

Colonial Foundations of Korean Cultural Policy

UNTIL 1910, when the Japanese annexed Korea, official measures for the preservation of public or private property did not consider the notion that either could have what Bourdieu would regard as “symbolic capital.” While retaining economic and functional values, which require no audience to be valorized, such capital would serve to positively distinguish the owner (or owning body) in society.¹ Because the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) was fairly stable, it is unlikely to have spawned many creative applications of tradition.² But whereas the aristocracy (or royal house) would be impervious to the mundane, banal social pressures that drive the general public to pursue particular properties, they would have been well aware that particular forms of capital, such as that represented by ancestral shrines,³ could be used to symbolize their own lasting, unique legacies of which their subordinates formed an integral part. These days, when cultural policies preserve and promote objects’ public ownership, they prioritize symbolic over other forms of capital because the suggestion of historic continuity serves to underpin nationalism and loyalty to the state. Gellner argues that preindustrial societies were too segmented to execute “cultural imperialisms, the efforts of one culture or another to dominate and expand to fill out a political unit,” but their culture (and ancestry)—as represented by property—would have helped determine the legacy of the privileged for centuries.⁴ While legislation in regard to property management therefore did not show concern for its potential use to define either the aristocracy or the royal house and their respective communities of subordinates, either group is likely to have recognized the notion of “symbolic capital.”⁵

The history of the protection of national heritage through legislation technically could be said to have begun almost five centuries earlier, in 1471, when a criminal justice system known as the Great Code of Administration (*Kyŏngguk taejŏn*) was put into effect. It constituted a revision of the Literal

Explanation of the Ming Code (*Tae myöngnyul chikhae*), which had been translated from Chinese in 1395. The code was in effect roughly until the end of the Chosön dynasty (1392–1910).⁶ It was ordered according to six sets of regulations, each of which corresponded to one of six government ministries. Under the sixth set, which comprised laws regarding public works, a regulation called “management of repairs” (*yöngsön*) dealt with the restoration of palace buildings:

The palace [is managed by] the *Chönyönsa*, and the buildings of the [surrounding] *kwana*⁷ are divided up and guarded by each of these buildings’ own officials, and when there is a place where the rain leaks through or where it is crumbling, they report it to the main office and it is repaired. Every year, in spring and autumn, [people from] the main office conduct an inspection tour and [then] report to the king. The repairs on the buildings of local government offices are undertaken after a report has been made to the king. As for the harbor platforms where Chinese envoys come and go, the responsibility is partially taken by the nearby counties and they make sure repairs are undertaken. As for the harbor platforms where the Japanese and the Manchus come and go, they are repaired by the local counties.⁸

Incorporated in the code were the *shibak* (*ship* = ten, *ak* = crimes), the ten worst crimes one could commit. Listed among them was an offense called “conspiracy” (*modaeyök*), which constituted the destruction of the ancestral temples that held memorial tablets to generations of kings, the kings’ *tumuli*, and the royal palaces. The family of anyone found guilty of one of the *shibak* would have had little reason to celebrate their relative’s rebelliousness. In the most extreme case, the principal offender would be left unburied with his head, arms, and legs cut off, while his father and those sons older than sixteen years would be hanged. The remaining family members would all be made slaves to a meritorious official, with the exception of very ill men over eighty or incurably ill women over sixty.⁹ It is obvious why the code did not consider recidivism.

The regulations show no sign of having been set up in order to protect the cultural, historical value of the properties. They were primarily preventative, concerned with the protection of property on the basis of it belonging to the royal house (no doubt intended for public admiration) and a matter of religious concern. Even the sizeable restorations performed on the royal palace from 1865 to 1867, which were aimed at restoring the prestige of the dynasty, failed to appeal to a sense of pride over the site’s cultural, historic importance.¹⁰ In December 1894, following the initiation of a series of changes to government policy under the name *Kabo Reform* (*Kabo kyöngjang*, 1894–1896) in July that year, the Korean government was reorganized and a Japanese-style cabinet formed with

seven ministries. One of these, the Ministry of the Royal Household (Kung-naebu), oversaw the Ceremonial Court (Changniwŏn), which was responsible for the management of mausoleums, cemeteries, and tombs.¹¹ By separating the Council of State Affairs (Üjŏngbu) from the Ministry, the latter was stripped of its governing powers and turned into a ceremonial institute.¹² The new administrative structure thus effectively eroded the power of King Kojong, who had tried to resist the measures for years.

When they set out to colonize Korea, the Japanese anticipated that in light of their loss of autonomy and the significant social change that modernity was ushering in, the effects of which they had only recently experienced firsthand,¹³ Koreans would come to long for markers of their heritage. Recognizing in addition that as they transitioned into the full annexation of Korea they could make use of the royal institution as a channel for the proclamation of sociopolitical measures at least for some years,¹⁴ the Japanese government refrained from removing all symbols of the Korean traditional hierarchy and prepared their maintenance as hollow, ceremonial institutes and monuments. Their eventual exhibition on museum grounds was to serve as a reminder of a foregone past. Rather than portraying them as “living” treasures, they deprived them of their religious significance and turned them into objects of nostalgia and wonder. To rid royal palaces of their mystic status and meet the growing demand for Japanese tourist attractions, the Japanese not only rearranged them but also opened them to the public—they had long been hidden from view, like similar palaces elsewhere in East Asia. The first of a series of museums was the Prince Yi Museum (*Riōke hakubutsukan*). Construction for this museum, which focused on the possessions of the former royal household, began on the premises of Ch’anggyōng-wŏn royal garden in November 1908. It was part of a large public entertainment park modeled after Tokyo’s Ueno Park and carried a name that revealed the colonial government’s intention to market Korea’s royal house as a curiosity, the ornate shell of a former kingdom.¹⁵ Another major museum in the center of Seoul was established on December 1, 1915, on the grounds of Kyōngbok Palace. Named after the Japanese colonial headquarters, the Museum of the Government-General of Korea (*Chōsen sōtokufu hakubutsukan*) was a colossal building constructed right behind the main gate to the palace grounds between 1916 and 1926. This museum was the first to focus on archaeological finds.¹⁶

On November 27, 1907, the Royal Household Minister declared that an office would be established for the purpose of managing and maintaining “movable [*tongsan*] and immovable [*pudongsan*] property in the possession of the [Korean] royal family.”¹⁷ This so-called Office for the Management of the Royal Family’s Property (Cheshil chaesan chōngniguk) would be small in size, with six positions to be filled by nine people in total. Although the edict suggests recognition of the royal household’s cultural as opposed to mere exchange value, a

Japanese reprint of this edict shows that the measure was little more than a justification for drawing a full inventory of the royal family's property, with the intention to eventually transfer its management to the colonial government.¹⁸ In 1911, the office was renamed Yi [Chosŏn] Royal Household Office (Yiwang-jik) and considerably expanded. From February 1 onward, it would be staffed by no less than ninety-seven people, with the number of Korean aristocracy eligible for employment limited to eleven.¹⁹ One important reason for the expansion was that the office was made responsible for managing the Prince Yi Museum.

The cultural policy of the Japanese colonial government—Chōsen sōtokufu (Government-General of Korea, r. 1910–1945)—focused, primarily, on cultivating loyalty to the Japanese empire through public information and education. From the turn of the century it had steadily increased its control on the media by taking over newspapers and implementing censorship of Korean publications. By 1910, after various takeovers and bans, all newspapers intended for Korean readers had been converted to propaganda organs of the Japanese government. To prevent the pervasion of dissident voices, the government-general's comprehensive censorship apparatus scrutinized many aspects of public life.²⁰ The instruction of Japanese, both as a condition for assimilation and a propaganda medium, became a priority. It is sometimes said that upon annexation, the Japanese discovered that the vast majority of Koreans were illiterate,²¹ but already in 1898, Isabella Bird Bishop had found that most uneducated men were able to read texts in the vernacular *han'gŭl*, so it appears that establishing proficiency in Japanese was more important than literacy itself.²² The Japanese provided Korean children with four years of elementary schooling, as well as an additional three and four years for girls and boys respectively. There was also the possibility of attending a technical or professional school, or even, if their parents could afford it, college in Japan. But prejudice significantly limited their access to higher education.²³ All preexisting public and private schools came under strict control of the government-general, their curriculum dominated by language training, with science only introduced in the third year. Music education, meanwhile, was strongly based on Japanese standards.²⁴ All courses were aimed at developing the students' fluency in Japanese and introducing them to new morals, including a revised reading of Korean history and culture. Rather than educating Korean students per se, the curriculums were ultimately intended to ease their assimilation into the Japanese empire.²⁵ Unless they could extend their education in Japan, the basic education allowed Koreans little opportunity for success; the Japanese authorities believed that overeducating Koreans would make them critical of their situation and too well equipped to voice their discontent. To frustrate patriotic appeals, it discouraged and oppressed the expression of Korean culture in words and behavior and pushed the adoption of Japanese customs and norms—such as those on hygiene and ethics—

instead.²⁶ In spite of the ambitious education policy, however, many Koreans still missed out on basic education. By 1945 less than 20 percent of the population had received any form of schooling.²⁷

