

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND CURATING DISPLAYS OF KOREANNESS: GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

BY CEDARBOUGH T. SAEJI

The four thematically-linked articles in this journal were developed from papers that were originally presented as part of a conference panel from the 7th Kyujanggak International Symposium on Korean Studies held at Seoul National University in August, 2014. We had discussed their publication and proposed the theme issue to *Acta Koreana* prior to the conference. Thanks to peer reviewers who were willing to meet short deadlines and all the efforts of the journal's editorial staff, we have managed to get our four accepted papers ready for publication in time for this December 15, 2014 issue of *Acta Koreana*.

Laurel Kendall, who may not need an introduction at all, has left her mark in Korean Studies, through numerous books and articles on topics related to Korean gender, shamanism, modern weddings, and material culture. She is a curator of Asian Ethnographic Collections at the American Museum of Natural History, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia. Recently she has begun research on the people and processes involved in making things with early forays into the carving of *changsŭng* and a co-authored book that addresses shamanic paintings in press. In addition, Dr. Kendall is planning additional research on Korean crafts.

Elmer Veldkamp is a professor at University College Roosevelt (Utrecht University), and a research associate for the Korea collections at the National Museum of World Cultures in Leiden, The Netherlands. If you want to know more about the museum and their holdings, Dr. Veldkamp wrote a catalog, *Highlights of the Korea Collection in Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde*, which was published in early 2014. He has published several articles in English, Korean, and Japanese on

contemporary human-animal relationships in Korea and Japan. More recent publications address heritage and the meaning of tradition, and the current article falls well within the trajectory of previous theoretical concerns.

Kim Hyeon-jeong, a professor at Tohoku University, has already published a book on the transmission of traditional Japanese heritage protected by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (1950) in Japan. Dr. Kim's book chapters and article publications include work in Japanese, Korean, and English that compares the cultural protection systems in the two countries and their engagement with UNESCO's system. In this paper Dr. Kim continues a larger research project on Japanese colonial buildings in Korea. Her first publication on the subject, which also focused on Kunsan, came out in 2012, and she is currently conducting research in two other field sites with abundant colonial era architecture.

Finally, I am a professor of Korean Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. My research has primarily examined cultural policy and how it impacts the Korean traditional performing arts protected under the Korean Cultural Property Protection Law (CPPL). Forays into issues of curation, contained within an unpublished section of my dissertation, address the curation of performing arts and audience education through live emcees, pamphlets, and programs. Accordingly, this project on curation of tangible heritage has many points of theoretical intersection with previous studies. I intend to continue working on curation as an extension of my concern with cultural policy.

This collection of four articles represents a significant addition to a little studied field: Korean curation. Although the Republic of Korea has a remarkable number of museums and a well-established commitment to protecting tangible and intangible culture, there has been a lack of scholarship on the practice of curation in Korea. Most of the notable publications on Korean curation are cited in our articles with the exception of some excellent work highly focused on the War Memorial. These scant sources are supplemented by a larger body of work in Korean art history and archaeology, yet most of these do not include a theoretical element; scholarship of intangible heritage items (primarily this has focused on music and the crafts are almost overlooked); and research on Korean folklore. As our discussant, Dr. Yang Jongsung, explained at the conference: "through examination of public displays of Korean culture in different contexts, panelists open a dialogue on perceptions of authenticity and their relation to the curation of regional and national culture." We truly hope for this to be true, and that you, the reader, will be inspired to extend research in this field.

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S CATALOGUING, CONSERVING, AND CURATING OF HERITAGE

The preservation, protection, and exhibition of culture have all played an important role in shaping Korean national identity. Therefore a brief history of Korea's engagement with cataloguing, conserving, and curating heritage seems a good place to start this special issue.

The year 1909 saw the opening of Korea's first modern museum, the Imperial Museum of Korea, just one year before Japan assumed full control of the nation (Choe KS 2009: 13). Laws and policies instituted by Japan surveyed, evaluated, and protected objects of Korean antiquity, and collections at the Imperial Museum and the Museum of the Government General of Chōsen (established in 1915, predecessor of the National Museum of Korea) grew quickly.¹ Archaeologist Hyung Il Pai finds the root of curation of Korean art and archaeological objects in colonial era "Japanese racial, cultural, and tourist policies, driven by ideologies of nationalism, mercantilism, and imperialism" (2013: xxx).

