

Heritage, Provenance, and Digital Re-Illumination: A Review of the *Jikji simche yojeol* and the Cheongju-BnF Collaboration

Introduction

Among the documentary inscriptions on UNESCO’s Memory of the World International Register, few items occupy as paradoxical a position as the *Jikji*. It is, on the one hand, a celebrated Korean cultural icon—Korean National Treasure No. 1132—since 1992, the centerpiece of an urban “Jikji Cultural Zone” in Cheongju, and the namesake of an internationally awarded UNESCO prize. On the other, the single surviving copy of the metal-type edition has resided continuously in Paris for over a century, currently catalogued as Coréen 109 in the Manuscripts Department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF) (2023). This bifurcation—between the geography of production and the geography of custody, and between national heritage claims and cosmopolitan custodial claims—has driven the development of an unusually elaborate digital, scholarly, and diplomatic infrastructure around a single late-fourteenth-century Buddhist anthology.

This article reviews the infrastructure in three connected registers. The following chapter surveys the *Jikji*’s identity as a Buddhist textual artifact and assesses how the Cheongju Early Printing Museum’s (CEPM) *Jikji Global* platform translates the material book into a multilingual digital experience. The second chapter reconstructs the provenance from late Joseon Korea to BnF accession and analyzes the BnF’s twenty-first-century framing of *Jikji* as a “treasure of the world of printing.” The third chapter examines the UNESCO inscription of 2001, the UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize, and the establishment in 2023 of the UNESCO International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH) in Cheongju. The last chapter evaluates the formal Korea-France collaborations that have allowed the CEPM to build a value-added platform on top of BnF-produced digital surrogates. The article closes with reflections on the model this case offers for international heritage cooperation and on the limits

that remain.

Jikji as a Buddhist Anthology and Its Digital Re-presentation

The Text and the Book

The full title of *Jikji* “Baegun hwasang chorok buljo jikji simche yojeol” 白雲和尚抄錄佛祖直指心體要節 may be rendered “Anthology of Great Buddhist Priests’ Zen Teachings Excerpted by the Reverend Baegun, Directly Pointing to the Essence of the Mind.” The text was compiled by the Korean monk Baegun Gyeonghan 白雲景閑 (1298–1374), who drew on canonical Chan/Seon sources including the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 and the *Seonmun yeomsong* 禪門拈頌 to assemble a graded anthology of *gong’an*, sermons, and exhortations across 145 Buddhist figures.¹ Baegun completed the manuscript in 1372 at Seongbulsu Temple and died two years later at Chwiamsa Temple in Yeosu. In 1377, three years after his death, his disciples Seokchan 釋璨 and Daldam 達湛, assisted by the lay patron, the Buddhist nun Myodeok 妙德 printed the work

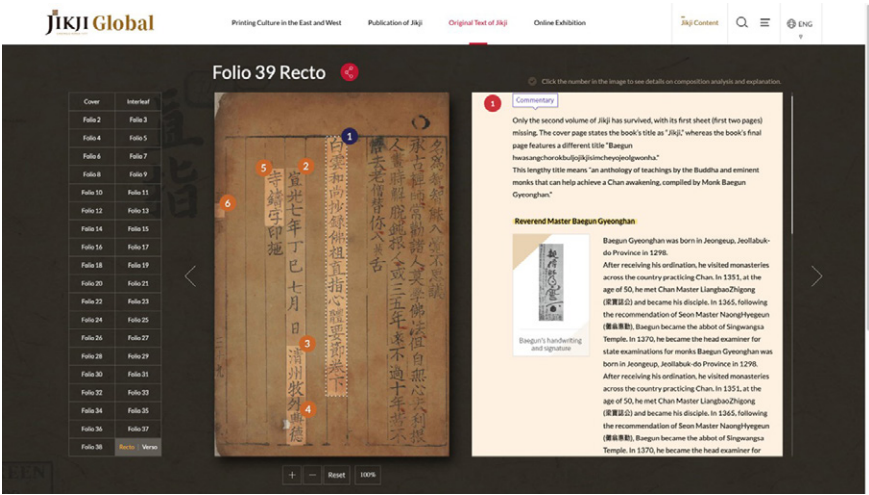


Figure 1. The Final Leaf of Jikji, Global Jikji Online Archive²

1 Library of Congress, “The Impact of *Jikji*: A Conversation with UNESCO Documentary Heritage Unit Chief, Dr. Fackson Banda, Guardians of Memory,” accessed May 20, 2026 (<https://blogs.loc.gov/preservation/2023/11/jikji-unesco-conversation/>).