The government-general portrayed Korean culture as inferior to that of Japan. Targeting its spiritual life in particular, it banned a large number of religious and folk rituals.²⁸ Using terms such as *dozoku* (indigenous) and *minzoku* (folk) to refer to Korean customs and belief systems, the Japanese authorities described Korean culture as uncivilized and barbarian, and in dire need of replacement by Japanese modernity. Although the terms were targeted at shamanism and Confucianism, they were equally applicable to Christianity and other forms of folk religion. The Japanese initiative to develop a public cemetery was another demonstration of their considerable disregard for Korean rites and customs. Since it was intended to facilitate the cultivation of particular land for farming or construction projects, the public gravesites did not follow the directions of a geomancer and disallowed Koreans to be buried near their ancestors.²⁹ Another example entailed the conversion of many village shrines across the country into shrines for Japan's native Shinto. In 1912, the government-general issued an order that authorized the investigation and subsequent purging of all superstitions and "fake religions"—such as small cults and Ch'öndogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way)—by the Bureau of Sanitation.³⁰ Atkins argues that the Japanese government treated shamanism with "resigned tolerance,"³¹ but according to Kim Kwang-ok, the police carefully monitored the activities of shamans and sometimes arrested or tortured them. He contends that because they regarded shamanism as a common enemy to their views on enlightenment and modernity, even the Korean adherents of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism in some cases "reluctantly" cooperated with the Japanese in their efforts to eradicate the practice of shamanism.³²

While the Japanese colonial government made considerable efforts to export its native religion, Shinto, for example, by ordering its colonial subjects to pay a large number of visits to one of its shrines,³³ it also manipulated Korea's own major belief systems. Having reorganized the Korean monarchy as the colony's main pillar of Confucianism, it shifted its attention to Christianity and Buddhism. Christian missionaries were considered a potential source of patriotism, and, presumably in an attempt to threaten them into submission, in 1911 and 1912 the Japanese arrested and tortured hundreds of men—many of whom were Christian—over allegations of conspiring to assassinate the Governor-General Terauchi Masatake.³⁴ The government-general would apply further pressure on Christians from 1919, when a large number of them were found to be behind the massive Korean uprising and passionate public appeal for independence that would later be referred to as the March First Movement. The only religion to gain support from the Japanese authorities, at least financially, was Buddhism.

After the annexation, in an attempt to counter the growing popularity of Christianity, the Japanese government effectively revitalized Korean Buddhist orders. Claiming that Korean Buddhism was “in a decadent condition,” the government-general assumed control of all Buddhist activities on the Korean peninsula. It legislated that resident or permanent priests had to be registered by the governor-general and pursued their adoption of Japanese practices, such as, from 1926, the ability for monks to marry and eat meat.³⁵ Although some Korean Buddhist orders ended up marginalized upon their refusal, many opted to compromise and follow the Japanese line.³⁶ Since they preceded the annexation by decades, Hwansoo Kim warns that it is wrong to label the many Japanese activities regarding Korean Buddhist orders as purely political, intent only on their assimilation into the Japanese empire.³⁷ Like their Korean counterparts, Japanese sects sought to promote their forms of Buddhism in Korea in part to counter Christianity, which was growing steadily, and in part to revitalize and modernize them using Japanese resources.

In Korea, both the legal measures to preserve what is today considered part of the national, cultural heritage and the categories under which properties would be listed were first set out during the period of Japanese colonial rule. The Japanese colonial government pursued a policy of vertical cultural assimilation aimed at encouraging colonial subjects to adopt the culture of the superior Japanese while carefully distinguishing nationalities based on race and traditions.³⁸ While many laws and regulations were enacted to protect the properties that now belonged to the Japanese empire, legislation showed a clear political agenda. The various measures regulated the transfer and management of Korean tangible cultural properties but showed no concern for intangible ones. In 1916, the Japanese began to protect old buildings and other state properties on the basis of them constituting cultural treasures, a novel notion, though not well developed at the time; it showed mainly a concern with the historical value of properties. Many cultural items were still easily removed from their original context, either by placing them in museums and representing them as part of the new culture, or by adding them to private collections in Korea or abroad.

The Japanese have often been blamed for the theft and destruction of many of Korea’s cultural properties. Koreans estimate that during the colonial period more than fifty thousand items of historical or artistic value were shipped to Japan.³⁹ During the annexation, most of the treasures found in cities, such as the capitals of the ancient kingdoms Kyōngju, Puyō, Kongju, and Kaesōng, were shipped abroad, leaving the cities that had hitherto abounded with historical relics virtually empty; this, at least, is the contemporary Korean view. The vigor and enthusiasm with which the Japanese undertook the acquisition of Korean relics may account for the occasional use of explosives. Korean sources duly note that in 1904, in the chaos following the wars with China and Russia, the Japanese

army used dynamite to open tombs in the region of Kaesŏng City and on Kanghwa Island, the contents of which—more than ten thousand pieces of ancient Korean pottery—were then shipped to Japan.⁴⁰

From the turn of the nineteenth century, Japanese archaeologists and anthropologists began to come to Korea to conduct fieldwork and excavations. The Japanese government's ban on a wide range of domestic heritage excavations led many archaeologists to the colonies to further their academic pursuits.⁴¹ Among them was Sekino Tadashi, an archaeologist from Tokyo National University, who in 1902 came to Korea at the invitation of the Korean imperial government to inspect Pulguk Temple outside Kyŏngju City. The temple has often been described as the hallmark of art of the Unified Shilla period (668–918), but it was partly destroyed during the Japanese invasions from 1592 to 1958, also known as the *Imjin waeran*. Yi Kuyŏl argues that Sekino's visit was intended to source materials to help justify the annexation of Korea.⁴² Yi does not provide evidence for his view, but throughout the colonial period Japanese archaeologists did indeed interpret their findings in ways that supported Japanese imperialism. In their pursuit of the historical remains of Japanese ancestry and Japanese civilization on the continent, they highlighted the natural, scientific superiority of their race. They treated Korean history as subordinate to that of China and attributed all innovation on Korean land to its invaders.⁴³ Meanwhile, the Japanese politicians who supported the archaeologists were keen to introduce the notion of Japanese national treasures to Korea in an attempt to undermine patriotism and highlight the historical and biological superiority of the founders of the empire.⁴⁴

In the year Korea was annexed, the Japanese began to undertake archaeological activities of a more serious nature.⁴⁵ The Japanese justified their actions by saying they were protecting historical treasures from the Koreans themselves. Sekino argued that this was necessary because of the Koreans' lack of concern for their own treasures and their rifling of many ancient structures. He also complained that the restorations Koreans had made to ancient structures violated their traditional form. But he conveniently overlooked how architectural changes made by the Japanese colonial government modified Buddhist and Confucian buildings. He himself revealed that, "with the inauguration of the administration of the Resident-General . . . it had become necessary to appropriate former shrines and other public buildings for government offices, post offices and school buildings etc., or to remodel them for such purposes."⁴⁶ Sekino's work and that performed by other Japanese archaeologists was comprehensive and detailed, and it was minutely recorded in annual reports published from 1918 to 1937 as Reports on Investigations of Ancient Sites in Korea (*Chōsen koseki chōsa hōkoku*).⁴⁷ In 1939, in what is a clearly pro-Japanese article, Edwin Reischauer stressed the value of the work conducted by the archeologists, saying, "The Japanese have continued diverse and geographically widespread excavations

throughout Korea and Manchuria, which have been carefully planned to cover the most necessary fields, and which have yielded valuable, if not spectacular, results.⁴⁸ Reischauer reported the damage inflicted by Japanese troops as if it was collateral, and notes that in 1938 the work of archaeologist Oba Tsunekichi had been hindered by bandits. He deplores that Chinese scholars took relics with them when they withdrew from Nanking, but disregards the possibility that they may have done so in an attempt to prevent the relics from falling into Japanese hands.⁴⁹