In 1945 Korea was freed. While the south was still under the US Military Government in Korea, this body established the Former Royal Household Affairs Office to take control of historic objects. After Rhee Syngman was elected president in 1948 the government focused on social issues and the Korean War (1950–1953), but before Rhee resigned from the presidency in 1960 he had already begun to reach out to traditional culture. In 1951 Rhee founded the National Gugak Center and in 1958 he instituted the first national folk culture contests.² As time went on the government realized that in order to promote official nationalism and thus national identity, an appeal to common cultural roots could be highly effective.³ Former General Park Chung Hee (Pak Chōnghūi) continued promoting nationalism through the arts after his 1961 coup d'état,

¹ "At the time of its foundation the collection of the Imperial Museum of Korea contained approximately 8,600 items, including paintings and calligraphy, porcelain, metalwork, sedan chairs and banners. But in 1912 the collection had swelled to 12,230 items, with the acquisition of Buddhist sculptures of the Unified Silla period, numerous vases, metalwork and jades from the Goryeo [Koryō] period and various works of art and wood and lacquer crafts from the Joseon [Chosōn] period" (Choe KS 2009: 14).

² The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts was founded and temporarily housed in Busan in 1951 (during the Korean War), and the Transmission Center for Gugak Musicians (in Seoul) was opened in 1955, both under President Rhee. This center recently changed its name to the National Gugak Center. The folk arts contests began in 1958 as part of a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea. See Chōng Sujin (2008: 185) for more on founding the folk arts contests and the institution of the National Gugak Center (159–160).

³ This is covered extensively in Yim Haksoon (2004) and Yang Jongsung (2003).

particularly because supporting traditional culture and painting himself as a champion of Koreanness could help to legitimize his government. Park and later presidents appealed to cultural nationalism not just vis-à-vis the past, but in the present and the future as a way to maintain distinctiveness in an increasingly globalized world (Han KK 2003: 6).⁴ President Park used nationalism, while instituting oppressive policies in pursuit of rapid economic development, a morally flawed but strategically successful manipulation of the populace.

Korea adopted the Cultural Property Protection Law (CPPL), modeled after a similar law in Japan, in 1962. This law established a framework for identifying Korea's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. This made Korea the second country to protect intangible heritage, and created a comprehensive system robust enough to later serve as a model for UNESCO efforts to provide additional international support for the preservation of vanishing intangible heritage. Committees of experts were chosen, reports were written nominating items to the various lists, and Korean academics and bureaucrats cooperated to protect Korean culture for posterity.⁵

The organization that oversees these efforts is the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA), or *Munhwajaech'ŏng*. The CHA grew out of the Former Royal Household Affairs Office, mentioned above, and worked under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism until it became independent in 1999. The CHA was elevated to the status of a sub-ministerial agency in 2004. The organization has four main divisions, which are responsible for Planning and Coordination, Heritage Policy, Heritage Conservation, and Heritage Promotion.⁶ All of the CHA's efforts work to further the philosophy expressed in their Cultural Heritage Charter:

A nation's cultural heritage embodies its intellectual and spiritual contributions to the civilization of mankind. Cultural properties, whether tangible or intangible, represent both the essence and the basis of national

⁴ President Chun Duhwan (Chŏn Tuhwan) used traditional culture; in publicity, including in his inauguration parade, the festival *Kukp'ung '81* and for the Olympic Games (Yang JS 2003: 89–90, Dilling 2001).

⁵ As of late 2014 a significant movement in Korea, backed by performers and scholars of the arts, is advocating for intangible cultural heritage to be removed from the CPPL and included in the proposed Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (Muhyŏng Munhwa Yusan Pŏp). So far this movement does not have any powerful political backers, but artists see it as a way to start fresh with a law that does not try to control artists in the same way that it controls heritage objects. Unfortunately, as cynically stated by Kim Sŏk-myŏng, National Human Treasure of Kosŏng Nongyo, even a perfect law, after enactment, is contingent on administration by principled people to avoid becoming unjust (12/6/2014, at a conference of the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Association).

