

# GATEWAY TO KOREA: COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, AND RECONSTRUCTING RUINS AS TOURIST LANDMARKS

Hyung Il Pai

Professor, East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies, HSSB Building, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106,  
hyungpai@eastasian.ucsb.edu

## ABSTRACT

*This paper traces the evolution of the South Gate (Sungnye-mun) as a must-see destination representing the antiquity, beauty and patrimony of Seoul, the former capital of the 600 year-old Chosŏn dynasty of Korea (1392-1910). Using the case study of the Republic of Korea's premier national treasure, this paper traces the preservation methods, educational, and commercial agendas of the producers, managers, and promoters of heritage remains. The earliest photographic records date back to the late nineteenth century when travel photographs taken by stereo-view companies, photo-studios, and diplomats were recycled in newspapers, postcards, and guidebooks, giving foreigners the first glimpses into the "Hermit Kingdom." The analysis relies on CRM archives such as photographs, guidebooks, architectural surveys, excavation reports, and material resources compiled by the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA) during the five years of excavations and construction of a replica to replace the original destroyed in an arson fire in 2008. The paper concludes with the grand re-opening ceremony to celebrate not only the resurrection of South Gate but to showcase the successes of the government's centralized heritage management policies, and conservation methods dedicated to preserving the city's architectural heritage.*

## INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL LANDMARKS AND THE IMPERIAL TOURIST GAZE

Scenic temples, royal tombs, city gates, and museum treasures in the Korean peninsula are the most widely recognized symbols representing the antiquity, beauty, and cultural patrimony of Korea's people and its unique civilization (Pai 2013b). The immense national pride of ownership over the 3,679 state designated properties (currently registered as of December 1st, 2013) is seen in the record attendance at special exhibitions and cultural events featuring national treasures<sup>1</sup> (See Table 1). Of all the former dynastic capitals, Seoul, as the current capital of the Republic of Korea, as well as the former seat of the five century long reign of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) boasts the most well maintained royal palaces and shrines, which a century ago were enclosed by layers of

inner and outer walls with eight gates (Figure 1). Consequently, these Chosŏn era royal remains have received the bulk of attention by scholars, conservators, and architects, as well as city planners, tourist developers, photographers, and millions of tourists, domestic and foreign.

As with the more familiar iconic views of Angkor Wat and the Taj Mahal captured by colonialists, explorers, and commercial photographers, Seoul's decaying ruins were "re-discovered," by missionaries, diplomats, journalists, and commercial photographers at the turn of the century (Bennett 1997; Ch'oe 1999; Pai 2011b; 2013a; Yi and Yi 2009). Emulating the precedents set by British and French imperialists in Palestine, Egypt and the India, the Japanese Colonial Governor's General Office of Korea (hereafter, CGK) carried out annual art and archaeological surveys by university-trained (Tokyo/Kyoto Universities) architects, art historians, antiquarians and aristocrats from the Interior Ministry and Education Department. These scholars were focused on identifying, excavating, and recording monumental art and architectural remains in a series of photographic albums (CGK 1915-1935). Their excavations, inventory catalogues, and preservation activities also gave birth to new field disciplines in Korea represented by archaeology, art, and architectural history (Pai 2006; 2010b; 2013b). In less than a decade after the official annexation in 1910, their field records, artifact collections and photographic archives not only attracted scholars but also appealed to a wide range of bureaucrats, curio collectors, commercial photographers, postcard manufacturers and tourists (Kwŏn 2003; Pai 2010a,b; 2011a,b; 2013a).

The CGK newspapers and administrative survey reports emphasized the reclamation of long neglected ancient ruins and relics as tangible symbols of a shared body of Japanese/Korean patrimony, and was an integral component of the CGK's civilizing and assimilation mission in the colony. Furthermore, specialists argued that the remains could serve as not only "scientific evidence," but developed as cultural assets, museum treasures, and scenic tourist destinations.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, archaeological

