COREA DEL NORTE, LA TRANSICIÓN INVISIBLE
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Highly politicized preservations

About heritage management policies, by Hyung Il Pai

Heritage Management in Korea and Japan: The Politics of Antiquity and Identity
HYUNG IL PAI
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Drawing on oral histories and a wide variety of archival sources from museums, national institutions, historical societies, and tourist bureaus, Hyung Il Pai traces the history of heritage management in South Korea and Japan. Pai focuses her study on the "contested history of shared museum treasures and cultural properties" and the complex selection process of labeling national treasures, ethnic groups, and tourist sites in Japan and South Korea. According to Pai, South Korean government-funded heritage management organizations inherited the hierarchical and property ranking system from the Japanese, who had looked to the West for examples of heritage management and for Western specialists of archeology and heritage preservation. As Pai argues, the forces of modernity, nationalism, colonialism, and globalization shaped the nature of heritage management in South Korea and Japan.

In Chapter One, Pai investigates the history of heritage management in South Korea and the burgeoning tourist industry that developed around national treasures. The system of state-run heritage preservation in South Korea has its origins in the colonial period when Japanese scholars, engineers, and developers first surveyed, excavated, and reconstructed monuments, royal burial grounds, palaces, shrines, temples, and folk villages. The South Korean government-funded Office of Cultural Properties (KSMKG), predecessor to the Cultural Heritage Association (CHA), then appropriated the "hierarchical working structure

and property-ranking criteria directly" from the colonial-era government. Beginning with President Park Chung-hee, South Korean dictators used this heritage preservation system to glorify Korean kings and military heroes as a way to legitimize their hardline military dictatorships. The South Korean government now devotes around 500 million dollars annually to the CHA.

Pai criticizes the structure of the CHA leadership, which is made up of state-appointed male academics who were trained in elite universities. The KSMKG and now the CHA haphazardly conduct salvage excavations in order to provide space for new high-rise apartment buildings, road construction, office construction, the building of factories, and the development of infrastructure. As Pai explains, "We will never know how many sites and relics were bulldozed to make way for dams, hotels, golf courses, airports, freeways, and casinos. (Pai, 29)." The need to compete with China and Japan for tourist dollars has rearranged the priorities of heritage preservation in South Korea. Instead of preserving Korean sites and relics for the sake of research, the South Korean government prioritizes those that can generate the most revenue from tourists.

In Chapter Two, Pai begins her historical exploration and looks at a time when the West clamored for Japanese objects and historical artifacts. In the late 19th century, Westerners bought Japanese goods such as fabrics, silks, embroideries, china, and bronzes at world fairs and exhibitions. Wanting to be a part of this new museum and exhibition craze, Japanese diplomatic missions went on "fact-finding" observation tours of museums and historical institutions in the West, such as the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. As more and more antiquities left Japan, concerned individuals such as Machida Hisanari alerted Meiji officials that something needed to be done to track potentially valuable treasures so they would not be sold on the black market. The Meiji state responded and allowed Machida to conduct a nationwide survey of potentially valuable treasures. In addition, the Meiji state became increasingly concerned that imperial tombs would be ransacked. Thus, beginning in 1874, the Japanese government placed any relics related to imperial history directly under control of the state. This spurred new government initiatives to find historical materials with imperial legacies. As a result, many prefectural governments and local historical falsified records pertaining to supposed imperial connections in order to secure state subsidies and attract tourists.

In Chapter Three, Pai focuses on the major issue that confronted Ito Hirobumi when it came to the arts: how to promote Japanese arts but halt the loss of relics related to imperial history. Ito appointed four individuals to oversee the regulation of Japanese arts at home and abroad: Ernest Fenollosa, Okakura Kakuzo, Kuki Ryuichi, and Sekino Tadashi. These four individuals ultimately shaped the

management of Japanese arts and archeology. For example, Okakura introduced historical narratives that traced the origins of the imperial household to ancient times. Fenollosa popularized the notion that the "aesthetic wonders" of Japanese sculptural style was derived from the great ancient civilizations in the West, such as Babylonia, Greece, and Rome. In addition, Fenollosa's companion Edward Morse presented photography as an effective way to catalogue ancient arts, which was then adopted in Japan. In Chapter Four, Pai elaborates on the racial tinges of prehistoric archeology in imperial Japan. Using prehistoric archaeology to prove a common "Japanese/Korean" cultural ancestry and bridging "the missing racial link," the field observations of Tokyo University students in the colonies were appropriated by the Japanese state to legitimize the building of an empire in East Asia.

In Chapter Five, Pai shifts to archeology on the Korean peninsula and the deployment of "a master racial narrative" by colonial officials that asserted Korea's historical weakness and dependency on foreign powers. In other words, archaeology in Korea was designed to strengthen notions of Japanese racial superiority and provide a historical reasoning for the development of a Japanese empire in East Asia. In her final chapter, Pai looks at the tourist industry that began to develop around historical sites in Korea. The Japan Tourist Bureau (JTB) published guidebooks in English and Japanese languages to help homebound Japanese and foreigners learn about life in the colonies of the Japanese empire. Promoting Japanese rule as a modernizing force on the peninsula, the colonial tourist industry depicted Korea as "Japan's long-lost poor country cousin who had been salvaged from the Dark Ages by the timely return of the superior Japanese and their 'enlightened' government (Pak, 263)."

Pai explains that she only focuses on one of the two Korean states because "it at best impractical to consider the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at this juncture (Pai, 197, note 9)." She then goes on to say, "This is because, due to the xenophobic and authoritarian nature of North Korean government, society, and academia, it has been impossible for me to get access to any reliable sources that would give a glimpse into the inner workings of the DPRK's heritage management policies and practices (Pai 198, note 9)." As Pai notes, scholars cannot delve into archival sources in the DPRK. However, tourists traveling in the northern regions of the DPRK can visit museums, statues, and monuments that trace the path of the Kim Il Sung-led anti-Japanese resistance movement in the 1930s. In Pyongyang, there are several museums that hold relics from the Koguryo, Koryo, and Choson dynasties. In addition, North Korean newspapers frequently mention discoveries of artifacts from ancient Korea. Thus, there are ways of investigating how the North Korean government manages and remembers Korea's ancient and colonial past. Heritage management

in the DPRK is meant to legitimize the rule of the Kim family regime but, as Pai explains in her study, heritage management in South Korea is also highly politicized. The study would have benefitted from a brief comparison of heritage management practices in the North and South and how the struggle to gain legitimacy as the true Korean state during the Cold War influenced the discovery and presentation of cultural properties in the two Koreas. Unlike other postcolonial states, Korea is divided and this unique historical condition has undeniably and partly shaped the nature of heritage management in the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Overall, Pai writes a fascinating book that looks at cultural properties that have shaped historical memory and national identity in Japan and South Korea. However, the conclusion does not review some of the major themes discussed throughout the book but rather introduces a new topic: the plunder of Korean artifacts during the colonial era and South Korea's attempt to reclaim these national treasures. Despite these quibbles, the inclusion of numerous photographs and a jargon-free writing style makes this book accessible to undergraduate students, graduate students, and professors. I recommend this book to students and scholars in the field of East Asian studies.

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