their function was encyclopaedic: a collection of historical references, citations, and material descriptions regarding a particular item or object. Indeed, in this litany of consumables the object achieves dimension through an accumulation of words, as it were, a precipitate of its own field of references and inter-textual testimony.

Yet while territorial boundaries (county, prefecture, province) remain relatively consistent for both the exhibition’s survey and the inventories provided in many late Qing gazetteers, as indeed do many of the “goods” themselves, the exhibition projects of the New Policies period were different in their changing associations of objects with words, place, and time. The association of place and object had taken on a new significance in an arena wherein market and nation were increasingly conflated—a conflation that demanded an increased visibility of both the object and a mass audience of consumers. At the same time, the exposition invoked a measure of temporal immediacy, a standard of progressive development (or its sole alternative, extinction) embodied in its particular culture of comparison. This shift is nowhere more apparent than in the investigative product reports (as with the other genre they served, the product “label” or “tag”) associated with the exposition.

On August 25, 1909, twenty-eight inspectors were commissioned to tour Zhili Province’s various prefectures and the counties within them, one or two inspectors assigned to each prefecture. Their task generally kept inspectors in the field through early to mid-October, with slightly longer inspection periods allotted to those who would be traveling to the further reaches of the province or to those areas not served by convenient railway lines. The inspectors were to tour the counties of their assigned prefectures, judging the “material products, industrial arts, fine arts and educational articles” of each locality, seeking to discover special products or “new and novel manufactures” (xinqi zhizao). Their instructions were specific, and the inspectors were expected to produce
reports in like manner. As their directive indicated: “The organization has established a ‘product-investigation form’ which must be carried by inspectors as they set out on their routes, to have handy so that they may fill it in at any time during their inspections, making notations that are thorough and accurate in each category, without ambiguity.”

The inspectors’ county-level reports survive along with the Zhili Province official account books and compendia associated with the 1910 exposition event, and offer a sense of the new standards being applied to this inventory of empire. A less literary genre, perhaps, than the gazetteer, the reports are relatively concise and certainly clear in their standards. The “new and novel” stand at the fore, with highest praise allotted to the industrial arts and particularly to the examples of mechanized industry that had already been established in a given locality. One county, Qingyuan, was praised for the “Industrial Arts Training Center” that had been founded there to train both men and women in textile and porcelain production, as well as for the “industrial reformatory” established for criminal offenders. Here inmates were being trained in textile manufacture, leather-work, printing, shoe-making, and other pursuits, achieving an “exquisite manufacturing technique” in the eyes of exhibition investigators. Gaoyang county received even greater praise for the successful efforts of its local chamber of commerce to research and obtain new textile machinery, and the chamber’s reinvestment of its earnings in the yearly acquisition of greater numbers of spinning machines—a strategy that lessened local reliance on Western thread. Having thus created the means to greater profits year after year, as exhibition inspectors reported, Gaoyang’s textile industry was to be heralded as an example for every county in the province to follow. Other locales, however, fared less well. Those without such installations of new industry received significantly less attention, though some mention was given to the more “common” goods such as fruits, grains, saltpeter, and tobacco, as well as the “old-style industries” such as the manufacture of coarser handmade cloth, horse harnesses, and knives.

The purpose of these inspections was ultimately to carry local objects and products into a provincial and national spotlight. The locality would be defined by both the quality of its objects and products, and the presence of local goods on wider regional and international markets. Some inspectors’ reports did echo

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17 See “Zhuoding Zhili chupin xiehui pai yuan diaocha ge zhou xian wuchan jian zhang” (Proposed regulations for product inspection by the Zhili product association at the department and district level), NYQYHZ, v. 3, 23. Upon discovering an item worthy of display at the main provincial event in December (with possibilities of being sent on finally to the national fair the following spring), such a form was to be immediately sent to alert the main office; upon confirmation, the item might then be shipped to Tianjin for preparation for December’s provincial exhibition.

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the accounts offered in local gazetteers, as in the case of Ansu county’s “plump and tasty” cabbage (vouched for as such by the 1884 prefectural gazetteer) which was praised by its exhibition inspector in 1909 for growing to sizes as big as eight or ten jin and for possessing an “unmatched flavor.” Yet while the success of certain items seems to have transcended both literatures—suggesting perhaps the relative stability of certain sensuous standards—words alone would not serve the purposes of the exhibition’s sponsors. The concern of their project remained, ultimately, to bring these material goods and objects before a mass audience and, ultimately, to let the things speak for themselves.

In this growing culture of capitalist competition, vice-director Xiang Ruikun propounded that what was most important for a nation’s new citizenry to receive was specifically an “education in material things.” The exposition grounds were presented as the prime site for this training, a place where visitors could study “which things are those of advanced nations, which things are those of less advanced nations, which are the things made by savage people, and which are those that civilized people are able to make.”

