

# **K**orea as seen through its material culture and museums

— This thesis is submitted as part of the requirement for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy. —



Photograph: Koni C. Kim

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Abstract

## **Korea as seen through its material culture and museums**

Koni C. Kim (김건희)

Since the 1990s, South Korean institutions have actively engaged in providing grants for the establishment of permanent and independent Korean galleries in renowned museums abroad. The point of departure of this thesis is to provide insights into this recent serial pattern, focusing on the notion of Korea. This is based on the belief that these events should be understood as the outcome of large-scale historical processes.

In this thesis, the notion of 'Korea' is taken as the point of convergence between the three major agents: people (i.e. Koreans and others), Korean material culture, and museums. The thesis aims to explore the nature of the three agencies and their interaction in relation to the notion of Korea, by examining how Korean people came to understand their identity as being Korean in relation to other, different such identities, and to their material culture and museums; how other people understood Korea and Korean material culture; and how far both Korean and other people's perceptions of the relationship between the notion of Korea and Korean material culture has influenced the museum field. This will lead to an understanding of South Korean efforts to open Korean galleries abroad.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter Two explores the notions of Korea and Korean identity. Chapters Three to Five follow the chronological framework of Korean history, Chapter Three dealing with the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to 1910, Chapter Four with that up to 1945, and Chapter Five with that up to the contemporary period. Each chapter attempts to investigate the points made above from a historical perspective. Finally, Chapter Six considers some emerging issues concerning Korean identity in South Korea, and the potential roles of museums and Korean material culture.

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<sup>1</sup> I regret to hear that she no longer works for the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>2</sup> My acknowledgements to the museum professionals mentioned above are listed in the order of the period when I undertook my research work at the museums. The main period of this work began with the Victoria and Albert Museum in late 2001 and ended with the British Museum in early 2003.

립중앙박물관); and to Yoon Keum-jin (윤금진), Director of the Cultural Exchanges Department (문화교류부) and the staff of the Korea Foundation (한국국제교류재단) library. I would also like to record my thanks to Yuka Shimamura–Willcocks, who checked my English transliterations of Japanese personal and geographical names.

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# General notes

## I. Romanisation

In July 2000, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (문화관광부) of the Republic of Korea released a bulletin concerning the romanisation of Korean, and issued a handbook, *Romanization Reference for Korean Place Names and Cultural Terms*. This aimed to replace previous spellings which did not accurately reflect Korean pronunciation, and which were also inconvenient to use because of diacritical marks. In this thesis, this 2000 romanisation system has been used for transliterating Korean (see Appendix 1 for the previous forms of the romanised forms used in this thesis).

## II. Personal names

Korean personal names are presented with the family name first, followed by the given name(s), as is the custom in East Asia (one which seems to have become accepted and widely used in the Western academic field in recent years). This usage also applies to Chinese and Japanese personal names.

According to the 2000 romanisation system, Korean personal names should be written in the following order: the family name, a space, and the given name without a hyphen, thus 'Song Nari' (송나리). However, the form 'Song Na-ri' (송나리) is also allowed where necessary to avoid possible ambiguity of interpretation: e.g. Yi Dong-a (이동아), which, without the hyphen, might be mispronounced as [yi-don-ga]. This thesis gives preference to the script form with a hyphen.

For those Korean personal names where the romanised form of the names of the people concerned was not known, the 2000 romanisation system has been used.

## III. Chinese characters

In the case of the Chinese characters used for personal names and geographical names in China and Japan, every attempt has been made to use the pronunciation of their original country as much as possible. Apart from those cases mentioned above, the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese characters has been used throughout this thesis.

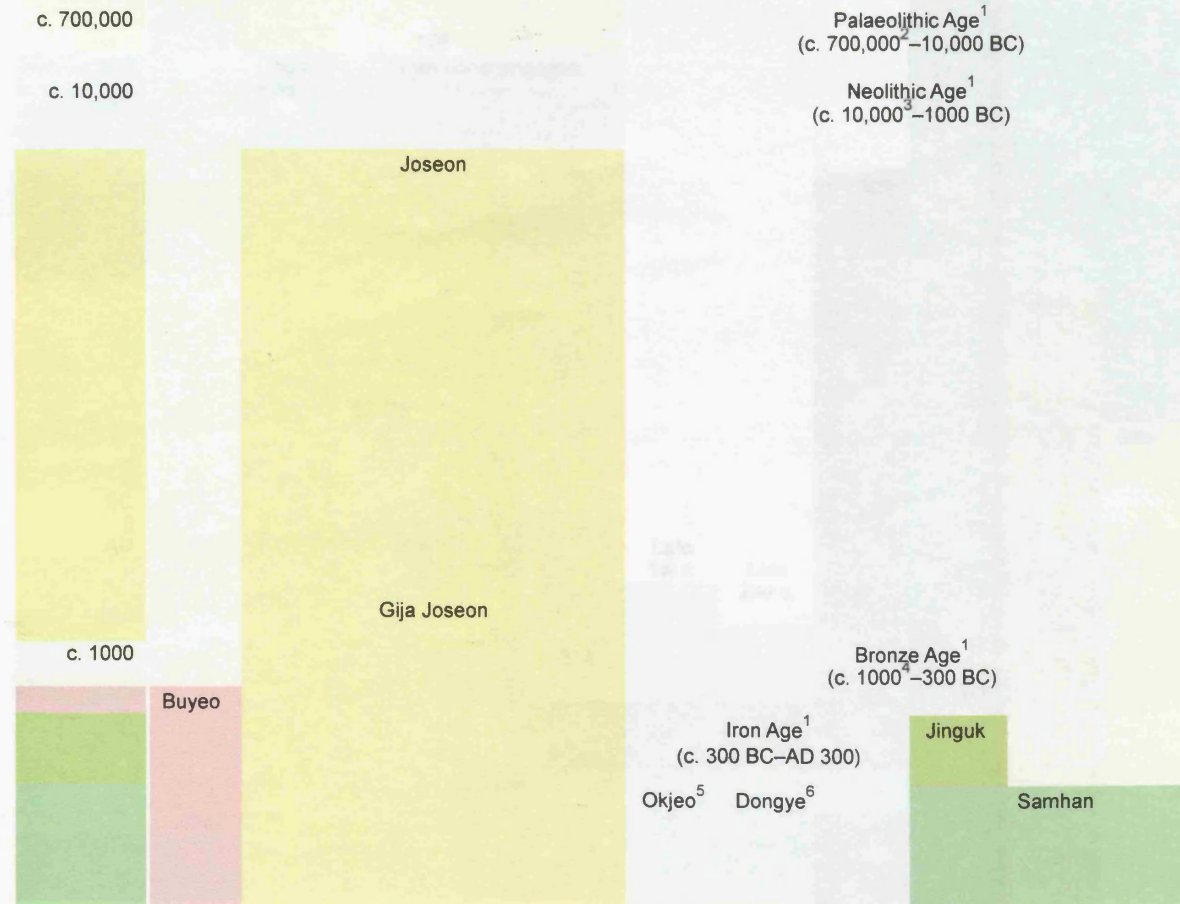
In the case of the Chinese characters where different forms are used in China, Japan and Korea, depending on the context, the most reasonable forms have been used: e.g. among the choices of '韓國' in Korea, '韩国' in China and '韓国' in Japan, the Korean form '韓國' was selected, as the form '韓國' which means 'Republic of Korea' (South Korea) or 'Korea' was a Korean neologism. However, it was unavoidable that this thesis has a strong bias toward the Korean forms, as the computer program used for this thesis does not include all the Chinese characters used in China and Japan.

#### **IV. Copyright**

Except where indicated otherwise, all translations from Korean (or other languages) into English, and all illustrated materials (including photographs), are my work.

I am very aware that, as a South Korean of the post-Korean War generation, my perspectives on some aspects in this thesis will be different from those of Korean scholars of other generations, British scholars, and others. I believe that there is room for both approaches and perspectives, and for openness and generosity in disagreement. For the views contained herein and for any errors, however, the responsibility is mine alone.

# Chronology



- <sup>1</sup> Within the Korean peninsula.
- <sup>2</sup> Possibility to re-date to c. 1,800,000 or even to 2,400,000 BC.
- <sup>3</sup> c. 8,000 or 6,000 BC when this period is divided again into the Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages.

(조선, 朝鮮; ?–108 BC)

Most commonly Known as Gojoseon (고조선) and also called Dangun Joseon (단군조선). Gojoseon can be translated as 'Ancient or old Joseon' and was originally used to distinguish from other following Joseon: e.g. Gija Joseon (기자조선), Wiman Joseon (위만조선). Today, it seems that 'Gojoseon' is understood by the Koreans as Joseon of Dangun, Gija and Wiman differing from Joseon (1392–1897) established by Yi Seong-gye. The founding date and location of Gojoseon are bone of contention. The calendric date of Dangi (단기) used in South Korea begins its first year in 2333 BC which is believed to be the founding year of Gojoseon.

It is said that Gija came to Joseon in c. 1122 BC.

- <sup>4</sup> Possibility to re-date to c. 1500 BC; dated to c. 3000 BC in North Korea

(부여, 夫餘; ? BC–AD 494)

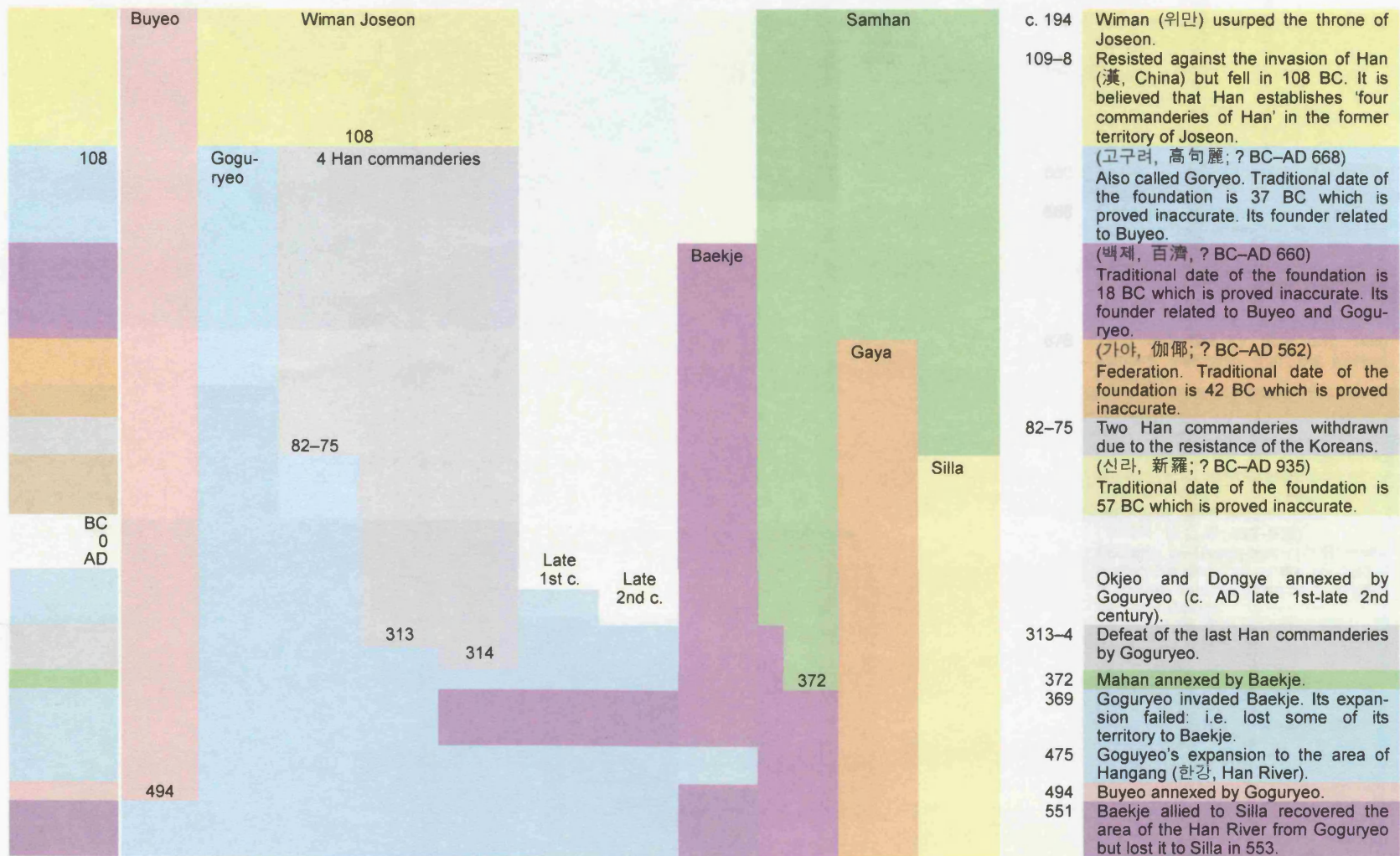
(진국, 辰國)

Established by the Samhan (三韓) people.

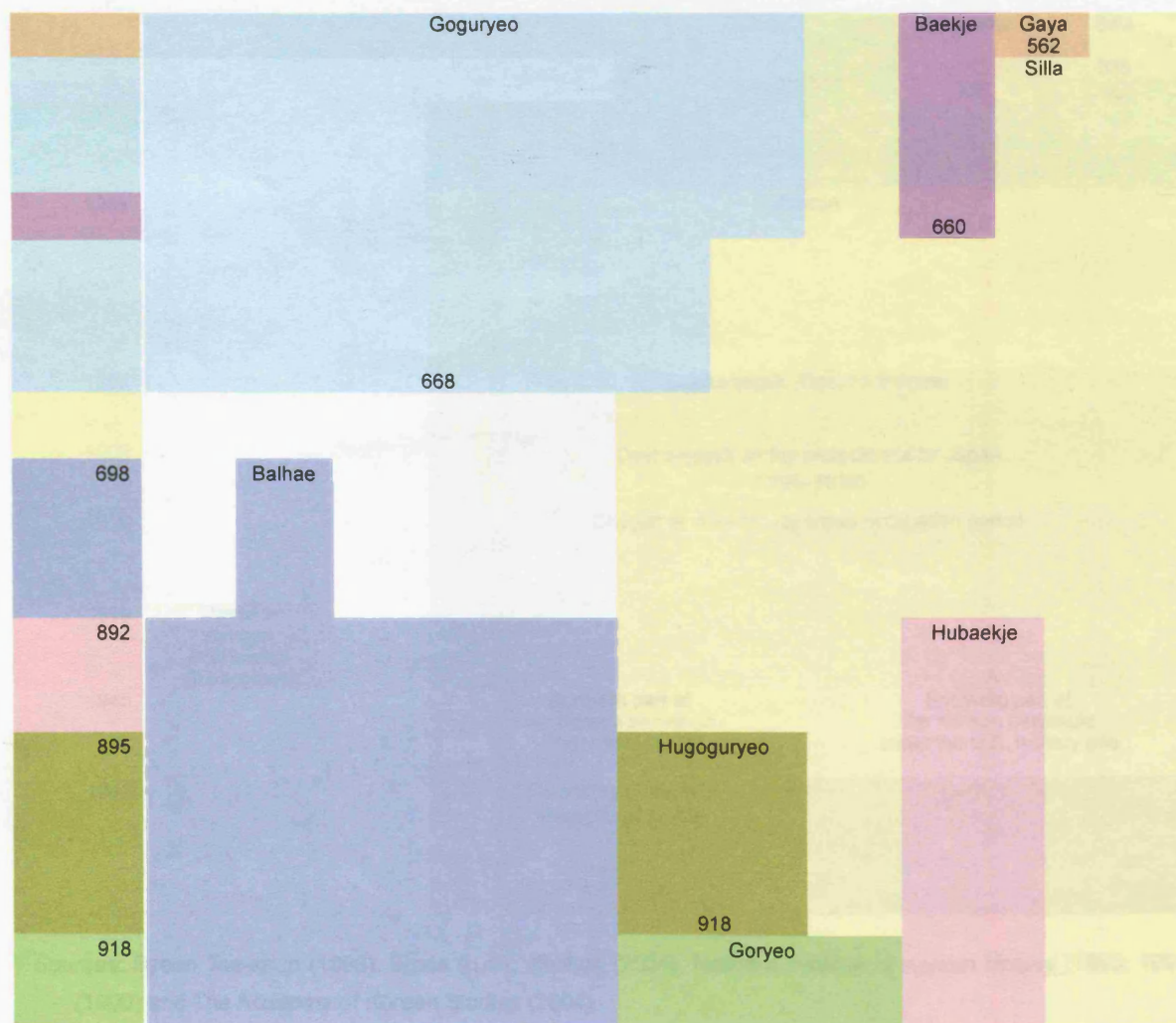
- <sup>5</sup> (옥저, 沃沮; ? BC–AD ?)
- <sup>6</sup> (동예, 東濊; ? BC–AD ?)

(삼한, 三韓; ? BC–AD c. 300)

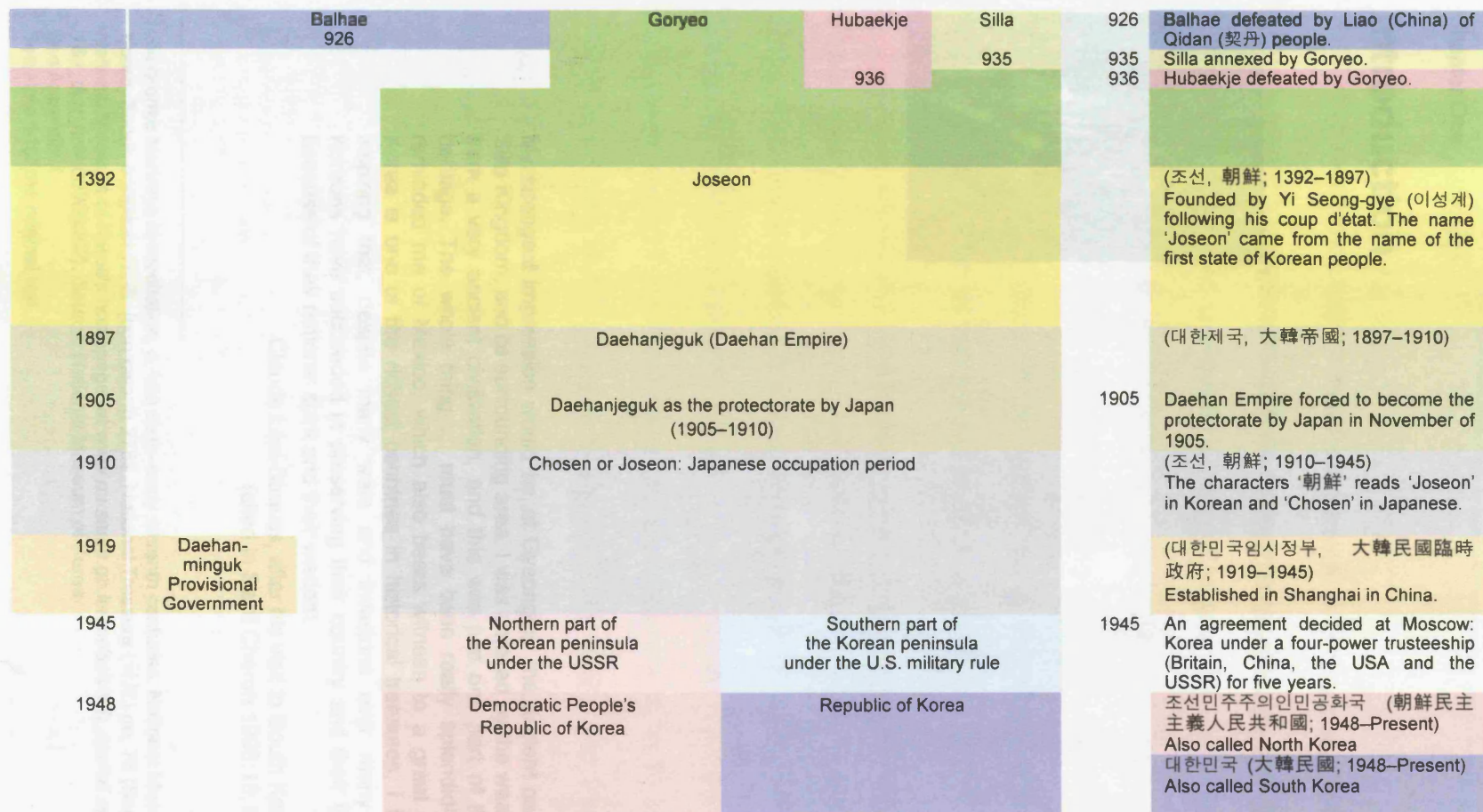
Translated as 'Three Hans', i.e. Mahan, Byeonhan and Jinhan.







- 562 **Gaya annexed by Silla.**
- 660 **Baekje defeated by Silla-Tang (唐, China) alliance.**
- 668 **Goguryeo defeated by Silla-Tang alliance. Tang attempted to place the entire Korean peninsula under her control by establishing commanderies in the territory of Baekje, Goguryeo and even Silla.**
- 676 **Tang defeated by Silla and Tang soldiers withdrawn from the Korean peninsula.**  
(발해 渤海; 698–926)  
Founded by Dae Jo-yeong (대조영) legitimating Balhae as a successor to Goguryeo. Its population was based on Goguryeo people absorbing other minority groups in Manchuria – especially Mohe people (靺鞨族).
- (후백제 後百濟; 892–936)  
Founded by Gyeon-hwon (견훤) legitimating his kingdom as the successor to Baekje. Hubaekje can be translated as 'Later Baekje'.
- (후고구려 後高句麗; 901–918)  
Founded by Gung-ye (궁예) legitimating his kingdom as the successor to Goguryeo. Hugoguryeo can be translated as 'Later Goguryeo'. Also called Hugoryeo. Changed the name of kingdom to Majin (마진) in 904, and to Taebong (태봉) in 911.
- (고려 高麗; 918–1392)  
Wang Geon (왕건) succeeded Gung-ye's kingdom legitimating his kingdom as the successor to Goguryeo.



- *Sources:* Byeon Tae-seop (1996), Etoos (n.d.), Jihaksa (2004), National Institute of Korean History (1993; 1995a–b; 1996a–c; 1997a–d; 1999b), Eckert *et al.* (1990) and The Academy of Korean Studies (2004).



## Chapter One

## Introduction



1

My strongest impression would be of Gyeongju,<sup>2</sup> the ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom, and its surrounding area. I was amazed by the wealth of relics from a very ancient civilisation, and this was just one part of this cultural heritage. The whole thing ... must have been really splendid! Gyeongju reminded me of Mexico, which also bears witness to a great civilisation. Korea is one of the richest countries in historical treasures. I find it very inspiring that, despite many wars and invasions over many centuries, Koreans have succeeded in preserving their country and their own culture because of their national spirit and their wisdom.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, after his visit to South Korea in 1981  
(cited in Saint Chéron 1996:18; translated)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gilt-bronze Maitreya in meditation, c. late sixth–early seventh centuries. National Museum of Korea, Seoul; *bongwan* (본관 [bon-gwan]) 2789. National Treasure (국보) no. 78 (See also the National Museum of Korea's homepage, at [www.museum.go.kr/kor/sch/sch\\_src/full.cgi?v\\_db=1&v\\_doc\\_no=00000052](http://www.museum.go.kr/kor/sch/sch_src/full.cgi?v_db=1&v_doc_no=00000052)). Source: National Museum of Korea.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Note 1 for the original text.

## Preliminary remarks

Since the 1990s, as part of their effort towards promoting understanding and appreciation of Korean culture worldwide, South Korean institutions have actively engaged in providing financial support for the establishment or renovation of permanent and independent Korean galleries in renowned museums outside the Korean peninsula (see Appendix 2). Among these South Korean institutions, it is worth noting in particular the Korea Foundation (KF),<sup>4</sup> which has played a significant role.<sup>5</sup>

The overseas museums in question include: the Peabody Essex Museum in the USA, which opened a Korean gallery in 2003; the Musée Guimet, France (in 2001); the British Museum, Britain (in 2000); the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada (in 1999); the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the USA (in 1998); the Portland Art Museum in the USA (in 1997); the Far Eastern Asian Art Museum in Germany (in 1995); and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Britain (in 1992). This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it to

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<sup>4</sup> The Korea Foundation (한국국제교류재단) was legally established on 30 December 1991 after the passing of the Korea Foundation Law (No. 4414) (한국국제교류재단 법률 <제 4414호>) in the National Assembly on 14 December 1991, the Korea Foundation Law Act (No. 13531) (한국국제교류재단 <대통령령 제 13531호>) being promulgated on 31 December 1991. The mission statement of the foundation is 'to promote a better understanding of Korea in the international community and to foster global friendship by conducting various exchange activities between the Republic of Korea and foreign countries around the world' (see page 4 of *The Korea Foundation Annual Report 1992-1993* and the KF's homepage, at [www.kf.or.kr/english/about/a1.html](http://www.kf.or.kr/english/about/a1.html)).

<sup>5</sup> 'Support for overseas museums' in the establishment of Korean galleries is one of the main activities of the KF's Cultural Exchanges Department (문화교류부) (see the KF's annual reports and homepage, at [www.kf.or.kr/english/about/a7.html](http://www.kf.or.kr/english/about/a7.html)). To some extent, it can be said that South Korean efforts to open Korean galleries in overseas museums are now centralised in the KF: e.g. in 1992, the Samsung Group provided financial support for the Victoria and Albert Museum to open a Korean gallery, but by 2001 the Group's support for a Korean gallery in the Musée Guimet in Paris was provided in co-operation with the KF.

some extent indicates a serial pattern of globalising Korean culture through the medium of museums and Korean material culture.

Interestingly, a close look at the location of the museums in question reveals that almost all of them are in Western European or North American countries (see Appendix 2), i.e. in the category of those 'advanced' countries which have dominated world economic and political decisions, which have a leading position in the cultural sphere, and whose norms have become (since the second half of the nineteenth century, in the case of the countries in East Asia) those of much of the world, i.e. global standards. It is also in those countries that the modern ideas of the museum and modern approaches to material culture have developed and were disseminated to the world. This raises some questions. What are the hidden factors which led South Korean institutions to be interested in this activity in those particular geographical areas? How did they themselves understand Korean material culture and museums?

The point of departure of this thesis is to provide insights into this recent serial pattern, focusing on the notion of Korea. This is based on the belief that the recent openings of Korean galleries abroad should be understood as the outcome of large-scale historical processes – how Korean people came to understand their identity as being Korean in relation to other, different, such identities and to their own material culture and museums; how other people have understood Korea and Korean material culture;

and how far both Korean and other people's understanding of the relationship between the notion of Korea and Korean material culture has influenced the museum arena.

### **Challenging the interactions between people, material culture and museums in relation to the notion of 'Korea'**

The main focus of this thesis is the notion of 'Korea'. This notion is taken as the point of convergence between three major agents forming the backbone of this thesis. These are people, material culture, and museums. The first agent is 'people', that is the people who actually form the notion of 'Korea', and other people who form other, different such notions.<sup>6</sup> The formation of notions like these entails a sense of belonging to a group of people bound together by the notion of 'the identity of the same' (Ricoeur 1992:123). In the process of this identification, the recognition of otherness derived from encounters with other groups of people is the main underlying factor (see Figure 1). This recognition arises from conscious or unconscious comparisons made in people's minds, and allows for the shaping of the notion of 'the identity of the same' that distinguishes one group (to which the 'I' belongs) from other groups.

As Paul Ricoeur (1992:317) points out, 'otherness is not added on to

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. Britain, China, France, Japan, Russia, the USA, etc.

selfhood from outside', but rather is part of the cognitive process by which the 'I' (i.e. the self) is constituted, in which one understands one's presence in the world by constituting the self from the other, based on the distinction between similarity and difference. In other words, it is the various encounters – positive as well as negative – with other people in the past which have led Korean people to create and develop a sense of identity as 'Korean', based on the recognition of comparative differences.

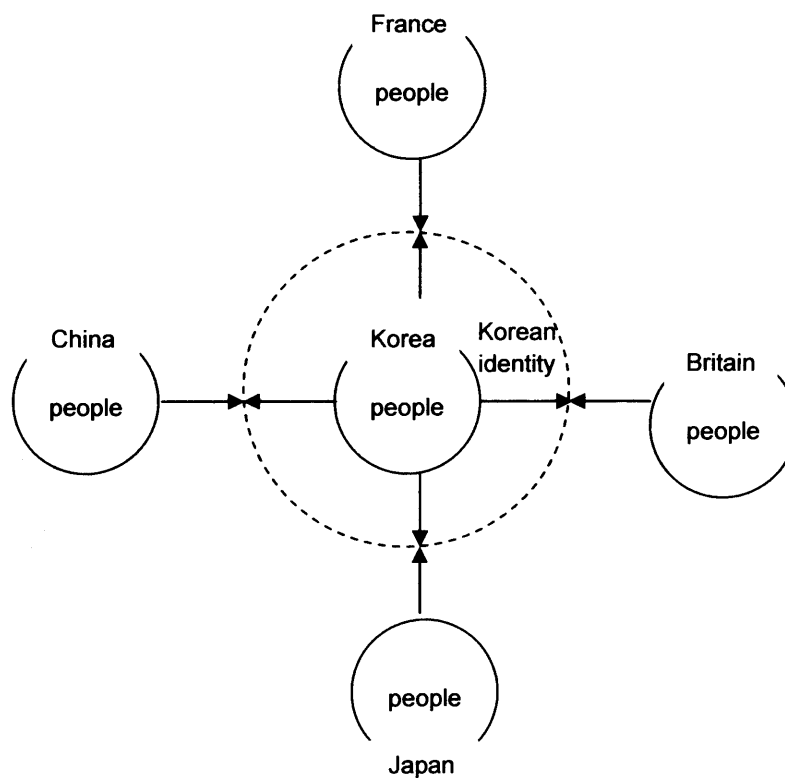


**Figure 1** Formation of Korean identity from the various encounters

The concept of 'Korea' has been forged over the passage of time. To understand it, interactions between Korean people and others are clearly important. It is these interactions which have shaped today's notion of 'Korea', and which are still an ongoing process in moulding the notion in the twenty-first century. This thesis suggests that the sense of Korean identity cannot be thought of without a parallel sense of other, different identities; thus Korean people are distinguished from others by using Korean identity as a criterion – Korean people are set up as the *self*, and other people as *others*, in counterpoint to Koreans.

In furthering an understanding of the Korean notion of the *self*, it seems necessary to note that the base of the formation of today's notion of Korea as a homogenous political, cultural and social unity has its history dating back to the year, AD 668, when Silla annexed Goguryeo after the annexations of Gaya and Baekje, though it was a partial unification of the Koreans (see Chronology).<sup>7</sup> Another crucial aspect of the Korean consciousness of the *self* can be found from the division of the Koreans into two political entities in 1948. This historical event which compelled the Koreans to constitute the *other* from *oneself* adds more complexity to the Korean sense of the *self* (see Figure 2). This thesis is built on the South

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<sup>7</sup> As Dae Jo-yeong (대조영) of defeated Goguryeo established Balhae (i.e. a Korean kingdom) in AD 698 in Manchuria, North Korean historians asserted that it was Goryeo which succeeded in the genuine unification of the Koreans in separate states, and called the Silla of 668 to 935 'Later Silla' (후기신라) instead of using the existing term 'Unified Silla' (통일신라) which is used in South Korea (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:118; Gim Gwang-in 2002a). Recently, South Korean historians have begun to use the term 'Northern and Southern Kingdoms' (남북국가) for the period when Silla and Balhae co-existed, instead of using the term 'Unified Silla' (see Byeon Tae-seop 1986; Gim Yeong-ha 2002:49–62).

Korean perceptions of Korean identity, and Korea and its history.

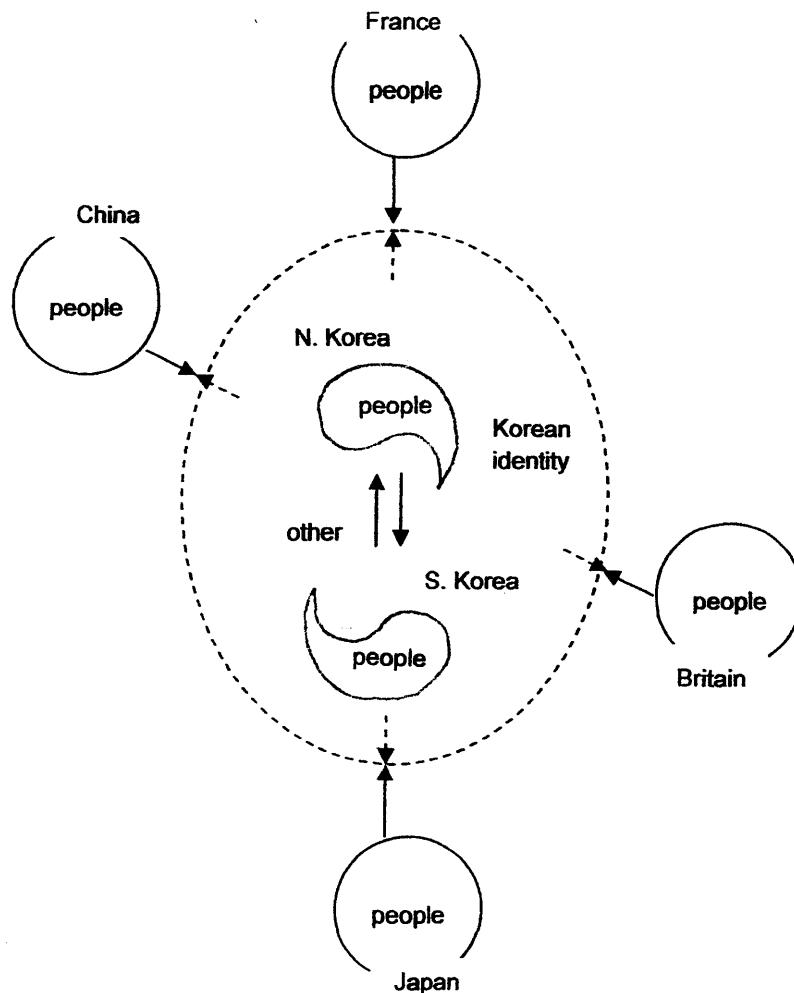


Figure 2 Korean identity after 1948

The second agent is 'material culture', seen as 'Korean', which enables people to materialise the notion of Korea and to reconstruct the past of the Korean people. However, before the late nineteenth century Koreans did not seem to appreciate their material culture in this light. It was during the

late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries that their existing concept of their relationship with the material world began to alter significantly. This was due to the introduction into Korea of the Western experience of material culture. At the same time, it is arguable that it was also due to the Korean people's historical experiences of how other people treated and interpreted Korean material culture.

This point brings the following questions: how did Korean people come to perceive their material culture, and how did other people perceive it? It seems that Korean material culture is an interesting case illustrating the process of how a group of people came to perceive a particular set of objects as their *alter ego*: needless to say, in this particular case, those people belonged to the culture which had itself produced the objects in question.

The intrusion of Western imperial powers into East Asia during the nineteenth century forced Korea to redefine its position vis-à-vis China – of which the notion was already settled in Western people's minds – and also to find its proper place in the new Western-dominated international order. In the case of Korean material culture, there seemed to be an emerging necessity to define its unique characteristics as 'things Korean', and to find its proper place in the material world of things with respect to Chinese materials – especially in the eyes of Western people who expected to acquire Korean materials to satisfy their aesthetic tastes or curiosity, or to



broaden their knowledge of one of the unknown world cultures, based on an exploration of the materials produced by the Koreans. In fact, the current Korean desire for world recognition of the Koreans as having a unique culture which deserves special attention might have been satisfied during the nineteenth century, as the Western recognition of a distinctive Korean culture now means that the world recognises Koreans as a civilised people distinct and different from the Chinese and, to some degree, from the Japanese.

At a pivotal point in time – the early twentieth century – Korea became an integral part of Japanese territory, losing the sovereignty it was not to regain until 1945. This experience of the Korean people adds more complexity to understanding Korean material culture, raising questions such as what makes an object Korean, and how far the notion (or the fate) of 'Korea' has affected both Korean and other people's interpretation and treatment of Korean material culture. This thesis attempts to trace a historical process in the Korean people's understanding of their material culture as things Korean (i.e. as their *alter ego*), based on an analysis of the narratives of Korean material culture formed by the Koreans and by others, mainly Japanese and Western people.

To understand the expression 'Korean material culture' used in this thesis, it seems necessary first to define the term 'material culture'. According to Pearce (1994:9), the term can be understood as 'the selected lumps of the

physical world to which cultural value is ascribed' and used as a cover term for 'artefact', 'good(s)', 'object', 'specimen' or 'thing'. The 'material culture' of Korean people will be understood along these well-established lines, i.e. 'the selected lumps of the physical world to which Korean cultural value is ascribed', or the selected material evidence from the past enabling us to appreciate part of the structure of Korean people's history, of their cultural values, and of their material environment. As regards the scope of Korean material culture, this thesis is mainly concerned with those materials which come from the past and which can be classified as archaeology, architecture, art objects, and folk crafts.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the third agent is 'museums'. The great potential of the museum to deal with a significant number of different kinds of people led it to take its place as a leading institution in altering people's relationship with material things. André Malraux describes the relationship between material culture and the museum as follows:

A Romanesque crucifix was not primarily a sculpture, the *Madonna* of Cimabué was not primarily a painting ...

The role of museums in our relationship with works of art [material culture] is enormous ... People in the nineteenth century were influenced by them as we are now, and forget that they gave to the audience a completely new relationship with works of art. Museums contributed to delivering works of art, which they gathered together, from their function: to metamorphose into paintings ... What does the identity of *l'Homme au Casque*, of *l'Homme au Gant* matter to us? They are called Rembrandt and Titian. The portrait ceases to be primarily the portrait of somebody ... And the museum removes almost all the portraits ... almost all their

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<sup>8</sup> 'Folk crafts' can be understood as what museums frequently call 'ethnographic objects'.

models, at the same time stripping works of art of their function: it does not know palladium, nor saint, nor Christ, nor object of worship, of resemblance, of imagination, of decoration, of possession; but images of things, different from the things themselves, and deriving from this specific difference their *raison d'être*. It is a confrontation of metamorphoses.

(1965:11–2; translated)<sup>9</sup>

One interesting thing which happened in the Buddhist sculpture gallery at the National Museum of Korea<sup>10</sup> after its move into a new building in 1986 was that some South Korean people offered money in front of each statue of the Buddha,<sup>11</sup> to ensure their well-being. This phenomenon illustrates a moment of confusion, over whether these statues were artefacts or symbols of god in the minds of those making such offerings. Here arise some questions: what is a museum? What is the meaning of the space? If those statues of Buddha were placed in Buddhist temples, the act of offering would be proper. As a result of being placed and displayed in a museum, the meaning of the statues was forced to be de-contextualised and re-contextualised (i.e. from god to a sculpture, with the possibility of a multitude of attitudes, interpretations and uses) and the act of offering thus became inappropriate. This example clearly illustrates how museums imposed on their visitors a completely new relationship with material culture (see Malraux 1965:11–2).

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<sup>9</sup> See Note 2.

<sup>10</sup> 국립중앙박물관 ([www.museum.go.kr](http://www.museum.go.kr)).

<sup>11</sup> My own memories of this in the museum start from the year 1987. It was interesting to observe the reduction in the number of offerings as time passed.

Continuing the point, it might be interesting to consider the gilded wooden Buddha displayed in the Korean gallery of the Musée Guimet<sup>12</sup> in Paris (see Illustration 1).



#### **Seated Buddha**

Korea

Goryeo period<sup>13</sup>

11th–12th century

Gilded wood

Expedition, CHARLES VARAT, 1888 – MG 15281

From the label, Musée Guimet; translated

**Illustration 1**

Source: Musée Guimet (2001:58)

This seated Buddha, which had already been de-contextualised from its original meaning (i.e. image of god) and function (i.e. object of worship), and which is now displayed in a French national museum far from the Korean peninsula, has come to stand for a part of the Korean people's past – as material evidence of the Goryeo period; at the same time, it has turned into a potential iconic image objectifying the notion of 'Korea' through its display in Paris.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, in the eyes of the Koreans, this

<sup>12</sup> Le Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet ([www.museeGuimet.fr](http://www.museeGuimet.fr)).

<sup>13</sup> The Musée Guimet dated this statue to the Goryeo period (918–1392). According to the catalogue, *프랑스 국립기메동양박물관 소장 한국문화재* (Korean Cultural Properties of the Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts, France), published by the National Research Institute of Cultural Properties (국립문화재연구소) in South Korea, however, this piece is dated to the Joseon period (1392–1897) (National Research Institute of Cultural Properties 1999:189).

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this displayed Goryeo Buddha can lead both informed and casual

latter point brings some concerns for the position of Korean material culture inside museums situated outside Korea, in relation to other materials, especially those of China and Japan.

As mentioned before, it was from about 1990 that South Korean institutions became actively involved in funding overseas museums, to carve out for Korea a limited museum space in the West. This thesis suggests that these South Korean efforts, which can be seen from the late twentieth century onwards, are comparable to Japanese efforts to participate in the international expositions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At that time, it appears that the Japanese people understood the significance of these international expositions. In an effort to 'achieve a position of parity with the Western nations' (Conant 1991:79), Japan actively participated in the expositions, and succeeded not only in finding her proper place in a new world order, but also in obtaining Western recognition as a civilised country distinct and different from China. Western enthusiasm for Japanese objects eventually led to a cultural phenomenon called 'Japonisme'<sup>15</sup> in the West.

For the better understanding of the interest of South Korean institutions in

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museum visitors to recognise their own identity, through the introduction of the concept of 'things Korean' in the sense of 'the other' to non-Korean people and of 'the self' to Korean people, based on the distinction between dissimilarity and familiarity of the material displayed in terms of the visitors' own cultural background and knowledge, or simply based on the museum's classification of the statue by locating it at the 'Korean' gallery with a label indicating its identity as 'Korean'.

<sup>15</sup> According to Sato and Watanabe (1991:14), the term 'Japonisme' was first used in 1872 by the French art critic and collector Philippe Burty (1830–90) and was introduced to Britain in 1875.

the museum, this thesis provides a glimpse of the nature of Japan's – together with Korea's – participation in international expositions, as the Japanese people of the time seemed to understand the 'exposition' as a sort of 'museums holding temporary and special exhibitions' and the 'museum' as a kind of 'expositions but holding permanent exhibitions' (Yoshimi 2004:15, 137–8). Locating the museum as an object, the thesis then explores the nature of the museum in Korea since its inception. The museum is a product of Western society, but in the case of Korea it appears that the institution was implanted by the Japanese. This will provide an insight into how the South Korean people in question came to understand museums.

### **Boundary of the case studies**

Given the scope of the research, it was necessary to make a selection among overseas museums. This selection was made on the basis of Korea's historical circumstances. During the period from Korea's opening-up in 1876 to its annexation by Japan in 1910, the principal and common problem facing Britain and Japan was Russia: its presence in Manchuria, and the possible expansion of its power to the Korean peninsula. Korea tried to keep the balance between imperial powers by signing treaties with them to secure its sovereignty. However, they were broken by the Anglo-

Japanese alliance, while of course France<sup>16</sup> took the side of Russia (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:411–3; Lowe 1981:76–81).

During the late nineteenth century, displays of Korean material culture and even the emergence of a Korean gallery are found in Paris. In addition to this, the first Korean governmental participation in an international exposition held in Europe was at the 1900 World Exposition in Paris. On the other hand, the first exhibition of Korean objects in London was in 1910, when Korea was already under the Japanese protectorate and would soon be annexed; in fact, the exhibition was designed to increase cultural and commercial ties between the UK and Japan. These events determined the scope of the case studies: the thesis will consider museums in Britain and France. It seems necessary to note that due to the language barrier, the study of museums in Russia was excluded from the beginning. This led to the exclusion, as a matter of balance, of museums in the USA, given the nature of the later phase of world history (i.e. the Cold War period) after the Second World War and significant relationships with the two Koreas: North Korea and the USSR, and South Korea and the USA.

Other criteria which were applied to selecting a museum were: that it should have the status of a national museum in its own country; that it

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<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy that French Catholic missionaries began to enter Korean soil illegally from 1836 in response to the demands of the Korean Catholics (Uh Cheol-gu 2000:314).

attempted to cover the whole range of Korean material culture,<sup>17</sup> from prehistory to modern times; and that it should have a permanent display room, established through South Korean grants, for Korean classical material. Therefore, the Korean collections and Korean galleries at the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Musée Guimet in Paris were selected, together, of course, with other supporting data. The Tokyo National Museum<sup>18</sup> is included as a supplement<sup>19</sup> to the principal case studies, although it does not meet the third criterion,<sup>20</sup> because of interest in looking at what actually happened in a museum in Japan, considering the part played by Japan in the history of Korea (i.e. the Japanese occupation period).

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is designed to explore in depth the nature of the three agencies – ‘people’, Korean material culture and museums – and their interaction in relation to the notion of Korea, which certainly provide an insight into the current openings of Korean galleries abroad. It is informed by a variety of literature, and by a detailed analysis of the Korean collections – their type and histories – and also by comparative analysis of the Korean displays in

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<sup>17</sup> Objects in archaeology, architecture, art objects, and folk crafts.

<sup>18</sup> 東京国立博物館 ([www.tnm.jp](http://www.tnm.jp)).

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that there was difficulty in obtaining access to museum records concerning the holdings in its Korean collection.

<sup>20</sup> i.e. it does not have any financial support from South Korean institutions.



the selected museums.

Because the history of Korea is the crucial context of this thesis in understanding the rationale for the South Korean efforts in opening Korean galleries abroad, the decision was taken to adopt a chronological sequence as the framework for discussion. This is preceded by Chapter Two, which is a necessary prelude to the following four chapters, and which considers the notions of Korea and Korean identity. It demonstrates how Korean people came to distinguish their identity as expressed in a set phrase 'One race [or 'nation'] one blood, the descendants of Dan-gun'.<sup>21</sup> As a counterpoint to the Korean perspectives, this chapter also explores how other people have perceived Korea based on an examination of the appearance of Korea in the Western atlas over the passage of time.

Chapters Three to Five follow the chronological framework of Korean history: Chapter Three is concerned with the period from the nineteenth century to 1910, Chapter Four from 1910 up to 1945, and Chapter Five from 1945 up to the present day. These chapters consider the history of the adoption in Korea of Western approaches to material culture and with them a Western institution, the museum. By placing emphasis on Korean identity, these chapters illustrate how the complexity of Korean history and the country's political position in the world were mirrored in, and reflected

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<sup>21</sup> '한겨레 한핏줄, 단군의 자손'.

back into, the range of interpretations of and attitudes to Korean material culture, which in turn affected museum practices. To deal with the ties between communities and Korean material culture, the displays of the Korean collection and acquisition details of Korean objects by the museums in the case-studies, and the period to which the objects belong and their type have been taken systematically into account in these chapters.

Chapter Six brings the analysis up to date by considering the potential role of museums, which held Korean material culture, in relation to the notions of Korea and Korean identity in the contemporary political and social situation of South Korea. The thesis ends with a conclusion, Chapter Seven.

## Korea and Korean identity



(i.e. the self).

Before pursuing this further, it is helpful to understand Korea's basic characteristics. Compared with most other nations, Korea has a long and continuous history as an independent state. The Korean language is quite different from both Chinese and Japanese. Unique traditions of clothing, cuisine and architecture all contribute to a strong sense of nationhood among Koreans.

The Korean peninsula occupies an important position in East Asia. Although it has been invaded repeatedly, Korea has retained a strong national identity.

From a panel in the Korea Foundation Gallery,  
the British Museum

The Korean people have a distinct national identity, and Korea has a long and continuous history as an independent state. The Korean language is quite different from both Chinese and Japanese. Unique traditions of clothing, cuisine and architecture all contribute to a strong sense of nationhood among Koreans.

From the introductory panel in the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art,  
Victoria and Albert Museum

<sup>1</sup> The introductory panel in the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The photograph was taken in 2002.

<sup>2</sup> A *dangui* (당의 [dang-ui], formal costume for Joseon court ladies), two *dolbok* (돌복, costumes for children's first birthday) and a *nokwonsam* (녹원삼, ceremonial costumes worn by Joseon queens and princesses at minor ceremonies and by high-ranking court ladies at major ceremonies) lent by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (문화관광부), Republic of Korea, displayed in the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2004 (see the labels of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

## **Dealing with the notions of Korea and Korean identity**

This chapter attempts to explore how Korean people came to realise their identity as Koreans, and how other people have understood Korea. The vantage point of the former is the concept of being Korean in the sense of the self, and the latter in the sense of the self but in relation to others. It is worth noting that other people's understanding of Korea has great potential in the awakening and consolidation of the identity of the Koreans (i.e. the self).

Before pursuing this further, it is helpful to understand Korea's main characteristics. Compared with most other countries of the twenty-first century, Korea illustrates a remarkable congruence among its people, language and culture. Although there exist some immigrants, the whole impression of the Korean population led Nelson to assert that:

There is no doubt that Korea is unusual in having a homogeneous population, with no national minorities or lingering aboriginals speaking different and unrelated languages, as is the case in both China and Japan. The Korean language has regional dialects, but they are mutually understandable throughout the peninsula and into the Korean Autonomous Region of Yanji, in Jilin Province, China. The Korean language is entirely congruent with people who consider themselves Koreans.

(1995:220)

Among the Koreans, the homogeneous nature of Korea forms a sort of pride. For them, it signifies the strength of their Korean identity despite

many wars and even the recent Japanese colonial experience in Korean history. Understandably, both historical events must have threatened the homogeneous nature of the Korean people and even the existence of Korea in this twenty-first century.

The current Korean beliefs on the homogeneous nature of their identity are captured well in the set phrase 'One race [or 'nation'] one blood, the descendants of Dan-gun'. Whether as historical fact or simple legend, Dan-gun, the founder of the first Korean state, stands firmly as a symbol of Korean identity and, interestingly, is also one of the most significant gods in Korean shamanism, and even Dan-gun religion called Daejonggyo (대종교) exists in Korea. The first section of this chapter explores the formation of Korean identity focusing on symbolic and historical values of Dan-gun. It elucidates how Dan-gun was understood by the Koreans over the passage of time, which leads to an understanding of how he became an icon of Korean identity. This obviously will shed light upon how the Koreans of the twenty-first century understood their identity as Korean, a single clearly defined concept based on which they draw a line between 'us Korean' and others. Although the first section of this chapter mainly deals with the Korean understandings of their identity by exploring the significance of Dan-gun, as a matter of interest it also provides a glimpse of how he was perceived by other people.

The second section examines the notion of Korea based on the

appearance of Korea in Western atlases over time. This section is built on an assumption that the process of the appearance of Korea in the Western atlas might illustrate the process towards a 'more or less accurate *representation* of' Korea that had existed 'in itself' before the Western people experienced it (Glaserfeld 1991:13). It is obvious that those past representations of Korea should reflect the Western people's understanding of Korea in the world at certain points in time.

In order to deal with this, this section mainly looks at the changes in the linguistic representations of Korea in atlases over time. According to Saussure: 'Every kind of linguistic unit represents a relation, and a phenomenon is also a relation. Therefore, everything is a relation. Those units are not phonic; they are created by thought' (2002:10; translated).<sup>3</sup> Assuming that the appearance in the atlas of a place given names in other languages can be considered a symbolic action (representing the relationship built in the past between the people who named and drew, and the place which was named and drawn), an examination of the factors which made some changes over the course of time in the name of the place, or even some modifications in its physical representation in the atlas, can certainly enrich understanding of the current English term 'Korea' and the reasons why the sea between Korea and Japan is called today 'Sea of Japan'<sup>4</sup> not 'Sea of Korea'.<sup>5</sup> This indicates, to some degree,

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<sup>3</sup> See Note 3.

<sup>4</sup> This can be understood as the Japanese right to the sea in question.

how other people have understood Korea and what are the hidden elements affecting their understanding of it, and also their decision-making in choosing among other possible names. Against the representations of Korea in the Western atlas, this section includes the reactions of the South Koreans and also draws attention to a special exhibition entitled 'COREA in the imagination of the EUROPEAN' organised by the Seoul Museum of History<sup>6</sup> in 2004. In this second section, by way of using the representation of Korea in the Western atlas as a metaphor for the representation of Korea in Western museums, it attempts to provide a partial understanding of the reasons why South Korean institutions involved themselves in opening Korean galleries abroad and also why most Korean galleries were opened in Western European and North American countries.

### **Dan-gun, the forefather of the Koreans**

In Korean history, although there were separate forms of statehood (see Chronology), as Nelson noticed, there seem always to be 'cultural and linguistic similarities, and a sense of being related peoples' between them (1993:264; see Yim Gi-hwan 1999:229–30). However, it can hardly be denied that the formation of Koreans' national consciousnesses, of 'the

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Koreans call this sea 'Donghae' (동해 [dong·hae]) which means 'East Sea'.

<sup>6</sup> 서울역사박물관 ([www.museum.seoul.kr](http://www.museum.seoul.kr)). This museum is under the Cultural Affairs Bureau (문화국) of the Seoul Metropolitan Government (서울특별시청) (see the Seoul Metropolitan Government's homepage, at [www.seoul.go.kr/org/organ/subhomepage/culture/intro/organinfo/index.html](http://www.seoul.go.kr/org/organ/subhomepage/culture/intro/organinfo/index.html)).

identity of the same', coincides with the process of their recognition of Dan-gun as the legend of origin and also as a historical event.

Among the ancient existing records of Korean history,<sup>7</sup> Dan-gun first appeared in Ilyeon's *Samgukyusa*.<sup>8</sup> Ilyeon records:

In the *Wiseo* it is written, 'Two thousand years ago there was Dan-gun Wanggeom, who set up the capital at Asadal ... and founded a state, calling it Joseon. It was during the same period as the reign of King Yao<sup>9</sup>.'

In the *Gogi* it is written, 'In ancient times there was Hwan-in [Heavenly King or God] ... His son, Hwan-ung had had an ambition to rule over the human world in order to relieve people from a rude savage stage. His father, realising his son's intentions, looked down at the Taebaek Mountain, which appeared to him a fitting place from which to benefit people. He gave Hwan-ung three *cheonbuin* [heavenly seals] and granted his request to rule over the people. Accompanied by three thousand followers, Hwan-ung descended on the peak of the Taebaek Mountain ... beneath the *sindansu* [sacred tree]. ... With his followers, Pungbaek [wind], Usa [rain], and Unsa [cloud], Hwan-ung instructed and enlightened people on some three hundred and sixty kinds of work, including agriculture, preserving long life, curing disease, punishments, and distinguishing between right and wrong.

At that time, there was a bear and a tiger that both lived in the same cave. They prayed constantly to Sin-ung [another designation of Hwan-ung] to become human beings. He gave them a bunch of sacred mugwort and twenty pieces of garlic [or twenty bulbs of garlic] and instructed them to eat only those he gave them, without seeing the sunlight for a hundred days; if they obeyed, they would become human. The bear and the tiger took them and ate them for three times seven days following the

<sup>7</sup> To research ancient aspects of Korea, many scholars suffer from the dearth of materials written by Koreans, as a considerable number of ancient records were destroyed and disappeared in wars and for various other reasons over time; the oldest extant record of Korean history is *Samguksagi* (三國史記 [sam-guk-sa-gi], 'History of the Three Kingdoms'), compiled by Gim Bu-sik (김부식, 1075–1151) in 1145 (Choi Young-seong 2001:93, 105).

<sup>8</sup> 三國遺事 [sam-guk-yu-sa] ('Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms'), compiled by a Buddhist monk, Ilyeon (일연, 1206–89) during the reign of King Chungryeol (충렬왕, r. 1274–1308). Together with *Samguksagi*, it is one of the principal records in understanding ancient Korean history (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:246; Chae Sang-sik 1996:307).

<sup>9</sup> The mythical Emperor Yao (堯) in Chinese history, some time before 2000 BC (Ilyeon 1972:32–3).



instructions. At the end of three times seven days, the bear succeeded in becoming a woman. The tiger, which could not endure the ordeal, did not become a human. As there was no one whom Ung-nyeo [bear-woman] could marry, she now went constantly to the base of the *sindansu* to pray for a child. Therefore, Ung [another designation of Hwan-ung] transformed himself into a man and married her. A son was born, and was called Dan-gun Wanggeom.

In the fiftieth year of Yao ... Dan-gun set up the capital at Pyeongyang ... and called it Joseon. He later moved the capital to Asadal ... He governed the kingdom for 1,500 years. In the year of Gimyo – the year of King Wu's ascension to the Zhou<sup>10</sup> throne – as Gija was invested with the throne of Joseon, Dan-gun moved to Jangdanggyeong. Later Dan-gun returned to Asadal, and became a mountain god. At that time he was 1,908 years old. ...'

(Ilyeon 1972:32–3, 1987:33–4, 1991:15–8; Hogarth 1999:261–2; translated and modified)<sup>11</sup>

From the above records of Dan-gun, it is possible to detect two values attached to Dan-gun: a historical value as founder of Joseon, and a symbolic value as a god, from his becoming a mountain god. To understand the current concept of Korean identity, it is crucial to grasp those interwoven facets of Dan-gun, which are deeply rooted in the consciousness and unconsciousness of Korean people and which present living discourses on the issue of Korean identity even in this twenty-first century.

Bearing this Janus-faced Dan-gun in mind, it might be interesting to look at the following two paintings (Illustrations 2 and 3) displayed in the Korean

<sup>10</sup> 周 (c. 1100–249 BC), a dynasty in Chinese history (Yun Nae-hyeon 1991:94).

<sup>11</sup> See Note 4.

galleries of the British Museum (BM) and the Musée Guimet (MG); both galleries opened in 2000 and in 2001 respectively, with the support of the Korea Foundation.



Illustration 2

**The Mountain God (Sanshin) with his tiger in a mountain landscape**

... 19th century.

... The Mountain God is the most popular shaman god, usually depicted as an old man accompanied by his messenger, the tiger. Sometimes he is portrayed with a crown as the legendary Tan'gun [Dan-gun], founder of Korea. ...

Lent by Hahn Kwang-ho, CBE

From the label, the British Museum

**66. Sansin, the God of the Mountain**

... late 18th–early 19th century

... Korea's mythological founder, Tan'gun [Dan-gun] ... is said to have transformed himself, at the moment of his death at the age of 1,908, into a god of the mountain.

From the catalogue, Musée Guimet  
(Musée Guimet 2001:333)



Illustration 3

### ***Dan-gun, his symbolic value as god***

About seventy per cent of the Korean peninsula is composed of mountains. This suggests why the mountain god has been, from ancient times, one of the gods most worshipped by the Koreans; to some extent, the transformation of the mountains (a natural element) into a form of religion (a cultural element) indicates a mode of ancient Koreans' thought on their relationship with their natural environment (see Lévi-Strauss 1962:16), and the paintings displayed at the BM and the MG can be understood as the materialisation of that mode of thought. The strength of this cult has left traces even in Buddhist temples – in many Buddhist temples in South Korea<sup>12</sup> it is possible to find a separate shrine for a mountain god (Pak and Whitfield 2002:14), where paintings of the deity can be found.



**Illustration 4** 'Immortel sur son tigre',  
Musée Guimet (IC 419/JJ1), 2002.

<sup>12</sup> It might be possible to trace shrines for a mountain god in North Korean Buddhist temples, unless the communist government has abolished them.

In an article concerning the gender of mountain gods published in 1934, Sohn Jin-tae (손진태) suggested that mountain gods were originally female (see Illustration 4), but over time male mountain gods became predominant (Hogarth 1999:132; Yun Yeol-su 1998:84–7). What this means here is that Dan-gun was just one of the mountain gods, but today, as Hogarth observes (1999:131–2), '[in] Korea, the Mountain Spirit, Sanshin [Sansin], is often identified with Tan'gun [Dan-gun] ... as written in the monk Iryŏn's [Ilyeon's] *Samguk yusa* [*Samgukyusa*] ...'.

Another important aspect of the cult of Dan-gun as god is its association with the ancestral cult. The worship of Dan-gun as the spirit of the Korean people can define the identity of the Koreans as the descendants of the same progenitor, Dan-gun, distinct from other groups of people. However, before the thirteenth century Dan-gun did not seem to be worshipped widely in this sense: the worship of Dan-gun as the progenitor seems to be limited to the regions around Pyeongyang (Seo Yeong-dae 2000:166).

According to Hogarth (1999:270), it was during the reign of King Gongmin (공민왕, r. 1351–74) that Dan-gun seems to be recognised widely as the divine progenitor of the Korean people at the national level: Dan-gun shrines were built nation-wide and sacrifices were officially offered to him, most often together with his grandfather, Hwan-in and father, Hwan-ung. It

is obvious that the war of some twenty-eight years against the Mongols<sup>13</sup> was one of the determinant factors in this phenomenon (Gim Cheol-jun 1988:103; Hogarth 1999:265–9; Seo Yeong-dae 2000:168). Considering the long period of the Goryeo people's resistance to the Mongol invasions, the worship of Dan-gun obviously played a significant role in unifying them and in strengthening their sense of national identity.

To understand this phenomenon further, it should be noted that it was during the period of the Mongol invaders' onslaught that the woodblock carving of the *Goryeo Tripitaka*<sup>14</sup> was undertaken (1236–51), to invoke Buddha as a safeguard for Goryeo and also to depict Goryeo people's defiance against the Mongols (Jikwan 2000:18–9). The latter had destroyed the woodblock for the *Tripitaka* enshrined in Buinsa,<sup>15</sup> produced between 1011 and 1087 to stop the Qidan (契丹) invasions of Goryeo (Jeon Sang-un 1996:205–6; Jikwan 2000:18–9). Another example can be found in contemporary South Korean society: one particular aspect of Korean shamans, *mudang* (무당), is that they pray to Dan-gun for the security and welfare of South Korea and for the reunification of the two Koreas (see Hogarth 1999:175).

After the establishment of a new dynasty, Joseon, in 1392, it seems that the notion of Dan-gun as the original progenitor of the Koreans was

<sup>13</sup> From 1231 to 1259 (Bak Yong-un 1987:481, 493–4).

<sup>14</sup> This is now registered on the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

<sup>15</sup> 부인사, a Buddhist temple.

established in the mind of Joseon (Korean) people. Soon after its foundation, the proposals to offer the national ceremony to Dan-gun emerged as a major element in the political agenda (Gim Tae-yeong 1995:239). However, it was only after 1425 that an independent Dan-gun shrine was built in Pyeongyang (Gim Tae-yeong 1995b:242).<sup>16</sup> In contrast with the Joseon court's attitude, it is said that Dan-gun was also worshipped as a *seong-jo* deity (성조, the sacred ancestor) by Joseon shamans (Hogarth 1999:272; Yun Yi-heum 1994:52). Interestingly, Dan-gun shrines were built even in Japan<sup>17</sup> (Noh Tae-don 2000b:25; Seo Yeong-dae 2000:175). During Toyotomi Hideyoshi's<sup>18</sup> Joseon campaigns in 1592 and in 1597, a significant number of skilled Joseon potters were abducted and forcibly relocated to Japan to produce pottery (Eckert *et al.* 1990:148; Min Du-gi 1976:123–5). It was they who built the shrines there, which reflects the pervasive worship of Dan-gun among the people of the Joseon period, and which can also be considered as an attestation of Joseon (Korean) identity.<sup>19</sup>

In 1909<sup>20</sup> the Dan-gungyo<sup>21</sup> was founded by Na Cheol<sup>22</sup> in order to

<sup>16</sup> Before that time, Dan-gun was enshrined at the Gija's shrine (Gim Tae-yeong 1995:242).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Joseon potters built Dan-gun shrines (玉山神宮) at Naeshirogawa (苗代川) and Kasanohara (笠野原) in Kagoshima (鹿児島縣) in 1605 and in 1704 respectively (Seo Yeong-dae 2000:175).