2 Available at <https://www.globaljikji.org/en/sub.do?menukey=4301&no=79> (accessed May 20, 2026).

in two volumes at Heungdeoksa Temple outside Cheongju Magistracy using cast metal movable type. A woodblock edition followed in 1378 at Chwiamsa Temple, and it is from the surviving woodblock copies—held by the National Library of Korea, the Academy of Korean Studies, and several monasteries—that the missing first volume of the metal-type edition is reconstructed.

The decisive evidentiary inscription is the colophon on the final leaf: “Cast in metal type and printed at Heungdeoksa Temple outside Cheongju Magistracy in the seventh month of the *jeongsa* year, the seventh year of Xuanguang (i.e., 1377)” 宣光七年丁巳七月日 清州牧外興德寺鑄字印施. It is this single line that establishes *Jikji* as preceding Gutenberg’s 42-line Bible (c. 1455) by 78 years and that justifies its status as the world’s oldest extant document printed from movable metal type.³

What survives at the BnF is the second (lower) volume only. The BnF’s manuscript catalogue describes the object as comprising 39 folios—but with the first folio (containing Chapter 38, Book 1) torn off, leaving 38 effective sheets of content, double-folded, 24.6 x 17.0 cm, on thin white Goryeo *hanji*, sewn with red thread at five points, and bound in a later (eighteenth-century) cream-colored paper cover bearing the brush-written title “直指下” (*Jikji*, vol. 2).

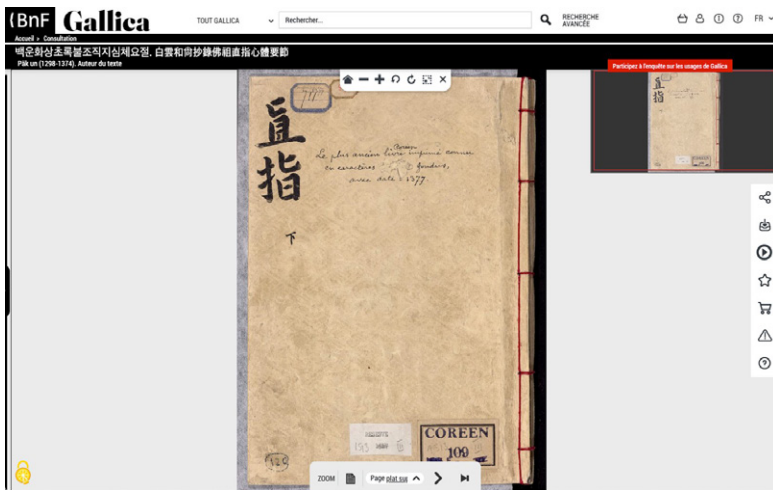


Figure 2. The Cover Page of *Jikji* Provided by BnF's Gallica⁴

3 UNESCO, *Baegun hwasang chorok buljo jikji simche yojeol 2* (Anthology of Great Buddhist Priests' Zen Teachings, vol. 2), accessed May 20, 2026 (<https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/baegun-hwasang-chorok-buljo-jikji-simche-yojeol-volii-second-volume-anthology-great-buddhist-priests>).

4 Available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52513236c> (accessed on May 20, 2026).

The cover also carries a French note in the hand of Maurice Courant identifying it as “le plus ancien livre coréen imprimé en caractères...fondus 1377.” Visible irregularities—misaligned columns, inverted characters such as “日”—blurred ink, and the non-recurrence of identical sorts on the same leaf are not flaws but rather the diagnostic features through which Park Byeongseon and subsequent scholars confirmed that the book was printed from cast individual sorts rather than from a woodblock.