The Japanese archaeologists and anthropologists did not train the Koreans who served as their assistants and would publish their findings in Japanese, but they did have a profound impact on the development of the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology in Korea after independence, if perhaps in part because they inspired Koreans to seek a rectification of the colonial interpretations.⁵⁰ Those first taking up the discipline in the 1920s included a number of Korean cultural nationalists, who felt that their ideals could not be achieved through Western ideas and institutions and regarded it as important to maintain symbols of Korean historic achievements.⁵¹ Ch'oe Namsön (1890–1957) and Yi Nünghwa (1869–1945), the forerunners of Korean folklore studies, chose to focus on shamanism in particular, because it did not exist in Japan, was indigenous to Korea, and represented the culture of the common folk.⁵² While the two maintained a strong nationalist agenda, their work showed the influence of Japanese approaches and methodologies, including those developed by Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), the founder of Japanese folklore studies, and possibly those of the aesthete Yanagi Muneyoshi/Sōetsu (1889–1961), who founded the folk crafts (*mingei*) movement and had a significant impact on the valorization of Korean folk arts and crafts.⁵³ In their attempts to celebrate a timeless culture untainted by Western modernity, Ch'oe and Yi were driven by nostalgia, much like Yanagita and Yanagi.⁵⁴

The Temple Act (*Jisatsurei*) of September 1, 1911, was the first legislative measure to protect Buddhist temples and prevent further damage regardless of what was causing it. The authorities believed that positive measures could encourage Buddhists to support Japan, and restoring Buddhist temples was therefore something of interest to both Korean Buddhists and their colonial masters.⁵⁵ It stipulated that an inventory be made of all movable and immovable properties worthy of preserving. Once registered, the items could no longer be removed, disposed of, or repaired without prior approval from the appropriate Japanese authorities. The law made it obligatory for those who discovered relics to report them. Properties under its protection included all temples' estates, Buddha statues, tombstones, old documents, and temple bells. Although by 1923 the colonial government had listed as many as 385 historical relics, only 114 were eventually designated for repair due to a lack of funding.⁵⁶ Japanese statistics

record, perhaps unsurprisingly, that between 1911 and 1928 the violators of the Temple Act were all Korean, but their number was small, not more than four per year on average.⁵⁷ Sekino claims that the Temple Act was aimed at enforcing regulations already set out in the Ancient Shrines and Temples Preservation Law (*Koshaji hozonhō*),⁵⁸ enacted in Japan in 1897, but Han Woo-keun believes the act was promulgated in order to suppress rebellion from the predominantly anti-Japanese monks. He argues that the Japanese used the act to sell off vast amounts of land that belonged to the temples and monasteries in order to prevent them from having funds to support resistance.⁵⁹ The law did indeed stipulate that temples and monasteries were to be used for religious purposes only and that any property in the possession of Buddhist organizations had to be minutely registered and could not be sold without prior approval from the Japanese governor-general.⁶⁰

The Temple Act was superseded by the Regulations for the Preservation of Ancient Remains and Relics (*Koseki oyobi ibutsu hozon kisoku*) on July 4, 1916. With the promulgation of these regulations, the colonial government took charge of archaeological and preservation activities.⁶¹ The committee that would manage the directives' execution was presided over by the vice governor-general and comprised of both academic experts and high government officials.⁶² The regulations were primarily aimed at the proper registration of newly discovered relics, and considering the Museum of the Government-General of Korea was established a year prior, it is likely that they were born out of concern for the illegal appropriation of and trade in antiquities, especially in light of the burgeoning Japanese heritage tourism industry.⁶³

A set of measures that broke down the already diminishing influence of Confucian institutions were the Regulations for the Management of Property of Schools Connected to Confucian Temples (*Kyōkō zaisan kanri kitei*) of 1920.⁶⁴ Han Woo-keun points out that these regulations were intended primarily to prevent local Confucian leaders from becoming too powerful.⁶⁵ Indeed, they did not specify procedures to safeguard the property of the Confucian schools but merely dictated measures to assume control over them. The schools were allowed to continue teaching, but property was effectively transferred to the colonial government, which charged Confucian adherents for its use whenever they organized an event or activity. Although Han makes the additional claim that the Japanese appropriated part of the schools' income to finance new public school programs,⁶⁶ the act stipulated that school income was to be used to finance the school's own running costs as well as the costs of maintaining Confucian shrines.⁶⁷ The regulations were nevertheless vague regarding the type of activities that would be exempt from taxation. Ironically, according to Article 3, the school facilities could be used free of charge except in case of activities of a cultural or educational kind.⁶⁸

On August 9, 1933, the Regulations for the Preservation of Ancient Remains and Relics were replaced by the Law for the Preservation of Natural Monuments, Places of Scenic Beauty and Historic Interest, and Treasures in Korea (*Chōsen hōmotsu koseki meishō tennenkinenbutsu hozonrei*).⁶⁹ The new law not only provided for the protection of cultural properties; it was also the first to stipulate how to plan restorations or excavations and the first to dictate proactive measures to safeguard cultural properties.⁷⁰ While incorporating the cultural properties protected by the earlier 1911 and 1916 laws, it broadened the concept of cultural property to include scenic sites. Similar to the 1916 law, cultural relics were not listed in order of importance, but in groups, per province.⁷¹ By August 27, 1934, 169 items had been selected, with Seoul's central Namdaemun (Great South Gate), Tongdaemun (Great East Gate), and the Poshin'gak bell pavilion making up numbers one to three respectively.⁷² By 1940, the tally of recognized cultural properties stood at 377 treasures, 128 places of historical interest, 119 natural monuments, 2 places of scenic beauty and historical interest and the like, and 2 natural monuments and places of scenic beauty.⁷³ While in 1911 resident Buddhist monks could apply for funding for the repair of temple properties considered important, which they then had to carry out themselves, the 1933 law put the government in charge of repairs. By 1935, the Japanese claimed to have already restored various Buddhist structures, including the stone bridge of Pulguk Temple in Kyōngju County, the hall of Pusōk Temple in Yōngju County in north Kyōngsang province, and the Kūmsan Temple pavilion in Kūmje County in north Chōlla province.⁷⁴

Whereas the various laws were aimed at maintaining control over all kinds of properties, mostly for political purposes, the 1916 and 1933 laws suggest that the colonial government did consider the possibility of property being neglected or damaged by the Japanese. Anna Seidel argues that the similar laws promulgated in Japan between 1897 and 1933 were passed to protect Buddhist art that had been devalued following rigid Westernization during the Meiji period (1868–1910). Examples she provides include the pagoda of Kōfuku Temple in Nara, which was sold as firewood to a local bathhouse, and plans to melt down the large Buddha of Kamakura in order to sell its metal to foreigners.⁷⁵ The colonial government must have seen the need to pass the same protective measures in Korea, Japan's new territory, to protect local Buddhist art there too. The new legislation did not, however, imply that the Japanese would stop sanctioning the damage of properties that fell under its protection. Hyung Il Pai notes that in the 1920s and 1930s the Japanese undertaking of large-scale railway construction prompted considerable concern among Japanese scholars of the Society for the Study of Korean Antiquities (*Chōsen koseki kenkyūkai*).⁷⁶ Despite their persistent pleas, the scholars were only able to prevent a small number of the several

thousands of tombs from being ruined, as railway tracks were laid with very little regard for whatever was in their way.

The relatively early enactment of the 1916 law could also reflect recognition of the threat posed by the antiques trade, which had been growing in East Asia since the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Many intellectuals and academics committed to the preservation of East Asian relics were also collectors, so it was often easy for them to acquire antiques and ship them abroad.⁷⁸ Japanese collectors regularly celebrated the great deals to be found in Korea.⁷⁹ A related problem that had been plaguing preservation efforts for many years, but was on the increase due to the steep rise in market prices, was looting. It coincided with a third, the growing trade in counterfeits. In 1912, *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette* began to report that due to the insatiable foreign demand for East Asian antiques, counterfeits were flooding the markets.⁸⁰ In Korea, in response to these market developments, the number of official registered antiques, or “second-hand” (*komul*) dealers, subsequently grew quickly, by no less than five hundred per year on average.⁸¹ The 1916 law itself was not concerned with the protection of antiques,⁸² but the number of violations of the associated Antiques Trading Regulatory Law (*Kobutsushō torishimarihō*) amounted to a rapid rise, with many Japanese among the perpetrators.⁸³ Realizing that it could not rely only on legal procedures to prevent theft and smuggling, the government-general decided to move important relics to the Museum of the Government-General of Korea.⁸⁴

