



KOREAN HERITAGE

Summer 2012 Vol. 5 No. 2



KOREAN HERITAGE

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of the Cultural Heritage Administration

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Cover

Red symbolizes summer. The symbolism originates from the traditional "five directional colors" based on the ancient Chinese thought of *wuxing*, or *ohaeng* in Korean. The five colors were associated with seasons and other phenomena in nature, including the fate of humans. The cover design features a painting of grass and insects by Lady Saimdang. For more stories about her, see p. 14.



CHA News Vignettes

Cultural Heritage Committee Marks 50th Anniversary

The Cultural Heritage Committee, the highest advisory body for the Cultural Heritage Administration, commemorated the 50th anniversary of its founding on April 30. In a ceremony held at Korea House in Seoul, the committee issued its “Declaration for the Protection and Promotion of National Heritage,” laying the philosophical platform for the preservation and development of the nation’s cultural heritage alongside the “Cultural Heritage Charter” adopted in 1997.

Gwangju to Host the IAC’s 11th Meeting in 2013

The Cultural Heritage Administration announced it has chosen Gwangju Metropolitan City as the venue for the 11th meeting of the UNESCO International Advisory Committee to be convened on May 23-25, 2013. The committee, comprised of 14 members, administers the Memory of the World Program. Korea nominated the “War Diary” of 16th century hero Admiral Yi Sun-sin and archival materials of the New Community Movement for the register this year.

Asia Regional Forum on Heritage to Convene in Korea

The UNESCO World Heritage Center will host the 1st Asia Regional Forum of Site Managers and Youth NGOs in Korea on August 26-30 this year, with the support of the Cultural Heritage Administration. Representatives of 18 Asian countries will discuss cooperation between heritage sites and the local communities.

Korean Folk Customs

Bamboo Wife for Cool Summer Night

The summer heat remains as annoying as ever. But there has been a sea change in how people overcome the heat. Ancient people sought cool, fresh air in open spaces, but nowadays electrical equipment is ubiquitous, controlling the temperature in closed spaces.



In bygone days, a smudge was made in the yard to keep mosquitoes away when dusk fell and the heat of the day dissipated. As night deepened, everyone withdrew into bed, but often the night air was too hot and humid to sleep comfortably. On such a restless night, many a man clutched a *jukbuin*, a cuddle pillow made of hollow bamboo roughly the size of a human body. A sleeping companion on sultry summer nights, the “bamboo wife” was loosely perforated to let in air, which circulated inside the empty cane. The bamboo felt cool to the touch under a thin hemp sheet. The natural, non-energy consuming device was a piece of science and technology derived from experience.



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Three Gateways toward Awakening Symbolic Meaning of Temple Gates

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration
Photos by Symong Agency & Graphickorea



Most Buddhist temples have a variety of gates. Some demarcate realms or connect different worlds. Others lead into a different domain or higher stage. They are portals for the conscience, not the body. Looking into the meaning of each gate, one can move a step closer to seeing what temples have to offer to mundane souls.

Three Gates Leading to Awakening

To enter a large Buddhist temple, one usually has to pass through three types of gates, collectively called *sammun* (three gates) or *sanmun* (mountain gates), the latter often applied at large temples, which are mostly nestled in the deep mountains.

The typical sequence of portals is One Pillar Gate (Iljumun), the Vajra Gate (Geumgangmun) or the Gate of Heavenly Kings (Cheonwangmun), and lastly the Gate of Non-duality (Burimun), which is also known as the Gate of Awakening (Haetalmun). This sequence can be found at the main grounds of Tongdosa in Yangsan or Beomeosa in Busan. The ground plan or other circumstances of individual temples may require different gate placement. For example, at Geumsansa in Gimje, the road past the One Pillar Gate first leads to the Vajra Gate and then to the Gate of Heavenly Kings.

All of the three gates symbolically distinguish the spaces inside and outside of them, rather than function as physical entranceways. In other words, passage through one of these gates indicates

transfer to another stage or ascension to a higher dimension in religious practice. The purpose of the gates is not to control the physical movement of humans but to alert them about different stages of spiritual cultivation and attainment. This is why the gates do not have door leaves or walls flanking their sides.

One Pillar Gate Guides to One Mind

The first entranceway into a temple, the One Pillar Gate is so named because it looks like a single-column structure when viewed from the side. The one-pillar concept means those entering the gate are taking the first step toward “one undisturbed mind.” In the same context, people join their hands in a gesture of focusing their minds before entering this gate.

Among large temples with an outstanding gate of this type are Beomeosa at Dongnae in Busan, Tongdosa at Yangsan, Haeinsa at Hapcheon, and Daeheungsa at Haenam. The One Pillar Gate of a large temple is typically topped by an imposing tiled roof with elaborate brackets. Some gates have three bays with the main sign

1. The first entranceway into the historic temple compound, the One Pillar Gate of Jikji Temple encourages the pilgrim to adopt “one undisturbed mind.”