This pedagogical mission, however, depended upon both a new culture of display and specific ways of seeing things, a culture that differed fundamentally from evolving practices associated with the consumption of objects at a temple fair or city market. In a fashion that shared qualities with the institutions of the museum and department store, but which claimed (or created) its audience on an even greater scale in 1910, the exposition was intended to carry a new culture of material exhibition to the mass audience associated both with the nation and with the “material civilization” to which it lay claim. Objects themselves, animated in the process of display, were in many ways imagined as the fundamental actors here, as Susan Pearce suggests in her description of objects as “both the signifier, that is, the medium that carries the message, and the signified, the message itself.”

Things nevertheless require the attention of their handlers if they are to present a unified or, to the extent possible, singular message that might serve a didactic purpose. China’s exposition managers, in late 1909 and 1910, were therefore very much concerned with the new science of display and promoted its methods across the Qing empire through their instructions for local exhibitions.

20 Xiang Ruikun, “Nanjing yu Nanyang Quanyehui” (Nanjing and the Nanyang Exposition), NYQYHTG, no. 2 (June 1909): 103.
21 Naquin 2000, 623–632; Dong 2003, 172–207. Madeleine Dong’s study of the Tianqiao market district in Republican Beijing offers a vivid account of the pandemonium associated with that district’s “labyrinth of commodities” and especially its not–quite–endorsed entertainments. It was precisely this kind of disorder and pandemonium that expo managers sought to avoid in 1910, even as they worked upon ways to draw the masses to the exposition fairground in Nanjing.
22 Pearce 1992, 38.
From the beginning of local exposition preparation to the grand event itself in Nanjing, organizers labored to impress participants with the potency of display and decoration as both art and science. The very first of the exposition circulars, published at the start of the preparatory period in early 1909, alerted its readers that “with global progress, categorization and display of products has become an expert specialty.” With increasing urbanization, industrial manufacture, and a growing consumer economy during the late nineteenth century, new schools and institutions had begun to emerge in both Europe and the United States to offer training in commercial skills including decorative architecture, commercial design, and display. These professional arts, however, did not achieve full realization until the nineteen-teens and -twenties. As one historian of the profession has noted, “display” as a term denoting the systematic treatment of goods did not exist before 1890 and would not become part of everyday merchandising vocabulary until World War I. Its first American pioneer was none other than L. Frank Baum, composer of fairy-tales and creator of the Land of Oz, who had participated in the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, also peddled fire-works and glass, and in 1900 published the first known book on the decoration of show windows.

While Xiang Ruikun lamented the lack of specialty departments instructing the techniques of display and decoration in Asia’s own commercial schools, the attention that he and other exposition organizers devoted to the subject was, for its time, quite cutting-edge. Beginning with the first exposition circular in February of 1909, organizers worked to educate potential exposition participants in the importance of these techniques. Organizers insisted that methods for display and decoration must progress, adhering to “scientific principles,” so that displayed products would be “understood at a glance.” They provided explicit instruction regarding product display, encouraging the implementation of specific types of display cases and object arrangement, tactical use of mirrors, as well as the use of models and flowers in decoration. “The display’s order should precisely suit the visitor’s mentality,” the circular

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23 “Fu kan Quanyehui shuolue” (Summary of an exposition) in NYQYHTG, no. 1 (February, 1909): 65.
24 William Leach 1989, 102. See also Leach 1993.
25 Leach 1989, 106.
26 Baum also founded a magazine, Show Window (beginning in 1897) and assembled the first National Association of Window Trimmers (to be known, after 1914, as the International Association of Display-men). Leach 1989, 109–110.
27 Xiang Ruikun had graduated from a commercial program at Japan’s Meiji University. For his complaint that even such commercial schools, in East Asia, still lacked separate departments for the study of decoration see Xiang Ruikun, “Shiwusuo chupin ke zhuangshi yanjiuhui yanshuo” (Lecture on the occasion of the research conference sponsored by the exposition office product department), NYQYHTG, no. 3 [n.d.], 44.
28 “Fu kan Quanyehui shuolue,” 65–66.
explained, “[it] should please the eye and warm the heart, and not encourage boredom.”

In April of 1909, the periodical *Dongfang zazhi* also began disseminating the exposition office’s instructions for product labeling, while detailed updates regarding object categorization and facsimiles of explanatory labels for display items were published repeatedly throughout the following summer and fall. These instructions were intended to offer guidance for both the preliminary local exhibitions in the provinces, which would be held during the fall of 1909, and the coming national event in Nanjing during the following summer. Not content to rely on the printed instructions in circulars and magazines, the exposition office also sponsored a week-long research conference dedicated to the techniques and strategies of decoration and display (referred to, together, as *zhuangshi*).

