

Intangible Cultural Heritage in Diplomacy: A Comparative Study of Heritage Aids by the US and South Korea¹

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Introduction

International aid, also known as foreign assistance or foreign aid, is a component of public diplomacy, serving as a tangible expression of a nation's goodwill, fostering positive perceptions, and contributing to diplomatic relationships on the global stage. It is an activity where a government voluntarily transfers public resources abroad with the 'specifically intended purpose' of improving the lives and livelihoods of recipient countries as a major means of promoting overseas development (Lancaster and Dusen 2005, Lancaster 2007). It serves four broad purposes: diplomatic, developmental, economic - encompassing commerce and trade -, and humanitarian relief. Particularly, the rise of humanitarian aid, which traces back to the mid-20th century, has evolved into a significant trend in international assistance. In the 1990s, key humanitarian principles, including humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, were established, accompanied by the development of minimum standards for humanitarian response. In the era of globalization, heightened awareness of global issues and crises, along with advances in communication and transportation, facilitated faster and more effective humanitarian responses. Humanitarian assistance has also gained prominence in the 20th century and even more so in the 21st century due to the increasing occurrence of natural disasters, conflicts, and public health crises, with a heightened focus on rapid response and disaster preparedness.

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Heritage aid, integral to heritage diplomacy, involves providing support for preserving, conserving, and promoting cultural heritage, fostering positive international relations, and proving valuable in humanitarian and development contexts by emphasizing social and economic sustainability. Heritage diplomacy is the “manifestation of the concept of heritage in foreign policy” (Akilli 2023). The recent and burgeoning concept within the broader scope of diplomacy has brought the integration of archaeology and artifacts into the larger sphere of cultural diplomacy and foreign relations to the forefront of discussions in the field of heritage studies (Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022; Luke and Kelsel 2013). With the increasing emphasis on sustainable development and the human capabilities approach in the 1990s, cultural heritage is being utilized as a means of development through heritage aid (Labadi, 2020).

Despite a growing scholarly interest in the use of cultural heritage in state foreign policy and international heritage governance over the past decade, there is a pressing need for the examination of heritage diplomacy in the broader context of international cultural interactions (Čeginskas & Lähdesmäki 2023; Peycam et al. 2023). Comprehending heritage diplomacy is frequently constrained for several reasons, marked by historical fixation, a restricted geographical viewpoint, and insufficient theoretical underpinnings. While heritage diplomacy employs both tangible elements, like artifacts, buildings, and landscapes, and intangible aspects, such as cultural traditions, cuisine, and music, for diplomatic purposes, the literature review highlights the dominance of studies and projects focusing on the preservation of tangible cultural heritage, commonly approached from a conservationist standpoint (Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022).

This research explores the use of intangible cultural heritage as a form of international aid in the context of diplomacy through comparative case studies, including "My Armenia" by the

US and Korea's support for Mongolia's national policy development for intangible cultural heritage. The US, traditionally one of the world's largest aid providers, along with the European Union, a major collective contributor, offer various forms of foreign aid. The Republic of Korea stands as a rare case in the realm of international development, having transitioned from an aid-receiving nation to a major donor in its own right. Over the recent decades, both countries have actively engaged in heritage diplomacy (Clarke 2018, 2). The cases demonstrate the states' efforts to expand and diversify their public diplomacy strategies, reflecting the evolution of public diplomacy and the academic and professional shift in heritage management. Both fields have increasingly prioritized community engagement and demonstrates a thorough examination of political, social, and economic issues, with a strong emphasis on addressing disparity, promoting equity, and ensuring sustainability. Therefore, these two cases not only exemplify the characteristics and trajectory of heritage aid but also shed light on contemporary trends in public diplomacy. Simultaneously, they serve as contrasting cases in terms of the dynamics and actors involved in heritage aid, driven by their distinct policy systems in heritage management. The purpose of this research is to investigate the political dynamics, examining the relationships among actors and their meticulous program design and implementation efforts in heritage diplomacy, with the goal of understanding how heritage diplomacy functions within the context of recent developments in both public diplomacy and heritage studies.