2. The fierce images of Vajrapani symbolize the role of the Holder of the Thunderbolt Scepter as the protector and guide of the Buddha.





3. The One Pillar Gate of Tongdosa has the sign, "Tongdo Temple at Mt. Yeongchwi."

hung horizontally over the central bay, bearing the temple's name and its locale, like "Tongdosa in Mount Yeongchwi" or "Haeinsa in Mount Gaya," written in classical Chinese script. The columns on either side of the central bay often have a pair of vertical signs with the temple's pronounced philosophy or objective in four Chinese characters. For example, Tongdosa has the signs saying "*bul ji jong ga*" (Buddhist head monastery) and "*guk ji dae chal*" (great state temple).

Vajra Gate Wards Off Evil Spirits

The Vajra Gate is flanked by two fierce images of Vajrapani, the Holder of the Thunderbolt Scepter, whose fierce warrior posture symbolizes his

4. Two of the Four Heavenly Kings images ensconced in the Gate of the Heavenly Kings at Sudeok Temple.



role as the protector and guide of the Buddha. A popular deva in Buddhist iconography and symbol of unrelenting effectiveness in the conquest of negativity, Vajrapani is associated with Yaksa, the benevolent nature spirits. Vajrapani may be represented holding a diamond rod with its mouth open, or in a martial stance with a closed mouth. But detailed features are not always consistent. Sometimes, the Vajrapani is accompanied by Samantabhadra on the back of a lion and Manjusri riding an elephant.

Gate of Heavenly Kings Protects the Buddha's Teachings

The Gate of Heavenly Kings is also called the Gate of Four Heavenly Kings (Sacheonwangmun), because the gate enshrines the four protectors of the world and fighters of evil. The Four Heavenly Kings are believed to reside on the lowest slopes of Mount Sumeru at the center of the 33 heavens in Buddhist cosmology. Each is associated with a cardinal direction and capable of commanding a legion of supernatural creatures to protect the Dharma. They include Dhrtarastra (Jiguk-cheonwang), the king of the east and watcher of lands; Virupaksa (Gwangmok-cheonwang), the all-seeing king of the west; Virudhaka (Jeungjang-cheonwang), the ever-growing king of the south; and Vaisravana, the all-hearing king of the north. They were originally represented by images of Indian noblemen but gradually acquired their belligerent non-human appearances when Buddhism spread to China.

Inside the gate, the kings of the east and south are ensconced on the right-hand side, and those of the west and north on the left-hand side. Each carries a symbolic object: Dhrtarastra has a lute; Virupaksa a pearl; Virudhaka a sword; and Vaisravana a trident and a stupa.

Gate of Non-duality Leads to Ultimate Truth

Nothing in this world exists on its own; things may seem distinct but they are not separated. The seemingly contradicting concepts of sacred and secular, being and emptiness, and beauty and ugliness are not separate conditions. Instead, they are intimately interrelated under the principle of dependent origination. Likewise, there is no distinction between subject and object, and the truth is not two-sided in spite of its dual nature. The Gate of Non-duality opens this realm of ultimate truth, leaving behind the illusionary knowledge of sentient beings.

Past the Gate of Non-duality one enters the main temple grounds, where the major halls and pavilions are located, to



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5. The Vajra Gate at Ssanggye Temple. Past the One Pillar Gate, the pilgrim will soon encounter the Vajra Gate.

fully dedicate oneself to spiritual practice. By this time, one would have shed all worldly concerns with his soul cleansed of dust from the mundane world. With one unperturbed mind, one should feel closer to the stage of awakening. Hence the gate is also called the Gate of Awakening.

Entering the Realm of Awakening

Passing through one gate after another and moving nearer to the Hall of the Buddha, one should feel gradually freer from worldly attachments and illusions. For those who seek the essence of the Buddha's teachings, the gates do not simply mark the border separating the world of the Buddha from the generic outside. They serve as the symbolic guides on the path to a whole new world.

6. The Gate of Non-duality at Geonbong Temple on Mt. Geumgang. Past the gate, one enters the main temple grounds for spiritual practice.

Hopae: ID Tags of Joseon Traditional Device for Census Control

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration
Photos by Goodimage & Graphickorea



All adult males during the Joseon period (1392-1910) were required to carry an identification tag called *hopae*. Mostly rectangular in shape, it was equivalent to today's ID card. It contained the bearer's basic personal information such as social status and place of residence.

IDs of Joseon Men

Men of all social classes during the Joseon Dynasty, from high-ranking public officials to commoners and slaves, aged 16 or older, had to carry the government-issued IDs. Those tags, made of wood, ivory or ox horn, were engraved on the front side with the bearer's name, year of birth, production date of the tag and the name of the office responsible for issuance. The material and content differed according to the social status and occupation of individuals. The fact that a man was issued such a tag meant that he was placed on the state census register and was subject to military service and taxation. Some did not carry their tag, hoping to evade conscription or paying taxes. The government, therefore, sternly punished those who fabricated their tags and barred those who possessed no tags from filing civil petitions or lawsuits.