<sup>18</sup> 豊臣秀吉 (1536–98) (Min Du-gi 1976:113).

<sup>19</sup> The Korean language and dance were used during their rituals. In 1934, in a journey to Naeshirogawa in Japan, Bernard Leach, a British potter, observes traces of Korean identity such as: 'At the village pottery of Naeshirogawa we found a population of Koreans whose ancestors were prisoners after Hideyoshi's invasion at the close of the sixteenth century. Many potteries in Japan were advanced by this influx of Korean art. In my experience, this village ... preserved its original Korean character in food and dance as well as pots' (1978:191).

<sup>20</sup> By this time Korea had already become a Japanese protectorate.

inculcate Korean identity, but a year later its name was changed to Daejonggyo to avoid Japanese censorship (Jo Gyu-tae 2001:92). In 1915, the Japanese government in Korea outlawed Daejonggyo, by classifying it as illegal; it eventually came to the end of its life in 1942 (Jo Gyu-tae 2001:193, 196). Interestingly, during the Japanese occupation period, some Japanese intellectuals attempted to embrace Dan-gun as a deity into their indigenous religion, Shinto, in order to assimilate the Koreans into the Japanese culture, and suggested enshrining Dan-gun in a Japanese shrine<sup>23</sup> which was built at Namsan,<sup>24</sup> by demolishing Guksadang (국사당),<sup>25</sup> the Joseon (Korean) national shrine for the Reverend Buddhist Priest, Muhak,<sup>26</sup> and other deities such as the Mountain God, located at the spot (Lee Ji-won 2000:81; *Donga Ilbo*, 1 March 2004; see Illustration 5).

After the recovery of Korea's independence, the Japanese shrine at Namsan was demolished (*Donga Ilbo*, 1 March 2004). In parallel with this, Daejonggyo was also revitalised, and its main temple is now to be found in Seoul (Bak Yeong-eun 1984:284–5).

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<sup>21</sup> 단군교, Dan-gun religion.

<sup>22</sup> 나철 (1863–1916). He organised a group called Jasinhoe (自新會) to assassinate the five Korean politicians who had signed the Protectorate Treaty, but this attempt failed (Jo Gyu-tae 2001:192).

<sup>23</sup> This attempt was not accepted by the Japanese authority (Lee Ji-won 2000:81).

<sup>24</sup> 남산, a mountain in Seoul.

<sup>25</sup> Guksadang can be understood as the icon of Joseon (Korea).

<sup>26</sup> 무학대사, a Buddhist monk who selected Seoul as the capital of Yi Seong-gye's Joseon.



**Illustration 5** Japanese shrine at Namsan. Source: *Donga Ilbo* (1 March 2004)

From this Dan-gun religion, it is possible to detect another mode of Korean thought. The assimilation of Dan-gun into the progenitor spirit appears to spring from a triadic relationship between his being the founder of the first Korean state, his becoming a mountain god, and his divine paternal lineage as the son of Hwan-ung (God) and the grandson of Hwan-in (God), ignoring his maternal lineage, which will be discussed in the following section.



**Illustration 6** Offerings to Dan-gun. Source: *Chosun Ilbo* (16 March 2002)



Today, Dan-gun is still worshipped (see Illustration 6), and a large number of related religions also manifest themselves (Hogarth 1999:271), though their connotations vary: e.g. a mountain god, the divine progenitor of the Korean people, Samseong<sup>27</sup> with Hwan-in (grandfather of Dan-gun) and Hwan-ung (father), and so forth.

***Dan-gun, his place in Korean history and how he became an icon of Korean identity***

Before continuing with this section, it might be interesting to look at who the Koreans are from the viewpoint of discoveries in archaeology. The origin of Korean ethnicity has always been a fascinating subject in the Korean academic field. Following the Western classification, the current Korean people belong to the Tungusic Mongoloids,<sup>28</sup> and their language falls in the category of the Altaic family (Kim Won-yong 1976:9). According to the dominant South Korean theory, the process of the formation of the current Korean people coincides with the process of assimilating the people known as Paleo-Asiatics of the Neolithic Age by the Ye-maek people of the Altaic family, who brought bronze with them and migrated

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<sup>27</sup> 삼성 (the holy trinity).

<sup>28</sup> Korean people use the terms such as 'Ye-maek (濊貊)', 'Ye (濊)', 'Maek (貊)' or 'Han (韓)' people – different from 'Han (漢)' people in China – etc. Those terms had appeared in the Chinese records to designate Korean people since the early Western Zhou (西周, c.1050–771 BC) period (Gim Jeong-bae 1997a:69). Han Sang-bok (2002:63–4) asserts that the Koreans belong to the Neo-Siberians.

across Siberia southward to the peninsula (Gim Jeong-bae 1997a:68–72).

In contrast to this, North Korean academic circles reject the theory of migration and assert that Korean ethnicity had been formed in the Korean peninsula since the Palaeolithic Age (Gim Jeong-bae 1997a:69; Gim Gwang-in 2002b).

The crucial point from both perspectives is that the people who are considered today as Korean have inhabited approximately the same territory (i.e. Manchuria and the Korean peninsula) since a very early period, which provides a sense of a continuum. Furthermore, as Nelson (1993:262) has pointed out, '[the current] population of the Korean peninsula is more homogeneous culturally, as well as physically and linguistically, than most large groups of people on earth.' This illustrates their sense of uniformity regarding their identity, and it is not therefore surprising to see that Korean history produces a single genealogical narrative, which legitimises the notion of Korea by providing a sense of continuity and homogeneity. This entails the formulation of a vantage point from which the Koreans draw lines between themselves as the self and others as the other.

Obviously, embracing Dan-gun in the structure of Korean history provides a common ground for consolidating the self-consciousness of the Koreans and the notion of Korea. However, the Korean upper class or elite have

shown a considerable degree of reluctance to recognise Dan-gun as the origin of the Koreans: instead they have preferred to place Gija,<sup>29</sup> of Chinese origin, as the forefather of Korea. The process of obtaining from Korean intellectuals a recognition of Dan-gun as the origin of the Koreans illustrates how far one's bias can affect the interpretation of a certain event.

In the chronology of the MG's catalogue of its Korean collection, Dan-gun is featured in the Neolithic Age section, as 'Tan-gun (Dan-gun), mythical

*The current place of Dan-gun* kingdom (2333-1243) (pages 13-14, 2001:376, see Appendix 3). On 24 November 2001, it was reported that the

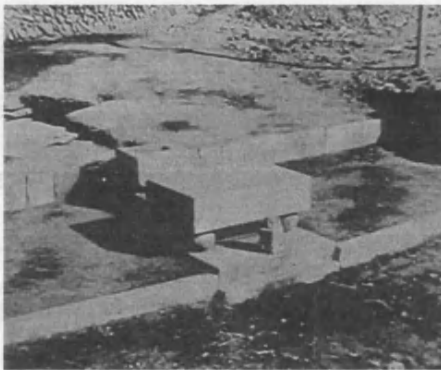


**Illustration 7** Dan-gun tomb



**Illustration 8** Newly erected Dan-gun tomb

Source: KBS,<sup>30</sup> at [tongil.kbs.co.kr/plan/plan\\_geo02\\_list02.php?men\\_id=321](http://tongil.kbs.co.kr/plan/plan_geo02_list02.php?men_id=321).

The following examples demonstrate the place of Dan-gun currently occupies in Korean history. In 1993, the North Koreans announced the excavation of the Dan-gun tomb at Pyeongyang<sup>31</sup> and the discovery of his remains inside the tomb (see Gim Gwang-in 2002a; Noh Tae-don 2000c:259; Illustration 7). Later, they erected an impressive new tomb on

<sup>29</sup> 기자 (箕子). See the last paragraph of Iljeon's record on page 25 and also page 50.

<sup>30</sup> 한국방송공사 (Korean Broadcasting System).

<sup>31</sup> 평양, the capital of North Korea.

the site (see Illustration 8). In 1998, North Korea claimed Pyeongyang as one of the cradles of world civilisation, and designated the culture around it the 'Daedonggang Civilisation'<sup>32</sup> (see Gim Gwang-in 2002b; Noh Taedon 2000a:3).

In the chronology of the MG's catalogue of its Korean collection, Dan-gun is featured in the Neolithic Age section, as: 'Tan'gun (Dan-gun), mythical founder of the Choson (Joseon) kingdom (2333-1286)' (Musée Guimet 2001:376; see Appendix 3). On 24 November 2001, in association with the British Association of Korean Studies, the BM organised a 'North Korean Study Day' (see Appendix 4), during which a presentation on the newly erected Dan-gun tomb was given by Beth McKillop of the British Library.

Appendix 5, which portrays Ilyeon's record of Dan-gun, is taken from a South Korean history textbook, republished in 2000 and designed for the use of the children in the sixth year of elementary school (about 11 or 12 years old following the Western calculation).<sup>33</sup>

By way of contrast, it is worth noting the attitudes of many South Korean Protestants after the government's announcement (in 1987) of a proposal to reform the compilation of Korean history textbooks. They contended that treating Dan-gun as a historical fact was the same as worshipping an idol,

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<sup>32</sup> 대동강문화 (Daedong River Civilisation).

<sup>33</sup> i.e. about 12 or 13 years old following the Korean calculation.

and insisted that Dan-gun should remain as a figure in a legend rather than in Korean history. They were also concerned that cults related to Dan-gun might become the national religion. Furthermore, they questioned how Korean people who had been created by God could be the descendants of a bear, Dan-gun's matrilineage (Yun Jong-yeong 1999:178). As if reflecting these views, Dan-gun statues in South Korea are today in danger of being beheaded or destroyed by those religious extremists who consider them as idols.

Such views as they emerged in the academic field during the twentieth century are well captured by a Korean-born British social anthropologist, Hyun-key Kim Hogarth. She asserts that the Dan-gun legend was invented by Ilyeon to 'reinforce the Korean national identity and instil a nationalistic sentiment in the Koryŏ (Goryeo) people facing a national crisis' of the Mongols' invasions and their consequent political intervention (1999:268). To support her argument, she points to the absence of any record of Dan-gun in *Samguksagi* and *Dongmyeongwangpyeon*,<sup>34</sup> which were compiled prior to *Samgukyusa*, and even suggests that the legend might have been created on the basis of a myth originating in Mongolia or another north or central Asian area (1999:268–9).

It seems that Hogarth has failed to grasp the nature of these ancient

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<sup>34</sup> 東明王篇 [dong·myeong·wang·pyeon] ('Book on King Dong-myeong'), compiled by Yi Gyu-bo (이규보, 1168–1241) in 1193 (Tak Bong-sim 1996:298).

records, the overall historical circumstances of Goryeo, and the ethnic origin of the Korean people. Her 'invention of tradition' theory illustrates the influence of Western concepts of nation and nationalism, in the light of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and other similar views (see Hogarth 1999:260–1) and also the danger of the application of a Korean event to such Western concepts without comprehension of the significance of that event. This brings to mind what Derrida notes: 'When, in a general way, one attempts to pass from a manifest language to a latent language, one must first make rigorously sure of the manifest meaning. The analyst, for example, must first speak the same language as the patient' (1967:53; translated).<sup>35</sup>

#### *Dan-gun prior to the Goryeo period*

Among the extant ancient Korean documents, Dan-gun is first presented fully in *Samgukyusa* (see page 24). However, this does not mean that Dan-gun did not exist before that time. One of the reasons for the difficulty in tracing Dan-gun prior to the Goryeo period is the lack of extant written materials. As an example, Dan-gun can be traced even in *Samguksagi*, which contradicts Hogarth's claim. In the section of Goguryeo (高句麗本紀), it is recorded that '平壤者本神人王儉之宅也' which means 'Pyeongyang

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<sup>35</sup> See Note 5.

(平壤) was originally the home of half god and half human (神人), Wanggeom (王儉)<sup>36</sup> (Gim Bu-sik 1994:326).

Another reason can be found in the ancient Korean people's perception of their history. Before the unification of the Koreans by Goryeo,<sup>37</sup> they were divided into separate states (see Chronology), although they shared a sense of being related people.<sup>38</sup> In this circumstance, it is unlikely that Dan-gun – who stood for Go-joseon (or Joseon) as the forefather of the Korean people – would be placed in separate statehoods; it is more likely that he was considered as one founder among others. Interestingly, as Noh Tae-don (2000b:20–1) points out, *Samguksagi* records the foundation date of Silla as the *Gapja* year (갑자년, 57 BC),<sup>39</sup> which is the first *Gapja* year after the fall of Go-joseon in 108 BC; there was a belief that a new state would be established in the *Gapja* year.

Another interesting record in *Samguksagi* is ‘先是 朝鮮遺民 分居山谷之間 爲六村’ (Gim Bu-sik 1994:16), in the section on Silla (新羅本紀), to the

<sup>36</sup> Dan-gun was named Dan-gun Wanggeom (檀君王儉) (see pages 24–5).

<sup>37</sup> This thesis concurs with the academic view that Goryeo succeeded in genuinely unifying the Koreans (see page 6 and Chronology).

<sup>38</sup> For example, according to the foundation legends of Goguryeo and Baekje, Jumong (주몽), the first king of Goguryeo, was related to Buyeo and to Heaven, and one of Jumong's sons founded Baekje. It is noteworthy that there were some who saw Jumong as the son of Dan-gun (see the chronology of *Samgukyusa*). According to ancient Chinese records, such as Yangseo (梁書) and Suseo (隋書), Baekje's language, costumes and food are similar to Goguryeo, and Silla's customs and costumes are similar to Goguryeo and Baekje (Yim Gi-hwan 1999:232).

<sup>39</sup> *Samguksagi* misstated the foundation year of Silla as 57 BC, of Goguryeo as 37 BC and of Baekje as 18 BC. Today, these foundation years are proved inaccurate. Cheon Gwan-u (1989:15) estimates that Goguryeo was founded in c. 100 BC; Baekje in c. 100 BC to AD 100; and Silla in c. AD 100 to 200. Byeon Tae-seop (1996:75, 77, 79) estimates the formation of Silla in the late first century AD, while he agrees with Cheon Gwan-u's foundation years of Goguryeo and Baekje.

effect that the former Go-joseon people had established Silla. From this, it is possible to deduce that Silla may have been thought of as the successor to Go-joseon, though this may be due simply to the influence of Gim Bu-sik's understanding of Korean history. It should be noted that the *sehyeong* daggers (세형동검, the bronze daggers of Go-joseon) were excavated around Gyeonju, the capital of Silla (see Noh Tae-don 2000b:21). The crucial point in understanding this notion of a 'successor to Go-joseon' can be found in the fact that it was Silla which succeeded, by annexing Gaya, Baekje and Goguryeo, in partially unifying the Koreans. In parallel with the notion of Go-joseon, Dan-gun seems to be recognised only in the form of cults (i.e. mountain god, progenitor spirit of Pyeongyang, etc.) and transmitted in the form of legend among the Koreans prior to the Goryeo period (Noh Tae-don 2000b:22; Seo Yeong-dae 2000:166–7).

#### *Dan-gun in the Goryeo period*

At the time of its foundation in 918, Goryeo proclaimed its legitimacy as the successor to Goguryeo and named itself 'Goryeo' after Goguryeo. However, in internal politics, it could not escape adopting the tradition constructed by Silla, which governed most of the Korean peninsula for some 224 years<sup>40</sup> (see Ha Hyeon-gang 1976:192). In fact, before the establishment of Goryeo, its people were Silla people. Interestingly, after

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<sup>40</sup> From the defeat of Goguryeo (668) to the foundation of Hu-baekje (892).



the unification of the former Silla territory, Goryeo illustrates dichotomous attitudes regarding its historical legitimacy; as the successor to both Goguryeo and Silla. It is worth noting that, unlike Hu-baekje, Silla surrendered to Goryeo without a fight (see Ha Hyeon-gang 1993:3).

After this peaceful surrender, the ruling class of Silla maintained their high status at the Goryeo court (Ha Hyeon-gang 1976:193), which brought conflicts between the original officials of Goryeo and those of the former Silla. Gim Bu-sik originated in one of the influential ruling families of Silla, and this is why *Samguksagi* illustrates a strong bias towards Silla; for example, about thirty-seven Silla people are featured in its biographies, but only eight from Goguryeo and three from Baekje (see also Goh Byeong-ik 1976:56). According to Gim Cheol-jun (1976:107), there is a possibility that Gim Bu-sik was aware of Dan-gun's Joseon, but simply ignored it. Another crucial point is that at that time Goryeo people might have considered the first king of Goguryeo to be the son of Dan-gun, as appeared in Ilyeon's *Samgukyusa* (1987:1), which sees Goguryeo as the successor of Go-joseon rather than of Silla. This is why he only briefly mentioned Go-joseon, referring indirectly to Silla as its successor (see page 39).

As many South Korean scholars agree (Gim Cheol-jun 1976:107–10; Ha Hyeon-gang 1976:203; Lee Ki-baik 1976:112–3; Tak Bong-sim 1996:300–3), the other record prior to *Samgukyusa*, *Dongmyeongwangpyeon*, can

be understood as the representation of a view opposite to Gim Bu-sik's (i.e. Goryeo as the successor to Goguryeo), by placing King Dongmyeong, the founder of Goguryeo, as the progenitor of the Goryeo people. While *Samguksagi* was compiled by one of the former Silla officials when they still exercised power, *Dongmyeongwangpyeon* was compiled after they had lost it. During the period when these two records were produced, the main issue seemed to be to which past Goryeo succeeded. This conflict is well captured by both records. Bearing this in mind, using them as evidence of the 'invention of tradition' theory regarding Ilyeon's Dan-gun record seems to be somewhat inappropriate.

It was during the late twelfth and the thirteenth century that a change in the overall view of Korean history occurred, by which Dan-gun and his Joseon came to be seen as the origin of the Koreans; this was reflected well in *Samgukyusa* and *Jewangungi*.<sup>41</sup> The most significant historical events of the period are the revolt of military officials against the supremacy of civil officials in 1170, the monopolisation of political power by the former until about 1270,<sup>42</sup> and the Mongol invasions from 1231<sup>43</sup> and their consequence. Although Goryeo resisted fiercely, it eventually became a 'son-in-law

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<sup>41</sup> 帝王韻紀 [je-wang-un-gi] ('Songs of emperors and kings'), compiled by Yi Seung-hyu (이승휴, 1224–1300) in 1287 (Yi Seung-hyu 1999:37, 39).

<sup>42</sup> According to Ha Hyeon-gang (1976:203), during this period (1170–1270), the officials originated in the former ruling class of Silla were swept from the court and Silla values were disregarded. Yi Gyu-bo's *Dongmyeongwangpyeon* was compiled in the climate of this time.

<sup>43</sup> First invasion (1231–32), second invasion (1232), third invasion (1235–39), fourth invasion (1247–48), fifth invasion (1253–54) and sixth invasion (1254–59) (Bak Yong-un 1987:480–95).

nation' to Yuan (元)<sup>44</sup> of the Mongols (1274–1351), which brought a diminution of Goryeo authority<sup>45</sup> and territory,<sup>46</sup> and a considerable degree of Yuan political intervention in Goryeo's internal politics. It appears that these historical events brought Goryeo people an awareness of their Goryeo identity, and broadened their perception of Korean history by searching for the origins of the Goryeo (Korean) people, which in turn led them to adopt Dan-gun and his Joseon, denying Gim Bu-sik's record of Gija as the origin of Korea.<sup>47</sup> Obviously, this bound them together through the notion of common origin, the descendants of Dan-gun rather than of either Goguryeo or Silla, or even Gija.

One of the interesting aspects of *Jewangungi* is Dan-gun's parentage. While *Samgukyusa* identifies his father as Hwan-ung, the son of Hwan-in (God), and his mother as a bear, *Jewangungi* records his father as the god of Dansu (檀樹神) and his mother as the grand-daughter of Ung, the son of Hwan-in (Yi Seung-hyu 1999:135). Concerning this point, Hogarth (1999:269) asserts that Yi Seung-hyu eliminated some of the non-indigenous Korean elements. However, the understanding which dominates among South Korean academics is that the contradiction arises

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<sup>44</sup> The Mongols proclaimed the Yuan (元) Dynasty in 1271 (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:171).

<sup>45</sup> As a sign of the subordination of Goryeo to Yuan, Goryeo Kings were forced to take a Chinese character, 'chung' (忠, 'loyal' to Yuan) as a prefix to their posthumous names (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:225): from King *Chungryeol* (忠烈王, r. 1274–1303) to King *Chungjeong* (忠定王, r. 1348–51).

<sup>46</sup> The northern part of the Korean peninsula was placed under direct Yuan control. It was recovered by force under King Gongmin (恭愍王, r. 1351–74) (NIKH 1994:318–26).

<sup>47</sup> In the chronology of *Samgusagi*, Gim Bu-sik placed Gija, who was invested with the throne of Korea by Zhou of China, as the first king of Korea.

from the background of Ilyeon, a Buddhist monk, which enabled him to be more flexible in recording the past of the Koreans, and that of Yi Seung-hyu, a Confucian scholar (see Lee Ki-baik 1976:117–23). In the eyes of such a scholar, to recognise the Koreans as the descendants of Dan-gun, the son of a bear, would be profane and irrational: this partly explains why Gim Bu-sik, who was a Confucian scholar, preferred to identify Gija as the first king of the first Korean state. He even attempted to connect the founders of Silla and Goguryeo to the Chinese sages, disregarding the original records of their foundations by explaining them as irrational (Gim Bu-sik 1994:81). As Seo Yeong-dae (2000:170) notes, during the Joseon period (1392–1897), when the influence of Confucianism was strongly marked throughout society, Joseon scholars tended to record only the rational and historical aspects of Dan-gun, eliminating irrational elements, and especially his matrilineage.

### *Dan-gun in the Joseon period*

After the founding of Joseon in 1392, Dan-gun and his Joseon were firmly established in the minds of Joseon people: e.g. every historical record now began with Joseon of Dan-gun<sup>48</sup> (Jeong Gu-bok 1976:220–50). Furthermore, the materialisation of Dan-gun was undertaken – national

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<sup>48</sup> In *Dongmongseonseup* (童蒙先習), a history textbook for children compiled by Bak Se-mu (박세무, 1487–1554), Dan-gun appeared as the founder of the first Korean state.

offerings were made to Dan-gun as the progenitor of the Koreans, shrines were built to him, documents recording the ruins of Dan-gun emerged,<sup>49</sup> and so on (Jeong Gu-bok 1995:109; Seo Yeong-dae 2000:171).

However, during the sixteenth century it appears that Joseon Confucian scholars treated Dan-gun as subordinate to Gija, because of the latter's connotation of Chinese dynasties such as Xia, Yin or Shang, and Zhou, with this deeply rooted Confucianism (Seo Yeong-dae 2000:174) threatening the place of Dan-gun as the origin of Korean people and Korean history. From the seventeenth century onwards, Dan-gun recovered his original place, following the devastating experience of wars with Japan, and Later Jin<sup>50</sup> and the shock of the overthrow of Ming (明, 1368–1644)<sup>51</sup> by the Nuzhen people (女真族, the Manchus) and the establishment of Qing (清, 1644–1911). These experiences had a great impact on Joseon *yangban* society,<sup>52</sup> in which the culture of the Han people (漢族) was held in high esteem and the Nuzhen people and the Japanese were considered barbarians. This brought it to reassess many of the values it held, and led to a concentration on things Korean (Haboush 1993:23; Han Yeong-u 1989:2; Jo Gwang 1998:219–20).

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<sup>49</sup> In fact, the site of Dan-gun's tomb in North Korea was already mentioned in those Joseon documents.

<sup>50</sup> Two invasions of Japan between 1592 and 1598; the invasion of Later Jin (後金, later changing its name to Qing) of the Nuzhen people (Manchus) in 1627; and the invasion of Qing in 1636 (NIKH 1995c).

<sup>51</sup> Ming was a Chinese dynasty built by the Han (漢) people.

<sup>52</sup> The upper class of Joseon Confucian scholars.

Under these circumstances, Joseon saw the emergence of a group of people who were interested in their own history, geography, language and culture, and in many other practical matters such as astronomy, economy, agricultural technology, and even Catholicism. Today, they are called the *silhak* scholars (실학, 'practical learning'), though they never designated themselves in this way (Jo Gwang 1998). Furthermore, there was great interest at this time in the history of Manchuria, which had once been Korean territory, i.e. Go-joseon, Buyeo, Goguryeo and Balhae (Eckert *et al.* 1990:168–9; Jo Seong-ul 1998:322–4). It was during this period that research on Dan-gun flourished and the cultural value of Dan-gun began to be emphasised (Seo Yeong-dae 2000:177–8).

### *Dan-gun in the Japanese occupation period*

In 1910, when the Japanese annexed Joseon, they destroyed written materials concerning Korean history, geography, bibliography and so on, and forbade the Koreans to read books on Korean history (Cheon Gwan-u 1976:12; Yi Man-yeol 1976:505). The irony for the Japanese was that, unlike the Chinese in Taiwan (multi-racial, according to their norm), the Koreans in Korea (with 'common blood ties', and thus akin to the Japanese) posed some problems for them in defining their own identity. During the Japanese colonial period (1910–45), as Yoshino notes, the Japanese undertook 'the study of blood types', which 'was closely

associated with the classification of racial types and verification of the claim that the Japanese and the Koreans were of different races' (1992:30).

Another striking contradiction of the period was Japan's policy of assimilating the Koreans. While the Japanese were eagerly looking for differences between themselves and the Koreans, the Government-General of Chosen (朝鮮總督府) in the Korean peninsula endeavoured to assimilate the Koreans into the Japanese, saying that 'Chosen [Korea] and Japan facing each other across a narrow strip of water have been in close connection from time immemorial with homogeneity of race and culture' (GGC 1932:1). According to Han Yeong-u (1989:8), some Japanese historians even claimed that Dan-gun was the brother of Susanoonomikoto (素戔鳴尊), one of the Japanese gods. Furthermore, in an attempt to assimilate the Koreans, the Japanese distorted the history of the Koreans to make the latter feel ashamed of their own history; obviously, as long as the Koreans were proud of their history, it was more difficult for the Japanese to govern them (Yi Man-yeol 1976:505). Thus in contrast with those Japanese historians who claimed Dan-gun as the brother of one of the Japanese gods, the colonial Japanese historians ignored Dan-gun and his Joseon, and insisted on Gija as the origin of Korean history, together with the four Han commanderies (see Chronology): i.e. from the inception of Korean history, Korea had been under Chinese influences and a Chinese colony. In fact, it was the Japanese who asserted that the Dan-gun legend was an invention of

Ilyeon. Against the Japanese liquidation of Dan-gun in Korean history, Choe Nam-seon devoted himself to researching Dan-gun in order to prove the historical values of Dan-gun (Choe Nam-seon 1988:7–22; Lee Ki-baik 1962:249).

It was during this period that the Western concept of 'nation', introduced to the Koreans via Japan during the nineteenth century, became pervasive. The notion, translated into Korean as *minjok* (민족), was understood as 'the idea of common blood ties' by the Koreans (Em 1999:283–317) and easily took root in the minds of Korean people, as the Korean *minjok* consists of the descendants of Dan-gun, and thus differs from the Japanese. This notion of *minjok* unified and mobilised the Koreans in achieving independence.

### *Dan-gun in South Korea*

It is worth noting the dispute over the question of Dan-gun's historical value in South Korea. In 1981, Ahn Ho-sang (안호상) presented a petition to the National Assembly as a way of seeking legal action against South Korean history textbooks, claiming that these had been influenced by the Japanese colonial interpretation of Korean history. This led to a public hearing between Ahn Ho-sang, with others with similar opinions, and renowned Korean historians at the National Assembly. Among the issues



presented for discussion, Ahn Ho-sang asserted that Dan-gun was a historical figure rather than a figure in a legend (Yun Jong-yeong 1999:21–30). On 15 August 1986, *Chosun Ilbo* (조선일보) published an article which asserted that South Korean history textbooks should be rewritten to correct the Japanese distortion of Korean history. Again, Dan-gun and his Joseon featured in the list of proposed corrections (Yun Jong-yeong 1999:97, 116). Based on archaeological discoveries and the above circumstances, Ilyeon's Dan-gun record is today understood as containing historical facts, and his matrilineage as a group of people whose totem was a bear (NIKH 1997c:45–146; Yun Jong-yeong 1999:244).

### ***Dan-gun through the eyes of the other***

In the late nineteenth century, Isabella Bird<sup>53</sup> (1897:12) referred in her book to the foundation legends of Korea as follows: 'Legends of the aboriginal inhabitants [the Koreans] of the [Korean] peninsula are too mythical to be noticed here, but it is certain that it was inhabited when Kitze or Ki-ja [Gija, 箕子] ... introduced the elements of Chinese civilization in the twelfth century B.C.'. In 1900, the Reverend James Gale published an article on Korea in which he placed Gija as 'first and foremost, the father of Korea' (1900:1).

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<sup>53</sup> Isabella L. Bird (Mrs Bishop, 1831–1904), British, the author of *Korea and her neighbours* (1897) written based on her four visits to Korea between January 1894 and March 1897.

In the same journal, to refute Gale's contention, Hulbert (1900:25–6) published an article in which he claimed that the Korean people's belief in their origin sprang from Dan-gun. In 1993, Nelson asserted that '[according] to the tradition, Kija [Gija] departed with a retinue of 5,000 people and went in exile to Korea, where he founded a state called Choson [Joseon] ... No bronze ritual vessels, which a Shang<sup>54</sup> prince could be expected to take with him in order to attend properly to his ancestors, have ever been found in Korea' (1993:156);<sup>55</sup> regarding the Dan-gun legend, Nelson found that it contains some interesting facets in relation to Korea and its people, and 'seems to be indigenous to Korea' (1993:155–6).

### **Korea through the eyes of the other**

The following map (Illustration 9) featured in the Chinese catalogue of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) published in 1991. In the map, although the Korean peninsula is named as 'North Korea' and 'South Korea' in English, it was written as '北朝鮮' (North Joseon) and '南朝鮮' (South Joseon) in Chinese.

<sup>54</sup> 商 (c. 1800–1200 BC), one of the dynasties in Chinese history (Yun Nae-hyeon 1991:73).

<sup>55</sup> The problematic aspect of her claims is the location of Go-joseon which was not bounded by the current Korean peninsula. According to recent archaeological discoveries, Shang bronze vessels which may be considered as the evidence of the existence of Gija Joseon were found near Dalinghe (大陵河, Daling River) (Lee Chung-kyu 2003:285–6). However, the assumption of relating those bronze vessels to Gija can be accepted only if Dalinghe marked the boundary of Go-joseon and the question of how Go-joseon can be related to the problematic discoveries of Shang bronze vessels with inscriptions of Gija's name found in Shandong (山东) is answered.

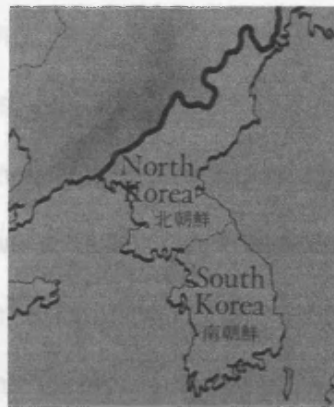


**Illustration 9** Korea portrayed in the Chinese catalogue of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Source: Victoria and Albert Museum (1991:17)

The point is that the official name of South Korea is *Daehanminguk*,<sup>56</sup> its short forms are *Hanguk*<sup>57</sup> or *Namhan* ('South Han'), which can be written in the Chinese of the People's Republic of China<sup>58</sup> as 大韩民国, 韩国 and 南韓 respectively.<sup>59</sup> The official name of North Korea is *Joseonminjujuuinmingonghwaguk*<sup>60</sup> and its short forms are *Joseon* or presumably *Bukjoseon* ('North Joseon'),<sup>61</sup> which can be written in Chinese as 朝鮮民主主義人民共和國, 朝鮮 and 北朝鮮 respectively. The interesting aspect of this is that the catalogue was published in 1991 in a Western European museum. In the same museum and from the same

<sup>56</sup> 대한민국 [dae-han-min-guk].

<sup>57</sup> 한국 [han-guk].

<sup>58</sup> 中華人民共和國 (1949–present).

<sup>59</sup> In the Chinese characters used in South Korea, they become 大韓民國, 韓國 or 南韓 respectively. It seems necessary to note that South Korea calls North Korea *Bukhan* (北韓, North Han).

<sup>60</sup> 조선민주주의인민공화국 [Jo-seon-min-ju-ju-ui-in-min-gong-hwa-guk].

<sup>61</sup> North Korea calls South Korea *Namjoseon* (南朝鮮, South Joseon) (see *Dictionary of Joseon Language* 1986:184).

department, the following year, a Korean gallery was opened, and a Korean catalogue published, with South Korean sponsorship. Naming South Korea 'South Joseon' instead of 'South Han' presumably happened accidentally, which shows a lack of scholarship, but there is perhaps a seed of misinterpretation, a reflection of the People's Republic of China's close relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) established during the Cold War period – or simply a lack of sensitivity about the issue, ignoring the problematic nature of the relationship between North Korea and South Korea.



**Illustration 10** Entrance of the Korean Gallery, the British Museum



**Illustration 11** Signage for the Korean Gallery, Tokyo National Museum

It may be interesting to look at the above examples concerning the naming of Korea. Illustration 10 is the entrance of the Korea Foundation Gallery of the BM. As mentioned in Chapter One, this gallery was opened in 2000 with the support of the Korea Foundation, an arm of the South Korean

government. In the photograph can clearly be seen the South Korean term for the English word 'Korea': '한국'.

Illustration 11 is of the Korean gallery of the Tokyo National Museum (TNM) in 2002. Here, the TMN uses the term '朝鮮'<sup>62</sup> as the equivalent English term for 'Korea', which can be considered as a reflection of the Japanese colonial period and the division of Korea into two states: i.e. after the annexation of Korea, the Japanese renamed Korea '朝鮮' from '大韓帝國' (Daehan Empire), a symbolic act to degrade the status of Korea, from that of an independent nation to a region of Japan. Furthermore, it seems that the division of Korea was affected in maintaining the name Joseon to designate the notion of Korea including both North and South Korea. Apparently, this aspect was reflected in the name of the TNM's Korean gallery which displays the Korean materials produced before the division. However, the problematic aspect of the name, Joseon, for the South Koreans is that this term is used by North Korea.

Here the question of the origin of the Western term 'Korea', which is used in the official names of both the two Koreas and accepted by other countries in the contemporary world, might arise. To deal with this question, it is necessary to look at how Korea was portrayed in Western languages (by linguistic symbols) and in atlases (by non-linguistic symbols) from the first notion of its existence in Western people's minds. As stated by

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<sup>62</sup> It reads 'Joseon' in Korean and 'Chosen' in Japanese.

Witherspoon, an 'analysis of a people's world view as seen through linguistic symbols and as seen through non-linguistic symbols will not produce a single view of the same world. Each symbolic system provides ... a different angle, a different point of view. This difference, however, is not so much contradictory as it is complementary. Linguistic and non-linguistic symbolic systems, for the most part, support, enhance, and supplement each other' (cited in Ingersoll and Bronitsky 1987:13).

### ***The formation of cognitive mapping of Korea in the West***

Looking back into history, it seems that the first knowledge of Korea reached the West during the ninth century AD, via Arab traders. According to Lautenshch (1945:39), Sulaiman, an Arab merchant, mentioned it in AD 851: in his report on India and China, Korea was called 'Sīla' and described as islands.<sup>63</sup> It is in the book *Kitābu, al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* (Book of Roads and Provinces),<sup>64</sup> written by Ibn Khurdādhba, a Muslim geographer from Persia, that one can detect direct contact between Arab traders and the people of Silla<sup>65</sup> (Jeong Su-il 2001:539–41; Lautenshch

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<sup>63</sup> 'On its maritime side China borders on the islands of Sīla. ... No Arab has travelled to this country to bring us an account of these people [the people of Sīla, i.e. Korean people]' (cited in Lautenshch 1945:39).

<sup>64</sup> According to Jeong Su-il (2001:710), this book appeared in AD 845, while Lautenshch states that it was written a few decades later than Sulaiman's report of 851.

<sup>65</sup> 'What lies on the other side of China is unknown land. But high mountains rise up densely across from Kantu. These lie over the land of Sīla, which is rich in gold. Mohammedans who visit this country are often persuaded by its fine qualities to settle down there. Ghorraib, kino resin, aloe, camphor, nails, saddles, porcelain, atlas, cinnamon and galangal are exported from there' (cited in Lautenshch 1945:39).

1945:39). It appears that the first example of a Western map in which Korea was portrayed with text<sup>66</sup> was the book *Nuzbatu'l Mushtāq fi Ikhtirāqi'l Afāq* (1154), which was written by an Arab geographer, al-Sharīf al-Iḍrīsī (1100–65), employed by King Roger II of Sicily. For Roger II he executed a map of the world, in which Korea was illustrated as a group of islands under the name of 'al sīla' [Silla] (Jeong Su-il 2001:541; Lautenshch 1945:40; Rey 1994:1002; Seo Jeong-cheol 1991:38).

The name 'Sīla' came from '신라' (新羅, Silla) (see Chronology). The above information reflects the trade between Arabs and Silla in the past, though the Arab traders' knowledge of Silla [Korea] was limited, as shown by its description as a group of islands rather than a peninsula together with islands. Here one question arises: why is the land between the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea called 'Korea' rather than 'Silla' in the contemporary context of Western languages?

In answering this question, it seems that the first European who actually had direct contact with Korean people was a Flemish missionary, Guillaume de Rubrouck (c.1220–c.1293), who was sent to the court of the Mongol khan in the name of the French king, Louis IX, from 1252 to 1254, on which occasion he met the envoys of the Goryeo dynasty (Fabre

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<sup>66</sup> 'From this island one can travel to the Sīla islands, .... There lies a city Ankuah ... whose area is so fertile and so rich in goods of all kinds that strangers who come to visit settle down and are reluctant to leave. There is gold in such large amounts that the inhabitants even fashion dog chains and collars for their monkeys from this metal. They also fashion woven clothing of gold and sell it' (cited in Lautenshch 1945:40).

1994:9, Lautenshch 1945:40–1). He described it as ‘Caule’ in his book *Voyage dans l’empire mongol* (1256). At that time Silla no longer existed in the Korean peninsula; instead, there was a dynasty called ‘Goryeo’. Later, Marco Polo (c.1254–c.1324), who visited the court of the Mongol Kublai Khan between 1271 and 1275, also mentioned Korea under the name of ‘Cauly’ (Polo 1903:343, see Appendix 6). Then, as Lautenshch (1945:41) pointed out, Korea again ‘disappeared’ for the West over about three centuries. It then seems that, due to the Jesuit missionaries who entered China and Japan during the sixteenth century, Korea began to reappear in the West, as ‘Caule’, ‘Cauly’, ‘Caoli’, ‘Coria’, ‘Cory’ ‘Corai’, ‘Coray’, ‘Corea’, or ‘Koreja’, influenced by the Arab, Chinese or Japanese pronunciation of ‘Goryeo’,<sup>67</sup> but it was always portrayed as an island and included in maps of China or Japan (Max 1983; Seo Jeong-cheol 1991). It is interesting to note that in the atlas of the Jesuit P. Martino Martini, published in 1655, Korea was portrayed as a peninsula, under the name ‘Corea’ (Lautenshch 1945:40–1; Max 1983; Rey 1994); Martini showed in his atlas that he was aware of the fact that at that time the Goryeo dynasty did not exist but that Joseon did, and he therefore used the term ‘la Péninsule de Corea ou Chaosien’ – strangely, however, only the word ‘Corea’ survived. Unlike the name ‘Silla’, it appears that there was considerable resistance to forgetting the old name ‘Corea’.

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<sup>67</sup> Yi Sang-tae (2003:372) asserts that ‘Corea’ is derived from the name of ‘Goguryeo’. In fact, Goryeo was named after ‘Goguryeo’ to legitimise its position as the successor to Goguryeo. According to Yeo Ho-gyu (1996:19), Goguryeo was also called ‘Guryeo’ (句驪). Therefore, in this light, Yi Sang-tae’s claim for the origin of the word ‘Corea’ from ‘Guryeo’ of Goguryeo is understandable; however, considering the historical circumstances, it was Goryeo which probably affected the naming of ‘Corea’ rather than Goguryeo.



One interesting point is the change in the English spelling from 'Corea' to 'Korea'. Although some Korean people think there must be some German influence in the English spelling of 'Korea',<sup>68</sup> many Korean people believe that it was changed by the Japanese because they wanted to place 'Japan' before 'Corea' in the English alphabetic word order. Concerning this point, it is worth noting Yi Sang-tae's (2003:372–91) study on the frequencies of the use of 'Corea' and 'Japan' in the Western atlas. He studied 212 Western atlases produced from 1595 to 1909: among them 108 were in English. Yi Sang-tae states that among those 108 English atlases, 84 used 'C'<sup>69</sup> and 24 used 'K' for Korea. It is interesting to observe that among four atlases in German, two used 'C' and the other two used 'K' for Korea. In the case of Japan, Japan figured as 'Hondo', 'Iapan or Iapon', 'Japan', 'Japon', 'Niphon' and 'Nipon'. Of 212 Western atlases, 63 used 'J' and 104 'N' for Japan. Among 108 atlases in English, 40 used 'J', 61 used 'N' for Japan and seven have no inscription. From Yi Sang-tae's study, it is clear that 'C' for Korea and 'N' for Japan were used more frequently. It is worth noting that the Japanese people call Japan 'Nihon' (日本) in Japanese, which explains why 'Niphon' and 'Nipon' were used more frequently.

As observed by Yi Sang-tae, it was during the eighteenth century that the

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<sup>68</sup> According to Dr. Pak Young-sook, Senior Lecturer in Korean Art History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in the nineteenth century English sometimes used 'K' instead of 'C', e.g. 'Keramic' instead of 'Ceramic'.

<sup>69</sup> 83 for 'Corea' and 1 for 'Corey'.

use of 'K' for Korea emerged, and 'C' and 'K' were used together until the nineteenth century; but from the twentieth century onwards, 'K' was consolidated: needless to say, Korea lost its sovereignty in the early twentieth century. It might be interesting to look at the treaties signed between Korea and Japan: e.g. 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Kingdom of Corea and the Empire of Japan' in 1876; 'Memorandum appended to the respective notes addressed from Japan to Great Britain, The United States, France ... Regarding the Convention of 1905, between Japan and Corea' in 1905; 'Agreement between the Korean Government and the Residency-General of Japan ...' in 1908; and 'Memorandum concerning the Administration of Justice and prison in Corea' on 12 July 1909; but 'Memorandum concerning the Establishment of the Bank of Korea' on 26 July 1909; and 'Treaty regarding the Annexation of Korea to the Empire of Japan' on 22 August 1910. In contrast with the Korean case, 'J' and 'N' for Japan were used together in the Western atlas until the nineteenth century, and it was during the twentieth century that 'J' for Japan seems to have become consolidated.

### ***Naming a sea: 'Sea of Japan' in question***

Illustrations 12 and 13 were taken from the BM's *Korea: art and archaeology* and the MG's *L'Art coréen*: both were published to accompany the establishment of the Korean galleries. Interestingly, two

names of the sea between Korea, Japan and Russia can be found in the following illustrations: i.e. 'East Sea' and 'Mer du Japon' (Sea of Japan).



**Illustration 12 East Sea**

Source: Portal (2000:10)



**Illustration 13 Sea of Japan**

Source: Musée Guimet (2001:37)

It is necessary to note that until the end of the eighteenth century, the 'Sea of Japan' was frequently called 'Mer Orientale' ('East Sea') or 'Mer de Corée' or 'Sea of Corea' (Li Jin-mieung 2001a; Seo Jeong-cheol 1991:15). However, as Li Jin-mieung (2001b:93–8) pointed out during the 20th Conference of the Association of Korean Studies in Europe, since the early nineteenth century the name 'Sea of Japan' has predominated. According to Li Jin-mieung, it was a consequence of the imperialist explorations by Western ships in East Asia between 1798 and 1859, especially the Frenchman Lapérouse's expedition in 1787, the result of which was the establishment of his hydrographical maps, which appear to have played a determining part in the appellations 'Sea of Japan' or 'Japan Sea'. These were treated as authoritative until the middle of the nineteenth century by

the Western mariners who sailed in Asian seas.

In an interview with the *Chosun Ilbo* in 2002 (Jeong U-sang 2002), Gim Sin,<sup>70</sup> who has been committed to changing the name of the 'Sea of Japan' to the 'East Sea',<sup>71</sup> or at least to the use of both names, says that it was the Japanese who demanded the use of 'Japanese Sea' during the first meeting of the International Hydrographical Organisation (IHO). The use of the name 'Sea of Japan' was officially adopted by the IHO in 1929 (Yi Gi-seok 2002), when Korea was under the Japanese power.

### ***Against the other's representation of Korea***

During the 2002 FIFA World Cup, young South Korean supporters used this occasion to protest at the English spelling of Korea by holding a banner on which 'Corea' was emblazoned (Illustration 14).

On 21 August 2003, a forum to redress the English spelling of Korea ('국호 영문표기를 바로 잡기 위한 북남토론회') was held at the Kim Il-sung University (김일성종합대학) in Pyongyang: 130 North Koreans, 60 South Koreans and 10 foreign people participated. In this forum, the participants

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<sup>70</sup> 김신, Professor at Gyeonghi University (경희대학교) in Seoul. He launched an English internet site ([www.east-sea.org](http://www.east-sea.org)) to help in redressing this issue.

<sup>71</sup> As mentioned before (see Footnote 5 on page 23), the Koreans call this sea 'East Sea', but Western people in the past also called it 'Oriental Sea' or 'East Sea', as it was located (seen from Europe) as in the Far East.

reached a provisional conclusion that there seems to be a high probability of Japanese intervention in the change of the English spelling from 'Corea' to 'Korea' (Critical Review of History 2003:371). In an article published in the journal *Critical Review of History* in 2003, O In-dong (2003:402–16) suggests 'Corea' as the name for Korea after the unification of the two Koreas.



**Illustration 14** South Koreans protesting at the English name 'Korea'. Source: *Donga Ilbo* (5 June 2002)

In 1997 and 2002, the South Korean government expressed their concerns about the name 'East Sea' (i.e. Sea of Japan) to the IHO (Yi Gi-seok 2002). Interestingly, in the map in the Korean gallery at the V&A, the sea in question was named as 'East Sea (Sea of Japan)' (see Illustration 15), and in the maps of the Korean galleries of the BM and the MG it is

only called the 'East Sea' and 'Mer de l'Est' respectively.

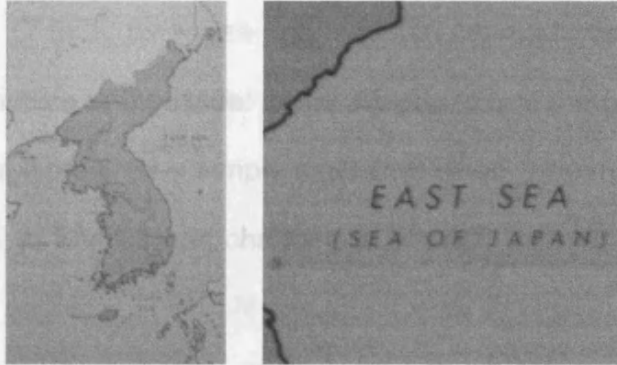


**Illustration 15** Map of Korea in the Korean gallery of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002

From 1 September to 26 December 2004, the Seoul Museum of History held a special exhibition entitled 'COREA in the imagination of the EUROPEAN' in Seoul (see Illustration 16).



**Illustration 16** Seoul Museum of History and the poster of the special exhibition, 2004

In its introductory panel, the museum states clearly the potential role of those maps displayed: 'It is also noteworthy that these maps could aid in

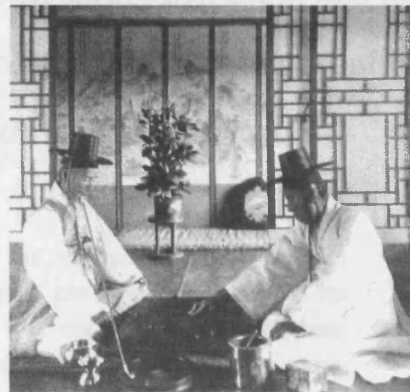
resolving the international issue surrounding the correct naming of the “East Sea”. However, concerning the issue of the changed English spelling from ‘C’ to ‘K’ for Korea, the museum seems to be sensitive to the problematic nature of the issue: in the Korean text of the panel concerning the naming of Korea, they simply state that since the nineteenth century, ‘C’ for ‘Corea’ in English had changed to ‘K’, and both ‘Corea’ and ‘Korea’ were used together (‘영어계통에서 “Corea”의 “C”가 “K”로 바뀌어 “Corea”와 “Korea”가 혼용된 것은 19세기 부터이다.’). In their English text of the same panel, they state that ““Corea” was used together with “Korea” until the 19th century and it wasn’t until the beginning of the 20th century when the official name of the country, “Korea”, was finally consolidated’.



**Illustration 17** Map of Korea in the Korean gallery of the Victoria and Albert Museum's, 2004

The above photograph (see Illustration 17) was taken in 2004 at the Korean gallery of the V&A. It is not clear whether the museum covered the part written ‘Sea of Japan’ or not, but to some extent, this illustrates how serious the nature of this issue is and how a museum can be a medium of protesting or conflicting with one’s national identity.

## Facing the new order of things



... William Woodville Rockhill, one of the best rounded diplomats we have ever had ... insisted that I [Sands] return to the East, where vital things were about to happen.

"Korea is the place," he said. "Nobody wants it ; it is too insignificant—but it is there you will see diplomacy in the raw ; diplomacy without gloves, perfume or phrases. ..."

(Sands<sup>2</sup> 1930:27–8)

Korea is the best illustration of this transition period of diplomacy, because it was the weakest of the Far Eastern countries, not only weak internally but also by having no undisputed official protector or friend among the Western powers. In China the same sort of thing was going on, but China is practically a continent, and the ancient power of China still lingered in European race memories as the seat of the King of Kings ... China was still a power, while Korea is a relatively small country ...

(Sands 1930:55–6)

<sup>1</sup> Two gentlemen of Daehanjeguk (대한제국, 1897–1910) playing an oriental chess. Source: Underwood (1904).

<sup>2</sup> William Franklin Sands (1874–1946), American diplomat (non-career appointee). Secretariat of the US legation in Daehanjeguk (Daehan Empire) from January 1898 to November 1899. Advisor to the court of the Daehan Empire from November 1899 to 1904 (Kim Won-mo 1984:161, 172; Sands 1999:3–9; The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:510, 512, 518); US Department of State's homepage, at [search.state.gov:8080/queryStateGov/viewdoc.jsp?libs=statego...](http://search.state.gov:8080/queryStateGov/viewdoc.jsp?libs=statego...).



## Historical background

On 14 August 1871, *The Times* recorded the Joseon (Korean) people's stubborn resistance against the American marines in June. Drew, who was acting as interpreter to the US expedition, translated the refusal of the Korean officials received by Governor Low on board the *Colorado*:

This people and kingdom have lived in the enjoyment of their own civilization four thousand years, and we want no other. We trouble no other nations, why should they trouble us? Our country is in the farthest east, yours in the farthest west ; for what purpose do you come so many thousand miles across the sea? Is it to inquire about the vessel destroyed ...?<sup>3</sup> Her men committed piracy and murder, and they were punished with death. Do you want our land? That cannot be. Do you want intercourse with us? That cannot be.

(*The Times*, 14 August 1871)

A comment by *The Times* on this incident between Joseon and the USA captures well the temper of the period:

That Corea [Joseon, i.e. Korea] will eventually be beaten is, of course, as certain as that the sun will shine on the day when the decisive battle is fought. And we cannot but regret the folly which impels her Government to plunge into reckless hostility. Corea must be beaten now if only to restore foreign prestige. If she, small barbarian State, were allowed to repel successfully both France and America, China would think that she, the one central and civilized Power, could meet the world in arms ; and past experience teaches us what would probably follow from such a conviction.

(*The Times*, 14 August 1871)

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<sup>3</sup> The American schooner *General Sherman* was destroyed by the Koreans on Daedonggang (대동강, Daedong River), with all on board, in 1866 (Kim Won-mo 2000:195).

The intrusion of Western imperial power into East Asia during the nineteenth century forced the countries in that area to abandon their existing China-centred (or Confucian) hierarchical international order and to recognise their status in the world in terms of Western standards of 'progress' – of material wealth and technological mastery – and this led the people in that area to understand 'Westernisation' as 'modernisation' and 'civilisation', and 'becoming Westernised' as 'enlightenment'. Furthermore, in the case of Joseon and Japan, there was an urgent necessity to redefine their position with respect to Qing (China) and to find their proper place in the new international order.

However, unlike Japan, which was accessible to Western people relatively earlier than Korea, mobilised under the Meiji government toward a new era of modernisation and succeeding in obtaining Western recognition as an independent state, in Joseon there was at that time every sign of a dynasty about to fall. The main reason for this can be traced back to the period from 1800 to 1863, during which political power was monopolised by a succession of royal in-law families (Eckert *et al.* 1990:178; O Su-chang 1997:201–82). In order to obtain appointment to an office, it was necessary to offer large sums in bribes, which were recovered through the exaction of levies on the common people, who also had to pay a heavy tax to the government. Popular uprisings due to corrupt local administrations, famine and the spread of disease aggravated the situation (Eckert *et al.* 1990:178–80; NIKH 1997d:285–380). This led directly to disorder and

corruption. Furthermore, the Western notion of Korea as one of the Chinese tributary states and the 'scholarly tendency to see China as the centre of everything in East Asian history' (Yun Peter, n.d.:18) constituted another major obstacle for the Koreans to overcome in order to obtain the world's recognition of Korea as an independent state and of its culture as different from that of the Western notion of China.

However, the most ironic event of the period in question was that in 1876 Joseon was forced to open up to the world not by any of the Western powers but by the Japanese, who thus imitated Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan of twenty years before (Choe Deok-su 2000:236, 245). This event certainly helped Japan to pave the way to consolidating her position in the world, in which the 'acquisition of colonies or other overseas territories became one of the attributes of international status, state power, and even modernity' (Duus 1995:3). By contrast, failing in all its attempts to maintain its sovereignty, Korea could not avoid becoming, against its will and for the first time in its history, the battlefields of the other's wars,<sup>4</sup> and a protectorate of Japan in 1905 which eventually led to its annexation by Japan in 1910.

This chapter deals with the period from the mid-1870s to 1910. For the Koreans, it was a period of confrontation between the existing order and the new order of things, not only in the political arena but in every aspect

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<sup>4</sup> Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) and Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) (NIKH 2000b:1, 16).

of society. The first section of this chapter is a review of the existing relationships between the Koreans and their material culture. It also looks at the introduction of the contemporaneous Western notions of material culture and Western institutions such as 'exposition' and 'museum' into Korea, which apparently challenged the Koreans' existing notion of their material culture and which led them to embrace qualitatively different kinds of relationship with their material culture. The second section outlines early displays of Korean materials abroad and explores the nature of those exhibitions. The third section examines the significance of the first exposition and museum in Korea. This provides an insight into how those materials from the Korean past, together with the exposition and museum operated in early twentieth-century Korean society. This will make clear how far the Korean materials were drawn into the political context which the Japanese had designed, by adopting Western systems such as the exposition and museum in Korea, but in their own interests, as the embodiment of modernity and progress. Finally, the fourth section considers the formation of dichotomous Western perceptions of Korean material culture and the determinant factors of such perceptions.

## Shifts in perception

The term ‘美術’,<sup>5</sup> which is now used in Korea, China and Japan for ‘art’ or ‘fine arts’ is a Japanese neologism equivalent to ‘Kunst’, ‘fine arts’ and ‘beaux-arts’ in German, English and French respectively. It was created at the time of the Japanese participation in the 1873 Universal Exposition of Arts and Industry in Vienna, to help in translating the phrase ‘Darstellung der Wirksamkeit der Kunstgewerbe-Museen’ into Japanese (Yuan 1995:18–9; Yun Se-jin 1999:6). Yun Se-jin (1999:1) notes that this term first appeared in Korea in 1884, in an article published in the *Hanseongsunbo*.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, however, this does not mean that the concept of ‘fine art’ did not exist in Korea prior to 1884.

At the time of the opening of Joseon to Japan and to other Western countries,<sup>7</sup> the existing Korean notion of material culture, in the sense of the current notion of ‘(fine) art’, appeared to be limited to painting and calligraphy.<sup>8</sup> The traditions of authentication, scholarship and criticism had been manifested in those areas along with the practice of collecting (see Hong Sun-pyo 1997:119–38, 1998:434–38). It is worth noting that both painting and calligraphy were practised not only by professional artists but

<sup>5</sup> Read as ‘misul’ in Korean, ‘meishu’ in Chinese, and ‘bijutsu’ in Japanese.

<sup>6</sup> 한성순보 (漢城旬報), the first Korean newspaper, issued on 31 October 1883 (Jeong Jin-seok 2000:13)

<sup>7</sup> While Joseon signed a treaty with Japan in 1876, it was not until the early 1880s that Joseon was opened to Western countries: the ‘Corean-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce’ was signed in 1882, and there were subsequent treaties with Britain (1883), Germany (1883), Italy (1884), Russia (1884), France (1886), etc. (NIKH 2000a).

<sup>8</sup> At that time, ceramics and sculpture did not seem to have acquired the same distinction.

also by intellectuals, the upper class and the monarchy. This is because the latter understood the practice of painting and calligraphy as personal and spiritual cultivation, and also as leisure activities. In parallel with this, the Koreans' existing understanding of material culture as the storage of knowledge about their intrinsic past seemed to be confined to ancient materials with inscriptions, such as ancient records and stone monuments. According to Yi Wan-u (1998:487), the Korean tradition of collecting rubbings of stone monuments goes back to the seventeenth century. These rubbings were used for reference in research into history and other areas, and also for studies of ancient writing styles.

The introduction of Western institutions such as 'exposition' and 'museum' had important consequences in allowing Koreans to see their material culture from a different angle. In 1881, five years after the forced opening of Joseon to Japan, King Gojong<sup>9</sup> sent twelve younger officials to Japan to inspect a wide range of modernised (or Westernised) institutions and facilities under the Meiji government (Eckert *et al.* 1990:202–3; Mok Soohyun 2000:8–10). At that time, as a symbol of 'modernisation', Japan had already adopted the museum<sup>10</sup> from the West, and in 1881 organised the second National Industrial Exposition (第二回内国勸業博覧会) in Tokyo (TNM 1973:781; see Illustration 18).<sup>11</sup> In the official report,<sup>12</sup> Bak Jeong-

<sup>9</sup> 고종 (r. 1863–1907), the last King (r. 1863–97) of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) and the first Emperor (r. 1897–1907) of the Daehan Empire (1897–1910).

<sup>10</sup> The first Japanese museum was established in 1872 (TNM 1973:779; Yanashita 1995:2).

<sup>11</sup> The first exposition (内国勸業博覧会) was held in 1877 at the Ueno Park in Tokyo.

<sup>12</sup> Seoul, Gyujeonggak (규장각), microfilm *Gyu* (奎) 2577, *Bunongsangmuseong* (附農商務省) of

yang (박정양) gave detailed accounts of the museum and the exposition which he had observed in Japan. Another account was given by Min Jong-muk (민종묵). In his personal account of what he observed in Japan, he briefly described the exposition and museum.<sup>13</sup> However, he questioned the very basis of a museum's value: 'What is the museum for?' In other words, 'What is the good of having a museum?'



**Illustration 18** The 2nd National Industrial Exposition in Tokyo, 1881. Source: Tokyo National Museum (1973)

After the signing of the 'Corean-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce' in 1882, the USA dispatched Lucius H. Foote as its diplomatic envoy to Joseon in May 1883 (Sin Yong-ha 1999:44). In response to this, King Gojong sent a group of delegates<sup>14</sup> to the USA in July 1883 (Min Gyeong-

*Ilbonguk-naemuseong-jikjangsamu* (日本國內務省職掌事務). See pp.65–9 of 79-103-178-B, Gyujanggak numbering.

<sup>13</sup> Seoul, Gyujanggak (규장각), *gyu* (奎) 1311, *Gyeonmun-sageon* (見聞事件), vol.2. See pp.Eb16 2-10, Eb16 2-11 and Eb16 2-17 of 75-103-29-F, Gyujanggak numbering.

<sup>14</sup> Eight Koreans, and three foreigners (one Chinese, one Japanese and one American) as interpreters (Pyun Chong-hwa 1982:6).

bae 1991:60; Sin Yong-ha 1999:44). At that time, the American Exhibition of Products, Arts and Manufactures of Foreign Nations (the so-called Boston Foreign Exhibition) and American Exposition were being held in the USA (Byeon Seung-ung 1999:160; Pyun Chong-hwa 1982:8–9; Rydell 1984:43). The Joseon delegates visited these two expositions, and the Smithsonian Museum (Min Gyeong-bae 1991:63; Pyun Chong-hwa 1982:8). It is said that a few Korean ceramics and other materials were displayed at the Boston Foreign Exhibition (Pyun Chong-hwa 1982:3, 9) and also Min Yeong-ik,<sup>15</sup> the chief Joseon delegate, donated a plant to the Smithsonian Museum (Sim Sang-yong 2000:95). According to Kim Won-mo (1999:3), Min Yeong-ik announced the possibility of organising an international exposition in Seoul the following year. Although this did not transpire in 1884, it illustrates Min Yeong-ik's understanding of the significance of such an exposition at that time. Among the delegates on the 1883 official visit to the USA, Min Yeong-ik nominated Yu Gil-jun (유길준) to study there (Yu Gil-jun 1995:16). In 1895, Yu Gil-jun wrote *Seoyugyeonmun* (西遊見聞), an account of what he had seen in the USA (Heo Dong-hyeon 1999:117). In his account, he introduced the notions of 'expositions' and 'museums' together with 'zoos, and botanical gardens' (Yu Gil-jun 1995:16).

Meanwhile, in 1888, Bak Yeong-ho (박영효) forwarded a memorandum,

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<sup>15</sup> 민영익 (1860–1914), a member of the royal in-law family of King Gojong (Min Gyeong-bae 1991:60). His sister married King Sunjong, the son of King Gojong (Pyun Chong-hwa 1982:6).



entitled *Geonbaekseo* (建白書), to King Gojong in order to convince him of the need for reform (Heo Dong-hyeon 1999:117). In this document, he suggested the establishment of a museum as a policy to further educational and research activities (Mok Soo-hyun 2000:11). However, though the Joseon court seemed interested in expositions – they actually participated in two international expositions later, in 1893 and 1900 – in contrast with their positive attitude there was almost no trace of any consideration of establishing a museum in the Korean peninsula.