Cultural Diplomacy vs. Heritage Aid vs. Heritage Diplomacy

While heritage diplomacy studies have often been explored in the frameworks of cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, new diplomacy, soft power, or the internationalization of politics, and the scholars of global power politics, there is a view to understand heritage

diplomacy apart from cultural diplomacy. Heritage diplomacy studies emphasize the importance of fostering long-term heritage diplomatic relations between states and people by establishing partnerships and cooperation based on historical cultural interconnections, moving beyond merely exporting or projecting a singular culture for a state's soft power and branding strategies (Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas 2022). Cull (2019) notes that heritage diplomacy dynamics revolve around recognizing and preserving the cultural value of the engaged society, occasionally involving collective efforts, especially in promoting UNESCO conventions to safeguard world heritage. Winter (2015, 1007; 2016) defines it as a “set of processes whereby cultural and natural pasts shared between and across nations become subject to exchanges, collaborations and forms of cooperative governance.” Winter (2015, p. 1007) also emphasizes the empirical and conceptual differences between heritage diplomacy and cultural diplomacy, considering the former “closer to a relational perspective of cultural flows and exchanges” than the latter, which is “self-promoting one-sided actions of a soft power nature.” In contrast, Clarke (2018) observes that heritage diplomacy often employs a one-directional, top-down approach centered around specific projects, time-limited partnerships, and high-level negotiations, potentially limiting mutual engagement, accepting the focuses on the exchange of cultural ideas to foster mutual understanding as the characteristics of cultural diplomacy. Lähdesmäki and Čeginskas (2022) note that the notion still requires clarification of the concept.

Indeed, both public diplomacy (e.g. new public diplomacy or international relations) and heritage studies are geared towards fostering engagement, promoting higher ethical standards, and humanitarian aspects, such as equity, and fairness, which in turn, have greatly contributed to the advancement of cultural diplomacy. Heritage diplomacy tends to pertain to shared heritage or the heritage of the engaging country in the realm of international relations, rather than the

country's own heritage being used as representation. And heritage can function as both a 'soft' and 'hard' type of power in a diplomatic context (Clarke 2018; Winter 2015). Consequently, debating which form of heritage facilitates more exchange or mutual understanding is futile, as they often intersect and blend seamlessly. The design and implementation of a diplomatic project hold paramount importance, and this study is specifically aimed at thoroughly exploring this aspect. Instead of examining whether "heritage" is used for diplomatic purposes, the focus of determining heritage diplomacy should be on whose heritage is utilized within diplomatic contexts. Heritage diplomacy is assistance provided to other countries in the form of renovation/cultural heritage protection and heritage management assistance, technology transfer, capacity building, or institutional support, which brings the people of the donor and recipient countries closer together (Winter 2016). Winter (2016, 26) further distinguishes "heritage in diplomacy" and "heritage as diplomacy." Compare to "heritage as diplomacy," where heritage is mobilized as diplomacy continues to flourish, in "heritage in diplomacy," heritage plays a central role in existing diplomatic relationships established through trade, historical connections rooted in colonialism, conflicts, or specific strategic interests.

Heritage aid stands out as a preeminent manifestation of heritage diplomacy, frequently centers on the provision of preservation assistance, which one nation offers support to another within a broader diplomatic or policy framework. By leveraging shared cultural heritage, countries aim to enhance diplomatic ties, bridge cultural gaps, and create a platform for dialogue and cooperation. International governance of cultural property has increased significantly since World War II, led and justified by renowned international heritage organizations such as UNESCO, ICOM, ICCROM, and ICOMOS. Intergovernmental landscape of heritage management particularly through UNESCO and its world heritage framework was developed

one of the defining characteristics of the modern heritage movement, international cooperation for heritage conservation (Winter 2015). Notable international heritage projects include the Abu Simbel campaign of the late 1950s, efforts to save Venice, and the preservation initiatives for archaeological sites like Borobudur in Indonesia and Mohenjo-Daro in Pakistan. Additionally, the case of Angkor in Cambodia is also noteworthy. Multinational cooperation in international heritage governance has been one of the earliest and extensively developed models of heritage diplomacy and has received significant scholarly attention within the context of a state's foreign policy and cultural relations (Čeginskas & Lähdesmäki 2023).

Still, international aid for cultural heritage has relatively recently gained prominence, responding specific sociopolitical contexts and catastrophic events, such as wars and natural disasters, can serve as motivations for heritage diplomacy. (Labadi 2020). It can be categorized into three main aspects based on their applications and goals: economic development, human development, and cultural diplomacy (Labadi 2020). In the late 20th century, there was criticism and re-evaluation of international aid programs that tended to overlook an understanding and consideration of the cultural history of recipient countries. It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that this issue gained attention, as it was recognized that considering cultural history could aid in crisis management within development assistance and lead to positive effects in achieving goals. Also with the growing emphasis on sustainable development and the human capabilities approach in the 1990s, cultural heritage has increasingly been utilized as a means of cultural aid in development (Labadi 2020). UNESCO has played a pivotal role in emphasizing cultural diversity and the significant role that culture and cultural heritage play in social and economic sustainable development. In such scenarios, heritage diplomacy collaboration and cooperative efforts are not necessarily contingent on a profound shared or mutual culture.