Different Materials and Issuance Procedures

For residents of the capital, the magistrate of Hanseong [old name of Seoul] was responsible for ID management, while in the provinces the provincial governors and county magistrates fulfilled the role. Senior



officials of the second rank (*i-pum*) or higher and those serving for the three royal advisory offices — the Office of Special Advisors (Hongmungwan), the Office of the Inspector-General (Saheonbu) and the Office of the Censor-General (Saganwon) — were supplied with ID tags produced by the government. The rest of the public officials as well as ordinary people submitted applications reporting their name, family relations, occupation and place of residence, so the data could be crosschecked against registrations at the concerned public offices before issuing the ID tags. According to regulations in the *Sequel to the Grand Code for State Administration (Sok daejeon)*, public officials of the second rank or higher used ID tags made of ivory; those of the third rank or lower employed through state examinations of miscellaneous



1. The *hopae*, or an ID tag, carried by Kim Hui (1729-1800), a civil official of the Joseon Dynasty.
2. An ID tag of Bak Jin-yeong (1569-1641), a military official of the Joseon Dynasty.

3. A census application paper of the Joseon period.

4. The front and back sides of an ID tag with part names.



subjects used ox-horn tags; those who passed lower civil service examinations carried boxwood tags; technicians, commoners and low-ranking clerks at government offices had small, rectangular wooden tags; and slaves at public offices and private households were issued large, rectangular wooden tags. If a person raised his social status, he would be allowed to carry a tag made of higher grade material.

ID Tags of High-level Officials

Here are two examples of the ID tags

of high-level Joseon officials, showing different styles in inscription and the shape of tag: one belonging to Bak Jin-yeong (1569-1641), a military officer of the 17th century; and the other of Kim Hui (1729-1800), a civil official of the 18th century. The ID tag of Bak is inscribed on the front side with “Bak Jin-yeong, born in Gisa Year, Military Examination of Gabo Year.” This means Bak was born in the *gisa* year of the traditional zodiac calendar, which corresponded to 1569, the second year of the reign of King Seonjo, and

5. ID tags were made in different shapes and sizes.



passed the military examination in 1594, the 27th year of Seonjo’s reign. The backside has a seal. The other tag has “Kim Hui, born in Giyu Year, Literary Licentiate Examination of Gyesa Year,” and is sealed with “Gapjin” on the back. From the inscription it can be seen that the man named Kim Hui was born in *giyu* year, or 1729, the fifth year of the reign of King Yeongjo, and passed the higher civil service examination in *gyesa* year, or 1773, the 49th year of Yeongjo’s reign, and the ID tag was issued in *gapjin* year, or 1784, the eighth year of King Jeongjo’s reign. The two tags are both rectangular, but the former has a small roundel with a loophole attached on the top while the latter has a rounded top with a loophole pierced on the tag. The difference is attributed to the changing types of ID tags from the eras of Prince Gwanghae and King Injo to the years after King Sukjong.

Horse Tags of Secret Royal Inspectors

Public officials of Joseon traveling to the provinces for official purposes carried *mapae*, meaning “horse tag,” which enabled them to prove their status and to borrow horses from state-run horse stations. Unlike ordinary ID tags, the horse tags were copper discs engraved on one side with a serial number, the number of horses available, the year of issuance, and a seal of Sangseowon, the office responsible for issuing horse tags; and on the other side images of horses in the number available to the bearer. The secret royal inspectors who travelled to the provinces on clandestine orders of the king to investigate local governance



and discover malfeasance, always carried the horse tags that symbolized their authority at moments of truth.

The ID tags of Joseon represent an aspect of the population identification systems that existed and evolved in most societies since ancient times. They not only provided a means for individuals to prove their identity but gave the state a tool to grasp the composition of population for efficient governance.



6. An ID tag of a forest ranger, who served under Prince Ikpyeong of the royal family (left); and a tax collector's ID tag.

7. A slave's ID tag



8. An ID tag called *mapae*, which was issued for a public official to prove his status and enable him to borrow horses from state-run horse stations.