According to Pai, the system of designating national treasures (Jap. *kokuhō*; Kor. *kukpo*) began with the enactment of the 1916 law,⁸⁵ but while the term was already in use in Japan, neither this law nor any other promulgated by the Japanese colonial government would apply the term *kokuhō* to Korean cultural properties.⁸⁶ Although the 1916 law was the first legislation aimed primarily at the protection of cultural properties, it was the 1933 law that first categorized the most important ones as treasures (Jap. *hōmotsu*; Kor. *pomul*). Already in 1927, Yi Kyōngnyōl discussed the notion of cultural property in detail. In an article published in *Tonggwang* (Dawn) that year, he relates culture to civilization, emphasizing that both are connected strongly to nature. He argues that a cultured people are able to find good use for the cultural property they have acquired and to let it further develop. He also mentions the concept of cultural heritage (*munhwa yusan*), but does not elaborate on the notion.⁸⁷

The cultural policy of the Japanese colonial government in Korea largely sought to justify Japan’s colonization of Korea and to weaken potential sources of dissent and rebellion. It did not seek to establish an appreciation for heritage per se, but sought to preserve heritage for political purposes, and as sites for Japanese historical tourism.⁸⁸ The reinterpretation of Korean history, the

manipulation of the Buddhist order, the destruction of dynastic symbols through the dismantling of tombs and the rearrangement and partial destruction of palaces, were nevertheless carried out by different parties, each of whom had its own set of interests. These actions reflected, besides cultural imperialism, a mix of archaeological, religious, and perhaps commercial interests, as well as individual ambition. As Roger Janelli suggests, it is unlikely that Japanese scholars' reinterpretation of Korean history simply followed from the dictates of the Japanese colonial government,⁸⁹ but such reinterpretation ultimately served the interests of imperial Japan and itself unquestionably benefited from colonial policies.

The Postwar Period: Adoption and Transformation

After liberation, on November 8, 1945, the provisional government renamed the Yi Royal Household Office to call it the Office of the Former Royal Household (*Kuwanggung*), operated under joint Korean and American jurisdiction. The office continued to oversee the enforcement of the 1933 law and the many treasures it aimed to protect, but because of economic and political instability, little was done. Economic rather than cultural programs had first priority in the post-Pacific War period and prevented major undertakings. On April 8, 1950, the Law for the Proceedings of the Property of the Former Royal Household (*Kuwanggung chaesan ch'öbunpöpp*) was enacted, which created three categories of cultural properties that had belonged to the royal household prior to Japanese colonial rule: (1) important palace buildings and their sites; (2) important works of art and historical souvenirs and documents; and (3) other items that require continuous preservation.⁹⁰

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, and raged until July 27, 1953. Although Eugene Knez, head of the US Information Service, was able to oversee an ingenious covert rescue operation that led to the safe evacuation of the Korean National Museum's collection to Pusan, many other cultural properties were severely damaged or lost.⁹¹ Pai suggests the dramatic rescue effort may have come from a desire to prove the legitimate heir to the government of Korea through heritage, but she warns that some of the collectors of Korean art treasures, including Knez, were partly to blame for the plunder.⁹² The involvement of the US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK; 1945–1948) in securing the success of this operation would have also been grounded on this notion. The preservation law was renamed afterward, on September 23, 1954, and called the Law of the Property of the Former Royal Household (*Kuhwangshil chaesanpöpp*).⁹³ It was more specific about the cultural properties it covered, using these four categories: (1) important structures such as altars, shrines, palaces,

parks, graves, and their sites; (2) important works of art, historical souvenirs, and written documents; (3) treasures, ancient remains, sceneries, and places of historic interest; and (4) matters resembling the hitherto mentioned cultural properties that require continuous preservation.⁹⁴

In the early 1950s, no office had official responsibility for the types of cultural properties that fell beyond those specified in the 1954 law. Since 1948, however, the Education Department (Kyodokwa) of the Culture Bureau (Munhwabu) had taken on some of the heritage management-related duties. On February 17, 1955, a Department of Culture Preservation (Munhwa pojokwa) was established and put in charge of protecting the national heritage.⁹⁵ On June 30, it redesignated 436 cultural properties that had been listed by the Japanese and renamed them “national treasures” (*kukpo*). Namdaemun and Tongdaemun thus became National Treasures nos. 1 and 2, respectively. The office also began to designate new cultural properties, and by 1960 it had listed a total of 606.⁹⁶ The department was superseded by the Cultural Properties Management Office (Munhwajae kwalliguk; CPMO), which was established on October 2, 1961, by merging the Department of Culture Preservation and the Office for the Management of Property of the Former Royal Household.⁹⁷ Located on the grounds of Tōksu Palace, the office was put in charge of managing and overseeing all protection and preservation activities.

Japan’s preservation laws continued to serve as models for Korea’s heritage system even after liberation. The Korean government’s adoption of Japanese ideas after liberation suggests that Koreans found the system’s fundamental principles, including the establishment of national symbols, persuasive, and regarded them as useful tools to nurture nationalism. On August 29, 1950, the Japanese government enacted its comprehensive Law 214, the Cultural Properties Protection Law (*Bunkazai hogohō*). This incorporated the 1919, 1929, and 1933 laws promulgated in Japan and added two new categories of cultural properties, *maizō* (buried) and *mukei* (intangible).⁹⁸ Initially, folk performing arts (*minzoku geinō*) were to fall under the latter category, along with so-called manners and customs (*fūzoku*), but following a revision in 1975 they were separately categorized as important intangible folk cultural properties (*jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai*).⁹⁹ The 1950 law divided cultural properties into five categories:

- (1) Tangible cultural properties (*yūkei bunkazai*): buildings, artistic craft works, old documents, sculptures, etc.
- (2) Intangible cultural properties (*mukei bunkazai*): plays, music, crafts, etc.
- (3) Folk cultural properties (*minzoku bunkazai*): folk performing arts, manners and customs related to life necessities, occupations, beliefs, and annual events, etc. Properties in this category can be designated as *jūyō*

yūkei minzoku bunkazai (important tangible folk cultural properties) or *jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai*.

- (4) Monuments (*kinenbutsu*): flora and fauna, places of scenic or historical value such as gardens, bridges, and canyons.
- (5) Groups of historic buildings (*dentōteki kenzōbutsugun*): fishing villages and villages under castle walls, etc.¹⁰⁰

While the Japanese law recognized folk cultural properties (*minzoku bunkazai*), it was not until 1975 that it laid out legal measures for their protection, and not until the early 1980s that an amendment provided financial support for the performers of associated genres.¹⁰¹ The Japanese system focused first and foremost on protecting those cultural properties considered in immediate danger of being lost. Well-established, iconic Japanese traditional performing arts, such as gagaku (court music and dance) and the theatrical drama genre of kabuki, were therefore initially omitted, though following much criticism they were placed under the law's protection through a revision in 1954. The new law also considered properties that were not necessarily in danger of being lost, but of significant "artistic or historical value" to the Japanese people.¹⁰²

On January 10, 1962, the Korean government followed suit with the promulgation of Law 961, the Cultural Properties Protection Law (*Munhwajae pohopōp*). Although it may seem odd that Park Chung Hee would enact a law of this scope no more than six months after his military coup, Chungmoo Choi posits that he may have pushed it in order to win the approval of the powerful nationalistic elite, who felt that there was an increasing need for government measures to preserve Korean traditions.¹⁰³ Among the politicians, scholars, and journalists arguing their importance, however, none was as effective as journalist Ye Yonghae (1929–1995). Between 1959 and 1963, Ye wrote a column for the *Han'guk ilbo* (Korea daily) entitled "In'gan munhwajae" (Human cultural properties), which demonstrated the dire state of many Korean traditions.¹⁰⁴ The new law placed cultural properties in four categories:

- (1) Tangible cultural properties (*yuhyōng munhwajae*): buildings, artistic craft works, old documents, sculptures, lacquer ware, etc.
- (2) Intangible cultural properties (*muhyōng munhwajae*): plays, music, dramas, crafts, etc.
- (3) Monuments (*kinyōmmul*): natural treasures such as animals and plants, and places of historic interest.
- (4) Folk materials (*minsok charyo*): morals, customs, and beliefs.¹⁰⁵

Its objective was to both "seek the cultural progress of the nation and at the same time contribute to the development of the culture of mankind by preserving and

utilizing cultural properties.”¹⁰⁶ It superseded earlier heritage-related legislation and adopted the properties recognized previously.¹⁰⁷