⁶ See www.cha.go.kr for more information.

culture. The cultural heritage of Korea, having survived the vagaries of its long and tumultuous history, is particularly dear to us, Koreans.⁷

This rather lengthy introduction to the CHA is provided because the four authors who contributed articles to this special issue have all written about topics that are connected to the CHA and items protected by the CPPL. The items discussed in these four articles are tied to the CHA through its management of modern cultural heritage (*kūndae munhwa yusan*), its management of intangible cultural heritage (*mubyōng munhwa yusan*), and its management of tangible cultural heritage (*yubyōng munhwa yusan*). Protection of the former has only been in effect since 2001, as explained in Kim Hyeon-jeong's article, while the latter two categories of heritage have been protected since 1962.

During Park's administration, cataloguing Korean culture was the primary task, and many sectors of society came together to determine what existed and what needed to be saved. The "consensual heritage discourse," as discussed by archaeologist Laurajane Smith (2006), is a conversation to determine what items or arts constitute heritage and what heritage means for the inheritors. This discourse was active in Korea from the late 1960s through the 1970s as items of Korean heritage were certified and included in the CPPL. By the 1970s Koreans began to frequently and actively resist the appropriation of traditional culture in government policy-making, asserting their ownership of Korean heritage. At first students asserted their ownership of their heritage by forming student groups to study and perform traditional music and mask dance dramas. Later both traditions and new forms that had grown out of them, such as politically-pointed *madanggŭk* dramas, were used in protests. Sociologist Chōng Sujin has labeled the CPPL governmental appropriation and documented how the government and Korean activists engage in the politics of memory (2008: 124–172). Today the initial discourse surrounding identifying heritage, and the later discourse on ownership of heritage has grown quiet, and the assumptions about "innate and immutable" definitions of "monumentality and aesthetics" that were used to certify the arts are almost unquestioned (Smith 2006: 4). A Korean populace, generally disconnected from traditional culture, accepts the items certified by experts and administrators as "authentic" and "traditional" heritage without debate or question.

The definition of heritage, or tradition, or authenticity, has become someone else's business, a previous generation's problem. While Keila Diehl witnessed Tibetan exile children feeling a "self-conscious honor/burden of being the

⁷ The charter is available on the website of the CHA at http://english.cha.go.kr/english/about_new/charter.jsp?mc=EN_02_04. Accessed on 11/28/2014.

bearers of their heritage,” (2002: 18) the very protection of Korean heritage by the government has allowed Koreans to not worry, and not assume a burden. What happens when ordinary Koreans no longer seem to value their cultural heritage? The lack of personal connection to heritage, in part caused by a widespread belief that the government is taking care of everything, has had a clear impact on engagement. Korean heritage is simultaneously ubiquitous and invisible in the Korean landscape. As an example, National Treasure No. 1 (on the list of national treasures) is Namdaemun Gate (also known as Sungnyemun). For decades, it was stranded in a roundabout at a major intersection in Seoul and Koreans could look at it only from afar. After Namdaemun was connected to a small park and became easily accessible in 2005, countless Seoulites passed by it on a daily basis without wondering if it was vulnerable. Yet in 2008 when an angry arsonist torched the historic monument, the citizenry was incensed that a better protection plan had not been put in place.⁸ The Korean government and private citizens alike become heated up when cultural objects with murky colonial era and Korean War pasts are not repatriated to Korea.⁹ However, there are scores of intangible cultural properties—particularly the craft arts including some discussed in Laurel Kendall’s article in this volume—that are in danger right now due to a lack of a younger generation to learn the skills. There are archaeological sites across Korea being excavated in a hurry as development interests loom over them, with far fewer news stories than the ongoing blame-fest associated with the shoddy reconstruction of Namdaemun. In other words, national attention seems to follow scandal, rather than caring about heritage every day.

Today most Koreans are solidly rooted in the highly-networked electronic present, although some still evince “nostalgia for traditional, rural life and folk culture with its community orientation and egalitarian spirit” (Yea 1999: 224). Hyung-yu Park explains that heritage has a socio-psychological importance in a given culture, detailing how people turn to heritage when worries about the pace of change in society arise (2009: 164). She found that Koreans were concerned by the structural changes in Korean society (2009: 171) and that engagement with heritage allowed Koreans to conceptualize national belonging (*ibid.*: 174). Park concluded that “sustaining the nation’s cultural associations is at the core of

⁸ There was one interesting response to this tragedy: volunteer protectors. A volunteer heritage protection corps increased their membership to 5,784 people in the wake of the Namdaemun disaster (see the contribution of Hae Un Rii in the chapter “Same Same But Different?: A Roundtable Discussion on the Philosophies, Methodologies, and Practicalities of Conserving Cultural Heritage in Asia” 2012: 48).