Mother of Great Scholar Yi Yulgok

Lady Saimdang, A Prominent Poet and Painter

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration
 Photos by Graphickorea & Goodimage



1

1. Paintings of grass and insects by Shin Saimdang, who enjoyed depicting familiar motifs from nature around her.

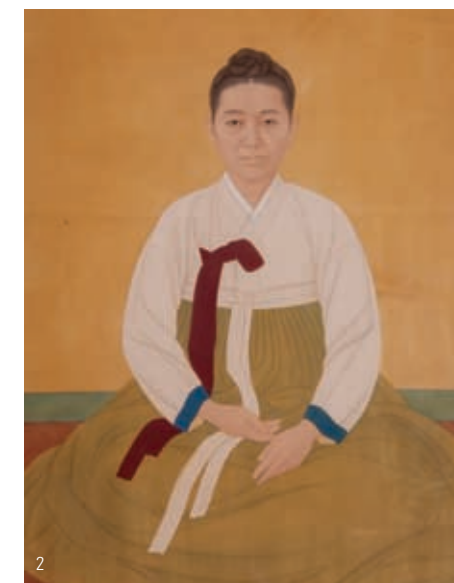
Currency design and subject matters suggest a lot about a country's economic stature and historical and aesthetic considerations. Therefore, portraits of nationally respected figures are most often featured on the money of many countries. The 50,000-won banknote, Korea's highest-denominated bills, has a portrait of Shin Saimdang, one of the most famous women in Korean history, who is highly recognized for her exemplary roles in family as well as prominent artistic and literary accomplishments.

Female Writer and Painter of the Joseon Era

Lady Saimdang, or Shin In-seon, was born on October 29, 1504, the second daughter of Shin Myeong-hwa, at her mother's maiden home in Gangneung along the east coast. The house where she was born had many black bamboos, hence its name Ojukheon, or the Black Bamboo House. Her maternal grandfather taught her classical texts, and as a young girl, she demonstrated exceptional talent in literary writing, calligraphy and painting, as well as sewing and embroidery, eliciting praise from her parents and relatives. She is said to have painted landscapes influenced by An Gyeon, a famous 15th century painter, when she was seven years old. She was excellent at not only landscapes but flowers, insects and grapevines. At the same time she diligently enriched her knowledge of the Confucian classics as an avid reader of good books.

Mother of Yi Yulgok

Saimdang had seven children with Yi Won-su, whom she married at 19. She faithfully performed her role as a wise wife and mother: she carefully assisted her husband, compensating for his shortcomings, while successfully educating all of her seven children. She constantly told her children about the deeds of great people, sternly disciplining them when necessary. When she was 33 years old, a black dragon appeared in her dream and flew over the sea to hover over her bedroom door. Shortly afterward she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was Yi I, who would become a great scholar and politician known by his pen name Yulgok. He authored many important books on Confucian philosophy and state administration, including *Catechism at the Eastern Lake (Dongho mundap)* and *Essentials of the Learning of Sages (Seonghak jibyo)*.



2

2. A portrait of Lady Saimdang

3. The Black Bamboo House, where Lady Saimdang and her son and great Confucian scholar Yi I were born.



Black Bamboo House

Ojukheon, or Black Bamboo House, so named for a thick black bamboo grove in the yard, is one of the oldest extant traditional houses in the country. The house consists of two main buildings, the inner quarters and the master’s outer quarters. A sign bearing a fine piece of work by the famous 19th century calligrapher Kim Jeong-hui hangs on a veranda column of the outer quarters. The house also comprises such auxiliary facilities as a memorial shrine of Yi Yulgok, an archive, a memorial hall and a museum. The memorial shrine, Munseongsa, has a portrait of Yulgok, and the archive keeps stationery items such as brushes and ink stones used by Yulgok when he was young. The house has been designated Treasure No. 165.

Yulgok’s Plum

A plum tree around 600 years old stands in the yard of the Black Bamboo House. Lady Saimdang and Yulgok are both said to have taken care of the tree. It is

called Yulgokmae, meaning “Yulgok’s Plum.” Saimdang loved to paint plum trees, and named her first daughter Mae-chang, meaning “Plum Window.” The tree is believed to have been planted sometime around 1400, when the house was built. Saimdang probably painted plum trees based on her childhood memory of this tree, which probably had grown quite big by the time she was born. The tree is Natural Monument No. 484.



4. "Yulgok's Plum" at the Black Bamboo House

Painter of Remarkable Originality

Saimdang could develop and demonstrate her ability in academic learning and artistic creation thanks to her good family environment as well as her own inborn talents. She grew up reading Confucian classics and literary writings of famous sages under strict instruction. She was deft at poetry and prose, and displayed excellent calligraphy skills in a style that overflowed with elegance and dignity.

Her favorite motifs of painting included grass and insects, grapevines, birds and flowers, fish and bamboo, plum blossoms, orchid, and landscape. As in her literary writing and calligraphy, she also displayed exquisite aesthetic sensibility in painting. Her style was so realistic and vivid that one summer day when she put her painting of grass and insects out in the yard in sunlight to dry it, a chicken pecked at it, almost poking a hole in the paper. As eloquently attested by numerous complimentary inscriptions, her paintings showed the highest standard of artistry among female painters throughout Korean history. About 40 ink-and-wash and colored works have been handed down, and additional scores of works are said

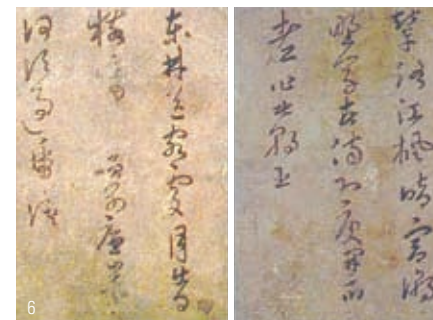


5. A six-panel screen with Saimdang's calligraphy in Chinese cursive script.

to exist but unknown to the world. Among the widely known works are “Purple Carp,” “Landscape,” “Grass and Insects,” “Reeds and Wild Geese,” “Lotus and Herons,” “Ducks and Other Birds on the Waterside” and a six-panel calligraphy screen in Chinese cursive script.