“Zhuangshi” was presented as an intricate science in this research conference, an event held for the benefit of both local exposition organizers and interested merchants. The conference was held in September of 1909, timed to coincide with preparations for the provincial exhibitions to be held later that fall, and chaired by the exposition’s vice-director Xiang Ruikun himself. The event assembled representatives from product associations organized in conjunction with the exposition, and was intended both to disseminate new display techniques associated with expositions, and to address perceived problems in native display practices in the broader commercial realm. “Our nation’s commercial knowledge is weak in the matter of decoration,” Xiang explained, “especially its practical use in accordance with human sentiment.” The Chinese nation, as he saw it, had four key deficiencies in decoration. One problem was a lack of attention to that great scourge of the modern era, namely dust, an element that contributed to changes in the color and quality of products, and which was particularly problematic when edible items were on display. A related problem was climate and weather. Good decorators would pay attention to such factors because, Xiang reminded, unlike people goods could not sense changes in the weather. Finally, he warned, the nation’s practices of decoration and display were deficient in both the use of light and in a lack of care for proper positioning of objects themselves.

Xiang Ruikun took special care to elaborate upon the complexities of *zhuangshi* as material presentation. As decoration, ornamentation, or arrangement, its techniques could be divided into categories of retail vs. exhibitionary presentation. Interior decoration and exterior decoration also constituted

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29 “Shiwusuo tonggao ge chupin xiehui wuchanhui yijian shu” (A letter of opinion circulated to local product and goods associations), NYQYHTG no. 3 [n.d.]: 44.
30 DFZZ 3.3 (April 1909); 6.6. (July 1909); 6.8 (September 1909).
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separate fields with their own particular approaches. The arrangement of products and objects remained a primary concern throughout his discussion, and Xiang contrasted its divisions of “subjective” arrangement (“only convenient for citizens of a relatively high level”), “objective” arrangement (“which uses everyday people’s sense of aesthetics”) and “specialty” arrangement or ornamentation (“encourages people to be of a buying-mind.”) At the same time, Xiang derided the common practices of Chinese merchants: “The level of Chinese people is low, of [these] methods ‘objective’ ones are used in the main… [upon] entering the great marketplaces, initially the [beautiful] objects are concealed and the coarser ones are shown. When examining [a shop’s] cabinets and tables, coarse and refined are in a chaotic mix, which annoys people. They are arranged without examination, without consideration, and not in accordance with ‘subjective’ zhuangshi.” Chinese merchants’ lack of knowledge about simple “objective” techniques of arrangement was “laughable” in Xiang’s view, yet another sign of the nation’s failure to compete globally. “East and West, every country has established department stores,” he noted, stressing that these should be constructed at major thoroughfares, thus gathering goods together at places easy for the “masses of people” to see them clearly. In this context, perfect decoration had three main traits: it would maintain products safely, protecting people’s health, it would suit both the mind and the products themselves, and it would make a viewer happy, “seducing” a customer into having a desire to buy.31

Exposition circulars would continue to offer instructions for those who had missed the conference throughout the remainder of that autumn of 1909. Before the end of the year, these circulars were succeeded by a regular exposition tri-monthly which continued to offer numerous diagrams of display cases, architectural plans and exhibit hall schema. In the tri-monthly’s pages, both Chen Qi and Xiang Ruikun also continued to advise local and regional participants of the importance of the “difficult” issue of display, warning of the chaos that a lack of care and an abundance of objects could produce.32

And when the exposition gates finally opened, what might the attentive citizen see on a trip through the exhibits? As exposition managers hoped, it would be the nation as composed of its products and arts, material visions of the past and future. All the best things that the country, province, and nation could produce were to be surveyed. The objects were meant to offer stirring examples of the historic strides that had been taken, to display the skill of

31 Xiang Ruikun, “Shiwusuo chupin ke zhuangshi yanjiu hui yanshuo” (Lecture on the occasion of the research conference sponsored by the exposition office product department), in NYQYHTG no. 3 [n.d.]: 47–48.
32 See QYHXB, no. 3 (January 10, 1910); no. 8 (March 1, 1910); no. 10 (March 20, 1910).
“Chinese” people and to create the things that would pull the nation up to par with its international competition. These displays of goods and models and machinery were also there to be examined for weakness, measured against all comers, and thus inspire greater efforts. In judging examples, good or bad, the nation’s progress was to be ensured by being made visible on the shelves and display stands of the exhibition. But what did it look like?