The basic structure of the Korean Cultural Properties Protection Law was clearly based on the Japanese law. It incorporated the category of intangible cultural properties as part of the national heritage,¹⁰⁸ and used identical descriptions of the various categories of cultural properties. But it carried grander ambitions, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage not just for the Korean people’s identity, but for the world as a whole.¹⁰⁹ Although it included performing arts related to the culture of the elite, it placed particular emphasis on folk traditions. Doing so avoided giving prominence to either Chinese influence or the culture of a privileged minority and helped remind the people of the Japanese oppression of Korean folk arts. Unlike the Japanese law, which considered only refined, classical performing arts and crafts as Important Intangible Cultural Properties (hereafter IICPs), it included folk music and dance, as well as martial arts, folk games and rituals, and even liquor distillation. Ironically, the prominence of folk arts and crafts may have been inspired by the work of Japanese folklorists and collectors, and the colonial-era *mingei* movement. While the activities of the aesthete Yanagi and his peers on occasion revealed a sense of cultural superiority over the Korean people and contributed to the smuggling of Korean antiquities,¹¹⁰ they contributed significantly to the valorization of Korean folk arts and crafts, to which the establishment of a Korean folk art museum by Yanagi and Takumi Asakawa in 1924 and the fast growing antiques trade and tourism industry provided further impetus.¹¹¹ It seems odd, therefore, that when Koreans adopted the basic structure of the Japanese law, they omitted the subcategory of folk materials. It may be that, unlike Japan, where the term folk performing arts (*minzoku geinō*) had begun to be commonly accepted as a scholarly term after World War II, the term was not as widely in use in Korea even by the early 1960s. But it is more likely that the Park administration wished to either prevent folk religion from being foregrounded, like it was in Japan,¹¹² or play into the hands of those calling for reunification by emphasizing the culture of the common people (*minjok*).¹¹³

In Korea, the need to provide a basic income was recognized much earlier than in Japan. Following a revision of the Cultural Properties Protection Law on August 10, 1970, the designation of intangible cultural properties was tied not only to the designation of holders (*poyuja*), which largely due to Ye’s column became commonly referred to as human treasures (*in’gan munhwajae*), but also to the provision of a basic income.¹¹⁴ Financial support was regulated on the basis of Law 1417, the Special Accounting Law for the Management of Cultural Properties (*Munhwajae kwalli t’ükpyöl hoegyepöp*). It was enacted on October 21, 1963, but payments would not be made until November 1968.¹¹⁵ In exchange for monthly support, holders were now expected to perform annually. The length

and the conditions of performance had to meet certain requirements, for which the holders had to seek prior approval from the government. The law also required holders to pass on their art through teaching.¹¹⁶

The first cultural property to be redesignated under the new law was Nam-daemun, on December 20, 1962. The order in which the Japanese had previously designated Korea's cultural treasures had already been adopted in 1955 and it was upheld again,¹¹⁷ though the numbers had to be rearranged following the loss of many items over the course of the previous two decades. The law named and further categorized cultural properties as follows:

- (1) National treasures (*kukpo*) and treasures (*pomul*), designated from among the tangible cultural properties (*yuhyöng munhwajae*): buildings, artistic craft works, old documents, sculptures, etc.
- (2) Important intangible cultural properties (*Chungyo muhyöng munhwajae*), designated from among the intangible cultural properties (*muhyöng munhwajae*): forms of art and craft that are of significant historical value.
- (3) Important folk materials (*Chungyo minsok charyo*), designated from among the folk materials (*minsok charyo*): manmade implements used in all aspects of daily life in the past, including ritual implements, cooking utensils, and clothing.
- (4) Historical sites (*sajök*), landmarks (*myöngsüng*), and natural monuments (*ch'önyön kinyömmul*), such as animals, plants, and minerals, designated from among the monuments (*kinyömmul*).

The national treasures category reflects a value that is greater than that of the category of treasures. According to Article 2 of the Cultural Properties Protection Law, national treasures stand out because they are “rare and of great value from the standpoint of human culture.”¹¹⁸ Large structures in the capital were nevertheless ranked first. Indeed, many items from the same region continued to be grouped together despite significant differences in size, age, or historical significance.¹¹⁹

Until a revision in March 2015, unlike tangible cultural properties, all intangibles recognized were listed as “important.” The current line-up of folksongs listed is shown in chronological order of appointment below:

- No. 8: *Kanggangsullae*, a circle dance with songs, from south Chölla province, February 15, 1966;
- No. 19: *Sönsori sant'aryöng* (Standing Mountain Songs), from Kyönggi province, April 18, 1968;
- No. 29: *Södo sori* (Folksongs from the Western Provinces), from Hwanghae and P'yöngan provinces, September 27, 1969;

- No. 51: *Namdo tŭl norae* (Field Songs from the Southern Provinces), from south Chŏlla province, November 5, 1973;
- No. 57: *Kyŏnggi minyo* (Folksongs from Kyŏnggi Province), July 12, 1975;
- No. 84: *Yech'ŏn t'ongmyŏng nongyo* (Farming Songs from T'ongmyŏng-dong in Yech'ŏn County) and *Kosŏng nongyo* (Farming Songs from Kosŏng), from north and south Kyŏngsang province respectively, December 1, 1985;
- No. 95: *Cheju minyo* (Folksongs from Cheju Province), December 1, 1989.
- No. 129: *Arirang* (“Arirang”), the folksong in its myriad forms over time, September 22, 2015.

On April 17, 1975, the Cultural Properties Research Institute (Munhwajae yŏn'guso) was created under the umbrella of the CPMO for the purpose of conducting research on cultural properties. The institute concerned itself primarily with developing scientific approaches to preservation while also maintaining a library of all kinds of printed and audio-visual materials related to the preservation of intangible cultural properties. In part because of the need to expand, the CPMO moved to Taejŏn City in 1998 and was renamed Cultural Heritage Administration (Munhwajae ch'ŏng; CHA).¹²⁰ By the end of 2012, it had designated 315 national treasures and 116 IICPs. To maintain its duties, its budget was increased considerably, from 131.6 million wŏn in 1961 to 615 billion wŏn in 2012.¹²¹

The law established a Cultural Properties Committee (Munhwajae wiwŏnhoe; CPC) comprised of scholars from various fields of study, which would be put in charge of all measures necessary to protect Korea's national heritage.¹²² In the first few years, the CPC was made up of a fair number of former classmates from Japanese academic institutions. The head of the subcommittee dealing with tangible cultural heritage was Kim Sanggi (1901–1977), a historian and former graduate of Waseda University. During the first three official meetings held between January and March 1965, he was joined by fellow Waseda alumnus Yi Sangbaek (1904–1966), a sociologist and historian, as well as historians Hwang Suyŏng (1918–) and Yi Hongjik (1909–1970), both Tokyo University alumni, archaeologist and art historian Kim Wŏllyong (1922–1993), a graduate of Keijō Imperial University, and Kim Tujong (1896–1988), a graduate of Kyoto University.¹²³ The head of the second subcommittee dealing with the intangible cultural heritage was Im Suk-jay (Im Sŏkchae, 1903–1998), an anthropologist and graduate of Keijō Imperial University. During the first two official meetings of his subcommittee he was joined by Sŏk Chusŏn (1911–1996), a historian and folklorist and former graduate of the Tokyo Dressmaking Graduate School, journalist Ye Yonghae, and three graduates of the Court Music Office of the Yi Royal Household (*Yiwangjik aakpu*), the government institute for court

music and dance during the colonial period: musicians and musicologists Sŏng Kyŏngnin (1911–2008) and Pak Hŏnbong (1906–1977), and dancer and musician Kim Ch'ŏnhŭng (1909–2007).¹²⁴ Not all specialists were scholars, therefore, but the fact that apart from Ye all early committee members had been trained at Japanese-run institutes, including Keijō Imperial University where people such as Fujita Ryūsaku, the former director of the Museum of the Government-General of Korea, was a professor,¹²⁵ will have affected not only their candidacy and that of others, but also their *modus operandi*.¹²⁶ Howard finds that in the early years of the CPC academic expertise and the experience of training at a recognized historical institute such as the Court Music Office of the Yi Royal Household added significant weight to a member's expertise.¹²⁷ Indeed, as in all other walks of Korean life,¹²⁸ in the traditional music scene a degree from a reputable college will elevate people's status significantly.