Role Model for Korean Women

Saimdang died suddenly at 48, about the time her husband assumed his post as a shipping administrator in Pyeongan Province. More than five centuries after her death, she continues to be widely admired and respected for her luminous achievements as a genius artist who bravely overcame gender discrimination in a Confucian-oriented patriarchal society and left behind great works of art as well as for her exemplary roles as a devoted daughter, virtuous wife and wise mother. ☺



6



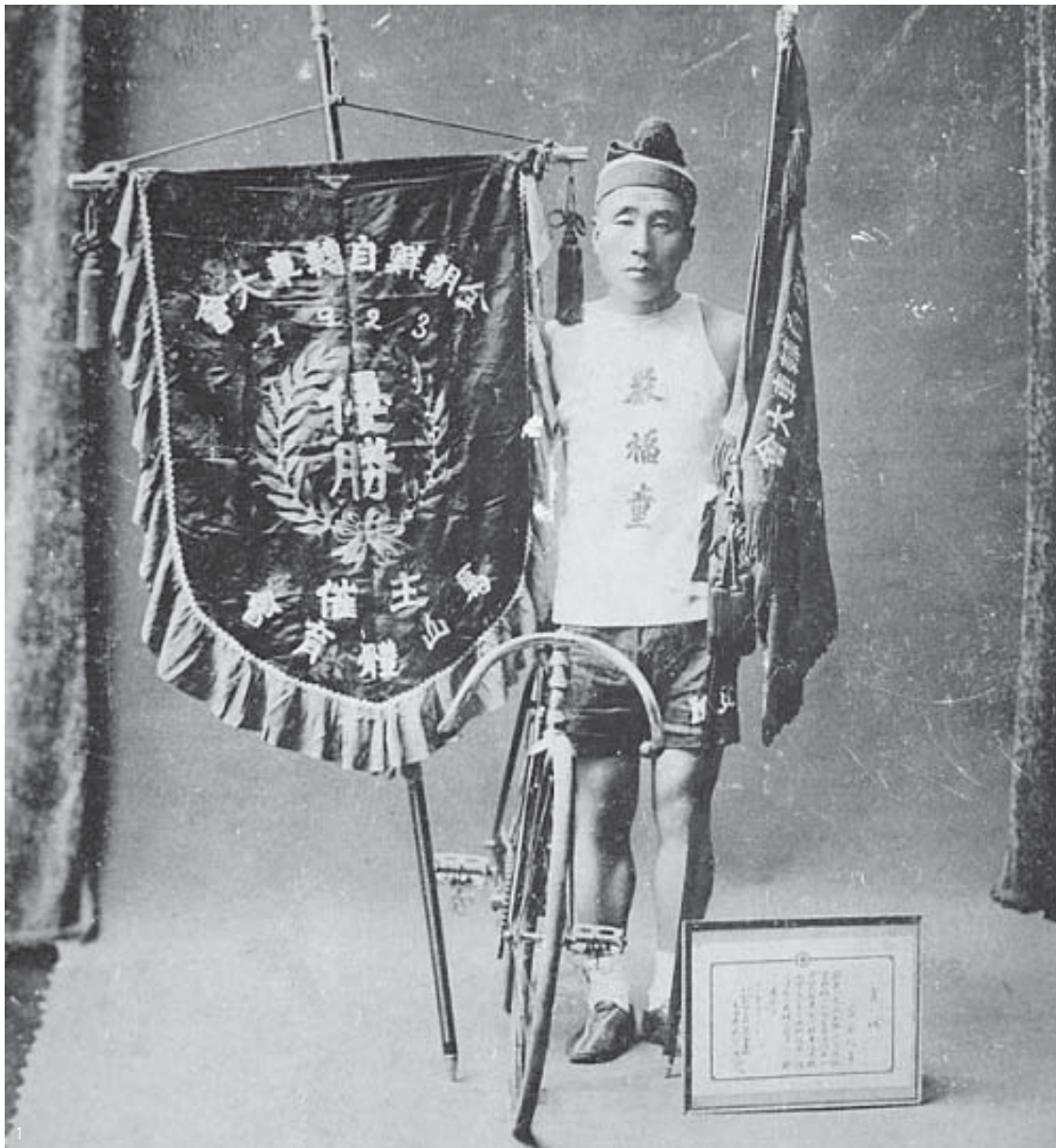
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6. Handwriting by Saimdang