Cultural Heritage Turn in Foreign Aid

Foreign aid has often encountered severe criticism within the North-South relations of global politics through the lens of neo-imperialism (Doty 1996; Rosen and Kurth 1974). It is often scrutinized and doubted in terms of its political intentions, processes, and outcomes, including its achievement of foreign policy goals and its impacts on recipient countries. The criticism underscores the need for increased transparency, accountability, and alignment with long-term development goals to ensure that aid effectively reduces poverty and fosters sustainable development in recipient countries. This critique often highlights issues of aid dependency, inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of recipient country ownership and accountability. Critics also point to the potential for donor interests and conditionality to influence the allocation of aid and note that well-intentioned aid efforts may inadvertently lead to unintended consequences.

International aid has transformed significantly over time, evolving from an economic development focus to prioritizing humanitarian assistance guided by principles like humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, with globalization enabling quicker responses and the late 20th century emphasizing the international community's duty to protect populations through humanitarian intervention. The 21st century introduced new challenges, prompting humanitarian aid organizations to adapt with a focus on sustainable development, resilience, and innovative assistance. The provision of security and military aid remains a sensitive and geopolitically influenced issue, with varying levels of support offered to different recipient countries and regions. These include a notable shift from bilateral to multilateral aid, with a growing emphasis

on collaborative efforts facilitated by international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, allowing for more effective resource pooling and coordination. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN has notably shaped the aid landscape, emphasizing critical objectives such as poverty reduction, healthcare improvement, education access, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. Humanitarian assistance has also gained prominence due to the increasing occurrence of natural disasters, conflicts, and public health crises, with a heightened focus on rapid response and disaster preparedness.

The ongoing integration of international cooperation in the cultural sector with broader streams of humanitarian and developmental aid underscores heritage's crucial role in foreign aid. Heritage has emerged as a vital platform for forging links with historical roots, laying the groundwork for future collaborations (Winter 2016). An evolving trend is the promotion of country ownership by donor nations, granting recipient countries more authority in determining how aid is utilized and aligning it with their unique development priorities. Since the late 1990s, international financial institutions like the World Bank have been increasing their support for culture and cultural heritage in development projects, influenced by the US historic preservation policy (Labadi 2020). Efforts typically encompass a range of activities, including conservation, heritage-management aid, technology transfers, capacity building, and institutional support. The intensification of conflicts in the Balkans and the Middle East, coupled with the rising frequency of extreme natural disasters, has led to increased focus on restoring cultural heritage and built environments by the international humanitarian aid sector.

The dynamics of preservation aid have varied, its network has expanded, and it has evolved to serve distinct diplomatic goals, rather than merely being a supplement or complement to economic development aid. While European and North American countries remain highly

active in preservation aid, Asian countries have also become significant contributors to UNESCO and preservation aid initiatives. For example, Japan has become very active in UNESCO but also utilized heritage diplomacy in extensively broad Asia region including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan to strengthen cultural, religious, and historical ties and revive deeper historical narratives and connections. In contexts where heritage serves primarily as a component of broader diplomatic or policy initiatives, collaborations and cooperative efforts do not rely on a shared cultural basis.

International NGOs such as UNESCO, ICOM, and ICOMOS have served as leaders and catalysts in multinational preservation aid through international heritage projects. UNESCO has encouraged states to adopt an international stance, fostering a culture of cooperation that nurtures internationalized cultural nationalisms and builds connections through shared histories. New players have appeared as well. For example, Blue Shield International plays a crucial role, particularly in regions susceptible to armed conflicts and natural disasters. Blue Shield national committees, such as Blue Shield France and Blue Shield Belgium, have provided heritage aid to Ukraine. Specifically, Blue Shield France supplied protective equipment to Syria in response to earthquakes and conflict aftermath (Blue Shield 2023). Collaborative efforts among governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector have become increasingly vital, with coordination and partnerships crucial for efficient crisis responses.

As evidenced by UNESCO's and ICOMOS's international collaborations on heritage conservation projects, tangible heritage, particularly the preservation of archaeological sites, has predominantly characterized heritage aid. Examples include the U.S. heritage aid efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The emphasis has traditionally been on the conservation of immovable cultural heritage, with the recognition and conservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH)

emerging much later. In 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (The 2003 Convention) was held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to raise awareness of the importance of ICH and has urged the need for safeguarding it. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is defined as: “the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” and promotes “a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” for members of the community (UNESCO 2003). The Convention also defines safeguarding as: “measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage” (UNESCO 2003).

The viability and vitality of ICH in society rely heavily on healthy on-going transmission, UNESCO emphasizes that supporting the bearers for the continuous transmission of ICH to occur is the social responsibility that all agencies and experts need to take, and the importance of the transmission of ICH is to pass not only from generation to generation but also among today’s generation (UNESCO 1995-2012). Importantly, the critical role of the community lies in preserving and keeping these traditions alive. Therefore, community engagement that prioritizes their needs, values, and ownership of ICH, rather than just respecting their perspectives, is crucial to ensure the thriving of intangible cultural heritage for the social, cultural, and economic benefits of current and future generations. This approach represents a fundamental requirement and goal for intangible cultural heritage preservation. The recent direction of heritage conservation, emphasizing community engagement and empowerment, aligns well with the

concept of new public diplomacy, presenting a significant opportunity in today's diplomatic landscape.