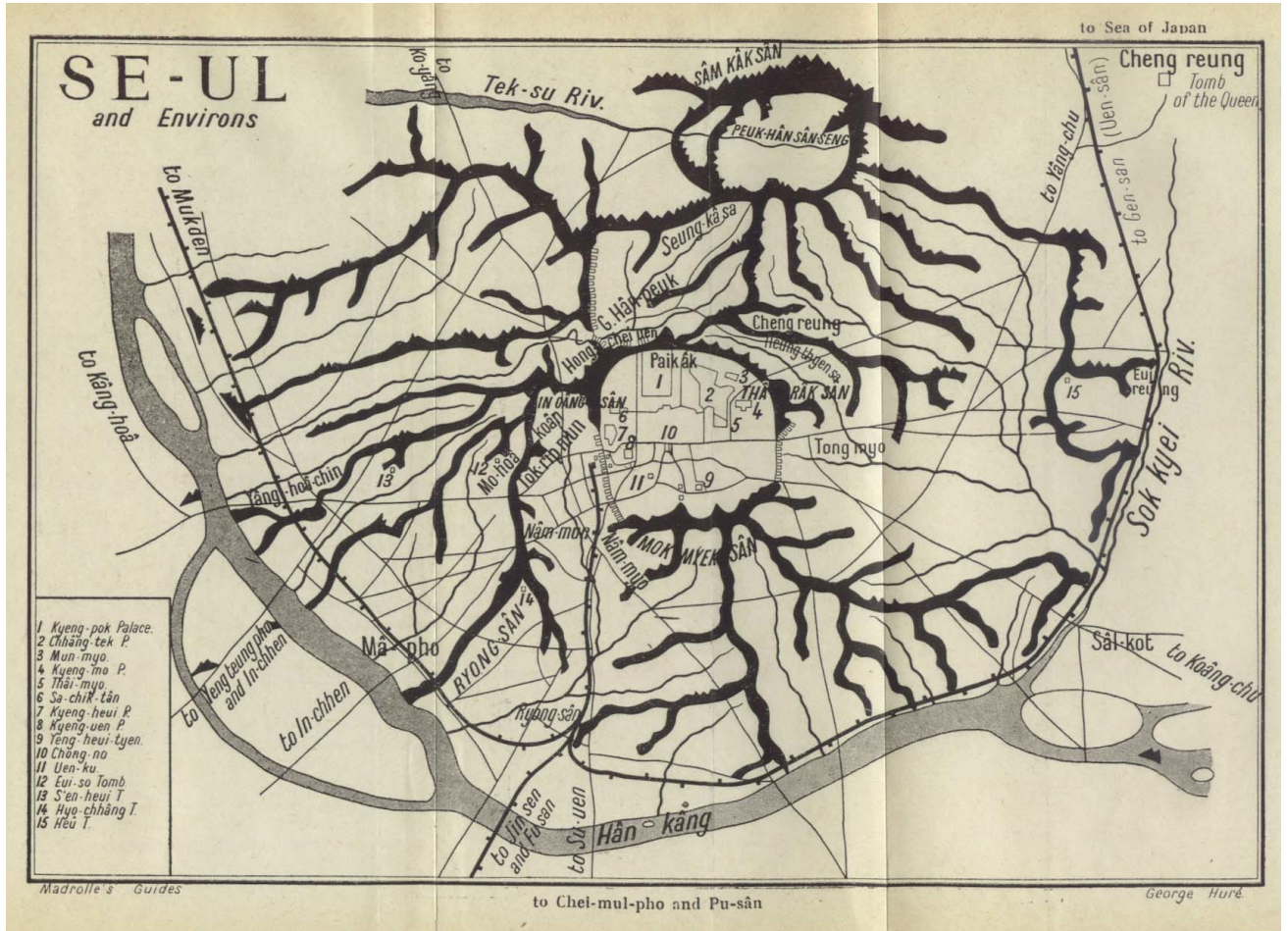


Figure 1. Map of Seoul's Fortress walls and gates (circa 1912), Courtesy of University of Texas Library Map Collections ([http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/se\\_ul\\_environs\\_1912.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/se_ul_environs_1912.jpg))

Table 1. 2013 Cultural Properties Categories. Adapted from CHA Home-page, [http://www.cha.go.kr/cultural\\_info/cultureTotal\\_ccrebasei\\_kor.jsp](http://www.cha.go.kr/cultural_info/cultureTotal_ccrebasei_kor.jsp). Accessed 2013 December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

| Cultural Properties Categories 2013         | Seoul      | 7 Provincial Capitals/<br>9 Provinces | National Totals |
|---|------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. National Treasures                       | 167        | 159                                   | 326             |
| 2. Treasures                                | 648        | 1292                                  | 1940            |
| 3. Historic Sites                           | 67         | 418                                   | 485             |
| 4. Scenic Sites                             | 3          | 101                                   | 104             |
| 5. Natural Monuments                        | 13         | 420                                   | 433             |
| 7. Important Intangible Cultural Properties | 27         | 90                                    | 117             |
| 8. Important Folklore Materials             | 47         | 232                                   | 274             |
| <b>Grand Totals</b>                         | <b>967</b> | <b>2712</b>                           | <b>3679</b>     |

research and heritage preservation efforts in Korea were embraced as part of the re-writing of a mytho-historiography of an ancient Japanese conquest and imperial lineage (*tenno-ka*) dating back to the times of the gods or *kami jidai* (Pai 2013b: 114-163). Thus, for more than a century, physical sites and museum treasures, as well as their reproductions in the form of art illustrations, photographic images, and advertisements as imperial destinations in Korea, Taiwan and Manchuria, have constituted the most important body of tangible evidence in re-inscribing traces of Japan's imagined prehistoric past in their cultural landscape and national memory. The continuing fascination with the "archaeological record" in all the world regions by scholars, amateurs and the public alike derives from the general understanding that material objects and ruins constituted the remnants of past nations and ethnic groups to be identified and plotted across the landscape as "distinctly demarcated archaeological cultures" (Abu El Haj 2001:3).



Figure 2. Arson fire reduces gate to a pile of timber and ashes on the morning of February 9, 2008 (Source: CHA, Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea 2009a).