The above examples show how the Koreans had been exposed to the Western system of expositions and museums. While the Joseon court was not convinced of any imminent need to establish a museum in Korea, their interest in expositions brought them to participate into the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition of Chicago (in the USA) and the 1900 Exposition Universelle de Paris (France). Those experiences were enough to shift their existing perception of their material culture, especially in the light of 'things Korean'. In these expositions, materials were arranged by nationalities. The Korean people's comprehension of the connotations of the Korean material culture on display and the displayed environment itself as a representation of Korea certainly evoked a sense of their Korean identity. Yun Chi-ho (윤치호), who visited the 1893 exposition in Chicago, wrote in his diary:

**28th.** [September] Chicago.

After having breakfast, I went to the exposition. On the tops of all the buildings there were the flags of the participant countries; only the flag of Korea was absent. My heart was torn apart. ...

I went to the Korean pavilion at 11 o'clock in the morning and stood there until 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I cannot explain why and for what purpose I did this. But, I just could not turn my eyes away from the appalling appearance of the exhibit, the appearance of my country.

(Yun Chi-ho 1974:179–80; cited in Min Gyeong-bae 1991:295–6; translated)<sup>16</sup>

The experiences of visiting and participating in the above mentioned expositions led the Koreans to broaden their perception of art to include sculpture, ceramics and other crafts, and to realise the advances of Western technology and the urgent need to develop Korean craftsmanship, as was indicated by Yun Chi-ho's expression 'appalling appearance of the exhibit' (see the above citation). In 1899, the Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry (農商工部, DACI) planned to establish a school of applied arts (工藝美術學校), inviting French artists as instructors. This project was in cooperation with Collin de Plancy, the first French diplomatic envoy to Korea (Yi Gu-yeol 1992:127). Unfortunately, the project was not realised, although one French potter was dispatched from France as an instructor (Yi Gu-yeol 1992:127). Instead, a government technical training school (官立工業傳習所), with Japanese technical experts as instructors, was established later, in 1907 (Yi Gu-yeol 1992:148). In September 1902, DACI announced the prospectus of a Provisional Exposition Bureau (臨時

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<sup>16</sup> See Note 6.

博覽會事務所 規則). In order to foster artistic and technological mastery, the newly established Bureau acquired a variety of craft materials, displayed them and gave awards to the best artisans (Yi Gu-yeol 1992:126).

Having experienced the international expositions mentioned above, the Koreans now seemed to understand their material culture as something which could indicate a country's enlightenment and civilisation and show its industrial progress, and more importantly its wealth and power (see Yun Se-jin 1999:29): in a word, Korean society was about to move from a morally or spiritually centred world based on Confucianism to a material-centred world, and those Korean objects collected for display abroad and based on certain social parameters now formed a new category of *langue* in Korean society, with their ability to metamorphose – e.g. from objects in use/circulation into the icon of Korea (see Pearce 1994:2–3).

### **Korean material culture in the world of representation**

On 1 May 1851 the Great Exhibition, which was regarded by Prince Albert as 'a true text and a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived' (cited in Conant 1991:79), opened at the Crystal Palace in London. Among the countries of East Asia, China was indirectly represented by a collection of raw materials, animal and

vegetable materials, teas, porcelain, lacquer ware, paintings, elaborate carvings of every description, and so on. These Chinese materials were contributed by about forty exhibitors, e.g. H.M. Consul in Shanghar [sic] through the Board of Trade, and a number of British collectors and merchants (Great Exhibition 1851:1418–25).

One interesting aspect of this exhibition was that some Japanese objects, which seemed to be organised randomly, came together with Chinese materials<sup>17</sup> and were included in the Chinese section (Great Exhibition 1851:1418–25). In the *Official descriptive and illustrated catalogue of the Great Exhibition*, these Japanese objects were listed together with those from China under the title 'China' (Great Exhibition 1851:1418–25), although in the list their identity was clearly stated as 'Japanese'. The whole impression given by the catalogue was that only China was represented; for instance, Hobhouse, in his *1851 and the Crystal Palace*, wrote:

Japan, of course, was not represented at all, having not yet emerged from that impenetrable seclusion from which it pleased God in His wisdom to call her two years later.

(1937:134)

As a matter of fact, it was Korean material culture which was not included in the Crystal Palace exhibition: Korea was virtually unknown in the West.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, two Japanese screens accompanied a large number of Chinese materials contributed by Hewett & Co. (Great Exhibition 1851:1421).

### ***Early displays of Korean material culture***

It seems that the earliest exhibition of Korean objects goes back to the 1873 international exhibition held in Austria.<sup>18</sup> Ironically, these objects appeared to be displayed there by the Japanese. According to information provided by the Tokyo National Museum (TNM), in 1873 more than a hundred Korean objects<sup>19</sup> were transferred (引継) to the TNM from an exhibition (博覽會) held in Austria (奥国); these materials included fans, ink stones, brushes, inksticks, ruler, traditional Korean papers, musical instruments, textiles, and Goryeo and Joseon ceramics.

Other sources concerning the exhibition held in Austria in 1873 confirm that this exhibition must have been the 'Weltausstellung 1873 Wien' (Allwood 1977:180) held in Vienna. According to Conant (1991:82–3), it was in December 1871 that the Meiji government agreed to take part in the 1873 'Universal Exposition of Arts and Industry' in Vienna, the first international event in which the Japanese government had participated. As they were determined to make an impression on the world through the display of their materials in the exhibition, the Japanese government 'allotted from their meagre budget the large sum of 600,000 yen to finance [the exhibition]' (Conant 1991:83), and set up an 'Exposition Office' (博覽

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<sup>18</sup> This information stems from my data-gathering work at the Tokyo National Museum. In South Korea, it is believed that the first display of Korean objects abroad was at the 1883 Boston Foreign Exhibition.

<sup>19</sup> TG 1776 (3970) 高麗古磁器. 明治 6年 奥国博覽會掛引継; TK 809 (26878) 朝鮮紙. 明治 6年 奥国博覽會掛引継; TI 133 (2328) 胸式. 明治 6年 奥国博覽會掛引継 etc.

会事務局); Japanese officials spent a year selecting suitable items (TNM 1973:83–4).

Later, in 1878, some other Korean objects were also displayed by the Japanese, at the 'Exposition universelle' (Allwood 1977:68) held in Paris. According to the Korean collection list provided by the TNM, in 1878 some Korean objects were transferred to the museum from the exhibition held in France (佛国), e.g. a bottle<sup>20</sup> of the Joseon period for use in the tea ceremony. This bottle, which is now designated as '重文'<sup>21</sup> (an Important Cultural Property) of Japan, was transferred to the TNM after the exposition.

At this distance in time, and in the absence of information, it is not clear whether these objects were represented as Japanese or Korean; it is also not clear why the Japanese selected them for display. However, one thing is certain: the Korean objects were intended to play a political role, to 'make an impressive appearance' of Japan in order to help obtain recognition of Japanese status in the West.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> TG 344 茶壺. 明治 11年 佛国專覧会掛引継. 重文.

<sup>21</sup> Abbreviation of 重要文化財.

<sup>22</sup> According to Dr Pak Young-sook, these displays of Korean objects should be understood as the Japanese claim on Korean culture as part of their own. She added that in Melanie Trete's lecture entitled 'Myth Mother Money: the formation of national symbol in Meiji Japan' (held on 27 April 2005 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), it became apparent how Japan had prepared for the annexation of Korea in the Meiji period with the worship of Empress Jingu (神功) based on the legend of Empress Jingu's conquest of the southern part of the Korean peninsula: e.g. in a Japanese bank note of the Meiji period, Empress Jingu was portrayed as Queen Victoria in a sitting posture, overseeing the southern part of the Korean peninsula – yet at that time Korea was an independent state. This example might help to elucidate the nature of the Japanese displays of Korean objects in the West mentioned above.

### ***Korean material culture displayed in the USA***

In 1883, as mentioned above, King Gojong sent a group of Joseon delegates to the USA. They seemed to participate informally in the American Exhibition of Products, Arts and Manufactures of Foreign Nations (the so-called Boston Foreign Exhibition) through a display of some Korean ceramics (Byeon Seung-ung 1999:161; Kim Won-mo 1999:80–3; Kim Young-na 2000:86). According to Pyun Chong-hwa (1982:3, 9), this was the first Korean participation in an international exposition, based on his finding the two official catalogues of the 1883 Boston Foreign Exhibition: one of the catalogues contains the words 'COREA/FROM THE GOVERNMENT/1. Porcelain and china vases, jugs, etc.'; these Korean objects were displayed at the Washington Hall and Franklin Hall.

On 2 May 1891, Gustavus Goward visited Joseon in the interests of the World's Columbian Exposition (see Appendix 7) and invited it to the exposition (Lee Min-sik 2001:162). Later, in April 1892, Joseon was invited to the Ceremonies of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in October 1892 (see Appendix 8), but was unable to participate in the ceremonies (Lee Min-sik 2001:163). Apparently King Gojong understood the significance of international expositions at that time: on 3 May 1891, Joseon immediately accepted the US invitation (Lee Min-sik 1999:348). In February 1892, King Gojong appointed Horace N. Allen, Chargé d'Affaires

of the US Legation in Korea, as the Honorary Commissioner (Min Gyeong-bae 1991:292–3) and in March 1893 he appointed Jeong Gyeong-won<sup>23</sup> as the Commissioner-General of Korea: he even dispatched ten Korean musicians to the exposition<sup>24</sup> (Lee Min-sik 2001:162).

According to the official catalogue (Department of Publicity and Promotion 1893:190–2), a small but independent traditional Korean-style house was built in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, and Korea was represented by raw materials, vegetable materials, traditional Korean paper, porcelain, metalwork, men's and women's clothes, textiles, weapons, musical instruments, and so forth. Lee Min-sik (1999:376) notes that on 1 May 1893, the day of the opening of the exposition, when President Cleveland approached where the Koreans were positioned, the ten Korean musicians played Korean music. The Korean musicians left Chicago on 3 May 1893 to return to Korea (Lee Min-sik 1999:373).

In a Joseon court record,<sup>25</sup> it is stated that after the exposition Jeong Gyeong-won reported to the King: that the Korean exhibit had been so popular neither he nor his secretary could satisfy verbally all the people who were interested in the Korean materials on display, so they had

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<sup>23</sup> 정경원 (1851–98) (Lee Min-sik 1999:348).

<sup>24</sup> Concerning these Korean musicians, it seems that there was a miscommunication between the Korean and the US sides. After their arrival in Chicago, Jeong Gyeong-won found that the musicians were not authorised to participate in the Exposition, so he had to obtain US permission for them to do so (Lee Min-sik 1999:368–9).

<sup>25</sup> *Seungjeongwonilgi* (承政院日記), dated 9 November in the 30th year of Gojong's reign (1893) according to the lunar calendar.



labelled all the exhibits (Minjokmunhwa-chujinhoe 2002:16, 38).

Jeong Gyeong-won's report gave a completely different view to the negative account of Yun Chi-ho (see also page 74) who recorded that:

**24th.** [September] Chicago Illinois.

...

2. Spent two days and two nights in the Fair. The magnificence of the buildings needs no poor description. The Chinese exhibit is very stupid. Except in ivory-carving, fineness or delicacy is not a part of the Chinese skill. Such a miserable grotesqueness in their China paintings! The Japanese exhibit is praised by everybody. Well may a Japanese be proud. ... Korea has a corner where are found the crude productions of the Korean skill or rather dullness. While I could not help blushing at the poverty of Korean arts etc. the sight of the Korean flags<sup>26</sup> had a strong attraction to me.

(Yun Chi-ho 1974:168–9)

Another negative account is found in an article written by an American journalist John A. Cockerill in *the New York Herald* dated 22 December 1895. Cockerill criticised the quality of the Korean exhibits: 'The king hastily knocked together a rather inexpensive collection of Korean junk and shipped it off to Chicago' (cited in Harrington 1966:147). In an official letter written by French consul in Seoul<sup>27</sup> to the *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères* in Paris, dated 7 May 1893, it is stated that the Korean materials displayed at the 1893 Chicago Exposition did not warrant

<sup>26</sup> The location of these 'Corean' flags seems to be different from the location of the flag which Yun Chi-ho mentioned in his diary of 28 September (see page 74).

<sup>27</sup> This must be Victor Collin de Plancy.

serious consideration, as the objects had been collected hastily and carelessly (NIKH 2001:232). It may be interesting to look at the size of the exhibit space, which partly provides an insight into Yun Chi-ho's, Cockerill's and the French consul's accounts: Korea was allocated a space of 899 square feet, while China was allocated 6,390 and Japan 39,542 (Kim Young-na 2000:89).

While the Japanese participated in about thirty-six of the eighty-eight international expositions between 1862 to 1910, using them as a way to acquire the most diverse and up-to-date industrial and technological developments, to illustrate their own artistic and technical achievement, and to foster their trade (Conant 1991:79), Joseon appeared to participate in the 1893 exposition in order to introduce Korea to the world as an independent state having a unique culture: that is, as a convenient means of helping to carve out a position in the world. According to Kim Young-na (2000:90), next to the map of Korea the Korean officials attached a paper which stated that Joseon was an independent country, not a part of China, that Joseon people did not speak Chinese, and that the Joseon language differed from Chinese and Japanese. Jeong Gyeong-won also records his personal conversation with an American<sup>28</sup> who questioned how one could say Korea was as a state desiring to be independent while using the characters of Qing (i.e. Chinese characters) rather than using Korean

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<sup>28</sup> He obviously understood Korea to be a state which belonged to China.

characters.<sup>29</sup> Jeong Gyeong-won answered that Qing did not create those Chinese characters, and thus it was irrelevant to use them as an example, and asked the American whether, if people considered the use of Chinese characters in Korea as a sign of belonging to China, one could say that the USA had sovereign rights, as the USA used English, the language of Britain, used also by the British vassal states (Lee Min-sik 1999:372–3).

After the exposition, some of the Korean materials were transferred to the Field Museum, the Peabody Essex Museum, the Smithsonian Museum and other institutions in the USA (Kim Kwang-on 1995:60–1; Kim Young-na 2000:92; Min Gyeong-bae 1991:294; Yi Gu-yeol 1992:160).

### ***Korean material culture and France***

The first treaty between France and Korea was signed in 1886 (Uh Cheol-gu 2000:316). Three years later, at the time of the Exposition Universelle held in Paris, the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro exhibited the Korean objects acquired by a wealthy Parisian, Charles Varat (1843–93), who had undertaken an expedition to Joseon in 1888 on behalf of the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts (Cambon 1994:7; Musée Guimet 2001:20).

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<sup>29</sup> At that time, Korean intellectuals preferred to use Chinese characters for writing but spoke the Korean language. The use of Chinese characters can be understood as analogous to the use of Latin in the West.

In 1893, several galleries on the second floor of the Musée Guimet (MG) were given over to an exhibition of Varat's Joseon collection (Musée Guimet 2001:7). The most noticeable aspect of this event was the cooperation between a Frenchman, Varat, and a person from Joseon, Hong Jong-ou.<sup>30</sup> For the classification and registration (i.e. the inventory) of the Joseon objects, Hong Jong-ou was appointed as a 'collaborateur étranger' by the MG in 1891; he completed the identification cards in *han-geul* (Korean script) with French transcriptions (Musée Guimet 2001:20–1). He was also involved in the translation of a Korean novel and a guide book in French on Korean cultural aspects which were published in the *Annales du Musée Guimet*: e.g. *Le Bois Sec Refleur* in 1893 and *Guide pour rendre propice l'étoile qui garde chaque homme* in 1897.

In 1894, the MG allocated a gallery on the second floor of the museum to the Korean collection acquired by Varat, and published a catalogue (Cambon 1994:7). Hong Jong-ou helped Varat in the creation of this gallery, which can be said to have been the first Korean gallery in a European museum (Cambon 1994:8).

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<sup>30</sup> 홍종우 (1854–94), a politician and Confucian with a Catholic education, arrived in Paris in December 1890 to learn about European civilisation for the benefit of Joseon. Régamey (1894:264) noted that nothing offended Hong Jong-ou more during his stay in Paris than being taken for a Chinese; he left there in July 1893 (Régamey 1894:268), and the following year assassinated a pro-Japanese Korean politician, Kim Ok-gyun (김옥균), in Shanghai (where an accident of history brought about his arrest by the British police). French sympathy with the motive behind the assassination was made clear in several articles which appeared at the time, such as *La guerre de Corée* by Chevannes, published in *La Revue de Paris* in 1894, and *Mélanges: un assassin politique* by Régamey, published in *T'oung pao* (通報) in the same year.

In 1900, the Korean court participated, for the second time, in an international exhibition, the Paris Exposition universelle. It seems that the French government invited Joseon to their 1900 Paris Exposition in early 1893. In May 1893, at the time of the Chicago Exposition, the French consul in Seoul wrote a letter to the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères asking for some catalogues with illustrations concerning the 1889 Exposition in Paris (see Note 7) in order to encourage the participation of the Joseon court in the 1900 Paris Exposition (NIKH 2001:232). However, it seems that the Joseon court made no comments on the matter, as another French official letter, dated 22 June 1894 (see Note 8), was sent to the Joseon court to persuade them to participate in the Exposition (NIKH 2001:234). It was in January 1896 that the Joseon court eventually accepted this invitation. To understand the nature of the delayed answer and the eventual acceptance of Joseon, it is worth noting that the Korean peninsula had been a battlefield at the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and that the Queen of Joseon<sup>31</sup> had been assassinated by the Japanese in October 1895. It was in these historical circumstances that Joseon accepted the invitation.

At that time, Joseon's sovereignty was gravely threatened by Japanese aggression, and in 1897, as a way of maintaining that sovereignty, King Gojong declared that Joseon was to become the Daehan Empire (대한제국)

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<sup>31</sup> Queen Min (민비) attempted to restrain the Japanese political advance in Joseon by using other foreign powers (NIKH 1999a:178).

and that he was to be named the Emperor Gwangmu: the Koreans of the time believed that a status such as 'empire' would protect the autonomy of their state (Yi Min-won 1999:13–29). As was stated in a letter by Collin de Plancy, Consul de France in Seoul, written on 3 June 1898 at the suggestion of Roulina, Consul général de Corée in Paris, Emperor Gwangmu appointed Baron Delort de Gléon<sup>32</sup> to be Commissaire général de la Corée in charge of the Daehan Empire's section of the exposition (NIKH 2001:248). As can be seen in the convention signed between Alfred Picard, Commissaire général de l'Exposition universelle de 1900, and Baron Delort de Gléon, the Daehan Empire attempted to impress the world by the construction of a Korean pavilion (see Appendix 9), in Korean style and displaying a range of the Daehan Empire's products and art objects, and also a reproduction of a road in Jemulpo (today called Incheon) with a fairground. They also envisaged bringing some artisans, who would demonstrate their craft to the public, and even some acrobats, and to organise some Korean ceremonies and festivals to animate the Korean section (NIKH 2001:265). Unfortunately, the sudden death of Baron Delort de Gléon in November 1899 brought a large-scale curtailment to the project (NIKH 2001:275): e.g. the display space reserved for the Daehan Empire was reduced, and the structures built on the site were removed (NIKH 2001:282). Despite this unfortunate event, the Daehan Empire expressed its intention of participating in the exposition.

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<sup>32</sup> He expressed his financial support for the section of the Daehan Empire.

A Korean pavilion (see Illustration 19) was built in a separated area, in the middle of the Champ de Mars. The Korean materials on display, organised by the Daehan Empire, with some loaned by Collin de Plancy, French ambassador to Seoul, were ceramics, textiles, lacquer work, metalwork, books printed with mobile metal characters, etc. (*Hankook Ilbo*, 26 October 1993; Yi Gu-yeol 1992:146). It is said that they were displayed to illustrate the potential wealth of the Daehan Empire and 'the exchanges possible within the framework of a Franco-Korean cooperation' (Musée Guimet 2001:15).



**Illustration 19** Korean pavilion. Source:  
*Hankook Ilbo* (26 October 1993)

As stated in the MG's record, some of the Korean materials on display, such as Buddhist paintings and other religious objects, were donated to

the MG.<sup>33</sup> In contrast with the Daehan Empire's effort to introduce the empire to the world, in the US pavilion, the portraits of the Emperor Gwangmu and of Min Sang-ho were displayed in the section of 'Public or Private Movements for the Welfare of the People' as an ethnological example (Kim Young-na 2000:96; Yi Gu-yeol 1992:136). It seems necessary to note that these portraits had been drawn by Hubert Vos<sup>34</sup> during his visit to Korea.

It is worth noting that in 1902 and 1903 some Korean materials were displayed in an exhibition in Tonkin (now Hanoi). Allwood (1977:109) says that in 1902–1903 there was an exhibition there, in what was then French Indo-China, in which the French organised a display of the products, agriculture and industries of their Far Eastern colonies. The exhibition also exhibited materials from China, Korea, Japan, Siam and the Philippines, and included others from the French colonies in Africa. To understand the nature of the display of Korean materials, it may be worth quoting Allwood (1977:109): 'It even boasted a specially-built Palais des Beaux-Arts ...'. The Korean material displayed was the Korean-French dictionary produced by French priests; other materials illustrating the French influence on Korea, such as the situation of the French school in Korea and the system for postal services recommended by French advisors and adopted in Korea; Korean crafts, such as furniture and armour; and

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<sup>33</sup> See MG 5706 and MG 15749 in the MG's records.

<sup>34</sup> (1855–1935), American painter (Jo Chang-su 1985:105).



photographs of Korea, and so forth (*Hankook Ilbo*, 26 October 1993).

### ***The first display of Korean material culture in Britain***



**Illustration 20** Korean pavilion. Source:  
*Official Report of the Japan-British  
Exhibition 1910* (1911)

In 1910, Imre Kiraleý, Commissioner-General of the Japan-British Exhibition, wrote in the *Official Report of the Japan-British Exhibition 1910*:

The Western World had long since learnt to admire Japan, her wonderful people with their remarkable energy, talents, and innate appreciation for Art in its highest and widest manifestations, and it was universally felt that the time had arrived for the realisation of a project [for] closer and more intimate contact with each other. Acting on this universal feeling, I, early in 1906, approached Count Mutsu (the then First Secretary of the Imperial Japanese Embassy in London) and laid before him a scheme that should, at any rate to some extent, help to bring the two nations to a fuller knowledge and understanding of one another.

(1911:65)

From May to October 1910, the Japan-British Exhibition was held at the White City, in Shepherd's Bush, London. This exhibition was divided into two sections, one Japanese, one British.

Together with those from Formosa, Kwantung and Manchuria, Korean materials were displayed in the Palace of the Orient (see Illustration 20). At the time when the exhibition began, Korea (i.e. the Daehan Empire) was a Japanese protectorate; it was in August 1910 that the Daehan Empire was eventually annexed by Japan.

According to the official report, Korean materials were located opposite those from Manchuria. The display was prepared by the Residency-General of Japan in Korea. The materials displayed were listed in the report:

The large model of Korea and the array of models of Korean dwelling-houses attracted much attention, and fine specimens of earthenware, porcelain, and metal-work of various kinds, the armour, bows, arrows, and swords used by the Koreans, the collection of bamboo boxes, cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, silver-ware, brass-ware, iron-ware inlaid with silver, were exquisite and lovely examples of the craftsman's art. Agricultural products were also represented, and included rice, wheat, barley, hemp, beans, silk culture, &c. There was also a good display of ores and minerals, specimens of wood, &c.

*(Official Report of the Japan-British Exhibition 1910, 1911:103)*

In the catalogue, it was clearly stated that the Palace of the Orient 'showed what the Japanese Government have accomplished in the development of

Formosa, Korea, and Manchuria'. This was well illustrated in the catalogue:

A part of the building was enclosed by a wall pierced by a gateway constructed in the style of Korean architecture. Here in this enclosure the Residency General of Japan in Korea presented a large collection of exhibits representative of the development of that peninsula. In the centre there was a topographical map of the peninsula, and along the wall there were exhibits embracing all the agricultural products of the country, and specimens of manufactured articles. ... By aid of these the great progress that has been made since the country first came under the influence of Japan was made clear.

*(Official Report of the Japan-British Exhibition 1910, 1911:291)*

The Korean materials became evidence for the Japanese to proclaim 'the progress made under Japanese auspices' (*Official Report of the Japan-British Exhibition 1910, 1911:103*). After the exhibition, Etsuzo Ogita, who was Secretary of the Residency-General of Korea, donated the Korean materials displayed at the exhibition to the British Museum.

In the above four expositions, in 1873, 1893, 1900 and 1905, there can be clearly detected two aspects of the early representations of Korean material culture conceived by the Japanese, the Americans and the French, who prepared the expositions in question (see Figure 3). For the Japanese, it seems that Korean material culture was a political tool to obtain recognition of Japan by the West as a civilised country, with a status equal to that of other, Western, imperial powers.

For America and France, the Korean materials on display were a medium for disseminating knowledge and evidence of a culture unknown to their people.

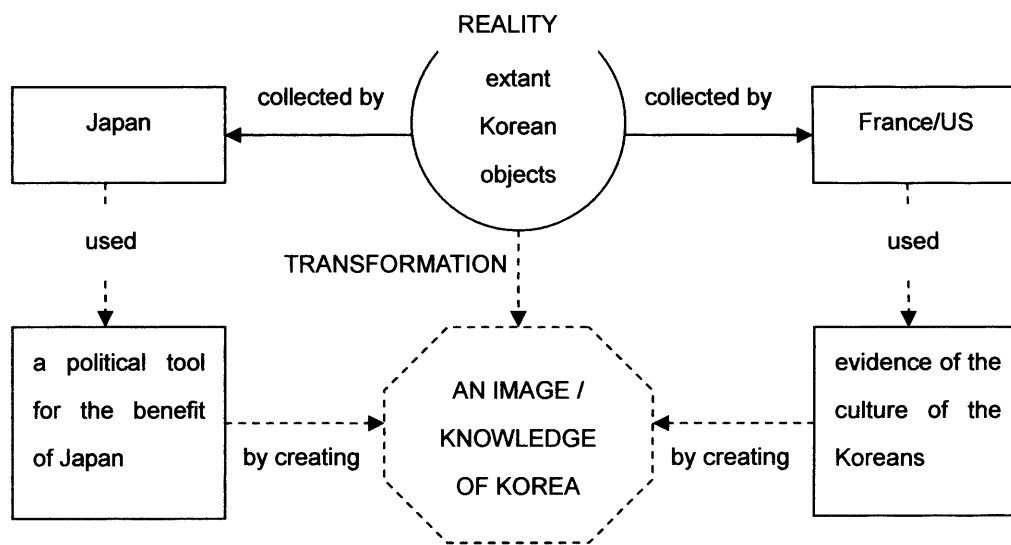


**Figure 3** Representation of the Japanese and French/US relationships with Korean material

## **Emergence of the first exposition and museum in Korea**

With Korea failing in its attempts to remain neutral and in its other efforts to keep its autonomy, the Korean peninsula became a battlefield in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, and in 1905 the Daehan Empire became a Japanese protectorate. In 1907, to counter Japanese aggression, Emperor Gwangmu secretly sent three envoys to The Hague to arouse favourable Western public opinion in a bid to preserve the independence of his Empire (Yu Yeong-ryeol 1999:311). Unfortunately, this failed: none of the Western countries made any effort to listen to them. The outcome of this, in July 1907, was that the Japanese forced Emperor Gwangmu to abdicate the throne in favour of his son (Yi Yun-sang 1999:328). It was during this time of turmoil that the first national exposition and the first museum emerged in the Korean peninsula.

### ***The Gyeongseong Exposition***

The Gyeongseong Exposition<sup>35</sup> was held in Seoul from 1 September to 15 November 1907. As its name denotes, this exposition was controlled by the Japanese: 'Gyeongseong' is the Japanese name for Seoul (while Koreans of the time would have used 'Hanseong' or 'Hwangseong').<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 경성박람회 (京城博覽會).

<sup>36</sup> See the titles of the two newspapers published at the time, *Hanseongsunbo* (한성순보,

According to Mok Soo-hyun (2000:18), the main organiser was Japanese, preparation for the exposition beginning in early August 1907. Given the lack of information, it is difficult to gain a genuine insight into this exposition, but interestingly it coincided with the forced abdication of Emperor Gwangmu in favour of his son, Emperor Yung-hi (later renamed Sunjong). Furthermore, considering the national scale of this exposition, the lack of detailed records in either *Gojongsilrok* (高宗實錄, 'Records of the reign of King Gojong') or *Sunjongsilrok* (純宗實錄, 'Records of the reign of King Sunjong') characterises its nature: while it might have provided an illusion of modernisation to the public, this merely obscured the unstable political situation caused by the Japanese aggression. It may be worth noting another event which probably explains the hidden Japanese intention for this exposition. In 1907, in the same year that the Gyeongseong Exposition was held in Seoul, the Tokyo Exposition (東京勸業博覽會) was held. At that time, a Korean woman was displayed in the Korean Pavilion, and this led a Korean student in Japan to publish an article in *Taegeukhakbo* treating the event as a disgrace to Korea and her people (Cheon Min-jeong 2003:13–4).

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'Hanseong') and *Hwangseongsinmun* (황성신문, 'Hwangseong').

### ***The Changdeokkung or Yiwangga Museum***<sup>37</sup>

In September 1908, a bureau, Eowonsamuguk (御苑事務局) was set up in order to establish a zoo, a botanic garden and a museum at Changgyeonggung (창경궁, Changgyeong Palace) in Seoul (Lee Nan-young 1996:82). Together with the zoo and the botanic garden, the museum was opened to the public in November 1909. Two years later, in 1911, the museum's main building was built (Lee Nan-young 1972:60; see Illustration 21). At the time of December 1912, the museum's collection was estimated to include 12,230 objects, which comprised Buddhist materials, paintings, ceramics and so on (Komiya 1912:Preface).

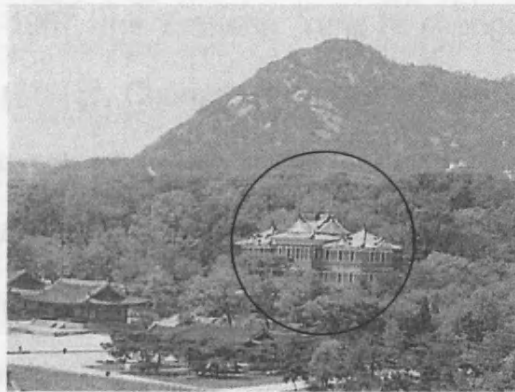


**Illustration 21** Yiwangga Museum. Source: Mun Yeong-bin (1991:11)

In Europe, many of the great royal art collections were turned into public

<sup>37</sup> 이왕가박물관 (李王家博物館, Royal Yi Household Museum).

museums by royalty itself (Pearce 1992:99); unfortunately, this was not the case here. In truth, the establishment of the first zoo, botanic garden and museum in Korea in the modern sense was proposed, in 1907, by a Japanese, Komiya Sabomatsu (小宮三保松)<sup>38</sup> (Komiya 1912:Preface), and under the leadership of Japanese such as Suematsu Kumahiko (末松熊彦) the museum acquired grave goods<sup>39</sup> looted by Japanese grave robbers<sup>40</sup> (Lee Nan-young 1996:82). According to Komiya (1912:Preface), the zoo, the botanic garden and the museum were designed to provide for the leisure activities of the young Emperor Yung-hi who was isolated from his father. This seems to have been a good pretext to hide a political move on the part of the Japanese.

In the winter of 1907, the Emperor Yung-hi changed his residence to Changdeokgung (창덕궁, Changdeok Palace), from Gyeongungung (경운궁, Gyeongun Palace), where his father resided (see Illustration 22). This measure of isolation from his father was taken by the Japanese in order to prevent the political intervention of his father, who was forced by the Japanese to abdicate his throne to his son, i.e. Emperor Yung-hi (Gim Sun-il 1991:82).

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<sup>38</sup> Komiya was Vice-Minister of the Department of the Royal Household from 1908 to 1910, and after the annexation of the Daehan Empire he was Vice-Minister of the Department of the Royal Yi Household (李王職次官) (Mok Soo-hyun 2000:21).

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Goryeo porcelain, brassware and so on.

<sup>40</sup> At that time, Japanese grave robbers ravaged almost all the tombs in Korea (Lee Nan-young 1996:82).



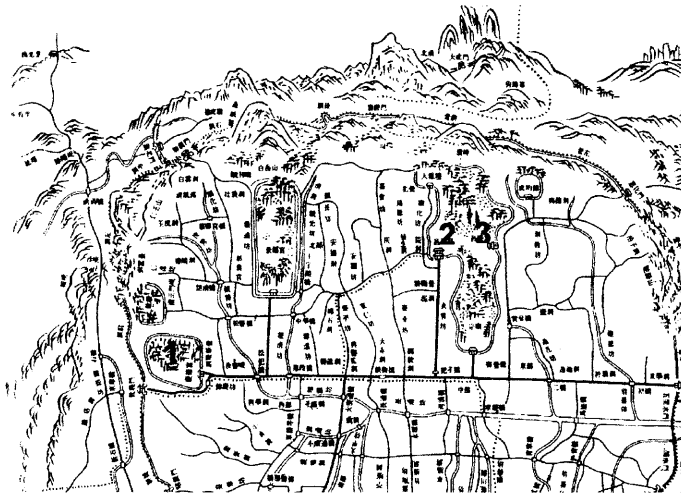


**Illustration 22** Location of the Gyeongun Palace (1), the Changdeok Palace (2) and the Changgyeong Palace (3).  
Source: Mun Yeong-bin (1991:9)

In order to understand the nature of this museum, it is worth looking at its location. For Korean people at that time, the palace and the emperor were together the visible symbol of nationhood. One of the Japanese long-term plans for colonisation was the converting of all palaces into parks (Gim Sun-il 1991:86–7), to detract from the Emperor's potential power to unify the country against Japan. This hidden Japanese intention was also captured well in the name of the museum: 'Yiwangga' which means 'Royal Yi family', used to degrade the dignity of the royal family in relation to the Japanese Emperor.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, none of the Korean people dared to call their royal family the 'Yi family'. In this context, the first museum in

<sup>41</sup> At the time of the opening of the museum, no official name was attached to the museum (Song Ki-hyung 1999:174). According to Hong sun-min (1999:231), the museum was known as 'the Changdeok Palace Museum', although it was situated in the Changgyeong Palace: this was due to the Korean people's understanding of the latter palace as a subordinate palace to the former. Thus the name 'Yiwangga Museum' was probably a Japanese creation.

Japan was called the Museum of the Ministry of Education at the time of its establishment, and renamed the Imperial Museum in 1889, and the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum in 1900 (TNM 2001:1). In this it is possible to see the malicious intent of Japan. To destroy the dignity of the Korean royal family, the museum was built after a zoo and a botanical garden in the Changgyeong Palace, near the Changdeok Palace, where Emperor Yung-hi resided (see Illustration 22), requiring him to confine his activities to indulging in the pleasure of this new environment (Mun Yeong-bin 1991:42).

Compared with this first museum in Korea, the first in Japan was established in 1872 in a Confucian temple, to encourage the country's industry (Yanashita 1995:2), instead of building it in a palace with a collection of curiosities and grave goods to 'divert the attention of Emperor Yung-hi away from the fate of his empire' (Kim Jong-hyuk 1990:8), as the Japanese were to do in Korea. The majority of the staff of the Royal Yi Household Museum were Japanese (Mok Soo-hyun 2000:22), another clear illustration of the way the museum was established as part of a political strategy for the future colonisation of Korea.

### **Western encounters with Korea and its material culture**

After his visit to South Korea in 1981, Lévi-Strauss expressed his view on the cultural aspects of Korea (see page 1): 'I was amazed by the wealth of relics from a very ancient civilisation. ... Korea is one of the richest countries in historical treasures.' Unfortunately, his view was not shared by the majority of Western people who visited Joseon (1392–1897) or the Daehan Empire (1897–1910).

After the opening of Joseon to Western people following the treaty signed with America in 1882, many of them questioned 'the very existence of Korean art' (Eckardt 1929:vii). In 1892, Charles Varat, whose Korean collection forms the backbone of the Musée Guimet, recalled that: 'Everyone kept telling me everywhere, in Europe, in America, in Japan and even in China, that Korea is a mediocre country from the point of view of ethnography' (Cambon 1996:7; Varat 2001:81; translated) According to Isabella Bird (1897:18), who visited Joseon in 1894, 'The arts are *nil* [in Joseon].'

It appears that while this period can be seen as the beginning of the construction of a genuine understanding of Korea and its culture, at the same time it can be understood, ironically, as the beginning of a distortion of that Korean culture: some Western people began to treat Korea merely as a cultural bridge between China and Japan, or as a pale imitation of

Chinese culture. The dominant belief in South Korea is that these negative notions of Korean culture were instigated by Japanese colonial scholars, and this is partly true. However, this chapter illustrates another aspect of the formation of such prejudice on the part of Western people towards Korean culture, which had already appeared during this period.

In 1896, in his book *Oriental Ceramic Art: Illustrated by Examples from the Collection of W. T. Walters*, Stephen W. Bushell – who stayed for twenty-five years in China as physician to Her Britannic Majesty's legation in Peking, who was a well known sinologist, and whose greatest interest was the study of Chinese ceramics – wrote:

Korea is situated midway between China and Japan, and derives its chief importance from having been the medium of the introduction of the arts and sciences from the mainland of Asia into the Japanese islands.

(1896:333)

And he continues:

[Concerning ceramic art] Korea would seem, however, merely to have played the part of an intermediary, and to have carried on to Japan the knowledge of technical points which it had derived from China in the course of its traffic with the latter country.

(1896:333)

Furthermore, he added:

Korea has only recently been thrown open, but the country has been thoroughly explored during the last few years, and it is now known that no

artistic pottery is produced there in the present day, and no indisputable evidence of any original skill in former times has been discovered.

(1896:333)

Finally, he concluded the chapter designed to explore Korean ceramics with:

Japan certainly owes many of the technical methods of the different varieties of the old Satsuma faïence to Korea, and Korean potters were the first instructors in the early productions of most of its porcelain kilns, but the stroke of genius which converted a manual handicraft into a new branch of art was due entirely to the innate artistic faculty of the Japanese themselves. There is no evidence of anything of the kind in Korea.

(1896:339)

What are the factors behind such prejudice about Korean ceramics – which in fact is the area that today, among all Korean material culture, has received the most attention outside the Korean peninsula?

Bushell's view may be compared with that of Sir Augustus W. Franks (1826–97), from 1866 to 1896 Keeper of the Department of Antiquities and Ethnography in the BM, who wrote in a letter to Homer B. Hulbert in July 1887:

Our funds are also limited especially this year, when the annual grant has been reduced to nearly one half. There is one matter, however, in which you might assist the Museum as well as myself. I have given to the museum my extensive collection of oriental pottery, in which are a few pieces which I believe to be Corean. I should like to make the collection more complete, and I should be willing to expend a sum not exceeding £40 for this purpose out of my own pocket. I should wish of course to

obtain very good and old specimens, the Korean origin of which is undoubted. ... England has been deluged with some dreadful modern Japanese pottery which is sold as Korean but seems to have been imported there to supply the demand. My friend Mr Colbourne Baker has shewn (sic) me two pieces which he believes to be Korean, but one of which seems to me to be of Chinese work and the other Japanese.

(cited in Portal 1995:44)

The above examples capture well two features of the period: a step forward in the understanding of Korean culture, and the distortion of that understanding. The irony is that it was from Franks himself that William Thompson Walters – who was the first American to create a collection of Oriental ceramics, and who needed someone, in his words, ‘residing in China, well versed in the subject and well acquainted with the Chinese language, [who] has obtained access to the stores of native collectors’ for his collection – heard indirectly of Bushell as a sinologist: the outcome was Bushell’s book referred to above (Laffan 1896:iii–iv).

Returning to the main point, what is the hidden context for such contradictory sets of value judgements about Korean ceramics? The first factor in this could be the availability of Korean objects in Europe (see Figure 4).

|      | BM | V&A | MG | TNM |      | BM | V&A | MG | TNM |
|------|----|-----|----|-----|------|----|-----|----|-----|
| 1872 |    |     |    | A   | 1895 | A  |     |    |     |
| 1873 |    |     |    | D   | 1896 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1874 |    |     |    | A   | 1897 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1875 |    |     |    | A   | 1898 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1876 |    |     |    | A   | 1899 | A  |     | A  | A   |
| 1877 |    |     |    | A   | 1900 | A  |     |    | A   |
| 1878 |    | A   |    | A   | 1901 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1879 |    |     |    | A   | 1902 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1881 | A  |     |    |     | 1903 |    |     | A  | A   |
| 1882 |    |     |    | A   | 1905 | C  | A   |    | A   |
| 1883 | A  |     |    | A   | 1906 |    | A   |    | C   |
| 1884 | A  |     |    | A   | 1907 |    |     | A  | F   |
| 1885 |    |     |    | A   | 1908 |    |     |    | A   |
| 1886 | A  |     |    | D   | 1909 | A  | A   |    | D   |
| 1888 | A  | B   | E  | A   | 1910 | C  | A   | A  | A   |
| 1889 | A  |     |    | A   |      |    |     |    |     |
| 1890 |    |     | A  |     |      |    |     |    |     |
| 1891 | A  |     | A  |     |      |    |     |    |     |
| 1892 | A  |     |    | A   |      |    |     |    |     |
| 1893 | A  |     | C  | A   |      |    |     |    |     |
| 1894 | A  |     | A  | A   |      |    |     |    |     |

A : object entered  
 B : more than 20 objects  
 C : more than 50 objects  
 D : more than 100 objects  
 E : more than 200 objects  
 F : more than 300 objects

**Figure 4** Acquisition up to 1910

As an example, the inventory of the V&A seems to show that the first Chinese and Japanese objects entered in 1852, but in the case of Korea it was not until 1888 that a group of Korean objects were donated to the museum by Thomas Watters, who was, according to the museum documents, 'Consul in China and acting Consul General in Corea' (Nominal file: Thomas Watters [MA/1/W]). In fact, in 1878 an iron helmet<sup>42</sup> decorated with silver inlay had come to the V&A, but this object was registered as Japanese. At that time, therefore, no object representing Korea was in the museum before 1888.

<sup>42</sup> According to Liz Wilkinson of the V&A, the helmet may be Chinese, although she affirms that the use of silver inlay decoration on the helmet was used extensively in Korea (Wilkinson 2003:242–3).

For a more concrete idea concerning the availability in Europe of objects for reference during the period in question, another example can be found at the MG. The Chinese jades in the Mazarin collection acquired in the seventeenth century, and Marie-Antoinette's Japanese lacquerware acquired in the eighteenth century, are considered the first objects from China and Japan to enter the MG (Musée Guimet 2001:34). It was not until 1888 that Korean materials were acquired by Charles Varat (1843–93), later to be transferred to the MG: Korean objects appeared in Europe about one or two centuries later than those from China or Japan. This illustrates the lack of sufficient materials at that time to provide some idea of Korea and to promote interest in its culture. It should be remembered that the Korean peninsula was inaccessible to Western people until 1882. Furthermore, even after the peninsula was accessible to them, no relevant scholarship or reference works existed in the West until the Korean tombs were opened.

Given this dearth of scholarship and reference works, it is not surprising that four paintings<sup>43</sup> which were acquired by the BM in 1881, and can be understood as the first Korean objects to enter the museum, were identified as Chinese: originally they were part of a collection of Japanese and Chinese paintings formed by Dr W. Anderson, a physician to the British Embassy in Japan (P.4818).

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<sup>43</sup> Three paintings of landscape and orchids (1881,1210,0.224–226) and a painting of a Korean nobleman (1881,1210,0.227).



A letter written by Franks to Edward A. Bond, dated 8 November 1881, shows clearly the knowledge of Chinese and Japanese – but not Korean – material culture which was available in Europe during this period:

The collection [of Dr W. Anderson] has not been formed entirely from an artistic point of view, the object being to illustrate the productions of each school and to obtain signed specimens off all the principal artists. It places the position of Japanese art in quite a different light from that usually entertained, and shows that some of the merits which are claimed for it are not of native growth, but derived from the ancient Chinese school, of which hardly any specimens are to be found in this country. Such specimens it would be hopeless to expect to obtain from China, as they are in that country of excessive rarity, and highly valued by native collectors. ... The supply must, however, be very limited, and in a few years it will not be possible to obtain such examples. ...; but among the smaller drawings are very many specimens which would sell, in this country, and still more in Paris ...

Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising to find many Western people interpreting Korean material culture through their knowledge of Chinese and Japanese materials: for instance, Carles, H.M. Vice-Consul in Shanghai and earlier in Korea, describes a Korean house in his book *Life in Corea* as follows:

The house consisted of several detached buildings, of an architecture half Chinese, half Japanese, each in its own courtyard, and generally facing south. The best of them was raised a couple of feet above the ground, and had an open balcony running along its front, somewhat after the fashion of a stage at a Chinese country theatre.

(1888:23)

During this period, much Korean material culture seems to have been collected by Western collectors in conjunction with Chinese and Japanese objects. Sometimes they did not even know they had acquired a Korean object; such was the case of Anderson at the BM.

However, it should not be forgotten that there were some Western collectors of Chinese and Japanese objects who did turn their attention to Korean objects: for instance, William Gowland (1842–1927), Emeritus Professor of Metallurgy in the Royal School of Mines in London, stayed in Japan from 1872 to 1888, having been invited there to work for the Japanese government at the new Imperial Mint at Osaka. He was mainly interested in the archaeology of ancient Japan, especially the dolmens of the Kofun period, and his collection included over three hundred items from the tombs. This was later acquired by Sir A.W. Franks for the BM. At that time, Gowland was intrigued by the history of the early rulers and Emperors in Japan, which reveals the relationship between Japan and Korea, and by the similarity between Japanese and Korean ritual grave goods, both pottery and metalwork. He therefore visited Korea to acquire a number of comparative Korean pieces for his eventual return to England. Meanwhile, the question of Korean immigration and the ancestry of the occupants of the Kofun (who were probably Koreans) is currently the subject of hot debate among historians (Harris 1996:7).

Concerning the dominant prejudice about Korean material culture, 'a pale

imitation of Chinese art', it may be interesting to look at the following example. In 1900, Homer B. Hulbert published an article to refute one entitled 'China's Influence upon Korea' by the Reverend James S. Gale, written earlier but published in the same journal as Hulbert's article; Gale left the impression that 'there is nothing in Korean society that is not dominated by Chinese ideas'. Hulbert counter-argued:

If this [that there is nothing in Korean society that is not dominated by Chinese ideas] is true, we have in Korea a condition of affairs that must be acknowledged to be unique; for Korea is a nation of over twelve million people who have preserved a distinct national life for more than two thousand years, and it would be strange indeed if there remained in the Peninsula nothing that is peculiarly and distinctively Korean.

(1900:25)

Unfortunately, Gale was not alone in holding such prejudices. Isabella Bird (whose book *Korea and Her Neighbours*<sup>44</sup> is today considered, among Western people interested in Korea, a reliable account of Korea during the late nineteenth century) shared Gale's view: 'Chinese influence in government, law, education, etiquette, social relations, and morals is predominant. In all these respects Korea is but a feeble reflection of her powerful neighbour ...' (1897:22).

When Western people visited Joseon or the Daehan Empire during the

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<sup>44</sup> This book is frequently cited as a historical and cultural source providing information on Korea and both Jane Portal and Pierre Cambon, who are keepers in charge of the Korean collection at the BM and the MG respectively, have mentioned this book.

period in question, they saw that poverty was serious and widespread in the peninsula. This was the result of the monopolisation of political power in the hands of a succession of royal in-law families from 1800 to 1864. Heungseon Daewongun<sup>45</sup> (the Prince Regent Heungseon) seemed to have succeeded in ending this monopoly by putting his son on the throne in 1864, but his attempt soon failed when his daughter-in-law seized power as a result of his forced retirement from the Court in 1873, when the reign of his son, King Gojong, began.

In the eyes of Western people who visited Korea during this period, every aspect of Korean society was measured by the standard of 'progress'. Korea was thus categorised as a 'backward' country which deserved to be under a civilised Japanese protector<sup>46</sup> (Bird 1897). Furthermore, their rough idea of Chinese or Japanese culture seemed to affect their view on that of Korean. Bearing these factors in mind, it is not surprising to see their amateurish approaches, which have distorted views of Korea and produced the negative image of Korea as 'backward' which helped to create such prejudices. These examples have captured well other factors in the formation of distorted views of Korea and its culture, which unfortunately still to some extent prevail today.

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<sup>45</sup> 흥성대원군 (r. 1864–73) (NIKH 2000a:154).

<sup>46</sup> Later, Bird changed her view to one suggesting that the Koreans would be placed under Russia: 'I felt Korea to be hopeless, helpless, pitiable, piteous, a mere shuttlecock of certain great powers, and that there is no hope for her population of twelve or fourteen millions, unless it is taken in hand by Russia ...' (1897:330).

## Being Korean under the Japanese power



The long, harsh and painful history of Chosen [Korea] is expressed in their art as hidden loneliness and sadness. In their art, there is always a sad beauty and loneliness that brings people to tears. When I look at it, I cannot control the emotion that fills my heart. Where else can I find such beauty of sadness?<sup>3</sup>

(Yanagi 1976:50–1, 1984:47, 1996:86–7; Kikuchi 1994:28; translated and modified)<sup>4</sup>

They [the Koreans] all look just like the Japanese ... Considering that the appearance and build of the Koreans and Japanese are generally the same, that the structure and grammar of their language are exactly the same, and that their ancient customs resemble each other's, you might think the Japanese and the Koreans are the same type of human being.

...

If you look closely [at the Koreans], they appear to be a bit vacant, their mouths open and their eyes dull, somehow lacking. ... Indeed, to put it in the worst terms, one could even say that they are closer to beasts than to human beings.

Hiroshima, who visited Korea after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5)  
(cited in Duus 1995:398)

<sup>1</sup> Japanese flags displayed on Gyeongbokgung (경복궁, Gyeongbok Palace), the main residence of Kings of Joseon and Emperors of the Daehan Empire. *Source*: Jeong Un-hyeon (1995:292).

<sup>2</sup> Government-General of Chosen built in the Gyeongbok Palace. *Source*: Seoul-teukbyeol-sisapyeonchan-wiwonhoe (2002:42).

<sup>3</sup> From Yanagi Muneyoshi's article entitled '朝鮮の友に贈書 (Letter to Chosen friends)' published in 1920.

<sup>4</sup> See Note 9.

## Historical background

In January 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt gave an assurance that the USA would not object to Japan's control over Korea and this was reconfirmed by the Taft-Katsura agreement in July. In August 1905, Britain and Japan renewed their alliance by signing the Treaty of Alliance in which Britain recognised Japan's right to take over Korea. In November 1905, after the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed between Russia and Japan. Russia now had to acknowledge Japan's supremacy in Korea (Gu Dae-yeol 1999:206–17; Lowe 1981:79, 80; *The Times*, 25 August 1910): what all these serial events mean is that the international community of the early twentieth century rejected Korea's existence as a state in the world no matter how strongly the Koreans wanted to preserve their sovereignty. As stated by Duus, '[a]s long as the Japanese guaranteed an "open door" in Korea, and as long as they confined their expansionist impulses to that country, the Western powers were willing to accept Japan as a partner in imperialism. In any case, except for the Russians, none of the other powers had as compelling strategic or economic interests on the peninsula as Japan did' (1995:189).

As the result of this international consensus in support of Japan, Korea could not avoid becoming the Japanese protectorate in 1905. On 22 August 1910 the Treaty of Annexation was eventually signed, under which the sovereign rights of the Korean Emperor were forcibly transferred to the

Emperor of Japan; it was promulgated on 29 August (GGC 1932:180–1; Seo Yeong-hui 1999:393; *The Times*, 30 August 1910). The historical socio-political and cultural settings of this chapter are the period from 1910 to 1945. The political climate of the times is well captured by the following excerpts from *The Times* of 1910:

To-morrow the ancient Empire of Korea will cease to exist, and the Korean Peninsula will become an integral part of Japanese territory.

(29 August 1910)

We are requested by the Japanese Embassy to publish the following announcement which was received by cable yesterday from the Foreign Office at Tokyo:—

1. Korea shall hereafter be named “Chosen.”

...

4. The issue of special passports for the people of Chosen is abolished, and hereafter the Chosens will be treated on an equal footing as the Japanese in the matter.

(30 August 1910)

From then on, Korea ceased to exist as a political entity among the nation states of the world and the Koreans were deprived of being Korean in the sense of the people of a state called ‘Korea’. Concerning the annexation of Korea, it is worth quoting Philippe Thiébault who asserts that ‘[it] may look as if it was only a Korean problem; Koreans were judged as unable to assume their modernization by themselves, but it was an international problem. The whole period [of the annexation] represents a failure of both the West and the East to reach a true encounter and cooperation for the fulfillment of Korea and the world community’ (2001:562–3).

The period from 1910 to 1945 which is marked in Korean history as the Japanese colonial period, saw both the First World War (1914–18) and the Second World War (1939–45). The irony of history brought the USA, Britain and others to face a clash with Japan from the latter war. Interestingly, during this period the dominant image of Korea in the West changed from one extreme to the other – from a lazy and backward state deserving to be occupied by a Westernised Japan to ‘one of the oppressed countries to be saved from Japanese imperialism’ (Lee 1987:31) – this was as a result of the changed political and ideological climate in the West rather than of any expanded knowledge of Korea.

With these circumstances in mind, this chapter investigates the interactions between Korean material culture and the Japanese, Koreans themselves and Western people, based on a consideration of how the status of Korea as a colony of imperial Japan affected the fate of Korean material culture, people’s understanding of it, and the operation of museums.

The first section of the chapter examines the nature of the various attitudes of the Japanese towards Korean materials from the past. The period in question marks one of the times when a great number of Korean materials were taken out of the Korean peninsula. The unlawful expropriation by the Japanese, which can be compared to that carried out by the Nazis in Europe, is the first focal point for the discussion. It will



review the impact of Japanese colonial policy in Korea on the interpretation of Korean materials and museum operations, and investigate Yanagi Muneyoshi's<sup>5</sup> developing perceptions of the characteristics of Korean material culture from his early definition of it as 'beauty of sadness' (see page 109).

The second section discusses the Korean people's reactions against the Japanese treatment of Korean materials from the past and their changing perceptions of such materials, seeing them as their 'alter ego' and 'material evidence' which could help to reconstruct their past. In contrast with Yanagi's view, Goh Yu-seop's<sup>6</sup> perceptions of the uniqueness of Korean materials will be dealt with in this second section. It is noteworthy, meanwhile, that Goh Yu-seop was the first Korean to study aesthetics and art history in their modern sense.

Finally, the third section examines the ties between Korean material culture and Western people. This section demonstrates how Korean materials were understood and treated in the West, and what factors could have affected this process.

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<sup>5</sup> 柳宗悦 (1889–1961), the theoretical leader of the *Mingei* (民芸, folkcrafts) movement which began in the 1920s in Japan. He is known as Yanagi Sōetsu in the West (Yanagi 1972; Yi In-beom 1999:11).

<sup>6</sup> 고유섭 (1905–44).

## Japanese people, Korean material culture and museums

Among the objects in the Korean collection at the TNM, the most numerous and those of highest quality came from Ogura Takenosuke,<sup>7</sup> a Japanese businessman who worked as the head of a Japanese electric power company in the Korean peninsula during the occupation period (Figure 5).<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 5** The Ogura collection at the TNM

|             | Korea | China | Japan | Other |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Archaeology | 557   | 10    | 4     | 4     |
| Sculpture   | 49    | 0     | 0     | 0     |
| Metalwork   | 128   | 2     | 0     | 0     |
| Ceramics    | 130   | 18    | 2     | 2     |
| Lacquerware | 44    | 0     | 0     | 0     |
| Manuscripts | 26    | 1     | 9     | 0     |
| Paintings   | 69    | 0     | 25    | 0     |
| Textiles    | 25    | 0     | 0     | 0     |
| Folkcrafts  | 2     | 1     | 1     | 1     |
| Total       | 1030  | 32    | 41    | 7     |

Source: Tokyo National Museum (1982:6)

His Korean collection, which comprises some 26% of the TNM's Korean collection, covers the period from the Neolithic Age to the nineteenth century. For an insight into the quality of the Ogura's collection, it is worth noting that eight objects in the collection have been designated '重要

<sup>7</sup> 小倉武之助 (1870–1964).

<sup>8</sup> Although the collection was donated by the Ogura Foundation to the TNM in 1981 (TNM 1982:8), it seems more logical to include it in this chapter, as the collection was mainly formed during the Japanese occupation period.

文化財' ('important cultural properties') of Japan and twenty-nine have been recognised as '重要美術品' ('important works of art') (TNM 1982:7).

The eight Korean objects in the list of Japanese important cultural properties are: an item of gilt bronze headgear (TJ 5033, see Illustration 23); a gilt bronze crown ornament in the shape of a bird's wing (TJ 5034); a pair of gold earrings (TJ 5035); a gold bracelet (TJ 5036); a gilt bronze greave (TJ 5037); a gilt bronze shoe (TJ 5038); a sword with a ring-shaped pommel with a dragon design (TJ 5039); and a bronze three-legged pot with handle (TJ 5307). All of these belong to Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla or Gaya,<sup>9</sup> and all came from archaeological excavations.

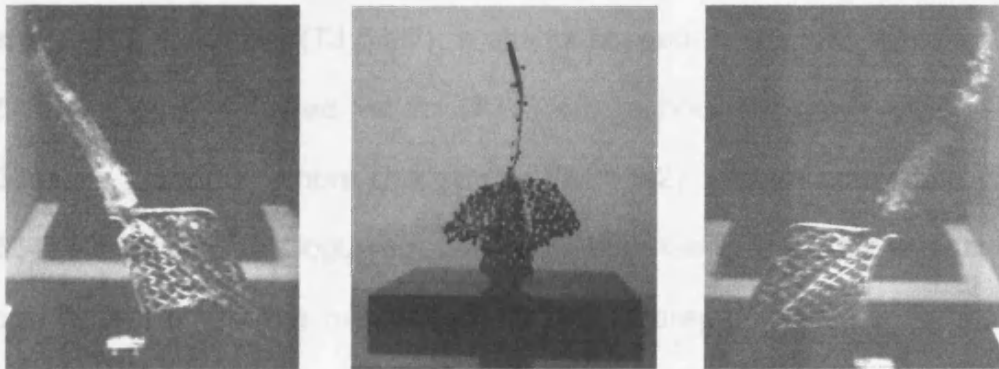


**Illustration 23** Gilt Bronze Headgear, 6th century, Tokyo National Museum (TJ 5033), 2002.

The twenty-nine Korean materials in the list of Japanese important works of art include the following: a bronze ornamental fitting with a design of animals from the Bronze Age (TJ 4939, see illustration 24); a bronze

<sup>9</sup> The most common term used to designate this period is the 'Three Kingdoms' period, omitting the Gaya federation. In South Korean academic circles, there have been suggestions for designating it the 'Four Kingdoms' period (see Yeon Min-su 2002).

mirror with multiple knobs and a geometrical pattern from the period between the Bronze and the early Iron Ages (TJ 4943); a bronze halberd from the early Iron Age (TJ 4947); a gilt bronze saddle fitting (TJ 5045); a gilt bronze seven-pendant horse ornament in the shape of a bell (TJ 5046); iron covered with gilt bronze horse ornaments (TJ 5047); a wooden fragment of a cantle or saddle pommel (TJ 5048); iron covered with gilt bronze pendant horse ornaments in the shape of a heart, with open-work decoration (TJ 5049); two gilt bronze horse ornaments (TJ 5050); a knife with a ring-shaped pommel with three-leaf crests (TJ 5051); two silver and gilt bronze star-shaped ornaments (TJ 5052); a gold crown (TJ 5061); a silver pendant girdle ornament (TJ 5126); a horse-shaped vessel (TJ 5334); an animal-shaped vessel with pendants (TJ 5336); a vessel in the shape of a waterfowl (TJ 5337); a chariot-shaped vessel with wheels (TJ 5339); a chariot-shaped vessel (TJ 5340); a house-shaped vessel (TJ 5341); a stand for a horn-shaped cup (TJ 5342); and an equestrian (TJ 5343), all belong to Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla or Gaya; a gilt bronze sarira casket with a hair-line engraving of a three-storey pagoda (TJ 5355); a silver sarira casket in the shape of a stupa (TJ 5356); a silver sarira casket with a hammer-worked decoration of floral scrolls (TJ 5357); a bronze bowl coated with lacquer (TJ 5358); a small silver jar (TJ 5359); a gilt bronze sutra case (TJ 5360); a gilt bronze octagonal sarira casket in the shape of a stupa (TJ 5364); and a wooden hexagonal covered bowl with a decoration of embedded silver sheet cutouts (TJ 5371), from Later Silla.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The most common term used to designate this period is the 'Unified Silla' period, omitting Balhae.

Again, these objects all came from archaeological excavations.

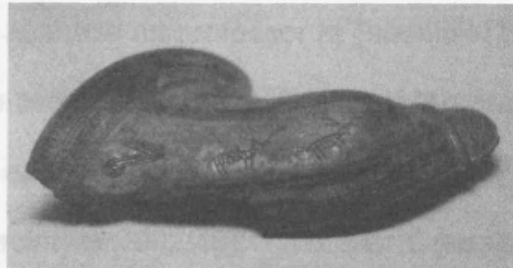


**Illustration 24** Bronze ornamental fitting, Tokyo  
National Museum (TJ 4939), 2002.

Ogura stated his reasons for collecting Korean materials as follows:

I have nothing to do either with history or archaeology, but I have collected for many years according to my interest and liking. ... I was surprised to find out that there are unexpectedly too many aspects of ancient Japanese history which became clarified only through the archaeological findings and ancient art objects of Korea. Starting from this point, I have endeavoured for many years to collect under the assumption that to collect, research and preserve not only Korea's artworks but also her antiques and old objects would contribute to the study of the ancient history of Japan and the cultures of Tungusic people in the Far East as well.

(TNM 1982:5; Kim Gwang-on 1995:13; mdified)

However, the above statement seems to convey only part of the truth about his motivation, and to present his collecting of Korean objects in a favourable light; Macintyre's description of him indicates Janus-faced

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In this thesis, the term 'Later Silla' is used. This term is used in North Korea (see page 6).

reasons. He notes that Ogura was nicknamed ‘the mole’ by the Koreans because of his obsession with Korean buried treasure, and quotes Takasake Soji, a Japanese art professor at Tsudajuku University, who says that the ‘Japanese plied Terauchi<sup>11</sup> with gifts of [Korean] relics and statues to get jobs or win approval for business projects’ and ‘[Ogura] was one of the bad guys’ (Macintyre 2002:49). Whatever Ogura’s intentions were in forming his Korean collection, this example illustrates some of the ways in which Korean material culture was understood and used by the Japanese at the time.