My Armenia: Heritage Conservation for Regional Development

International aid has been a crucial policy tool with the goal of serving the interests, values, and welfare of the US since the Cold War era, and the economic, political, and social issues of developing and transitional countries constitute an important part of the current U.S. diplomatic policy and national security concerns (Lancaster and Dusen 2005). The US, traditionally one of the world's largest aid providers, along with the European Union, a major collective contributor, offer various forms of foreign aid. Aid programs encompass various types, including economic support to foster development and alleviate poverty, humanitarian assistance to address crises, health aid for healthcare enhancement and disease control, educational aid to improve access to quality education, environmental aid for conservation and climate mitigation, technical assistance to develop skills and systems, governance and democracy aid to support democratic institutions, security and military aid to enhance defense capabilities, infrastructure aid for physical development, and cultural and heritage aid to preserve and promote cultural resources. The recipients of foreign aid encompass many countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and nearly all former Soviet countries. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal agency that receives overall diplomatic policy guidance from the Secretary of State and supports U.S. foreign policy objectives. Through this, USAID enhances U.S. national security and economic prosperity, demonstrates American generosity, and promotes the self-reliance and resilience of beneficiary countries (USAID 2022).

US aids have garnered commendation for their positive global impact; nevertheless, they have also encountered significant critique. Predictably, the policy discussions surrounding foreign aid within the American political system has always been a contentious and controversial policy. It often leads to clashes over resources and the authority to influence policy within a highly bureaucratized network of actors and has been subjected to harsh criticism from both progressive and conservative factions, often met with limited enthusiasm in Congress (Guess 2011). Its characteristics as a public policy have also been challenging, lacking policy autonomy and operating within the confusing and overlapping boundaries of both domestic and foreign policy. Due to these challenges, Guess (2011) notes that foreign aid programs have often been reactive, stemming from moments of desperation, and are characterized by inadequate design and execution, resulting in considerable confusion regarding their objectives and evaluation criteria.as part of foreign policy.

The heightened instability in the Balkans and the Middle East has underscored the global humanitarian aid emphasis, particularly by the US, on reconstructing cultural heritage and built environments (Winter 2016). Given the growing significance and urgency of preservation aid initiatives for the US to respond to challenges in foreign relations and maintain global leadership, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in the US Department of State has been effectively utilized to provide support. Established to "preserve a wide range of cultural heritage in less developed countries, including historic buildings, archaeological sites, ethnographic objects, paintings, manuscripts, and indigenous languages and other forms of traditional cultural expression," the Ambassador's Fund has supports over 1100 projects in 130 countries (ECA, n.d.). While the funding has increased several times from \$1million for 60 awards in 2002, the usual expected funding level \$20,000-\$700,000 for each project in the mid-2010s. post-disaster

and post-conflict recovery efforts in some of the world's most desperate communities allowed exception of occasional large projects like restoration works in Iraq and Haiti. The funding fluctuated and peaked \$13.45 million for 2014-2015 when it supported multiple projects in Egypt and the restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage Site affected by the earthquake in Nepal (ECA 2011, 2016). The fund connects multi-layers of public and private actors globally, and innumerable US cultural and educational organizations have participated in the projects and collaborated with the governments, cultural institutions, and communities.

"My Armenia (2015-2020)" is a cultural heritage tourism program funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and executed by the Smithsonian, with oversight and mediation from the Office of the Investment and Reserve. The Smithsonian emphasized the importance of conserving intangible cultural heritage and the economic potential it holds by developing community-based cultural tourism products (Smithsonian, My Armenia n.d.). Armenia's unique tangible heritage, including the world's oldest winery, archaeological sites from the Paleolithic era, early Christian fortress-like churches, and human remains of Soviet-era factories, has already begun to be developed as tourism resources. Therefore, the program was to raise awareness of the value of intangible cultural heritage as both a cultural and economic asset for the community, while also supporting its balanced conservation and stimulating local economic growth. In supporting regional economic development, the program intentionally targeted economically challenged rural areas, intentionally excluding the capital region, with the goal of fostering regional and national equitable development.