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how monument preservation and heritage management policies driven by political factors, such as nationalism and colonialism, as well as urban development and global travel have determined the fate of archaeological remains that are now proudly displayed as national landmarks. Here, we will adopt the case study of Korea's oldest premier national treasure, *Sungnyemun*, better known as the South Gate, which was registered as the colony's premier treasure when its main arch was salvaged and transformed into a tourist destination between 1907 and 1934. After having survived a century of violence, such as Japanese military invasions, bombings during the Korean war (1950-53), city-builders, and environmental degradation, an arsonist's fire burned down the gate one fateful night on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (Pai 2013b: 16-18) (Figure 2). By tracing the saga of the rise, fall, and resurrection of a life-size replica, which opened on May 2013 to much acclaim, this paper will historicize past and present heritage management challenges and issues which have daunted CRM specialists, municipal authorities, and citizens living in one of the world's most densely populated cities. The paper is

divided into three distinct periods tracing the Gate's physical and symbolic transformation from a once functioning gateway to its current status as a tourist landmark surrounded by a dense urban landscape and traffic (Figures 2 and 9). The first part addresses the impact of mass media responsible for painting the South Gate as the most picturesque vision of "Old Korea" dating back to the 1880s. Second, the paper introduces the preservation agenda of Sekino Tadashi (1868-1935), the Tokyo Imperial University trained architect who was instrumental in producing the first architectural documentations and salvaging the gate from demolition in 1907. The third part focuses on reliable archaeological data that only became available following a five-year long excavation and reconstruction project carried out by the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage following the devastating arson fire (CHA 2009b; 2010; 2011; NRICH 2011). The latter staff carried out the first systematic analysis incorporating scientific dating and conservation methods of the remains including the Gate's stone foundations, columns, and typology of ceramics, roof-tiles, etc. This study relies primarily on archives compiled by the CHA (2009a; 2009b; 2010; 2011) for a retrospective public exhibition on South Gate supplemented by historical sources, excavation/reconstruction reports, and contemporary guidebooks for the Pre-War eras.

#### PART I: THE PHOTOGRAPHIC GAZE: THE VISUALITY OF THE SOUTH GATE AND THE "ORIENTAL CITY."

It is not an exaggeration to state that the South Gate was and is still the single most reproduced Korean site, featured in official government publications, newspapers, postcards, magazines, tourist guidebooks, as well as internet travel websites. Ubiquitous images of the gate first appeared in the Western mass media in the late nineteenth century for the following reasons: First, the rapidly shifting geo-political rivalry amongst Russia, China, and Japan, the new rising military power in North-east Asia, resulted in the forced opening of the Chosŏn Kingdom after four centuries of self-imposed isolation (*soeguk*). The signing of the Kanhwa treaty in 1876 and the opening of the three treaty ports of In'ch'ŏn, Pusan and Wŏn-san signaled the opening of commercial and diplomatic relations with European powers and the United States in the 1880s. Following the Sino-Japanese (1894-5) and Russo-Japanese wars (1904-5), Japan's newly conquered lands sparked worldwide interest in the formerly neglected regions of Northern China and Korea (Morse et. al. 2004).

Second, the sensational news of the brutal murder of Queen Min (1852-1895) by the Japanese gendarmerie and subsequent flight of King Kojong (1852-1919) from Kyŏngbok palace to the Russian Legation in the winter of 1895 made headline news following reports by missionaries and journalists (Bird 1898). The same eventful year following Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese wars in 1895, numerous postcard sketches of the South Gate started appearing in popular illustrated magazines in

Europe which carried both domestic and international news, events, gossip, and commentaries such as *Harpers Weekly*, *The Graphic*, *The London Illustrated News*, *Petit Journal*, and *Le Petit Parisien* (Seoul Shirip Taehakkyo Pangmulkwan 2006). In the February 28th, 1904 edition of the latter publication, a coloured lithograph depicted an imposing South Gate framing the long line of Japanese soldiers marching in to take over the capital. As we can see in Figure 3, European journalists and graphic artists' drawings followed the tried and true convention of portraying the South Gate as a "picturesque ruin" whose stained and muddied walls reflected the waning fortunes of the last days of the Yi dynasty. This commemorative scene was designed to appeal to readers' expectation of the fantasies of a decaying "Oriental City" which had been the staple of Western imaginary for three centuries (Lowell 1886: 76).

Third, with the opening of legations, there was an unprecedented influx of soldiers, merchants, diplomats, journalists, missionaries, globe-trotters and commercial photographers who began arriving in substantial numbers from China, Japan, Russia and Europe (Yi and Yi 2009). The South Gate, as the only entrance leading into the heart of the capital on the road from the Inch'on port, left a lasting impression on these foreign visitors who were traveling on foot, sedan chairs, donkeys, and carriages (see Figure 4, lower frame). These travelers' original sketches and photographs were soon reprinted in the international press, travelogues, and distributed as the first picture postcards depicting Korea's views manufactured in Europe (CHA 2009a; Kwōn 2003; Pai 2013a; Pusan Museum 2008; Seoul Shirip Taehakkyo Pangmulkwan 2006).

## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL SURVEYS AND THE COLONIAL PRESERVATION AGENDA (1902-1943)

The first comprehensive archaeological and architectural survey of the Korean peninsula was launched even before the official annexation of Korea in 1902, the year the Interior Ministry dispatched Sekino Tadashi (1865-1935), a young graduate of the Tokyo Imperial University engineering department (Hirōse 2003; Pai 2013b: 116-18). In his 1904 report published in the prestigious Tokyo University Engineering Department Research Report Series, Sekino praised the gate's magnificent wood architecture distinguished by its symmetry, sturdy construction, and artistic features of Yi dynastic craftsmanship. His research into the Yi dynastic records indicated that it was indeed the oldest gate in the capital built in 1398, during the seventh year of King T'aejo (r. 1392-98) the founder of the Chosōn kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Sekino noted that the Gate's advanced age made its remarkable preservation state an even rarer occurrence (Sekino 1904:108-16) compared to the situation in Japan where with the arrival of modern warfare and the mad rush to modernize had resulted in the mass destruction of castles and gates which had once symbolized domain, power, and prestige (Ōta 2000; Sekino 1931).

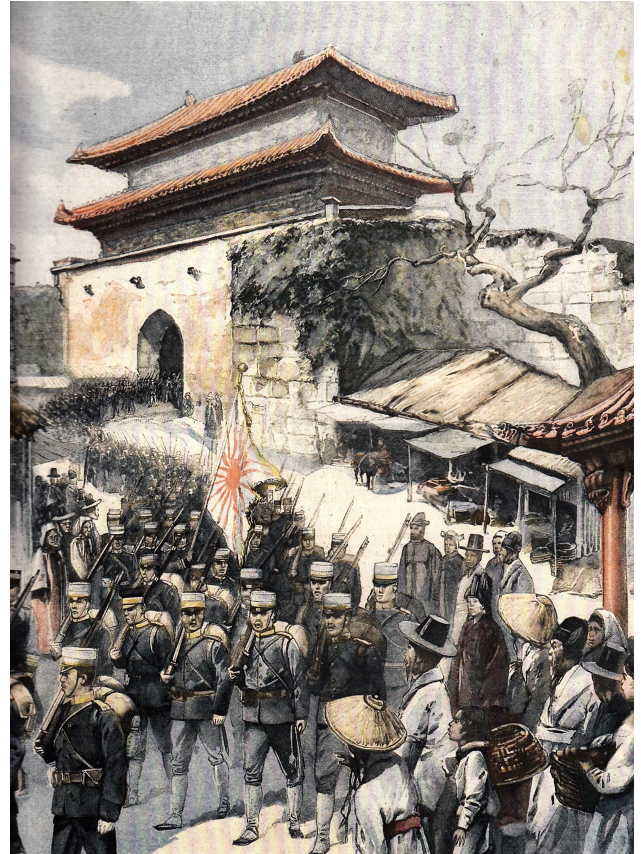


Figure 3. Artist's Lithograph titled "Occupation of Seoul by Japanese soldiers" following the Russo-Japanese Wars (Feb 28, 1904 Edition of *Le Petit Parisien*), Reproduced in *Seoul Shirip Taehakkyo Pangmulkwan 2006*.

Because of Sekino's rave reviews, the gate's arch was spared destruction when in 1907 the CGK purchased the surrounding real estate, effectively pushing out the dense enclave of shops and street vendors (Figure 4, lower frame). The following year, the municipal government was renamed as "Keijō," or capital fortress (Keijō-fu 1934). Due to the Gate's international status as well as Sekino's urgent recommendations, the engineers working for the CGK department of public works and municipal government erected a buffer-zone in order to protect the gateway against the encroachment of railway lines, tram-lines and roads. The re-organization of traffic lanes was then necessitated by the introduction of trams and the automobile in the late 1890s, when the South Gate became notorious for dangerous accidents involving trams, vendors' carts, rickshaws, and pedestrians. A more systematic clean-up project of the Gate's environs by the city government was carried out in 1907, in honor of the grand celebrations commemorating the imperial tour of the Crown Prince Yoshihito (1879-1926) of Japan, the future Taishō emperor. By the 1930s, following two decades of extensive re-landscaping to facilitate traffic flow and commerce, the gate was placed in the middle of a roundabout and re-opened as a city park in 1934 (Figure 4, Upper frame). That same year, the newly reformed Committee on Ancient Ruins, Treasures, Famous Places and Natural Monuments registered the South Gate as Korea's first

listed treasure in the colonial inventory of ancient remains and relics (CGK 1937; Pai 2013: 18-22). More importantly by then, the city tourism board had designated South Gate Station as the central depot where all rail passengers could embark on the Keijō city tour buses (Ruoff 2010:116-128).