One display hall from the national exposition, Zhili Province, has left behind a photographic record to go with its own written description. The architecture of the Zhili Hall, like many of the other buildings situated at the national expo grounds, was intended as a mixture of old and new, a design that included both Western elements and apparent Chinese flourishes. Once inside an elaborate “Chinese style” gate, a visitor could follow his or her assigned path through the hall, winding through a collection of open-shelf displays and large glass cases. Indeed, glass cases were something worth celebrating in themselves at this time, and the newspaper Shenbao praised the many halls at the exposition for their attention to glass construction, noting how useful this substance was to society.33 Behind glass and on the display shelves stood a broad range of manufactured goods, textiles, foodstuffs, teas, and other consumables as well as works of art, scientific samples, and models. Object arrangement in the Zhili Hall was specifically ordered by category in accordance with twenty-four divisions that had been promulgated by the exposition’s central office. Education items were numerous, and included many drawings, sketches, and paintings (most leaning against the back walls of shelved cases, some laying flat on the shelf bottoms), as well as group photographs of students themselves. Other education items included pharmaceutical samples in glass jars, provided by an army medical academy, small electric appliances and scientific instruments, and models of ships, carts, and the human body in all the detail of its inner anatomy. Mining and Metallurgy were represented by samples arranged in rows of glass jars or cases, while orderly stacks of “Dragon” brand soap drew attention to the category of Chemical Industries. As visitors followed the winding path laid for them through the Hall, they would find themselves parading past a host of other objects: silk cocoons and cotton textiles, an imposing cotton-spinning machine, tea ceramics, agricultural tools, timber samples from a Forestry display and stuffed animals from the Hunting exhibit, shelves of bottled liquor and tinned biscuits, paintings, calligraphy, sculpture, and tools of the Army and Navy (swords, for the most part). A fair number of visitors, or so one might judge from the number of chairs and tables present, would also have visited the guest room. This was a parlor of sorts, arrayed with stuffed

33 Shenbao (August 2, 1910), 2.
Objects, Spectacle, and a Nation on Display

armchairs and a sofa, whose walls were crowded with paintings, portraits, and calligraphy. Scores of miniature flags of the world’s nations hung from lines that stretched back and forth across the ceiling, criss-crossing from one corner of the room to the other.

When one paused in this “center room,” it might seem one was indeed at the center of it all. Here a person could sit comfortably, at once a resident of a Provincial Hall, a Civilized Nation, and a Modern World, celebrating the things of which that new order was composed: tinned biscuits and glass bottles, spinning machines, swords, and soap. It was precisely this choreography of observer and object that was intended by the exposition’s nationalist promoters to create a dedicated and productive citizenry. Objects, carefully arranged and framed with labels and awards, would thus speak to a new kind of time, one embodied in technology and markets themselves as well as the hierarchy of place that they implied. If the gazetteer offered an inter-textual and trans-historical collage, one that in certain respects captured the object more precisely in its reflection of a thing’s accrual of significations and its frequent ability to outlive the text itself, the sights of the exposition were intended to inspire (and impose) an ever-present “now.” They were to advertise a set of standards embodied in technology and the search for the “new and novel.” This new sense of time, moreover, was ideally suited to the exposition’s main appeal as spectacle itself—an appeal upon which organizers’ relied as they sought to draw and inspire an audience.

An Audience Unleashed:
Exposition Spectacle as Cause and Conundrum

In the midst of its commotion the Nanyang Exposition offered an arena for a multitude of objects and roving observers, while ultimately presenting a material choreography that invoked a constant conflation of production and consumption, producer and consumer. Everything here was meant to be consumed, from the didactic message inherent in the arrangement of products and displays at the exhibit halls to the entertainment and attractions offered in expo theaters and eateries, to the event itself in its sale of tickets, postcards, guidebooks, and souvenirs. The attendance of a mass audience was a requisite element of the pedagogical mission undertaken by China’s exposition managers. Indeed, these organizers imagined and, to a certain extent, achieved this mass audience of participant-visitors while simultaneously offering an education in the subtle arts of the modern marketplace. The event ultimately, however, was intended as one that would both entertain and train a citizenry, creating a new crowd of individuals that would enthusiastically embrace the nation through their dedicated study of commodities themselves. Expo orga-
izers’ own conflation of production as a nationalist cause with the promise of consumption in part as necessary lure (and, they argued, an honest diversion) for their audience opened the door to unintended consequences during the summer of 1910. Indeed, Xiang Ruikun’s own need to articulate a justification for popular entertainment reveals the social complexities associated with consumption itself, and the fears that many of his elite contemporaries held regarding the unexpected consequences that spectacle itself could provoke.

During the months of local preparation underway for both the provincial preparatory fairs held in late 1909 and the national exposition of 1910, exposition organizers heralded the “miraculous effects” of the event in speeches dedicated to the “awakening” of a citizenry. In addition to the exhibition’s power to advance industry, broaden markets, and improve products through the avenues of comparison, awards, and research, the event was also celebrated for the magic of the “impressions” it would make upon visitors and the productive energy implicit in the “extraordinary spectacle and commotion” of the event itself. Speaking in 1909 on the topic of “the nation’s grand ceremony,” exposition Vice-Director Xiang Ruikun described the powerful impact an exposition might make upon its audience. He cited the national holidays celebrated at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 (“forever etched upon the mind”) and the great excitement which he had personally witnessed of the Osaka Exposition of 1903, an event, Xiang noted, that people “to this day still delight in talking about.” Xiang suggested that his own nation might use the exposition to commemorate such recent events as the promulgation of the Ninth-Year Constitution and the first year of the Xuantong emperor’s new reign. This vision for the exposition as a national celebration, moreover, was explicitly associated by Xiang with a mandate for the event as a site for amusing the masses, as he explained to an audience of exposition promoters:

I recall ten years ago there being the proposal to do away with theater at temple festivals in the villages. Now the time our nation’s people spend at their labors is excessive, and if there is no leisure time to blow off steam, then the result will be much trouble. The people of our nation have already entered an arena of competition for survival, thus amusement is a certain necessity.