The US has historically supported efforts to promote Armenia's democratization, economic development, regional peace, and stability since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1992 (DOS 2020). In order to strengthen democratic governance and support social,

political, and economic resilience and recovery, U.S. assistance to Armenia from 1992 to 2020 amounted to \$31.5 million, with 45% allocated to "Democracy, Human Rights & Governance" and 34% invested in economic development (DOS 2021). The US government's support for Armenia includes enhancing its relations with the West, addressing economic and diplomatic isolation, and navigating ongoing political challenges. Additionally, it aims to integrate Armenia into regional and global economies, diversify trade, and build resilience against external pressures. In that sense, "My Armenia," which also focused on leveraging heritage for rural development in national and global economies, diversifying its trade, and building resilience against external pressures, aligns closely with the direction of US Armenian aid. Armenia's pro-Russia stance stemming from its high economic dependence on Russia, despite historical grievances, and its friendly relations with Iran, underscores the importance of the US engaging in diplomatic efforts.

The direct and tangible interests of the United States in supporting Armenian cultural heritage are not as clearly defined and lack persuasive arguments when compared to heritage aid provided to politically challenged areas such as Afghanistan or Iraq. Foreign aid may not yield immediately apparent direct political and economic benefits, as its motivations can vary. This is particularly pertinent given the heightened emphasis on humanitarian and altruistic aid and the need to consider the influence of ethnic or religious organizations on foreign aid within the pluralistic, multicultural political framework of the United States (Lancaster (2007)). The political influence of Armenian-Americans within the United States has played a role in aid to Armenia, complementing one of the objectives of US foreign aid, which is to demonstrate American generosity.

"My Armenia" follows typical funding and working dynamics in cultural diplomacy, with the Department of State utilizing embassies and Ambassador's Fund to heavily dependent on the experts in culture and heritage, such as "American Spaces" or the Iraq Heritage Project. The Smithsonian, being the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, excels in conserving intangible cultural heritage and global outreach. Its Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage is dedicated to promoting greater understanding and sustainability of cultural heritage through research, education, and community engagement (Smithsonian CFCH 2024). For the project, the center provided expertise including documenting and inventorying Armenian intangible cultural heritage and working with artisans. Additionally, the Smithsonian's Office of International Relations (OIR, now Office of Global Affairs) facilitated its engagement in global initiatives and partnerships. While the Smithsonian's involvement in international activities goes back over a century, since the mid to late 1980s, the Smithsonian has shown a more organized and proactive approach to international activities. The establishment of the OIR in 1988 expanded and reorganized international research activities and encouraged overseas cooperation efforts, leading to a strategic and extensive expansion of the Smithsonian's cultural relations and cultural diplomacy activities on a global scale. Notable examples of these institutions in cultural diplomacy are the Smithsonian Folklife Festival "Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust" in 202 and American Spaces. CFCH showcased the rich cultural heritage and living traditions of Eurasia, including regions with diplomatic challenges, with support from the Department of State and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The Office of International Relations evaluated US information centers and libraries overseas used during the Cold War and executed the creation of American Space to engage global audiences through visually and spatially redesigned spaces and program development utilizing Smithsonian resources.

To ensure sustainability in both conservation and community development, there was a strong emphasis on community engagement and capacity building, necessitating collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders across various industries. Content development and heritage interpretation played a key role in bridging tourism and heritage conservation efforts. The program differentiated management approaches and service development by applying museological interpretation techniques to the tourism industry, introducing curation and storytelling. This involved integrating business and museum practices into tourism, educating diverse stakeholders in the tourism sector, cultural institutions, and local residents, and empowering youth through heritage and history engagement (USAID, 2018). This program's collaboration between the public and private sectors, participated by for-profit and non-profit organizations and a diverse range of stakeholders, ensured that multidisciplinary expertise and skills were effectively applied to enhance sustainability. A specialized consulting and marketing company focused on sustainable tourism development, Solimar International was brought on board to promote economic growth while conserving natural resources and cultural heritage (Solimar International n.d.). Higher education was brought on for capacity building, and the American University of Armenia implemented a regional guide training program to educate tourism industry professionals, museum personnel, and residents in practical and professional guiding techniques for effective communication and management. Young people were a particularly important target audience, and diverse education programs on cultural heritage and local history were conducted specifically to empower them to become guides and cultural ambassadors for the community (USAID 2018). This serves important goals in heritage conservation, the transmission of intangible cultural heritage to the next generation, and public diplomacy, through youth engagement and empowerment. The collaboration between public and

private sectors, as well as participants from profit and non-profit sectors and various fields, enhanced the program by ensuring multifaceted professional expertise and skills were used effectively and contributed to its sustainability.