7. Grapevines painted by Saimdang

Legacy of Heroic Cyclist Eom Bok-dong Bicycle Designated Modern Cultural Asset

Text from *Korean Heritage*, published by Sangsang Neomeo Publishing Co.
Photos by Graphickorea & Goodimage



“Look up, there’s the airplane of An Chang-nam; Look down, there’s the bicycle of Eom Bok-dong...” The song passed from person to person, though nobody knew who wrote it or from where it originated. From the colonial period to post-liberation years and the 1950s and well into the 1960s, young girls sang this song while jumping rubber rope. An Chang-nam was widely known as Korea’s first pilot, a national hero during the dark years of colonial oppression. But who is Eom Bok-dong? And why should his bicycle matter?

Eom Bok-dong (1892-1951) was the nation’s top cyclist, who enjoyed great popularity during the colonial period. In the early half of the 20th century, when Korea was under Japanese rule, various modern sports were introduced in the country. The nation had its first YMCA baseball team and not a few skaters earned fame. Cycling was also a popular sport, with races held on major national holidays and even on the grounds of Gyeongbokgung, the main palace of

the Joseon Dynasty, amid great public enthusiasm.

Eom Bok-dong was at the center of the bicycle racing boom. The son of a poor leather processor, Eom began working for a bicycle shop to earn a livelihood at an early age. He delivered newly purchased or repaired bicycles to customers, sometimes over long distances to other cities. Ilmi Store, where he worked, imported bicycles from Japan and managed a cycling team similar to professional teams of nowadays. With his cycling ability honed through his job, Eom became a member of the team, receiving generous support from his employer, who didn’t spare expenses to seat him on the latest racing bicycles.

Champion for 15 Years

In April 1919, Eom defeated Japanese competitors to win a national race jointly sponsored by two major newspapers, Gyeongseong Ilbo and Maeil Sinbo. This began a 15-year



1. Eom Bok-dong as photographed after winning a nationwide cycling race sponsored by the Masan Athletic Association in 1923.

2. Eom Bok-dong’s bicycle recently designated Registered Cultural Heritage No. 466.

3. The bronze emblem on Eom’s bicycle, a product of British bicycle manufacturer Rudge Whitworth Cycles.



4. A road cycling race for the Eom Bok-dong Cup kicks off on October 20, 1989.



streak of championships in Korea and even China. News about his triumphs helped Koreans regain their national pride and shed some of the anger and frustration they felt under foreign rule.

Eom's long winning streak invited displeasure and interference from the Japanese. Races were forcibly suspended under improbable pretexts when another victory became a foregone conclusion. He was constantly exhorted

to change his nationality to Japanese. But he adamantly withstood all kinds of pressure, pedaling his bicycle under Korean national flag in all races.

Like many other male star athletes, Eom was tremendously popular among female fans, particularly the hostesses at entertainment establishments, known as *gisaeng*. It was said that one passionate fan took off her skirt while cheering for him. Around the racing venues his

5. A newspaper report on Eom's victory in a nationwide cycling race in 1923, and an advertisement for Britain's Rudge-Whitworth bicycles.



photographs sold out, attesting to his celebrity status comparable to reigning Olympic champions Kim Yu-na and Park Tae-hwan today.

Designated Modern Cultural Asset
One of Eom's bicycles was recently designated Registered Cultural Heritage No. 466. The bicycle is one of the oldest in the country and also a rare model worldwide. With wooden tire frames, the bicycle bearing the serial factory number 1065274 was a gift from the British bicycle manufacturer Rudge Whitworth Cycles to promote its products as well as relations between Korea and the United Kingdom. The cultural heritage designation recognizes its symbolic importance in Korean sports history.

After his retirement, Eom presented the bicycle to junior cyclist Park Seong-ryeol, who is said to have fled to the south carrying it on his back when the

Korean War broke out in 1950. The present owner, Professor Kim Geun-u of Korea National Sport University, is known to have bought it from Eom's family. The bicycle is one of the very few remaining items among Eom's personal belongings. After ending his athletic career in the early 1930s and spending his last years wandering here and there, Eom died in an air strike during the Korean War.

Though forgotten by most Koreans today, Eom's legacy in modern Korean history extends beyond sports. He was a national hero who united his compatriots by relieving their sorrows and sufferings under colonialism. His statue in front of the municipal sports complex in Uijeongbu, north of Seoul, helps preserve memories of his glorious days. The Eom Bok-dong Cup 1km Road Cycling Race, held annually from 1977 to 1999 brought back those memories for amateur cyclists until lately.



6. A statue of Eom Bok-dong at the Uijeongbu Sports Complex.

Flower Garden in Heaven The Road to Gombaeryeong Pass

Text & Photos by Graphickorea & Goodimage

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration
Photos by Eurocreon & Goodimage

Numerous rare plants grow around Gombaeryeong Pass, an ecological haven on Mt. Jeombong in Inje County, Gangwon Province. This mountain with a rather unfamiliar name is seen on the right-hand side from atop Hangyeryeong, another scenic mountain pass along the road from Inje to Yangyang toward the East Sea, facing Mt. Seorak on the left-hand side.