34 “Nanyang Quanyehui yu guomin zhi juewu” (The Nanyang Exposition and the awakening of the citizenry), NYYQHTG, no. 2 (June 1909), 116–119.
35 Xiang Ruikun, “Nanjing yu Nanyang Quanyehui” (Nanjing and the Nanyang Exposition) NYQYHTG, no. 2 (June 1909): 103. In the same speech, Xiang also noted the value of social events (such as dance parties) to the pursuit of international diplomacy.
Embracing this call, exposition promoters pursued concrete measures in the effort to entertain, educate, and attract the broadest audience possible. In their instructions to those arranging regional and provincial exhibitions in preparation for the national event, organizers explained that local fairs should establish Sundays as a “half-price” day for both soldiers and students. On Saturdays tickets were to be further discounted to so as to allow “poor people” an opportunity to visit the fairgrounds and tour the exhibits. While ticket prices were somewhat higher for the national exposition held in Nanjing during the summer of 1910, similar arrangements were made in an effort to attract a broad audience. In Nanjing, “special tickets” and “children’s tickets” were made available at 1.5 jiao apiece to students, soldiers-in-uniform, and children under twelve years of age, while “servant’s tickets” were priced at five coppers.36 In early July, just over a month after the exposition’s opening, prices for the exposition were further reduced by one third for both regular admission tickets and the “special tickets” for students and soldiers.37 Meanwhile, large contingents of visitors were organized as school groups, crowds of “overseas Chinese” and foreign guests, as well as at least one peasant group (made up of “literate peasants and those with experience”) were assembled to tour the exposition and the objects laid forth there.38

In encouraging a mass audience for the event, moreover, exposition organizers and chroniclers were most enthusiastic in their embrace of women as participants in the exposition. Actively encouraged to participate in the empire-wide event and its preparation, women’s physical presence in a shared public space nevertheless attracted comment as a strange, if somehow strangely appropriate, phenomenon. As the newspaper Shibao noted in its celebratory description of the national exposition’s success in its opening ceremonies, many people had come to hear the day’s speeches and “there were even female guests visiting the grounds.”39 Women’s attendance and their direct contribution to the material collections on display were celebrated at both the national and provincial levels. Individuals such as the renowned practitioner of embroidery, Shen Shou, were heralded for their skill and the honors they had won in broader (often global) arenas. Newspaper coverage of exposition events also underscored the contributions of women generally to handicraft

36 Servants’ tickets, however, were only sold to servants (and workmen) on the first and the fifteenth of every month, from six to eight in the morning. Their employers could buy the tickets on their behalf any time of day. Guide to Nanking and the Nanyang Exposition (Nanjing: University of Nanjing Magazine, May 1910), 7.
38 Shenbao (July 8, 1910), 3.
39 Shibao (June 7, 1910), 2.
production as well as their participation as a labor force in the nation’s textile manufacture. A recognition of women’s roles as consumers is very much evident in the national event, where women featured prominently as speakers in a series of lectures that included a well-publicized talk given by Zhao Luzhen, (founder of the Women’s Association for the Protection of National Wealth) in which she urged her fellow female consumers to purchase “national goods.” The registered attendance of many members of “the women’s realm” at a research conference held in conjunction with the exposition also received due attention. Five women in particular were lauded in the press for their enthusiasm and for their stamina amidst the summer’s sweltering heat, for upon their arrival at the conference they had immediately embarked upon a wide tour of the exposition grounds. “They did not shrink from the weather,” readers were informed, “and they pursued a broad view of [the exposition’s] sights and sounds.”

Several of the local preparatory exhibitions, including those held in Tianjin and Yangzhou, nevertheless followed the policy of Beijing’s newly established display hall in segregating the genders and assigning particular days or times exclusively for women to tour the exhibition. Yangzhou, in fact, turned its entire fair over to women for the last three days of its nine-day run. While women were touring the fair during this period, all positions except for those at the ticket office, fire and police departments were staffed entirely by women. Men were forbidden from the grounds, and, in order to make seeing the sights there “more convenient” for women, personnel were stationed outside the exhibition gates to prevent male visitors from mistakenly entering or causing any trouble. Women also claimed their own space at the national event, creating a haven from the unwanted male attention that some were apparently receiving during their visits to the exposition. One of the most publicized of such

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40 For coverage of Shen Shou in the context of the exposition, see both Shenbao and Xinwen bao on July 31, 1910. Xinwen bao, meanwhile, also celebrated women’s participation in a new industrial labor force and, through this, their liberation from the “bound foot” and the “old society.” See Xinwen bao (September 10, 1910).