Education and engagement were not limited to abroad; the Smithsonian also introduced Armenian intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to the US, promoting cultural understanding and tourism. While My Armenia is an international aid program, its alignment with the Smithsonian's academic and educational goals and global vision and can maximize synergies for a mutually beneficial relationship. The program's benefits were shared in the US through various Smithsonian channels, including in-person programs, publications, websites, and apps. These initiatives aimed to introduce Armenian cultural heritage as a valuable component of international heritage and humanities culture. (Smithsonian, My Armenia n.d.). In particular, Armenia was selected as a participating country in the 2018 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The Folklife Festival, hosted annually by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH) since 1967, presents a diverse range of interpretive formats and presentations to showcase both domestic and international intangible cultural heritage, aimed at promoting mutual understanding between the United States and people around the world and fostering cultural diversity and sustainability. Therefore, the Armenia: Creation Home program showcased the continuity of traditional culture in a changing era through Armenia's foodways presentations and artisan crafts traditions, highlighting the importance of economic and cultural sustainability (Smithsonian, 2018). Visitors to the program encounter cultural diversity, yet they are also designed to explore and reflect on Armenia's culture in their own lives, finding commonalities in everyday life and the significance of home, thereby experiencing and understanding Armenian culture while also integrating and exploring it in their own cultural and personal contexts. Kurin

(2007) emphasizes that the culturally interactive nature of the Folklife Festival highlights its support for multilateral international relations and serves as a positive example of cultural diplomacy. Armenia's rich cultural heritage, local knowledge, and artisans' stories can be accessed on the Smithsonian's website, allowing for online purchases of artisan-crafted handicrafts. This provides an opportunity to learn about Armenia's culture and history even after the program ends, encouraging exploration and experience (Smithsonian, My Armenia n.d.).

Korea-Mongolia Joint Cooperation Project under the Umbrella of UNESCO

From the perspective of foreign aid, the 1990s represent a notable era of development and policy evolution. South Korea's international aid efforts have grown significantly over the past few decades, reflecting its transition from a recipient of aid to a major donor. Following the Korean War, South Korea was one of the world's poorest countries and heavily reliant on foreign aid, particularly from the United States, which supported its recovery through economic, military, and technical assistance. By the 1970s, effective use of this aid and a focus on export-oriented industrialization led to rapid economic growth, transforming South Korea into a self-sustaining economy. By the 1990s, South Korea had transitioned from an aid recipient to a donor nation, now assisting other developing countries with its own international aid programs. South Korea provides international aid primarily through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), established in 1991, and the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), focusing on education, health, infrastructure, rural development, and governance. Key aspects of South Korea's international aid include bilateral aid, providing direct assistance to numerous developing countries with a focus on Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and multilateral aid, contributing to international organizations and multilateral development banks such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. South Korea also offers

humanitarian aid for disasters, invests in educational exchanges like the Global Korea Scholarship, supports global health programs, and emphasizes sustainable development through environmental protection and climate change adaptation, aiming to promote global peace and prosperity (KOICA, n.d.).

Similarly, it was in the 1990s that Korea became actively involved in UNESCO, maturing its heritage policy structure. With well-developed policymaking efforts for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH), Korea became actively involved in UNESCO in the early 1990s. Korea and Japan have significantly contributed to the global development of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) preservation practices, playing pivotal roles in advancing awareness, research, and methodologies for safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage worldwide (Akagawa 2016; Kono, 2019; Hafstein 2018). Particularly, Korea proposed to the UNESCO Executive Board and contributed to the establishment of the UNESCO "Living Human Treasures" program. The program, discontinued upon the enactment of the 2003 Convention, encouraged Member States to prepare a policy to recognize tradition bearers and practitioners based on their accomplishments, willingness to convey knowledge, and the value of their traditions in representing cultural heritage and community identity, as well as the risk of their disappearance. The guideline defines Living Human Treasures as “persons who possess to a very high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO, n.d., 3).

The early development of Korea's heritage policy has been situated within the context of addressing paradoxical and challenging circumstances. The emergence of Korean heritage policies as a tool for the Japanese Imperial Government to control Korean cultural resources was followed by the enactment of the 1962 Cultural Property Preservation Law (CPPL), which were

modeled after the Japanese 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties during the nation's recovery period from the Korean War. Over time, these policies have evolved into a framework of policymaking that is responsive to Korea's social and cultural needs (Maliangkay and Frederick and Frederick 2017; Zoric and Sang Hun 2014). The CPPL classifies heritage into four categories: Tangible Cultural Property, Intangible Cultural Property, Monuments, and Folklore Cultural Property. ICH recognizes heritage items and the individuals or groups who are holders of these items in areas such as performing arts, music, specific dance forms, ceremonies, and applied art techniques. (Kim et al. 2012, 24; Cang 2007, 47). The policy modification in 1982 marked a significant shift towards addressing issues of government authority, ownership of cultural patrimony, and public access.