### ***Illegal appropriation of Korean material culture***

As shown in Figure 5, more than half of Ogura’s Korean collection consists of archaeological materials. It should also be noted that a considerable number of objects in the general categories of ceramics and metalwork came from burial sites. According to the list provided by the TNM, the Korean collection was classified by the museum into categories of archaeology (考古), manuscripts (書跡) – which included ancient records, calligraphy, rubbings, epitaphs and seals –, ceramics (陶磁), ethnography (民族), lacquer work (漆工), metalwork (金工), painting (繪画), and textiles (染織). Among about 4,000 items in the TNM’s Korean collection, more

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<sup>11</sup> General Terauchi Masatake (寺内正毅), first Governor-General of Korea (1910–16).

than 50% were classified as archaeological. Although the list does not contain full and detailed information, it is also possible to detect a number of objects in the categories of ceramics, manuscripts and metalwork which came from excavations in Korea. It can be assumed from the list that at the very least 10% of the rest of the collection, especially in the categories of manuscripts, metalwork and ceramics, came from a similar source, e.g. Goryeo bronze mirrors,<sup>12</sup> a Goryeo celadon dish,<sup>13</sup> a Joseon ewer,<sup>14</sup> an epitaph of Seok Su-min (석수민)<sup>15</sup> and so on.

The earliest TNM acquisition from an excavation seems to be a celadon dish of the Goryeo period purchased by the museum in December 1900. It was recorded that the object came from an excavation at Gaeseong, which had been the capital of Goryeo (918–1392) and is where the Goryeo royal tombs can be found. Yi Gu-yeol, originally a Korean journalist, who has devoted a considerable amount of time to studying the Japanese looting of Korean material, notes that Gaeseong was the provenance of 99% of Korean ceramics in the Yiwangga Museum's holdings, as a result of grave robberies (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:71).

From the above examples of the TNM's acquisition, it is possible to deduce that Japanese excavations in Korea were undertaken not from the

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<sup>12</sup> TE 12–8 (old accession number: 13036–42).

<sup>13</sup> TG 11 (old accession number: 355).

<sup>14</sup> TG 1814 (old accession number: 4012).

<sup>15</sup> TB 1131 (old accession number: 2291).

beginning of the colonial period, nor from 1905, when Korea became a protectorate of Japan, but from around 1900, probably in fact after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), when Korea was struggling to maintain its sovereign and autonomous status. An important point to note is that at this time the concept of ‘excavation’ did not seem to exist in the minds of Korean people. Furthermore, they would never have contemplated excavating a tomb, with their traditional belief in ancestor worship; in 1900 Confucianism was the dominant ideology in Korean society, and one of its main principles is ancestor worship. Therefore, for Korean people at that time a tomb was to be respected, as a symbol of their ancestors. This aspect of Korean culture was even recognised by the Japanese. In the 1930–2 annual report (English-language version) of the Government-General of Chosen, in order to illustrate to Western people how superstitious the Koreans were, it was recorded that:

Respect for tombs is characteristic of the Korean people as a form of ancestor-worship, and very great importance is placed upon the selection of a site for burial, and this, strengthened by their superstition [風水]<sup>16</sup> that the position of a grave affects the family destiny, either for good or ill ...

(1932:39)

The above Japanese record ironically indicates that in Korea it was the Japanese rather than the Koreans themselves who were responsible for

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<sup>16</sup> It reads ‘feng shui’ in Chinese and ‘pungsu’ in Korean: the theory ‘considered to govern spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of energy ... and whose favourable or unfavourable effects are taken into account when siting and designing buildings’ (Pearsall 1998:674).



the excavations in question. During the colonial period, they undertook excavations over almost the whole area of the Korean peninsula, but Buyeo (the capital of Baekje), Gaeseong (the capital of Goryeo), Gyeongju (the capital of Silla) and Pyeongyang (the capital of Goguryeo and the site of Lelang) were the main areas concerned.

According to Asagawa Noriaki,<sup>17</sup> a Japanese sculptor who came to Korea in 1913 and became interested in Korean ceramics, he was told by Suematsu Kumahiko (末松熊彦), Director of the Yiwangga Museum at the time, that one day in about 1909 abdicated Emperor Tae<sup>18</sup> had come to visit the museum for the first time, and asked Ito Hirobumi<sup>19</sup> where the celadon objects on display had come from. Ito answered that they were from this country (Korea) and produced at the time of Goryeo. The abdicated Emperor stated firmly that these kinds of objects could not be found in Korea. Suematsu added that Ito did not dare to contradict the Emperor by telling him that they were from Korean tombs (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:71). It is worth noting that before the Japanese excavation of the Goryeo tombs, no Korean knew of the existence of the Goryeo celadon, something well captured in the above anecdote, which suggests the probable provenance of most of that Goryeo celadon whose provenance

<sup>17</sup> 浅川伯教 (1884–1964) (Yi In-beom 1999:34).

<sup>18</sup> His name changed as follows: Gojong (고종) when he was the last king of Joseon (r. 1863–97); Emperor Gwangmu (광무황제) when he became the first emperor of the Daehan Empire (1897–1907); and Emperor Tae (태황제) after his abdication.

<sup>19</sup> 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), first civilian Resident-General during the Japanese protectorate period of Korea. He was assassinated by a Korean, Ahn Jung-geun (안중근), in 1909.

was unknown or not recorded.

The serious nature of these Japanese excavations during the colonial period can be found in the account of Hwang Su-young,<sup>20</sup> who worked as an official of the National Museum (국립박물관) and went to Gaeseong immediately after the liberation in 1945, to survey the damage caused to the Korean cultural legacy during the occupation period. He states that:

I saw tombs that were empty and destroyed. ... People [in Gaeseong] came up to me and said, "They [the Japanese] threatened me with guns and dug up my ancestors' tomb."

(cited in Macintyre 2002:47)

This explains well why today the Koreans continue to accuse Japan of illegal cultural expropriation. Another point to be made here concerns Buddhist objects and stone statues from tombs and palaces, which were mostly categorised as metalwork and sculpture. A number of episodes are related of how the Japanese illegally acquired these objects, and it is worth recalling some of these.

One example is a gilt bronze Bodhisattva, which today has become a Korean icon (see Illustration 25). At the beginning of the occupation, this

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<sup>20</sup> 황수영 (b.1918), Korean Art Historian, then President of the Dongguk University (1982–6), then Director of the National Museum of Korea (1971–4). He published a number of books and articles on Korean Buddhist Art.

Bodhsattva was found by Gim (김) in the mountain near his house, not far from Mangwolsa<sup>21</sup> in Gyeongju. He brought it to his home to worship, and enshrined it in one of the rooms, as there was no Buddhist temple in the locality at that time.



**Illustration 25** Gilt-bronze Maitreya in meditation; Baekje.<sup>22</sup> National Museum of Korea; *deoksu* (덕수) 3312. National Treasure (국보) no. 83. Source: National Museum of Korea

One day, four or five Japanese people came to the house and asked for water to drink with their lunch, after which they looked into the room where the Bodhisattva was enshrined. Early the next day, when Gim's wife O (오) went to the room to make an offering, the Bodhisattva had disappeared.

<sup>21</sup> 망월사, a Buddhist temple.

<sup>22</sup> Jin Hong-seop (1976:203) dated this statue to the early seventh century; Hwang Su-yeong (1978:112) to the mid-seventh century of Silla; Jang Chung-sik (1983:199) to Silla; Kim Won-yong (1980:60) to the seventh century of Baekje; and Pak Young-sook (Pak and Whitfield 2002: 112) to the late sixth century of Baekje or Silla (See also the National Museum of Korea's homepage, at [www.museum.go.kr/kor/sch/sch\\_src/full.cgi?v\\_db=1&v\\_doc\\_no=00000544](http://www.museum.go.kr/kor/sch/sch_src/full.cgi?v_db=1&v_doc_no=00000544)).

For the rest of their lives, the couple looked in vain for their stolen god, and died in misery (Hwang Su-yeong 1992:50–4). Later, a Japanese antique dealer, Kajiyama Yoshihide (梶山義英) contacted Suematsu of the Yiwangga Museum. On 21 February 1912, when the museum acquired this gilt bronze statue, nobody could recognise it, because the Japanese had painted the body white and the lips red, and had drawn eyebrows and a moustache in black. After washing in warm water, the original reappeared (Hwang Su-yeong 1992:50–4; Yi Gu-yeol 1996:128).

In the mid-1930s, a small group of Japanese people looted the *sarira* (Buddhist relics) from inside a pagoda in Hyeonhwasa<sup>23</sup> at Gaeseong by blowing it up with dynamite. They were later caught, but it was too late as the objects containing gold had already been destroyed to retrieve the precious metal (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:118).

Japanese immigrants in Korea were often people who for one reason or another had not been successful in their own country. They came to Korea driven by dreams of gold, of excavated tombs, of looting Buddhist objects from temples or other places, and of selling these objects to antique dealers, Japanese businessmen, museums and so on (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:37–200). This dream of gold even spread among Japanese scholars and students, most of whom were engaged in archaeology, as Koizumi

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<sup>23</sup> 현화사, a Buddhist temple.

Akio (小泉顯夫), director of the Pyeongyang Museum established in 1933 (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:163–4) admitted when he was interviewed by Macintyre in 2002: ‘They were spurred on by tales about golden chickens that would crow from the tombs every New Year’s Day’ (cited in Macintyre 2002:48).

As already mentioned, the involvement of senior Japanese officers and of businessmen based in the peninsula in stimulating the cultural pillage of Korea cannot be ignored. For example, Ito Hirobumi had more than 1,000 pieces of Goryeo celadon, some of which were donated to the TNM. For some time, Goryeo celadon was unobtainable in Seoul, as Ito had purchased all he could find there (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:66). Terauchi Masataka, first Governor-General, possessed about 1,855 works of calligraphy, 432 old Korean books and 2,000 pieces of celadon, bronze mirrors and other objects (Macintyre 2002:49). Arimitsu Kyoichi (有光教一), an archaeologist who worked for the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen in the 1930s (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:96), said: ‘Once we found something it went to the Governor-General, and then he would choose what went to the Emperor [in Japan]’ (cited in Macintyre 2002:48–9).

At the time of the Pacific War (1941–5), the Japanese government in Korea forced the Koreans to hand over all the metal materials they had (see Illustration 26), such as chopsticks, spoons, rice bowls, Buddhist

vessels, Buddhist bells and so forth. The bell of Jeondeungsa<sup>24</sup> on Ganghwado<sup>25</sup> was confiscated by the Japanese in the later period of the war, and after the war, when Korea had obtained its independence, the head monk of Jeondeungsa went to the port of Incheon in the hope of finding the bell. Instead he found a bigger bell, which had been left in a Japanese arms factory (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:152), and brought it back to the temple. This bell is now identified as Chinese, made in 1037 (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:152). Yi Gu-yeol (1996:152) assumes that the bell had been carried off from the Japanese-occupied area of China.



**Illustration 26** Japanese confiscation of metal materials.

Source: Yi Gu-yeol (1996:151)

From the above examples, it is possible to detect a pattern of Japanese attitudes towards Korean cultural objects. They saw them as a route to riches, as gifts to be sent home, as a way to 'get jobs or win approval for business projects', or as material which could be used to meet other

<sup>24</sup> 전등사, a Buddhist temple.

<sup>25</sup> 강화도, an island on the western coast of South Korea.

purposes. Above all, the right of free access to Korean materials for the Japanese, who had no similar right to their own materials, attests to the subject status of Korea and its people and to that of Japan as their conqueror.

Another important point here is the Korean identity of the materials. If Korea had been powerful enough to maintain its sovereignty, the objects categorised as 'Korean' would not have suffered this kind of ordeal. But the Japanese expropriation of Korean materials provided a basis for the creation of meaning for Koreans, in perceiving those objects as part of Korea itself and of themselves; an object began to be cherished simply because it was Korean. In this way, clearly, Korean identity was being reinforced, a phenomenon which will be discussed in the second section.

### ***Inventing 'self' by distorting 'other'***

As Mark Peattie points out, 'acquisition of a colonial empire in the late nineteenth century was a mark of national eminence, the ultimate status symbol upon the world scene' (1984a:10). This view is well expressed by Tokutomi Soho,<sup>26</sup> publisher of the *Kokumin shinbun*<sup>27</sup> who advocated the use of force by the Japanese government in Korea, giving as the reasons

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<sup>26</sup> (1863–1957).

<sup>27</sup> A Japanese newspaper.

for his call for action:

to build the foundation for national expansion in the Far East, ... to be recognized by the world as an expansive Japan, ... to take her place alongside the other great expansionist powers in the world.

(cited in Totman 2000:322)

By colonising Taiwan in 1895, then Korea in 1910, Japan succeeded in obtaining recognition as one of 'the colonial – the civilized – powers' (Peattie 1984b:82) in the world of the Western nation states. This fact set the Japanese apart from the neighbouring people of East Asia. It is obvious that, for the Japanese of the time, having a colony had become a source of national pride, as for them it symbolised the equal status of their nation with the Western powers and their participation in modern civilisation (Peattie 1984b:82–3).

However, at the same time, by colonising Korea, 'a land whose sense of self, national identity, borders, and history were as fully established as their [Japanese] own' (Jansen 1984:77–8), the Japanese had to face a most disturbing paradox: how they could define the Koreans, with whom the Japanese shared '[a] sense of cultural affinity' (Peattie 1984a:7). In fact, the Koreans were people to whom the Japanese owed a great deal, especially in cultural matters – for instance, the first object in the list of Japanese national treasures is a Korean Bodhisattva (Fisher 1993:140–1;



Hwang Su-yeong 1992:54–8; Jeong Eun-woo 1995:428; see Illustration 27).



**Illustration 27** Wooden Bodhisattva of Koryuji (廣隆寺).

Source: Fisher (1993:141)

It is noteworthy that during the fifteenth century, for instance, the Japanese had recognised the superiority of Korea (or pretended to recognise it where it suited their needs to do so). In Japan's official letters asking Joseon for economic or military support, Joseon was referred to as '上國', an expression which positioned the Japanese as subjects of that country within East Asia; they even called the King of Joseon 'Emperor', which was only authorised for use by the Chinese monarch at that time (Ha U-bong 1995:407). Here a question may arise: how could a people whom the Japanese once themselves considered civilised and superior become (borrowing the expression of Hiroshima) 'closer to beasts than to human beings' (see page 109)?

It was this paradoxical situation which seemed to raise other questions, such as: who the Japanese were (more exactly, how the Japanese differed from other, neighbouring East Asian people, especially the Koreans); what was and was not Japanese; how the Japanese understood the history of Korea, especially in relation to themselves; how they could justify their act of colonising the Koreans, whose culture the Japanese had themselves once shown great deference to; and how they could govern Korea in order to consolidate permanently their rights over the new, expanded territory.

The above paradox sets Japan apart from its Western counterparts, whose racial origins and cultural traditions were usually entirely distinct from those of their colonies, making it easier for them to construct images of 'others', and it appears that the above issues came to profoundly shape the attitudes of the Japanese towards the Korean past, and to be reflected in their understanding of Korean material culture. A variety of discourses appeared during this period.

*Distorted Japanese discourse I: Korea as a former Japanese colony*

Yi Man-yeol (1976:501–2) introduced Hatada Takashi's<sup>28</sup> classification of Japanese studies of Korea undertaken during the Edo period (1603–1867)

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<sup>28</sup> 旗田巍.

as follows: in the first category are the studies of Joseon Zhuzi studies (朱子學), especially Yi Hwang's<sup>29</sup> theory, by the founders of Japanese Zhuzi studies such as Hayashi Razan<sup>30</sup> and Yamazaki Ansai.<sup>31</sup> The second category comprises studies of Korea exclusively based on ancient Japanese records, such as *Kojiki* (古事記, 'Record of ancient matters') and *Nihonshoki* (日本書紀, 'Chronicle of Japan'), compiled in 712 and 720 respectively (Min Du-gi 1976:19; Totman 2000:64). In the third category are the studies of the relationship between Korea and Japan which emerged to meet the needs of Japan's national security.

It was the second category which provided the basis for the distortion of the relationship between ancient Korean states and Japan before the eighth century, e.g. the record of Empress Jingu's conquest of Samhan (see Chronology) in *Nihonshoki* (see Totman 2000:67). The detailed discussion of the nature of *Nihonshoki* is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, according to Gim Tae-sik (1997a:281) and Hong Won-tack (1988:243), Empress Jingu's Samhan conquest appeared only in *Nihonshoki*. No Chinese or Korean documents recorded this event, and even in the Japanese ancient record *Kojiki* there was no trace of it. As Totman (2000:65) puts it, *Nihonshoki* was designed to legitimise the rule of Tenmu and his descendants. Its problematic aspect is that it is based on the invention of certain events, and by the distortion or omission of other,

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<sup>29</sup> 이황 (1501–70). His pen name is Toe-gye (퇴계).

<sup>30</sup> 林羅山 (1583–1657).

<sup>31</sup> 山崎闇齋 (1618–82).

unfavourable events, although, under 'careful scrutiny', it contains significant information on the East Asian past (see Hong Won-tack 1988:12; Totman 2000:65–6).

Later, during the Meiji period, in order to enhance their emperor's authority as head of the Meiji government and to legitimise their acquisition of Korea, imperialist Japanese scholars developed a history based on that shaped by the Japanese nationalistic scholars of the second category, disregarding extant Korean sources as unreliable because they had been compiled later than these Japanese records (Hong Won-tack 1988:16). They misled the Japanese into believing that Empress Jingu (神功) had conquered the southern part of the Korean peninsula (南鮮經營設),<sup>32</sup> and that in the area of Gaya, Japan had once had, for more than two centuries, a colony called 'Mimana' (任那日本府説),<sup>33</sup> beginning in the late fourth century, and that prior to the seventh century Baekje and Silla had paid tribute to Japan. This provided a basis for the assertion of Japan's historical right to restore its lost territory in the seventh century (Hong Won-tack 1988:1–2, 10, 14–15, 243; Yi Man-yeol 1976:512). Based on this inaccurate history, the Japanese developed a sense of superiority over the Koreans (Yi Man-yeol 1976:502).

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<sup>32</sup> After the Second World War, as the study of ancient Japanese history progressed, Japanese historians began to question the authenticity of the *Nihonshoki* version, and of Empress Jingu's Korean expedition; what had been treated as historical fact came to be seen as inauthentic (Hong Won-tack 1988:16–7).

<sup>33</sup> In the records of the TNM, Gaya (Korea) materials were recorded as '任那', i.e. Mimana materials.

It is believed in South Korean academic circles that, starting in 1902,<sup>34</sup> the Japanese carried out surveys of Korean historical materials (Kook Sung-ha 2002:vi; Park Soon-won 2001:16). One of the reasons for undertaking such surveys was presumably to support the discourse of Korea as an ancient colony of Japan; and this is also why archaeological materials comprised the majority of the TNM's or Ogura's Korean collection.

In 1904, for instance, the Tokyo Imperial University sent Shibata Joe (柴田常恵) to undertake a survey of shell mounds at Gimhae (김해패총), in the ancient Gaya region (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:82). From 20 September to 17 December 1910, the Government-General of Chosen commissioned Sekino Tadashi<sup>35</sup> and his team to find material supporting evidence for Empress Jingu's conquest of Samhan, but without success (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:83). During the decade after 1910, Japanese colonial scholars excavated the area where Gaya and Silla had once existed, but no Japanese material culture was discovered to support the theory of an ancient Japanese colony; materials discovered in the territory of ancient Gaya, for instance, attested rather to the continuity of Gaya culture from prior to the fourth century – when Japan was supposed to have established its colonial government – to the conquest of Gaya by Silla in the sixth century (Gim Tae-sik 1997a:279).

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<sup>34</sup> As mentioned before (see page 119), information provided by the TNM suggests that its first acquisition of a Korean archaeological object was 1900, in turn suggesting an approximate date for the start of the Japanese surveys of Korean historical remains.

<sup>35</sup> 關野貞 (1868–1935).

*Distorted Japanese discourse II: Korea as a former Chinese colony*

Before proceeding with this section, it would be useful to look at the chronology of Korea displayed in the Korean gallery of the V&A. Interestingly, the section named 'Korean Periods and Dynasties' begins with the Han<sup>36</sup> commanderies (see Appendix 10). These were installed in 108 BC as a result of the defeat of Joseon or Go-joseon, the first state established by the Koreans (see Chronology). At the time of the fall of Go-joseon, there existed other such states, such as Buyeo, Goguryeo, Samhan, etc. Without mentioning Go-joseon and other Korean states, but by commencing with the Han commanderies, the V&A's chronology not only reduces the length of Korean history but also gives the impression that before the Koreans established a state China had occupied the northern part of the Korean peninsula, or even misleads visitors into believing that Korea, from her very earliest history, was probably a colony of China. Whether intentionally or not, this evokes the assertions of the imperialistic Japanese scholars who created a Korean history, to the effect that while the southern part of the Korean peninsula was a Japanese colony during the fourth and fifth centuries, the northern part had been occupied by the Chinese from time immemorial (Hong Won-tack 1988:1).

The existence, as a fact of history, of the Han commanderies is disputed in

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<sup>36</sup> 汉 (206 BC–AD 220), a dynasty built by Han people in Chinese history.

South Korean academic circles. There seem to be two opposing views: that they did exist, and that they did not. According to the former, Han (China) ruled directly the areas where the commanderies were installed. Following this interpretation, in 82 BC Zhenfan (眞番郡) and Lintun (臨屯郡), two of the four commanderies, were abandoned because of the fierce resistance of the indigenous people now called Koreans, and in 75 BC Xuantu (玄菟郡) was expelled to China. In AD 313, Lelang (樂浪郡) commandery was defeated by Goguryeo (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:65). However, a problematic aspect of this is where the commanderies were located. Korean scholars holding the view that they did in fact exist divide into two groups: those who assert that their location was Manchuria, and those who claim that it was the Korean peninsula (Gim Jeong-bae 1997b:111). It is noteworthy that, apart from Lelang (樂浪), no materials which could be considered as material evidence of the other three commanderies appears to have been discovered in the Korean peninsula.

In contrast to this, another category of Korean scholars denies the existence of the Han commanderies, basing this on a critical examination of ancient Chinese Han documents – which did not even agree on the number of commanderies (four, three or two). Considering the nature of Chinese political ideology – positioning China as the centre of the world – it is conceivable that Han might have been content with its victory over Joseon or Go-Joseon (see Chronology), as punishment for the

wrongdoing of a barbarian state, and it is very possible that after the defeat of Go-Joseon Han might simply have reconstructed the geographical names of the regions of Go-Joseon (Gim Jeong-bae 1997b:108–11). As far as Lelang is concerned, it is worth noting that Han fell in AD 220, and if Lelang was a Han commandery for governing its colony in the Korean peninsula, how can one explain its existence until AD 313? It could be understood rather as a self-governing city of Chinese migrants, or a Chinese trade settlement (Gim Jeong-bae 1997b:113).

During the Japanese occupation period, the Japanese formed a 'discourse of heteronomy' (他律性論) in order to justify their acquisition of Korea and their continued hold on the new territory. This discourse can be summarised as follows: history shows no evidence of Korean autonomy. Instead the country was heteronomously formed; i.e. its history consists of continuous subjugation to foreign pressures, from the Han people, the Mongols, the Manchus and finally the Japanese (Yi Man-yeol 1976:511). Thus the Koreans could not claim a right for independence.

The following is an extract from the 1930–2 annual report (English-language version) of the Government-General of Chosen, written under Western scrutiny of its acquisition of Korea:

Chosen [Korean] ... never enjoyed political independence to any considerable extent. For centuries before Japan came to intervene in her national affairs she was virtually held subject to China, paying tribute to



and receiving Chinese envoys from Peking.<sup>37</sup>

(1932:1)

The Japanese selected those elements of Korean history which could support their argument, and rewrote that history to exaggerate those aspects that fitted their heteronomy discourse, such as that Gija was the founder of Korea, and simplified or eliminated those that illustrated Korean autonomy, such as the defeat of Sui (China) by Goguryeo,<sup>38</sup> the defeat of Tang by Silla, Goryeo's 28-year resistance during the Mongols invasions, the creation of the Korean *Han-geul* alphabet, and so on. In 1909, in order to support the discourse of heteronomy, the Japanese Protectorate Government commissioned Sekino Tadashi and two assistants, Yatsui Saikazu and Kuriyama Toshikazu, to undertake the excavation of the old tombs around Pyeongyang, which might have been the site of Lelang (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:157), and between 1910 and 1916, as part of the project for the surveying and preservation of Korean historical remains, they excavated each year hundreds of tombs situated in or near Pyeongyang to find Lelang (Han) materials (Park Soon-won 2001:17). In September 1933, the Pyeongyang Museum, so-called 'Lelang Museum', was established (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:163, 165–6). Among its six display rooms, two rooms and parts of two others were devoted to Lelang

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<sup>37</sup> In fact, Japan also belonged to this tribute system, which can be understood as, in Totman's words, 'sending diplomatic delegations ... in the terminology of the day' (2000:41).

<sup>38</sup> One of the main reasons for the fall of Sui (China) was the war with Goguryeo (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:91).

materials, and although Pyeongyang was the capital of Goguryeo for 241 years (427–668), only one room and a wall in Room 5 were allocated to Goguryeo materials (see Figure 6).

| Rooms                                                                                                                  | Facilities                     | Nature of the display                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Room 1                                                                                                                 | Entrance, main hall, rest room | - Old map of Pyeongyang                                                                                   |
| Room 2                                                                                                                 |                                | - Prehistoric materials displayed on a wall                                                               |
|                                                                                                                        |                                | - Lelang materials                                                                                        |
| Room 3                                                                                                                 |                                | - Lelang materials                                                                                        |
| Room 4                                                                                                                 |                                | - Lelang materials                                                                                        |
| Room 5                                                                                                                 |                                | - Lelang materials displayed in the centre<br>- Materials of Goguryeo, Silla, Goryeo and Joseon           |
| Room 6                                                                                                                 |                                | - Replica of the Gangseo Tomb (강서고분)<br>- Photographs of the wall painting of the Gangseo Tomb (Goguryeo) |
| Room 7                                                                                                                 |                                | - Sino-Japanese War-related materials                                                                     |
| <b>Figure 6</b> Display in the Pyeongyang Museum. <i>Source:</i> Choe Seok-yeong (2001:165–6), Kook Sung-ha (2002:133) |                                |                                                                                                           |

It is obvious that an acceptance of this version of Korean history could eventually help to eradicate the Koreans' identity, by making them feel ashamed of their past. It is said that one example of the Japanese version of Korean history, 朝鮮史のしるべ, published in 1936, was translated by UNESCO and distributed in the West (Yi Man-yeol 1976:508, 511).

*Distorted Japanese discourse III: the devaluation of Korean material culture*

In order to assert Japan's superiority over the Koreans, and to fit into its 'discourse of heteronomy', Japanese colonial scholars set up a stereotype of prehistoric Korean culture as inferior to those of China and Japan. This was based in turn on the Japanese colonial version of Korean history – that Korea had been an ancient colony of Japan, and Japan thus a major influence on ancient Korean culture. They<sup>39</sup> asserted that in the Korean peninsula there was no trace of the Palaeolithic and Bronze Ages; that when iron was being used in China, the Koreans remained in the Neolithic Age; that in Korea there was no Bronze Age, the Neolithic being followed directly by the Iron Age; and that iron was introduced by the Han (Chinese) people through the establishment of the Han commanderies (Choe Mong-ryong 1997a:12; Gim Jeong-bae 1973:205–6).

As mentioned before, in order to support their assertion of Korea as an ancient colony of Japan, the Japanese undertook excavations, from 1907 onwards, of the shell moulds of Gimhae (Choe Seong-rak 1997:382). Interestingly, instead of discovering the expected material evidence for their thesis, a significant quantity of iron materials, pottery and bone artifacts, and small numbers of stone objects, were discovered; but the

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Umehara Sueji (梅原末治), Hamada Kosaku (濱田耕作), Fujita Ryosaku (藤田亮策) etc.

Japanese then referred to these as materials from the Chalcolithic Period (金石併用期) rather than the Iron Age – which latter would have denied their claims that the Iron Age began in the Korean peninsula with the importing of iron from China,<sup>40</sup> or which might have revealed a lack of scholarship in the Japanese archaeological circles of the time (Choe Mong-ryong 1997b:326; Gim Jeong-bae 1973:205–6). In fact, the materials discovered in the territory of ancient Gaya strongly attested to Korean influence on Japanese iron culture, or even to the possibility of a Korean conquest of Japan (Nelson 1993:237): at the time when Gaya was processing iron into tools and weapons, the Japanese did not produce iron, importing it from Gaya (Gim Tae-sik 1997b:311–2; Nelson 1993:237).

Another piece of evidence which contradicts Japanese colonial claims emerged in the 1930s: a Palaeolithic site was discovered at Donggwanjin (동관진) in Korea;<sup>41</sup> this was simply ignored by the Japanese (Bae Gi-dong 1997:14). With respect to the Bronze Age materials discovered in the Korean peninsula, the Japanese also claimed that these were Chinese or brought by the Chinese (Gim Jeong-bae 1973:208) but, as many archaeologists now agree, not only did the Bronze Age exist in the Korean peninsula but also the excavated Korean materials of that period are unrelated to those of China (Nelson 1993:110; NIKH 1997b:1–321).

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<sup>40</sup> The iron trade was one of the main trades of Gaya, and iron mines can be traced from the third century BC (Nelson 1993:237). It is noteworthy that the Han commanderies are believed to have been established in 108 BC.

<sup>41</sup> The materials discovered at Donggwanjin were removed to the USA during the Korean War, but later returned and are now held at the National Museum of Korea (Yi Yung-jo 1997:113).

In addition to the above distorted discourse, in cases where Japanese materials strongly attested Korean influences the Japanese minimised Korean influence on their cultural development. For instance, instead of using the word 'Korean' they replaced it with labels such as 'continental' or 'Chinese' (see Hong Won-tack 1988:4). They emphasised 'a manifestation of Japanese self-absorption rooted in place in the history of the East Asian cultural complex' (Park Soon-won 2001:15) by reducing the role of Korea as a cultural intermediary between China and Japan, while emphasising those aspects of Korean material culture which illustrated Chinese influences.

It is interesting to look at the Bodhisattva designated as a Japanese national treasure (see Illustration 27 on page 129). Jeong Eun-woo (1995:424–7) notes that before 1950 the Japanese identified this statue as Japanese, and attempted to place it in the Buddhist artistic tradition, e.g. of the Asuka or Hakuho period; there was even an assertion that this statue illustrated unique Japanese characteristics which had absorbed Chinese and Korean styles. However, the turning point came with Kohara Jiro (小原二郎) in 1951; his studies showed the statue was made of a red pine which is indigenous to Korea. Red pine is also found in Japan, but if the Japanese of the Asuka period carved it it would be the only example of their use of red pine. As research on this statue progressed over time, other data was discovered supporting its origin as Korean: the particular technique used to deal with the wood was indigenous to Korea, and the

original expression of the statue, with its striking similarity to a Bodhisattva held at the National Museum of Korea (see Illustration 25 on page 123), strongly suggested a Korean origin. It is worth noting that Robert Fisher's caption for the illustration of the statue states: 'Meditating bodhisattva, 620–640, Asuka or Hakuho period, Koryuji, Kyoto, Japan. Red pine ...' (1993:141). His text goes on to say: 'The close similarity of a meditating bodhisattva figure to Korean works, as well as its material, a wood indigenous to Korea, suggests that, if not originating in Korea, it was probably carved in Japan by Koreans' (1993:141).

The following statement reveals the conflicting nature of the Japanese colonial discourses concerning Korean material culture. The Government-General of Chosen, which commissioned the Japanese colonial archaeologists for excavations in Korea and contributed to the distortion of the Korean past, stated in its report (English version) that:

Chosen [Korea], one of the oldest countries of the Orient, was once a highly advanced nation from which Japan learned many arts and crafts.

(Government-General of Chosen 1932:1)

Another Japanese discourse should be mentioned here, called the 'discourse of stagnation', which seems to conflate the above two contradictory discourses. During the colonial period, the Japanese created a genealogy of Korean art, according to which it was initially influenced by

the Han Chinese, and flourished during the Silla period but with Tang-oriented Buddhist artistic culture, then began to decline during the Goryeo period. The Joseon era marked its final demise, and by the colonial period there was no such artistic feature of any kind in Korea (Park Soon-won 2001:19).

From this genealogy, the Japanese drew the conclusion that the Koreans were unable to perpetuate the artistic achievements of their ancestors, which in turn positioned the Japanese authority as the guardian of Korean traditions and the preserver of ancient Korean cultural materials (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:95–6).

*Distorted Japanese discourse IV: liquidating Korean identity via the discourse of assimilation*

Having experienced the Korean protests in March 1919,<sup>42</sup> the Prime Minister of Japan, Hara Takashi,<sup>43</sup> stated that: 'Chosen is a Japanese dominion and not a subject state. Moreover, it is not a colony of Japan; it is nothing but an extension of Japan' (cited in Otake 2001:21; translated). At about the same time, the Governor-General of Chosen, Hasegawa

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<sup>42</sup> The 'March First Movement', when over two million Koreans demonstrated in favour of the liberation of Korea from Japan.

<sup>43</sup> 原敬 (1856–1967), a Japanese politician.

Yoshimichi<sup>44</sup> declared that: 'Chosen is the dominion of the Empire and not a subject state. The Chosen people are the subjects of the Empire and treated, without discrimination, on a par with the people in the home islands (内地人, i.e. the Japanese). Therefore, following the administration of Chosen and the policy of assimilation, it is expected there will be no prejudice against a cosmopolitan and great cause' (cited in Otake 2001:21; translated).

The March First Movement in 1919 caused the Japanese to moderate their colonial policy in Korea. This policy was based on the discourse of assimilation, which can be summarised in phrases such as '内鮮一體' ('Japan and Chosen are one flesh'), '日鮮同祖論' ('Japan and Chosen originate from the same ancestors'), and '日鮮同源論' ('Japan and Chosen spring from the same origin'). In 1923, Ninagawa Arata (蜷川新) asserted that, according to 2,000 years of Japanese history, the Japanese and the Koreans were the same people; if there were people who considered the Japanese and the Koreans as different, they were ignoring scientific discussions and destroying peace; the relationship between the Japanese and the Koreans was completely different from the one between the British and the Indians, the French and the Indo-Chinese, etc; and Koreans who attempted to separate themselves from Japan should be punished, as cultural traitors (1923:30–2).

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<sup>44</sup> 長谷川好道 (1850–1924), Governor-General of Chosen (Korea) (1916–19).



In 1931–3 Japan conquered Manchuria, and in 1937 the military collision between Japan and China resulted in the Japanese conquest of most of the north-eastern part of China, the Changjiang<sup>45</sup> region, and coastal enclaves south to Indochina. In 1941 Japan provoked the Pacific War by attacking Pearl Harbor (Totman 2000:312, 427). During this time the Japanese used Korea as a supply base for war material and human resources, and strengthened their policy of extinguishing Korean identity.

The most notorious evidence for the assimilation of the Koreans by destroying Korean characteristics was that Koreans were forbidden to speak their own language or to study their own history. The Japanese indigenous religion, Shinto, was forced on them; they were even required to adopt a Japanese name and to abandon their Korean first and family names (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:454). On 2 October 1937, the Japanese formulated 皇國臣民誓詞 (an oath of subjection to the Empire) and forced the Koreans to recite it all the time (Noh Yeong-taek 2001:52). The oath which Korean children were obliged to recite every morning, in Japanese and without understanding the language, ran in part: 'We are the subjects of the Great Japanese Empire. We will be devotedly loyal to the Emperor' (Noh Yeong-taek 2001:52). The intention here was very clear: to disconnect Koreans from their past, and to make them into Japanese, thus creating human resources to supplement shortages in Japan's military

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<sup>45</sup> 长江 (Chang River).

power and eventually leading to permanent Japanese domination of the Koreans. Considering the political climate of those times, it is not surprising to observe the Japanese assimilation policy reflected in the Japanese interpretation of the Korean past, in materials produced by the Koreans and in the operation of museums.

In March 1938, the Japanese regime inaugurated the Yiwangga Art Gallery (李王家美術館, Royal Yi Household Art Gallery) which was an amalgamation of the Yiwangga Museum and the Seokjojeon (석조전), a gallery of modern Japanese art. Near the Seokjojeon (석조전), a museum building had been newly erected inside the Deoksu Palace (덕수궁), destroying the original Palace buildings in the process. The Japanese displayed ancient Korean objects in the newly constructed building, and their own contemporary objects together with Western paintings in the Seokjojeon, but without displaying any contemporary Korean objects. By doing so, the Japanese pretended Korean art and culture would be stimulated through the displays of contemporary Japanese objects (Chun Kyung-soo 2000:164).

Interestingly, a similar pattern can be detected in the Japanese treatment of the Korean royal family and palaces. It should be noted that in every annual report of the Japanese regime the Crown Prince Yi<sup>46</sup> and his

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<sup>46</sup> 이은 (c.1896–1970). In 1908 he was taken to Japan by the Japanese authorities in Korea. Masako stated that: '[He] was expected to become Japanese in all ways of life' (Yi Pang-ja

Japanese wife appear on the frontispiece, as a symbol of ‘內鮮一體’ (‘Japan and Chosen are one flesh’). It was the Japanese who began to call Joseon the ‘Yi dynasty’, to degrade its status and to alienate Korean people from their empire (or dynasty) by giving the impression that Joseon was a Yi family dynasty, and not one of the people. The Japanese seemed to fear that the royal family had the potential power to unify all Koreans against Japan. As a part of maintaining their policy of assimilation in Korea, three of Korean royal children were forced to live in exile in Japan, on the pretext of a better education, and to marry a Japanese person.<sup>47</sup>

After their acquisition of Korea, the Japanese placed a prefix ‘舊’ (‘former’) to the name of the Gyeongbok Palace in order to emphasise that it no longer had the status of a palace (see Choe Seok-yeong 2001:5), and built a Western-style building for the use of the Government-General of Chosen on the site (see page 109). The act of destroying the palace and replacing it with a Japanese government building was to symbolise the visible reality – that there was no Korean nation state, and that Koreans were now nationals of Japan; and through the displays of ancient Korean and

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1973:85). In 1920, the Japanese government forced him to marry a Japanese princess, Masako – known as Yi Pang-ja in Korea – although he already had a Korean fiancée; this was part of the Japanese policy to infuse Japanese blood into Korean royalty. In his life time, it was almost impossible for him to visit his own country – he was unable to return to Seoul until 22 November 1963. It is worth quoting what the Korean Crown Prince said in 1911, after the annexation of Korea, and in 1945, after the recovery of independence from Japan: ‘I am no longer a Korean in my way of living. But I cannot become completely Japanese, for I will never give up my Korean way of thinking. Then, what am I? A man in between, without roots?’ (Yi Pang-ja 1973:86); and ‘I am no longer a pure Korean, while I cannot be completely Japanese’ (Yi Pang-ja 1973:151). It is noteworthy that the Korean princess Deok-hye (덕혜) could not bear her life in Japan and her forced marriage to a Japanese, Count So, and ended up suffering from mental illness.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that at the time the ‘purity’ of the Korean royal blood was viewed as important, i.e. marriage to a foreigner was not to be countenanced.

contemporary Japanese materials juxtaposed with Western materials, the message projected by the Japanese seemed to be that: before there had been Korea, but now there was 'only Japan'.

From 1 to 7 November 1938, the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen held a special exhibition on the ancient relationship between Korea and Japan, in a bid to strengthen the assimilation policy. The museum displayed about 100 Korean and Japanese objects, such as stone daggers, stone arrows, Buddhist materials and so on, chosen to illustrate the similarity between the two cultures (Chun Kyung-soo 2000:167–8; Mok Soo-hyun 2000:72–3).

Considering the significant Korean influences on ancient Japanese culture, the materials displayed would indeed have attested to a strong similarity. However, the Japanese distorted the historical record by claiming that what was made manifest in the material forms was that ancient Korean states could only have maintained their autonomy with Japanese support (Mok Soo-hyun 2000:73). During the exhibition period, the museum even reduced the entrance fee from five to two *jeon*<sup>48</sup> and Sase Naoe (佐瀬直衛), of the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen, gave a lecture on '內鮮一體' ('Japan and Chosen are one flesh'), which he claimed was manifest in the materials displayed (Chun Kyung-soo 2000:168).

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<sup>48</sup> The unit of money of the time.

To the Japanese of the time, Buyeo, the capital of ancient Baekje, was known as the site of '內鮮一體' ('Japan and Chosen are one flesh'). The Government-General of Chosen (GGC) therefore established a museum there, in 1939, in order to illustrate the close relationship between the cultures of the Korean Baekje and the Japanese Asuka.<sup>49</sup> It is worth noting that the GGC originally planned to open the museum in the autumn of 1940, as a part of events celebrating 2,600 years of Japanese history (Choe Seok-yeong 2001:140–4). From the above examples, it is possible to detect the propaganda nature of such displays of Korean material culture, and the use of the museum as a political tool to cope with Japanese wartime needs and to brainwash the Koreans into believing that they were Japanese living in a permanently Japanese-dominated Korea.

From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese forced Korean artists to produce propaganda art under the name of *hwapilboguk* (畫筆報國), which means 'repay the nation with the brush' (Lee Jeong-youn 2000:24).

In the 93 examples of propaganda material from this time presented by Lee Jeong-youn (2000), it is possible to detect three main themes. The first theme is the military recruitment of Koreans: artists projected images such as a Korean mother in traditional dress holding the hand of a son wearing military-style clothes and holding a toy aircraft in his other hand; or a soldier with an expression of intelligence, kindness, pride, etc. The

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<sup>49</sup> AD 552–645.

second theme is Korean support on the home front: images of mothers with children, of workers and farmers with expressions of health and intelligence, or of confident-looking women in the uniform of military nurses or at work on a farm or in a factory. The third theme is the integration of Korea with Japan: this was portrayed in images such as Korean children holding Japanese flags, a Korean mother holding her son with a Japanese flag in his hand, or a girl and a boy, in traditional Korean and Japanese clothes respectively, sitting together peacefully (see Illustration 28).



**Illustration 28** Japanese propaganda

Source: Lee Jeoung-youn (2000)

***The characteristics of things Korean: the emergence of a definition***

Unlike the self-serving colonialist view of Korea, and the attitudes of the majority of the Japanese who despised the Koreans, Yanagi Muneyoshi (see Illustration 29), was the leading figure among those Japanese who fostered a fresh outlook on Korea and its people through their appreciation of Korean material culture. Bernard Leach<sup>50</sup> recalls that:

[m]y friend [Yanagi] had a great sympathy for Korea, its people and its arts. Especially, he loved the pots of the Yi dynasty [Joseon]. I recall one day in 1918 at Abiko, just after he had returned from a visit to Seoul. When, at the hour for lunch, I joined him in his study overlooking the lagoon of Teganuma, I found him in a reverie, slowly moving from pot to pot, gently stroking each in turn. After a pause I asked him what he was doing. He turned and said quietly, "I am visiting my Korean friends".

(1972:97–8)



**Illustration 29** Yanagi Muneyoshi (c. 1958).

Source: Yi In-beom (1999:12)

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Howell Leach (1887–1979), British potter.

At a time when, for political reasons, the originality of Korean materials was denied by the Japanese, Yanagi was a strong defender of the uniqueness to be found in Korean cultural materials. However, he was also the author who coined the term 'the beauty of sadness' (see page 109) as one of the characteristics of Korean material culture; given the political climate of the times, it is conceivable – or even likely – that the fate of Korea as a Japanese colony might have influenced Yanagi's perception of that culture.

Interestingly, his perception of things Korean later underwent radical change. This raises a question: if Korea had not been a Japanese colony, how would his definition of Korean material culture have differed from the 'beauty of sadness'? This focuses attention on the power relations which had constructed a particular form of knowledge of Korea, then widespread in that society, because it must have been this constructed knowledge which, in turn, affected an individual who was searching for Eastern values to set against the Western values at that time predominant in Japan; who attempted to establish an Eastern approach to Eastern cultural objects, based on the Eastern world views he saw as embedded in those materials, instead of adopting Western approaches; and who, for the first time, sought to explain where the characteristics of Korean objects differed from those of China or Japan. This section explores Yanagi's developing perceptions of Korean material culture in relation to the notion of Korea, as these perceptions raise a vital question concerning the Korean identity



embedded (as it were) in things Korean, and also brought significant consequences for the Koreans, who while being urged to overcome Yanagi's early definition of the Korean characteristics in Korean material culture, were not free from his later changed perceptions of Korean objects or even his early definition (i.e. the beauty of sadness).

Hamada describes how the young Yanagi indulged in Western art, as did many other young Japanese, before gradually turning his attention to Eastern values, through his encounter with Korean material culture (especially Joseon ceramics),<sup>51</sup> and then to Japanese folkcraft (Hamada 1972:10). A similar observation can be found in Kikuchi, who asserts that Yanagi's involvement with Korea was extremely significant in the development of the *Mingei* movement in Japan (Kikuchi 1994:24). Yi In-beom (1999:13) notes that in *Mingei* theory Yanagi portrayed Joseon art as the typical model.

Yanagi's interest in Korean ceramics and folkcraft eventually led to a plan for the Chosen Minzoku<sup>52</sup> Museum (朝鮮民族美術館), which was opened in April 1924 in one of the Gyeongbok Palace buildings (Yi In-beom 1999:43). The collection largely consisted of Korean ceramics and other

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<sup>51</sup> The colonial Japanese scholars of the time treated Joseon as having few artistic skills, ignoring the fact that the Japanese tea ceremony was built round ordinary Joseon rice bowls, and that many Japanese potters (even during the colonial period), such as Hamada, Tomimoto and Kawai, were deeply influenced by Joseon ceramics. It can be said that it was Yanagi's enthusiasm for Joseon ceramics which made them appreciated in their own right in Japan and in the West, contrary to the prejudices of other, colonial Japanese scholars.

<sup>52</sup> The word *minzoku* can be translated into English as 'people', 'race', etc.

objects (Yanagi 1972:101).<sup>53</sup> Yanagi also published a number of articles on various types of Korean material culture, such as ceramics, sculpture, woodwork, paintings and so forth. He also organised exhibitions of Korean objects in both Japan and Korea, his first exhibition of Korean crafts in Japan being mounted in May 1921 (Kikuchi 1994:25).

Yanagi's approach to artefacts can be summarised in a word, '直観'.<sup>54</sup> To explain this approach, he distinguishes two aspects: seeing and knowing.

He says:

... To 'see' is to go direct to the core; to know the facts about an object of beauty is to go around the periphery. Intellectual discrimination is less essential to an understanding of beauty than the power of intuition that precedes it ...

He who only knows, without seeing, does not understand the mystery ... The scholar of aesthetics tends to base his ideas on knowledge – or rather, he tries to make seeing proceed from knowing. But this is a reversal of the natural order of things ...

The eye of knowledge cannot, thereby, see beauty.

(1972:110)

He goes on:

The number of collectors of art in the world is constantly increasing, but there are few whose perceptions are developed enough to gather various types of art together with a uniformity of standard and taste. This is undoubtedly due to the foot-rule approach that I am decrying ...

... I would like to give them three pieces of advice.

<sup>53</sup> Based on the experience gained in Korea, from the late 1920s Yanagi and his circle led a similar folkcraft movement in Japan, eventually establishing the Nihon Mingeikan (日本民芸館, Japanese Folkcraft Museum) in Tokyo in 1936.

<sup>54</sup> This term has been variously translated into English as 'direct insight' (Kikuchi 1994), 'the seeing eye' (Leach 1974) etc.

First, put aside the desire to judge immediately; acquire the habit of just looking. Second, do not treat the objects as an object for the intellect. Third, just be ready to receive, passively, without interposing yourself. If you can void your mind of all intellectualization, like a clear mirror that simply reflects, all the better. This nonconceptualization – the Zen state of *mushin* ('no mind') – may seem to represent a negative attitude, but from it springs the true ability to contact things directly and positively.

(1972:111–2)

Based on his '直観' ('seeing eye') approach, Yanagi tried to keep in mind the background of the object as he viewed it. In an article on Korean ceramics published in 1921, he wrote that through the beauty of the ceramics it was possible to understand the feelings of the people who had produced them, the culture of the period, the natural environment of the time of the creation of the ceramics and the relationship to their creator's sense of beauty (Yanagi 1996:133). He applied this approach to Korean material culture, in an attempt to identify its characteristics. Ironically, his understanding of that culture, which changed over time, reveals both the vulnerability of his theory and one of the characteristics in the process of understanding an object, i.e. the relation between the 'inexhaustibility' of the object and 'selectiveness' in the process of its interpretation. According to Susan Pearce:

The object is inexhaustible, but it is this inexhaustibility which forces the viewer to his decisions. The viewing process is selective, and the potential object is richer than any of its realizations. When the same person sees the same tureen ten years later it may appear in a new light which seems to him more 'correct', richer, and more perceptive, so that object is transformed into experience.

(1992:219)

In the beginning (from 1919 to around 1922), Yanagi understood the characteristics of Korean objects as '悲哀の美' ('the beauty of sadness') (see page 109) to be found in their 'line'. He wrote that:

I think Korean art, especially the beauty of line, which can be considered as one element of the characteristic of Korean art, symbolises their heart starving for love. That beautiful long lingering Korean line expresses truly the continuous appeals of their starving hearts. Their grudges, their prayers, their wishes, their tears, all seem to flow in the line ... The Koreans have expressed their lonely feelings and their starving for something in this beautiful, appealing, long and curved line.

(Yanagi 1996:18–9; translated)

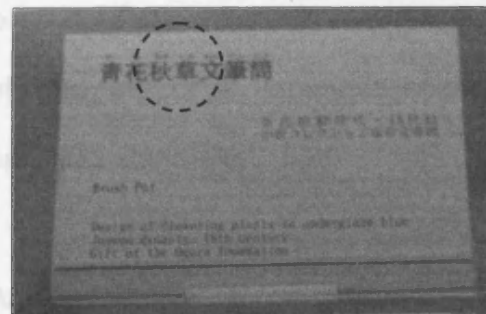
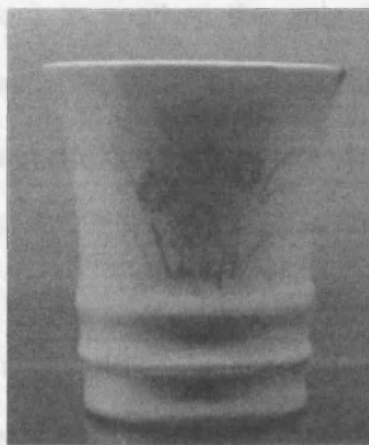


**Illustration 30** Brush Pot and its label, Tokyo National Museum, 2002.

In order to emphasise the sad feeling and his definition of 'the beauty of sadness', he even created a term '秋草文' ('autumn grass style') for the 'flower and plant design' in the decoration of Korean ceramics (see illustration 30). Although there emerged an argument in Japan concerning

this term, as these flowers and plants can also be spring and summer plants such as orchids and irises (KiKuchi 1994:24), the term seems to have gained a place in Japanese academic circles, as seen in the display label of a Korean blue-and-white porcelain brush pot decorated with such a flower and plant design, in the TNM.

Yanagi's understanding of Korean history is also worth noting. In an article entitled 'Thinking of the Korean people', published in 1919, he described China as a tyrant and wrote that when China became weak, Russia emerged to rule over Korea, and finally Japan took over that position; from one era to another, the only change for the Koreans was a change of tyrannical powers; thus they became gradually exhausted, and declined (Yanagi 1996:19). This reveals clearly the impact of Japanese colonial discourses, such as those of heteronomy and stagnation.

In another article, entitled 'Korean Art' and published in January 1922, Yanagi compared Korean with Chinese and Japanese art. By distinguishing between China as a vast continent, Korea as a peninsula threatened by irresistible pressures from that continent, and Japan as a group of islands which secured peace against the possible Chinese invasions, he described strong shapes as characteristic of Chinese art created by 'the practical and strong Chinese people', beautiful colours as characteristic of Japanese art created by 'cheerful Japanese', and the sad and lonely line as characteristic of Korean art created by 'lonely' Koreans

(Yanagi 1996:176–90), and then stated that he saw this Korean line everywhere in Korea, in architecture, sculpture, paintings, nature, crafts and particularly ceramics (Yanagi 1996:183–5). Furthermore, he saw the white clothes worn by Koreans as ‘mourning dress’.<sup>55</sup> He concluded that these white clothes were also a symbol of the Koreans’ sad and humble minds; in wearing white the Koreans were eternally in mourning, and generally the opposite of cheerful (Yanagi 1996:188).

The first noticeable change in Yanagi’s perceptions appeared in an article entitled ‘Characteristics of Joseon ceramics’, published in September 1922, where he described Goryeo ceramics as having ‘feminine beauty’ or ‘the beauty of delicacy’, ascribing this to Buddhism, one of the main beliefs of the period; Joseon ceramics he characterised as having ‘masculine beauty’ or ‘the beauty of will’, due to the dominance of Confucianism. He still maintained his definition of ‘the beauty of sadness’, however, as the overall characteristic of Korean material culture (1996:212).

The second change emerged during the 1950s. Yanagi began to use expressions such as ‘naturalness’ (i.e. naturalness without intention and artificial) and ‘freedom’ to express the unique character of Joseon ceramics and he no longer used expressions such as ‘sadness’ or ‘loneliness’ (1972:122–5). On the use of the colour white, he concluded that it was a reasonable way to avoid complicating the design process for

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<sup>55</sup> White clothing is normally worn at funerals in Korea as opposed to black in the West.

inexpensive ordinary folkcrafts (Kikuchi1994: 32).

The above examples seem to show that although Yanagi insisted on his 'seeing eye' approach, he apparently failed in his understanding of Korean material culture. This provides an ironic illustration of how strongly he was influenced by the received wisdom of the times in which he lived, and reveals one aspect of how an individual constructs the meaning of an object over time; as Pearce points out:

The interpretation ... is not the true meaning of the object, it is an individual's construction of its meaning, and so, strictly, an illusion created so that it fits into our individual imaginative world ... So the viewer has constantly to modify the illusion which he is creating, and he perpetually organizes and reorganizes the data he is given.

(1992:220)

To sum up, although Yanagi's views shifted slightly over time from 'the beauty of sadness' to more universal values in the appreciation of Korean objects, it can hardly be denied that his initial view of Korea was coloured by the nature of Japanese colonisation, and his final view by the changed status of Korea as an independent country – though no doubt another reason for the alteration in his views can be found in the more profound knowledge and experience of Korea which he had gained over the course of time.

### **On selfhood: Korean people, things Korean and museums**

One distinctive characteristic of this period among the Koreans was a greater awareness of their identity as 'being Joseon [Korean] people', emphasising the 'idea of common blood ties' (see page 46). As mentioned in Chapter Two, the word *minjok* (see page 48) entered the Korean vocabulary in the late 1890s and became widely used during this period. The main concern of Korean intellectuals now became 'how to regain national sovereignty' (Robinson 1988:13). In order to achieve independence they considered the idea of *minjok* – the idea of 'common blood ties', i.e. Koreans as the descendants of Dan-gun – to be a means of unifying and mobilising the entire Korean population.

Tsurumi, in her article on Japanese colonial education in Taiwan and Korea, argues that Japanese efforts to educate the Koreans into assimilation with Japanese society seem to have had the opposite effect: 'to be educated was to be anti-Japanese' (1984:294). According to her, 'it was the [Western] missionaries, not the Japanese, whom Koreans praised for introducing sports [and other innovations]'. She went on to compare Korean attitudes with those of the Taiwanese: 'Taiwanese usually responded to the inadequacies and discrimination in colonial schools by demanding a better version of the model from which the colonial school system had been fashioned. Koreans, on the other hand, always wanted independence – immediately' (1984:311).



Continuous Korean resistance to the Japanese emerged in a variety of forms during this period. As an example, in Korean academic circles Bak Eun-sik's<sup>56</sup> publications on Korean history and biographies of Koreans such as Ahn Jung-geun<sup>57</sup> and Yi Sun-sin<sup>58</sup> can be understood as a way for Koreans to resist the Japanese imperial power. It is worth noting also the beliefs of Bak Eun-sik, who emphasised the importance of preserving the Korean (national) spirit: i.e. a country can be overthrown, but the history of its people cannot. A country is a 'form', but history is the 'soul'. As long as the Korean national spirit (i.e. history) was alive, the country would one day recover its independence (see Gim Yong-seop 1976:431; Yi Man-yeol 2000:279).

Another example can be found in the Korean people's understanding of their own material culture, and in museums. It seems that Japan's unlawful appropriation of Korean material culture made Koreans aware of the values of that culture, and perceive it as emblematic of Korea itself. It is arguable that their perception of their material culture as evidence of their past is also noticeable during this period. In parallel with the Japanese Yanagi's definition of the characteristics of Korean material culture, a definition by a Korean, Goh Yu-seop, also emerged during this period.

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<sup>56</sup> 박은식 (1859–1925).

<sup>57</sup> 안중근. He assassinated Ito Hirobumi, Japanese Resident-General of Korea, in 1909.

<sup>58</sup> 이순신. He repulsed the Japanese invasions in the sixteenth century.

### ***Korean material culture as the extended self***

On 15 May 1928, the first work of its kind in Korea, *Gunyeok-seohwajing*,<sup>59</sup> was published<sup>60</sup> by O Se-chang,<sup>61</sup> who was determined to preserve and protect ancient Korean historical documents and Korean cultural materials from disappearing during the nation's subjection to Japanese occupation (Hong Sun-pyo 2001:8–9; Yi Gu-yeol 1996:36–8). His determination reflected the patriotic ideas common among intellectuals of the late Joseon, the Daehan Empire and the colonial periods. They believed that collecting and preserving the national patrimony would serve as the foundation for both individual and national strength in being Korean (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:17–9).

Interestingly, the nature of O Se-chang's collecting changed over the passage of time: his early collection was mainly focused on paintings and calligraphy and was obviously inspired by his father, O Gyeong-seok, an official translator of Chinese, and by the prevailing aesthetic taste of the time (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:36), i.e. more like a pastime reflecting the popularity of late Ming (Chinese) paintings and calligraphy (Hong Sun-pyo 1997:119–38). As Hong Sun-pyo (2001:8–9) notes, O Se-chang's concerns about the

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<sup>59</sup> 근역서화징 (槿域書畫徵, 'Bibliographical Evidence for Korean Calligraphers and Painters').

<sup>60</sup> In fact, it was completed in 1917.

<sup>61</sup> 오세창 (1864–?). He was arrested and imprisoned for two years and eight months by the Japanese authorities, for joining a leading group of 33 individuals who on 1 March 1919 signed the declaration of Korean independence from Japan. He is considered a patron and connoisseur of Korean painting and calligraphy. He also contributed to Jeon Hyong-pil's efforts in collecting Korean materials.

quantity of Korean cultural materials which had been scattered or had disappeared motivated him to collect such materials and to compile his book. His collecting in this regard appears to have begun about 1910 (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:36). In his review of O's publication, Choe Nam-seon<sup>62</sup> praised O's efforts thus: 'Although Joseon is an artistic country, the materials which prove it have been lost. Despite many difficulties, O Se-chang safeguarded the artistic foundations of Joseon (Korea) by unearthing and preserving those materials' (*Donga Ilbo*, 17 December 1928: translated).

O Se-chang states the purpose of the book as providing a set of records of family relations (Hong Sun-pyo 2001:10). It seems that by emphasising the family-like lineages of artists in a longitudinal survey, the author was attempting to reflect the deeply rooted social traditions of the Koreans and the then-current idea of 'common blood ties'; In his words, 'records of [family] relations', which can be interpreted as documenting a lineage within a group of people, reflect a sense of kinship and common descent. O's book seems to convey a strong notion of the genealogical character of Korean history, which can be considered as an expression of the Koreans' identity through an awareness of their cohesiveness and continuity. As he wrote in the preface:

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<sup>62</sup> 최남선 (1890–1957), a Korean historian .

Painting and calligraphy achieve perfection through the magic of Creation and enhance civilization by bringing out the secret power of life force. Art is precious and none of it should be regarded carelessly. Paintings and calligraphies are linked together, unbroken, from generation to generation, possessing the same root of character, and sharing the same feeling, thus forming the same spiritual domain. Likewise, our [Korean] past artists are so closely linked with each other and to us [the Koreans] that we might as well consider them all to be members of the same family.

(cited in Hong Sun-pyo 2001:6)

Apparently, by publishing the book *O* aimed to help restore national spirit by emphasising the continuity of the Koreans, using the lineage of Korean artists and material culture as a metaphor for that continuity.

Another example is a private collector, Jeon Hyeong-pil,<sup>63</sup> better known by his pen name of Gansong (간송), who inherited a substantial fortune from his father (see Illustration 31). With this fortune, he made every effort to buy Korean objects, particularly those in danger of being sold to non-Koreans, especially the Japanese. In 1935, he acquired a vase called *maebyeong* (매병) from a Japanese collector (at an exorbitantly high price); this is now in the Gansong Art Museum's<sup>64</sup> holdings, and is designated National Treasure (NT) no. 68. Again, in November 1936, after intensive negotiations with Yamanaka Shokai, a famous Japanese antique dealer of the time, he succeeded in purchasing a blue and white porcelain

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<sup>63</sup> 전형필 (1906–1962).

<sup>64</sup> 간송미술관

bottle with an orchid, chrysanthemum, grass and insect pattern in underglazed iron and copper (Lee Heung-woo 1997:51–2).



**Illustration 31** Jeon Hyeong-pil. Source: Yi Gu-yeol (1996:57)

From time to time Gansong even went to Japan to acquire, at auction or from other sources, Korean objects of high quality which had already been taken there. In the mid-1930s the quality of John Gadsby's<sup>65</sup> collection of Goryeo celadon was well known among collectors, and Gansong was determined to acquire it. In February 1937, when the opportunity arose, he went to Tokyo to acquire the entire Gadsby Korean collection, which is now in the museum in Seoul which he founded (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:211–9).

Among his Korean collection, 11 objects are now designated by the city of

<sup>65</sup> An English lawyer who stayed in Tokyo, was fascinated by Korean Goryeo celadons and collected such superior quality items during his time in Japan (from about 1914).

Seoul as Korean 'National Treasures' (NT), another 11 as 'Treasures' and four as 'Cultural Assets'. For an insight into the nature of his collection, the 11 objects designated as National Treasures include the following: a celadon incense burner with a unicorn-shaped lid (NT no. 65); a celadon kundika with an inlaid pattern of a pond and mandarin ducks (NT no. 66); a celadon vase with an inlaid pattern of clouds and cranes (NT no. 68); a manuscript, *Hun-min-jeong-eum* (訓民正音, 'Correct sounds for the instruction of the people'), concerning the Korean *hangeul* alphabet (NT no. 70); a manuscript, *Dong-guk-jeong-un* (東國正韻, 'Dictionary of proper Korean pronunciation') (NT no. 71); a gilt-bronze Buddha trinity (NT no. 72); a shrine with a gilt-bronze Buddha trinity (NT no. 73); a celadon water dropper in the shape of a duck (NT no. 74); and an album of paintings by Sin Yun-bok (NT no. 135) (Lee Heung-woo 1997:53).