⁹ Elmer Veldkamp hints in his article that this issue has become more politicized since 2012 with the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation touring museums with Korea collections around the world.

maintaining a sense of Koreanness” (2009: 175). Park feels that heritage tourism has a role to play in the reconstruction and re-conceptualization of ethnic and national identity.

More and more, heritage sites are transforming into event spaces or sites for entertainment—even palaces hold concerts or art exhibitions. The commodification of Korean heritage, or the act of engaging with Korean heritage through consumption practices has been addressed by various scholars including Timothy Tangherlini on visits to the Suwon Folk Village and Lotte World (2008 and 2011), Moon Okpyo and Uri Kaplan on experiential programs (2011 and 2010), and Han Kyung Ku on the making and selling of kimch'i (2011). Tangherlini asserts that in Korea the “control and manipulation” of heritage is a “battleground between rival institutions, between generations, between classes, between genders, between individuals and even between countries” (2008: 81). Certainly contestation between different parties has been a continual part of the Korean politics of heritage, yet it is a specialized contest and in most cases the number of contestants is anemic.

The strengthening and preserving of Koreanness may be at the center of the government's efforts to preserve culture, including turning much of Korean tradition into an exhibition of itself (perfectly illustrated in these four articles). However, without individual participation and the desire to learn, the traditional can be overlooked in this age of information overload. The search for Koreanness, the ideas that drive exploration of Korean traditional culture, often begins and ends with taking children to a museum, folk village, or a traditional performance.

CREATING MEMORIES OF KOREANNESS

The idea of cultural heritage, and wanting to protect one's own “unique” culture, emerged simultaneously with the modern nation state. The social construct that is nation is made with heavy state engineering. As such, cultures are not only fluid over time, they are fluid over space, too. What is considered Korean today contains numerous elements borrowed from other cultures. Fixed territories, as we see in the Korean peninsula, do not necessarily translate into bounded cultural units. Establishing firmly which items are the heritage of a given nation inevitably marks them with that national signifier. Not only are these established as a monument, a statue, a building, or a craft, but as an overall manifestation of Koreanness. In this sense, heritage is a representation created through both remembering and forgetting (Anico and Peralta 2009: 6). As a result, memory can be effectively manipulated, and popular perceptions of tradition can be

constructed. The Republic of Korea seeks to revitalize, promote and protect heritage through ideologically constructed appeals to nationalism and the CPPL.

Yet not all kinds of Koreanness are institutionalized. Certain understandings of the past, memories, are privileged while others are repressed by heritage politics (Rowlands and de Jong 2007: 16). The tension between privileged and repressed memories becomes inevitably enmeshed in political objectives. Historian Takashi Fujitani explains this through theorizing the construction of a common Japanese understanding of the past through mnemonic sites. These sites are used to make memories of a national past that has never been personally experienced (1998: 11). Fujitani's assertion is that through ritual, national holidays, and state ceremonies—each serving as a mnemonic site—Japaneseness (and love of the Emperor) was developed and embodied in Japan. Similarly in Korea, historic buildings, museum displays, festivals, and even the workshop of the papermaker can serve as mnemonic sites building a link to the Korean past within the visitor. Fujitani's mnemonic sites intertwined the self and others in a common understanding, as “imperial pageants” taught citizens a sense of themselves as a part of the Japanese nation (Fujitani 1998: 15–16). This conceptualization of memory makes clear how local and personal or social memory exist in a tense relationship with “globalizing and/or state-building acts of memorialism” (Rowlands and de Jong 2007: 14). Repeated viewing of the same objects—as “authentic” heritage, teaching tool, and advertising icon—also creates and reinforces an understanding of the significance and value of these particular heritage items (Veldkamp, this volume). Presentations of certain key moments in handicraft production, always the same moments and presented in the same ways, creates memories of how Korean things are made (Kendall, this volume). These mnemonic sites are a key part of engagement with Koreanness today, partially because these acts of curation distill the vast heritage of Korea into a few key memories, key visuals, key acts, that can be repeated and reinforced in a bid to break through the information overload in our contemporary society and provide a link to past and nation.