The vast grassland on the hilly ridge of Gombaeryeong Pass.

On the hilly ridge the vast windy grassland is adorned with all varieties of wild flowers, blooming and fading from spring to autumn. The ecstatic harmony of flowers peaks in the summer. The highland meadow becomes all abloom with gorgeous flowers of countless wild plants, creating a sea of colors; hence the place is called a “flower garden in heaven.”



The green grass and wild flowers on Gombaeryeong Pass.



Buttercups are among wild flowers growing in abundance on Gombaeryeong Pass.



Trigonotis radicans var. sericea



Hepatica asiatica Nakai



Leontice microrhyncha S. Moore



Dog's tooth violet, or *Erythronium japonicum (Balrer) Decne*



Lady's slipper, or *Cypripedium macranthum Sw.*



Lysimachia clethroides Puby



Corydalis grandicalyx B.U.Oh & Y.S.Kim

A Walk About Contemporary Seoul

Text by Robert Koehler | Editor-in-chief of SEOUL. As a native Long Islander and a graduate of Georgetown University, Mr. Koehler has lived in Seoul since 1997.
 Photos by Goodimage & Graphickorea

A Walk About Contemporary Seoul

With a history spanning two thousand years, Seoul is a city rightfully proud of its past, which is very much in evidence in its grand palaces and shrines. What gets relatively little appreciation, however, is its rich contemporary cultural heritage, those pieces of the city's past dating from the late 19th century to the time of the Korean War, when Seoul transformed from

a medieval walled town to a modern, industrialized capital. This heritage is worth exploring, both for its intrinsic beauty and as an educational voyage into Korea's not-so-distant past.

Bukchon: More than Just Hanok

It's hard to call Bukchon "unappreciated," as anyone who has been there on a weekend could attest. Still, it's probably fair to say that few of the hundreds of visitors who descend on Bukchon daily fully appreciate the "contemporary" nature of Seoul's most famous *hanok* village. The scenery that greets visitors today — one of a sea of tile roofs, with homes flowing one into another townhouse-style along winding alleyways — is the result of the changes that transformed Seoul in the early 20th century. As Seoul modernized and the population tripled in the first three decades of the last century, the old aristocratic manors that dominated Bukchon in the Joseon Dynasty were divided into smaller plots, on which were built nearly identical hanok homes that were Korean, but built for the cramped urban environment. As architect Hwang Doo-jin, noted for his hanok restoration work, once remarked in an interview with this writer, the term *hanok* ("Korean house") itself denotes modernization — prior to the opening of Korea to the West at the turn of the 20th century, there would have been no need to coin such a word.

Bukchon is more than just hanok, though — it is home to several other important pieces of modern cultural heritage. In

1. Korean traditional houses with tiled roofs line narrow alleys in Bukchon.



2. The main hall of Choong Ang High School was completed in 1937.



the heart of the neighborhood lies the grand campus of Jeongdok Public Library, formerly Kyunggi High School, with several pieces of early modern architecture, including the old Main Hall, a modernist structure dating from 1938. For decades, this was Korea's finest secondary school, and accordingly produced many of Korea's most important leaders. Also in the neighborhood is picturesque Choong Ang High School, founded in 1908. Its Tudor Gothic main hall was completed in 1937 and designed by Park Dong-jin, one of Korea's first architects trained

in Western architecture. Just behind the main hall are two older, red brick halls, built in the 1920s and designed by Japanese colonial architect Nakamura Yoshihei.

Jeong-dong: Where East met West

If Seoul has a "typical" contemporary history district, it's Jeong-dong. Comprised of the quiet, leafy neighborhood just to the west of Deoksu Palace, Jeong-dong is Seoul's old legation quarter, not entirely unlike Beijing's internationally better known Legation Quarter. It is home to some

3. A curious Romanesque gazebo in Deoksu Palace, Jeonggwanheon was King Gojong's coffeehouse.



of Seoul's earliest Christian churches, modern schools and, of course, foreign legations, including the historic American legation (now the residence of the U.S. ambassador) and the stunning Georgian-style British legation (now the British ambassador's residence).

Most tours of Jeong-dong begin with Deoksu Palace, the venue for much of drama of the Korean Empire (1897-1910). The palace comprises several interesting early 20th century buildings, including the British-designed, Neoclassical Seokjojeon East Hall, the Japanese-designed Seokjojeon West Hall (now the Museum of Contemporary Art, Deoksugung) and, perhaps most interesting, the Jeonggwanheon, a curious Romanesque gazebo designed by Russian architect A. I. Sabatin as a coffeehouse for King Gojong.