Korean ICH policy has evolved as part of broader heritage policy frameworks. During the 1960s, the focus was on designating significant Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) properties. The law acknowledges masters of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for their exceptional expertise and influence on intangible cultural heritage, granting them the title of Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property, commonly known as a National Living Treasure. They receive targeted protections and support from the government, being revered as guardians of Korea's cultural heritage and praised for their expertise, understanding, and dedication to preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage. Since the end of that decade, there has been a shift towards emphasizing the transmission of ICH through educational infrastructure (Kim, Choe, and Jeong 2012). The Korean Intangible Cultural Property System has undergone several improvements: the designation of target properties in the 1960s, the acknowledgement of property holders in the 1970s, and the reformation of intangible cultural policies in the 1990s (Kim, Choe, and Jeong 2012). Policy improvement efforts have been consistently continued,

aiming to enhance the legal framework for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), exemplified by the enactment of the Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2015.

The Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA) (Korean: 문화재청) the South Korean government agency responsible for preserving and promoting Korean cultural heritage, has experienced growth. Emphasizing the importance of heritage administration, it was elevated from being part of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to a sub-ministerial agency in 1999 (Kim, Choe, and Jeong, 2012). When the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism was established in 2008, it came under the Ministry's jurisdiction, and among educational and research institutions, it also oversaw the National Intangible Heritage Center (NIHC). Established in 2013, the NIHC is Korea's first comprehensive administrative institution dedicated to safeguarding and transmitting intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Its primary roles include research, archiving, exhibitions, performances, educational programs, support for ICH masters, and promoting traditional crafts. Through these activities, NIHC aims to enhance cultural diversity and promote sustainable development while preserving and revitalizing Korea's intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

While the typical approach to heritage aid in other countries predominantly focuses on the conservation of tangible heritage, Korea has strategically leveraged its policy strength in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Korea actively promotes the conservation of ICH at the international level, thereby underscoring its commitment and expertise in this domain. The critical juncture that boosted this effort was the establishment of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP) (Park 2024). In 2009, UNESCO officially approved its

establishment at the 35th UNESCO General Conference, and in May 2010, the President ratified the agreement with UNESCO after congressional approval. It was established as a special-purpose entity, administered under CHA and financially supported by the Korean government. ICHCAP's mission is to strengthen information and networking within the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. To this end, it supports the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage among the 48 Member States of the Asia-Pacific region, focusing primarily on disseminating information and building networks in the ICH field. With its goal is to enhance cultural diversity and promote sustainable development throughout the Asia-Pacific region through various effective safeguarding activities, the initial target countries were Vietnam and Mongolia. Fundamentally, the UNESCO 2003 Convention served as a framework for such global outreach efforts. (Park 2024).

The Korea-Mongolia joint cooperation project for the safeguarding of Mongolian intangible cultural heritage, spanning a decade from 2007 to 2018 and operating under the UNESCO 2003 Convention framework, aimed to support Mongolia's compliance with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the wake of the democratic revolution in the 1990s, which followed periods of cultural suppression and destruction during the Qing ruling and Soviet era, Mongolia has experienced a revival of traditional cultural practices and religious freedoms. To support this revival, the Mongolian government has enacted laws to protect cultural heritage, including the Cultural Heritage Law in 2001 and joining the 2003 UNESCO Convention in 2005 (Park 2021). In the course of implementing the convention, Mongolia initiated the listing of intangible cultural heritage items and sought support from Korea. After strategic meetings in 2007, both countries agreed to prioritize tasks, primarily concentrated on establishing the Living Human Treasure system in

Mongolia, including identifying holders of Mongolia's intangible cultural heritage, establishing an education system centered around these holders, and enacting laws related to intangible heritage. They agreed to start collaborative projects between the center and Mongolia from 2008, designed as a three-year program focusing on building the intangible heritage protection system in the first year, conducting on-site surveys in the second year, and publishing promotional materials based on the results in the third year.

Through multiple bilateral agreements, it extended over an extensive period to provide support for capacity building in conserving ICH, encompassing its initial foundation period, analog data restoration and digitalization projects (2011-2012), intangible cultural heritage documentation and video production endeavors (2013, 2015-2017), and the curation of photography and video exhibitions (2018). For example, from May to August 2013, the Mongolia–ICHCAP Joint Project, “ICH Documentation Workshop and Pilot Filming,” was conducted in collaboration with UNESCO Accredited NGO in Mongolia, Foundation for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage (FPNCH), and ICHCAP, aiming to share ICH safeguarding experiences, improve Mongolian personnel's capacity, practice collaborative filming, and strengthen practical expertise and capacity building in ICH documentation (ICHCAP, n.d.). Since the agreement came into effect in April 2006, Mongolia has actively participated in the listing of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) items on the international level. As of 2021, Mongolia has contributed to the inclusion of a total of 15 items in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, including 8 items on the Representative List and 7 on the Urgent Safeguarding List. The series of diverse work focusing on capacity building allowed Korea to contribute to build a strong policy foundation and strengthen capacity

building for Mongolia's ICH, aligning with the principles of international cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (Park 2021, 2024).