Before a cultural property could be designated, one or two CPC members (*munhwajae wiwŏn*) would be commissioned to write a research report. Upon a positive review of the report by the committee, the CPC would submit it to the appropriate government minister—in 1962, the minister of education—who in turn could designate the cultural property. Separate committees were established for six specialized areas: (1) temples and traditional houses; (2) old texts and books, paintings, and sculptures; (3) historical sites, such as ancient tombs or shell mounds; (4) intangible items such as plays and music; (5) sceneries, animals and plants; and (6) museums. The committees have not convened according to a regular schedule, but they have met between four and ten times each year. In addition to its permanent members, the CPC may call on freelance “expert members” (*chŏnmun wiwŏn*) when a particular expertise, such as in folk-songs or masked dance drama, is required.¹²⁹

As laid out in Article 55 of the 1962 law, cultural properties not designated as national cultural properties can be listed by city or province as Municipal or Provincial Cultural Properties (*Shi-do chijŏng munhwajae*) if they are found to be deserving of preservation.¹³⁰ For this purpose, however, each major municipality and province establishes its own CPC. The state can only advise on regional cultural properties; although it may obstruct the initial research, it has no power to influence designations. Location and differences in budgets help explain the unequal number of municipal and provincial cultural properties. Because the capital has long been the center for entertainment, many traditional performing arts were developed there and are inextricably linked to the area. And since it is home to a third of the Korean population, the capital is able to financially support many local preservation activities. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Seoul and the adjacent city of Incheon together have 365 tangible properties, 120 more than the combined total listed for the four other major cities of Pusan, Taegu, Kwangju, and Taejŏn. The differences in funding available to

cities and provinces are also reflected in the financial support they are able to provide to their holders. Whereas Seoul currently pays its holders a monthly stipend of 1.3 million wŏn (roughly equivalent to US\$1,120), most other regional administrations can pay no more than 800,000 wŏn.¹³¹

One category of municipal or provincial cultural properties that has gained prominence in recent years consists of folk arts transmitted from what are now North Korean regions. Korea's former military administrations would have resented promoting traditions that are associated as much with the north as with the south. Indeed, when they selected *Sŏdo sori* in 1969, masked dance drama from Pongsan and Ünyul (IICP nos. 17 and 61) in 1967 and 1978 respectively, and a shaman ritual from Hwanghae province's Pyŏngsan county (IICP no. 90) in 1988, they did so without highlighting their northern pedigree. As they sought to preserve traditions that were very much alive in South Korea and could intimate their demise in the north, in 2008 the government created a separate category of traditions that specifically considered their North Korean origin. Named Special Management Law Related to the 5 Provinces North of Korea (*Taehan min'guk ibuk 5 do-e kwanhan t'ükyŏl choch'ipŏp*), this category of regional folk arts is rather unusual because it incorporates traditions preserved by people who have moved south from the north (Yi Inmuk 2009). One of the first traditions designated within this category was "Tondollari" (on November 2, 1998), a folksong and dance from south Hamgyŏng province. Another genre preserved under this category is *Sŏdo sŏnsori sant'aryŏng* (Standing Mountain Songs from the Western Provinces) from Hwanghae province; it was designated on August 26, 2009. It is somewhat similar to the *Sŏnsori sant'aryŏng* discussed in chapter 3 but has a smaller repertoire, and a less uniform appearance since each group member can wear his or her own color *hanbok*.

Inclusion on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has become an important proving ground for Korea's national heritage. International recognition of Korean culture has long been used to nurture national pride, but because the list is associated with an objective, international standard, the inclusion of items can have considerable impact on their national status. In 2009, many Koreans were offended when China officially recognized "Arirang" as part of its national intangible cultural heritage. The Chinese version of the song forms part of a Korean farmer's dance by residents from Yanbian, the Korean autonomous prefecture in China's northeast that borders on North Korea and is home to many Korean migrants.¹³² In response, the CHA made additional efforts to see the Korean version of the song listed on UNESCO's list, and in 2012 and 2014 succeeded in having respectively "Arirang" and *nongak* (farmers' music) included. In 2014, the former was then listed a second time, though this time as a series of songs by that name

from different provinces in North Korea. Since Japan's traditional papermaking craft known as Washi was added to the list in 2014, the CHA will likely make additional efforts to see the Korean tradition of *hanji*-making included in the near future.

Reports on Intangible Cultural Properties

Since the first study on *Kkocktugakshi norüm* (Kkocktugakshi [puppet] play), more than 250 reports on important intangible cultural properties have been written. In some cases, several reports form the basis of a single designation. These so-called Research Reports on Intangible Cultural Properties (*Muhyöng munhwajae chosa pogosö*) are published in small numbers and made available to selected universities and public libraries in Korea. Even though they form the basis of the discussions about designating IICPs, the studies are not so much new inquiries as summaries of the status quo regarding the general understanding of the cultural items concerned. Rather than questioning a consensus opinion about a cultural item, they seem to merely justify it. This is partly due to the fact that the process is rarely initiated by the Cultural Properties Management Office. It is initiated by a city or province. Bang So-Yeon of the Intangible Cultural Properties Division outlined for me the official procedure for designating IICPs:

- Proposal by an individual or group
- Cultural Properties Committee member or municipal/provincial CPC member
- Discussion by the CPC
- If positive: commission of *munhwajae wiwön* or *chönmun wiwön* (expert member)
- Fieldwork and research
- Report
- Discussion and subsequent recommendation by the CPC
- If positive: second deliberation by the CPC after no less than thirty days
- If positive: consideration by the minister of culture, sports, and tourism
- Appointment¹³³

Until recently, the CHA could not designate an IICP without a holder. Because distinct talent was deemed important, if the skill required to perform a tradition was not considered unique it would not be designated as an IICP. Bang So-Yeon explained that this is why *sshirüm*, Korean wrestling, had not been designated. However, because the CHA recognized the importance of such traditions, in 2012 the government began to work toward an amendment of the Cultural

Properties Protection Law in order to include traditions that have no holders. This allowed “Arirang,” Korea’s most common folksong, to also be appointed.¹³⁴

Somewhat in contrast to UNESCO’s Masterpiece Program, which recognizes the importance of securing approval from the community that holds a specific tradition,¹³⁵ the IICP reports do not reveal the opinion of the holders or their peer groups. The reports say where the holders of a candidate cultural property have been educated, whether they have a recording history, and what important awards they have won. Until recently, the most important award for folk performing arts was the *Chôn’guk minsok yesul kyōngyōn taehoe* (National Folk Arts Contest). This contest was important for performers who wished to draw attention to themselves with a view to persuading the CPC to pursue research into their art, as well as for those whom CPC members were considering. “Kanggangsullae,” a circle dance with songs, for example, had already been given the Minister of Culture and Sports Award in 1961 and had been performed five times at the contest before it was appointed as IICP no. 8 in 1966. *Kosōng nongyo* won that same award in 1978, and singer Yi Sangsu garnered an individual award in 1979 when *Yech’ōn t’ongmyōng nongyo* won the Presidential Award at the contest.¹³⁶ These genres were collectively appointed as IICP no. 84 in 1985. Of note, the element of competition had a significant effect on folk traditions; due to the time limit of the contest and the distance between performers and audience participants, the performers began to focus on the most exciting part of their tradition, embellishing it with stage props and fancy costumes.¹³⁷ The late publisher and aesthete Han Ch’anggi told me that Ye Yonghae, who he considered a very close friend, had started the contests: “I blame him for the consequences. If the country supports folk art contests it should be done locally, but through competition they learn from each other; it creates uniformity, such as in clothing. They learn bad things there.”¹³⁸

The selection of traditions, the official deliberation, and concomitant hierarchy within them is affected by the relationships among CPC members and between members and practitioners. The musicianly and scholarly credentials of those involved bear heavily on those relationships. Building up one’s profile by way of domestic and international performances and recordings, and establishing a good relationship with CPC members (or their allies), are common ways in which practitioners pursue the official appointment of their tradition. The process can be time-consuming and costly, especially if many practical arrangements have to be made so as to encourage and allow committee members to see a tradition in full.¹³⁹ Clark Sorensen, professor of Korean anthropology at the University of Washington, has related that when he visited a Pyōlsin Kut on the east coast of Korea with an eminent Korean folklorist in November 1976, the troop of shamans insisted on paying the food and lodging costs of the folklorists and their guests.¹⁴⁰