In 1934, Gansong purchased about 33,000 square metres of forest land in Seoul and opened *Bukdanjang* (북단장), a centre to preserve and research his Korean collection (Lee Heung-woo 1997:51). In 1938, he eventually opened a museum, called *Bohwagak* (보화각), which was considered the first Korean private museum; it is the prototype of the Gansong Art Museum, whose holdings comprise over 12,000 objects (Yi Gwang-pyo 2002). The word 'Bohwagak' means that the place is full of the Korean national spirit in preserving precious Korean materials, and shows that for him to collect items of the Korean heritage was another way of fighting against the Japanese power: in fact, the name 'Bohwagak' was

O Se-chang's coinage for the first private museum built by a Korean, Jeon Hyeong-pil (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:59). Thus, for Gansong, Korean material culture, together with the museum he built, was interpreted as a way of rebelling against the occupying power by preserving the Korean spirit. It is worth noting that during the Japanese occupation he did not change his Korean name by adopting a Japanese one, although the Japanese regime required him to do so.

The above examples illustrate how a group of objects came to be appreciated by Korean people because of their identity as things Korean – material culture seems to embody such potent symbols of national identity. Both O Se-chang's and Jeon Hyeong-pil's efforts to acquire Korean material culture and preserve it, in the form of a book and a museum respectively, can be understood as a fight to preserve the Korean identity which might bring the country independence one day, just as Bak Eun-sik believed that the preservation of the Korean national spirit would bring about that end.

***Limits to a Korean's understanding of the Korean past and his efforts to find Korean identity in things Korean***

Goh Yu-seop (see Illustration 32) is considered the first Korean to

graduate in aesthetics and art history (美學及美術史科).<sup>66</sup> In 1933 he was appointed Director of the Gaeseong Prefectural Museum (開成府立博物館) (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:417). It is believed that he was the only Korean director of a museum built by the Japanese during the occupation period, because of the strong anti-Japanese feelings of Gaeseong people. He kept this position until 1944, when he died at the age of 39. During his lifetime he wrote a number of essays and articles on aesthetics and on Korean material culture, ranging from Buddhist pagodas to ceramics, crafts, paintings, etc.



**Illustration 32** Goh Yu-seop. Source: Goh Yu-seop (1993a)

Goh Yu-seop was born in 1905, the first year of the Japanese protectorate in Korea (1905–10), and educated in the Japanese colonial environment; thus he was necessarily exposed to and influenced heavily by the Japanese colonial discourses of Korea and its past. In an article entitled

<sup>66</sup> He graduated from Keijo Imperial University (京城帝國大學) in 1930 (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:417).



朝鮮 古美術에 관하여 ('About ancient Joseon [Korean] art'), published in the *Chosun Ilbo* in 1932 (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:17–20), he defines what the words 'ancient art' means in his writings. Unlike other scholars of Korean history of the time, who considered the period up to Goryeo to be the 'ancient' period, Goh Yu-seop prefers to regard Korean materials produced up to the year 1910, when Korea lost its sovereignty, as 'ancient Korean art'. According to him, Korean materials were born in the Korean historical environment and developed together with that history, but now that Korea no longer existed, those materials which would have been identified as 'Korean', together with Korean history, also no longer existed (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:17). Goh then gives his reasons for the fall of Korea: Korean culture was heavily influenced by that of 'the continent' (i.e. China); Korean culture in the past began and ended with continental culture. However, after King Injo<sup>67</sup> of Joseon, 'Oceanic' culture entered Korea, and because Korea did not adopt that culture,<sup>68</sup> it fell, being annexed by Japan. He adds that a similar pattern of events happened in ancient times, e.g. the fall of Go-joseon to Han (China). At that time, Go-joseon was saturated with primitive stone culture,<sup>69</sup> and the Iron Age culture of Han was a huge

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<sup>67</sup> 인조 (reigned 1623–49).

<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, in the same article (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:17–20) he stated that the Silla and Bakje cultures contained the elements of the Oceanic, and that the latter were markedly present in the ancient Silla culture; according to him, it could be said that the original Silla culture belonged to the Oceanic culture. This recalls the Japanese colonial discourse – the southern part of Korea as an ancient colony of Japan.

<sup>69</sup> At the time of the fall of Go-joseon, iron was already in use (see Chronology). Han (China) prepared for the war with Go-joseon from 110 BC, invading in 109 BC. This war lasted about a year, and Go-joseon eventually fell in 108 BC. During the war, due to the fierce resistance of Go-joseon, Han sent an envoy there to negotiate peace and thus to end the war, although this initiative failed (Gim jeong-bae 1997b:105–7). If Go-joseon was using only stone rather than iron materials, it would have been difficult to continue the fight against the Han invasions for a year, and Han would not have needed so long (about two years) to prepare for the war, let alone seek

threat. This iron culture had already appeared in China, but Go-joseon did not adopt it and this led to its fall (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:18).

Another trace of Japanese colonial discourses can be seen in Goh's understanding of the period from 1392 to 1910 in Korean history. He sees this as a period of tremendous decline. As mentioned earlier, Japanese colonial scholars such as Sekino Tadashi asserted that Korean art was derived from Chinese-influenced Lelang art and reached a climax during the period when Gogureyo, Baekje and Silla existed, and when Buddhism was adopted by those kingdoms; this climax continued during the following period, when Silla annexed Gaya, Baekje and Gogureyo. The decline of Korean culture began during the Goryeo period, and was followed by over 500 years of misgovernment in the Joseon and the Daehan Empire periods, resulting in dry and trivial art that lacked the refinement of earlier times. The belief that Korea's culture was stagnant and dependent upon foreign stimulation, justifying Japanese colonisation, was itself a product of that colonialism (see pages 139–143).

This genealogy of Korean culture was transmitted through formal education under the Japanese power and instilled in the Koreans. It seems that Goh Yu-seop could not escape this pervasive and distorted colonial version of the Korean past. Like the Japanese colonial scholars, throughout his writings he also claimed that the Joseon period became

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to negotiate a peace with Go-joseon.

conservative, narrow-minded and non-artistic, due to Confucianism: thus he did not pay serious attention to the Joseon period. His understanding of Joseon culture differs a great deal from that of today's Korean academic circles, where it is understood that it was during the Joseon period that 'Koreanness' was strongly manifested in cultural materials.

From 11 to 20 October 1934, Goh published a series of articles entitled 우리 美術과 工藝 ('Our [Korean] arts and crafts') in *Donga Ilbo* (1993a:71–125). In these articles he questions what the Korean sense of beauty<sup>70</sup> was in the past. According to him, the concept of 'beauty' changes over time, but it has a universal value which is immutable, and he explains that his intention is to identify such unchanging qualities associated with enduring aspects of culture, and to base this on an examination of a range of Korean works of art.

Goh's efforts in search of Korean beauty in Korean cultural materials appear to be more fully articulated in two other essays. The one entitled 朝鮮 美術文化의 몇날 性格 ('Several characteristics of Korea's art and culture') was published in the *Chosun Ilbo* on 26 and 27 July 1940 (Goh Yu-seop 1993a:31–8). Here he argues that the characteristics of art are not fixed and unchanging, but can evolve as they are manifested in changing styles. He also argues that factors like national character or

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<sup>70</sup> His efforts in search of Korean beauty can be considered as searching for the characteristics manifesting themselves in Korean materials.

environment are useless in efforts to define the indigenous characteristics of Korean art, which challenges Japanese colonial scholars such as Sekino and Yanagi – as well as some Korean intellectuals who believed that Korea's climate and peninsula character determined those characteristics of Korean art manifest in its style (e.g. the 'line' in Korean art, as Yanagi puts it), popular disposition, and customs.

The second essay, entitled 朝鮮古美術의 特色과 그 傳乘問題 ('Characteristics of ancient Korean art and the issues of their transmission') was published in the *Chunchu* (春秋) in July 1941 (Goh Yu-seop 1993b:31–8). He claims that the characteristics and traditions of Korean art could not have been transformed or have evolved, but instead became more concrete in the flow of time. These seeming contradictions between the two essays suggest that his research interest in searching for the cause of stylistic changes in Korean cultural materials had shifted to a consideration of the inherent and immutable qualities of things Korean.

In both essays, Goh Yu-seop defined several characteristics of Korean cultural materials, including 무기교의 기교 ('technique without technique'), 무계획의 계획 ('plans without planning'), 무관심성 ('detachment'), 구수한 큰 맛 ('an overall sense of pleasure') and 고소한 작은 맛 ('a lingering sense of delight').<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Translated by Kim Young-na (2001:37), except 'detachment' which was translated by Pak Young-sook.

He also explained that Korean art was not commercial in nature but emerged from the practical needs of everyday life. He claimed that Korean art lacked control and symmetry, was simple, naïve, and spontaneous, showed imagination and a sense of composition. It could be extremely attractive, but it could also easily lose any sense of unity. A lack of attention to detail brought a sense of warmth and generosity to larger forms, and at the same time imbued smaller forms with elegance and refinement. Representing the superior qualities of Korean art, these characteristics could also lead to disorder and crudeness if insufficiently inspired. He also wrote that ‘an overall sense of pleasure’ and ‘a lingering sense of delight’ implied a kind of colourlessness, and that ‘technique without technique’ bred simplicity and a ‘beauty of quietness’ which, if uninspired, ‘fell into a sad melody’ – which echoes Yanagi’s ‘beauty of sadness’. Throughout his subsequent writings, he illustrated his ideas by using examples of Korean architecture, ceramics, women’s clothes, and so forth (Goh Yu-seop 1993a–d). In a way, his descriptions accord with what Yanagi notes:

... Our common sense is of no use for Koreans at all ... Their way of making things is so natural that any man-made rule becomes meaningless. They have neither attachment to the perfect piece nor to the imperfect. At the very moment when I got their unexpected answer, I came to understand for the first time the mystery of the asymmetrical nature of Korean lathe work ... Since they use green wood, the wares inevitably deform in drying. So this asymmetry is but a natural outcome of their state of mind, not the result of conscious choice. That is to say, their minds are free from any attachment to symmetry as well as asymmetry. The deformation of their work is the natural result of nonchalance, freed from any restriction. Why does Japanese lathe work look hard and cold in comparison with Korean? Because we are attached to perfection, we want to make the perfect piece. But what is human perfection after all?

In modern art, deformation is so often emphasized and insisted upon. But what a difference from Korean deformation! The former is done purposely, the latter naturally. Korean work is but an uneventful, natural outcome of the people's state of mind, free from dualistic, man-made rules. They make their asymmetrical lathe work not because they regard asymmetrical form as beautiful or symmetrical as ugly, but because they make everything without such polarized conceptions. They are quite free from the conflict between the beautiful and the ugly. Here, deeply buried, is the mystery of the endless beauty of Korean wares. They just make what they make without any pretension.

(Yanagi 1972:122–3)

Returning to the point, in a way it can be said that the Goh Yu-seop's 1940 and 1941 essays do not really contradict one another. Taken together, they suggest a range of expressive possibilities. Although he believed that a sense of beauty and its fundamental characteristics and traditions were fixed and unchanging, he also argued that such qualities were not always consistently expressed. Instead, sometimes they blossomed or declined, depending on historical and social conditions. The two essays are important as representing the first Korean definition of Korean cultural materials.

It seems that in the 1940s he became interested in the uniqueness of the Korean artistic tradition, but it is not clear why he became interested in defining the characteristics of Korean material culture. He may have been influenced by the late 1930s climate in Korea. According to O Gwang-su, in Korean artistic circles in the late 1930s there was a sudden increase of interest in how unique Korean aesthetics could be (2001:328–9). Goh may

possibly have been stimulated by a contemporary trend: the search for uniqueness in Korean culture and tradition.

However, there is also a possibility that he was influenced by a Japanese man, Yanagi Muneyoshi, who had attempted to define the characteristics of Korean material culture prior to Goh Yu-seop. As mentioned above, in Yanagi's 1922 essay, 'Korean and her art', he said that 'Korea's destiny has been determined by the fact that it is a peninsula ... Korea's history is saturated with agony and loneliness'. As we have seen, he coined the expression 'the beauty of sadness' as the distinctive characteristic of Korean art (although he later changed his perceptions).

As an example of Goh Yu-seop's awareness of Yanagi, he refuted the latter's belief that Chinese art is best exemplified in form, Japanese in colour and Korean in the 'line'. He claimed that Yanagi's definition was too poetic and could be applied to any nation's or people's culture. He was also critical of Yanagi's belief that peninsular geography had determined Korea's destiny. However, he agreed with other points made by Yanagi, and in his essay entitled 郷土藝術의 意義 ('The meaning of local art') published in Samcheonli (三千里) in April 1941, he echoed Yanagi's hope that an art museum would be established in Korea. Later he even accepted Yanagi's belief, which he had once refuted, that the characteristics of Korean materials can be found in their 'line'.

Although he was presumably influenced by the historical views of Japanese colonial scholars, which suggests there were scholarly limitations imposed by temporal and spatial agents (i.e. Korea during the Japanese colonial period), his definitions of the uniqueness of things Korean, together with Yanagi's later perceptions, had a great deal of influence on later Korean generations in understanding material culture in the Korean past, and also on others interested in Korean cultural materials.

### **Western people, Korean material culture and museums**

In 1917, the Reverend Stanley Smith,<sup>72</sup> who was with the English Church Mission in Seoul during the Japanese occupation period (Nominal file: Smith, Rev Stanley T. [MA/1/S]), and from whom both the British Museum (BM)<sup>73</sup> and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)<sup>74</sup> acquired some Korean materials in the categories of ceramics, metalwork, paintings, textiles and woodwork, including lacquer work, published an article in which he described the dominant attitudes of Western people collecting Korean materials at the time:

The ordinary tourist who passes through Korea has no expectation of either seeing or finding any art treasures, and who shall blame him, for

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<sup>72</sup> (1876–1954)

<sup>73</sup> OA 1946.0720.6 Jar with lid (Purchase); OA 1952.1215.0.1 Painting of the Guemgang Mountain (금강산) (Gift).

<sup>74</sup> M.96-1920 Candle holder; T.196-1920 Ceremonial Court Costume; W.38-1920 Box (Purchase) etc.



there is no available literature on the subject. He fully expects to satisfy all his aesthetic tastes in China and Japan. He may have great hopes of acquiring in those countries things both old, beautiful and unique, meanwhile he wishes to have some souvenir of Korea.

(1917:484)

He continues as follows:

What happens? The first bright thing that catches his eye is bound to be some piece of furniture plastered over with lurid brass; this he will acquire, together with some brass vessels, some pieces of amber (imported from Germany), and the rest of his purchases, should they have any pretensions to artistic value, are probably of Chinese or Japanese origin although guaranteed to be 'genuine Korean'.

(1917:484)

Then he compares the Western collecting of Korean pieces with that of the Japanese:

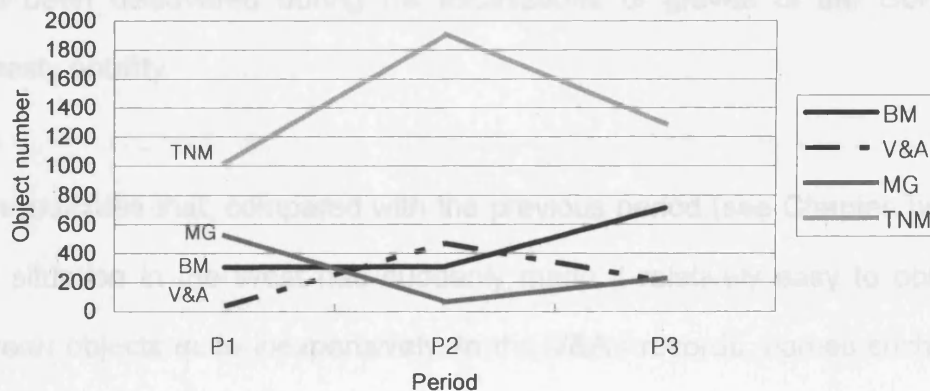
While our rich friend is acquiring these objects which thoroughly please him, a little old man with a wizened face and shabby kimono, but with the eyes of a hawk for beauty, is peering into the lumber shops in the back streets of Seoul. In his hand is a small piece of pottery, crude in shape, of old rich glaze almost black, from which emerges in small flocks a dull soft iron red colour of much beauty. He breathes upon it, and polishes it with the sleeve of his kimono, haggles much over the price, and in the end it is his very own for 30 sen.

That same night with two or three old crony friends they will look at that piece for hours, strange grunts and sibilant ejaculations proceeding the while, all expressive of pleasure and admiration.

(1917:485)

Smith's accounts summarise well the attitudes of the majority of Western people to Korean material culture. In the museum field, as Figure 7 illustrates, the BM's acquisitions were maintained during this period at almost the same level as during the first period (from the opening of the museum up to 1910), and the Tokyo National Museum (TNM) and the V&A saw significant increases in their acquisitions. Unlike the other museums in the case studies, however, acquisition by the Musée Guimet (MG) of Korean objects fell sharply: during the period in question, the BM formed about 24% of its Korean collection, the TNM 45%, the V&A 65%, but the MG only 5% (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 Acquisition of Korean objects



As Stanley Smith noted in 1917: 'During the last ten years the graves have opened ... Now what was so rare is comparatively common, and genuine specimens of Korean Celadon can be acquired by persons of moderate means' (1917:487). It is noteworthy that words such as 'tomb' or 'Song-do'

(the ancient name of Gaeseong) appeared in the V&A's records as the provenance of some materials, attesting to the serious nature of Japanese excavations in Korea (see pages 118–22).

During this period, a great number of Korean objects were circulating in the market; it appears that even in London it was possible to acquire some Korean pieces. For example, according to H.L. Joly (Nominal file: Joly, Mr & Mrs H.L. [13/5943M]) an iron Korean helmet decorated with silver (M.179-1913), which he donated to the V&A in 1913, had come from the collection offered for sale in London in the winter of 1910 by a Japanese man, Sakutaro Shimura, who had excavated it in Korea. In December 1910 the V&A purchased, also from Shimura, two Korean mirrors<sup>75</sup> which had been discovered during his excavations of graves of the Goryeo dynasty nobility.

This indicates that, compared with the previous period (see Chapter Two), the situation in the West had suddenly made it relatively easy to obtain Korean objects quite inexpensively. In the V&A's records, names such as John S.T. Audley (an Oriental dealer of St James's in London), Yamanaka & Co. (a Japanese dealer with an outlet in London), and S.M. Franck & Co. (importers of goods from the Near and Far East, based in London)

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<sup>75</sup> M.526-1910 and M.527-1910. In the V&A's inventory, their provenances were recorded as follows: 'Found during excavations by Mr. Sakutaro Shimura in graves of the ancient Korean nobility, on the hillside north of Kayō, capital of Korai (Koryō), one of the early kingdoms of Korea.'

appeared in relation to ways of acquiring Korean materials (see Wilkinson 2003:246). This in turn raises the question of the sudden decline in the MG's acquisitions. This section mainly focuses on the V&A and the MG, as they represent two extremes among the Western attitudes to Korean material culture expressed during this period.

Reflecting the easy access to Korean objects, a great opportunity for acquiring Korean materials came to the V&A: in 1918, the museum acquired more than 100 Korean objects, the majority of which were ceramics (especially of the Goryeo period), from Aubrey Le Blond,<sup>76</sup> a Cambridge man who married Baroness Hanover and who had collected a great number of Korean objects during his voyage to China, Korea and Japan from 1912 to 1913. It should be noted that by 1914 Le Blond's collection of Korean ceramics was already known to the V&A. The museum displayed about 143 objects on a loan basis,<sup>77</sup> as it found them 'very important' and believed that they could 'make a very interesting exhibit in the Loan Court', as Korean ceramics were 'practically unknown' in Britain and only a very few collectors had studied them (Nominal file: Le Blond, Mr & Mrs A. [MA/1/L594]).

In contrast with the display at the V&A, the situation in the MG had

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<sup>76</sup> (1869–1937)

<sup>77</sup> A V&A document entitled 'Objects submitted on approval for loan' dated 17 June 1914. It was recorded that '119 pieces of Corean pottery (15 with separate cover)' and '24 pieces of Corean pottery (11 with separate cover)'. On the back of the paper was written: 'Exhibited in Loan Court 14 Aug 1914'.

apparently reached stalemate after the annexation of Korea by Japan. The Korean collection formed by Charles Varat was displayed until 1919 in the Korean gallery at the MG, between the Chinese painting and Egyptian galleries, even though the space allotted to it became increasingly smaller. The situation was aggravated after the founder of the museum, Emile Guimet, died in 1918. In the following year, the MG underwent major renovation and the Korean collection was eventually dispersed. A new generation emerged increasingly attracted to Japanese culture, and as a result the Korean gallery closed (Cambon 1994, 1996).

In Britain, the growing interest in Korean cultural materials led the V&A in 1912 to send C.H. Wylde,<sup>78</sup> Keeper of the Ceramics Department, to Korea to acquire Korean materials (Nominal file: Purchases by officers on visits abroad, Part 5 1902–1954).<sup>79</sup> In France, the MG acquired some Korean objects in 1933 through the expedition of Joseph Hackin to Japan the preceding year. He did not visit Korea,<sup>80</sup> unlike Charles Varat, whose expedition to Korea in 1888 had acquired objects in the country itself at a time when Western people questioned the very existence of Korean art (see Chapter Two).

Another active attempt by the V&A to acquire Korean objects took place in

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<sup>78</sup> He was in charge of the Ceramics Department of the V&A from 1896 to 1918.

<sup>79</sup> According to a recent article by Liz Wilkinson, this file was in Part 4 (2003:255), but during my data-gathering work at the V&A's archives, I found it in Part 5.

<sup>80</sup> In the MG's records, he acquired these Korean objects in Japan, but in the museum's catalogue published in 2001, he acquired them in Korea.

1919, when the Reverend Stanley Smith drew the museum's attention to duplicates of Korean pottery possessed by the Yiwangga Museum in Seoul. In a letter dated 18 February 1919, Cecil Smith, then Director of the V&A, wrote to the Japanese Director of the Seoul museum:

Dear Sir,

A gentleman who has lately arrived in this country from Corea has given us to understand that amongst the collections of ancient Korean pottery and other works in your Museum, there are numerous duplicate specimens for the exhibition of which you have not sufficient space. I therefore venture to write to you to enquire whether this is actually the case, and, if so, to suggest that you might be willing to dispose of selected specimens to this Museum. We have as yet only a somewhat small representation of Korean art, and should be glad to take advantage of any opportunity that may arise of adding thereto. ...

(Nominal file: Smith, Rev Stanley T. [MA/1S])

It is not clear whether his attempts succeeded: presumably it failed, as there was no record of the Yiwangga Museum in the V&A's records. This illustrates the V&A approach at the time. It also explains the reasons for the sudden increase in the V&A's acquisition of Korean materials during this period.

Another example of the V&A's active endeavours to acquire Korean objects can be found in a letter dated 1 May 1920 which Bernard Rackham,<sup>81</sup> the V&A's Keeper of the Ceramics Department at the time,

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<sup>81</sup> (1876–1964)

sent to Tapp, asking for his financial support to enable the V&A to purchase Korean ceramics:

Dear Mr. Tapp,

I think you will be interested to know that we have now at the Museum for consideration a large collection of works of art chiefly pottery from Korea brought over by a Missionary who was for several years, before the war, in that country and thus had exceptional opportunities for securing good specimens. Many of the things are, in my opinion, better than any which we have in the collection given to us by Mr. Aubrey Le Blond. An interesting point also is that the consignment includes very good specimens of the later porcelain of the (Yi dynasty) ... showing several different types of technique ... what I was told only yesterday by Professor Sayce, that in future it will be very difficult to obtain any but second-rate specimens from Korea, as the Japanese Administration have secured for themselves the right to acquire anything they wish to retain, and forbid, under heavy penalties unauthorised excavations. It seems likely, therefore, that the prices of Korean pottery will in future be much higher than before the war.

The prices of the articles now offered for sale are, in my opinion, moderate, even on the pre-war scale, so we have an exceptional opportunity of extending the Museum collection of Korean wares. The unfortunate thing is that the Government have just decided to cut down, by about 30%, the Museum purchasing grant which, even before the war was insufficient for our needs and is now in consequence quite inadequate. This being so I am afraid it will be impossible for us to purchase anything like all the desirable pieces from this collection and my reason for writing to you is that I thought possibly you might feel disposed to help us in our difficulty ...

(Nominal file: Smith, Rev Stanley T. [MA/1S])

It is worth noting an American example: according to Kim Kwang-on, in his article on the Peabody Essex Museum in the USA, the museum became visibly reluctant to build a Korean collection. Only a few items, such as a child's multi-coloured coat and some court uniforms and robes, entered

the museum, through purchases from Japanese dealers in the USA (1995:61).

This example, together with those of the MG and the V&A, illustrate interestingly different reactions in the West to the historical fact of Korea's annexation. Korea's loss of control over its own territory made the materials which had been 'so rare' 'comparatively common' to acquire and research; this was illustrated by the V&A's display of Korean materials and the sudden increase in its acquisition of them. As Liz Wilkinson (2003:247) notes, there were large auction sales of Korean materials in both Paris and London in 1911 (e.g. at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris and Glendinning's in London), and articles on Korean art began to be published in scholarly art journals such as the *Burlington Magazine*. At the same time, however, the image of a lost country seemed to interfere with Western interest in Korean material culture, as shown by the MG's closing of its Korean gallery, and its reluctance to acquire Korean materials.<sup>82</sup>

As can be seen from the above, while the broad range of Korean material culture went largely unnoticed, Korean ceramics apparently aroused great interest in the West. The most famous example of this is Godfrey Gompertz, who visited Korea in September 1927 and became strongly attracted to Korean ceramics, which he began to study during his stay in

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<sup>82</sup> Given the lack of information, it is difficult to understand the reluctance in the BM's attitudes towards the acquisition of Korean materials. However, from the MG example it is conceivable that the BM probably chose to go the same way as the MG.



Japan through the writings of Japanese experts. He also collected Korean ceramics, aiming to introduce a representative Korean ceramics collection in Britain. He collected over 90 Goryeo wares, about 30 Joseon porcelains and a number of bronzes and lacquer wares, which are now at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (*Korean Culture* 1992). William B. Honey,<sup>83</sup> then Keeper of the Ceramics Department at the V&A, whose comments completely contradict Bushell's with respect to Korean ceramics (see Chapter Two), wrote as follows:

... the best Korean wares are not only original; they are the most gracious and unaffected pottery ever made. They have every virtue that pottery can have. Their shapes are simple, characteristically beautiful in proportion and outline, flowering easily and naturally into plastic and other decorations, incised or carved or inlaid, of unsurpassed beauty and strength ... This Korean pottery in fact reaches heights hardly attained even by the Chinese. It has at all times great dignity, a quality which is said to accord with the character of the Korean people, as shown in the great periods of their history and even in their misery to-day ...

(1945:167)

However, it must be remembered that the appreciation of Korean ceramics in the Western world was confined to a small number of people, including museum keepers, and the mainstream of Western museums' acquisition of Eastern pieces centred on Chinese and Japanese objects. The other factor to be borne in mind is that almost all Korean-related research had been carried out by Japanese scholars, and this was the only source for

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<sup>83</sup> (1889–1956)

the study of Korean art or archaeology at that time – see the examples above from Gompertz,<sup>84</sup> and Cecil Smith's attempt to obtain copies of the Japanese report on Korean art. While these and other materials written by the Japanese undeniably provide a certain amount of information about Korean culture, there is also a danger of perceiving it through the distorting lens of Japanese colonial perspectives, which could make it difficult to build a balanced view. According to Jane Portal, Museum Keeper in the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the BM: 'The fact that most Western collections of Korean art are predominantly of ceramics is probably due partly to the influence of the Japanese Folk Crafts scholars [e.g. Yanagi, Hamada, etc.] and partly to the general and long-standing Japanese appreciation of Korean ceramics ... Paintings, screens and sutras remained inaccessible to many Westerners and were not collected in such numbers' (2000:18). It is worth noting that in June 1929, Yanagi and Hamada visited the V&A and inspected some of the ceramics in the museum's holdings. According to the museum records concerning the Korean objects C.406-1918, C.331-1912 and C.352-1912, Yanagi and Hamada identified C.406-1918 (a jar) to be Chinese, C.331-1912 (a water bottle) to be modern Japanese and C.352-1912 (a water bottle) to be Japanese (imari style). This example, together with the V&A's Korean

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<sup>84</sup> Later in 1962, Gompertz states in the preface of his book *Korean Celadon and Other Wares of the Koryŏ Period* that 'the great majority of references are to Japanese sources. The reason for this is that the Japanese exercised a virtual monopoly of archaeological research during their thirty-five year rule of Korea. They also took the greatest interest in the study and collection of Korean ceramic wares. The only Korean scholar of promise in this field was Yu-sŏp Ko [Goh Yu-seop], who published a small work based largely on Japanese studies but died before he could make any major contribution' (1963:xvi).

chronology displayed in the Korean gallery mentioned in page 134 in this chapter, can be understood in a way as the reflection of these Japanese influences.

To finish this section, it seems worth quoting what an English potter, Bernard Leach wrote concerning the characteristics of Korean beauty (see Yanagi's interpretations of Korean beauty on pages 156–8):

I had visited Korea for the first time with Yanagi in 1918, before the occupation by the Japanese.<sup>85</sup> ... I seemed to have the sensation of already knowing something of its unique beauty, not only in the pottery, which continues to this day, but also in the lines of its ancient granite hills behind the Imperial Palace gates; the curved roofs lifting to the mountains behind; the strange black horse hair hats of the married men – raised an inch above their heads on bamboo frames ...; the lilting shape of the foot gear; women beating washing on flat stones in the clear flowing water of river-beds, the lovely line of dark hair resting on the napes of their necks. ... Everywhere beauty of line, neither Chinese, nor Japanese. ... The emotions were poetic; I did not want to leave; memories are still nostalgic.

After the annexation I came again in 1935 and by invitation held an exhibition of my work in Seoul. The [Japanese] government had allowed Yanagi the use of a small building at the old palace to be used as a museum – a meeting place where the Japanese and Koreans could enjoy love of beauty without rivalry or politics.

During my exhibition I gave a talk in Japanese. Remarking on the sad loss of beauty in the things of everyday life. I praised Yanagi's brave attempt to preserve some of the exquisite 'arts of the people'. I was silenced by a courageous young Korean student who dared to stand up and reprove me for pleading for beauty when life was at stake. This was unanswerable. I hope nothing untoward happened to that young man, for the Japanese army was ruthless.

... Everywhere in this peninsula [Korea] I found a lonely, poetic beauty. From the first if my concept of China has been of form, that of Korea has been of line, whether in landscape, hats, shoes, pottery or poetry. The calm ideal of Korea may be due to Buddhism – there was in the air a sense of loneliness, isolation and sadness.

(1978:200–1)

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<sup>85</sup> He must be confused, as Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910.

## Korea and its people after liberation



KOREA is a gem of a country inhabited by a noble people.

(Buck 1963:9)

'There is a warmth and humanity in Korean art,' says Robin Crighton, keeper of applied art at the Fitzwilliam [Museum], 'which compares favourably with the search for a classical perfection of form of the Chinese and the often eccentric, deliberate informality of the Japanese.'

(*The Times*, 28 June 1991)

Ancient Koreans lived as one with nature. Their lives exemplified nature itself, with its beauty being captured in their arts. It is a beauty that reflects the wind, the trees that change with the seasons, flowing water and the vast sea. This unique beauty was attained through an exquisite harmony with the natural order of nature. In particular, they never went against nature, tried to alter nature with human influence or sought to dominate it. Such sentiments underlie the creation of the mid-Chosŏn [mid-Joseon] period moon jars.<sup>2</sup>

(Chung Yang-mo<sup>3</sup> 2000:73)

<sup>1</sup> Poster of the Korea Foundation Gallery, the British Museum, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> See the jar figured in the BM's poster above.

<sup>3</sup> 정양모 (b. 1934): Emeritus Professor, Department of Appraisalment in Korean Antiques and Arts (고미술감정학과) at the Graduate School of Traditional Arts (전통예술대학원) of the Kyonggi University (경기대학교) and Chairman of the Cultural Heritage Committee (문화재위원회 위원장) in South Korea. Then Director of the National Museum of Korea (Daum, at [people.dic.daum.net/tab/simpleinfo?id=0000009570](http://people.dic.daum.net/tab/simpleinfo?id=0000009570); Kyonggi University, at [www.kyonggi.ac.kr/organ/staff/view.asp?oMID=13184&organID...](http://www.kyonggi.ac.kr/organ/staff/view.asp?oMID=13184&organID...)).

## Historical background

On 15 August 1945, the Koreans recovered their sovereignty. Although during the previous 35 or 40 years<sup>4</sup> the Koreans had fought against and resisted the Japanese power to gain their independence,<sup>5</sup> it was in fact obtained as a direct result of Japan's Second World War surrender to the Allies, which led to the Koreans being once again compelled to suffer from a clash of powers greater than themselves: the institution, at the Moscow Conference in December 1945, of a five-year trusteeship of the Korean peninsula by the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China; the division of the Korean peninsula along the thirty-eighth parallel (due to US fears of socialism and communism, i.e. of the Soviet Union exerting control over the whole Korean peninsula);<sup>6</sup> Soviet strategic interests, stemming from the geographical location of Korea along the ten-mile common border near the mouth of Dumangang,<sup>7</sup> not far from Vladivostok; the emergence of separate states in the Korean peninsula in 1948, reflecting the dominant global ideology of the Cold War period; and the Korean War, from 1950 to 1953 (Byeon Tae-seop 1986:495–506, 1996:469–81; Eckert *et al.* 1990:327–45).

<sup>4</sup> 35 years from the Japanese occupation in 1910, 40 years from the start of the Japanese protectorate in 1905, up to 1945.

<sup>5</sup> These Korean efforts focused the attention of the great powers on the issue of the liberation of Korea from Japan. In 1943, the USA, Britain and China agreed that Korea should become independent 'in due course', and later the Soviet Union concurred in this at the Cairo discussions (Byeon Tae-seop 1986:497, 1996:471; Eckert *et al.* 1990:339).

<sup>6</sup> In fact, on 10 August 1945, the Soviets attacked Unggi (웅기) and Najin (나진) located in north-eastern Korea (Eckert *et al.* 1990:330). It was perhaps this event that raised some fears of a possible Soviet occupation of the Korean peninsula.

<sup>7</sup> 두만강, a river forming the northern frontier with China and Russia, known as 'Tumen Jiang' or 'Tumen river' in the West (e.g. *Philip's Atlas of the World*).

Intriguingly, the most paradoxical aspect of the post-Korean War period is that the Koreans, who consider themselves one *minjok*, the descendants of Dan-gun and different from the Japanese or the Chinese, now have to learn to recognise Koreans in the other part of the peninsula as the 'other'. This concept of seeing 'oneself as another'<sup>8</sup> which the Koreans have had to accept, illustrates that a kind of otherness is not merely constituted by comparisons – of which examples can be also detected in the history of the Koreans (e.g. the relationship between the Koreans and their others such as the Chinese, the Japanese and Western people) – but can be 'constitutive of selfhood as such', and suggests that 'the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that one passes into the other' (Ricoeur 1992:3). The notion of 'Korea' or 'Korean' now has a range of differing connotations, such as Korea the entity existing in the past (e.g. Go-joseon, Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla, Gaya, Goryeo, Joseon, etc) and, in the present – South Korea, North Korea or both. It is now impossible for one to 'be thought of without the other' (i.e. North Korea without South Korea, and vice-versa), although the people and the materials are divided between and belong to two different states. This point makes people's understanding of 'Korean' material culture much more complex.

After the Korean War, the main aims of the South Koreans can be summarised as political stability, economic development, dealing with the

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<sup>8</sup> This expression is borrowed from the title of Paul Ricoeur's book (1992).

negative image of 'Korea' in the West,<sup>9</sup> overcoming the Japanese colonial legacy, recovering the self-esteem as Korean, and the reunification of the two Koreas.

The historical, political and socio-cultural setting of this chapter is the environment of South Korea from Korea's liberation in 1945 to the present. In order to understand the nature of the South Korean efforts in the 1990s to establish a permanent Korean gallery abroad, this chapter is divided according to the South Korean historical framework: the first section covers the period from 1945 to 1948, the second with that up to 1959; the third with that up to 1988; and the fourth section with that up to 2002 or thereabouts.

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<sup>9</sup> This might affect sales in the West of products labelled 'Made in Korea' and Korea's potential in attracting tourists.

### The period soon after liberation (1945–48)

With liberation from Japan in August 1945, the most visible shift in the museum field was the changes in the ownership of museums and the guardianship of Korean materials from the Japanese to the Koreans – all the Japanese had to be evacuated from the Korean peninsula. Kim Che-won,<sup>10</sup> the first Director of the National Museum of Korea, recalls his experiences at the time:

After the historical radio broadcast of Japan's surrender at 12:00 pm on 15 August 1945, I was thinking what I should do from now on, as many other Koreans did ...

On 15 August 1945,<sup>11</sup> I went to the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen. The Japanese people welcomed me and asked me: 'What will happen to us?', 'Are we able to keep working in the museum?', 'Who will be in charge of the museum work?' Anxious as they were, they asked me various other questions. ... I asked them to keep closely in touch with me and advised them not to be anxious for their future. At that time, the *Haksulwon* [National Academy]<sup>12</sup> was established ... Baek Nam-un,<sup>13</sup> who later left South Korea for North Korea, became the Director of the *Haksulwon* and confiscated all academic institutions in Seoul from the Japanese.

One day I went there and he advised me to confiscate the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen. I told him that as the museum was already under my control, one could say that it was already virtually

<sup>10</sup> 김재원 (1909–90). He obtained a doctorate in education from the Universität München in Germany in 1934, and subsequently studied archaeology by assisting Dr Carl Hentze, professor at Ghent University in Belgium (1934–40). He was Director of the National Museum of Korea from 1945 to 1970 (Cunningham 2001a:46; Kim Che-won 1991:3, 271).

<sup>11</sup> According to Arimitsu Kyoichi (有光教一) who was in charge of the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen (1941–5), Kim Che-won came to the museum on 17 August 1945 (1996:10).

<sup>12</sup> Later, according to Cunningham (2001a:46), the *Haksulwon* (National Academy) was designated by the US military government in Korea, within months of the war's end, as the Korean organisation in charge of the restoration and reorganisation of educational and research institutions throughout Korea.

<sup>13</sup> 백남운 (1894–1979). Marxist historian (Cheon Gwan-u 1976:22; Cunningham 2001a:46).



confiscated, that therefore the formality of confiscation was not necessary, and that my only concern was the possible illegal appropriation of valuable objects, such as gold crowns moved to the museums at Gyeongju and Buyeo for safety,<sup>14</sup> during the period after the Japanese people who had been in charge of those objects had left. He asked me to go to Gyeongju and Buyeo to deal with the situation. The Korean government had not yet been established at that time, I was only an ordinary individual, and therefore what I could do there would of course be limited. However, feeling that the situation was urgent, I left for Gyeongju; indeed, my travelling expenses were provided by Baek.

(1991:7; translated)<sup>15</sup>

With a letter from Arimitsu Kyoichi,<sup>16</sup> Kim Che-won went to Gyeongju and confiscated the museum by appointing a Korean, Choe Sun-bong (최순봉), to serve as director; he then returned to Seoul because of his concerns about the post-liberation situation, which was changing from moment to moment (Kim Che-won 1991:8).

During the Japanese occupation period, apart from Goh Yu-seop, none of the Koreans were employed in museum professional grades. This fact was well recognised by Arimitsu Kyoichi (1996:11) of the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen. These sudden changes in ownership and guardianship of museums and Korean material culture can thus be understood as the process of change in the meanings attaching to

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<sup>14</sup> During the war time, in order to prevent possible damage, those objects were removed from the Museum of Government-General of Chosen to 'branch museums' by Arimitsu and other museum workers who were conscious of the values of those objects but with no support from the Government-General of Chosen. In fact, the latter attempted to use the museum building for war purposes, ignoring the safety of the museum collection (Arimitsu 1996:8).

<sup>15</sup> See Note 10.

<sup>16</sup> Kim Che-won probably thought that the letter from Arimitsu, who was in charge of the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen, could give him the authority to convince the Japanese director of the Gyeongju museum.

museums in Korea and to Korean material culture: i.e. from a visible symbol of Japanese colonisation to a visible symbol of the liberation of the subjugated Koreans from Japan.

On 7 September 1945, the US army landed at Incheon in Korea.<sup>17</sup> At the time of the US arrival, two Korean governments already existed: the *Daehanminguk-imsigonghwaguk*<sup>18</sup> and the *Joseon-inmingonghwaguk*.<sup>19</sup> The US forces, however, denied the legitimacy of both, proclaiming that the US Army Military Government was the only legitimate administration in the Korean peninsula to the south of the thirty-eighth parallel (Byeon Tae-seop 1986:499). On 21 September 1945, it was the US Army Military Government in Korea that officially appointed Kim Che-won Director of the former Museum of the Government-General of Chosen, which was renamed the 'National Museum'<sup>20</sup> (Jo Yu-jeon 1996:16; Kim Che-won 1991:9).

Today, this US intervention in Korean museum history raises an issue concerning the identity of the so called 'National Museum' of the time, as from 1945 to 1948 the people and the land called 'Korean' and 'Korea'

<sup>17</sup> On 20 August, the Soviet landed at Wonsan (원산) in Korea (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:638).

<sup>18</sup> 대한민국임시정부 (Daehanminguk Provisional Government). It was established in 1919 in Shanghai in China. Later, in 1940, it moved to Chongqing (重慶) in China. Its main activity was recovering the independence of Korea (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:463–4).

<sup>19</sup> 조선인민공화국 [jo-seon-in-min-gong-hwa-guk] (People's Republic of Joseon). It was established 6 September 1945 in the Korean peninsula (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:472).

<sup>20</sup> 국립박물관. Later, the word '중앙', which means 'centre', was added, and it is thus called today '국립중앙박물관'. The direct translation of the latter is the 'National Central Museum'. However, its official name in English is the 'National Museum of Korea'.

existed, but a state called 'Korea' did not exist: i.e. Korean people and their land were divided, and placed under a Soviet-US Joint Commission (Eckert *et al.* 1990:340). Kim Che-won was appointed 'as Director of [the] National Museum in the employment of [the] United States Army Military Government In Korea' (Kim Che-won 1991:20).

In the above term 'National Museum', it is difficult to ignore the question of what the word 'national' means. This question has already begun to be raised by a small circle of South Korean scholars who were exposed to the Western post-colonial discourses. Chun Kyung-soo (2000:183) asserts that this 'National Museum' must be identified as the 'Museum of United States Army Military Government In Korea', and that the museum can be called 'National Museum' only after the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948. This argument might raise another issue, about defining the identity of the current National Museum of Korea.

Concerning this point, this thesis challenges the above argument by emphasising the need to pay attention to the initiatives taken by Kim Che-won before the US involvement and also during the US occupation period; the significance of the museum to the Koreans of the time – rather than the South Koreans of the twenty-first century, who have been influenced by the Western post-colonial discourses; and the nature of the American involvement in the museum work.

Unlike the two Korean governments whose legitimacy was ignored by the US forces (see page 194),<sup>21</sup> before Kim Che-won's appointment the US military government had already acknowledged him as Director of National Museum and the museum as the 'National Museum'. In a letter dated 14 September 1945, Major-General Archer Lerch of the US Army addressed Kim Che-won as 'Director, National Museum' and the museum was called 'National Museum', even though the letter specified Kim Che-won's position as follows: '... prior to 13 August 1946, and subsequent thereto you did while occupying a position of trust as Director of [the] National Museum in the employment of United States Army Military Government in Korea ...' (Kim Che-won 1991:20).

After obtaining official recognition as Director of the museum, Kim Che-won went to Gongju,<sup>22</sup> Buyeo and Gyeongju,<sup>23</sup> with Arimitsu and two American soldiers, Robin Winkler and Lieutenant Paul Mitchel, neither of whom were professional soldiers: it was said that Winkler was in his 20s and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and Mitchel, in his 50s had a background in teaching (Arimitsu 1996:13).<sup>24</sup> They transported the collection of the former Museum of the Government-General of Chosen

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<sup>21</sup> In November 1945, Gim Gu (김구) and other leading figures of the Daehanminguk Provisional Government were only allowed to enter the Korean peninsula as ordinary individuals, and not as officials of the Korean government (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:473), although they fought together with the Allies during the Second World War (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:468).

<sup>22</sup> There was a display room for Baekje materials.

<sup>23</sup> The museums at Buyeo and Gyeongju were formerly branch museums of the Museum of the Government-General of Chosen.

<sup>24</sup> It appears that Arimitsu, who was detained in Korea, was moved by Lieutenant Mitchel's offer to help in preparing for the reopening of the museum (Arimitsu 1996:13).

from the museums in Buyeo and Gyeongju to the National Museum in Seoul, and at Buyeo and Gongju Kim Che-won appointed a Korean to serve as director, promising the new appointee at Gonju to promote its status from display room to museum (Kim Che-won 1991:10–3). At that time, the US military government had no information on Korea: it can thus be considered that it was Kim Che-won who, in fact, appointed those Koreans as director. It may be worth noting that one day Kim Che-won asked Winkler to write two official letters, by which the US Army Military Government would approve Yi Jae-uk (이재욱) as Director of the National Library and Jo Bok-seong (조복성) as Director of the Science Museum; when these letters had been typed, Winkler signed them himself, and both Koreans were appointed (Kim Che-won 1991:13). This episode tells us a good deal about the nature of the US involvement and about Kim Che-won's position in Korean museum history. He was then actively engaged in endeavouring, with the support of Captain Eugene Knez<sup>25</sup> (who had a BA in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico), to secure Korean objects held privately by the Japanese (Kim Che-won 1991:41–50; Knez 1997:79) and also to prevent the potential illegal exportation of items of Korean heritage<sup>26</sup> (Yi Gu-yeol 1996:224–34).

According to Kim Che-won, patriotism among the Koreans was very strong

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<sup>25</sup> Eugene I. Knez (b. 1916). American. Anthropologist Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution from 1979. Anthropologist (Curator, Asian Ethnology) at the Smithsonian Institution (1959–79), Director of the National Bureau of Culture of the US Army Military Government in Korea (1945–6) (Knez 1997:79, 81). His original name was Knezevich, but he is known as Knez.

<sup>26</sup> Both Kim Che-won (1991:24) and Arimitsu (1996:12–3) record the violation of the museum storage by the US soldiers looking for souvenirs.

at that time. When he – together with Arimitsu and two American soldiers – was transporting the collection of the former Museum of the Government-General of Chosen, the single expression ‘our country’s national treasures’ (우리나라의 국보) prevented people from daring even to touch a lorry carrying the objects (1991:12).<sup>27</sup> In order to understand the Korean perception of the word ‘national’ at that time, it is crucial to understand the expression used by Kim Che-won, such as ‘our country’s national treasures’. Following Chun Kyung-soo’s argument (see page 195), the connotation of ‘our country’ could have been ‘US Army Military Government In Korea’, which is an absurdity; and it is also very unlikely that the US military government itself would have used the word ‘national’ to mean ‘of the US Army Military Government In Korea’.

To understand the meaning attached to Korean material culture at the time, it may be interesting to look at an account written by Captain Eugene Knez:

A Korean delegation from Yosŭ [여수, Yeosu] came to my office to request the return of a large polished stone monument to the national hero, Admiral Yi Sun-shin [이순신], that had been removed from its site during the Japanese occupation of Korea. It was found by the staff of the National Museum of Korea in the corridor surrounding the Kunjongjon Hall (Throne room) [of the Gyeongbok Palace]. Carved characters referred to naval victories over the Japanese by the Admiral Yi’s turtle ships which the Japanese authorities must have found offensive. The historical stele had not been destroyed but transported to Seoul, placed flat on the ground, and covered with rice straw sacking. This act of concealment and preservation of a national monument, by the Japanese, was surprising and

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<sup>27</sup> See Note 11.

of much interest to me. Perhaps, this was a covert Japanese recognition of the factual account of Admiral Yi's exploits. ... After having submitted to my office documentation to assure me the monument would be placed in its original location, the delegation traveled with it to its destination.

(1997:13–5)

The above example illustrates clearly the significance of Korean material culture as a visible sign of independence: Japanese control over the past achievements of the Koreans had now been returned to Korean hands, even though a Korean state did not exist – and this brings the US intervention into the process. In order to understand the nature of US involvement, it may be worth looking at another account written by Knez:

With Prof. Sohng Suk-Ha [송석하] as director, I established a new National Museum of Anthropology in the former Japanese residence of Kato Kangkakai. The purpose of the anthropological museum was to present folk culture of Korea in a dignified and attractive manner and to restore both understanding and pride after the long oppressive Japanese occupation ... The oval driveway on the former Kato estate was lined with beautiful blossoming cherry trees which Prof. Sohng, usually a reasonable man, wanted to cut down immediately. He explained that they symbolized to all Koreans the Japanese occupation and should be removed. I understood and with reluctance approved his request.

(1997:19–20)

There is another interesting account in Knez's recollection of the time:

Soon the pressure of adequate housing for American troops was expressed with a plan to install quonset huts near the Capital Building [the former Government-General of Chosen building]. I managed to resist the proposal by pointing out that the Capital Building itself should not have

been built by the Japanese on palace grounds, and to construct quonset huts was a further violation of international conventions of historic and cultural property. United States Army Military Government in Korea ... I recommended, should be prepared for periodic inspections by cultural specialists, from GHQ-Tokyo, and hopefully meet the international requirements. ... My successor was not able to discourage the quonset hut construction, but eventually the quonset huts were removed from the palace grounds.

(1997:18)

According to Kim Che-won (1991:19–23), it was the Koreans who eventually succeeded in discouraging the Quonset hut construction project: Korean newspapers published articles together with photos of the US housing construction at the palace, and this shocked and infuriated the Koreans. The project was abandoned, but Kim Che-won, who had assisted in calling a meeting of members of the Association for the Preservation of Ancient Remains (고적보존회) and also sent photos of the construction to the Association (which were eventually sent to the Korean press by Sohng Suk-Ha (송석하), Chairman of the Association), did not avoid a letter of reprimand from the US military government. In the letter, of 14 September 1945, it is stated that: ‘Your disloyal and dishonest acts in this instance have brought you into discredit with this headquarters, and a grave doubt exists as to your fitness to hold the important position of trust as Director of [the] National Museum’. However, later in the same month Kim Che-won was in fact appointed as Director of the National Museum by the US military government.



Knez also recorded that: 'The Japanese authorities had not permitted Koreans to be trained and assigned to responsible positions for culture and science. Koreans with general qualifications were ... selected by the interim American military government and assigned often as Korean counterparts to American officers' (1997:15). On the staff list of the Bureau of Culture of the National Department of Education, Captain Eugene Knez was Military Chief and Choe Seung-man was Korean Chief. The rest of the staff were Koreans (see Appendix 11). The above statements provide some idea of the scope of the US intervention in the museum field, and the relationship between the US military government and Kim Che-won.

The problematic aspect of the Japanese handing the museum over to the Koreans was that this institution, based on Western practices and administered to meet the needs of the Japanese colonisers, was transferred to a people who had never had an opportunity to consider what a museum was for. After recovering their sovereignty in 1945, the Koreans had to deal with museums which had already been established in the Korean peninsula, without regard to the interests of the inhabitants, by the Japanese. The only way to deal with this state of affairs was to detain a couple of the Japanese people who were in charge of the museum work in the Korean peninsula. Arimitsu Kyoichi was one of them. According to Chun Kyung-soo (2000:181–2), a similar event happened in the museum at Pyeongyang under the Soviet military government. Also of interest was that Museum Studies as a course was taught at the Gyeongseong

University<sup>28</sup> in around 1946 (Chun Kyung-soo 1997:33–4). This illustrates the strong need there was at the time for the training of museum professionals.

### **The establishment of two states, the Korean War and afterwards (1948–59)**

On 15 August 1948 the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was established, and recognised by the USA and its allies, with Rhee Syng-man (이승만) as its first president; and in September 1948 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), recognised by the Soviet Union, was proclaimed, with Kim Il-sung (김일성) as its 'Great Leader'. Both states claimed to be the only legitimate government on the Korean peninsula<sup>29</sup> (Eckert *et al.* 1990:343). As there were now to be two separate political entities in the Korean peninsula, a new identity was imposed on the Koreans (i.e. Korean, but North or South Korean). Concerning the National Museum, the word 'national', in addition to its original signification *sensu stricto* of 'Korea' as a whole, now began to acquire a new connotation, situated as the museum was in Seoul: 'Korean but South Korean'. Thus

<sup>28</sup> The Keijo Imperial University (京城帝國大學) became the Gyeongseong University (京城大學). The institution was later renamed the Seoul National University. It is worth noting that during the Japanese occupation, Seoul was called 'Keijo' and the Korean pronunciation of the latter is Gyeongseong.

<sup>29</sup> Article 3 of the Constitutional Law (헌법 제3조) of the Republic of Korea defines its territory as the whole Korean peninsula and its adjoining islands: '대한민국의 영토는 한반도와 그 부속도서로 한다' (Heo Yeong 1997:184–5).

the erstwhile National Museum in Seoul effectively became the 'National Museum of South Korea'.

In January 1949, following its government's political agenda, the National Museum held a special exhibition of the royal seals and diplomatic documents of Guhanguk (구한국, ancient Hanguk)<sup>30</sup> which had been forcibly taken away by the Japanese, recovered by the US military government headquarters in Tokyo, and returned to South Korea (Chun Kyung-soo 2000:185). This exhibition was able to strengthen the sense of Korean identity, as Chun Kyung-soo (2000:185) notes;<sup>31</sup> however, considering the political circumstances of the time, it was more likely to be a visible symbol of the legitimacy of South Korea, and of its claim to the title 'Korea' through the ownership of the former Korean royal seals and diplomatic documents. It is worth noting that to claim this legitimacy, South Korea adopted the flag of Joseon as its own national flag, which was used as the flag of the *Daehan* Empire (대한제국) and *Daehanminguk-imsigonghwaguk* (대한민국임시공화국, *Daehanminguk* Provisional

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<sup>30</sup> South Korea uses the word 'Guhanguk' to designate the Daehan Empire (1897–1910) (Minjung-seorim 2001:279). However, this sometimes includes Joseon (1392–1897): e.g. under the title 'Guhanguk-waegyo-munseo (구한국외교문서, 'Diplomatic documents of Guhanguk'), it includes the late Joseon period after its opening to Japan and the Western countries.

<sup>31</sup> Chun Kyung-soo (2000:185) understood that this special exhibition was intended as the highest expression of Korean nationalism, aiming to demonstrate that Korea was an independent state and to strengthen national spirit among the Koreans. He even added that the establishment of national identity was an urgent task for a newly emerging nation which had once been colonised. His assertion illustrates the influences of the Western colonial discourse and of nationalism, and his attempts to fit this particular Korean case (i.e. the special exhibition) into these Western discourses. However, it also shows that he failed to understand the political circumstances in Korea at that time, by not understanding the meaning of the two Koreas' emergence, and of the competition between North and South Korea to be recognised as the only legitimate government in the Korean peninsula.

Government) and named the state '*Daehanminguk*' ('대한민국'), proclaiming its establishment on 15 August 1948, the third anniversary (to the day) of the recovery of Korean sovereignty from Japan.

According to the Dan-gun legend, Dan-gun established the first Korean state and named it '*Joseon*' ('조선'). North Korea which proclaimed its establishment in early September 1948 (Byeon Tae-seop 1986:503) named its state '*Joseon-minjujuuy-inmin-gonghwaguk*' ('조선민주주의인민공화국') to justify its own legitimacy. It should be mentioned here that on 25 September 1948, South Korea proclaimed the use of the calendric date of *dangi* (단기)<sup>32</sup> beginning its first year in 2333 BC which is believed to be the founding year of Dan-gun Joseon (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:646). As mentioned in Chapter Two, in 1993 North Korea announced the discovery of the remains of Dan-gun and his wife in Pyeongyang and built an enormous Dan-gun mausoleum on the spot in 1994. Based on the knowledge and experience acquired from her recent visit to North Korea, McKillop recorded this event as follows:

By including elements of tomb design from later periods in the construction of the monument to Tangun [Dan-gun], President [Great Leader Comrade] Kim Il Sung [Kim Il-sung] and his successor Kim Jung Il [Kim Jung-il] were highlighting their view that Tangun's authority flows like a river from antiquity until the present, conferring legitimacy on those who succeeded him as ruler. ...

... The enormous mausoleum of Tangun, constructed in 1994 north-east of Pyongyang [Pyeongyang], is a startling reminder of Koreans'

<sup>32</sup> *Dangi* was used until the end of 1961. From 1 January 1962, South Korea officially adopted the Gregorian calendar (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:666).

tenacious belief in a founding ancestor, and the determination of the leadership of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea] to stress its reverence for the figure of Tangun, whose birthplace and capital was claimed to be at Pyongyang. As rulers of the home of Tangun, Pyongyang's political masters confidently assert their right to be considered the true, legitimate heirs to the age-old ruling lineage of Korea.

(McKillop 2002:5–6)

It may worth quoting an anecdote about Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-seong:

One early morning in May 1992, President [Great Leader Comrade] Kim Il Sung [Kim Il-sung] left for a royal tomb situated on a mountain ridge 8km north-west of Kaeseong [Gaeseong, the capital of Goryeo]. ... Upon hearing the news that the President visited the tomb of Wang Kon<sup>33</sup> to glorify the history of the nation, an old man called on a senior official with a box containing valuables and asked him to convey it to the President. Contained in it were a royal seal used by Wang Kon and the genealogical records of his family.

(cited in McKillop 2002:9)

After the establishment of the two states, conflict between North and South often occurred near the thirty-eighth parallel, and especially in the summer of 1949 – the 'Songaksan<sup>34</sup> incident' (송악산사건), involving shooting between North and South, occurred at Gaeseong, as if anticipating the outbreak of the Korean War. Kim Che-won and the staff of the National Museum relocated the Gaeseong Museum's collection to Seoul, although

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<sup>33</sup> 왕건, the founder of Goryeo.

<sup>34</sup> 송악산 [song·ak·san], a mountain in North Korea.

Jin Hong-seop (진홍섭), Director of the museum was opposed to this, as he was worried about the reaction of Gaeseong people: later, Kim Che-won was even reprimanded by Jo Geun-yeong (조근영), Director of the Bureau of Culture (문화국) in South Korea (Kim Che-won 1991:61). When the North Korean communist forces occupied Gaeseong on 25 June 1950, according to Kim Che-won (1991:61), the exhibit room of the Gaeseong Museum was empty, as the Korean materials displayed there had already been removed to Seoul.<sup>35</sup> Due to the personal commitment of Kim Che-won, Choi Sun-u (최순우) and other museum staff, South Korea was now able to retain ownership of these Korean materials. To some extent, this removal of the Gaeseong Museum's collection illustrates the process of the fragmentation of Korean identity and the choice available to the Koreans at the time: North or South Korea.

To understand the situation prior to the Korean War, it might be interesting to look at what Knez<sup>36</sup> recorded:

A few days before the North Korean invasion of South Korea, I escorted an official visitor from Washington, D. C. to Ch'unch'on [춘천, Chuncheon], north of Seoul. ... I stayed in the Kook Je Japanese style inn ... In the small dining room I ate several meals with a young American artillery captain who was an advisor to South Korean artillery units. ... Each time I saw him, I would ask, "How are we doing?" (in resisting the North Korean forces). He would reply that the South Korean artillery units were holding their positions until being "knocked out" and [sic] would give

<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that at that time there were Korean people leaving South for North Korea and vice-versa.

<sup>36</sup> Knez retired from military service in May 1946, but he returned to Korea to collect ethnographic data (Knez 1997:30–1).

me a reduced figure for the number of S. Korean [sic] artillery units in the field. He was bitter about the S. Korean units being “outgunned”, being forced to use weapons not capable of coping with enemy tanks and heavier artillery pieces. Apparently, the American solution to Pres. Rhee’s desire to unify Korea by invading N. Korea perhaps without adequate notice to the U. N. command, was to train and equip the S. Korean forces only as a constabulary. This critical view of American policy by the artillery advisor made me realize that the S. Koreans had been denied a military capability because of a misunderstanding.

(1997:33–5)

On 25 June 1950, the communist-led troops of North Korea invaded the South (*The Times*, 26 June 1950) and Seoul was occupied by the North in just three days (Byeon Tae-seop 1996:481). The government of the South was forced to move to Daejeon (The Academy of Korean Studies 2004:650). After the North Korean occupation of Seoul, Gim Yong-tae (김용태) of North Korea confiscated the National Museum and Kim Che-won had to hide in order to stay alive; other museum staff remained to work at the museum (Kim Che-won 1991:63–4, 67). The ownership of the museum and of Korean material culture had now passed from South to North Korea.

When the course of the war changed dramatically in favour of South Korea, North Korean officials ordered the staff to ship the National Museum’s collection to North Korea. However, delaying tactics by the museum staff, Choi Sun-u (최순우) and Jang Gyu-seo (장규서), together with the retaking of Seoul in late September, allowed the collection to be kept in the

South (Kim Che-won 1991:67).

Before the second evacuation of Seoul, in January 1951, rumours of approaching North Korean and Chinese forces were rife. Having experienced the North Korean occupation, Kim Che-won asked Baek Nak-jun (백낙준), the Minister of Education (문교부), for permission to remove the museum collection to Busan, and when this request was ignored went to see Knez to ask for his assistance (Kim Che-won 1991:69; Knez 1997:41). Although Knez at first hesitated to help him, after a second visit from Kim Che-won he accepted. He records the reason of his acceptance thus:

... after Dr. Kim's second visit, I decided that it would be completely inexcusable not to do everything possible to move the Korean cultural treasures of the National Museum out of harm's way. I decided to personally assume the responsibility for the evacuation. If a mishap did occur during the evacuation, at least I couldn't be charged with insubordination. Though I was certain that if the Korean art fell into the hands of the North Koreans, or worse, was damaged or lost, I would be severely criticized by officials and scholars at home and abroad ...

(1997:42)

Meanwhile Kim Che-won kept requesting the Minister of Education's permission to relocate the museum collection to Busan, and eventually his request was accepted (Kim Che-won 1991:69–70).

Having learned that there were trains which, after unloading war materiel



in the Seoul area, would return to Busan with mostly empty boxcars, Knez requested a car from the American officer in charge of the Seoul railroad station and also the temporary loan of trucks from the American military motor pool (Knez 1997:42). In December 1950, about 20,000 objects from the National Museum and the Art Gallery of the Deoksu Palace (덕수궁미술관) were moved, by train, over a four-day period (Cunningham 2001a:48). The museum remained in Busan until the end of the Korean War (in 1953), and some parts of the collections stayed there until 1955–6 (Cunningham 2001a:48). President Rhee Syng-man even considered relocating the materials to the USA, although the US government declined President Rhee's request and suggested Japan – which President Rhee would never have considered a suitable place. Eventually, the Honolulu Academy of Arts accepted the South Korean request, and Kim Che-won and his museum staff were engaged in packing the collections of the National Museum and the Art Gallery of the Deoksu Palace when the war situation changed in favour of South Korea, and the relocation project was soon abandoned (Kim Che-won 1991:79–81).