The ICHCAP has been a steadfast supporter of this initiative from the beginning of the project, including its preparatory phase before its official establishment in 2011. CHA led the projects with full institutional authority without the involvement of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO also participated. Interestingly, the local government, Jeonju City, where CHA located supported in these collaborative efforts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs historically not participate in international engagement for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) conservation efforts, although they showed interest and took the lead in large-budget heritage aid for tangible heritage conservation abroad, a pattern that has been observed in recent years (Park 2024). The successful implementation of this low-budget project was made possible by the expertise of CHA, the institutional framework of ICHCAP, and the project's emphasis on capacity building (Park 2024) Capacity building through knowledge sharing and networking represents a departure from traditional foreign aid programs, including those focused on conventional heritage activities like excavation and restoration of tangible heritage. Unlike these programs, which often involve providing resources or conducting activities directly on behalf of recipient countries, capacity building emphasizes empowering local stakeholders through shared expertise and collaborative networks.

Extensive stakeholders in Mongolia heritage participated in the project. For example, after the strategic meeting between Korean and Mongolian experts to examine the status of Mongolia's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and identify challenges and requirements for its protection and conservation, the meetings to proceed the project involved Mongolian officials from various institutions including the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, the

UNESCO Mongolian National Commission, the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the Morin Khuur Center, the National Song and Dance Ensemble, the Buddhist Art Research Institute, the Jangga Association, the Mongolian National University, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Center, and the Mongol Ger Development Center. The second strategic meeting, held in Seoul, featured Mongolian representatives from the UNESCO Mongolian National Commission, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, the Morin Khuur Center, the Mongolian National University, the Academy of Sciences Language and Literature Research Institute, the Cultural Arts Research Institute, and the Mongol Ger Development Center. These higher education and research institutions, arts and cultural institutions played the important roles in the project. Higher education and research institutions, as well as arts and cultural institutions, remained major collaborators and played crucial roles in the project.

The project's completion has fostered a sustained and visible long-term relationship between Korea and Mongolia. As ICHCAP continues to serve UNESCO state parties in the Asia-Pacific region through information sharing and expands its networking strategy, Mongolia remains a close partner in Korean heritage diplomacy. It was included among the five countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia—in Central Asia that have been collaborating with ICHCAP since 2015. Heritage conservation support for Mongolia is not limited to ICH. Examples in 2023 include an agreement to establish a collaborative research system and mutual support for dinosaur fossil research and preservation between the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and the Mongolian Institute of Paleontology, and the conservation treatment of 17th-century Buddhist scriptures by the Cultural Heritage Conservation Science Center under CHA at the request of the Institute of Archaeology in the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

Conclusion

The "My Armenia" and Korea-Mongolia joint cooperation projects represent contrasting approaches to heritage aid. The distinctive difference between these projects lies in the respective countries' domestic heritage policies and their varying relationships with UNESCO, introducing an intriguing aspect to the administrative structure and coordination of these initiatives. The U.S. utilizes a decentralized approach in historic preservation and public diplomacy, while South Korea employs a centralized approach, with the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA). The distinctive difference of those projects lie in their policy system and political dynamics in heritage conservation. Their domestic heritage policies, with the US utilizing a decentralized approach in historic preservation and public diplomacy and South Korea employing a centralized approach, along with their varying relationships with UNESCO, introduces an intriguing aspect to the administrative structure and coordination of these projects.

Despite the differences, the two cases demonstrate the characteristic of ICH aid. Despite being labeled as collaboration, both projects maintained a top-down, one-way support approach, which can reinforce neo-colonialist dynamics often criticized in modern human rights-related aid or diplomacy. However, the inherent characteristics of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), prioritizing cultural bearers, emphasizing living culture, and focusing on transmission, contributed to enhanced community engagement and increased sustainability in these heritage conservation efforts. Sustainability and capacity building were the primary goals in both instances, although the direct political motivations or benefits for the U.S. and South Korea remain unclear. In both cases, the political motivations or direct benefits for those two countries

are not distinctly clear. These reflect not only the trajectory of foreign aid but also public diplomacy in recent decades. They also share characteristics of cultural diplomacy that have historically been inconsistent and short-term, lacking strategic direction in both countries. The two cases initially committed to short-term projects, which were extended multiple times. The political dynamics of the agencies allowed the Smithsonian and CHA full institutional autonomy in developing these programs. These reflect not only the trajectory of foreign aid but also public diplomacy in recent decades. The shared approaches highlight the evolving nature of heritage aid, moving beyond traditional tangible heritage conservation toward leveraging intangible cultural heritage for sustainable development, cultural diplomacy, and international cooperation.

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