Contemporary city guidebooks published by the Colonial Government Railways (CGR, a branch of the Japan Imperial Government Railways), then under management of the South Manchuria Railways (SMR), emphasized the gate's historical significance as the "door-step (*kenkan*)" in Japanese travel guides (CGR 1929:10). It was promoted as the main gateway through which several generations of Japanese conquerors had entered Seoul beginning with the warlord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), whose troops had overrun the capital in 1592. Alongside, such patriotic narratives targeting the Japanese tourists and newly arrived settlers, the guidebooks juxtaposed panoramic shots of "Before" and "After," views of the South Gate, duplicated throughout all official media outlets such as CGK controlled newspapers, official photo albums, railway brochures, guides, reports, and historical references. A prime example is Figure 4 included in an official photo album commemorating the twenty-five years of CGK administration entitled, "Thriving Chosen." Commissioned by the CGK, it was written in English and printed by the Taishō Publishing Company (*Taishō shashin kōgeisho*), Japan's largest maker of postcards (Pai 2013a). The upper frame devoid of tourists, pedestrians and shoppers shows off a standard postcard convention in which the photographer has staged a virtually 'empty' cityscape, in order to show off the gate's architectural façade, the built protective barrier, police box, trams, automobiles, and clean city streets. This staged view contrasting signs of "colonial modernity" juxtaposed with the rustic image of the gate's older visage, projects an image of the colony as a pristine, empty and unpolluted destination ripe for exploration, adventure and colonization (Selwyn 1996). The English caption, "Nandaimon, One hundred years older than the discovery of America, preserved as a memento of Old Korea," emphasized not only the Gate's antiquity, but also its status as a tangible imperial monument advertising the successes of their civilizing and assimilation mission to be admired by incoming railway passengers and tourists.<sup>4</sup>

To further emphasize the propaganda message of CGK's developmental agenda, the publisher included in the lower frame a thirty-year-old photograph inscribed in English with the year, 1895 (Meiji 28). The caption "South Gate at the top of a narrow muddy road before annexation," and the resting cow, bullock cart, and natives dressed in Korean costume have been transformed into "time-less" signifiers marking Seoul's historical origins as a dark and dirty "Oriental City." More im-

portantly, this same staged anachronistic view was included in the Album of Korean Ancient Sites and Relics (CGK 1915-1935) published by the CGK and supervised by Sekino. This fifteen-volume series is significant in the history of Korean archaeology because it represented the earliest body of modern/scientific survey records documented by imperial university trained archaeologists, specialists, field researchers, and professional photographers (Pai 2013b: 135-37). Their sketches, measurements, maps, and photographs also advertised the latest discoveries resulting from over two decades of CGK sponsored annual archaeological surveys (1915-1935). They included archaeological discoveries from the Han dynasty tombs in P'yōngyang, Koguryō burials, Paekche, and Silla tombs. The fifteen-volume set was also the first time art and architecture of Korea was classified and periodized by genres such as architecture, paintings, temples/shrines, fortress/gates and palaces. The albums also included field documents such as survey maps, and measurements attached to cultural inventory forms (*taichō dōroku*) submitted to the CGK. Based on these surveys, the CGK promulgated the first comprehensive archaeological cultural properties preservation laws in 1916, predating those of Japan by three years (CGK 1924; Pai 2001). The CGK's ultimate political goal was directed at reclaiming the art and archaeological treasures discovered in Korea as the part of their long lost shared body of imperial cultural and racial patrimony. These registered treasures and preserved monuments were also promoted as material "proof," of shared cultural heritage designed to foster a sense of belonging, pride, and nostalgia conveyed to millions of Japanese settlers, colonized subjects, and arriving tourists (Pai 2010a; 2010b; 2011a; 2013a).

The tens of thousands of cultural properties, including card inventories, records of prehistoric objects, museum artifacts, photographs, and standing art/architecture, consulted by specialists working for the Committee on Korean Antiquities (Chōsen kōseki kenkyūkai, 1916-1943), were inherited by their Post-War era successors, the Office of Cultural Properties (Munhwajae kwalliguk, OCP 1961-1998) and the CHA (1998-present) (Pai 2013b: 18-23). Because these field survey records and photographs also included the original address, owner, historical documents, measurements, photographs and excavated data, they are still being consulted as the oldest "authentication records" by the CHA (OCP 1997a, b) for preservation and reconstruction purposes (CHA 2009a; NRIC 2011). The colonial ranking order has also determined the amount of funding for excavations, preservation and reconstruction projects provided by state institutions, and tourist investment funded by both public and private enterprises in the past century.



Figure 4. Typical Postcard Depictions of "Before and After" Views of South Gate, Source: CGK 1935.

### PART III: POST-COLONIAL LEGACIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ADMINISTRATION

The CHA (Cultural Heritage Administration) formerly known as the Office of Cultural Properties (*Munhwajae kwalliguk*, OCP) is the centralized state bureaucracy responsible for all aspects of heritage administration policies and execution in the Republic of Korea since 1961. They have included the promulgation of cultural properties legislation, excavations, collections, preservations, reconstruction, and exhibitions of all registered national treasures, architectural monuments, and folk resources. A half a century later, it is undeniable that the CHA's mission statement outlined in the inaugural volume of their journal, *Munhwajae* (1965- present), "to re-discover the achievements of their ancestors so that they can be studied, preserved, and promoted for all posterity to uphold and admire for eternity" (OCP 1965:2-4) has been a success. This is because most South Korean citizens assume that these objects have always been inherently "Korean." Whether or not an object, animal, living artisan, folk tradition, ritual or monument is to be registered as a state

cultural property is decided by nine cultural committees, whose members are made up of academics, practitioners, and specialists appointed by the CHA. According to the cultural committee's criteria, the properties' current preservation state, artistic execution, technological achievements, and craftsmanship should be representative of "our country's past historical epochs and therefore, can be regarded as superior examples of our ancestral achievements" (OCP 1997b). The final decision to register a Korean cultural property is handed down by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, who awards a certificate of authenticity (*Munhwajae taejang*) and provides funds for the upkeep of the registered item depending on the committees' recommendations (Pai 2013b: 9).