The war led the two Koreas to perceive each other as 'foe' and 'competitor', and to paint each other in black and white terms, based on entirely opposing world views. During the Korean War, many Koreans were tortured or killed, by both North and South Korean authorities, after being accused of collaboration with the enemy. During the post-war period, many South Koreans who were considered 'communists', or if they had

merely been heard or seen to use some basic socialist terms, were tortured, sentenced to prison or killed by their own government; and presumably similar events must have happened in North Korea. With respect to the common cultural past achievements of the two Koreas, the issue which emerged from this war period was the question of legitimate ownership: whose material culture?<sup>37</sup> And it must be remembered here that both states denied the reality of two legitimate states in the peninsula – there existed (or must exist) only *one* legitimate state to inherit the legacy of the Koreans.

Considering these circumstances – and others, such as the North Korean efforts to remove museum collections to North Korea; Kim Che-won's efforts to transfer the collection of the Gaeseong Museum to Seoul; and President Rhee's consideration to move these materials overseas as a way of keeping the objects for South Korea – the meaning given to Korean material culture during this war period can be interpreted as a political symbol of the legitimacy of a political entity, whether the museum professionals who were actively involved in this battle for the ownership of Korean materials intended it or not.

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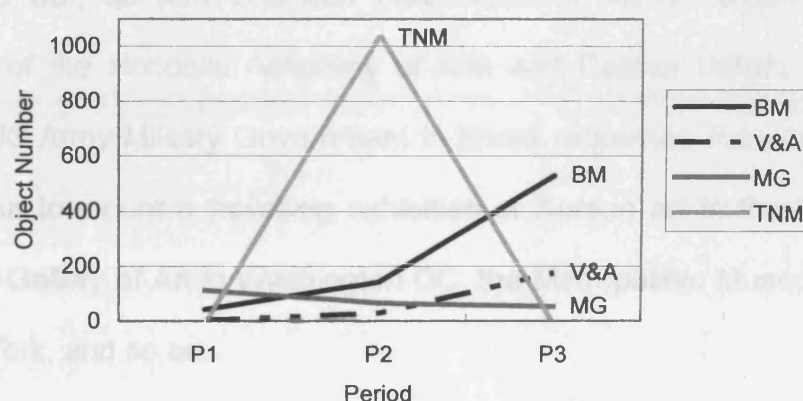
<sup>37</sup> At the time of an exhibition entitled '韓国の名宝' ('Korea/South Korean treasures'), held at the Tokyo National Museum in 2002 to commemorate the holding of the 2002 FIFA World Cup jointly in Korea and Japan, I asked a member of the museum staff about the problematic aspects of using the word '韓国' (Korea/South Korea). The person answered that if the museum organises a Korean exhibition in cooperation with South Korea, it uses '韓国' ('Korea/South Korea') and if with North Korea, '朝鮮' ('Korea/North Korea').

After moving the majority of the collections to the safety of Busan, museum professionals continued to hold exhibitions in cafés or warehouses. It is difficult to understand the reasons why these exhibitions were held during this war period but as Yi Gyeong-seong states, one reason could have been to show the outstanding cultural aspects of Korea to foreign military personnel who had arrived there to fight (Yi Gyeong-seong 1998:43–6, 57–8). Another reason might have been to encourage and console the Korean people. As Kavanagh so aptly put it, although war exposes human beings' inhumanity and our capacity for destructiveness and greed, museums, which 'contain the most positive expressions for ourselves as worthwhile, creative and inventive people', are an important element in our humanity. The objects displayed can tell us 'who we are, what we are and when we are' (1994:176–8). In this context, the Korean material culture displayed at Busan gave a self-awareness which provided courage to deal with the ordeals of the period, gave hope for the future, and, at the same time, was a source of national pride by providing those non-Korean soldiers with an opportunity to experience a part of the Korean cultural aspect.

It seems more logical to put the period from 1945 up to 1948 and that up to 1959 together to understand what happened outside the Korean peninsula. Figure 8 illustrates the acquisition pattern of Korean materials of the BM, the MG, the V&A and the TNM from 1946: P1 covers the period from 1946 to 1959; P2 from 1960 to 1989; and P3 from 1990 to 2002.

During the period in question (see P1 in Figure 8), the BM made up only about five per cent of the Korean collection acquired from 1946 to the present; the V&A about one per cent; and the MG about 49 per cent; almost no Korean materials were acquired by the TNM. It should also be noted that the majority of the MG's Korean collection (about 85 per cent) acquired during the period in question came from one source – Arthur Sachs, in 1951.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 8 Acquisitions made from 1946



In Korean history, the Korean War is often seen as a period when a number of Korean materials were taken from Korea by foreign diplomats,

<sup>38</sup> Arthur Sachs (1880–1975). He was an American investment banker who was well known for his art collection and his philanthropy. He was a member of the Harvard class of 1901; in 1929 he established two fellowships at Harvard for the advanced study of fine arts, and in 1958 set up a scholarship fund at his alma mater to give French students a chance to study at Harvard and Radcliffe. Sachs also made a donation to the restoration of Chartres cathedral, and to the National Gallery of Art, the Fogg Museum, the Morgan Library and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. After retiring from Goldman, Sachs, and Co, he spent much of his time in France, where he lent part of his famous collection to the Louvre. Sachs was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor (at [www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pbio?1406](http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pbio?1406)).

civilians and military officers (Kim Kwang-on 1995:58). Interestingly, this did not seem to affect the above overseas museums' practice of acquiring Korean objects. According to the Korea Foundation, it appears that no Western museums allocated a space for the display of Korean materials between 1945 and 1959.

As a consequence of the Korean War, Korea which had hitherto been relatively unknown to Western people, obviously became better known in the West – but the image broadcast by the media was a negative one. After the war, as Kim Che-won (1991:109–11) notes, Robert Griffing, Director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts and Damon Giffard from the former US Army Military Government in Korea requested President Rhee Syng-man to mount a travelling exhibition of Korean art in the USA: the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and so on.

From December 1957 to June 1959, the National Museum was involved in this touring exhibition, entitled *National Treasures from Korea* in the USA and about 197 objects were selected for the exhibition: i.e. about 17 objects in metalwork, 24 Buddhist sculptures, 7 roof tiles, 35 paintings, 108 ceramic objects and so forth (Anh Hwi-jun 2000:197; Kim Che-won 1991:117; National Museum of Korea, at [www.museum.go.kr/kor/spe/spe\\_abo.htm](http://www.museum.go.kr/kor/spe/spe_abo.htm)). Kim Che-won (1991:117–18) points out that this was a way of dealing with the negative image of Korea formed overseas by the

Korean War, through a display which would promote a good cultural image of Korea, and the National Museum sent high-quality objects – note that the museum today would agree to send neither the two gilt-bronze statues of Maitreya (see Illustrations 33 and 34), nor three gold crowns (see Illustrations 35 and 36) at the same time. It is clear that the significance attached to these Korean materials was a way of dealing with the negative image of Korea.

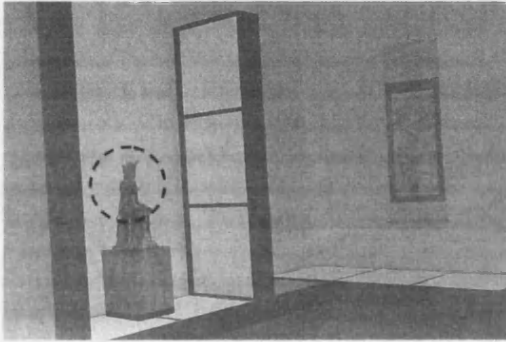


**Illustration 33** Korean display at the National Gallery of Art. Source: Kim Che-won (1991:123)



**Illustration 34** Article on Korean exhibition in the *Washington Post*, 15 December 1957. Source: Kim Che-won (1991:125)



**Illustration 35** Gold crown



**Illustration 36** The side of the gold crown

Silla. National Museum of Korea, Seoul; *hwangbuk* (황복) 1. National Treasure no.191. Source: National Museum of Korea (1996:138–9).

### South Koreans, Korean material culture and museums (1959–88)

After the Korean War, South Korea faced great economic difficulties. Furthermore, the fraud, corruption and coercion of the Rhee Syng-man government aggravated the situation. The student protest of 19 April 1960 forced President Rhee to resign, and the Second Republic was inaugurated with Yun Po-sun (윤보선) as its president and Jang Myeon (장면) as its premier. Unfortunately, the new regime did not differ from the Rhee government in its inability to deal with poverty, widespread official corruption at high levels, the mushrooming of left-inclined reformist parties, and so on; indeed, in some respects the situation worsened. On 16 May 1961 the Second Republic, which had suffered a severe loss of credibility among the people, was ended by a military coup, and the era of President Park Cheong-hee<sup>39</sup> (1963–79), who ‘was committed to a vision of national wealth and power through economic development’ (Eckert *et al.* 1990:360) began. The assassination of Park Cheong-hee in 1979 brought an end to this regime. The succeeding regime of Choi Kyu-hah (최규하) lasted only about one year, being ended by another military coup d’état, which led in turn to the Fifth Republic (1980–8) and to Chun Doo-hwan (전두환) as President. Chun Doo-hwan’s regime was followed by that of Roh Tae-woo, another military government (Byeon Tae-seop 1986:509–15, 1996:489–508; Eckert *et al.* 1990:347–61).

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<sup>39</sup> 박정희 (1917–79). His regime was often characterised as a ‘military dictatorship’. However, today, various other interpretations of Park Cheong-hee’s regime have begun to appear.

To deal with the extreme poverty of the time, the industrialisation of the country began under President Park Cheong-hee's direction. Under the government's direction, the whole of South Korea worked hard, dreaming of the country joining the list of developed countries such as the USA, Britain and Japan. The rapid growth of the South Korean economy in the 1970s stimulated the development of museums, which now had to respond to new demands from schools and the public, who became interested in cultural activities and in Korean culture. In 1977, a series of public lectures on Korean culture<sup>40</sup> was set up in the National Museum of Korea, and courses for children during the school vacations also appeared in the museum field (Lee Nan-young 1986:32).

In parallel with economic development, a return to Korean traditions and the promotion of Korean identity were encouraged by the Park Cheong-hee administration (Kim Young-na 2001:39). Within this context of social movements, it seems that the characteristics of Korean material culture as differing from those of the Chinese and Japanese gained popular interest, which can be understood as an expression of the search for Korean cultural identity in Korean cultural materials. According to Kim Young-na, the terms used by Goh Yu-seop to define the characteristics of Korean art drew renewed attention from the public in the 1960s (Kim Young-na 2001:39). In the South Korean academic field, attempts to define the

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<sup>40</sup> In February 1949 a series of lectures for middle school art teachers on Korean art, or on other subjects such as 'Museums in the USA', 'Eastern Aspects of Palaeolithic Art', etc. were set up (Kim Che-won 1991:35–8).



uniqueness of Korean material culture also reappeared, and continued to appear (together with criticism of definitions of 'Koreanness') throughout the period with which this section deals.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, Goh Yu-seop was Director of the Gaeseong Museum during the Japanese colonial period, and was the first Korean to study Korean art history. Attempts to define the characteristics of Korean material culture had already appeared during the Japanese colonial period (e.g. by Yanagi). According to Goh Yu-seop, the characteristics of Korean material culture can be seen as 'technique without technique' (무기교의 기교), 'plans without planning' (무계획의 계획), 'an overall sense of pleasure which sprang from carelessness in details' (세부가 치밀치 않은데서 더 큰 전체에 포용되고 거기서 <구수한 큰 맛>이 생긴다), 'detachment' or 'unconcern for technical perfection' (무관심성), induced unconsciously to adapt oneself to nature (see Chapter Four). It is interesting to compare Gompertz's description of Goryeo pottery with the terms used by Goh Yu-seop:

... the Koryŏ [Goryeo] potters were often *careless or inexpert in technique*: they were *more concerned to achieve an artistic effect and seldom paid much attention to detail*. However, there are many examples of their work which display skill in execution equal to the beauty and nobility of conception, and these must be accorded their place among the major achievements in ceramic art.

(1963:2, emphasis added )

In 1980, Kim Won-yong<sup>41</sup> concluded that 'Korean art can be characterised as a preference for natural things, that is, adaptation to nature by evading any artificiality ... the underlying notion in our art is not idealism perceived by human beings, but is more likely naturalism as viewed by nature' <sup>42</sup> (1980:17; translated).<sup>43</sup> By asking himself where such characteristics of Korean art come from, he connects them with Korean identity, necessarily formed by their daily environment (space) and history (time) (1980:17). The views of Kim Won-yong and Gompertz do not appear to differ a great deal from Goh Yu-seop's – or even from Yanagi's latest views.

While Goh's terms are used widely criticism of his term for, and other scholars' attempts at, the definition of 'Koreanness' also appeared. To sum up, Goh's notions did not significantly differ from those of Yanagi or of Japanese colonial scholars (see Chapter Four). Mun Myeong-dae argued that Goh Yu-seop could not transcend his Japanese colonial context, and stated that the search for unchangeable characteristics (i.e. Korean characteristics) in a group of cultural materials (i.e. Korean material culture) was as same as writing fiction (1984:7, 10). According to Kim Young-na (2001:40), in 1982, Yu Hong-jun asserted that if the South Korean academic discussions prior to the 1980s about the uniqueness of

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<sup>41</sup> 김원용 (1922–93): one of the leading scholars in Korean archaeology and art history. In 1947, he met Kim Che-won, Director of the National Museum, and worked for the Museum for fourteen years. In 1959, while still employed at the museum, and with the support of Kim Che-won, he completed his PhD dissertation on 'Studies on Silla Pottery' under Professor Alfred Salmony of New York University (Pak Young-sook 1989:221).

<sup>42</sup> Another interesting note of Kim Won-yong's is that 'Perfection for its own sake is neither human nor friendly' (1986:8).

<sup>43</sup> See Note 12.

Korean cultural materials were an attempt to overcome the Japanese colonial legacy, it was now time to move beyond these discussions on Korean material culture in order to transcend the post-colonial mentality.

In the case of the National Museum of Korea (NMK), the dramatic growth of collections, staff and organised cultural programmes during the 1960s and 1970s fostered an awareness of the need for a larger building. In particular, the Bureau of Cultural Properties (문화재관리국, BCP, founded in 1961) sought to consolidate all national art objects under one roof in Seoul, including the materials kept at the palaces such as the Deoksu Palace and the Changdeok Palace. Despite Kim Che-won's opposition, the Ministry of Education and Culture, with the support of President Park, obtained the necessary appropriations in late 1966, and in 1972 a building for the first time specially designed for the NMK was opened in the Gyeongbok Palace (which today houses the National Folk Art Museum) (Cunningham 2001a:48–9).

After the foundation of the BCP and the new building for the NMK, cultural awareness in South Korean society became more noticeable. In 1986, the building of Jungangcheong,<sup>44</sup> the former Government-General of Chosen building (1926–45), was converted, and dedicated to the NMK (Kim Hong-nam 1998:178).<sup>45</sup> Many people believed that the reasons for the

<sup>44</sup> 중앙청 [jung-ang-cheong], the seat of the South Korean government.

<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that after the liberation the National Museum had to move four times, until it

museum's fourth move, into this new building, were to improve facilities, to meet international standards, and to expand and strengthen its leading role in promoting Korean culture. However, it is hard to deny the possible intervention of political agenda. This thesis suggests that another reason for the move can probably be found in the 1988 Olympics, held in Seoul. It should be noted that at that time the building was no longer a symbol of Japanese colonisation (the building built and used by the former Japanese Government-General), nor a symbol of military dictatorship (the former seat of the South Korean government). It had become a symbol of the overcoming of past ordeals by becoming the building of the NMK.

In the West, recent historical events (e.g. the Japanese occupation and the Korean War) had created the image of Korea as a tragic and devastated country. In order to promote a better perception of Korea and its culture, international touring exhibitions were organised by the NMK with the support of the South Korean government.<sup>46</sup> An exhibition entitled *National Treasures from Korea* was held in museums in Europe from 1961 to 1963. The exhibition *5,000 Years of Korean Art* was held in US museums from May 1979 to September 1981, and in Britain and Germany from February 1984 to January 1985; 334 objects were displayed. Among

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came to rest in this building: first to the ethnographic museum building on Namsan (South Mountain) in 1950, then to a wartime repository in Busan during the Korean War period, then to Seokjojeon, in the Deoksu Palace, in 1955, and finally to a specially designed building in the Gyongbok Palace in 1972.

<sup>46</sup> According to a letter written by G. White, Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain, in January 1960: 'I have a letter from the Foreign Office saying that the Korean government would like to show their exhibition of Korean art in London in the spring of 1961 ...' (RP1960/215, VX1961.001).

the museums in the case studies, the V&A in 1961 and the BM in 1984 were included in these South Korean touring exhibitions.

Interestingly, both the exhibitions made little impact on Western museum practice, nor on the Western public. This was in spite of their overall success in the West. For example, in Britain many articles were published on the Korean exhibition at the V&A in 1961. To quote some of them:

The Korean exhibition, which opens to the public to-day at the Victoria and Albert Museum, brings to London an art characterised by dignity, charm and superb craftsmanship.

It is doubtful whether any other national school of comparable merit is as little known to the general public in Europe and as unjustly ignored by our scholars. This is not surprising, for this is the first Korean exhibition to be held in England.

...

Qualitatively and spiritually, it is dominated by the early seventh century gilt-bronze Maitreya, or Buddha of the Future. This noble figure combines serenity and dignity rare in any art.

...

Of equal beauty are the inlaid celadon pieces, and this is a technique distinctively Korean. Indeed, this exhibition makes it clear that Korean art was by no means a slavish offshoot of Chinese art, and, in fact, it exerted a considerable influence upon the Japanese.

...

... this exhibition has to offer experiences both spiritual and aesthetic.

Korean painting at times lacks the economy and unerring statement of Chinese work of the same period, but its charm is hard to resist and in other fields the Koreans reached notable heights.

*(The Daily Telegraph, 23 May 1961)*

KOREA ... has been almost unknown territory until our own century when it became a battleground between East and West.

Battlegrounds are not the most favourable areas either for the preservation or the study of works of art. ...

... In the best Chinese art there is a severe, almost chilly perfection, a refinement that often strikes one as inhuman. In Korea humanity comes into its own again. The Chinese 'Kuan Yin', the carved Bodhisattva of Mercy, is a symbol of peace and serenity. Its Korean counterpart is no longer aloof and brooding: the gilt bronze figure (No.11) of the seated Maitreya is no longer remote and introspective. The attitude is the same but he has just remembered a funny story and is smiling inscrutably. An illustrated album of drawings is mainly concerned with the kind of genre subjects that would have attracted Rowlandson. Two elderly gentlemen,<sup>47</sup> in one of them, together with a furious hen, chase a cat who is sneaking off with one of her chickens. This is not quite the Chinese attitude to life.

(Newton 1961)

The exhibition of Korean treasures at the Victoria and Albert Museum is something between informative and impressive. It calls for a fine adjustment of our sensibilities, a focus upon both works of art and objects of great virtue which few of us will have been familiar with before ...

(Sutton 1961)

However, such praise was not paralleled by the V&A's acquisition of Korean materials: although the exhibition was held at the V&A, only three objects entered the museum from 1963 to 1972. During the same period about 28 objects entered the BM and about three entered the MG. In the case of the US, according to Michael R. Cunningham (2000b), Curator of the Cleveland Museum of Art, at the beginning of 1960 his institution had \$15 million in one endowment fund alone for the purchase of objects, and from the late 1950s through the 1970s it acquired approximately 120 Chinese, 85 Japanese, 95 Indian and 15 Southeast Asian objects

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<sup>47</sup> Dr Pak Young-sook points out an error in Newton's article. According to her, the painting by Gim Deok-sin (김덕신) is of a husband and wife, not 'two elderly gentlemen'.

annually: but not one Korean object was acquired. This situation contradicted the museum's interest, at its inception, in Korean culture; in 1914, the newly appointed director, Frederick Whiting, drew up a wish list in which he included Korean ceramics, as he believed that a first-rate collection of such objects would help to establish the museum's reputation. Contrary to its initial interest in Korean culture, illustrated by its active acquisition of Korean objects, from 1928 to 1985 only 12 Korean objects entered the museum.

During the period from 1960 to 1989, the BM formed about 16 per cent of the Korean collection acquired from 1946 to the present; the V&A about 14 per cent; and the MG about 28 per cent. Meanwhile, there was a sudden increase in the acquisition of Korean objects (more than 90 per cent) by the TNM (see P2 in Figure 8 on page 212). As mentioned in Chapter Four, the TNM's sudden increase was due to the Ogura Foundation donation; apart from this, almost no Korean materials were acquired by the TNM.<sup>48</sup>

Concerning the emergence of displays of Korean material culture worldwide, it appears that in the 1960s six Korean displays were mounted in museums outside the Korean peninsula: one in Asia (i.e. Japan), three

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<sup>48</sup> According to Shirai Katsuya (白井克也), Assistant curator in the Northeast Asia [Korean] section of the TNM's Department of Oriental Antiquities, in 1965 the Japanese and South Korean governments signed a treaty which prevents any national Japanese institution from acquiring Korean objects. According to Shirai, the TNM, as a National Museum, is unable to acquire any Korean object because of this treaty. However, there have been some cases where the TNM has accepted a small number of Korean objects, when Japanese collectors wanted to donate their objects to the museum.

in Europe (Denmark, Switzerland and Czech Republic), and two in North America (i.e. the USA). In the 1970s, ten Korean display rooms were opened: one in Asia (i.e. Japan), three in Europe (France,<sup>49</sup> Germany and Vatican), four in North America (i.e. the USA) and one in Oceania (i.e. New Zealand); and in the 1980s, seven Korean galleries were opened: one in Asia (i.e. Japan), two in Europe (i.e. Austria and Germany) and four in North America (i.e. the USA) (KCTPI 2002:311–4). Among the museums in the case studies, the TNM displayed its Korean collection from 1968 onwards, and the MG, after the closure of its Korean gallery in 1919, displayed Korean objects again in 1970, though allocating a very small exhibition space for them. Bearing the above information in mind, it might be interesting to look at the research on Korean material culture in the West. As Pak Young-sook comments (1989:221–5), the first doctoral dissertation on Korean cultural materials was submitted by a Korean, Kim Won-yong, to the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in 1958. From 1958 to the 1980s, only eleven doctoral theses including Kim Won-yong's can be traced in the USA and Europe. As she pointed out, all but one<sup>50</sup> of these theses were written by Koreans.

The reasons behind the emergence of displays of Korean material culture are not clear, but one of them could be the improved status of South Korea

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<sup>49</sup> In fact, the Korean gallery at the Musée Guimet was firstly opened in 1894 and closed in 1919. Since 1970, the Korean objects had been displayed again.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Best's *Buddhism in Paekche: A Cultural Approach to Early Korean History and Sculpture*, Harvard University, 1976 (Pak Young-sook 1989:222).



in the world, and another the Western recognition of the importance of Korean art and its culture in East Asian art history. It is worth noting that during the period from 1960 to 1989 almost no university in the West offered a course on Korean art: for instance, at that time no course on Korean art had been offered at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, and it was not until after 1989 that such a course was introduced (Pak Young-sook 1989:226).

### **Searching for Korean values and mapping Korea in the world (1988–2002 or thereabouts)**

In South Korea, the period with which this section deals can be seen as one of the re-evaluation of values in material culture – a national symbol, it was believed, representing Korea's unique past. These values have been held, without any critical examination, since the liberation in 1945. If the Japanese colonial experience brought the Koreans an awareness of the values of their material culture, the economic development of South Korea in the 1980s and early 1990s allowed the government to engage actively in cultural domains such as the research, preservation and promotion of Korean material culture, heritage sites and historical monuments, attesting as they did to Korean identity. In a way, it can be said that the South Korean government had now joined a global trend in which the appreciation of historical and cultural material and of museums formed a

universal language; and this could be used to change the image of Korea in a more positive way, and to stir other people's interest in the country, which in turn would contribute to creating South Korea's own place in the world. Furthermore, it can hardly be denied that the displays of Korean cultural materials abroad were understood also to be a means of fostering the country's tourist industry.

### ***Re-evaluation of values***

The year 1995 marked the 50th anniversary of liberation from the Japanese. To celebrate this, a 'Committee for the 50th Anniversary of Korea's Liberation' was set up in South Korea, and a variety of events were organised by the committee and by various other institutions. One of these events was the demolition of the NMK building, which itself symbolised the oppressive colonial regime of the Japanese, their greed for the permanent colonisation of Korea, and their colonial plan of creating a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' to legitimise their domination of East Asia and to obtain the necessary resources, labour and other benefits<sup>51</sup> in the interests of the Japanese Empire. On 15 August 1995, the spire of the building's dome was dismantled.

In fact, the issue of the demolition of the building had been raised during

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<sup>51</sup> E.g. the impressment of 'comfort women' for the imperial forces.

the Rhee Syng-man regime of 1948–60 (Lee Man-hoon 1995:79). Since that time the issue had arisen on several occasions, but due to the tremendous cost of demolition no tangible result was obtained; as an expedient solution, the building was converted into the home of the NMK, which was to symbolise Korea's heritage; as mentioned before, the building as a museum opened in August 1986.

Following the rapid economic growth and improved status of South Korea in the world after the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the issue was again brought up, in late 1990, by President Roh Tae-woo, who announced his support for the removal of the building, the relocation of the NMK and the restoration of the Gyeongbok Palace, but it was under President Kim Young-sam's regime (김영삼, 1993–98) that the demolition of the building was finally undertaken (Kim Hong-nam 1998:180; Lee Man-hoon 1995:79).

Intriguingly, the reasons behind the demolition of the NMK building illustrate two quite different interpretations of the building. The first was clearly its strong connection with the Japanese colonisation of Korea which was the main reason for its removal: the building had after all been erected by the Japanese on the site of the Gyeongbok Palace.<sup>52</sup> Another facet of this connection can be found in the geomantic layout, which resembles the Chinese character 日. When combined with the character

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<sup>52</sup> For the people of Joseon and the Daehan Empire, its meaning was perhaps analogous to that of Buckingham Palace for contemporary Britain.

大, made by the two arms of Bukhansan (북한산, Bukhan Mountain) behind the palace, and with the character 本 created by the City Hall (시청), which was also built by the Japanese, the Chinese characters for 大日本 (Great Japan) can be seen (see also Chung Yun-shun 2003:234; Jeong Un-hyeon 1995:168). This layout attests to their ambition for the permanent colonisation of Korea, and their colonial plan of creating a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' – in other words, of expanding the Great Japanese Empire.

The Gyeongbok Palace was originally built, according to geomantic theory, to a design propitious for the prosperity and longevity of Joseon (1392–1897). By destroying the palace and erecting the Government-General building on the site, again to a design based on geomancy, the Japanese hoped to emphasise the permanency of their colonisation of Korea. The building was designed to block the vital natural force, or *gi* (기), which is believed to emanate from the location of the palace site between the Bukhan Mountain and Namsan (South Mountain). Metal poles were also found on the peak of the Bukhan Mountain (see Illustration 37), placed there by the Japanese to weaken this *gi*, which is thought to energise the Korean landscape and to have been capable of bringing the country a great leader.<sup>53</sup> In addition to placing the building directly in front of the throne hall, it has been said that the Japanese buried swords under

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<sup>53</sup> The Japanese drove metal poles into every mountain in Korea which they believed to have the vital force. To help in restoring the national spirit, the Liberation Society worked for the removal of these geomantic metal poles (see also Kim Hong-nam 1998:181).

Gwanghwamun<sup>54</sup> to cut the connection between a Korean sovereign and the polity, to prevent the virtue of the Korean ruler spilling out of the gate towards his people (see Kim Hong-nam 1998:181–2).



**Illustration 37** A metal pole found at the Bukhan Mountain and its removal.  
Source: Jeong Un-hyeon (1995:246).

Furthermore, based on a plan of the Government-General of Chosen, the Japanese planned to build an open-air music hall, a fountain and an open-air square, destroying all other palace buildings behind the building of the Government-General of Chosen, and at the site where the Queen Myeongseong (명성황후) was killed by the Japanese, they planned to remove the original building and replace it with flower-beds; but apparently this project failed, due to the fierce resistance of the Koreans (*Donga Ilbo*, 28 December 1995). The main focus of the *Donga Ilbo* article was that the Japanese had planned to remove all traces of the palace, which was enough to call forth an emotional appeal from the South Koreans for them

<sup>54</sup> 광화문 [gwang-hwa-mun], a gate of the Gyeongbok palace.

to justify the building's removal.

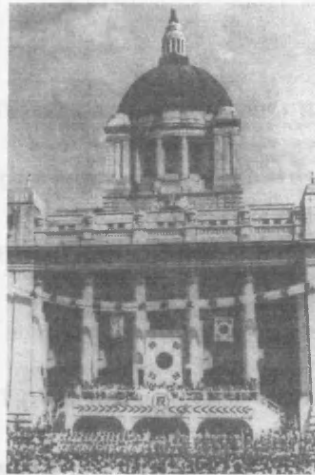


**Illustration 38** Establishment of the Republic of Korea. Source: Jeong Un-hyeon (1995:20)

A second, contrary interpretation of the building was formed after the liberation. In September 1945 General John R. Hodge, commander of the US Forces in Korea, commandeered it for use by the US military government; it was here that he accepted the formal surrender of Japan's last governor-general, Nobuyuki Abe, and of the commander of Japanese forces in Korea. At the time, thousands of cheering Koreans gathered in the streets leading to the building (Lee Man-hoon 1995:80); it was certainly the first time that it had ever had a positive meaning for them. On the establishment of South Korea in 1948, it became the seat of the South Korean government. The inauguration of the *Daehanminguk* was held in front of the building (see Illustration 38), and the first cabinet meeting of

President Rhee Syng-man was held in the principal room of the building.<sup>55</sup>

In both these respects, it is clear that the building had been transformed into a symbol of Korean independence.

When Seoul was recaptured by UN forces from the North Koreans, during the Korean War, the building became a symbol of democracy and anti-communism.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, over the period from 1960 – when the building was damaged by students protesting against the Rhee Syng-man government – to 1983, when it was closed for conversion into the NMK, it became a symbol of dictatorship; but by its transformation in 1986 from a government building into the NMK, a violence-free symbol of Korea, it again had a positive meaning: the overcoming of past ordeals. In the case of the NMK building, it was obvious that of the two interpretations – negative and positive – its identification as a symbol of the Japanese colonial legacy had decided its destiny.

It is worth noting that the remains of one of the palace buildings, Jaseondang (자선당),<sup>57</sup> which was removed to Japan by Ogura in 1915, was returned to South Korea on 28 December 1995 – the building was about to be demolished by the Government-General of Chosen when Ogura, because of the 1915 exposition in the palace, asked the

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<sup>55</sup> I myself clearly remember the images of these events featured in the historical documents broadcast on television.

<sup>56</sup> The image of the South Korean flag together with that of the building appeared whenever news of the Korean War was broadcast on South Korean television. Another of the images which I still remember clearly is of a soldier placing a South Korean flag on the building.

<sup>57</sup> Jaseondang was used by the crown prince of Joseon.

Government-General of Chosen for it; his request was granted, and he relocated it to the Ogura Hotel at Tokyo, where it was then used as a private museum for the Ogura family. In 1923, Jaseondang was destroyed by an earthquake, and only the stone bases of the building remained. Since 1993, South Korea had sought the repatriation of the remains, and they were returned in 1995 (*Donga Ilbo*, 31 December 1995).

On 1 March 1995 (in commemoration of the 1 March Movement) the Namdaemun (남대문), which is designated National Treasure Number 1 by the Japanese, also became, along with the NMK building, a bone of contention. The issue became one of re-evaluating its value as a symbol of Korea; in fact the whole system of ascribing values<sup>58</sup> to Korean material culture and its content came into question. From articles published in Korean newspapers and various other journals during this time and afterwards, three major Japanese distortions of Korean material culture can be identified. First, the distortion of the value of 'things Korean' (가치 왜곡) – the 503 items designated as National Treasures in the cultural properties registry cannot represent 'true Korean values', as they were arbitrarily so labelled by the Japanese in 1933, in a classification which has lasted, without re-evaluation, up to the present day. Second, the distortion of naming and status (문화재 지칭 및 등급 왜곡) – without re-evaluation, the names used during the Japanese period are still used in

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<sup>58</sup> Under this system, Korean material culture divided the objects considered to have the best aesthetic qualities and the most historical importance into 'National Treasures', 'Historic Sites' and 'Scenic Sites'.



contemporary South Korea; for instance, to degrade the values of the Sungnyemun (숭례문, the Gate of Honouring Propriety) the Japanese changed the name of the gate to 'Namdaemun' (남대문, South Gate). Third, the distortion of history (역사왜곡) – there is a need for an investigation into the ways in which the Japanese might have used Korean material culture to distort representations of the Korean past (*Donga Ilbo*, 27 September 1995, 11 March 1996; Pai Hyung-II 2001:302–3).

In November 1996 an academic conference concerning the re-evaluation of those Korean cultural properties registered during the Japanese colonial period was organised by the Bureau of Cultural Properties (문화재관리국), and a committee formed to address the issue. As a result, Namdaemun regained its original name of Sungnyemun; and in other developments, eight forts which were discovered to have been built during the period of Hideyoshi's invasion of the Korean peninsula were demoted from 'National Historical Remains' to 'Provincial Cultural Properties'; six objects designated as Treasures were upgraded to National Treasures; and the status of a pagoda was downgraded from Treasure to Provincial Cultural Property (Pai Hyung-II 2001:306–7).

In April 1996, there was a campaign in Buddhist circles to substitute reproductions of the statue of Maitreya (see Illustration 25) for reproductions of the statue of Venus or of other Western statues which were used for drawing classes in middle and high schools. Bak Chan-gab

(박찬갑), a sculptor, stated that the experience of drawing the statue of Maitreya would provide an experience of Korean beauty. Yi Du-sik (이두식), Director of the Korean Art Association (한국미술협회이사), suggested reproducing other Buddhist statues as well, to provide a variety of models, and these reproductions of the statues may be used in the national university examinations in art (*Donga Ilbo*, 7 April 1996). This case also illustrates clearly the changing perception of Buddhist materials in the Buddhist circles: i.e. de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of its meanings (from an object of worship to a sculpture, with the possibility of a multitude of attitudes, interpretations and uses). At the time of the first touring exhibitions abroad in 1950s, Alan Priest and Robert Paine came to South Korea to select a Korean collection for the exhibitions. They wanted to exhibit a Buddha enshrined at Bulguksa<sup>59</sup> in Gyeongju: however, this was not successful as the Buddhist monks of Bulguksa pleaded with the South Korean government to refuse to display their god abroad (Kim Che-won 1991:112-6). As mentioned before, in the late 1980s, there were some South Koreans who offered money in front of each statue of the Buddha displayed in the Buddhist sculpture gallery of the National Museum of Korea (see Chapter One). Today, in South Korea, it is even possible to find a Buddhist temple running a museum displaying the materials in their collection such as statues of Buddha, sutra and so on.

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<sup>59</sup> 불국사, a Buddhist temple.

From the foregoing examples, an increasing awareness among South Koreans of the Korean identity in Korean materials can be clearly seen; and it can also be noticed that the notion of the Koreans' past visualised in its material culture plays a distinct social role in forming this awareness, though of course the notion can be selective and changeable according to how people interpret it.

In the academic field, unlike the Japanese colonial scholars and Goh Yu-seop, who considered the Joseon period as marking the final demise of Korean artistic culture, a new perspective seems to have emerged among a new generation of scholars such as Chung Yang-mo, sometime Director of the NMK, Kim Hong-nam, Director of the National Folk Museum, and others. According to Kim Hong-nam (1993:48), by the eighteenth century (which can be understood to be a time of intense Korean self-consciousness) the Joseon court artists seem to have developed Korea's own style. Chung Yang-mo also asserts that 'the eighteenth century was a remarkable period in which Korea's individuality and originality were asserted throughout the entire culture and all the arts' (1993:10).

It may be interesting to look at another aspect of Korean academic circles. Recently, Professor Gang Wu-bang, then Director of the Gyeongju National Museum, asserted that the statue of Maitreya in meditation (see page 1) belongs to Goguryeo (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 21 September 2004), which contradicts previous research: Jin Hong-seop (1976:206) dated this statue

to the early seventh century of Silla; Hwang Su-yeong (1974:159, 1978:112, 1992:17) and Kim Won-yong (1980:58) to the late sixth century of Silla; Jang Chung-sik (1983:198) to the late sixth century; and Pak Young-sook (2002:23) to the second half of the sixth century of Baekje or Silla. However, in defining the beauty of the statue, he used the expression ‘the beauty of an early death’ (요절의 미)<sup>60</sup> which expresses a sense of sadness and which also recalls Yanagi’s earlier definition of ‘the beauty of sadness’ (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 21 September 2004). In a way, this expression could exaggerate the sense of the statue’s beauty, by attracting an emotional feeling of sadness, but it is completely based on personal emotions rather than on an academic and scientific foundation, and there is a danger of its being conceived as a Japanese colonial legacy by those Koreans aware of Yanagi’s early definition.

### ***Creating South Korea’s own place in the world***

In the 1990s nineteen Korean galleries appeared in museums outside the Korean peninsula: eight in Europe (i.e. three in Britain, two in Germany, two in Belgium and one in Russia), ten in North America (i.e. nine in the USA and one in Canada) and one in Oceania (i.e. Australia), and in 2000 four more displays: two in Europe (i.e. Britain and Netherlands), one in

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<sup>60</sup> The reason for this definition was that the style expressed in the statue of Maitreya, once it had reached its apogee, disappeared.

North America (i.e. the USA) and one in South America (i.e. Mexico). During the same period (1990–2002), the BM acquired about 79 per cent of the Korean collection acquired between 1946 and the present; the V&A, about 85 per cent; and the MG about 23 per cent; while almost no Korean materials were acquired by the TNM.

The above information illustrates a certain increase in Western interest in Korea. This has mainly been due to the economic development of South Korea and its improved status in the world, as Pak Young-sook remarks:

It would be no exaggeration to say that only in the 1980s did a widespread awareness of Korean art emerge in the Western art world. This phenomenon was accompanied by spectacular auction prices for Korean objects, which sometimes made undesirable headlines in the press. With new financial backing by private companies, the [South] Korean government is now able to promote Korean studies in American and European universities and to fund independent galleries of Korean art in some Western museums.

(1998:50)

In December 1992 a gallery dedicated to Korean material culture opened at the V&A, and in November 2000 a Korean gallery opened at the BM. In January 2001 the MG reopened after its five-year renovation, and the Korean gallery space was expanded from 64 to 360 square metres (Cambon 2001:2). All the Korean galleries were funded by South Korean institutions: the V&A's by the Samsung Group<sup>61</sup> and the BM's and the

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<sup>61</sup> In 1991, another South Korean company, Hyundai, financed a gallery devoted to Korea at the

MG's by the Korea Foundation, an arm of the South Korean government.

The Korean gallery at the V&A came out of the state visit to Britain of South Korean President Roh Tae-woo and his wife in 1989. The latter personage was disappointed by the low profile of Korean art in Britain, and asked whether the V&A would be interested in a Korean gallery. Soon afterwards, the Samsung Company offered the V&A its financial support for the project (*Chosun Ilbo*, 30 January 1991; *Korea Daily*, 30 January 1991; *Segyae Ilbo*, 31 January 1991; Moore 1993). It is interesting to note that the contract was signed not only by the Directors of the V&A but also by the National Museum of Korea. Such examples illustrate the extent of the South Korean government's involvement in these Korean gallery projects.

At the time of the opening of the Korean gallery at the V&A, Myers described the predominant Western perception of Korean culture as follows:

Despite recovering from the Korean War with an economic miracle that propelled it into the company of the world's foremost industrialised nations, Korean's isolationist traditions have kept it a shadowy figure in the eyes of the West. Equally, Korea's rich artistic heritage has long been overlooked, hampered by a lack of knowledge and the misconception that it is a poor, provincial relation of Chinese art.

(1992/1993:68)

In response to South Korean initiatives, the V&A allocated funds for the purchase of Korean objects, and in 1991 and 1992 sent two curators, Beth McKillop and Rose Kerr, to South Korea to acquire Korean objects to fill gaps in the museum's collection (*The Independent*, 1 December 1992): this explains the increase in the acquisition of Korean objects during the period in question.

While the majority of articles praised London's first Korean gallery opened at the V&A (see *The Antique Collector*, December 1992/January 1993; *Kensington News*, 9 December 1992; *The Times*, 2 December 1992; *Antiques Bulletin*, 12 December 1992; *Ceramic Review*, January 1993), it is worth quoting two examples of the criticisms which had already begun to appear by the time the gallery opened at the V&A:

... The Samsung Gallery of Korean Art recently unveiled at the V&A was the biggest disappointment – asking a guard in a passage for directions I was told I was standing in it ...

(*The Sunday Telegraph*, 27 December 1992)

The V&A's new Korean art gallery is little short of a slap in the face for the culture it seeks to celebrate. First, the 'gallery' – a glorious misnomer for what is a section of corridor previously occupied by part of the sculpture collection. This is the nub of the problem. The gallery is heralded as 'the first permanent, comprehensive display in Korean art in Britain' ...

What we find are some 200 objects of wildly fluctuating quality presented in a hotch-potch display. Is this crowd of exhibits, squeezed into a corridor as if an embarrassing postscript to the Far Eastern collection, a fair representation of the achievement and culture of the

Korean people? I think not ...

Equally misleading are the displays of furniture, textiles and metalwork on the left flank of the corridor. The collection has been arbitrarily ordered into themes in the spirit of the T.T. Tsui Chinese Gallery, where works of art are presented as documents of social history. In the shallow space of 'The Man's Room', for example, we find a carved slate funerary epitaph to a 17th century official which would probably have been made for display in an ancestral shrine. Similarly, alongside objects made for the scholar's desk such as elegant porcelain and inlaid metal brush pots, we find a small bronze incense burner that, far from being an object of everyday life, was used in Korea for ceremonies, either in a Buddhist monastery or for ancestor worship. A kind of eternal Korea is presented: there is no sense of chronology or evolution. Some objects are contemporary, others may be 16th century.

The cases are sprinkled with objects that strike even the untutored eye as third-rate – a Choson [Joseon] lacquer table inlaid with mother-of-pearl; hunting and flower screens; and a garish contemporary flower painting made by a Buddhist monk. A glance at their inventory numbers reveals them to be the fruits of last-minute shopping expeditions to stop the gaps. The inexplicable absence of any Korean art specialist from the gallery advisory committee is only too apparent.

(Moore 1993)

The location of the Korean gallery, and its small size compared with the Chinese and Japanese galleries, became problematic in the eyes of the South Koreans. When Jane Portal met Choi of Samsung at a dinner provided by the South Korean Ambassador on 24 September 1996, she said that he showed 'every sign of being infuriated with the V&A and its Korean Gallery, implying that he had tried to persuade them to (a) increase and (b) redecorate the gallery, but he had not been able to get an appointment with the Director [of the V&A]'.<sup>62</sup> Another issue which emerged concerning the V&A's Korean gallery was the Japanese influence

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<sup>62</sup> From a BM document, 'Memorandum from the Director: 25 September 1996' to Robert Knox.



on Western perceptions of Korean material culture, or the Western scholarly tendency of seeing Chinese superiority in everything in East Asia, which seems to have had more pervasive effects in the West than such South Korean efforts as international touring exhibitions. For example, as mentioned before, the chronology displayed at the V&A's Korean gallery gives the impression that the history of the Koreans began from the time when the Han (Chinese) invaded Korea and left four commanderies in the northern part of the country. Another example is the two Chinese stone statues placed in the entrance of the corridor leading to the Korean gallery (see Illustration 39).



**Illustration 39** Two Chinese stone statues, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002.

The labels of these statues describe them as a figure of an envoy, possibly Korean because of the hat (see Illustrations 40 and 41):

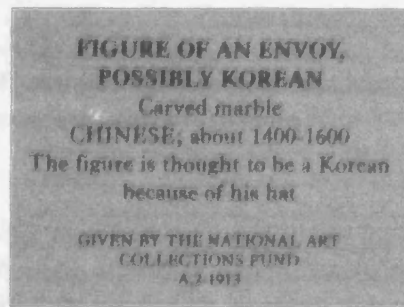


**Illustration 40** Label, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002.

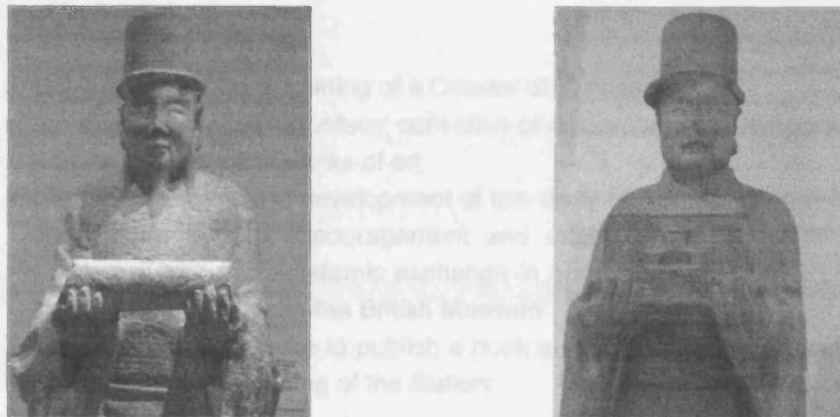


**Illustration 41** Chinese tomb guardians, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002.

It appears that the Korean gallery at the V&A set a precedent for South Korean involvement (at governmental level) in the creation of Korean galleries outside the Korean peninsula, and the experience gained from it had a great effect on the Korean gallery projects which followed. It is worth looking at the agreement<sup>63</sup> drawn up to launch the BM's Korean gallery project:

<sup>63</sup> Thanks to Jane Portal, I was allowed to consult the documents concerning the Korean gallery at the BM; however, regulations respectively governing the V&A's and the MG's archives did not permit these to be examined.

THIS AGREEMENT is made the Twenty-first of May 1992 BETWEEN:-  
KF and The Trustees of the British Museum

...

Whereas: -

(A) The Trustees, intend to refurbish, reorganize and redecorate an area of approximately 400 sq.m. on the mezzanine level of the King Edward VII Building at the British Museum to form a Korean Gallery for the display of the British Museum's Korean collection (the Gallery)

...

6. The trustees hereby undertake to provide and obtain funds from sources other than the Korea Foundation to achieve the following objectives:

...

- b. the appointment and training of a Curator of Korean Art
  - c. the expansion of the Trustees' collection of ancient and contemporary Korean artefacts and works of art
  - d. the advancement and development of the study of Korean art, history and culture by the encouragement and expansion of educational work, research and academic exchange in areas of study relevant to the Korean collection in the British Museum
7. The Trustees undertake to publish a book on the Korean collection to coincide with the opening of the Gallery

...

In the above extract, Korean concerns as to a proper location for the actual gallery, and for the appointment and training of a curator of Korean art, were clearly stated. The Korea Foundation even suggested setting up an advisory committee for the gallery, a proposal with which the BM disagreed. According to a museum record written by Jane Portal to the Director of the BM in 1998:

... I explained to him [the Vice-President of the Korea Foundation] that I had a degree in Korean Studies from SOAS, although I realised that I still had a lot to learn. I gave him a copy of the *BM Book of Chinese Art* and

explained that I was modelling the Korean Gallery book on that, not writing a catalogue. I agreed to send the text to several eminent Korean scholars and to SOAS for 'checking'. He called it a 'specialist review', but it sounds a bit like censorship to me.

...

6. He repeated the KF's [Korea Foundation's] desire to have an Advisory Committee for the gallery. I repeated that this was not BM policy but suggested that I could make an informal visit to Seoul and show a group of experts chosen by the KF the plans for the gallery ... He also suggested we involved the 'experts' at SOAS and I told him that I had excellent relations with them and they had been most helpful over the temporary exhibition ...

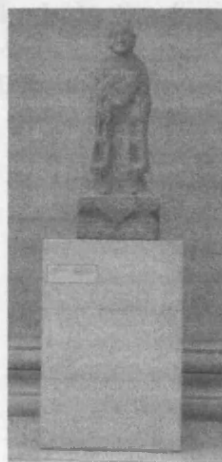
On 8 November 2000, a permanent gallery for Korean material culture opened in the BM. It is worth pointing out that up to then only a small number<sup>64</sup> of Korean objects had been displayed, (since 1991) on the north staircase and in the north entrance of the museum (Wilson 1989:293; Yim Yu-bin 1996:44–5), although the BM asserted that it held the best and most substantial Korean collection not only in Britain but also in Europe (Portal 1995:38).

Comparing the case of the Korean gallery with that of China and Japan, Korea's long-term cultural, historical and geographical neighbour countries, it was on 7 April 1990 that the Japanese galleries opened to display the BM's collection; these consisted of the Urasenke Gallery (Room 92), the Main Japanese Gallery (Room 93) and the Konica Gallery (Room 94), and were funded by Japanese sources, by donations from within Britain and by

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<sup>64</sup> For example, in 1966 approximately 66 Korean pieces were displayed (Yim Yu-bin 1996:44–5).

the BM itself. On 9 November 1992 the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities (Room 33) was opened for the display of sculpture from South and South-East Asia, and of bronzes, sculpture, decorative arts and ceramics from China, through the generosity of Joseph E. Hotung (Hotung 1993:32; Rawson 1992; Smith 1990:5).



**Stone guardian figure**

One of a pair, from north-east China, 17th century, late Ming or early Qing Dynasty

OA 1913.4-24.1



Such figures lined the spirit roads, leading to tombs. These probably represent local officials from an area of China which included people of Korean origin: they have Korean features<sup>65</sup> and the boxes they carry are Korean in design.

**Illustration 42** Chinese tomb guardian figure and its label, the British Museum, 2004

In the chronology of the Korean gallery, Korea's history begins with

<sup>65</sup> I went to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for advice on whether these Chinese statues are of Koreans. Roderick Whitfield, former keeper at the BM and Emeritus Professor of Chinese Art, and Pak Young-sook, a specialist in Korean art, both agreed with my understanding of the statues: apart from the boxes, it is difficult to claim that they have Korean features.

'Prehistoric Periods: Neolithic'. The BM's efforts in representing Korea in this newly-established gallery were far superior to those of the V&A – Korea has now gained its own place in one of world's most renowned institutions, which is considered to represent world culture.

However, the two Chinese statues at the entrance from the Great Court (see Illustration 42) leading to the Chinese, Korean and Japanese galleries remain to illustrate the limitations of the BM's efforts and the distance the Koreans still have to travel.

## Chapter Six

## The forward-looking roles of museums



1



2



Figure 8 The inter-relating of museums, material evidence, and the public

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.

(International Council of Museums 2004:1)

<sup>1</sup> National Museum of Korea, Yongsan, Seoul. Source: National Museum of Korea.

<sup>2</sup> South Korean visitors at the Korean Foundation Gallery, the British Museum, 2003.

## Museum, material culture and people

In the definition of the International Council of Museums (see above), we can see that the three major agents which form the backbone of this thesis overlap the three main agents that bring a museum into existence: the museum itself (i.e. museums), the material evidence (i.e. Korean material culture) and the public (i.e. people) (see Figure 9, and page 4).

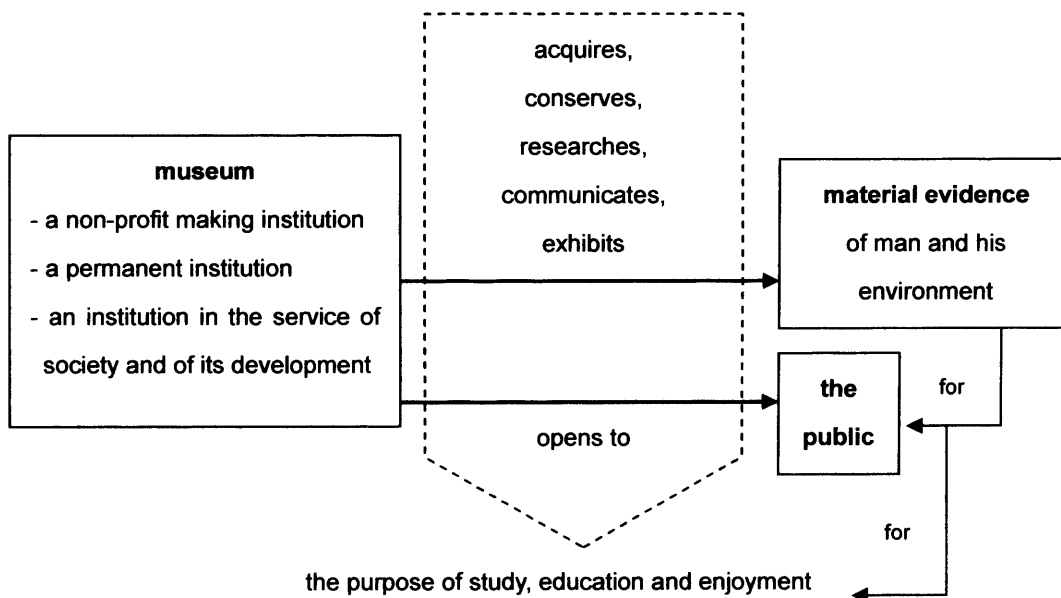


**Figure 9** The inter-relationship of museums, material evidence, and the public

In the same definition, it is also possible to see the relationship between a museum, the materials in its holdings, and the public. As Figure 9 shows, although those materials are placed at the centre of the museum's



operation, a museum does not simply exist to hold the material evidence of man and his environment. Instead, its *raison d'être* lies in those benefits to the public set out in the definition.

One crucial point is that a museum is a product of society: as Kavanagh states, museums 'are saturated with the ideology of their time and place' and they 'differ across time and across culture' (1994:3). Therefore, a museum selects objects to display and interprets them in relation to its contemporary cultural environment. Borrowing Haug's term (2001:111), the way a museum deals with objects can be called the 'actualisation' of the past: its contents are constituted by the values held by the contemporary society to which it belongs. Here there emerges a significant issue: the intervention of a political agenda in the interpretation and representation of a set of historical materials, or even in the museum's operations, especially when notions such as 'nation' or 'national identity' are involved.

In the same definition of the museum, it is also possible to discern the social roles and responsibilities of museums: this is clearly indicated by the phrase 'in the service of society and of its development'. As one example, in March 2000 the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester hosted an international conference to explore the social role of museums: the main theme was combating social exclusion. Sandell pointed out:

Contributors approach the social role of museums in vastly differing ways. ... Though approaches differ, they are all underpinned by acknowledgment that museums are fundamentally social institutions that influence and respond to the changing characteristics and concerns of society. They reflect a belief in the social utility and responsibility of museums.

(2001:xviii)

Continuing with this point, it is obvious that the objects in the museum cannot escape from their role as a 'social utility' so long as they belong to the museum, because they are its medium of communication. Bearing in mind the need for a balance between political intervention in museum practice and the social role of museums, this chapter endeavours to investigate some emerging issues concerning the potential roles of Korean material culture and of museums in relation to Korean identity in the early twenty-first century.

The first section of the chapter addresses issues of globalisation in connection with the Koreans in South Korea; the second considers the issue of the reunification of the two Koreas; finally, the third deals with the current threat to Korean identity by exploring the issue of the identity of those Korean materials located in the People's Republic of China, as the Chinese have begun to claim that part of the Korean people's past which took place in current Chinese territory as part of their own history (see Parry 2004), and this distortion of the Korean past might seem to threaten the notion of 'being Korean'. This final issue will bring some attention to

bear on what Korean identity means.

### **Things Korean and museums in a global era**

In October 1945, the United Nations (UN) was set up to promote international peace, security and cooperation. The following month, a specialised UN agency, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was created to encourage the exchange of information, ideas and culture. In the museum world, it was in 1946 that the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was born, to promote and develop museums and the museum profession at an international level. As regards materials as modes of humanity's cultural expression, UNESCO adopted in 1954 the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict; in 1972, the same organisation adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, in recognition of the need for international cooperation in the preservation for humanity of the world's natural and cultural heritages; and in 2003, the International Convention on the Preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which complements the 1972 Convention, was adopted (see the homepages of UN,<sup>3</sup> UNESCO,<sup>4</sup> and ICOM;<sup>5</sup> also Pearsall 1998:2018, 2023).

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<sup>3</sup> [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

<sup>4</sup> [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).

<sup>5</sup> [www.icom.org](http://www.icom.org).

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it to some extent indicates the steps taken towards, and the scale of, 'globalisation', which can be understood as 'the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across borders' (Holm *et al.* 1995:1), and which is believed to be the most salient characteristic of the twenty-first-century world.

Obviously, the process of globalisation was accelerated by the development of modern technologies (i.e. new modes of communication and transportation), which revolutionised existing notions of time and space: as David Harvey (1989) describes it, 'the compression of time and space'. In world affairs at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it seems that special emphasis is being placed on global interdependence in economics, politics, technology and so forth. Furthermore, ideas such as 'transnational', 'international', 'universal', 'worldwide' and 'global' have become all-pervasive: companies and banks become transnational by extending their scope to the international level, and a global culture is born regardless of differences among the people in different nation-states. According to the journalist Thomas Friedman, globalisation 'is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before – in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before' (cited in Muller 2004:25).

Since it is in this global climate that museums exist, there is also evidence

of globalisation to be seen in the museum field. In December 2002, a declaration introducing a new concept was signed by 18 of the world's leading museums: they defined themselves as 'universal museums', showing objects from all over the world and serving the people of every nation. However, it can hardly be denied that, in a way, some museums use this notion as a means of avoiding calls for repatriation of contested objects in their collection (Morris 2003a:8; Muller 2004:27; Vaswani 2003:21).

In the Swedish city of Gothenburg, the National Museum of World Culture (NMW), which aims to 'display, represent and interpret the various cultures of the world', is expected to open in the winter of 2004/5 (Heywood 2002:21). One particular feature of this museum is that it will have no permanent galleries, to '[keep] up with the ever-changing world' (Heywood 2002:21). In 2002, Heywood (of the *Museums Journal*) interviewed the Director of the NMW, Jette Sandahl, who wants the museum to draw on all aspects of world cultures, as 'culture can be defined around different issues, traits and languages' (Heywood 2002:21). As Sandahl explained: 'As soon as you start doing permanent galleries you get into the concept of definite, different and well-defined cultures that have lives of their own. You immediately start thinking in terms of geography, nationality or ethnicity' (Heywood 2002:21). Another aspect of globalisation can be seen in the emergence of a worldwide museum chain, the Guggenheim, across the US and other countries: the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the

Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in Las Vegas, the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation has recently announced plans for a new Guggenheim Museum in Rio de Janeiro (see the homepage of the Guggenheim;<sup>6</sup> also Muller 2004:25).

The other recent and interesting case is the BM's swift intervention in rescuing Iraqi cultural materials from looting (in contrast to the US/British military action that created the conditions for the looting to happen): in April 2003 the BM announced that it had secured funding from an anonymous donor for six conservators and three museum keepers to work in Iraq, and also hosted a conference on the topic (Heal 2003:5; Heywood 2003:50; Morris 2003b:4; 2003c:22; Vaswani 2003:20–1).

It seems that, in this era of globalisation, the concept of 'humanity' has emerged as a new collective identity, which appears to have the capacity to link people in different nation-states in a single entity, as 'us'<sup>7</sup> (i.e. humankind). This concept can be detected in expressions such as 'universal' museum, 'global' culture, 'world' culture and 'world' heritage, all of which comprise the idea of 'people in the world' (us), by whom tangible or intangible cultural materials were produced, forming a particular culture.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org).

<sup>7</sup> This includes the whole notion of the first person plural in English – 'we', 'our', 'ours'.

Based on this idea, the above expressions can be understood as museum, or culture, or heritage for 'everybody in the world' (us).

The BM's efforts to protect Iraqi material culture from looting can be understood within the foregoing context, which was well captured by John Curtis.<sup>8</sup> In an interview with the *Museums Journal*, he said: 'We are not just talking about the cultural heritage of Iraq but of the world' (Heywood 2003:50). From this example, it is important to note that the materials which are seen as the symbol of Iraq (i.e. of another culture, a metaphoric category) now see their meaning transformed into part of 'our' culture (i.e. part of the world's cultural materials, a metonymic category) under a new collective identity, by transcending the political conflicts between Iraq (to which the materials belong) and Britain (to which the BM belongs, and of which it is in fact a symbol), because those materials constitute 'our' history (i.e. the history of humanity).

### ***The other side of the coin***

Intriguingly, in this globalising era, at a time when people are saturated with the notion of 'global' and 'transnational' and have become familiar with that of 'humanity', debates concerning nationalism and national identity

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<sup>8</sup> Keeper of the Ancient Near East department at the BM. He went to Iraq to assess the damage in the National Museum of Iraq (Heywood 2003:50).

form the other side of the coin. According to Boswell,

THE NATION-STATE is said to have passed its day but nationalism, especially in the reassertion of its ethnically based regional form, seems particularly vociferous. It is one of the great paradoxes of current affairs. During a period of apparently intensive standardization through a remarkably monopolistic globalization of information technology and manufactured goods for sale in a few private hands, there has been a resurgence of national, regional and other forms of localism.

(1999:11)

Kiely and Marfleet (1998:2) observe that: 'The 1990s have seen a boom in writing about globalisation,' while for Calhoun (1997:1): 'In the 1990s, nationalism became front page news again.'

Coincidentally, in the museum field it appears that it was in the 1990s that South Korean institutions, mainly the Korea Foundation (an arm of the South Korean government) in cooperation with other South Korean institutions, began to provide financial support for the opening or renovation of Korean galleries in overseas museums, in order to obtain global recognition of Korea's unique identity by placing its material culture in a positive setting (see Appendix 2; Chapter Five). In consequence, a Korean gallery was opened or reopened during the 1990s in nine overseas museums, and during the early 2000s in seven overseas museums. Whether these institutions intended it or not, their efforts at obtaining others' recognition of their Korean identity by globalising Korean



culture can be understood by these others as a form of so-called 'nationalism'<sup>9</sup> rather than 'globalisation'. A further example from the same period can be seen as showing evidence of 'nationalism' within South Korea. As mentioned in Chapter Five, in 1995, the National Museum of Korea (NMK) building was demolished because of its connotations with the Japanese occupation, and a new building for the NMK was constructed at a site in Yongsan, an area of Seoul which had previously been occupied by the US military and remained off-limits to the South Koreans. Although this event probably took place regardless of the resurgence of nationalism in the 1990's international environment,<sup>10</sup> there is always a possibility to be included as an example of it in the history of the world.