41 See Xinwen bao October 19 and 21, 1910 for coverage.

42 Shibao (July 27, 1910). Women had been specifically encouraged to participate in the research conference (“all women eager to participate in research are also invited to join,” read an announcement for the conference). The requirements for participation (for both men and women, apparently, as the regulations did not specify gendered standards) were the procurement of a letter of introduction from a local education association, chamber of commerce, agricultural society, or an exposition official. Participants were also to prepare their own funds for lodging and entrance to the fair. See DFZZ 7.6 (July 31, 1910) and 7.7 (August 29, 1910). Nanjing’s summer heat, already infamous, had been particularly brutal that summer of the national fair.

43 “Yangzhou wuchanhui kai hui jilue” (A record of the opening of the Yangzhou product association), QYHXB, 12 (April 10, 1910).
efforts was in the case of a teahouse disturbance at the Nanyang Exposition. The exposition grounds in Nanjing offered more than ten teahouses as places for visitors to rest from the sun (and refresh themselves after the more formal tours of the product halls, perhaps.) Although each teahouse provided ushers for their guests, many women found the disorderly behavior and impolite attention of the “young dandies” there tiresome. Seeking a more peaceful escape from the hot weather, then, a group of women organized to raise funds and arrange for the construction of a teahouse at the exposition that would offer exclusive service to female visitors.\(^{44}\)

Although the reinvented bounds of a shared public space were still subject to negotiation, women’s participation was not simply an option but also, by 1910, an expectation. In the last days of the national exposition, the daily Xinwen bao reported that one Ms. Feng, the principal of a women’s school in Hankow, had learned that female students of every province had already been to the Nanyang Exposition and that only Wuhan had failed to send representatives for a visit. Ms. Feng quickly organized a group of young women students, some sixty to seventy in number, and rushed to Nanjing to visit before the close of the event.\(^{45}\) Thus, with the help of new institutions—particularly women’s schools, new-style military brigades, agricultural societies, and chambers of commerce—exposition organizers had succeeded in invoking (and perhaps provoking) a broad audience for their events.

Inside the exposition gates, meanwhile, and in the lanes and thoroughfares that led to them, commotion often reigned. The spectacle of the expo, as noted previously, was an intended attraction, a strategy of organizers who embraced a mandate to amuse the masses as well as to instruct them. In many ways, these New Policies exhibitions emerged as contested arenas. The exhibition’s power lay in its design as a space that united pedagogical intents with commotion itself, capitalizing upon spectacle to capture its audience. At the same time, the New Policies exhibitions also reveal overlapping cultures of spectacle, as the new-style exposition remained influenced by practices associated with seasonal temple festivals and street markets.

For many visitors, the exposition was defined by its sights, scenes, and noise. Exposition organizers pursued a visual spectacle in both the architecture of the exposition grounds and its ornamentation, including brilliant flags and banners—and particularly in new uses of light. Shanghai’s preparatory exhibition welcomed visitors until the hour of midnight each evening, offering over four thousand electric lights and ten thousand paper lanterns to draw

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\(^{44}\) Shenbao (July 16, 1910), 2; Xinwen bao (July 16, 1910).

\(^{45}\) Xinwen bao (November 9, 1910).
their attention.\textsuperscript{46} The national fair held in Nanjing the following summer provided an even greater attraction with the marvel of fourteen thousand electric lights, which outlined the grand gates and main façade of the expo entrance and which created a nighttime spectacle that reportedly could be seen “from many tens of \textit{li} away.”\textsuperscript{47} Grand fireworks displays also wowed visitors at both the local and national events. Noise—or in its more civilized varieties, sound and music—was no small part of the attraction. The fairs all offered martial bands (in the case of Shanghai’s exhibition, four of them all playing at once) which performed such tunes as “Yankee Doodle” and “Poor Black Joe” as flourishes before public speeches and ceremonies. “Our nation’s people in the past scorned soldiers,” noted one account of the 1910 Nanyang Exposition, suggesting that a new relationship had come into existence and could be seen in the appearance of army bands waiting to welcome visitors at the central grounds of the national fair.\textsuperscript{48} State officials, too, used the grounds to establish a new kind of relationship with the nation’s citizenry: busts of both Duanfang and Zhang Renjun were proudly displayed in the Fine Arts Hall, and one Qing minister who toured the grounds even made a point of handing out souvenir photographs of himself to visiting overseas Chinese.\textsuperscript{49}