Using experiences to inculcate a specific message of Koreanness is a prominent factor in Kim Hyeon-jeong's research. Visiting three different museums in Kunsan, Kim curiously finds a reiterated message about the Japanese colonial era being communicated to the museum visitor, even when the stated goal of two museums was to exhibit art and architecture. The memorialism involved in displays of heritage objects in Korean museums, particularly when layered with lessons about the difficulties of life during the Japanese Colonial Era, is an important part of reclaiming the past and communicating strong nationalistic messages. Kim's article provides a clear example of the politically

charged process of converting unpleasant remnants of the colonial era into certified heritage. Museums are cultural spaces, but also “serve as the locus of the legitimacy of the state, because they assemble, preserve and display the symbols of its authority” (Choe KS 2009: 13). Therefore these museums, physically housed in colonial period buildings, must establish that the colonial state was illegitimate (and the Republic of Korea the inheritor of legitimacy) through emphasizing what Kusan and Korea was made to endure under Japanese oppression.

In my article, as well, I approach the National Museum of Korea as a mnemonic site with a message of Koreanness. In the museum, the prominent display and repeated mention of Buddhism in the context of presenting Korea’s historic artifacts and art objects creates a link between grand relics of Koreanness and the religion. The clear through-line of Buddhism in the museum could be seen as part of establishing an imagined community governed by a shared vision of glorious golden Buddhas. The agreement about what a particular tradition means within a particular community, in Benedict Anderson’s sense, deals with the common ideologies within a group of people who may never have met each other, yet are part of a shared, bounded “imagined community” (1983). An imagined community can be created through an understanding based in print culture (as Anderson argues) or it can be accomplished through mnemonic sites—certainly experiences such as art, music, and dance have been used to enact or disseminate a shared identity (Waterman 1990: 372). The National Museum of Korea is the flagship public museum in Korea, repository of many of Korea’s most precious national treasures. The scale of the building—the high ceilings, artfully controlled lighting, and the grandeur of the objects creates a vivid mnemonic experience of Koreanness.

AUTHENTICITY AND CURATION

Museums are one of the most commonly visited heritage sites, and the Korean commitment to museums has been remarkable. The drive to collect, curate, and open museums in Korea has, as of 2012, culminated in 32 nationally operated museums,¹⁰ 326 public museums, 95 university museums, and over 287 (and

¹⁰ This includes both regional national museums operated as subsidiary institutions of the National Museum in Seoul, such as the Kyōngju National Museum, Taegu National Museum, and Cheju National Museum and other museums operated by the government such as the National Palace Museum of Korea and the National Folk Museum of Korea (both on the grounds of Kyōngbok Palace).

growing) *registered* private museums.¹¹ To put this into perspective, it amounts to 700 museums in a country the size of the American State of Indiana. Korea is not only invested in curation for domestic audiences, but also an active part of international organizations related to curation of culture, such as the International Conference on Museums (ICOM). In fact ICOM's first general conference in Asia was in Seoul in 2004. The National Museum of Korea also serves as the chair of the Asia-Europe Museum Network (ASEMUS). Further, Korea is an outspoken part of UNESCO, and has worked tirelessly to list historic sites, relics, and items of intangible heritage on UNESCO's various lists.

