

***Heritage Management In Korea and Japan: The Politics of Antiquity and Identity.***  
**Hyung Il Pai. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013. 258 pp.\***

Reviewed by Natsuko Akagawa

This informative book explores the politically sensitive historical relations between (South) Korea and its former colonizer, Japan. As the reader learns in the final chapter, amongst the range of recriminations made by the former against the latter are accusations of deliberate dispossession of much of its moveable cultural heritage. The thrust of the book's detailed historical analysis is to refute this accusation, albeit recognizing that much of Korean movable heritage is to be found in a range of Japanese institutions. To appreciate why this is the case, however, does require a long journey back through history. Despite a rather misleading main title, the potential reader should not be deterred from taking it as Pai provides an exciting pathway through an understanding of Korean heritage and its relationship with Japan, an inseparable past that current Korean politics perhaps prefers not to recognize.

After setting the global context in a succinct preface and providing a summary of the current system of heritage management in (South) Korea (chapter one), the book proceeds through five chapters that outline the basis of Japan's involvement in identifying, categorizing, and assembling Korea's heritage. This is not an account of Japan's colonization of Korea, although this is recognized as the backdrop to the cultural project on which the book focuses. It is rather an account of Japan's own search for identity; the red thread that runs through these substantive chapters is Japan's search for its racial and cultural origins. A second but perhaps equally important theme relates to the international context within which this search was conceived. Not only did it emanate from the Meiji Restoration's objective of gaining international recognition as a modern nation, but also the intellectual criteria upon which this was to be founded derived from then current Western theories of race and civilization. A third theme that links the chapters is the history of the role of archaeology in the identification of heritage. Considering the overall content of this book, therefore, the main title of this book is somewhat unfortunate in that it seems to dilute the significance of this book.

In chapter two ("Collecting Japan's Curios") and chapter three ("Tracing Japan's Lineage"), Pai sets out the national and international context in which Japan's modern "search for identity" originated. Here she shows how the political interests of the imperial Japanese government in the latter decades of the 19th century converged with the contemporary Western "discovery" of Japanese culture by individual collectors and spectators at world exhibitions, and with intellectual discourses on race and civilization. Through detailed biographical accounts, we see how foreign scholars directed and were subsumed into imperial policies designed to shape a modern national profile based on a rich heritage of a continuous civilization. Much of the story of the modern origins of the "management" (although the exact word did not exist in traditional Japanese) of Japan's heritage is told through the professional biographies of Western "aficionados" such as William Sturgis Bigelow, Ernest Fenollosa, and Sylvester Morse ("for whom Japan was like a candy store" [54]), and the first generations of Japanese scholars such as

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Machida Hisanari, Miyaki Yonekiche, Okakura Kakuzo, and Sekin Tadashi. It is perhaps particularly the exploration of the work of individual Japanese and Western archaeologists, museum curators, and university professors that brings this detailed but fascinating history to life. Not only was there a direct intellectual transfer between these men, but Japanese scholars and officials were sent abroad to study Western curatorial and archaeological practices that were then adopted in imperial museums and universities that housed the objects collected by imperial decree. By the end of the 19th century an imperial system was in place:

the Imperial Household Agency reigned over a trio of state-funded cultural resource management institutions...These national institutions were charged with micromanaging “national prosperities”, from the issuance of excavation permits to registering and monitoring the circulation of antiquities and the construction of imperial palaces, temples and mausoleums. [107]

It was also imperial interests that drove the search for “the missing link” (chapter four). Finding insufficient evidence for earlier theories that modern Japanese evolved from Ainu or pre-Ainu inhabitants of the islands, a second theory held that modern Japanese inherited their racial and national identity from a civilizational march eastwards from the Greco-Roman world, through China to find its apotheosis in Japan. The first step in this intellectual argument was derived from “Western scientific racism (based on a vulgarized Darwinian evolutionary perspective), which was ultimately responsible for denigration of the Ainu as the ‘Primitive Other’” (107). The second “hyperdiffusionist” view based on Western archaeological assumptions “attempt[ed] to situate Japan’s racial artistic and cultural lineage as being directly descended from great civilizations of the ancient world, on a par with Greece and Rome” (108). It was on this basis, Pai shows, that Korea, the peninsula through which civilization was believed to have flowed to Japan, became the focus of the imperially directed, archaeologically based accumulation of what was considered to be Japanese heritage. This assumption was further consolidated by exhibitions in Japan but also, as Pai details in a separate chapter, Japanese tourism to Korea.

And so to the modern day accusations concerning “the plunder of Korea” (172), which Pai refutes. While making clear the self-interest of the original Japanese research in Korea, she also highlights the importance of this scholarship for the conservation of Korea’s heritage whose management is still based on original Japanese classification mechanisms. She emphasizes that “even though there were greedy individuals and private excavations of Korean ancient sites,” the specialists employed by imperial universities and museums were not “the culprits who were motivated to dig only for persona gain, fame and profit” (181). The question of the return of objects collected in Japanese museums and universities remains, but, as Pai concludes, this problem is “an on-going one for [all] museum curators, preservation trusts and former imperial institutions that have inherited colonial era collections,” not just in this case.

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