The CPC discussions, some of which have been recorded in *Munhwajae*, the annual journal of the CHA, at times indicate considerable differences in opinion concerning a designation or its cancellation. During one discussion, for example, the senior musicologist Chang Sahun successfully attacked a report on *Yangsan hakch'um* (Crane Dance from Yangsan Region) by his colleague Kim Ch'önhŭng, saying, "Because Kim Ch'önhŭng is not really a researcher and has only lent his name [to the report], I don't see why we should discuss [this] any further. We should bring an end to this research practice of simply lending one's name [to the report]."¹⁴¹ The dance was never designated. Kim Ch'önhŭng and Chang Sahun both studied at the Court Music Office of the Yi Royal Household. While Chang went on to become one of Korea's most respected musicologists, Kim became a senior member of the National Gugak Center (*Kungnip kugagwŏn*; until 2012 known as the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts) and continued to perform. He was eventually appointed holder of two IICPs. Chang seemed not to regard Kim as a proper scholar and his own senior status allowed him to express this openly. Personal criticism like this has rarely been recorded; it is often leveled at the reports themselves. In 1978, when Kim Kisu was concerned about the quality of holder Han Kaptük of *Kömun'go sanjo* (Solo Pieces for the Korean Six-stringed Zither), he strongly criticized Hwang Pyönggi's report: "The research report has absolutely no substance to recommend it. I don't see any reason for keeping Han Kaptük's appointment."¹⁴² This particular issue was not resolved, and Han Kaptük retained his appointment until his death in 1987.¹⁴³

The IICP reports do not follow set criteria. All scholars perform research on their own terms, using their own methodologies. The research (including fieldwork) is usually conducted by two experts over a period of one or two weeks.¹⁴⁴ Because of this relatively short time frame, reports are often limited to information that is readily available, as there is no time to scrutinize the object of study from more than one perspective. In the case of folksongs, the emphasis has long been mostly on the folkloric importance of a particular genre. Other aspects, such as the music, dance, or costume, are rarely considered. The predominance of folkloric scholarship is not only evident in the government reports on folksongs but prevails throughout the history of folksong studies in Korea. Roger Janelli notes that studies of Korean history and culture were introduced under Japanese colonial rule, when the data were used to reconstruct history and justify the assimilation of Koreans. The study of folklore by Koreans, he says, was aimed at correcting the politically motivated interpretations of Japanese folklorists. The possibility of using their work to nurture cultural nationalism and to rid his administration of the stigma of collaboration may have led President Park Chung Hee to endorse the study of Korean folklore.¹⁴⁵ Efforts to construct the national identity would intensify

in the 1970s, when Park's ongoing authoritarianism juxtaposed his patriotism.¹⁴⁶ The strong emphasis on justifying folk genres' importance may explain why data in regard to the sound and presentation of traditions were omitted in the past.

Very few of the reports on folksongs from the 1960s and 1970s contain musical transcriptions or analysis. This is surprising considering that the majority of the reports were written by Chang Sahun (1916–1992), a professor of music at Seoul National University. Sŏng Kyŏngnin (1911–2008), a former holder of IICP no. 1, *Chongmyo cheryeak* (Rite to Royal Ancestors), and head of the National Gugak Center from 1961 to 1972, also wrote reports (Sŏng Kyŏngnin 1966), and these equally focused primarily on lyrics. Musicologist and former CPC member Yi Pohyŏng told me that in 1971, when he joined the CPC, he was the only musicologist.¹⁴⁷ Folklorist Im Tonggwŏn (1926–2012), another former CPC member, contended that the lack of musical transcriptions came from the need to justify the preservation of folk music as opposed to court music.¹⁴⁸ The first musicologist to consistently include musical transcriptions in her reports was Yi Sora, who joined the CPC as an expert member in 1984. Yi has provided by far the largest number of musical transcriptions of folksongs using the Western notation system, but other members of the CPC have disputed her approach. Some of them blamed her alleged lack of expertise on the fact that she never studied folk music until she began working for the Cultural Properties Management Office.¹⁴⁹

Koreans commonly find the standard Western notation system ill-suited for the many sliding notes, lack of a set tempo, and frequent use of overtones in Korean folk music. Yi Pohyŏng comments:

The main problem lies in explaining Korean music using Western musical theory. It's not a method used by ethnomusicologists. Musicologists all know that the old [Western] method they used to explain Korean music. . . . was not good, and therefore new research based on several methods is now being conducted. So, likewise, I have also used the old method. . . . I also studied Western composition techniques. I applied what I knew in the beginning, but when I carried my research out clumsily with this Western method it didn't come out well. . . . I wonder how I should explain Korean music, using which method.¹⁵⁰

CPC members could have opted to record music for future analysis, but Kim Sam Dae Ja, who used to work for the library of the Cultural Properties Research Institute, told me that at least until the mid-1990s the library only held recordings of appointed holders, many of whom had sent in the recordings themselves.¹⁵¹ Since then, however, the institute has actively collected recordings of a

wide range of folk materials, including recordings made by scholars and performances by amateurs.

Hong Chonguk, a researcher working on tangible cultural properties at the institute, believed the system as a whole was too bureaucratic and should allow faster action. He recalled many cases in which the CPC's decision to execute protective measures came too late to prevent irreparable damage.¹⁵² Because the number of informants who hold information regarding traditions inherited from the past is decreasing, most fieldwork should have ideally already been performed and many students promoted. Instead, the reports on IICPs often merely document prevailing repertoires, as sung by a very small number of professional singers, rather than studying a range of both professional and amateur versions. This is certainly the case with the reports written on the popular folksong genres from Kyönggi, P'yöngan and Hwanghae provinces (discussed in chapters 3 and 4). Few reports combine different research perspectives, and they clearly lack standard criteria for recording and documenting.

In partial response to some of the issues outlined below, in March 2016 the government implemented the Act on the Preservation and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage (*Muhyöng munhwajae pojön mit chinhüng-e kwanhan pömyul*). While seeking to secure the global relevance of Korea's heritage program by adopting the broader categories of intangible cultural heritage applied by UNESCO, it centralizes the assessment and ranking of senior practitioners, recognizes specialist tertiary education as a form of transmission, and expands the number of specialists on the CPC to thirty. It also renamed all IICPs "National" Intangible Cultural Properties (*Kukka muhyöng munhwajae*; hereafter NICPs).¹⁵³

Recognition of Intangible Cultural Properties

Throughout its forty-eight revisions, the Cultural Properties Protection Law has exhibited growing concern over environmental pollution and the illegal art trade. One significant amendment in 1970 (no. 2233) recognized holders of artistic crafts and established measures for the recording of "movable" (*tongsan*) cultural properties; another, in 1973 (no. 2468), established a licensing system for cultural property traders. Arguably the most comprehensive revision involved amendment no. 3644, in 1982. This amendment deleted the words *uri nara* (our country), used in defining all cultural properties, so that Chinese relics recovered off the coast of Shinan to the southwest could be included. Local tangible cultural properties that had not been officially designated but were deemed important for the preservation of local culture had before this amendment been designated "cultural properties outside designated cultural proper-

ties” (*chijöng munhwajae-ioe-üi munhwajae*); but because this term was often interpreted as implying undesigned cultural properties, the revision changed the term to “cultural properties material” (*munhwajae charyo*).¹⁵⁴ In addition, amendment no. 3644 provided legal measures to enforce holders’ education of students. Because lessons could be costly and prospects for a steady income dim, scholarships were offered to secure an appropriate number of students. The law recognized the need to appoint groups of holders in order to preserve folk genres that required multiple performers at the same time. Hence, from 1986 onward, for cultural properties such as IICP no. 75, *Kiji-shi chul tarigi* (Tug-of-War of Kiji City), and IICP no. 8, the folksong and dance “Kanggangsullae,” groups of holders have been financially supported.

At the start of 2016, 129 IICPs were being transmitted by 174 holders, including 39 holders for 26 IICPs that fall under the category of music. The CPPL does not include a provision to prevent the double appointment of a holder. Kim Ch’önhüng (1909–2007), for example, was holder of both IICP no. 1, *Chongmyo cheryeak*, for which he was appointed in 1968, and IICP no. 39, *Ch’öyongmu* (Dance of Ch’öyong), a court mask dance honoring the spirit of Ch’öyong,¹⁵⁵ for which he was appointed in 1971.¹⁵⁶ Because holders are expected to represent and transmit their art, double appointments are a dilemma; these holders have to divide their time and efforts between different groups of students and possibly juggle conflicting festival seasons. The CPC can revoke designations and appointments. In the case of tangible cultural properties, where most revocations take place, the reasons are described in *Munhwajae*. For example, designation of a ginkgo tree was revoked because it had died, and in another case a specially designated area was canceled because, due to its large size, it was violating private property. In the case of holders and their students, however, the reasons for revocation tend to be obscure, being obvious only if the person concerned has died, married, or moved abroad.¹⁵⁷ For example, in the case of IICP no. 52, *shinawi*, a type of improvisational ensemble music, the holders moved abroad and their appointments were subsequently canceled. When a holder dies, his or her students may be grouped together under another, similar genre. This practice can control for anomalies and occurred in the case of two versions of *p’ansori*, IICPs nos. 36 and 59; which were integrated into one IICP no. 5, *p’ansori*, in 1973 and 1991, respectively.¹⁵⁸ The appointments of senior students are sometimes revoked in cases of ill health or because a holder asks for it, the latter of which happened with IICP no. 11, *p’ungmul* (farmers’ music).¹⁵⁹ The CPC conducts regular reviews of all IICPs, but not annually. Based on a revision of the CPPL in July 1996, the CPC may now change the status of a holder into that of “honorary holder” (*myöngye poyuja*) when an investigation concludes that he or she has become unable to consistently teach his art, due to, for example, old age or

poor health. In those instances, a senior student will in principle be promoted to replace the mentor lest the NICP is dropped. In practice, however, holders always retain their status among their students and peers, regardless of their physical condition, making it highly unlikely that a senior student will seek to replace his or her mentor against the latter's wishes.