Displays of technology also united new sights and sounds. Gramophones, as both display items and apparently objects for sale, entertained visitors with their novel delivery of Chinese songs.\textsuperscript{50} Motion pictures also were offered in a movie theater housed at the grounds of the Nanyang Exposition. Promoters similarly attracted people to the expo events in their presentations of larger-scale technical wonders, including the appearance of an army blimp at the Nanyang expo grounds as well as displays of fire-fighting equipment, water pumps, textile machinery and other mechanical devices at both the national and provincial exhibitions.\textsuperscript{51} Meanwhile, visitors were drawn to the fair by the relatively new means of transportation that were being installed in China’s urban centers. Shanghai’s exhibition organizers, for instance, arranged a contract with the Shanghai Tramway Company both to sell tickets to the fair and

\textsuperscript{46} Xinwen bao (October 29, 1909).
\textsuperscript{47} Shibao (June 8, 1910), 3; (June 14, 1910), 3. The lights were subsidized jointly by Shanghai’s Shangwu Corporation and the Guanghua Electric Light Company. See Shibao (September 20, 1910), 3. One \textit{li} is approximately five hundred meters.
\textsuperscript{48} Shibao (June 17, 1910), 3. The Army also offered horse competitions for the entertainment of visitors. Shenbao, (July 25, 1910).
\textsuperscript{49} Shibao (June 14, 1910), 3.
\textsuperscript{50} North China Herald (November 27, 1909): 479–481; “You zhanlan hui chang ji shi yi” (An account of a visit to the exhibition grounds, part one), NYQYZH, v. 4, “Lun shuo jixu ge xian” (Miscellaneous commentaries and accounts), 3.
\textsuperscript{51} Xinwen bao, (October 9, 1910) on blimp; See also North China Herald (November 27, 1909), 479; Xinwen bao (November 21, 1909).
to provide free transportation on its streetcars for those same ticket-holders between the city’s railway station and the exposition grounds, from two o’clock in the afternoon until the exhibition’s closing hour of midnight. Several of these cars were “brilliantly lit” for the event, flying many-colored flags during the day and illuminated with hundreds of red and green lanterns at night.\textsuperscript{52}

Such marvels seem to have mixed easily with an evolving culture of performance and consumption associated with temple fairs and street markets, as well as with the freak shows, circuses, and menageries that were also being deployed locally. A visitor to Zhili’s provincial exhibition in Tianjin in 1909 described the “arenas of artistry” and the host of small-time entertainers that awaited at the fairgrounds there: actors performing Western scenes, magicians dazzling the crowds with sleight-of-hand, adepts of the martial arts who wielded swords and guns—“every sort of performer beyond description.”\textsuperscript{53} Similar attractions awaited at Shanghai’s exhibition, whose managers had established a plaza for all sorts of music, jugglery, and children’s games, as well as stages for both “Eastern” and “Western” theater.\textsuperscript{54} Exotic collections of live animals, assembled from across the empire, were offered at both local and national fairs as well. More freakish sorts of curiosities also awaited at the local venues. Displays of super-human strength were offered on one stage in Shanghai, for example, while visitors there might also step carefully behind screens to study a five-legged ox or the child with a gargantuan head. An illustration in the small and short-lived Shanghai paper, the \textit{Minli bao} (People’s stand) presents another unusual figure in the context of the Nanyang Exposition itself. In the illustration, a young woman rests on her bed, obviously recovering from some exertion. A wrinkled old woman stands before her, leaning forward with the weight of the infant in her outstretched arms. Whether she is presenting the child to the young woman, or taking it away, is unclear. In any case, both may be intended, as the text alongside intimates. Apparently a baby had been born to a peasant woman who lived outside the west gate of Yangzhou, after a thirty-month pregnancy. As the text relates, the child had been born with horns and third eye that stood out between them—this strange entity (guaiwu), we are told, was marked for death. By some luck, a neighbor “with a bit of knowledge” arrived and advised instead that the child be sent to the Nanyang Exposition for display.\textsuperscript{55} Yet while organizers of local fairs were willing to capitalize upon this sort of spectacle, the directors of the national exposition disapproved of such scenes and ruled against performances of the “abnormal”

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Xinwen bao} (November 21, 1909).
\textsuperscript{53} “You zhanlan hui chang ji shi yi” (An account of a visit to the exhibition grounds, part one), 3.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Xinwen bao} (November 18, 1909).
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Minli bao} (October 20, 1910), 4.
in their regulations for fairground shops and vendors.\textsuperscript{56} Choreographing a spectacle, it seemed, was a precarious business, and although they were not always successful, the nationalist directors of the New Policies expositions were concerned to prevent such forms of exhibitionary improvisation.