The Cheongju Early Printing Museum and Jikji Global

The CEPM was opened in March 1992, immediately adjacent to the excavated Heungdeoksa Temple Site in Uncheon-dong, which had been identified in 1985 when construction workers and Cheongju University archaeologists recovered a bronze ritual *gong* inscribed “Heungdeoksa Temple of Seowon Prefecture.” Heungdeoksa Temple itself, destroyed at the end of the Goryeo period, was symbolically rebuilt the same year as the museum opened. From 2000 the museum reorganized its permanent exhibition around *Jikji* as its central theme, and from 2007 the area surrounding the museum has been designated the “Jikji Cultural Zone” by the city of Cheongju. A “Movable Metal Type Education Center” and a Modern and Contemporary Printing Exhibition Hall extended the institution into a comprehensive print-culture campus, including a master-class facility where the Intangible Cultural Heritage holder Im In-ho has reproduced the entire two-volume *Jikji* using the traditional beeswax casting method. The museum’s digital flagship is the multilingual portal *Jikji Global* (<https://www.globaljikji.org>), available in eleven languages—Korean, English, French, Japanese, Chinese, German, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, and Italian. Architecturally, the portal organizes its content into five top-level sections: “Printing Culture in the East and West,” “Publication of Jikji,” “Original Text of Jikji,” “Online Exhibition,” and “Jikji Content.” The first section situates *Jikji* in a global timeline of printing, with comparative subsections on woodblock printing in East and West, Goryeo movable metal type, and Gutenberg. The second narrates the temple history, composition, the colophon, the metal type casting process, and the UNESCO inscription. The third—the most digitally innovative section—offers a “Commentary on the Original Text” alongside two interactive e-books: an “original” e-book of the second volume corresponding to the BnF copy and a “restored” first-volume e-book reconstructed from the 1378

woodblock edition through the museum's 2011–2016 restoration project, which involved the Humanities Research Institute at Kyungpook National University.

The interactive image viewer is unusually rich. Users navigate the surviving folios by recto/verso, hover to reveal page-level annotations, click numbered hotspots layered over the high-resolution image to access description, palaeographic shape analysis, and content commentary in any of the eleven languages, and zoom and pan freely. A “Journey of Jikji” webtoon dramatizes the book’s biography from 1377 to 2001 across several interactive scenes; the platform’s Jikji Content area further offers a serious-game module, an animation, and a downloadable comic book for younger audiences. The “Online Exhibition” section, titled “Heungdeoksa: The Birth of Jikji,” reconstructs the temple environment and printing process. A “Scientific Analysis of Jikji” subsection publishes phase-by-phase findings of the trilateral BnF–CEPM–French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) physico-chemical study (2021–2024), including paper-thickness measurements, ink composition data, and conservation diagnostics released in 2022 and beyond. Crucially, this content base is anchored by an internal record of more than 650 books from the Silla, Goryeo, and Joseon periods that the museum physically holds and is supplemented by the museum’s parallel virtual exhibitions on Google Arts & Culture (since 2019).

The CEPM thus functions as the principal interpretive and pedagogical authority for *Jikji* worldwide. Where the BnF preserves the original artifact and provides a stable, conservation-grade digital surrogate, the CEPM provides the contextual scaffolding—bibliographic, codicological, doctrinal, archaeological, or comparative—through which a global public encounters that surrogate as a meaningful book.