Despite the authoritativeness conveyed by UNESCO or national government certification as cultural heritage, the question of authenticity is never entirely put to rest. A well-known analysis of authenticity by anthropologist Edward Bruner posits four meanings of authenticity: credible and convincing, complete and immaculate simulation, original-not-copy, and certified legally valid (1994: 399–400). In the case of Korea's intangible cultural heritage, the government has long been involved in determining authenticity through a process of legal certification that applies to the craft arts discussed by Laurel Kendall. Yet, as Kendall's article shows, the appearance of authenticity may not have changed, but the processes used to make craft works certainly are changing. We are treated to front stage demonstrations that legitimize items as officially protected intangible heritage through iconic photographs and public processes. But craft production is a fluid domain of human practice influenced by technological innovation, access to materials, and the social, economic, and environmental context in which craftworks are produced and circulated. Artisans sometimes utilize new technological innovations to produce affordable goods for a contemporary market and accommodate, where necessary, the inaccessibility of traditional materials, although such adjustments are often elided in the presentation of craftwork. Yet I am misrepresenting Kendall's work if I focus on the issue of authenticity when she is more concerned with how these craft processes are being carried out, or being performed, in an era where the purists definition of authenticity (and Kendall labels the CHA purists) is likened to an impossible, if noble, quest. The items themselves, sometimes ordinary, often no longer needed in the twenty-first century, gain deep significance because of the performative act of making carried out by expert artisans. They are in some sense reproductions, but high-priced, the cost a result of hand-crafting in an era of mechanical reproduction, of the time

¹¹ The statistics on numbers of museums can be found on the website of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in the 2013 *Chŏn'guk munhwa kibansisŏl ch'ongnam*, data as per December 31, 2012. http://www.mcst.go.kr/web/s_data/statistics/statView.jsp?pSeq=690. Accessed on 11/28/2014. There are dozens of unregistered private museums.

taken by certified masters. Kendall's article examines how the performative act of *doing* the craft adheres to the objects through a careful curation of images and narratives.

In the case of Elmer Veldkamp's article we find another case where authenticity is complicated. Focusing on the display of replicated artifacts in national museums, Veldkamp's discussion extends previous work into cultural difference in perception of authenticity. With regard to Asia, this discussion has been developed in studies on architectural heritage in particular. Asia's wooden buildings are frequently rebuilt, including many within UNESCO world heritage sites. Originally, requirements for World Heritage designation collided with the practice of frequent rebuilding of sanctuaries in Japan, an issue that was eventually addressed in the Nara Document on Authenticity that resulted from the Nara Conference of 1994. The prime example of this is the rebuilding of the Ise shrine dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami, the mythical ancestor of the Japanese royal family, an event that takes place every twenty years. The new shrine is functionally identical to the old one, in the same location, and includes all the same furnishings—yet it “lacks material authenticity” (Munjeri 2004:15). A failure to tear down and rebuild the shrine would be inauthentic to the location and what is intended there. It would also make it hard to pass on the many traditional building and furnishing skills associated with the project and held onto by various local craftsmen. Munjeri further complicates discussion of authenticity with examples from Vodoun in Benin, where regularly rebuilt temples are not identical to the past temples, and newly constructed altars include recycled items from modern society such as car parts. This experiential authenticity, based on an intention of authenticity, demonstrates the ownership over the culture held by the artist who can produce the culture.

Veldkamp finds that the Korean museum replicas are complete *simulations*, and in this way could be considered authentic. They are employed by the museum as useful to present a comprehensive portrait of a historical time period or to demonstrate artistry through displaying the best piece ever made. However, for the museum visitor, there is an assumption that once they enter the museum space all the objects behind the glass cases are going to be authentic. In the museum space the visitor's definition of authenticity gravitates towards *original-not-copy*. Therefore Veldkamp's discussion reveals an area of dissonance between curator/museum and visitor that may vary based on assumptions made by visitors, as Veldkamp reveals in his own changed feelings towards an object revealed to be a replica.

CONCLUSION

From Laurel Kendall we start to question crafting processes. Who will grow young mulberry, or make affordable lacquer to spread on lacquered objects? Do artisans now need to not only do their own craft but the subsidiary processes as well? Elmer Veldkamp shows us that lending objects to overseas museums, even some of the most respected in the world, is politicized and tied to an argument for use of replicas, already common in Korea. We wonder if seeing is believing, as we read his article we ask “Did I accept a replica as the original?” Kim Hyeon-jeong’s focus on three recently established and complementary museums shows how powerful even an old building can be. Kunsan’s negotiation with criticisms for preserving Japanese heritage, and becoming a tourist destination through a unique educational experience of a painful historical period demonstrates important changes in attitudes towards the colonial era. Finally, I ask the reader to stop and wonder why the National Museum of Korea exhibits Buddhist art so prominently, yet says so very little about Buddhism. In all four cases we endeavor to question the backstage spaces and the process of curation, revealing stories behind presenting cultural heritage to the public.

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