**Conclusion**

The directors of the Nanyang Exposition were ambitious in their aims. The goals of the successive expo events of 1909 and 1910 were to assemble, judge, categorize, and collect objects and products from across the Qing empire. At the exposition, the locale would be epitomized by objects-on-display, by an assembly of things that would serve to integrate a diverse collection of localities and the citizen-observer within a broader conception of a national community. In this respect, expo organizers pursued not only an inventory of empire and a systematic evaluation of its material components (objects, artwork, products, and technologies), but also intended, through the use of both material pedagogy and spectacle to help transform subjects into citizens.

Just as the museum assembled and advertised cultural treasures to invoke an imagined national and cultural community, the exposition reassembled a host of mundane objects in the name of a similarly transcendent purpose. In the realm of the expo, in fact, no object could remain mundane. The New Policies exhibitions were revolutionary, in this sense, as the application of a new culture of display, one which pursued a precise choreography of objects and their viewers. Indeed, this material choreography was intended to invent its own audience on national and ultimately international scale. During the last years of the Qing dynasty, as elsewhere at the same global moment, the exposition represented the rise of a mass culture, the potent combination of material pedagogy and consumption with a spectacle that invited participants from across a societal spectrum to identify with the new nation that was being created and the market upon which its future was seen to depend.

While the methods and aims of the exposition as witnessed in the major fairs held in Europe and the United States presented a vision of a strict colonialist hierarchy, moreover, expositions such as that held by the Qing dynasty in Nanjing suggested a much more open field of competition. During the same summer of 1910, Huang Zunkai, the Trade Commissioner to Japan, published an extended essay entitled “An Investigation of the Regulations and Methods of International Expositions.”\textsuperscript{57} While he was certainly concerned with the

\textsuperscript{56} NYQYHYL, (Shanghai: Zhongguo tushu, n.d.), 40–44.

\textsuperscript{57} Huang Zunkai, “Diaocha ge guo bolanhui zhangcheng banfa” (An investigation of the regulations and methods of international expositions), *Shibao* (August 30, September 1, 3, 5; 1910).
development of scientific knowledge and industry as the universal basis for national strength, he noted that in certain respects China was “not that far behind” and had “no need to be ashamed.” Huang’s discussion provided a review of exposition technologies, and his discussion of both Japanese and French national and international expositions was quite pragmatic in tone. Europe did not appear as a distant or lofty model to be emulated here, and Japan was described matter-of-factly as having provided its own model (“a borrowed mirror”) for the Paris Exposition of 1900 in the Japanese perfection of exposition arrangements over the course of five national expositions.58

Huang discussed both financial arrangements, including the various strategies of private and government funding, and the importance of exposition grounds’ design and appearance to the overall effectiveness of the event. Physical arrangement was crucial in Huang’s view, and he noted that the Nanyang Exposition needed improvement in the layout of its rooms and gardens if it was to increase the attendance and pleasure of visitors. The Paris Exposition of 1867, with its halls organized in a circle, was offered as a particularly good example. Huang also stressed the importance of both a grand and innovative appearance for the exposition, one designed by those with “inventive minds” so as to present an image that combined both “the new” and elements of architecture peculiar to one’s own nation. The object of design was the creation of nothing less than a “splendid and imposing memorial,” one that would nourish the visitors’ “reverent and patriotic hearts” while preventing them from “having an attitude wherein upon seeing a thing their thoughts change and become ones of slavish imitation.”59 Huang’s historical review of the evolution of expositions abroad, the changes in their procedures, and the failures and successes of their organizing tactics suggests an understanding of expositions as a tool to be owned—one which did not belong to the exclusive purview of a modern, or Western, other. Huang’s optimism and pragmatism indicated a belief that the Qing empire and Chinese nation could reinvent itself without needing to simply “imitate” another, achieving through that assembly of objects and studious citizens a material modernity that transcended the West.

58 Huang Zunkai. Shibao (September 1, 1910), 1. Japan reportedly provided an example in its perfection of “regulation and scale” as well as “arrangements,” which followed in step with that nation’s own progress.
59 Huang Zunkai. Shibao (September 1, 1910), 1.
Glossary

| Ansu xian | 安肃縣 | rexin gongyi |
| Baoding fuzhi | 保定府志 | Qingyuan xian |
| Chen Qi | 陳琪 | shangwu ju |
| chu deng xiao xue | 初等小學 | Shenbao |
| Duanfang | 端方 | Shibao |
| Dongfang zazhi | 東方雜志 | shiwu yuan |
| Gaoyang xian | 高陽縣 | tuchan |
| gao deng xiao xue | 高等小學 | wang guo |
| guoyu | 國語 | wuchan |
| guai wu | 怪物 | Xiang Ruikun |
| Huang Zunkai | 黃尊楷 | xinqi zhizao |
| Minli bao | 民立報 | Xinwen bao |
| nanyang da chen | 南洋大臣 | zhuangshi |
| Nanyang quanye hui | 南洋勛業會 | |
| qiang guo | 強國 | |

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NYQYHTG. *Nanyang Quanyehui tonggao* (Nanyang Exposition circular).