From Heungdeoksa Temple to the Rue de Richelieu: Provenance and Current Custody

Acquisition by Victor Collin de Plancy

The migration of *Jikji* from a Korean temple-collection context to the European antiquarian market is bound up with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Joseon Korea and the Third French Republic. The Franco-Korean

Treaty of Defence and Commerce was concluded in May 1886 and ratified in 1887 by Kim Yunsik (1835–1922) and Victor Émile Marie Joseph Collin de Plancy (1853–1924), who took up his post as France's first chargé d'affaire in Seoul in 1888 and served until 1891, returning for a second term as French Minister between 1896 and 1906. A career diplomat trained in law and Chinese, Collin de Plancy used his thirteen total years in Korea to assemble a substantial private collection of Korean ceramics, paintings, and books, much of it catalogued by his subordinate, the sinologist Maurice Courant (1865–1935), whose *Bibliographie Coréenne* (1894–1901) supplied the first sustained Western scholarly description of Korean book culture. *Jikji* was almost certainly acquired during the second residency (1896–1906); the CEPM and the BnF concur that it was first publicly exhibited at the Korean Pavilion of the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, where Collin de Plancy had arranged for Joseon participation at the suggestion of Emperor Gojong. The book appeared in print in the appendix of Courant's *Bibliographie Coréenne* in 1901, where its colophon was noted but its precedence over Gutenberg not yet asserted.

The geographic split between where *Jikji* was produced and where it is now held has fueled decades of debate over its ownership, provenance, and acquisition. Its immense historical value naturally drove a strong Korean desire for return. Modern cultural heritage law rests on the 1970 UNESCO Convention, but because *Jikji* left Korea before 1900 and was legally bequeathed to France in 1950, it is shielded from such challenges. South Korea takes a pragmatic stance; the Korea Heritage Service acknowledge that since *Jikji* was not looted, forced repatriation cannot be legally demanded, as that would violate international norms.

The Vever Interlude and BnF Accession

Upon his retirement to France, Collin de Plancy donated most of his East Asian books to his alma mater, the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, and consigned the remainder to a four-day auction at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris from 27 to 30 March 1911. Of the 883 lots, some 700 were Korean. Most ordinary Korean items were purchased by the Bibliothèque nationale at prices between 3 and 135 francs, but lots 711 (*Jikji*) and 712 (the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch) were knocked down to the jeweler and bibliophile Henri Vever (1854–1942) for 180 francs each, the higher price apparently exceeding the

BnF's ceiling for the sale.

The book remained in the Vever collection until 1950, when, according to the testamentary disposition Vever had prepared before his death in 1942 (some Korean sources give 1943), it was bequeathed to the Bibliothèque nationale. It physically entered the collections in 1952 under accession number Don 9832 and was assigned the shelfmark Coréen 109 in the Grande Réserve of the Manuscripts Department, Oriental Division. For a further two decades it remained essentially unknown to scholarship, until the Korean librarian Park Byeongseon (1923–2011) recruited to the BnF's East Asian section in 1967, identified it among uncatalogued Korean holdings and submitted it for exhibition during the 1972 UNESCO International Book Year. The 1972 exhibition, followed by *Trésors d'Orient* in 1973, marked *Jikji*'s formal entry into Western book history.

The BnF's Framing of Jikji

The BnF's current institutional discourse around *Jikji*, articulated on its dedicated page "*Jikji*, a treasure of the world of printing," embraces three rhetorical moves. First, it affirms factual primacy and Korean provenance; *Jikji* is described, in language directly echoing UNESCO, as "the oldest known book in the world printed with movable metal type," produced "in 1377 in what is now the city of Cheongju (Republic of Korea), 78 years before the Gutenberg Bible." Second, it situates *Jikji* as belonging simultaneously to Korean national heritage (Treasure No. 1132) and to a common heritage of humanity, a position it consolidated symbolically by exhibiting *Jikji* alongside the Gutenberg Bible and the Bois Protat for the first time in the 2023 exhibition *Imprimer! L'Europe de Gutenberg*. Third, it asserts a conservation rationale for retention; the book is "treated accordingly" as one of the most precious items in the collections, with handling minimized and consultation requiring the reasoned authorization of the Department's director. This last move—preservation as legitimation of custody—has been a constant feature of BnF's response to Korean repatriation requests since the 1990s.