This wide-spread acceptance of the immutability of Korea's most ancient, most unique, and sanctified remains, even extends to academics and intellectuals, since only a handful of voices have been raised against OCP's heritage management policies until the public relations debacle following the 2008 arson fire. The former uncritical situation was no doubt the cultural legacy of more

than thirty years of successive military dictatorships (1961-1992) during which all political, educational, and cultural institutions, as well as the staff, activities and publicity materials of media outlets were subject to censorship and close inspection by state mandated authorities and Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) spies. Needless to say, since its foundation in 1961, the OCP's policies were also heavily influenced by the personal ambitions of former presidents, Park Chung-hee (r.1961-1979), Chon Tu-hwan (r.1981-1986), and Ro Tae-woo (r.1986-1992). As military men who had risen to the highest office in military coups, their goals were first and foremost, national security, which in the case of South Korea was synonymous with "anti-imperialism/anti-communism" and vigilance towards North Korea, and secondly, economic development.

Consequently, their cultural management policies focused on legitimizing their oppressive military dictatorships by glorifying great kings and war heroes, who, like themselves, had saved Korea from foreign threats and invasions. Thus, the nation's cultural budget was expended in constructing large-scale national cemeteries, war memorials, mausoleums, battle-sites and ancestral shrines that were transformed into sites of national memory and martyrdom for all to see and learn (Jager 1997; Park 2011). Under President Park's directive, the CHA was given the charge to identify and rebuild fortresses, shrines, and gates starting in the 1970s (Yu 2004). The OCP's main educational goal was to resurrect the sites of "Korean" resistance against foreigners dating back to the time of the Mongol invasions (Late 13th century), the Imjin Wars or Hideyoshi invasions (1592-1598), as well as of more recent vintage, such as nineteenth-century forts that had repelled gunboats sent by Japan, France, and the U.S. in the 1870s. In the case of Seoul's fortifications, portions of the city wall which had survived intact in the mountainous hinterlands were the first to be linked with replicas of six gates, while memorials now mark where the West and Southwest gates ones stood in downtown Seoul (Figure 5). The CHA's stated future goal is to restore all eight gates as well as the entire length of Seoul's former Yi dynastic fortifications by 2015 as part coordinated efforts over the last three decades to restore the capital's historicity and authenticity as a dynastic capital constructed for both military defense as well as an enduring symbol of royal authority (Yu 2004). With such grand ambitions, the CHA and Seoul Metropolitan Government embarked on a five-year long excavation and reconstruction project following the arson fire.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 5. Diagram of eight city gates and walls to be restored by the CHA and Seoul Municipal Government by 2015.

#### PART IV: THE RESURRECTION OF THE SOUTH GATE AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHA

Under intense public scrutiny and media pressure following the devastating fire that had collapsed ninety-percent of the gate's two storied roof structure, columns, and beams, the CHA appointed a nine member executive committee to oversee the massive rebuilding project on August 2006.<sup>6</sup> The first season which lasted sixty-seven days from August-December 2008, and was devoted to demarcating the 800-square meter excavation perimeter, mapping a grid, and building a protective tent to cover the entire site (NRICH 2011: 58). Preliminary explorations using 3-D scanning mapping technology of the gate's surrounding areas revealed traces of the demolished late Chosŏn era (19th century) eastern and western walls, as well as buildings and road surfaces dating to Gate's Post-Korean War reconstruction projects from the 1960s-1970s. An unexpected find was what appeared to be an abandoned U.S. military bunker dating to the Korean War era (1950's), which had not been confirmed in any historical records (NRICH 2011: 59). The second 150-day long excavation season (February -December 2009) was focused on the Japanese Colonial era demarcated park area (Figure 4, Upper frame) fronting the gate. The stratigraphic investigations revealed the remnants of a built up eastern wall foundation (Figure 6), and buildings, drainage facilities and tramlines, all dating to the early twentieth century. The third season lasting sixty-three days (April-July 2010) unearthed features of the original

Chosŏn era gate's foundations (14th century), its east-west walls, as well as the main dirt road.

The stratigraphy was divided into six different layers (Levels I-VI) revealing 500 years of continuous occupation identified by ceramic types dating from as early as 15th century Punch'ŏng type wares, a mix of Punch'ŏng and white porcelain, white porcelain (16th century), blue-white wares (19th century), and imported trade-wares such as Japanese manufactured sake cups and Western imports (early 20th century). The soil and accompanying materials, unearthed from a depth measuring 300 cm to 3 cm below the surface, were also composed of a mixture of various paving materials such as stamped earth, pebbles, and cut stone masonry, thus reflecting the different phases of the wall's construction, restoration and maintenance covering the entire span of the gate's six hundred year existence (NRICH 2011: 65-96). The use of GPR also confirmed the estimated dates of the excavation finds such as the contours of drainage facilities, building foundations, distribution of broken stones used for city roads (NRICH 2011: 96-103). Their analysis of the older construction materials excavated in and around the gate environs led to comprehensive recommendations for the reconstruction team.