According to Articles 18 and 19 of the Cultural Properties Protection Law Enforcement Ordinance (*Munhwajae pohopöp shihaengnyöng*), students can be recognized and financially supported in several ways. At the bottom of the list are special scholarship students (*chönsu [changhak]saeng*).¹⁶⁰ Once these students graduate, they become graduates (*isusaeng*; more commonly referred to as *isuja [chal-ja = person]*). From among these students, a holder can select an assistant teacher of graduates (*chönsu kyoyuk chogyo*; usually abbreviated *chogyo*) or a musician (*aksa*) to assist with the teaching or performance.¹⁶¹ The best student could also be selected as a future holder (*poyuja hubo*),¹⁶² but this category no longer exists. Future holders were supposed to replace holders upon their death, but such appointments were not guaranteed, as the status was often awarded merely to avoid antagonism. For instance, report no. 236, published in 1996, discusses the succession of holder Han Yöngsuk (1920–1989) for IICP no. 24, *Söngmu* (Monk's Dance). Although future holder Yi Aeju was eventually appointed, presumably based on the recommendation of senior CPC member Shin Ch'an'gyun, expert member Kim Munsuk advised against her succession because, or so the report says, he thought that her art differed too much from the original form; yet the possibility must be considered that her political activism was a factor.¹⁶³ In 2000, the government canceled the future holder and musician categories, bringing them together under the banner "assistant teacher of graduates" (hereafter assistant teacher). This coincided with the formalization of the evaluation process for a senior student's suitability as holder, which examines his or her activities, reputation, and physical condition.¹⁶⁴

Hierarchy, Age, and Finance Matters

Folk musicians appointed for group performances are ranked according to how vital their skills are to the preservation of the tradition. Im Tonggwön told me that in the case of farming songs, singers are considered to be of a higher rank than those who play instruments;¹⁶⁵ for NICP no. 3, *Namsadang nori* (Male Temple Group Play), on the other hand, musicians playing the *kkwaenggwari* (small gong) are ranked higher than those who perform acrobatics. It is not, however, usually the government that determines the hierarchy but the groups themselves; the government office merely copies how the group members rank themselves.¹⁶⁶ Even so, in a 1992 interview with Keith Howard, Im Tonggwön

explained that the government rankings can lead to antagonism within groups: “The government only gives money to the top few [group members]. . . . The person who just misses nomination is very unsatisfied and tends not to want to work together with those who are nominated. . . . This is a big problem, so in the future, we must give money to the whole group so that the group can work together. This also entails a contradiction, though; somebody who has really excellent skill might abandon his responsibility.”¹⁶⁷ Im stressed that the rankings alone do not preclude those who do acrobatics in *Namsadang nori*, and who have less valued specializations in other genres, from being appointed.¹⁶⁸ But without financial support, students may choose to focus on other things and abandon a career in the art form. The hierarchy has a negative influence on students’ willingness to learn a certain aspect of a given tradition. Practicing acrobatics, for example, is likely to be less popular among special scholarship students than learning how to play the lead instrument. This, in turn, is bound to result in a lack of senior performers of the less prestigious parts of a tradition, a situation that may be exacerbated by the increasing number of women performing folk music traditions.¹⁶⁹

Age is a major determinant within the ranks of traditions. In the past there was a consensus among CPC members that holders should be at least sixty years old, but in recent years many younger holders have been appointed.¹⁷⁰ In the 1990s, the CPC began to appoint younger holders when it recognized that in the case of traditions that require athletic strength, such as *chul t’agi* (tightrope walking) or the martial art *t’aekkyōn*, appointing old people would be impossible, if not sadistic. While on a few occasions, such as in the case of Yun Chongp’yōng for *Sōnsori sant’aryōng*, prospective holders die before they can be appointed, very old holders have nevertheless been appointed for some traditions. Ha Pogyōng, holder of IICP no. 68, *Miryang paekchung nori* (Ghost Festival of Miryang), for example, was appointed in 1987 at the age of eighty; and in 1993, Kwōn Yongha was appointed for IICP no. 13, *Kangnūng tanoje* (Tano Festival of Kangnūng) at the age of 75.¹⁷¹ Old age often affects performers’ energy and voice, as well as, presumably, their ability to teach. In October 1995, at the *Nongak myōngin chōn* (Show of Celebrated Farmers’ Music Performers) at the *Seoul nori madang* (Seoul Playground) near Lotte World, two senior performers apologized to the audience for being too weak to finish their performance.

The monthly stipend has steadily grown over the years, but holders have complained that it is insufficient, which suggests that the increments remain unsatisfactory.¹⁷² Many holders and senior students are nevertheless able to ask for additional funding from the government for specific activities, including overseas performances, and they can use their official status to charge considerable fees for private lessons. In 1995, for example, Kim Suyōn, a senior student of the holder of *Kyōnggi minyo*, Muk Kyewōl, charged 50,000 wōn per hour. Rates

have since quadrupled. Kang Ŭn'gyŏng, a graduate student of Ahn Sook-sun (An Suksŏn), holder of NICP no. 23, *Kayagŭm sanjo mit pyŏngch'ang* (Solo Pieces with Song for the Korean Twelve-stringed Zither), pays between 500,000 and 800,000 won per month for private lessons, in addition to the fee for group lessons.¹⁷³ Considering private lessons usually occur once a week, this amounts to an hourly rate of approximately 200,000 won (USD167). Because income from group performances is often shared, however, students may use it to offset the cost of their tuition. Private sponsors are a potential third source of income. On various occasions over the years I have accompanied a senior musician at a dinner or late-night drink hosted by one or more businessmen. It appears that female musicians, in particular, are able to add to their income by liaising with sponsors privately, somewhat reminiscent of the *kisaeng* tradition discussed in chapter 3. The status and opportunity that come with an official appointment may thus lead to forms of corruption in the selection process. Some holders, for example, complain that the government is biased in its selection of cultural properties and holders, while others complain that their disapproval of the appointment of future holders was ignored.¹⁷⁴ In chapters 3 and 4, I relate the cases of respectively Kim Okshim and Pak Chunyŏng, whose failure to be appointed holder cannot be easily justified on the basis of a lack of skill, pedigree, or experience.

Clearly, Korea's national heritage preservation system is founded on the Japanese system. Although it has gone through many revisions ever since it was first established, key components and notions, such as the categorization of properties and the leverage from training at a Japanese institute, affected the range of properties and their deliberation until recently. In terms of scale and complexity, however, the current system can certainly hold its own. And yet the number of measures it provides to ensure the authenticity of intangible cultural properties is limited. Whereas it acknowledges authentic forms and seeks to maintain them as much as possible, they are not intended to preserve performance genres in amber without change, since it is recognized that certain adaptations need to occur. The CPC continues to judge the performance of traditions based on their alleged original form, but it does not seek to freeze them. It accepts that traditions will evolve as a result of sociopolitical and economic developments and in order to secure the successful transmission of genres in this way, it makes compromises. It reviews the activities of holders to ensure they do what is within their power to preserve their art, but the holders maintain a degree of freedom. The system does not, therefore, stipulate that traditions must be preserved exactly as they were at the time of designation, but it merely proscribes a few straightforward measures that can be taken when the CPC believes that traditions deviate too much from their original form.

Because of the system I have described, each National Intangible Cultural Property has come to represent an authentic form with one or more representatives. To practitioners and audiences, holders have come to represent important distinct lineages (and hierarchies) that appear to hold as much sway as the authentic forms they are meant to preserve. Students study the versions and styles that are passed on to them by their mentors as faithfully as possible. To deviate in favor of an earlier version recorded in the past could be perceived as a denial of their mentor's authority, and thus jeopardize their advancement in the ranks. As the age and gender and social class of performers and audiences change, so do costumes, lyrics, voices, and performing styles. These issues will be dealt with in more detail in chapters 3 and 4.