The repatriation question has remained unresolved. Unlike the 297-volume *Oegyujanggak* royal protocols of the Joseon dynasty, which were "permanently lent" by France to Korea in 2011 following protracted negotiations that began in 1993, *Jikji* has remained in Paris, and no formal Korean state demand for

its return is currently active. The asymmetry is striking; the *Oegyujanggak* manuscripts had been seized by the French naval expedition of 1866 and could be characterized as war loot, whereas *Jikji* entered the French system through a private auction and a private bequest—categories more difficult to challenge under existing international heritage law. The Korean position has therefore shifted, particularly since the 2001 UNESCO inscription, from repatriation as primary objective toward maximum digital and scientific access as a practical substitute.

UNESCO Recognition and the Re-Illumination of *Jikji*

The 2001 Inscription

Jikji was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register on September 4, 2001, following the Fifth Meeting of the International Advisory Committee held, significantly, in Cheongju from 27 to 29 June 2001. The inscription was the product of sustained coordination among the City of Cheongju, the CEPM, and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. The submission was evaluated alongside 42 other documentary heritage candidates from 23 countries; under the chairmanship of Bendik Rugaas of the National Library of Norway, the IAC selected *Jikji* on grounds of rarity (a single surviving copy), historical significance (the oldest extant artifact of movable metal type printing), and global influence (transformation of human communication).

The inscription has had consequential effects on three fronts. First, it formally consolidated international scholarly consensus on *Jikji*'s precedence over Gutenberg, a question that had remained marginal in Western book history. Second, it brought UNESCO badge usage and technical conservation support to the bearer institutions. Third, it operationally bound the BnF, as custodian of the inscribed item, to UNESCO Memory of the World preservation and access norms, including the obligation to facilitate digitization and online consultation. It is from this third effect that the subsequent Gallica digitization and the bilateral Korea-France digital collaboration flow.

The UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize

The City of Cheongju moved swiftly to translate inscription into ongoing institutional capital. A municipal ordinance establishing a “Jikji Prize” was promulgated in September 2003; the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted the proposal to UNESCO that same month; and the 169th Executive Committee of UNESCO approved the establishment of the UNESCO/Jikji Memory of the World Prize on 28 April 2004. The first award ceremony was held in September 2005, integrated with the inaugural Jikji Festival in Cheongju.

The Prize, endowed with \$30,000, funded by the Republic of Korea through the City of Cheongju, is awarded biennially to individuals or institutions “that have made significant contributions to the preservation and accessibility of documentary heritage as a common heritage of humanity.” Across the ten awards made between 2005 and 2024, laureates have included the Czech National Library (2005), the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (2007), the National Archives of Malaysia (2009), the National Archives of Australia (2011), ADABI Mexico (2013), Iberarchivos (2016), SAVAMA-DCI of Mali (2018), the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum of Cambodia (2020), the American University in Cairo Libraries and Learning Technologies (2022), and the National Library of Indonesia (2024). Conceptually, the Prize functions as a permanent rhetorical lever: by attaching the name “Jikji” to international preservation excellence, it embeds the *Jikji* identity in UNESCO’s global documentary heritage architecture independently of where the physical object resides.

The Digitization Mandate and Gallica

UNESCO inscription accelerated the BnF’s digitization of *Jikji*. Although the surviving second volume had been microfilmed earlier (now digitized under BnF ARK identifier [ark:/12148/btv1b100933766](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:fr:bnf-12148-btv1b100933766)), the principal full-color access copy was produced and published on the BnF’s Gallica platform under ARK [ark:/12148/btv1b52513236c](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:fr:bnf-12148-btv1b52513236c), with the metadata indicating a refreshed indexation date of 30 August 2020. Gallica makes the complete folio sequence—described by the BnF catalogue as 39 *feuilles* (the first effectively absent, hence the conventional citation of 38 sheets)—available free of charge under public-domain terms, downloadable in JPEG or PDF format, zoomable through the

standard Gallica viewer, and exposed via IIIF manifests at the pattern.⁵

This is significant for two reasons. First, the Gallica copy is the canonical digital surrogate from which all other digital instantiations of *Jikji*, including those on *Jikji Global* and Google Arts & Culture. Second, the IIIF exposure means that the CEPM (and any other institution) can legally embed and re-tool the BnF images within its own viewers without re-photographing the original. The BnF, in effect, performs the conservation-intensive work of producing high-fidelity images and licenses their global re-use under public-domain terms; the CEPM and others perform the interpretive and pedagogical work of contextualization.