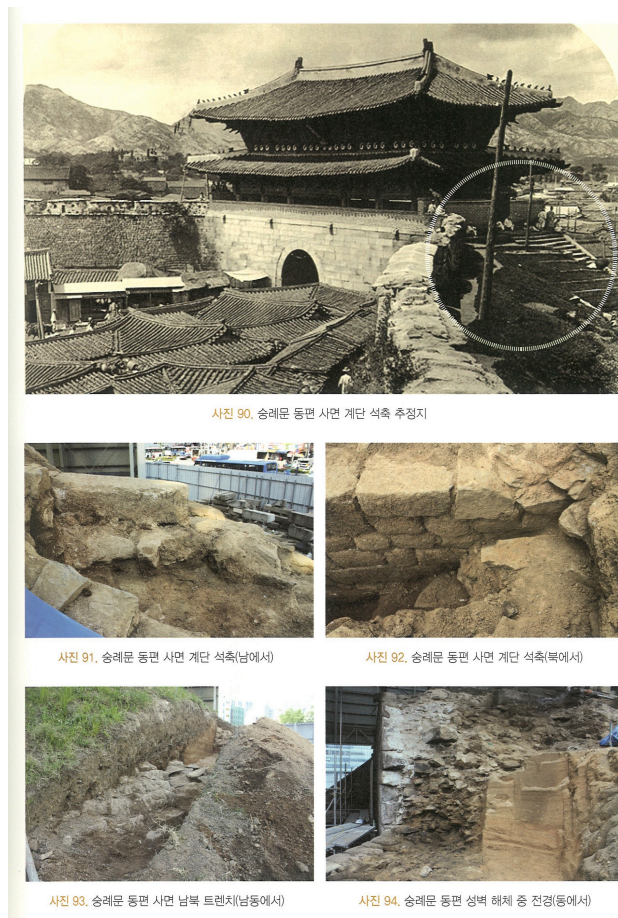


Figure 6. Eastern Portions of the Gate Walls being exposed during the excavations' seasons (2008-10), which confirmed the accuracy of George Rose's Stereo-view (circa 1904). (Source: NRICH 2011).



Figure 7. Carpenters in Korean dress using traditional tools to prepare domestic pine trees (Source: CHA 2011).

Following the excavation seasons, the CHA Institute in collaboration with conservation teams dispatched by Myŏngji University Research Institute of Korean Architecture, published three separate volumes documenting the results of their scientific investigations and experimental methods to reuse salvaged materials such as roof-tiles and eaves, burnt embers, charred beams, and columns. NRICH labs provided carbon dating, ceramic typological studies, and metallurgical analysis. An army of architects, carpenters, craftsmen and painters certified by the CHA as nationally designated "holders of tradition" (*poyuja*) were hired to identify, track down, and source the same kind of pinewood from all over the peninsula. The timber was then harvested, processed, and painted using traditional carpenter's tools and natural dyes instead of machine-made tools (Figure 7). Master potters worked with the Cooperative of the Korean National University of the Arts to build traditional Yi dynasty climbing tunnel-type wood burning kilns (Figure 8), so they could manufacture the same kinds of roof-tiles and eaves tiles excavated by archaeologists.

Last but not least, in order to placate the "wronged" ancestral ghosts and spirits, ritual specialists were invited to inaugurate the firing of the kilns, as well as bless the raising of the roof (*sangnyang-shik*), once a widespread Shamanic ceremony designed to cleanse the site of past and future pollution. All of these re-enacted ceremonies were coordinated by the CHA with the heavy presence of reporters and television crews, since the CHA was keen on rebuilding their public image as the "trusted" stewards and cultural gatekeepers of Korean culture. On the days prior to the opening both domestic media and international news organizations, such as the BBC, reported on the unprecedented construction budget and man-power set by the CHA in their all out efforts to restore the authenticity and historicity of South Gate. The final figures reported in the media were as follows: (1) 151,369 pieces of domestic pinewood delivered by 28 trucks hauling 25 tons each; (2) 23,369 fired roof-tiles; (3) 1,228 square meters of stone materials, (4) 1,332 kg of paint; (5) 152 sprinklers; (6) 35,000 staff workers (3,968 carpenters; 9,938 stonemasons; 284 roof-tilers; 1,541 *danch'ŏng* (traditionally



colored varnishes) painters, 251 iron-workers, 6,080 managers; (7) 1,916 work days (5 years and 3 months). The total budget amounted to US \$24 million provided by the CHA, Seoul City Government, and about 600,00 dollars raised in private donations (See Figure 9).



Figure 8. Master potter offering prayers and pig's head, food and wine prior to the firing of traditional climbing kilns built to manufacture the 23,369 roof-tiles used for South Gate's roofing (circa October 2011), (Source: CHA 2011).