Returning to my subject, how can this controversial situation (i.e. the coexistence of globalisation and nationalism) be understood? The question focuses attention on the ontological constitution of selfhood in the human mind. It is believed that one of the most fundamental components in the constitution of the self is the distinction between selfhood and otherness, formed on the basis of the distinction between similarity and difference. Here, the question is whether people can abandon their old

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<sup>9</sup> The problematic aspect of using terms such as 'national' or 'nationalism' for Korea is that there exist two Korean states sharing the same ethnic origin, the same language and the same past: although the interpretation of their common past differs, both Koreas developed their sense of so-called 'national' identity and 'nationalism' within this environment. When South Koreans use the Western terms 'national' and 'nationalism', they tend to ignore this political division and to see a single entity under the name of 'Korea'.

<sup>10</sup> This event took place as a part of celebrating the 50th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan.

consciousness of self in the name of globalisation.

The answer to this question can be found in a simple proposition: that people exist in the world in relation to other people. The notion of 'the presence of being-self-in-the-world' (Ricoeur 1992:314), which entails the self/other distinction through various encounters, is crucial in understanding the formation of the sense of identity (see page 4). Therefore, as long as people maintain this self/other distinction, it is clear that all ideas concerning identity will be lasting ones.

To continue this point, we need an understanding of what the word 'globalisation' is actually used to mean in the contemporary world. In addressing this question, as mentioned in Chapter One, the geographical location of the overseas museums which opened a Korean gallery during the period from 1990 to 1999 (see page 3 and Appendix 2) is significant: four in the USA, two in Britain, two in Germany and one in Canada. In addition to these, in the following period (2000–3) Korean galleries opened or reopened in a museum in Britain, France and Mexico, and four in the USA. Thus, North America and Western Europe are the main areas where South Korean institutions have been interested in opening a Korean gallery.<sup>11</sup> South Korean efforts to globalise Korean culture by the

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<sup>11</sup> No museum in China, Russia or Japan was on the list. In the case of Japan, this goes without saying, given the recent Korean experience of thirty-five years of Japanese occupation. China and Russia have concerns about the political circumstances in the Korean peninsula: the division of Korea into two states, the Cold War period, etc. Presumably, if North Korea had undertaken a similar project, the list of countries would be slightly different.

installation of a Korean gallery in overseas museums leads to some concerns about power relations in this global order (i.e. Western dominance of the world system), as Craig Calhoun says:

None of the particular cases [concerning nationalism] can be understood fully without seeing how a more global ... rhetoric has helped to produce and give form to each. This goes for nationalist movements, nationalist state policies, nationalist traditions in literature and the arts, and ordinary people's everyday conceptions of where and how they fit into the world.

(1997:3)

The Industrial Revolution brought the West dominance in world economic and political decisions, and a leading position in the cultural sphere. Since then, Western norms have increasingly become those of the world (i.e. global standards), and 'modernisation' has come to mean 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation', and a measure of progress towards this for non-Western countries. As mentioned before, the modern notion of museums was in fact introduced to the world by Western society. In the contemporary world, this new Western system has become a universal language by which people communicate with each other; in this way, how South Korean institutions actualise their material culture (i.e. map 'Korea' in the limited spaces of museums) can be understood as a search for 'where and how they fit into' the Western-dominated world system by using the language Western people understand.

In the twenty-first century, the rhetoric of 'diversity' is emphasised as intensely as are the ideas of 'globalisation', 'transnationalism' and so forth. Here a question may arise: how can the emphasis on 'diversity' in the contemporary world be understood? The answer to this question may lie in Ricoeur's idea that: 'the other is not an object of thought but, like me, a subject of thought, that he perceives me as other than himself, that together we intend the world as a common nature, that together, as well, we build communities of persons capable of behaving, in their turn, on the scene of history as personalities of a higher order' (1992:332).

In this globalising era, it seems that people more and more appreciate the values held by others in forging a more inclusive society (or world). It can be assumed that the experience accumulated in the course of history (i.e. imperialism, colonialism, migration, etc) has led contemporary people to an awareness of Ricoeur's point. Furthermore, modern technology has revolutionised people's lives by compressing time and space: Jette Sandahl, for instance, grew up on a dairy cooperative in rural Denmark, studied in the USA and Denmark, worked in Denmark, and then became Director of the National Museum of World Cultures in Sweden (Heywood 2002:23). Today, her case is not an exceptional one: many people in the world have had experiences similar to hers. Furthermore, people in the twenty-first century have more opportunity to choose their new national identity than before (through migration, marriage to a foreigner, etc). This new life style leads people more than ever towards an understanding of

others, paradoxically even while they perceive that none of us can exclusively transcend our original cultural identity.

In the museum field, from 1990 up to now, about nine museums in the West, apart from those supported by South Korean institutions, have provided a display space for Korean cultural material (i.e. a gallery or a display in a small space) without financial support from South Korea.<sup>12</sup> One of the hidden reasons for these events can be found in an interview with Neil MacGregor, Director of the BM, by Jane Morris in the *Museums Journal*. He says that: 'The idea of trying to show the cultures of the whole world to the world seems the most important task of any cultural institution at the moment' (Morris 2003b:23).

In a sense, it can be said that the urge to respect others through the recognition and acceptance of differences has led to an emphasis on diversity in the contemporary world, where there is a place for nationalism alongside globalisation. From this, another meaning of globalisation in the twenty-first century can be found: a rich network between the ideas of 'local' (or 'national' or 'regional') and global.

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<sup>12</sup> The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia (1990); State Museum of Oriental Art, Russia (1990); Birmingham Museum of Art, the USA (1993); Freer Gallery of Art & Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the USA (1993); Royal Museum of Art and History, Belgium (1994); National Museum of Scotland, Britain (1996); Dayton Art Institute, the USA (1997); Lowe Art Museum, the USA (1997); and Royal Marimont Museum, Belgium (1999) (HMGJY 2002:312–4).

### ***Being (South) Korean in the world of globalisation***

At this stage, it might be interesting to look at the South Koreans' understanding of their 'presence of being-self-in-the-world', the world of globalisation. Within the political rhetoric of South Korea, it was in about 1994 that globalisation began to be emphasised, and late in that year the President, Kim Young-sam (김영삼), put globalisation on his political agenda. It seems that the South Korean politicians understood globalisation in two ways: first, as a concept emphasising the role of the state in expanding the scope of exchanges with other countries in political, cultural and other areas; and second, as a concept which caused changes, mainly in trade and other economic systems in the world. The most interesting aspect of the South Korean political discourse was the emphasis on culture. 'Culture' was understood as a key word in dealing with this global era, and defined one of the characteristics of the twenty-first century – the age of the 'world war of culture' (국제 문화전쟁) or the 'Age of Culture' (문화시대) (Korea Cultural Policy Institute 1998:117–9).

It was in August 1994 that South Korea submitted a list of natural and cultural materials to the World Heritage Committee. In December 1995 Bulguksa<sup>13</sup> and Seokgulam<sup>14</sup> of the Silla period, the woodblocks of the

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<sup>13</sup> 불국사, a Buddhist temple.

<sup>14</sup> 석굴암, a Buddhist grotto.

*Tripitaka Korean*<sup>15</sup> of the Goryeo period and their storage halls at Haeinsa,<sup>16</sup> and Jongmyo<sup>17</sup> of the Joseon period were registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List (Kang Jae-soo 1996b:2–3).

Compared with the 1851 Great Exhibition – and with other international exhibitions which can be considered as being built on two foundations, nationalism and internationalism, and as a means of bolstering trade and national economic benefits (see Chapter Two) – to what extent are touring exhibitions of Korean material culture overseas, together with the installation of a Korean gallery in overseas museums, different, at this time of globalisation? It seems that the only difference is that Korea needs to define its place in the world; and here a question arises: why is it important for South Korea to be perceived 'correctly' or even positively by the world, and in particular by Western countries?

The past experiences of the Koreans provide plausible answers to this question. During the late nineteenth century, in order to secure its sovereignty in the event of conflict between Russia and Japan, the Daehan Empire attempted to obtain favourable attention for its neutrality, and absolute peace treaties between the Empire and the world (i.e. powerful Western empires), but it was defeated by the opposition of Russia and Japan, and by a total disregard on the part of the other

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<sup>15</sup> 팔만대장경, a collection of Buddhist scriptures, rules and treatises.

<sup>16</sup> 해인사, a Buddhist temple.

<sup>17</sup> 종묘, the royal ancestral shrine.

(Western) powers (Bak Hui-ho 1999:13–42; Sands 1930:122–4).

After liberation from Japan in 1945, although Korea was a victim of the Second World War, the Korean peninsula was divided into two states against the will of its people. It was decided by the US, Britain, the Soviet Union and China that the Koreans were to have no rights to be involved in making decisions on their own destiny.

In the case of the two Germanys, reunification would not have been possible without the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the Soviet Union. In the case of Korean reunification, it seems that there is still a long way to go – North Korea has been branded a part of the ‘axis of evil’ by the USA, the issue of nuclear weapons believed to be under development in North Korea may bring war to the Korean peninsula, and China is concerned that its Korean minorities living near the border between North Korea and China might, after any unification of the two Koreas, threaten the current extent of Chinese territory.<sup>18</sup>

Concerning the issue of repatriation, in the case of Nazi looting, museums and other relevant organisations made efforts to restore many items to their rightful owners. In the case of Japanese looting in Korea, there has

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<sup>18</sup> During the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese sold an area of Korean land to China: Gando (간도), in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. After the defeat of Japan, this transaction lost its validity and the land legitimately reverted to Korea. However, as a result of the division of Korea into two states, this territorial issue was buried and Gando still remains Chinese territory.



been comparatively very little serious research into the issue, and very little action. In an interview by Donald Macintyre in *Time* magazine, John Dower<sup>19</sup> said: 'It's a wide open area ... This one got truly buried' (Macintyre 2002:47). Macintyre set out the reasons for this 'burial' in *Time*:

One reason for the burial: postwar discussions of Japanese cultural restitution were rapidly superseded by political considerations. A key opponent of Japanese restitution was General Douglas MacArthur, head of the U.S. occupation government in Tokyo after the war. In a transcript of a confidential May 1948 radio message that TIME has uncovered in the U.S. National Archives, MacArthur told the Army: "I am in most serious disagreement even with the minority view on the replacement of cultural property lost or destroyed as a result of military action and occupation." MacArthur's opposition had nothing to do with the legal, ethical or moral rightness of restitution claims but with immediate U.S. policy goals and growing cold war fears. Such a course would, according to MacArthur, "embitter the Japanese people toward us and render Japan vulnerable to ideological pressure and a fertile field for subversive action."

(2002:47)

These cases partly illustrate the reasons for the touring exhibitions of Korean material culture in the past, and for the main geographical location of the Korean galleries which South Korean institutions have opened as a priority. What South Korea expects from these Korean galleries can be found in a speech in 1980 by Lee Kyoo-hyun, then Minister of Culture and Information in South Korea, when the Korean Cultural Service was opened in Los Angeles:

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<sup>19</sup> Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and author of *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (Macintyre 2002:47).

[The opening of] the Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles [is] a small step, but a very significant one. Through this cultural exchange, we hope to offer the American people the best of our arts, our view of life and our wisdom, for whatever contribution it may be able to make to the complex amalgam that is American life and culture. The two peoples of America and Korea enjoy a remarkable degree of common friendship, respect and understanding *when circumstances bring them together, whatever the situation*.

(Lee Kyoo-hyun 1980:23, emphasis added)

In 1997, South Koreans had to face another test of history. As Ro Young-chan puts it, South Korean people 'had gained a certain degree of self-confidence and self-esteem due to the political stability and economic prosperity in the 80s and the 90s' just before the financial crisis of 1997. This crisis 'created a new sense of uncertainty and anxiety for [South] Korea's future' (2001:711). South Korea had to accept the economic reform undertaken by the International Monetary Fund. This accelerated South Korea's adaptation to Western, mainly American, norms under the name of *seggyehwa* (세계화, globalisation) and the South Korean government and people 'advocated globalization as the only hope and salvation for the country' (Ro Young-chan 2001:715).

On 6 January 2005, Lee Kun-moo (이건무), Director of the National Museum of Korea, Kim Hong-nam (김홍남), Director of the National Folk Museum (국립민속박물관) and Yu Hong-jun (유홍준), Administrator of the Cultural Heritage Administration (문화청), announced a project to mount touring exhibitions of Korean, Chinese and Japanese cultural materials at

the time of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and about 100 objects of high quality will be selected from each country. According to Yu Hong-jun, this will be a good opportunity for Korea to raise Korea's cultural status, which has received relatively little attention in the world compared with those of China and Japan (*Donga Ilbo*, 6 January 2005). This project proposed by South Korea can be understood as congruent with the establishment of Korean galleries abroad. In order to understand South Korean eagerness to obtain world recognition of a unique Korean cultural identity, it may be worth looking at the following two cases.

During a conference on 'Korea's Interface with the World: Past, Present and Future', hosted by the Korea Foundation in December 2001, Frédéric Boulesteix<sup>20</sup> raised a question:

If the Far East is in fact emerging as one of the main areas in which western imagination is invested, albeit focussing mainly on the major, i.e. better known regions of China and Japan, what can be said of the Korean peninsula, situated as it is at the heart of the geographical and historical wagers [*sic*] of this region whilst still retaining its image in France of a discrete *terra incognita*?

(2001:1)

At the same conference, Michael Breen<sup>21</sup> made a similar point concerning foreign perceptions of Korea: 'The first point to acknowledge about

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<sup>20</sup> A French professor in the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (한국외국어대학교), South Korea.

<sup>21</sup> British Managing Director of Merit/Burston-Marsteller.

perceptions of Korea is that not many people have them.' And he questioned why the perception of Korea among the people who 'read tabloids' is overwhelmingly negative: divided, plagued by student riots, and so on (2001:3). He observed that 'Westerners do not tend to become attracted to Korea from a distance in the way they do with, say, China or India', though there are exceptions. And he described the Western pattern of perceptions as 'struggling with dislike of Korea and then coming to love it' (2001:2). He also noticed that:

One disadvantage for Korea which we must acknowledge is that foreigners who have invested the time and effort to learn the language and culture and who have in the process come to love the country and its people have never had much of an audience back home.

(2001:2)

Furthermore, he added:

Most [Western] news organizations have always sent visiting reporters here [to South Korea]. The correspondents here for foreign agencies often have lower status than colleagues based in Tokyo and Hong Kong. Furthermore, unlike Tokyo and Beijing, where correspondents invariably learn the language or may have graduated from Asian studies courses, very few Seoul-based journalists have studied Korea or Korean. As a result, the visitor's "initial distaste" tends to have underscored a lot of western reportage.

(2001:2-3)

In the South Korean economic area, one of the main issues has always been the need for Korean brands (the image of Korea) to encourage more

favourable attitudes in world markets towards the phrase 'Made in Korea' (Jo Geon-ho 2002) and in world political decisions concerning issues related to Korea such as the reunification of the two Koreas, changing the name of 'Sea of Japan', redressing the Chinese and Japanese distortions of Korean history and so on. Considering the past experience of Korean people, another issue could be to encourage more favourable attitudes in world politics, which might allow the Koreans themselves to decide their own destiny and to keep the peace in the Korean peninsula.

### ***Towards self but also beyond self***

The following photographs (Illustrations 43–7) were taken in Korean galleries at the BM, the MG and the V&A in 2002 and 2003.

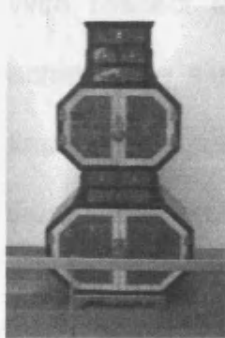


**Illustration 43** Cabinet  
(MG 15562), Musée  
Guimet.



**Illustration 44** Buddha  
(OA1997.12-14.1),  
the British Museum.



**Illustration 45** Storage jars  
(FE.433, 434, 438 & 439-  
1992), Victoria and Albert  
Museum.



**Illustration 46** Replica of a traditional Korean house and a visitor, the British Museum



**Illustration 47** French visitors listening to an audio-guide, Musée Guimet.

It is clear that the objects illustrated carry a notion of Korea which can lead museum visitors to a sense of their own identity, based on the degree of their familiarity with those objects.

The phrase, 'the world understanding Korea, Korea understanding the world'<sup>22</sup> was addressed by Lee In-ho<sup>23</sup> in the 1999 annual report of the Korea Foundation (KF).

With respect to the museum field, among its various programmes to achieve the aim of 'the world understanding Korea' the KF has provided financial support for the establishment of Korean galleries as permanent venues for exhibiting Korean objects in overseas museums, and thus for making Korean culture more readily accessible. In addition to this, 'to enhance appreciation of Korean culture abroad and to encourage the establishment of independent Korean galleries in prestigious museums

<sup>22</sup> (한국을 이해하는 세계, 세계를 이해하는 한국).

<sup>23</sup> 이인호, then President of the Korea Foundation.

overseas', the KF also sponsored a 'Korean Culture Program', including lectures, a tour of Korean traditional music performances in museums and universities, and so on (see the KF's annual reports).

In 1999, the KF launched a new programme, 'Workshop for Korean Art Curators', for overseas museum professionals to more effectively maintain the Korean galleries and Korean objects in their museum's holdings, to expand their understanding of Korean culture and art, and to form networks with specialists in Korean culture and art in South Korea and elsewhere. This programme included a series of lectures and seminars, and visits to museums and other historical sites in South Korea. The third workshop was held in September 2001 on the theme of 'Korean Ceramics: Past and Present'. Some 34 professionals from 32 museums in 12 countries participated in this (see the KF's 2001 annual report).

During the 2001 KF conference, Michael Breen said:

Our discussions during this seminar [the conference] assume that it is important for [South] Korea to be correctly perceived, or to be more honest, to be positively perceived. But why should that matter? The answer for modern [South] Korea is the same as it is for a company. Perceptions determine whether people will invest in you and buy your products. In other words, they have a direct impact on the economy. They also influence how Koreans are treated internationally. But economics is not all and perhaps what counts most is how these foreign perceptions make Korean citizens feel about themselves.

(2001:1)

Bearing the above statement in mind, it is assumed that the Korean objects for which a proper environment (i.e. Korean galleries) has been provided are now expected to play an important role as a vehicle for genuine dialogue between Korea and the world, based on respect for the values held by Koreans and enhancing an interest in Korean culture, deepening a genuine understanding of Korea, and hopefully enriching cultural diversity in the global world. It may be noted here that in September 2001 the BM organised a tour to South Korea entitled 'Korea: Land of Morning Calm' to coincide with the opening of its Korean gallery (see Appendix 13).

Here there arises a question as to Koreans' perspectives of their identity in relation to the rest of the world. In 1997 the 'Third African Sculpture Exhibition', organised by the Korea-Africa Cultural Association and sponsored by the KF, was held at the Incheon Cultural and Arts Hall from 27 to 31 October. About 400 pieces of African materials were displayed, accompanied by the showing of Africa-related films and video tapes (see the KF's 1997 annual report). However, it seems there is a tendency to neglect the importance of 'Korea understanding the world': compared with other activities overseas, there are few events which further this aim. It is noteworthy that the majority of museums in South Korea display only Korean materials: it is even rare to find a display of materials from China or Japan, Korea's historical and geographical neighbour countries. Inside South Korea almost all international activities appear to stress only the



promotion of Korean culture to other people in the world.

In the late nineteenth century, compared with the extent of knowledge about Korea in the West, many Koreans had little or no knowledge of the Western world, though there were exceptions. Given that there are today about 222 countries in the world, in South Korean academic circles the need for 'open multilateralism' has begun to be emphasised. As the world is shrinking, it seems necessary for the South Koreans to expand and deepen their knowledge of the world (and not only of Western countries) and to have accurate ideas about the position of South Korea in that world.

The need for two-way understanding was well pointed out at the time of the KF's evaluation of its activities in 2000. On 17 and 18 August 2000, the Foundation held a workshop to assess its past international exchange activities and to identify the directions it should follow in the 21st century. The participants stated that 'Korea's international exchange activities require a shift in emphasis from mainly enhancing Korea's national interest and image to promoting the well-being of all mankind and world peace.' They also 'stressed the need for two-way international exchange rather than centering only on the introduction of Korean culture to other countries.' In addition, some participants suggested that the KF 'should redirect its focus from advanced countries to Asian countries' (see the KF's 2000 annual report).

After its move to Yongsan, as Lee Kun-mu, Director of the National Museum of Korea, notes, the museum will open an Asian Section (동양관) in order to broaden South Koreans' understanding of their culture in the context of Asia: Central Asian, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian and Southeast Asian Galleries (NMK 2003:4). Based on their existing Central Asian collection, the museum has attempted to strengthen its collection by acquisition of these materials, although their funds have been limited.

Here potential roles for museums can be found, well captured by Chauncey J. Hamlin,<sup>24</sup> who stated at the time of the inaugural session of the ICOM:

The museums of the world, guardians of humanity's cultural patrimony, have an important role to play in awakening and enriching understanding between peoples, an essential vehicle in the construction of ICOM, a permanent structure of peace and of cooperation between people.

(cited in Able 1996:3; translated)<sup>25</sup>

The last point to be made in this section is the South Koreans' perception of their identity inside the country. In the course of South Korea's transformation due to the pressure for 'modernisation', 'industrialisation' and today's 'globalisation', based on the Western (and especially the American) model, its people have become familiar with 'global' culture; this is notable in contemporary Korean society (e.g. in education, the arts,

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<sup>24</sup> (1881–1963), first president of ICOM.

<sup>25</sup> See Note 13.

medicine, technology, industry, and so forth), and has altered the South Korean life-style a great deal from one generation to the next: from the generation who experienced the Japanese occupation, to the generation who lived through the Korean War, to the generation who had no experience of these (now historical) events but who grew up indoctrinated with anti-communism and with an education which emphasised Korean history, and finally to a generation again with no experience of these historical events but with a more less constrained, less dogmatic education regarding Korean history and anti-communism and with an emphasis on globalisation.

Concerning the current more flexible education regarding Korean history, it should be noted that the sixth national education reform (1992–2002), with its emphasis on globalisation, reduced the importance of learning Korean history: Korean history now belongs to social science, and the aim of teaching it in this context is to foster the quality of citizenship in a democratic society (Yun Yong-hyeok 1999:259). Under the seventh national education reform, in 2002, Korean history was no longer to be compulsory (Chu Chin-oh 2004:23). This illustrates the crisis of Korean identity in South Korea under the name of globalisation. Another recent example can be found in an article published in January 2005. When Yi Gi-jun (이기준) was newly appointed as Deputy Minister in the Ministry of

Education, his son's American nationality<sup>26</sup> was a bone of contention. Although his son abandoned his American nationality, South Korean protests called for the annulment of Yi Gi-jun's appointment. In an article, Jang Seong-ja (장성자), wife of Yi Gi-jun, replied that we are living in a period in which nationality is not so important<sup>27</sup> (*Donga Ilbo*, 6 January 2005).

Bearing the above situation in mind, it is worth quoting Kenyon's words:

It is the sense which a museum gives that our life is rooted in the past. A society which has no past is lacking in stability ... the consciousness of great men, the warnings and encouragements derived from past history, have a steadying influence in times of stress. Not merely the political, but also the intellectual and artistic, history of a nation gains in stability and solidity.

(1927:23-4)

Here the potential roles of a Korean museum which preserves Korean material culture as 'the greatest evidence of the facts of history found in the material' can be found: to provide Koreans with stability between their Korean identity and their identity as world citizens, and to promote an understanding of Korea and its people among other peoples, their counterparts.

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<sup>26</sup> He was born in the USA.

<sup>27</sup> '국적이 그렇게 중요한 시대도 아니지 않느냐'.

## Concerns on the reunification<sup>28</sup> of the two Koreas

In recent years, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) has emerged from isolation to the extent of establishing diplomatic ties with 'capitalist' countries; in the case of Britain, diplomatic relations were established in December 2000 (Hoare 2001:1; Morgan 2000). Robert Anderson, former director of the BM, describes the BM's involvement in this political and historical event, and an opportunity to visit North Korea, thus:

One December evening the British Museum laid on a small party for officials from both sides [Britain and North Korea] who had been negotiating long and hard during the day. I was handed a letter by one of the North Koreans inviting me to bring a small cultural delegation from the British Museum and the British Library to North Korea's capital Pyongyang [Pyeongyang]].

(2001:14)

Following the invitation from North Korea, Robert Anderson and Jane Portal,<sup>29</sup> from the BM, and Beth McKillop,<sup>30</sup> from the British Library, visited Pyongyang and Gaeseong; on this occasion, the BM acquired a number of contemporary works in the 'socialist realist' style (Anderson

<sup>28</sup> From 918 to 1945, the Koreans had been united under one political entity, although over the course of time they were variously called 'Goryeo people' (918–1392), 'Joseon people' (1392–1897), 'people of the Daehan Empire' (1897–1910) and perhaps 'Chosen people' (1910–45) under Japanese rule. It therefore seems more accurate to use the term 'reunification' rather than 'unification'.

<sup>29</sup> Jane Portal is Assistant Keeper in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, and is also in charge of the BM's Korean collection.

<sup>30</sup> Beth McKillop had previously worked for the establishment of the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art at the V&A.

2001:14–5). On 24 November 2001, the BM organised a ‘North Korean Study Day’ in association with the British Association of Korean Studies, and the museum also began to display, in the lobby of the Korea Foundation Gallery, some North Korean materials which it had acquired in North Korea itself.

Unfortunately, this special exhibition became a bone of contention between South Korea and the BM. A South Korean newspaper, the *Chosun Ilbo* (조선일보), published articles criticising the contents of the BM’s display of North Korean objects, emphasising that the Korean gallery was funded by a South Korean government body, the Korea Foundation (Gwon Gyeong-bok 2002; Shin Hyeong-jun 2002a, 2002b). It appears that the most problematic object was the calligraphic inscription ‘祈願永生 위대한 수령 김일성동지의 영생을 기원하옵니다’ (‘Hoping for the immortality of the Great Leader, Comrade Kim Il-sung’) and a propaganda poster praising the communist revolution (see Illustration 48).

Concerning the exhibit, Jane Portal of the BM stated: that there was no political intention in the display of the North Korean materials; and that the BM acquired these materials in order to record the sudden change which North Korea has been going through, like that which Chinese art experienced during the Cultural Revolution (Lee Ja-yeon 2002). She also clarified that it is the BM which decides the contents of the exhibits of the Korean gallery, even though this gallery was established with a South

Korean financial support (Shin Hyeong-jun 2002a).

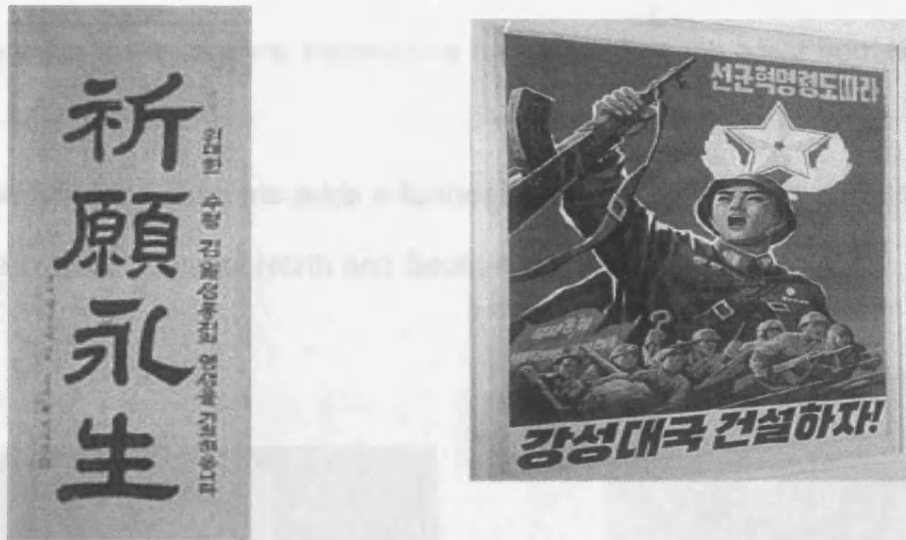


Illustration 48 The two contentious North Korean objects displayed at the British Museum.

However, the *Chosun Ilbo*'s articles obliged the Korea Foundation to send a letter of concern to the BM, which resulted in the removal of the two objects from the Korean gallery. Although both Koreas believe that they are a single *minjok*,<sup>31</sup> the above example illustrates a complex aspect of understanding the notion of Korean identity; in a sense, the BM's display of North Korean materials can be understood as a reflection of a recognition of Korean people as a single *minjok*,<sup>32</sup> regardless of the current political and ideological barriers. In contrast with this, the South Korean contention as to the propaganda nature of North Korean materials

<sup>31</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, for the Koreans, the word *minjok* is understood to mean a group of people sharing the same culture, language and customs, and belonging to the same ethnic group.

<sup>32</sup> It is obvious that the BM will not display Chinese or Japanese materials in its Korean gallery.

illustrates another aspect of Korean identity, which has fragmented into two different political entities since 1948 and which in turn has led the Koreans to turn against themselves by constituting the *other* from *oneself*.

The following example adds a further layer of complexity in understanding the current notion of North and South Korean identity.



Illustration 49

Source: *Daehanmaeil* (19 August 2000)



Illustration 50

In August 2000, within the Korean peninsula, two hundred members of families<sup>33</sup> separated by the North and South division were able to meet each other in Pyongyang and Seoul (Gluck 2000); 15 years had elapsed from the previous meeting in 1985, and only a limited number of North and South Korean families were involved (Choi Byeong-muk 2000). Illustration 49 is a North Korean in the bus on the way to the Gimpo Airport leaving his family in the South. Illustration 50 is a North Korean carrying his

<sup>33</sup> One hundred people from each side were selected, and allowed to meet their families living in the other part of the Korean peninsula.



mother from the South on his back for the last time, just before leaving. Illustration 51 is a grandson in the South who had never seen his grandfather from the North before, saying 'Grand-father, don't go back [to North Korea]' to him and his grandfather passing a handkerchief to his grandson without realising that he was already in the bus and the bus window between him and his grandson formed a barrier between them.



**Illustration 51**

Source: *Daehanmaeil* (19 August 2000)

The above example shows only one side of the reality following the political and ideological division. The other, hidden side of the division is that there are Korean people who had a family member killed by the other side, or even worse by their own government (due to the ideological and political factors which again separated some South Koreans from other South Koreans). Here the complexities of what it means to be North or South Korean, which in turn leads to the question of what it really means to be Korean, become more apparent.

### ***Distinction between self and others***

The division of Korea into communist North and capitalist South after the Second World War brought dichotomous perceptions to the Korean people regarding the material culture designated as 'Korean' – i.e. 'things Korean', but now in the sense of 'ours' and 'theirs'. The boundary of this dichotomy is whether the material was produced before or after 1948, when two separate governments were established in the Korean peninsula.

Since 1948, for political reasons, North Korea became inaccessible to South Koreans, and vice-versa. Furthermore, after the Korean War (1950–3) the predominant perception of the other as 'foe' and 'competitor' was strongly entrenched in both Koreas. As Linton puts it so well, 'to be South Korean meant to be anti-North while to be North Korean meant to be anti-South' (2001:47). It is important to note that since 1948 anti-communist values had been one of the fundamental elements in South Korea's political agenda; even the most basic elements of socialism were taboo.<sup>34</sup> This lasted until quite recently – it was not too long ago that the National Security Law (국가보안법) was strictly applied in South Korea. For instance, at the *Gwangju Biennale 2000*, Sin Hak-cheol (신학철), a South Korean painter, displayed '[his] collage-like painting that depicts Korean

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<sup>34</sup> In November 2001, when I told my mother that I would be going to the BM for the 'North Korean Study Day', my mother – who had experienced the Korean War and the post-war period, during which anti-communism was strongly marked in every aspect of South Korean society – was against the idea of such a visit, and advised me to behave with extreme care, and to avoid, for instance, talking to any North Koreans.

farmers dredging the fields of weapons, cigarettes, Coca-Cola bottles, etc. (icon of the American military and commercial presence) before they can begin planting' (Hoffmann 2000). The framing images of the painting were peach-tree branches and Baekdusan,<sup>35</sup> which is a holy site for the Korean people and is situated in North Korea. According to Hoffmann (2000), those framing images of Sin Hak-cheol are 'Buddhist and national allusions to a nativist paradise'. However, as Hoffmann noted, in 1989 the South Korean government destroyed the first (1987) version of the painting displayed at Gwangju and put the artist on trial, 'alleging his utopian scene to be Communist propaganda that idealized North Korea' (Hoffmann 2000). It can be assumed that similar events have taken place in North Korea.<sup>36</sup>

As Kim Moon-hwan noted, North Korea published a book in commemoration of its ninth annual National Art Exhibition in October 1966. The twelve basic principles set out in this book illustrate clearly one of the reasons for the cultural heterogeneity of the two Koreas.

1. Develop revolutionary art based on national forms with socialist content.
2. Portray the revolutionary path and the people's heroic struggles.

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<sup>35</sup> 백두산 (Mount Baekdu).

<sup>36</sup> Born in South Korea long after the Korean War, I have no direct experience of North Korea apart from a brief encounter with four North Koreans during the BM's 'North Korean Study Day' in 2001. During a break, I dared to approach them to obtain a North Korean museum catalogue and other materials, as other people had acquired such a catalogue or other materials written by North Koreans: what I found was that they could not give me one directly, unless I provided a third person, a go-between, who was not Korean; this I was unable to arrange on the spot. My only real knowledge of North Korea, however, comes from the materials available in South Korea.

3. Contribute to class awareness through the portrayal of exploitative society.
4. Proclaim the joy of life under socialism.
5. Develop art based on Korean painting (*chosŏnhwa*) [조선화, Joseonhwa], but do not reject the artistic trends of other countries. Develop oil painting and woodblock printing techniques as well.
6. Uphold *juch'e* [주체, self-reliance] ideology in art.
7. Base your painting on Korean traditional art, but do not simply copy traditional paintings. Rather, master traditional clarity and simplicity, and develop it to fit modern requirements.
8. Select the right subject. This means subjects that can help educate the masses in communism and inspire them to revolutionary struggle and construction.
9. Develop not only paintings but also ... sculpture, embroidery and crafts based on Korean forms, and refine them to fit the sentiments and goals of the builders of socialism.
10. In capitalist society, art tends to be subjective, formalistic, and naturalistic. It is therefore distant from the lives of the masses and is not loved by them.
11. Artists must live in reality if they are to produce the art needed by the party and loved by the masses. Therefore, they should go to the factories and farmlands and work with the masses.
12. Popularize artistic projects and nurture new generations of talented artists.

(cited in Kim Moon-hwan 1995:29)

During the BM's 'North Korean Study Day', Han Chang-gyu, Director of the National Gallery in Pyeongyang, gave a talk on 'Twentieth Century Painting in the DPRK', in most of which Kim Il-sung was portrayed in various situations<sup>37</sup> (e.g. surrounded by children, fighting against the Japanese, etc). After the lecture, Aidan Foster-Carter asked Han Chang-gyu from the audience why there was no abstract painting in North Korea,

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<sup>37</sup> All paintings illustrate high artistic quality, and can be moving. As Lewis (2000) notes, some of them are similar in basic intent to Western religious painting.

while a number of abstract paintings could be found in South Korea. Han Chang-gyu answered simply that people in North Korea do not like (or love) abstract paintings,<sup>38</sup> which appears to echo the point made in the tenth principle quoted above (see also Foster-Carter 2001).



**Illustration 52** *Spring of Bukman (북만의 봄)*, 1966, Jeong Chang-mo. Source: Yi Gu-yeol (2001)

On the occasion of the 'family reunions' in August 2000, an organisation had planned to arrange an exhibition of the North Korean painter Jeong Chang-mo,<sup>39</sup> who was on the list to meet his family in South Korea, as the organisation believed that it had located 50 of his paintings in South Korea. Unfortunately, the exhibition was cancelled: among the paintings collected,

<sup>38</sup> Lewis (2002) recalls that after a tour of the Ed Ruscha exhibition in Oxford, Han Chang-gyu said, 'far too subjective to be of any use'. Later at the dinner time of that evening, Han Chang-gyu said that 'you have very different philosophies from us, and I simply can't understand those paintings [of Ed Ruscha]'.

<sup>39</sup> 정창모 (b.1931), painter in *Joseonhwa*. He was given the most honorific title of 'People's Artist' (인민예술가). He was born in Jeonju in South Korea and left the South for the North during the Korean War (Yi Gu-yeol 2001:275). See Illustration 52 for an example of his work.

Jeong Chang-mo recognised only six pieces as his own work (Gim Bok-gi 2000). To some extent, this illustrates a lack of knowledge by South Koreans of North Korea, and vice-versa.

It should be noted that until not long ago it was impossible for an object to come directly from North Korea to South Korea, or vice-versa, apart from some exceptional cases: for instance, at the time of the 'family reunions' in 2000, Jeong Chang-mo brought his paintings to South Korea, and in 2001 a North Korean painting was purchased by a South Korean, Gim Dae-gi (김대기),<sup>40</sup> in North Korea and brought directly from North to South without passing through a third country<sup>41</sup> (Jeong U-cheon 2001). Apart from such cases, other North Korean materials were acquired only rarely in South Korea, and then indirectly through a third country (Jeong U-cheon 2001). From the above examples, it is clear that the lack of direct contacts, resulting from the prevailing political circumstances based on different ideologies, led the two Koreas to form an image of each other as 'us' but 'other'; this is clearly reflected in the material culture produced by North and South Koreans over the past 57 years,<sup>42</sup> visible signs of the division.

It is worth noting the reactions of South Korean tourists to the North

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<sup>40</sup> He visited North Korea to promote cooperation and exchange between North and South (남북교류협력) in March 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Afterwards, Gim donated this landscape painting, by Sin Bong-hwa (신봉화), to the Gwangju Art Museum (광주시립미술관).

<sup>42</sup> From 1948 to 2005.

Korean display at the BM. Based on an observation<sup>43</sup> undertaken in 2002, they can be roughly divided into three groups: those who had experienced the Korean War and the immediate post-war period (SK1); those who had experienced only the post-war period, in which they were saturated with anti-communist education (SK2); and those who had experienced only the later post-war period, when anti-communist education had lost some of its intensity (SK3). Interestingly, it was possible to detect from their different reactions the gap between generations, revealing the intensity of anti-communist education in South Korea.

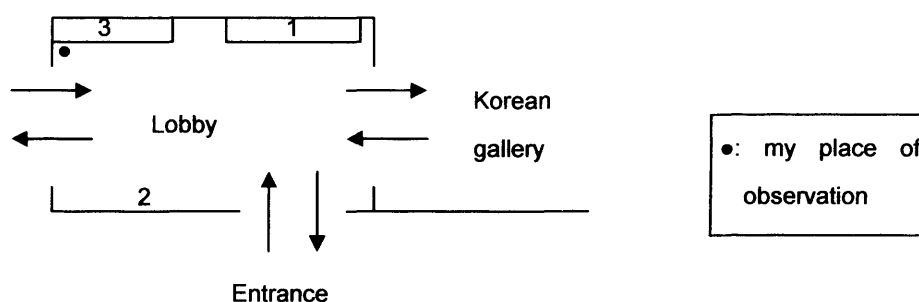


**Figure 10** The lobby of the Korea Foundation Gallery, the British Museum

<sup>43</sup> On 24 November, while I was in the lobby of the Korea Foundation Gallery to see the objects from North Korea, there seemed to be a pattern among South Korean tourists' reactions to the North Korean display, so I undertook an observation of these reactions (25 November and 1, 2 and 7 December 2001) in the lobby of the Gallery. In total I observed about 200 people, most of whom were members of groups of South Korean tourists on a package holiday – the members of such a group differ from most individual tourists, and it is relatively easy to detect their identity as 'Korean' (as opposed to individual South Korean tourists among other visitors of Asian origin). The tourists were mostly mixed family groups. In most cases, it can be said that the majority of the former group had rarely experienced a trip abroad before. The choice of this particular group among the museum visitors was based on the premise that its members were unlikely to be familiar with objective perceptions in the understanding of Korea, or of South Korea in relation to North Korea, in the context of the world as a whole. In fact those South Koreans who appeared to have had experience of living in other countries did not show the same negative feelings.

From the entrance to the gallery, when they faced the problematic calligraphy (see 1 in Figure 10 above), SK1 and SK2 showed signs of shock, and some of them expressed their negative feelings, e.g. 'Remove everything (다 떼어버려)', 'Burn everything (다 불살라버려)' and so on. Some (SK1) even turned back from the entrance of the gallery without visiting the display.

In contrast to SK1 and SK2, SK3 showed an interest in the North Korean objects: for them, the 'problematic' calligraphy and other propaganda posters seemed to be no more than memorable backdrops for taking photographs.



**Illustration 53** Display of North Korean materials at the Korean gallery, the British Museum, 2001.

One interesting conversation took place between a male and a female, both in their 20s, who seemed to be resident in Britain, and who were



looking at the display of ceramics located at 3 in Figure 10 (see Illustration 53): she pointed out only differences, while he disagreed with her, detecting a similarity with the ceramics produced in ancient Korea and which South Koreans are familiar with.

In comparison with the various reactions of the South Koreans, many Western people seemed slightly disappointed at the small number of North Korean objects on display in the BM. Their interest seemed to lie in the nature of the objects as illustrating the communist ideology of North Korea.

It is necessary to note here the impact of the division on the Korean materials produced before 1948, by looking at the reason provided by the Japanese for their refusal to repatriate a stele called *Bukgwandaecheopbi* (북관대첩비), which depicts the victory of the Koreans over the Japanese invasion in the late sixteenth century. During the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese took this large polished stone monument to Japan, as they found it offensive.<sup>44</sup> It is now in a Japanese shrine, Yaskunijinja (靖國神社), neglected and in poor condition. In February 1983, Jeong Tae-beom (정태범) from the Ministry of Education (문교부, a descendant of General Jeong Mun-bu) requested the return of the stele, as it records the general's defeat of the Japanese. The reason the Japanese gave for their refusal was that the stele had originally been located in the northern part of the

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<sup>44</sup> According to Gim Jeong-dong (1999:96–8), the Japanese destroyed almost all steles which recorded the victory of Koreans over the Japanese or during other invasions.

Korean peninsula, and as they were concerned with a possible conflict with North Korea, they were unable to return it to the South. The stele remains in the Yaskuni shrine, exposed to pigeon droppings (Gim Jeong-dong 1999:94–8). Obviously, the reason given by the Japanese was a mere excuse, to deflect calls for repatriation. However, this reflects the reality which the Koreans who live as minorities in other countries are facing: i.e. the choice between North and South in defining their Korean identity. On this point, the Korean minorities in Japan illustrate the most extreme case: there are two Korean communities there, one called Jochongryeon (조총련, the Pyongyang federation of Korean residents in Japan) and Mindan (민단, the pro-Seoul federation of Korean residents in Japan). It was only recently, after the summit meeting between North and South on 15 June 2000, that the possibility was opened of unifying these fragmented Korean minorities within the notion of a single Korea.

### ***In search of common ground for reunification***

According to Hamilton (1992:1), writing after the unification of East and West Germany, while ‘the Germans are now one people in a constitutional sense, they are far from being unified economically, socially, and emotionally.’ Here a potential role for Korean material culture and those museums holding Korean collections could be found: to reduce the impact of a similar situation arising in Korea in the future.

When the Korea Foundation Gallery at the BM opened, in November 2000, two North Korean officials assigned to the International Maritime Organisation in London were present at the opening ceremony, although Britain and North Korea had no diplomatic relations at that time (Anderson 2001:14). This illustrates the function of the BM as a buffer zone between Britain and North Korea (and between South and North Korea), holding as it does cultural materials representing the past of the Korean people as a whole; there is a designated room within the (limited) space of one of the world's leading museums, which for both Koreas can be a source of pride in their unique culture – they both belong to the Korea put on the map by the BM. At the time of the opening, two North Korean prints were also displayed in the lobby of the Korean gallery; there were no South Korean protests, as neither print was of a propaganda nature. It can be assumed that this display of North Korean materials next to other, South Korean materials<sup>45</sup> might signify the future reunification of two Koreas, as pointed out by Portal at the time of the gallery tour in 2001. However, as illustrated in the recent display of North Korean materials, the BM which can play the role of a buffer zone can also easily become a catalyst for conflict between the two Koreas.

According to Arne Eilers, a British visitor to North Korea from 29 April to 6 May 2002, in Pyeongyang there is a monument which depicts two women

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<sup>45</sup> In the lobby of the Korean gallery, the BM displays South Korean materials and also uses the space for special exhibitions. In the gallery itself, the museum displays Korean materials produced before the division of Korea.

in *Hanbok*,<sup>46</sup> their arms stretched out as if to embrace each other, and seeming to shout 'Long live reunification!'<sup>47</sup> (Eilers 2002). This monument clearly shows a desire on the part of the North Koreans for reunification. Moreover, in the Korean traditional costumes of the two women can be understood the intention of North Korea that the statues should symbolise clearly the oneness of the two Koreas and their sharing of the same history.

On 1 March 2001, historians from North and South Korea arranged the first joint academic forum in Pyongyang, to restore national history. At the close of the forum the following day, they adopted a joint statement condemning Japan's self-serving version of history, coinciding with the Japanese government's approval of rightist-influenced school history textbooks which distorted the Japanese colonial past and its wartime legacy (Ahn Byung-ook 2001). As noted by Ahn Byung-ook (2001), Professor of History at the Catholic University of Korea, who participated in the forum, this meeting was held on the basis of a perceived need 'to restore a sense of national community between the two Koreas', as 'the two sides have increasingly recognized that they belong to a single national community with a single history, and that their fate is thus inseparable'. This event marked the first formal inter-Korean academic meeting since the division of the peninsula, and raised hopes that the two Koreas could eventually reduce the sense of otherness formed during over

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<sup>46</sup> 한복, Korean traditional costume.

<sup>47</sup> Eilers slightly modified the North Korean slogan on reunification, which is: 'Long Live Reunified Korea'.

half a century of division, and overcome the mutual hostility which has built up over those years.

Compared with the above event, museums in both Koreas seem reluctant to engage in consolidating domestic unification, although they hold strong material evidence of the past with which to help build a single community for the North and South Koreans, as also to enrich their future community by accepting the different ways of expression in their material culture which were formed during the period of the division, and thereby to underpin the production of a new kind of Korean material culture for a new age.

During the North Korean Study Day at the BM, Han Chang-gyu showed a number of slides of modern North Korean paintings; the following illustrations are two examples. The message of Illustration 54 is clear: to praise Kim Il-sung by depicting his so-called fight against the Japanese for the liberation of the Koreans. Illustration 55 deals with a more general theme, which many people will accept without difficulty: when this painting was shown, much of the audience responded immediately by laughing and by exclamations which showed its appeal for them, while the socialist realist style paintings were greeted with great interest, as shown by the audience's serious and attentive attitude.



**Illustration 54** *Torchlight of Bocheonbo* (보천보 횡불), 1948, Jeong Gwan-cheol (정관철). Source: Yi Gu-yeol (2001).



**Illustration 55** *Who is taller?* (누가 키가 더 큰가?), 1963, Jeong Heon-ung (정현웅). Source: Yi Gu-yeol (2001)

Here can be found the potential role of Korean material culture and museums. To provide a common ground which would reduce the cultural, social and emotional gap between the two parts of Korea, both North and South, museums need to consider organising exchange exhibitions with contemporary material culture from 1948 to the most recent times (see Illustrations 54 and 55). Museum professionals should show awareness of their responsibility to society by avoiding a blind emphasis on North/South differences based on ignorance, which might satisfy curiosity but shows no consideration of feelings, and by instead promoting genuine understanding. In order to provide accurate insights, it might be useful to look at North/South materials by beginning with what the differences in the material form are that divide the two Koreas, what factors led to such differences, where their similarities lie, and so on. Here come new and exciting challenges for Korean museum professionals: both Koreas have a unique opportunity to look at the Korean identity reflected in each other's

material culture and produced according to different understandings of the world. The reunification of the two Koreas may bring the opportunity to reconsider what the notions of Korea and of Korean identity mean. It will be an exiting experience to witness how their understanding of Korea and Korean identity will be reflected in the material culture of reunified Korea.

Concerning materials produced before 1948, not only museums in both North and South Korea but also overseas museums which hold Korean collections should develop a long-term research project to interpret the past of the Korean people. They need to assess the way they currently interpret Korean material culture, and to find an appropriate and accurate way of interpreting the Korean past in their displays – taking into account that the two Koreas tend to be at loggerheads over the interpretation of that past. The simplest example is their different views concerning the origin of the Koreans: as mentioned in Chapter Two, North Korean scholars believe that the Koreans have lived and evolved in the same geographical area since paleolithic times; South Korean scholars believe that the people of the paleolithic age were not Koreans; they endorse the theory of migration (Gim Gwang-in 2002a). It must be noted that up to about a decade ago it was not possible for South Koreans to enter any part of the People's Republic of China, the USSR (including Mongolia) or of course North Korea; and these areas hold the key to the origin of the Koreans and to kingdoms such as Buyeo, Goguryeo and Balhae. Contemporary South Koreans have had access to a material culture which

represents only half of their history (and this applies equally to the North Koreans). As to the interpretation of the past of the Korean people in overseas museums, it seems it has been more influenced by South Korean perspectives, as well as by Chinese and Japanese interpretations of Korea and by Western prejudices about the country. To enhance a genuine understanding of Korea and its people, there is a pressing need to assess methods of interpretation in the museum field, and to develop a long-term research project to establish an accurate interpretation of the past of the Korean people, from its beginnings to the twenty-first century. It would be particularly interesting for a South Korean museum professional to be allowed to visit North Korea and organise a special exhibition of a North Korean museum's collection from a South Korean perspective, and vice-versa.

### **Threats to Korean identity from the Chinese distortion of the Korean past**

On 24 November 2001, at the time of the BM's 'North Korean Study Day', Kim Myong-chol of the [North] Korean Cultural Preservation Centre gave a lecture on wall paintings from Goguryeo tombs. After this one-day workshop on North Korea, according to Lewis (2002), Kim Myong-chol and other North Koreans toured the conservation facilities of the BM, the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Ashmolean Museum, as they were the



responsible officials for the North Korean application to UNESCO to designate those Goguryeo wall paintings as a World Heritage Site. In January 2002, North Korea submitted a list of the wall paintings in the Goguryeo tombs to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, in a bid to have the tombs put on the World Heritage List. Unfortunately, the request was not approved, in the light of a negative report from the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which questioned the state of preservation and the accessibility of the sites. At the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee,<sup>48</sup> the request was put on hold until the Committee's next session (KBS,<sup>49</sup> 12 October 2003).

In the case of cultural heritage sites, screening by ICOMOS is a necessary prerequisite for acceptance to UNESCO's World Heritage List. With respect to South Korea, in February 1995 Nimal de Silva, architect and professor at Moratuwa University in Sri Lanka, inspected the sites on the list submitted by South Korea on behalf of ICOMOS (Kang Jae-soo 1996a:58). In the case of the Goguryeo mural tombs in North Korea, the ICOMOS report was contributed by scholars and authorities from the People's Republic of China (PRC) (KBS, 12 October 2003).

Interestingly, in February 2003 the PRC applied to UNESCO for the registration of Jian (集安, the early capital of Goguryeo) as a Goguryeo

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<sup>48</sup> Held in Paris from 30 June to 5 July 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Korean Broadcasting System, a TV channel in South Korea.

cultural heritage site on the World Heritage List. According to a Chinese government official, they were putting forward two projects: to register either the whole city as a Goguryeo cultural heritage site, or – if this was not possible – some of the Goguryeo material culture and cultural sites (KBS, 12 October 2003).

In a bid to gain UNESCO's acceptance, the PRC, at government level, began to restore the Goguryeo cultural heritage sites by renovating the whole city, over about six months in early 2003. As the PRC had used the state of preservation as a reason for refusing the North Korean request, it had to be sensitive to the poor condition of its own Goguryeo sites. During the renovation period, no foreign people, and especially no Koreans, were allowed to visit the sites, which were guarded by soldiers and police (KBS, 12 October 2003). In fact, South Koreans have been allowed only limited access to the Goguryeo cultural sites since before the renovation up to the present – which reminds critics of the PRC about the accessibility of the Goguryeo sites in North Korea (*Korea Times*, 2 January 2004). It is worth noting here that, according to Hirayama Ikuo<sup>50</sup> (平山郁夫), most countries in a poor economic condition tend to emphasis the development of their economy rather than the preservation of cultural materials or sites; but considering the economic situation in North Korea, the country is doing its

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<sup>50</sup> A Japanese painter, and Director of the Tokyo Art University (도쿄예술대학). He works for UNESCO and the Foundation for Cultural Heritage in Japan, and is also President of the 'Association of Japan-PRC Amity' (일본·중국 우호협회) and of the 'Association of South Korea-Japan Cultural Exchange' (한·일문화교류협회).

best to preserve the sites in good condition (KBS, 12 October 2003).

Before the North Korean application to UNESCO, the PRC had tended to neglect the protection of the sites of Goguryeo; ironically, it was South Korean scholars who were aware of the importance of the Goguryeo material culture and heritage sites, and who had hoped for the registration of the sites on the World Heritage List (e.g. Pak Young-sook in her lecture on 'Cosmic Vision of Ancient Koreans: Koguryo Mural Paintings' at the Royal Asiatic Society in London on 11 October 2001; Seo Gil-su in a KBS programme on 12 October 2003; etc). However, as the sites are situated in the PRC, South Korea could not prevent their destruction, and could only look on at the building of houses on the site, the use of stone from Goguryeo tombs for the walls of houses, grave robbery, negligent maintenance, natural causes and so on. Now, following the renovation, the whole city has changed dramatically. The most striking new aspect is that even the houses built on the sites have been removed, and replaced with grass. Furthermore, some excavation of the sites has been undertaken, and the findings displayed in a suitable environment (KBS, 12 October 2003).

The 28th session of the World Heritage Committee (chairperson: Zhang Xinsheng, from the PRC), which decides on the inscription of new properties on the World Heritage List, including those of North Korea and the PRC, took place at Suzhou (蘇州) in the PRC from 28 June to 7 July

2004. North Korea expected that both Goguryeo requests would be approved by the Committee. On the other hand, the PRC believed that its own request, rather than North Korea's, would win the Committee's approval, a belief the PRC considered was strongly supported by the session's being held in its own country. The Chinese also believed that, as both countries had submitted the cultural heritage of Goguryeo, the Committee would choose only one as representative of that heritage on the World Heritage List (KBS, 12 October 2003).

### ***Goguryeo: whose history?***

On 24 June 2003, the *Guangming Daily* (光明日報)<sup>51</sup> published an article on Goguryeo, one of the kingdoms in Korean history. The article stated that the people of Goguryeo were one of the Chinese minority groups who had appeared in the north-east of the current PRC territory, that Goguryeo had been a Chinese provincial political entity, and that there was no connection at all between the Goguryeo people and the Koreans: thus the history of Goguryeo belonged to the Chinese people (KBS, 12 October 2003).

Before the 1980s, it seems that PRC scholars understood that Goguryeo (?B.C.–A.D. 668) was part of Korean history, and instead focused on

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<sup>51</sup> A PRC newspaper.

claiming Balhae (698–926), another Korean kingdom which had occupied most of the territory of Goguryeo, as historically Chinese (Yeo Ho-kyu 2004:285). In a dissertation completed in 1978, and found by a KBS team in the PRC, it is clearly stated that ‘Goguryeo is one of the three kingdoms, together with Baekje and Silla, which succeeded the culture and tradition of Gojoseon’ (KBS, 12 October 2003). The irony was that, at that time, the PRC scholars attempted to separate Goguryeo, which they considered as historically Korean, from Balhae, which they claimed as part of their own history. In fact, the people of Balhae themselves proclaimed that Balhae was the successor of Goguryeo, and the people of Goryeo and Joseon included Balhae in the history of the Koreans (see Noh Tae-don 1996a:7, 1996b:30). It should be noted that Western names such as ‘Korea’ and ‘Corée’ were derived from the Korean name ‘Goryeo’, but ‘Goguryeo’ was also called ‘Goryeo’. In fact Goryeo adopted the name of Goguryeo in order to legitimise its formation of a state by defining it as the successor of Goguryeo (Chapter Two). Thus, in one way, China’s attempt to include Goguryeo in its own history has the potential to threaten the identity of a state today called ‘Korea’ and of the people called ‘Korean’.

In the 1980s the PRC government defined China as unified and multi-ethnic, regarding the histories of all the ethnic groups which lived or had lived within its current territory as parts of Chinese history (Yeo Ho-kyu 2004:282). In February 2002, the PRC launched a five-year government initiative, called the ‘Northeast Asian Project’ (東北工程), to carry out

regional studies of the north-eastern part of its territory; this project is concerned not only with Goguryeo but also with other Korean early kingdoms such as Gojoseon, Buyeo and Balhae (Choe Gwang-sik 2004:3), and seeks to claim their history as Chinese – which will in effect reduce the length of Korean history, which, according to this recent distortion, only began with the Silla period. The ultimate aims of this project are to support the long-term stability, unity and national solidarity of the PRC, the maintenance of social order, and the stability of the country's frontiers (KBS, 12 October 2003).

To understand the PRC's attempt to reinvent early Korean history as Chinese, the composition of its population is relevant. China's population is not homogeneous: about 93.3% of the people are Han (汉族), with the remainder consisting of about fifty-five minority groups (Yun Nae-hyeon 1991:21). The important thing to note is that although the Han people are the dominant ethnic group, they only occupy about 40 per cent of the current territory, and the minority groups about 60 per cent. This fact alone makes the minority groups significant for the PRC government's political agenda. Among these groups, the Koreans (朝鮮族) mainly reside in Jilin (吉林), Heilongjiang (黑龍江) and Liaoning (遼寧), where one can find not only Goguryeo materials but also those of other early political entities of the Korean people, such as Buyeo and Balhae (Yun Nae-hyeon 1991:21–2), and where the border between the PRC and North Korea lies.

Mark Byington, who visited the PRC in the early 1990s, states:

Koreans are the majority in the city of Yanji ... the capital of the Yanbian ... Korean autonomous region (the eight easternmost counties of Jilin Province), where nearly every Chinese sign or billboard has an accompanying equivalent in han'gul [Korean script]. While walking through the streets of Yanji one gets the impression of being in a place somewhere between China and Korea. But Korean is the language most often heard in Yanji ...

(undated)

Having witnessed the fall of the Soviet Union and the resulting 'loss' of vast territories, the PRC's main concern appears to be its territoriality, in which context it already has some conflicts with other minority groups. Seo Gil-su,<sup>52</sup> who is devoted to research on Goguryeo history, says that the PRC is concerned that after a reunification of the two Koreas the Koreans would claim the recovery of the ancient territory of Goguryeo. The PRC also cannot ignore the possible impact of such a unification on the minority group of Korean people, those who form an autonomous district near the border between the PRC and North Korea (KBS, 12 October 2003). Similar remarks were made by Choe Gwang-sik<sup>53</sup> in an interview with a South Korean newspaper, the *Joongang Daily*, on 12 January 2004:

There are three main reasons behind China's efforts to incorporate Goguryeo into their history ... First is the issue of the identity of the Chinese-Koreans presently residing in Manchuria. Second is preventing

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<sup>52</sup> 서길수, Professor at Seo-gyeong University and President of the Koguryo [Goguryeo] Research Society in South Korea

<sup>53</sup> 최광식, Professor of Korean History at the Korea University (고려대학교).

talk of territorial gains by Korea once the two Koreas become unified. Third, the rising number of North Korean refugees in China near the northern border of North Korea may give rise to territorial disputes.

(*JoongAng Daily*, 12 January 2004)

He also commented on the seriousness of the matter: 'If the [PRC's] claims made in the past were at an individual, academic level, this time the worry is that China's efforts to rewrite history are made at a government level' (*JoongAng Daily*, 12 January 2004).

Given the premise that a unified Korea would threaten its territoriality, the PRC has adopted various measures since the 1980s. In 1990, its textbook on the history and maps of ancient China, 中國古代歷史地圖集, even distorted territorial boundaries by extending the Great Wall of China to Pyeongyang in North Korea. Another example is that the PRC even made efforts to acquire all the materials it could on Goguryeo and to translate them into Chinese; in April 2003, for example, Seo Byeong-guk (서병국), Professor of the history of Goguryeo and author of several published books on Goguryeo, received a letter from a professor of history in the PRC in which the latter sought permission for the translation of Seo's books. Afterwards, Seo discovered that similar requests had also been made in respect of other materials on Goguryeo written by North and South Korean scholars. The PRC's efforts to have North and South Korean written materials on Goguryeo translated into Chinese is regarded



by the South Korean academics concerned as an attempt to build a solid basis for the Chinese interpretation (or distortion) of the past – as against the two Korean interpretations, which assert the legitimacy of Goguryeo as part of Korean history (KBS, 12 October 2003).

On 19 September 2003, an interesting article, ‘中国：朝鮮族に思想教育’ (‘The PRC: Ideological education for the Korean people in their minority groups’), was published in the Japanese newspaper *Mainichi Daily News* (毎日新聞); the article summarised the main content of the PRC’s education for its Korean minority group – that the latter’s history is of a Chinese minority group, one of a variety of such groups in the PRC, and that the PRC is its fatherland (KBS, 12 October 2003).

All this is a matter of serious concern to the two Koreas, as it would provide a basis of assumed legitimacy for a future PRC claim to the northern part of Korea (i.e. North Korea) as Chinese territory. In the circumstances it is not difficult to find the reason for the PRC’s prompt response to the North Korean application to UNESCO over for the Goguryeo tombs, in submitting its own list of Goguryeo sites in the PRC to the World Heritage Committee.

***'Mountain is mountain, water is water'*<sup>54</sup>**

Some examples of the fierce South Korean reaction to the PRC project are given below.

In November 2003, the Voluntary Agency Network of Korea set out to correct inaccurate or distorted versions of Korean history on some of the world's leading websites, such as *www.iexplore.com*, *iexplore.nationalgeographic.com*, *travel.yahoo.com*, and even an American university homepage, *www.umich.edu*. These websites claim that Korea was formed as a state in 668, when Silla had unified Goguryeo after Baekje in 660. According to Choe Gwang-sik (최광식), the reason for the misinformation might lie in inaccurate reference material written in English by the Chinese and Japanese in the past (*Donga Ilbo*, 26 November 2003, *Korea Times*, 11 December 2003).

In December 2003 a group of South Korean historians issued a statement on the PRC's scheme to incorporate Goguryeo into its own past (*Chosun Ilbo*, 9 December 2003).

On 5 January 2004, South Korean high school students and civic group members, dressed in Goguryeo armour, demonstrated in front of the PRC

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted from '산은 산이요, 물은 물이로다', a Buddhist sermon given by a South Korean Buddhist monk, Seong-cheol (성철, 1912–93).

embassy in Seoul, denouncing the historians of the PRC for their 'wrongdoing'. This was just one of the rallies which have been held in front of the embassy (*Yonhap*, 5 January 2004; see Illustration 56).



