

Emphasis on Difference: Ethnic and National Cultural Heritage Identities and Issues in East Asia Focusing on Korea Cases

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Abstract : Even though 23 years have passed in the 21st century, nation-state and nationality-centered cultural identities are still the sentiments and ideologies that dominate the world. Nevertheless, as seen in many cases in Europe, a new perspective is needed to recognize mutual exchanges and influences and to view them as natural cultural exchanges between countries. The situation in East Asia is completely different from Europe. This is presumed to be from the long tradition of having an ethnocentric state concept for at least hundreds of years, quite different from Europe, where the concept of a nation-state was established relatively recently. In other words, unlike Europe, where active exchanges took place, the problem stems from the unique characteristics of East Asia, which has a strong tradition of finding its identity in 'difference'. Thus, it would not be hard to find cultural studies or news of the three East Asian countries emphasizing differences among one another. This applies to all cultural areas, including traditional architecture. For example, in the Korean traditional architecture field, buildings with effects from neighboring countries tend to be ignored, even if they are traditional Korean architecture. In addition to this, in the case of Korea, there seems to be one more cultural harmful aftereffect caused by the 36 years of Japanese colonial rule in the early 20th century; the obsessive filtering concept of 'it must be different from Japan'. In other words, the implicit ideological coercion that the definition of 'Korean cultural heritage' should not be influenced by exchanges with Japan may be found throughout Korean studies. The architectural and cultural aspects of the vast period of time, from the Three Kingdoms era to the beginning of Joseon, which was a period in which cultural influence exchanges with neighboring countries were relatively strong compared to the late Joseon Dynasty, also reflect the 'distorted filtering' caused by finding a repulsive identity against the Japanese colonial period. It is important to look the cultural heritage and traditions as they are inductively, not deductively. If not, we may often ignore or limit our own precious cultural heritage. Conversely, If Baekje, the ancient Korean Kingdom, helped Japan in construction and craftsmen played a big role in building the ancient temple, it would be a healthier perspective to view it as a cultural exchange rather than proudly seeing it as a cultural owner's perspective because this point of view is a proper reconstruction of our ancient and medieval Asian culture (strictly speaking, the color common to East Asia at the time). In particular, this study will examine this topic by giving specific examples from each field of Korean cultural studies. In the search for cultural identity, it would be more helpful for healthy relations between countries and collaborative research in the sensitive part of the interpretation of historical facts as well as cultural circles to minimize excessive meanings on originality and difference.

Keywords : cultural heritage identity, cultural ideology, East Asia, Korea

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