The inauguration celebrations held on May 5, 2013, attended by 150 invited guests made up of diplomats, ministers, and CHA officials was officiated by the current President Park Geun-hye, who was clad in an auspicious yellow-coloured traditional costume or *hanbok*. The President's speech, emphasizing the "gate's long anticipated rebirth signaling a new dawn and era of hope for the Korean nation," no doubt reaffirmed her new found status as the Republic of Korea's (1948-present) first female president. Other reopening ceremonies were staged by national theatre members performing Confucian ancestral rituals, Shamanic dances and royal dance/musical performances staged simultaneously at the world heritage sites of Chongmyo shrine, Ch'angdök palace and Kwanghwamun Plaza. These celebrations were also telecast on giant digital screens throughout Seoul and broadcasted in real time across social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, and news media outlets.

## EPILOGUE

As we have seen with the saga of the South Gate, monuments can play a critical role in political and economic legitimization schemes, for not only national cultural institutions, but also municipal governments, and presidential regimes who are keen to assert their authority and pride as trusted stewards of Korea's oldest national landmarks. Such perceived state manufactured cultural and historical value ultimately impacts whether an archaeological or historical relic gets preserved in a national museum or is awarded scarce state funding for its preservation and reconstruction. Furthermore, the issue of state control reflects other recent debates regarding how to "depoliticize" and make transparent the highly centralized, authoritarian and top-heavy bureaucratic process of the

inner workings of the CHA in a post-democratized Korean society. The on-going debates over the question of who is to blame for the destruction and mismanagement of Korea's oldest and top ranked national treasure marked the first serious challenge to the supreme authority of the CHA over all aspects of heritage management from preservation legislation, registrations, investigations and tourist development.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, for the first time, the CHA and metropolitan officials worked hard to engage the media, local citizenry, community leaders, and even the ghosts of the Gate's past, holding regular news conferences, seminars, and excavation site tours.



Figure 9. Tourists Visiting the New South Gate. See attached Eastern walls modelled after George Rose's 1904 photograph consulted during reconstruction (Also See Figure 6). (Author's Photograph, August 2014).

## NOTES

1. Amongst the current inventory of 3,679 (2013) registered national cultural properties (divided into eight categories), only 326 items are listed in the top rank of "national treasures (*kukbo*). Seoul is also home to 167 national treasures (half of the total) due to the presence of the National Museum of Seoul's Collections and well-preserved royal architectural remains in the capital. (CHA Homepage: [http://www.cha.go.kr/cultural\\_info/cultureTotal\\_ccrebasei\\_kor.js](http://www.cha.go.kr/cultural_info/cultureTotal_ccrebasei_kor.js), accessed December 15, 2013).
2. These pioneers' field observations recorded as maps, illustrations and so-called, "scientific records" representing the earliest body of CRM are preserved in former imperial universities and museum collections in Japan and Korea.
3. The move to Seoul was a strategic one masterminded by Chŏng To-jŏn, the trusted advisor to the founder of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910), a former general named Yi Sŏng-gye (1335-1408), a.k.a. King T'aejo from Kaegyŏng (today's Kaesŏng city, north of the DMZ in the DPRK). Under his direction, Seoul was chosen to be the new capital with the construction of a total of eight gates (Four large- *taemun*, Four small-*somun*) encircling the former city walls of "Hansŏng Sŏngkwak." Chŏng's political goal was for the new regime to break away from

the aristocratic factions loyal to the former Koryŏ dynasty king, who Yi Sŏng-gye deposed in a military coup in 1388.

4. By 1935, when this photo-album was published, this gate's intersection had become the busiest traffic junction in Korea, with an estimated five thousand daily visitors and shoppers. (Pai 2011b: 20-21).

5. According to the principles of *Fengshui*, the southern gate remains key since it is direction in which the fortunes of the nation ebbed and flowed. In the case of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the rebuilding of the South Gate is part of a comprehensive city wide development scheme to rebrand the capital as a "UNESCO design city" in the hopes of placing Seoul on the world map as a unique destination as one of the world's oldest standing fortified historical cities (Hwang 1997). The ultimate goal is to lure the leisure tourists, business conventions, investors as well as the hundreds and millions of fans of *Hallyu*, the latest wave of popular K-pop stars and television dramas.

6. Representing a "who's who" list of leading academics, curators, and specialists in the fields of architecture, archaeology, art history, and history, the committee was given the charge to oversee the excavation and restoration project. Two staff archaeologists from the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (NRICH) team, Ch'oe In-hwa and Yi In-suk were in charge of three excavation seasons from 2008-2011. They also edited the final excavation report entitled, "Sungnye-mun Palgul chosa," published by the NCRIP in 2011. An e-book edition is available for download on the NRICH Homepage (<http://www.nricp.go.kr/eng/>)

7. In contrast to the initial positive reviews over the newly re-opened South Gate Park, only five months later, the gate was again swept up in media controversy. Since October 2013, hundreds of painted surface decorations of flower petals have begun to peel and crack. Currently, there is much finger pointing, as newly appointed investigative committee members have confirmed rumors of corruption activity on the part of master-craftsmen licensed by the CHA to paint traditional buildings. It seems they had accepted bribes to sell their contracts to unlicensed commercial outfits who were accused of using unauthorized chemicals in the paint. This is only one example of the unending series of scandals that have come to light over who is the blame for the shoddy workmanship in the maintenance of cultural properties endorsed by CHA officials and have highlighted issues over custodianship, management, and daily operations.

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