**Illustration 56** South Korean protests

Source: *Yonhap* (5 January 2004)

Over a period of less than three weeks, more than a million South Koreans signed a nationwide petition, calling on their government to take firm and immediate action over the PRC's 'theft' of the Korean past (Illustration 57).



**Illustration 57** South Korean protests

Source: *Korea Herald* (26 January 2004)

In a further example, on 15 January 2004 a civic group called the 'Alliance of Korean citizens for true Korean history' ('우리역사바로알기시민연대') launched a campaign to send an e-mail to ICOMOS and UNESCO to raise awareness of the PRC's re-writing of history. This campaign succeeded in convincing more than 20,000 internet users to bombard the websites of both UNESCO and ICOMOS (see the homepage of the Alliance, at [www.historyworld.org/erro1.html](http://www.historyworld.org/erro1.html)).

From 16 to 18 January 2004, a steering committee of ICOMOS met at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. According to the *Munhwa Ilbo* (문화일보) on 19 January, ICOMOS recommended that both North Korea's and the PRC's requests for inscription on the World Heritage List be granted.

An ironic outcome of all these reactions to the PRC's political claim on Goguryeo materials is that such materials have now become a strong metaphor for the identity of those people who believe themselves to be Korean, and this sense of Goguryeo as a symbol of Korean identity has become a means to tie them more firmly together, as 'we Koreans'. For instance, South Koreans have urged their government to cooperate with North Korea over the inscription of the Goguryeo cultural heritage on the World Heritage List, and to make efforts to obtain international recognition of the people of Goguryeo as Koreans, of their material culture as Korean regardless of who now owned it (i.e. whether or not the PRC might hold the legal title to it), and of the Goguryeo period as the past of

contemporary Koreans (see *Donga Ilbo*, 16 January 2004; *Korea Herald*, 26 January 2004; etc.).

On 12 January 2004, a South Korean newspaper, the *JoongAng Daily* (중앙일보) interviewed an 18-year old student, Jeon Jae-su, who with a friend had signed a petition of protest at the PRC's taking-over of Korean history. He said: 'I don't know the details of the fuss, but from what I understand, China claims Goguryeo as part of their history and that is just wrong. *For thousands of years, we have always known it to be ours*' (emphasis added).

For an understanding of South Korean thinking on this matter, it might help to look at the saying 'mountain is mountain, water is water'. Since people attach the separate ideas of 'mountain' and 'water' to the relevant orthographic and phonological forms, as part of their *langue* (see Saussure 2002:19–20), the meaning of the saying is that the one cannot be subsumed under the other; and the import of this is in turn that what the PRC demands of the Koreans is as it were that they reprogramme 'mountain is mountain' in their memory database by replacing it with 'mountain is water'.

It is worth noting that the Chinese themselves in ancient times distinguished themselves from the Goguryeo people, whom they considered (in modern terms) Korean, by classifying them as the 'Ye-

maek' or 'Maek' people (i.e. as Korean).

***Mediators of reconciliation and the construction of new relationships***

From 27 to 30 December 2003, a group of South Korean archaeologists visited the site of Goguryeo in the PRC. Seo Gil-su stated that they had no access to Goguryeo relics in fortresses in Liaoning Province: a direct instruction was issued by the provincial governor to forbid them access. Seo added that in Jirin Province they were only allowed to stand in front of the monument of the Great King Gwanggaeto (광개토대왕) and the tombs of Kings Jang-su (장수왕) and Tae (태왕), and that they could only see Gungnae fortress (궁내성) from the inside of a bus (*Korea Times*, 2 January 2004). In an interview with the *Korea Times* in January 2004, Seo said:

Wherever we went, the Chinese police watched us closely. We were denied access not only to the Koguryo [Goguryeo] relics where visitors were allowed to take pictures, but also to a museum opened to the public

...

(*Korea Times*, 2 January 2004)

The above serves to illustrate the extent of the serious conflict between the South Koreans and the PRC.

The South Korean government, compared with the fierce reactions of its

people, seems to be rather reluctant to take prompt action. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development has kept quiet, presumably to avoid angering the PRC government, given the economic and political interests of the PRC. In January 2004, Lee Chang-dong (이창동), the then Minister of Culture and Tourism, remarked at a press conference that it would be better to leave this issue to historians in the PRC and South Korea, without the interference of either government. He said that a political approach would worsen the situation, and that he believed an invisible hand behind efforts in the private sector would make things better (*Korea Times*, 7 January 2004). His statement was heavily criticised by South Koreans – e.g. one of the slogans in Illustration 57 says ‘they [the PRC] come to take over the whole country while letting the scholars worry about it!’ (‘학술문제 떠맡기다 나라통째 떠넘길라!’).

It seems that it was pressure from the public which obliged the South Korean government to act. On 9 January 2004, Park Heung-sin (박흥신), Director-General in charge of cultural affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, stated that his government had conveyed its concerns to the PRC concerning a certain state-funded research project (i.e. the ‘Northeast Asia Project’). He reported that, according to the PRC government, the project was an academic research programme in which it was powerless to intervene. He added that the PRC was concerned that this issue could have a negative impact on bilateral relations. A separate but similar remark was made by South Korean diplomats resident in the

PRC. However, they added that the PRC's government only provides funding for the project (Choi Man-ho 2004; Seo Jeong-su 2004). Apparently, the South Korean political climate leads also to a reluctance among museums to interfere: it seems that almost no museum came forward on the issue until the National Museum of Korea (NMK) actually held a special exhibition on Goguryeo in 2004 at the time when South Korea hosted the 20th ICOM General Conference in Seoul.

In the case of the PRC, as Seo witnessed, the museum engaged actively in its own government's political agenda by refusing access to the South Koreans, or where it did allow them (restricted) access, by ensuring there were always people watching them closely. In fact, according to a South Korean who recently visited the PRC, museums in the PRC display these Goguryeo materials as Chinese. One interesting point she made was that a Chinese museum guide of Korean origin confirmed those materials to her as Korean, while most Chinese museum guides of Han origin explained them as Chinese (MBC<sup>55</sup> 2004).

In Japan, in August 2004, the Tokyo National Museum (TNM) held a special exhibition of Chinese Art. The problematic aspect of the exhibition was that in the display room under the title of 'Chinese calligraphy' (中国の書), the museum displayed 31 Goguryeo materials including 5 rubbings of

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<sup>55</sup> A TV channel in South Korea. Thanks to Kim Yun-joung, my sister, who recorded several TV programmes and sent them to me.



the King Gwanggaeto's stele without mentioning its origin (i.e. Korean). When a South Korean journalist asked the reason for the display of these Goguryeo materials in the Chinese exhibition, Tani Toyonobu (谷豊信), who is in charge of the Department of Eastern Art (東洋課) responded simply that the museum did not intend to present these materials as Chinese and that because of its size, the museum could not locate them in any other part of the museum (MBC 2004). As stated by Yi Jeong-hun (2003:320), in the chronology of another Japanese national museum in Kyoto, he found that the museum classified Goguryeo as a kingdom belonging to China and Korea, and another Korean kingdom, Balhae as a Chinese kingdom.

In order to understand the TNM's attitudes, it is necessary to note the other two displays the TNM held in the lobby of the Korean gallery in 2002. To commemorate the joint holding of the 2002 FIFA World Cup by Korea and Japan, the TNM and National Museum of Korea (NMK) organised an exchange exhibition: Korean materials in Japan and Japanese materials in South Korea. During the period of the World Cup, the TNM displayed Goguryeo materials in the lobby of its Korean gallery. For the Koreans, the history of Goguryeo is one of the sources of pride in being Korean. Interestingly, just before the display of the Goguryeo materials, in the same place, the TNM displayed Lelang (Chinese) materials.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This information comes from my own observation during the period of data-gathering at the TNM in March, April and July 2002.

From 14 September to 17 October 2004, just before its closure for the move into a new museum building at Yongsan, the NMK organised its last special exhibition by selecting a theme on Goguryeo (see Illustrations 58 and 59). The title of the exhibition was 고구려유적세계문화등재기념특별전 ‘고구려’ (Special exhibition in commemoration of the registration of Goguryeo relics on the World Heritage List: ‘Goguryeo’). The nature of this special exhibition is not as simple as one might think: Park Jin-soo understood this exhibition as: ‘[Aiming] to help the Korean public to gain an historical appreciation of Goguryeo’ (2004:72), as the South Korean people are already aware of the serious nature of Chinese distortion of Goguryeo history and the Japanese involvement in this matter: the issue has been heavily discussed in the South Korean media since 2003.



**Illustration 58** Special exhibition on Goguryeo (고구려), National Museum of Korea.

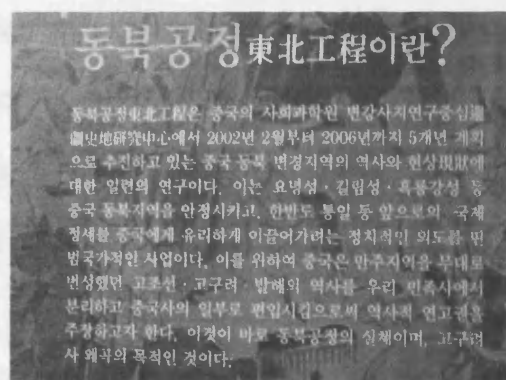


**Illustration 59** Part of the panel explaining the PRC's Northeast Asia Project (동북공정 東北工程).

In the panel on the wall (see Illustrations 60 and 61) at the entrance to the special exhibition, there was a section which dealt with the Chinese

distortion.



**Illustration 60** South Korean children of an elementary school listening to their teacher's explanation.



**Illustration 61** Non-Korean visitors

This section was divided into seven sub-titles, which translate into English as follows: 'China's 'Northeast Asia Project''; 'Interpretation of the History of Goguryeo in China'; 'Goguryeo, a Kingdom of the Yemaek People, Ancestral Koreans'; 'Tribute and Bestowal: Pre-modern Diplomatic Formalities'; '70-year Wars of Goguryeo against Sui and Tang'; 'Balhae, A Kingdom of the Goguryeo Refugees; and 'Goryeo, a Successor of Goguryeo'. Under the sub-title, China's 'Northeast Asia Project', the NMK stated that:

... This nation-wide project, 'Research on the Northeast Region', is loaded with political interest beyond academic achievements. First, it aims to establish political continuity in the ethnically diverse northeastern region. Second, it intends to justify the claim that Goguryeo was a regional feudal state in China. The intentional distortion of the historical truth may be used to support the position that China should actively be involved in the reunification of Korea in the future.

<sup>58</sup> See UNESCO's homepage, at [portal.unesco.org/culture/en/?url\\_id=1528&url\\_do=770\\_T07004](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/?url_id=1528&url_do=770_T07004).

The original Korean of the last sentence in the above English-language version would be better translated as 'The intentional distortion of the historical truth may be used to obtain a favourable position for China in the international context at the time of the reunification of Korea in the future.'

The reasons for this special exhibition can be found in internal pressure from museum circles asking the NMK to engage in this issue, and in external pressures such as the museum practices of the PRC and Japan mentioned above. Furthermore, hosting ICOM's 20th General Conference and its 21st General Assembly in Seoul seems to have been considered as a good opportunity for making the world aware of the issues at stake.<sup>57</sup>

The different ways of approaching the matter in the three countries' museum fields focus attention on the recent UNESCO attempt to prepare recommendations for new museum management policies:

On its creation in November 1946, museums were at once an integral part of UNESCO's cultural programmes. ...

... Recently UNESCO intervened in the wake of conflicts to encourage museums to act as mediators and agents of reconciliation and social reconstruction ...

(undated)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Some people suggested to the NMK that it organise, at this particular time, an exhibition on Goguryeo dealing with Chinese distortions (personal correspondences with NMK staff). It seems worth noting that the Seoul Museum of History organised a special exhibition on the issues concerning the English spelling of Korea and the name of the sea between Korea and Japan around the period when the ICOM's meeting was held in Seoul. During the ICOM's meeting, both museums were on the programme for the delegates to visit.

<sup>58</sup> See UNESCO's homepage, at [portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php@URL\\_ID=1556&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&...](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php@URL_ID=1556&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&...)

Having witnessed the movement towards the economic unification of Europe, the potential for a similar sort of movement among Asian countries has emerged in the political discourse in East Asia. Here, it seems that Chinese, Japanese and Korean museum fields need to pay attention to the points made by UNESCO, and perhaps find there a potential role.

## Chapter Seven

## Conclusion

'All phenomena are relations between relations', says Foucault (1992: 10, translated).<sup>1</sup> Since 1990, South Korean institutions have actively engaged

in the establishment of permanent and independent

permanent museums abroad; as a result, 18 have

opened or reopened a Korean gallery by 2003, with

(see Appendix 7). In order to understand the world

Korean efforts to present Korean culture on a global

adopted a historical perspective to explore the process

agencies – people, Korean material culture and museums – and the

interaction of these agencies in relation to the notion of Korea. This is

based on the belief that these events should be understood as the

outcome of large-scale historical processes in the Korean people's

understanding of their Korean identity, their own material culture and

museums, and also other people's understanding of these phenomena.

The theory ... 'Basically, Korea's been ignored,' says Jane Portal, curator of Oriental Art at the British Museum. 'We've had curators for China, Japan, Islam, India and South-East Asia, but we haven't had anyone working on Korea before.'

With Korean reunification a possibility, within the next ten years Korea could emerge as a major power in the next century ...

If the fairy tale conclusion is in sight, it is due to Korea itself. 'It really starts with the Koreans, with their confidence and ability to excite the rest of the world about their art,' says McKillop [of the Victoria and Albert Museum].

(Myers 1992/1993:71)<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Gilt-bronze Maitreya in meditation; Baekje. National Museum of Korea, Seoul; *deoksu* (덕수) 3312. National Treasure (국보) no. 83. Source: National Museum of Korea.

<sup>2</sup> This article deals with the opening of the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1992.

## **Understanding the establishment of Korean galleries abroad**

'All phenomena are relations between relations', says Saussure (2002:10; translated).<sup>3</sup> Since 1990, South Korean institutions have actively engaged in the establishment of permanent and independent Korean galleries in renowned museums abroad; as a result, 16 overseas museums had opened or reopened a Korean gallery by 2003, with South Korean support (see Appendix 2). In order to understand the serial pattern of these South Korean efforts to present Korean culture on a global stage, this thesis has adopted a historical perspective to explore the relations between three agencies – 'people', Korean material culture and museums – and the interaction of these agencies in relation to the notion of Korea. This is based on the belief that these events should be understood as the outcome of large-scale historical processes in the Korean people's understanding of their Korean identity, their own material culture and museums, and also other people's understanding of those phenomena.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter Two demonstrates the complexity of the notions of Korea and Korean identity by exploring how the Koreans define themselves and how non-Koreans perceive Korea. To understand the current notion of Korean identity, it is hard to ignore the symbolic and historical values of Dan-gun, which are deeply rooted in the Korean mind and provide a belief in the continuity and the 'homogenous'

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<sup>3</sup> See Note 14.

nature of the Korean people<sup>4</sup> – possibly the reason why Korea exists today, despite its geological location next to China, numerous invasions and even the Japanese colonial experience, and one which might lead Koreans to succeed in ‘preserving their country and their own culture’, as Lévi-Strauss puts it (see page 1).

In addition, a detailed examination of the appearance of Korea in the Western atlas attempts to reveal how the current notion of Korea was forged over time in the West. It is clear that the atlas, which can be considered the most reliable source for providing objective and scientific knowledge of world geography, reveals its subjective and even manipulative nature, leading to some concerns about the position of Korea in the world, especially in the context of power relationships between Korea, Japan and the imperial powers of Europe: for example, the process of the consolidation of the name ‘Korean Sea’ or ‘Oriental Sea’ as ‘Sea of Japan’ illustrates a pattern in the relationship between Korea and its other. Since the intrusion of the Western imperial powers in East Asia during the nineteenth century, Western countries have taken the place of China. As noted in Chapter Two, it was the hydrographical maps resulting from the Frenchman Lapérouse’s expedition in 1787, which appear to have played a determining part in the appellations ‘Sea of Japan’ or ‘Japan Sea’ among

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<sup>4</sup> Popular expressions such as ‘5000 years of Korean history’ (오천년 역사 or 반만년 역사) used in Korea capture well the significance of Dan-gun deeply rooted in the mind of the Koreans, as they count from the year of Dan-gun’s foundation of the first Korean state Joseon, whether they believe in Dan-gun as a historical fact or not.



other choices available at the time. Japan did not miss the opportunity to obtain official recognition for the name 'Sea of Japan' in this new international environment. Korea is now engaging in redressing this issue, which can be compared with its effort to open Korean galleries abroad.

Using the representation of Korea in the Western atlas as a metaphor for its representation in Western museums raises a question of whether a museum can be a neutral space, providing a genuine knowledge of the world – the answer to which could be one of the reasons why South Korean institutions involved themselves in opening Korean galleries abroad, mainly in those Western European and North American countries where modern ideas of the museum and modern approaches to material culture originated, and where museums form a strong medium for appreciating not only past human achievements but more importantly the hegemonies of the contemporary world. South Korea's political and economic interests lie in those countries, a fact which seems to be well reflected in the number of Korean galleries opened – i.e. eight in the USA out of 16, established abroad. The other crucial question is whether a museum which claims to represent world cultural history can actually cover such a field. Unlike the atlas, the space in museums is limited. This obviously leads to selecting only parts of world history, and thus brings up the issue of inclusion and exclusion. Unfortunately, Korea has tended to be excluded. This aspect of the museum provides another insight into the South Korean effort to carve out for Korea a limited museum space in the

West.

Chapters Three to Five endeavour to show the relationship between the material culture categorised as 'Korean' and the notion and status of Korea in the international community, and also the impact of this relationship on the museum field. Pearce discusses the moon rock displayed in the 'Milestones of Flight' hall at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC: 'The moon rock reflects the process of becoming a part of the world of human values through its selection and display', and she asserts that 'if there were no human beings on earth, stones would still be there, but they would not be "stones" because there would be neither mineralogy nor language with which to distinguish and classify them' (1994:10).

In the case of Korean material culture, these chapters seek to demonstrate the process by which it became 'a part of the world of human values' (i.e. an *alter ego* for the Koreans), the hidden agents which affected its understanding, and the construction of its meaning within the context of Korean history in general, and in particular of the history of how museums were adopted in Korea. Together with the history of the museum in Korea, the history of Korean material culture is, in its own particular way, a microcosm of the history of the Korean people. This brings the Koreans to an understanding of their own material culture as a symbol of their Korean identity, which in turn affects the museum field (e.g. the demolition

of the National Museum of Korea building).

It is clear that, before the nineteenth century, what other people thought of Korea, and what the unique characteristics of things Korean were, did not seem to be of concern to the Koreans. As seen in Chapters Three and Four, the encounter with Western people during the nineteenth century and the Japanese colonial experience during the twentieth led the Koreans to be aware of what the country represented, of what it meant to be Korean, and of the relationship between Korea and other countries in the world. These chapters attempt to bring out the nature of the relationship between Korea and Japan, as perceived by the West before and during the colonial period; Chapters Three and Four show that Western understanding of Korea relied heavily on Chinese- and Japanese-centred perspectives. It was Western ignorance of Korea and its unique identity which allowed imperial Japan to rewrite Korean history. During the colonial period, the Japanese authorities attempted to distort the facts of Korean history and to embellish them as their own. Furthermore, the influence on Western perceptions of the country's colonial status led in some quarters to a loss of interest in Korea and its culture (reflected, for example, in the closure of the Korean gallery at the Musée Guimet).

These chapters also examine the factors which affected people's understanding of the Korean past. It is people (whether Korean, Japanese, British or French) who interpret (or even distort) the past, which in turn

influences the understanding of material culture and the construction of its meaning. People belong to a society, which can be defined by three elements: time (e.g. the period from the late nineteenth century up to the present); place (which society, e.g. Japan, Korea, Britain, France); and cultural conditions (how the people in that society understand the world, what the nature and scope of their knowledge is, what beliefs they hold, etc – for example, how they see colonialism). No individual can escape from this context (e.g. Yanagi, Leach and Goh Yu-seop). Therefore, the understanding of the meaning of Korean material culture in connection with these three elements in the historical context permits us to speculate on how a 'Korean' object will be understood by Koreans and others in the future, and how those understandings will influence the museum field.

As observed in Chapters Three and Four, others' understanding and treatment of Korean material culture seem to lead the Koreans themselves to be aware of the value in things Korean, seeing them as their *alter ego*, and of the potential roles of the displays of Korean material culture in the museum setting.

Within the context of the historical period from 1945 to the present, Chapter Five shows how Korean material culture has been valued by the South Koreans and by Western people, how various agents have affected their perspectives, and also how Korean cultural materials have come to be appropriated by the South Korean political agenda to assist in the effort

to gain a better position in the world. In the South Korean attempts to define the characteristics of Korean material culture, one can see attempts to define an identity different to those of China, Japan and of course Western countries. The image of South Korea is seen to depend a great deal on the process of getting Western recognition for its past cultural achievements rather than for the aesthetic values of its material culture, as is clearly demonstrated by the patterns of the establishment of Korean galleries and by the acquisition of Korean materials in the West. South Korean attempts to establish Korean galleries in overseas museums can be compared with the Japanese efforts to participate in international expositions during the late nineteenth century (see Chapter Three); in both cases the paramount need was for the economic and political benefits of obtaining recognition of their own place in the world. It is apparent that engagement with the Korean past has always had to be considered as having some political resonance during the period in question, and also that there is no straightforward interpretation of Korean material culture.

The South Korean efforts to establish Korean galleries abroad can be understood as a visible reflection of the South Korean understanding of the reality of being Korean in the international community, and a visible effort to deal with the unpredictable challenges of the future, for the benefit of South Korea (or of both Koreas), by using Korean material culture and museums to form a genre of language in the modern international community. It will be fascinating to witness changing perceptions of

Korean material culture, both in Korea and in other countries, over the twenty-first century, as the South Koreans endeavour to consolidate a place in the world for their material culture.

Finally, Chapter Six deals with the emerging issues of globalisation, of the reunification of the two Koreas, and of the further threat to Korean identity caused by a Chinese distortion of Korean history, and goes on to suggest the potential roles of museums of Korean material culture.

## Notes

- 1 Mon impression, la plus forte, aura été Kyongju [경주, Gyeongju], l'ancienne capitale du royaume de Shilla [신라, Silla], et ses alentours. J'ai été très étonné par l'abondance des vestiges d'une très ancienne civilisation. Et le plus étonnant est que je n'ai vu qu'une partie de cet héritage culturel. Le tout... eût été vraiment magnifique! La situation de Kyongju [경주, Gyeongju] m'a rappelé celle du Mexique, qui témoigne aussi d'une grande civilisation. La Corée est l'un des pays les plus riches en trésors historiques. Ce qui m'a touché enfin, c'est le fait que, malgré beaucoup de guerres et d'invasions pendant bien des siècles, les Coréens ont réussi à garder leur pays et leur culture propre grâce à leur esprit national et à leur sagesse.
  
- 2 Un crucifix roman n'était pas d'abord une sculpture, la *Madone* de Cimabué n'était pas d'abord un tableau ...  
 Le rôle des musées dans notre relation avec les oeuvres d'art est si grand ... Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle a vécu d'eux ; nous en vivons encore, et oublions qu'ils ont imposé au spectateur une relation toute nouvelle avec l'oeuvre d'art. Ils ont contribué à délivrer de leur fonction les oeuvres d'art qu'ils réunissaient ; à métamorphoser en tableaux ... Que nous importe l'identité de *l'Homme au Casque*, de *l'Homme au Gant* ? Ils s'appellent Rembrandt et Titien. Le portrait cesse d'être d'abord le portrait de quelqu'un. ... Et le musée supprime de presque tous les portraits (...), presque tous leurs modèles, en même temps qu'il arrache leur fonction aux oeuvres d'art : il ne connaît plus ni palladium, ni saint, ni Christ, ni objet de vénération, de ressemblance, d'imagination, de décor, de possession ; mais des images des choses, différentes des choses mêmes, et tirant de cette différence spécifique leur raison d'être. Il est une confrontation de métamorphoses.
  
- 3 Toute espèce d'unité linguistique représente un rapport, et un phénomène aussi est un rapport. Donc tout est rapport. Les unités ne sont pas phoniques, elles sont créées par la pensée.
  
- 4 魏書云。乃往二千載有壇君王儉。立都阿斯達。... 開國號朝鮮。與高同時。古記云。昔有桓因 ... 庶子桓雄。數意天下。貪求人世。父知子意。下視三危太伯可以弘益人間。乃授天符印三箇。遣往理之。雄率徒三千降於太伯山頂 ... 神壇樹下。... 將風伯雨師雲師。而主穀主命主病主刑主善惡。凡主人間三百六十餘事。在世理化。時有一熊一虎同穴而居。常祈于神雄。願化為人。時神遺靈艾一炷。蒜二十枚曰。爾輩食之。不見日光百日。便得人形。熊虎得而食之。忌三七日。熊得女身。虎不能忌。而不得人身。熊女者無與爲婚。故每於壇樹下。呪願有孕。雄乃假化而婚之。孕生子。號曰壇君王儉。以唐高即位五十年庚寅。... 都平壤城。... 始稱朝鮮。又移都於白岳山阿斯達。... 御國一千五百年。周虎王即位己卯。封箕子於朝鮮。壇君乃移於藏唐京。後還隱於阿斯達爲山神。壽一千九百八歲。...  
 (Ilyeon 1987:33-4, 1991:17)
  
- 5 Quand, d'une façon générale, on essaie de passer d'un langage patent à un langage latent, il faut qu'on s'assure d'abord en toute rigueur du sens patent. Il



faut, par exemple, que l'analyste parle d'abord la même langue que le malade.

- 6 조반 후 나는 박람회 갔다. 모든 건물 위에 참가국들의 깃발이 휘날리고 있는데 한국 국기만이 없었다. 가슴이 메어졌다. ...

나는 오전 11시에 한국관에 갔다. 그리고 거기서 오후 다섯시까지 서 있었다. 왜, 무엇을 위해 그랬었나. 설명할 수는 없다. 그러나, 그러나, 다만 나는 그 처참한 모습에서, 내 나라의 모습에서, 눈을 돌릴 수 없었기 때문이다.

(cited in Min Gyeong-bae 1991:295–6)

- 7 ...

Séoul le 7 mai 1893.

... La Corée j'en suis sûr prendre part à l'Exposition et le roi fera confectionner des objets d'art pour la circonstance.

Il [King Gojong] m'a même donné à entendre que, le moment venu, un grand fonctionnaire, membre de la famille royale, serait choisi pour représenter la Corée. Les Coréens du reste ont pris part à l'Exposition de Chicago. Ce qu'ils ont envoyé, recueilli à la hâte et sans ordre, ne représente pas quelque chose de bien sérieux. Il en serait autrement pour nous qui aurons le temps de les guider dans les choix qu'il y aurait à faire. Seulement, nous aurons à tenir compte d'un facteur important : la Corée est très riche en produits, mais son Gouvernement grâce au désordre de ses finances est plus riche en bonne volonté qu'en argent. Il y aurait donc à faire comme l'Amérique, à l'aider pécuniairement, soit par l'achat des collections, soit en facilitant le transport des marchandises et des personnes qui seraient dirigées sur Paris.

Je serais heureux si Votre Excellence pouvait faire adresser à ce poste quelques catalogues illustrés de l'Exposition de 1889, je suis sûr qu'ils intéresseraient vivement S.M. Li-Hi ./.

- 8 Paris, le 22 juin 94

D<sup>de</sup> de Documents relatifs  
à l'Exposition de 1899.

M. le Min. et Cher Collègue,

Le Concul de Fr à Séoul dans une lettre que mon prédécesseur a eu l'honneur de communiquer à votre département le 12 juillet dernier, a exprimé le désir de recevoir quelques catalogues illustrés ou autres publications relatives à l'Exposition de 1889, qu'il voudrait offrir au Roi de Corée pour le disposer favorablement à participer à notre Concours international de 1900.

Je vous serais obligé de vouloir bien me mettre s'il est possible et si vous le

jugez bon en mesure de satisfaire à cette demande./.

- 9 永い間の酷い痛ましい朝鮮の歴史は、その芸術に人知れない淋しさや悲みお含めたのである。そこにはいつも悲しさの美しさがある。涙にあふれる淋しさがある。私はそれお眺める時、胸にむせぶ感情お抑え得ない。かくも悲哀の美がどこにあるう。

(Yanagi 1984:47)

- 10 1945년 8월 15일 12시, 일제의 역사적인 항복방송이 있는 후 우리나라 사람 누구나와도 같이 나는 이제부터 무엇을 하여야 되나 하고 생각하고 있었다.

8월 15일, 나는 그때까지의 朝鮮總督府博物館으로 찾아갔다. 일본사람들이 기쁘게 맞아주면서 “이제 우리는 어떻게 되나요? 우리가 그냥 머물러서 일을 할 수 있을까요? 누가 박물관일을 맡아보게 될까요?” 불안한 그들은 나에게 여러 가지 질문을 하였다. ... 나는 그들에게 나와 항상 긴밀한 연락을 취하도록 부탁하고 불안해하지 말라고 타일렀다. 그때 ... 學術院이라는 단체가 조직되어, 그 후 북한으로 간 白南雲이 위원장이 되어 서울에 있는 모든 학술기관을 ‘接收’하고 있었다.

하루는 그곳에 들렀더니 나더러 박물관을 ‘접수’하라고 하였다. 나는 서슴지 않고 별로 그런 형식을 취하지 않아도 접수한 것이나 다름없다고 말하고, 다만 경주와 부여에 金冠 등의 귀중품이 疎開되어 있는 데 지방소식을 알 수 없어서 일본인 책임자가 귀국하면 그 공백기가 걱정된다고 하였더니 곧 가서 그 일을 처리하고 오라고 하였다. 물론 우리 정부도 수립되지 않았는데 내가 그곳에 갔대야 개인에 불과하지만 나는 일이 급함을 느끼고 白南雲에게서 여비를 받아 가지고 경주로 떠났다.

- 11 그때의 각자의 애국심은 대단하여 이것이 *우리나라의 국보*라는 말 한 마디로 어느 누구도 감히 그 차에 손을 댄 사람이 없었다.

(My emphasis added)

- 12 ... 한국미술은 人工을 회피하는 자연에의 순응, 자연적인 것의 기호로써 특징지워진다고 할 수 있고 ... 우리 미술의 기본철학하면 사람의 쪽에서 보는 이상주의가 아니라 자연쪽에서 보는 자연주의라고 말해야 한다고 생각하는 것이다.

- 13 Les musées du monde, gardiens du patrimoine culturel de l'humanité, ont un rôle important à jouer dans l'éveil et l'enrichissement de la compréhension entre les peuples, vecteur essentiel dans la construction de l'ICOM, structure permanente de paix et de coopération entre les hommes.

- 14 Tous les phénomènes sont des rapports entre des rapports.

## Appendices

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## Appendix 1 Previous forms of the 2000 romanised Korean forms appearing in other materials

| New form      | Korean and pronunciation | Previous forms (including McCune-Reischauer system) |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Baekje        | 백제 [baek·je]             | Paekche, Päk-che                                    |
| Balhae        | 발해 [bal·hae]             | Palhae, Parhae                                      |
| Busan         | 부산 [bu·san]              | Pusan                                               |
| Buyeo         | 부여 [bu·yeo]              | Puyo                                                |
| Daehanminguk  | 대한민국 [dae·han·min·guk]   | Taehanmin-guk                                       |
| Daejeon       | 대전 [dae·jeon]            | Taejŏn                                              |
| Dan-gun       | 단군 [dan·gun]             | Tangun, Tan'gun                                     |
| Gaeseong      | 개성 [gae·seong]           | Kaesong, Kaesŏng                                    |
| Gaya          | 가야 [ga·ya]               | Kaya                                                |
| Gim Bu-sik    | 김부식 [gim·bu·sik]         | Kim Pu-sik                                          |
| Goguryeo      | 고구려 [go·gu·ryeo]         | Koguryŏ, Ko-gu-ryŭ                                  |
| Gongju        | 공주 [gong·ju]             | Kongju                                              |
| Goryeo        | 고려 [go·ryeo]             | Koryo, Koryŏ, Koryŭ, Ko-ryŭ                         |
| Gyeongbokgung | 경복궁 [gyeong·bok·gung]    | Kyŏngbŏkkung                                        |
| Gyeongju      | 경주 [gyeong·ju]           | Kyongju, Kyŏngju, Kyŏng-ju                          |
| Ilyeon        | 일연 [il·yeon]             | Ilyon, Ilyŏn, Iryŏn                                 |
| Joseon        | 조선 [jo·seon]             | Choson, Chosŏn, Chosun                              |
| Pyeongyang    | 평양 [pyeong·yang]         | Pyongyang, P'yŏngyang, P'yŏng-yang                  |
| Silla         | 신라 [sil·la]              | Shilla, Sil-la                                      |
| Wonsan        | 원산 [won·san]             | Wŏnsan                                              |
| Yeosu         | 여수 [yeo·su]              | Yosu, Yŏsu                                          |

## Appendix 2 South Korean support for the establishment or renovation of Korean galleries at overseas museums

A: Year the Korean gallery opened or reopened

B: South Korean body providing grant

C: Approximate size of Korean gallery (in *pyeong*)<sup>1</sup>

D: Approximate number of Korean objects in the museum collection

KF: Korea Foundation

OT: Other

(p): partial

\*: figure provided or modified by my own data-gathering

| A    | Continent     | Country | City        | Museum                           | B      | C   | D      |
|------|---------------|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|--------|-----|--------|
| 1990 | Europe        | Britain | Cambridge   | Fitzwilliam Museum               | OT     | –   | 1,055* |
| 1992 | Europe        | Britain | London      | Victoria and Albert Museum       | OT     | 40  | 900*   |
| 1994 | North America | USA     | Seattle     | Seattle Asian Art Museum         | KF (p) | 42  | 155    |
| 1995 | Europe        | Germany | Cologne     | Far Eastern Asian Art Museum     | KF     | 27  | 300    |
| 1997 | Europe        | Germany | Hamburg     | Museum for Arts and Crafts       | KF     | 9   | 100    |
| 1997 | North America | USA     | Portland    | Portland Art Museum              | KF     | 28  | 132    |
| 1998 | North America | USA     | New York    | Metropolitan Museum of Art       | KF     | 48  | 200    |
| 1999 | North America | Canada  | Toronto     | Royal Ontario Museum             | KF     | 65  | 730    |
| 1999 | North America | USA     | Los Angeles | Los Angeles County Museum of Art | KF     | 56  | 324    |
| 2000 | Europe        | Britain | London      | The British Museum               | KF     | 120 | 3,200  |
| 2000 | South America | Mexico  | Mexico City | National Museum of Culture       | KF     | 37  | 70     |
| 2001 | Europe        | France  | Paris       | Guimet Museum                    | KF     | 108 | 1,000  |
| 2001 | North America | USA     | Honolulu    | Honolulu Academy of Arts         | KF     | 28  | 700    |
| 2002 | North America | USA     | Birmingham  | Birmingham Museum of Art         | KF     | 22  | 163    |

<sup>1</sup> One *pyeong* (평) = approximately 3.3058 m<sup>2</sup>.

| A    | Continent     | Country | City          | Museum                            | B  | C  | D     |
|------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------------------------|----|----|-------|
| 2003 | North America | USA     | Salem         | Peabody Essex Museum              | KF | 78 | 2,500 |
| 2003 | North America | USA     | San Francisco | Asian Art Museum of San Francisco | KF | 78 | 700   |

Source: Korea Foundation

### Appendix 3 Chronology of Korea from the Musée Guimet's catalogue

|      | CHINA                                                                                  | NORTH                                                                                                                                  | KOREA                                                                                                                                               | SOUTH                                                                                                                     | JAPAN                                                                                                       |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5000 | NEOLITHIC<br>(5000-2000)                                                               |                                                                                                                                        | NEOLITHIC<br>(5000-1000)                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 4000 |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 3000 |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           | NEOLITHIC<br>(3500-200)<br>Jomon pottery                                                                    |
| 2000 | BRONZE AGE<br>(2000-500)<br>Shang Dynasty<br>(1600-1030)<br>Zhou Dynasty<br>(1030-222) |                                                                                                                                        | Tan'gun, mythical founder of the Choson kingdom (2333-1286)<br>When he dies, he becomes the spirit of the mountain (Sansin).<br>CAPITAL: P'yongyang |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 1000 |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        | BRONZE AGE<br>(1000-300)                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 900  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        | Choson, autochthonous population / Yi and Maek, populations from Baikal                                                                             |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 800  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        | Megalithic civilization (Cists, cairns, dolmens*)                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 700  | *Spring and Autumn*<br>(722-481)                                                       | *Northern Type                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                     | *Southern Type                                                                                                            |                                                                                                             |
| 600  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 500  | IRON AGE<br>(500)<br>"Warring States"<br>(481-221)                                     |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 400  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 300  | Qin Shi Huangdi<br>(221-210)                                                           |                                                                                                                                        | IRON AGE<br>(300)                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 200  | WESTERN HAN<br>(202 BC-AD 8)                                                           | Kingdom of Puyo<br>(now Manchuria)                                                                                                     | Kingdom of Choson<br>(Ko-Choson)                                                                                                                    | The Three Hans, confederation of Southern Korean tribes :<br>*South-West Mahan<br>*South-East Chinhae<br>*South P'yŏnhan  | BRONZE AGE<br>(200 BC-AD 200)<br>Yayoi pottery                                                              |
| 100  |                                                                                        | Expedition of Han emperor Wu (109 BC)                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
|      |                                                                                        | Foundation of Koguryo (37 BC)                                                                                                          | CHINESE COMMANDERIES: foundation of Lolang (close to P'yongyang)                                                                                    | Foundation of Paekche (18 BC)<br>Foundation of Silla (57 BC)<br>Foundation of Kaya (near beginning of Christian era)      |                                                                                                             |
| 0    | Introduction of Buddhism<br>EASTERN HAN<br>(AD 25-221)                                 | THREE KINGDOMS PERIOD (1st-7th CENTURY)                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
|      |                                                                                        | KINGDOM OF KOGURYO<br>(37 BC-AD 668)<br>1st CAPITAL: Hwarin (37 BC)<br>2nd CAPITAL: T'ong-kou (AD 22)<br>3rd CAPITAL: P'yongyang (427) | CHINESE COMMANDERIES: Lolang (ends in AD 313)                                                                                                       | PAEKCHE KINGDOM<br>(18 BC-AD 660)<br>1st CAPITAL: Seoul (18 BC)<br>2nd CAPITAL: Kogju (AD 475)<br>3rd CAPITAL: Puyo (538) | SILLA KINGDOM<br>(57 BC)<br>CAPITAL: Kyongju<br>KAYA CONFEDERATION<br>(beginning of Christian era - AD 526) |
| 100  |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                             |
| 200  | SIX DYNASTIES PERIOD<br>(221-581)                                                      |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                           | IRON AGE<br>(200-500)<br>Civilization of burial mounds Kofun period                                         |

|      |                                                                                                   |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                 |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 300  |                                                                                                   | Adoption of Buddhism (372)                              | Adoption of Buddhism (384)                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                 |
| 400  |                                                                                                   |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                 |
| 500  | SUI PERIOD (581-618)                                                                              |                                                         | Adoption of Buddhism (528)                                                                                                                                                                      | Donation of sutra and Buddhist images to Emperor Kimmei by the king of Paekche (552).<br>ASUKA PERIOD (552-645) |
| 600  | TANG PERIOD (618-907)                                                                             | STATE OF PALHAE (North and today's Manchuria) (699-926) | UNIFIED SILLA (668-918)<br>CAPITAL: Kyongju<br>Buddhism as state religion (Avatamsaka sutra)<br>Introduction of esoteric Mahayana sects                                                         | NARA PERIOD (645-784)                                                                                           |
| 700  |                                                                                                   |                                                         | Sokkuram Cave-Temple / Pulguk-sa Temple (751)                                                                                                                                                   | HEIAN PERIOD (784-1185)                                                                                         |
| 800  |                                                                                                   |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                 |
| 900  | FIVE DYNASTIES PERIOD (907-960)<br>NORTHERN SONG (960-1126)                                       |                                                         | KORYŬ PERIOD: unification (918-1392)<br>CAPITAL: Kaesong<br>Buddhism spreads throughout society Introduction of Ch'an (in Korean: son)<br>Khitan invasion (935-1018)                            |                                                                                                                 |
| 1000 |                                                                                                   |                                                         | Liao invasion (1010)                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                 |
| 1100 | SOUTHERN SONG (1127-1279)                                                                         |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 | KAMAKURA PERIOD (1185-1333)                                                                                     |
| 1200 | YUAN PERIOD (1260-1368)<br>[Mongol Dynasty]                                                       |                                                         | Mongol invasion (1231)                                                                                                                                                                          | Failure of Mongol invasion (1274-1281)                                                                          |
| 1300 | MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)                                                                          |                                                         | YI DYNASTY (1392-1910)<br>CAPITAL: Seoul<br>The kingdom is called "Choson"<br>Neo-Confucian reaction Administration based on the Ming model                                                     | MUROOMACHI PERIOD (1333-1573)                                                                                   |
| 1400 |                                                                                                   |                                                         | Reign of King Sejong (1418-1450); creation of the Korean alphabet (Hangul)                                                                                                                      | Senshu (1420-1506)                                                                                              |
| 1500 |                                                                                                   |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Arrival of Portuguese (1543)                                                                                    |
|      |                                                                                                   |                                                         | Japanese invasion: Imjin war (1592-1598) [expedition of Toyotomi Hideyoshi]                                                                                                                     | MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1573-1614)                                                                                     |
| 1600 | Arrival in China of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1601)<br>QING PERIOD (1644-1912)<br>[Manchu dynasty] |                                                         | Manchu incursions (1627-1636)<br>The Dutchman Hendrick Hamel fetches up on the Korean coast (1653)<br>Chong Son (1676-1759); first landscapes painted from true-view                            | EDO PERIOD (1615-1867)                                                                                          |
| 1700 | Giuseppe Castiglione at the court of Peking (1688-1706)                                           |                                                         | Silhak ("Science of reality") movement (1700)<br>First genre paintings Shin Yun-bok (1758-7); Kim Hong-do (1745-1814)<br>Yi Sung-hun converts to Catholicism during a mission to Beijing (1784) | Ogata Korin (1658-1716)<br>Utamaro (1753-1806)<br>Hokusai (1760-1848)                                           |
| 1800 | Franco-British expedition, Sack of the summer palace (1860)                                       |                                                         | Persecution of Catholics starts (1801)<br>Execution of the first three French missionaries, Maubant, Chastan and Bishop Imbert (1839)<br>Tonghak syncretic religious movement (1860)            | Meiji Revolution (1868)                                                                                         |



## Appendix 4 Leaflet for 'North Korean Study Day', the British Museum

**THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM**  
illuminating world cultures

# North Korean Study Day

Organised in association with the British Association of Korean Studies

*Saturday 24 November 2001*

*Stevenson Lecture Theatre, The British Museum*

09.50 **Registration and welcome**

10.00 **Britain and the DPRK - One Year On**

Dr J E Hoare, British Charge D'Affaires in Pyongyang

10.45 **Let the Past Serve the Present - Tombs of Founding Kings in the DPRK**

Beth McKillop, British Library

11.30 Coffee

11.50 **Archaeology in the DPRK**

North Korean Scholar

12.35 **Dancing for the Eternal President**

Dr Keith Howard, SOAS

13.20 **Questions**

13.30 Break for lunch - Opportunity to visit Special Exhibition of North Korean Arts in the lobby of the Korea Gallery

14.30 **Twentieth Century Painting in the DPRK**

Kim Yeung-ho, Director of the National Gallery of Art, Pyongyang

15.15 **Collecting Contemporary North Korean Art**

Jane Portal, The British Museum

16.00 Tea

16.30 **Contemporary Film in the DPRK**

Dr Hyang-jin Lee, Sheffield University

17.15 **Questions and summing up**

Tickets: Adults £25, BMF £22, Concessions £15

To book please send a cheque (payable to 'The British Museum Great Court Ltd') to 'North Korean Study Day', along with your name and address to The British Museum Box Office, The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG, or telephone 020 7323 8181

Education Department  
Telephone +44 (0)20 7323 8511/8854  
Facsimile +44 (0)20 7323 8855  
education@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3DG  
Switchboard +44 (0)20 7323 8000  
www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

## Appendix 5 Dan-gun in a South Korean textbook



### (1) 역사가 오랜 우리 나라

#### 고조선의 건국

(교과서 6~8 쪽)

아득한 옛날, 하느님(환인)의 아들 환웅은 인간 세상을 다스리고 싶어하였다. 그리하여 하느님의 허락을 받고, 농사짓기에 좋도록 비, 바람, 구름을 다스리는 신들을 데리고 태백산에 내려왔다.



어느 날, 호랑이와 곰이 찾아와 사람이 되기를 애원하자, 환웅은 이들에게 곡과 마늘을 먹으면서 100 일 동안 굴 속에서 기도하도록 하였다.



호랑이는 이 말을 지키지 못하여 뜻을 이루지 못하였으나,



곰은 이 말을 끝까지 잘 지켜, 마침내 여자가 되었다.

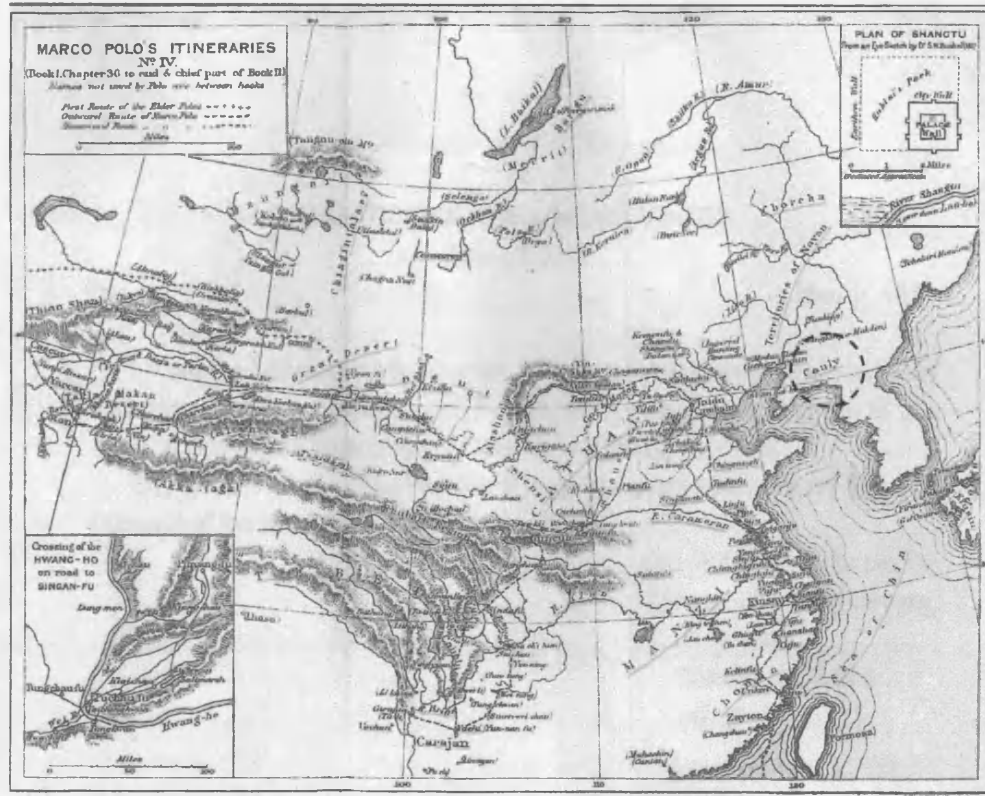
환웅은 이 여자와 혼인하여 아들을 낳았는데, 이분이 곧 단군 왕검이시다.



단군 왕검은 아사달에 도읍을 정하고, 조선이라는 우리 겨레 최초의 나라를 세웠다.



## Appendix 6 Marco Polo's Itineraries



**Appendix 7** From a letter of H.N. Allen, Chargé d'Affaires of the US Legation in Korea, sent to Min Chong-mok, President of the Korean Foreign Office<sup>2</sup>

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES

Seoul, Korea

No. 78. F.O.

May 2, 1891

Sir:

I have the honor to notify Your Excellency of the arrival on yesterday of Gustavus Goward Esquire, who comes to Korea in the interests of the World's Columbian Exposition, to be held in Chicago in 1893.

Mr. Goward bears a Commission from the Secretary and the Director General of the World's Columbian Exposition. ...

I have the honor to be, Sir

Your obedient servant,

H.N. Allen

Chargé d'Affaires

*ad int.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Guhanguk-waegyomunseo* (舊韓國外交文書, diplomatic documents of Guhanguk: May 1882–January 1894), vol.10 (Asia Centre of the Korea University 1967:578).

**Appendix 8** From a letter of A. Heard, of the US Legation in Korea, to  
Min Chong-mok, President of the Korean Foreign Office<sup>3</sup>

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES

Seoul, Korea

No. 132. F.O.

Apl. 16, 1892

Sir:

By instructions of my Government I have the honor to bring to the notice of Your Excellency a resolution adopted by the committee on Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition which reads as follows:-

"Resolved. By a Joint Committee on Ceremonies of the Worlds Columbian Commission and the Worlds Columbian Exposition that the Honorable Secretary of State of the United States be, and hereby, respectfully requested to issue a special invitation to the Foreign Governments to send such representatives as they may deem appropriate, to participate in the ceremonies of dedicating the buildings of the World's Columbian Exposition in the city of Chicago on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of "October 1892."

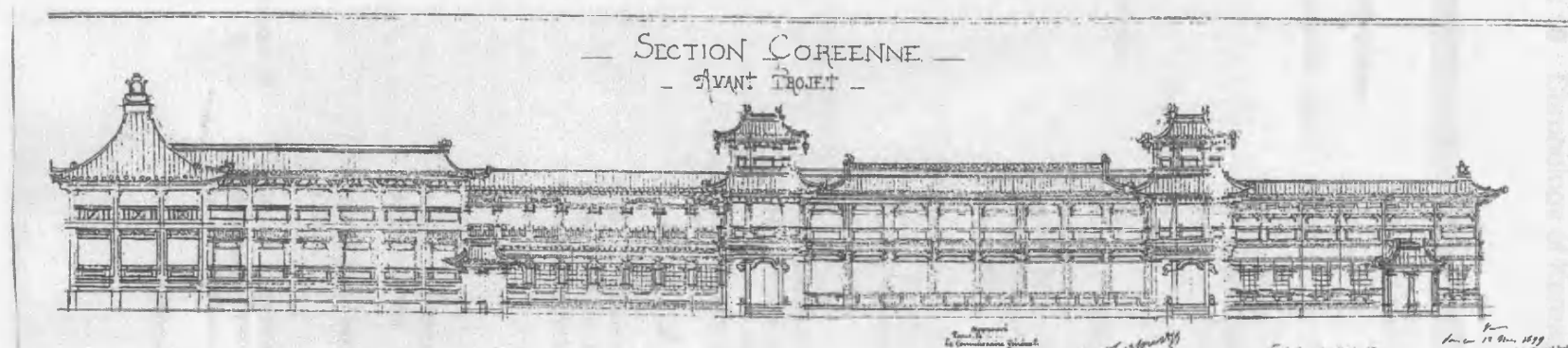
I am instructed also to express the hope that it may be found convenient to accept the invitation by the appointment of such representatives. ...

---

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Guhanguk-waegyomunseo* (舊韓國外交文書, diplomatic documents of Guhanguk: May 1882–January 1894), vol.10 (Asia Centre of the Korea University 1967:655).



**Appendix 9** Cancelled plan of the Korean pavilion



Source: National Institute of Korean History (2001)

## Appendix 10 Chronology of Korea, Victoria and Albert Museum

| Korean Periods and Dynasties         | Korea                                                                                                                            | The World                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1945- ... Republic of Korea          | 1950-53 ... Korean War                                                                                                           |                                      |
| 1910-1945 ... Japanese colonial rule | 1919 ... 'March First' movement: popular revolt against Japanese colonial rule                                                   | 1939-45 ... Second World War         |
| 1392-1910 ... Chosŏn                 | 1876-86 ... Japan, the United States, Britain, Russia and France force the Korean government to conclude treaties allowing trade | 1914-18 ... First World War          |
|                                      | 1700-1800 ... The Practical Learning Movement ( <i>Sirhak</i> ) stimulates literature, the arts and sciences.                    | 1789 ... French Revolution           |
|                                      | 1666 ... A Dutch sailor, Hendrick Hamel, publishes a description of Korea after being shipwrecked and held captive there.        |                                      |
|                                      | 1592 ... Japanese military leader Hideyoshi sends troops to Korea and China                                                      | 1620 ... Pilgrims Fathers in America |
|                                      |                                                                                                                                  | 1500                                 |
| 935-1392 ... Koryŏ                   | 1443 ... The Korean alphabet, han'gŭl, invented                                                                                  | 1456 ... Gutenberg's Bible printed   |
|                                      | 1394 ... Seoul becomes capital of Korea                                                                                          |                                      |
|                                      | 1237-51 ... Buddhist scriptures printed on 81,137 woodblocks, now stored at Haein temple                                         |                                      |
|                                      | 1231 ... Mongol invasion                                                                                                         | 1215 ... Magna Carta                 |
|                                      |                                                                                                                                  | 1066 ... Norman invasions            |

|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
|                                                                                | 1010 ... Buddhist scriptures printed for first time                                                                   | 1000-1100 ... The Crusades; Christian Powers try to capture the Holy Land from the Muslims | 1000          |
| 668-935 ... United Silla                                                       | 919 ... Kaesŏng chosen as Koryŏ capital                                                                               | 990 ... Inca Empire expands                                                                |               |
|                                                                                | before 751 ... Dharani sutra, world's earliest printed book, printed and buried in a pagoda at Pulguk Buddhist temple |                                                                                            |               |
| THE THREE KINGDOMS (traditional dates)                                         |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
| 57BC-AD668 ... Early Silla                                                     | 640 ... Ch'ŏmsŏngdae Observatory built at Kyŏngju                                                                     | 570-632 ... Life of the Prophet Muhammed                                                   | 500           |
| 37BC-AD668 ... Koguryŏ                                                         |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
| 18BC-AD668 ... Paekche                                                         |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       | 476 ... End of the Roman Empire                                                            |               |
|                                                                                | 427 ... P'yŏnggang chosen as capital of Koguryŏ                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
|                                                                                | 384 ... Buddhism adopted as state religious by Paekche                                                                |                                                                                            |               |
|                                                                                | 372 ... Buddhism adopted as state religion by Koguryŏ                                                                 | 200 ... Christianity spreads throughht the Roman Empire                                    |               |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       | 43 ... Romans reach Britain                                                                |               |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            | AD<br>0<br>BC |
| 0-AD200 ... Mahan, Chinhan, Pyŏnhhan, the Three Han States                     |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |               |
| 100BC-AD313 ... Lelang and the Chinese commanderies in parts of northern Korea | about 400-200 ... Iron Age                                                                                            | 221 ... China united                                                                       |               |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       | 356-323 ... Life of Alexander the Great                                                    |               |
|                                                                                | about 900-400 ... Bronze Age                                                                                          | about 566-486 ... Life of Buddha                                                           |               |
|                                                                                |                                                                                                                       | 776 ... First Olympic Games                                                                |               |



## Appendix 11 Staff in the Bureau of Culture, National Department of Education

|                           |                                                       |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Capt. Eugene I. Knezevich | Military Chief                                        |
| Choe Seung-man (최승만)      | Korean Chief                                          |
| Lee Chong-rin (이종린)       | Section Chief for General Administration              |
| Ryu Doo-yeun (유두연)        | Interpreter                                           |
| Choy Chong-muk (최종묵)      | Section Chief for Institutions                        |
| Cho Ke-sung (조거성)         | Clerk for Arts Section                                |
| Ree Soon-suk (이순석)        | Advisor for Arts Section                              |
| An Chul-young (안철영)       | Advisor for Arts Section                              |
| Yun Sei-ku (윤세구)          | Section Chief for Group Guidance                      |
| Ryu Hyung-oh (유흥오)        | Branch Chief for Group Guidance and Religion Sections |
| Koo Tong-sik (구동식)        | Clerk for Group Guidance and Religion Sections        |
| Lee Kei-sook (이계숙)        | Interpreter                                           |
| Hwang Ha-un (황하운)         | Clerk for General Administration                      |
| Han Pil-dong (한필동)        | Clerk for Institutions Section                        |
| Ryu Kwan-yung (유관영)       | Clerk for Institutions Section                        |
| Paik Ryong-ki (백용기)       | Section Chief for Recreation                          |

Source: Knez (1997:17)

## Appendix 12 Chronology of Korea, the British Museum

| CHRONOLOGY OF KOREAN HISTORY |                    |                                                                            |                 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| DATES                        | CHINA              | Korea                                                                      | JAPAN           |
| 5000                         | Neolithic cultures | Prehistoric Periods:<br>Neolithic                                          | Jomon period    |
|                              | Shang dynasty      |                                                                            |                 |
| 1500                         |                    |                                                                            |                 |
|                              | Western Zhou       |                                                                            |                 |
| 1000                         |                    | Bronze Age<br>c. 1000 BC                                                   |                 |
|                              | Eastern Zhou       |                                                                            |                 |
| 500                          |                    | Iron Age<br>c. 400 BC                                                      |                 |
|                              |                    |                                                                            | Yayoi period    |
|                              | Qin                |                                                                            |                 |
|                              | Western Han        |                                                                            |                 |
| BC                           |                    | Proto-Three Kingdoms                                                       |                 |
| 0                            | Eastern Han        | 0 – c. AD 300                                                              |                 |
| AD                           |                    |                                                                            |                 |
|                              | Six dynasties      |                                                                            |                 |
|                              |                    | Three Kingdoms<br>c. AD 300 – AD 668<br>Silla, Koguryo, Paekche<br>(Kaya)* | Kofun period    |
| 500                          |                    |                                                                            |                 |
|                              | Sui dynasty        |                                                                            | Asuka           |
|                              | Tang dynasty       |                                                                            |                 |
|                              |                    | Unified Silla<br>AD 668 – 935                                              |                 |
|                              |                    |                                                                            | Nara<br>Heian   |
|                              | Five dynasties     |                                                                            |                 |
|                              | Song dynasty       | Koryo dynasty<br>AD 918 – 1392                                             |                 |
| 1000                         |                    |                                                                            | Kamakura        |
|                              | Yuan dynasty       |                                                                            | Muromachi       |
|                              |                    | Choson dynasty<br>AD 1392 – 1910                                           |                 |
| 1500                         | Ming dynasty       |                                                                            |                 |
|                              |                    |                                                                            | Momoyama<br>Edo |
|                              | Qing dynasty       |                                                                            | Meiji           |
| 1900                         |                    |                                                                            |                 |

\* Traditional dates for the founding of the Three Kingdoms are:

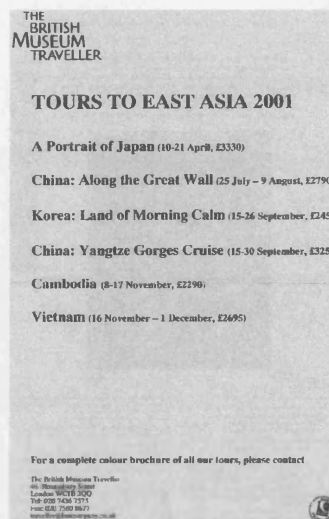
Silla 57 BC

Koguryo 37 BC

Paekche 18 BC

Kaya AD 42

## Appendix 13 A tour to South Korea, the British Museum



## Bibliography

## Abbreviations

|       |                                                              |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| GGC:  | Government-General of Chosen (朝鮮總督府)                         |
| KCTPI | Korea Culture and Tourism Policy Institute (한국문화<br>관광정책연구원) |
| NIKH: | National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회)               |
| TNM:  | Tokyo National Museum (東京国立博物館)                              |

## Musée Guimet

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| AA: Arts asiatiques (from 1932) | MA : Musée asiatique (from 1945)    |
| EO: Extrême-Orient (from 1923)  | MG: Musée Guimet, Paris (from 1889) |

Inventory file: CATALOGUE GÉNÉRAL DES OBJETS.

Inventory file: AA 1–2000.

Inventory file: EO 1–3678, AA 1–74.

Inventory file: MA 1–4326.

Inventory file: MG 4001–6000.

Inventory file: MG 6001–8000.

Inventory file: MG 8001–10,000.

Inventory file: MG 10,001–12,000.

Inventory file: MG 12,001–14,000.

Inventory file: MG 14,001–16,000.

Inventory file: MG 16,001–18,000.

Inventory file: MG 18,001–20,000.

Inventory file: MG 20,001–22,000.

Inventory file: MG 22,001–24,000.

Inventory file: MG 24,001–26,000.

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Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS 132-1905 to 800-1909.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.3-1910 to C.600-1910.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.36-1911 to C.403-1912.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.4-1913 to C.330-1916.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.663-1917 to C.630-1918.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.15-1919 to C.1008-1922.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.1-1923 to C.845-1925.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.59-1926 to C.115-1930.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.8-1931 to C.203-1937.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.129-1938 to C.82-1953.

Inventory file: CERAMICS & GLASS C.2-1954 to C.122-1977 + UNREG

HMC CD79, 80, 847, 855 & 117 IS 243, 244, 249-1897.

Inventory file: CIRCULATION 1909 to 1930.

Inventory file: CIRCULATION 1931 to 1968.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1970 to FE.40-1973.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1974 to FE.223-1974.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1975 to FE.54-1976.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1977 to FE.136-1978.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1979 to FE.113-1981.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1982 to FE.108-1982.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1983 to FE.161-1983.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1984 to FE.30-1987.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1991 to FE.-1992.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.500-1992 to FE.59-1993 & HH.1 to  
19-1993.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.60-1993 To FE.12-1995.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.159-1995 To FE.132-1996.

Inventory file: FAR EASTERN FE.1-1997 To FE.1-2001.

Inventory file: FURNITURE & WOODWORK 38.1888 to W.38-1909.

Inventory file: FURNITURE & WOODWORK W.501-1910 to W.200-1916.

Inventory file: FURNITURE & WOODWORK W.201-1916 to W.200-1921.

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Inventory file: METALWORK 1566-1852 to 1661-1882.

Inventory file: METALWORK 188-1883 to 206-1899.

Inventory file: METALWORK 241-1900 to M.119-1909.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.525-1910 to M.1068-1910.



Inventory file: METALWORK M.382-1911 to M.180-1913.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.402-1916 to M.16-1918.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.1-1919 to M.605-1924.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.63-1925 to M.1115-1927.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.2-1928 to M.899-1931.

Inventory file: METALWORK M.1-1932 to M.75-1939.

Inventory file: SCULPTURE A.127-1916 to A.85-1919 C.572-1919.

Inventory file: TEXTILES 792-1853 to 1877-1888.

Inventory file: TEXTILES T.49-1909 to T.470-1920.

Inventory file: TEXTILES T.2-1921 to T.119-1949.

Nominal file: Joly, Mr & Mrs H.L. [13/5943M].

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