The UNESCO International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH)

A further institutional consequence of the *Jikji* inscription was Korea's successful 2017 bid to host UNESCO's first International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH), which was approved at UNESCO's 39th General Conference in Paris on November 6, 2017 following a joint submission by the City of Cheongju and the National Archives of Korea. Established as a Category 2 Centre in 2020, the ICDH was inaugurated in a purpose-built facility located in Cheongju near the CEPM and the Heungdeoksa Temple site in November 2023, in a ceremony attended by the Korean Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the National Archives of Korea which serves as Korean institutional host, and representatives of the regional Memory of the World committees for Africa and Asia-Pacific. The Centre's stated functions include monitoring of inscribed Memory of the World items, training programmes for under-represented regions, post-inscription management, and "standardization of criteria and technology for restoration of endangered documentary heritage." Two ICDH activities directly involve *Jikji* and bear on this article's argument. First, in coordination with the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library, the ICDH co-leads the "From Jikji to Gutenberg" project, an internationally funded interdisciplinary investigation whose 2023 Library of Congress colloquium gathered specialists from seven countries to plan a multi-venue exhibition

5 Available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/iiif/ark:/12148/btv1b52513236c/manifest.json>.

for 2027, the 650th anniversary of the printing of *Jikji*. Second, the ICDH supports the ongoing physico-chemical study of *Jikji* and the Gutenberg Bible to comparatively analyse their material properties.⁶

Korea-France Collaboration on Digital Access

The Trilateral MoU of 2021

The most consequential bilateral instrument framing current Korea-France cooperation on *Jikji* is the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding signed on Friday, November 26, 2021 between the City of Cheongju, the BnF, and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), specifically through the Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation (CRC), a joint research unit of CNRS, the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN), and the French Ministry of Culture. The MOU committed the parties to a multi-year (2021–2024) programme of physico-chemical analysis of *Jikji*'s paper, ink, and conservation state. The analysis of the book's materials and its state of preservation will be carried out by the Cheongju Early Printing Museum, Chungbuk National University's paper-based artifacts preservation center and CNRS's conservation and analysis center, while the BnF provides controlled physical access to Coréen 109. Phase 1 (2021), conducted at the BnF, examined paper thickness, ink color, stains, and the adhesion between printed leaves and mounting paper; Phase 2 (2022) at the MNHN Conservation Research Centre conducted chemical composition analysis of paper and ink and confirmed that *Jikji* was printed in Korean ink on thin, light Goryeo-style *hanji* paper.

This trilateral MOU is genuinely novel in international heritage practice. It permits a Korean municipal museum and a Korean national university to acquire scientific data on a French-held object—data that they then publish under their own institutional imprimatur on the *Jikji Global* platform, including academic conference proceedings shared during the 2022 Jikji Festival.

6 Randy Silverman, "From Jikji to Gutenberg: The Origins of Printing from Cast-metal Type, accessed May 20, 2026 (<https://jikji.utah.edu/>).

The 2023 BnF-CHA Cooperation Agreement

A second, broader instrument was signed on April 11, 2023 in Paris: a three-year cooperation agreement between the BnF and the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea (since reorganized as the Korea Heritage Service in 2024). Signatories of record included BnF President Laurence Engel and CHA representative Chae Su-Hee, with witnesses from the Cheongju city government, the UNESCO Korean delegation, the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, and the Republic of Korea's embassy to France. The agreement's stated scope is the strengthening of scientific cooperation on the Korean collections of the BnF, with initial actions including facilitation of Korean public access to the Imprimerie L'Europe de Gutenberg exhibition through Korean-language online resources and the joint organization of *Jikji*-themed conferences. The architecture that these agreements have produced is a layered division of labor that can be summarized as follows. The BnF performs (a) physical conservation and custody, (b) authoritative bibliographic description in its general catalogue (notice cb44421589b) and Archives et manuscrits database (ark:/12148/cc78021m), (c) production of the canonical digital surrogate on Gallica, and (d) selective high-profile public exhibition. The CEPM, in turn, performs (a) restoration and reconstruction of the missing first volume from woodblock evidence (2011–2016), (b) physical replication of the metal-type-set itself, (c) contextual digital interpretation through *Jikji Global*, (d) educational programming and the operation of the Movable Metal Type Education Center, and (e) coordination of the UNESCO/Jikji Prize ceremonies and the annual Jikji Festival.

The value-additions on *Jikji Global* are illustrative. The platform's "Original Text" e-book viewer reuses BnF-quality images but augments them with eleven-language layered annotation at the page, column, and character level—functionality that Gallica, designed as a universal national-library platform, does not provide. The "Restored First Volume" e-book provides access to a text that does not exist as a metal-type physical object anywhere in the world; this is original Korean scholarship rendered as a digital edition. The "Movable Metal Type Casting Process" subsection embeds video documentation of the beeswax casting method, contextualizing the Gallica image with a tactile reconstruction of how it was produced. The "Printing Culture in the East and West" section explicitly juxtaposes *Jikji* with Gutenberg, drawing on the comparative

scholarship produced by the “From *Jikji* to Gutenberg” consortium. And the “Game,” “Webtoon,” “Animation,” and “Comic Book” modules in the “Jikji Content” section target younger and non-specialist audiences in formats that no national library platform attempts. The model is thus one in which the BnF’s digitization satisfies the UNESCO inscription’s accessibility mandate at the level of the raw image, while the CEPM’s platform satisfies it at the level of meaningful accessibility—multilingual, contextualized, and pedagogically active. From a heritage-studies perspective, this represents a productive separation of custodial and interpretive functions that does not require resolution of the underlying ownership dispute.

Conclusion

The *Jikji simche yojeol* is a small, fragile, 38-sheet Buddhist anthology that the world has nevertheless invested with enormous symbolic weight. The trajectory traced above—from a Cheongju temple in 1377, through Collin de Plancy’s diplomatic baggage, into a Parisian auction room, through a jeweler’s library, into a national library’s Grande Réserve, onto a UNESCO register, onto an open-access digital platform, and back into a Cheongju museum’s interactive interpretation—is in one sense a story of dispersion. It is in another, more productive sense, a story of an emerging template for how contested heritage can be jointly stewarded in the absence of repatriation.

That template has four observable features. First, custody and interpretation are deliberately decoupled and assigned to different institutional regimes—the BnF and the CEPM respectively—under conditions where each performs work the other cannot. Second, digital surrogacy mediates the relationship; the BnF’s Gallica copy, produced once and made available under public-domain terms, becomes the shared substrate of all subsequent interpretive labor. Third, UNESCO functions not merely as a conferrer of prestige but as a binding architecture, through both the Memory of the World accessibility norms and the on-the-ground presence of the ICDH in Cheongju. Fourth, scientific cooperation, formalized in the 2021 trilateral MOU and the 2023 BnF-CHA agreement, constitutes a parallel knowledge-production stream that further binds the two regimes together. This template has limits that should not be elided. The underlying provenance question remains historically unresolved;

the absence of documentation of Collin de Plancy's acquisition continues to render the BnF's title defensible in law but morally contested. The bilateral collaborations, however generous, depend on continued BnF goodwill and on the asymmetric resource of physical custody. And the digital model presupposes infrastructural and linguistic capacities that not every Memory of the World inscription's home-community possesses. Still, for the case of *Jikji*, the Cheongju-BnF-UNESCO arrangement has produced an unusually rich, multilayered, and globally accessible heritage object. As the 650th anniversary of *Jikji*'s printing approaches in 2027, the question is no longer whether the world has access to *Jikji*, but how the interpretive labor of contextualization will continue to be funded, coordinated, and renewed across the institutions that now share its stewardship.

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