Follow the landmark Deoksugung Stone Wall west, and you'll come to the Seoul Museum of Art, a grand colonial edifice built in 1928 as Keijo (Gyeongseong) Courthouse. Nearby is the beautiful Chung-dong First Methodist Church, built in Victorian Gothic style by American missionaries in 1892. Just a short walk from the church past the Russian Embassy is the old East Hall of Pai Chai Haktang, one of Korea's first modern secondary schools, founded in 1898 by the same missionaries who founded Chung-dong First Methodist Church.

Continue up Jeong-dong and, in an alley on the right, you'll find Jungmyeongjeon



Hall, a brick, colonial-style structure built by A. I. Sabatin at the turn of the 20th century as a royal library. Beautifully restored, it is now operated by the National Trust for Cultural Heritage as a museum to the Eulsa Protectorate Treaty of 1905 and the Hague Conference Delegation Incident, for which the building is best known historically.

4. The East Hall of Pai Chai Haktang, founded in 1885 by American Methodist missionary Henry G. Appenzeller.

Not far from the Jungmyeongjeon is the old campus of Ewha Haktang, founded by American missionaries as Korea's first modern educational facility for girls. Its old Simpson Memorial Hall

5. The main sanctuary of Seoul Anglican Cathedral





6. The Myeong-dong shopping district in the 1960s

(built in 1915) was recently restored to its full glory, and is used as a museum for the school. Across the street from the old school, perched on a hill overlooking the entire neighborhood, is the tower of the old Russian legation, all that remain of the once palatial compound that famously served as the temporary residence of King Gojong following the brutal assassination by the Japanese of his wife, Queen Min, at Gyeongbok Palace in 1895.

Finally, no introduction to Jeong-dong would be complete without mention of Seoul Anglican Cathedral, a gorgeous Romanesque church designed by British architect Arthur Dixon and

7. The previous Bank of Korea headquarters building now houses the Bank of Korea Museum.



consecrated in 1928. One of the most spectacular pieces of Romanesque architecture in East Asia, the cathedral integrates aspects of Korean traditional architecture most notably in the roof and windows. Be sure to check out the awe-inspiring mosaics in the apse done by George Jack, a Scottish designer and architect associated with the British Arts and Crafts Movement.

Myeong-dong: Seoul's Historic Commercial Heart

During the Japanese colonial era, the area that is now Myeong-dong was developed by the Japanese as a commercial district, which they named Honmachi, meaning the "main street."

The best-known of Myeong-dong's colonial edifices is the old Bank of Korea headquarters, a Neo-Baroque edifice completed in 1912 and designed by British-trained Japanese architect Tatsuno Kingo, one of the fathers of Japanese modern architecture and the man behind Tokyo landmarks such as Tokyo Station and the Bank of Japan headquarters. Originally the headquarters of Korea's colonial bank, it became the Bank of Korea after Liberation and is now a currency museum.

Across from the old bank are two more colonial-era landmarks, the old Korea First Bank (now Standard Chartered First Bank Korea), built in 1933; and the Shinsegae Department Store (originally the Mitsukoshi Department Store), built in 1930.

Further along Myeong-dong's main street, across from Lotte Department Store, is another piece of Myeong-dong history, the Kepco Building, built in 1928 for the Japanese-owned Keijo Electric Company. The sturdy building, built in the Chicago-style architecture popular at the time, incorporated earthquake-proof and fire-proof designs, as it was built soon after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.

In the heart of Myeong-dong's shopping district is Myeongdong Theater, built in 1936 as the Meiji-za Cinema. Following the demolition of two nearby movie theaters in 1999 and 2005, it is the only surviving colonial-era movie theater in the Myeong-dong area. It also served as the National Theater of Korea from 1957 to 1973, and is now a performing arts center.

The most beautiful piece of Myeong-dong's early modern cultural heritage, however, is Myeong-dong Cathedral, the mother church of Korean Catholicism. A Gothic masterpiece, the church was designed by Father Eugene Jean Georges Coste of the Paris Foreign Missions Society and completed in 1898. The high, vaulted ceiling is truly a sight to behold, as is its lovely crypt chapel, where relics from nine Catholic martyrs (five Frenchmen and four Koreans) are held. Surrounding the cathedral are several important historical structures, including the old Archbishop's Residence (built in 1890, making it Korea's oldest surviving Western building), the old Archdiocese



Annex (1927), Coste Hall (1939), the old church for Japanese (1928) and the chapel of the Seoul convent of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, now used as the convent museum.

8. Myeongdong Theater in the heart of Myeong-dong's shopping district.



10. Myeong-dong Cathedral is a Gothic masterpiece completed in 1898.

Jongmyo and the Parthenon

Where Humans and Gods Meet

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration
photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration & Goodimage



Jongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), is regarded as the epitome of traditional Korean architecture. Its overbearing religious symbolism may well be compared to the Parthenon, the apex of European sacred architecture. Let us look at the two distinguished monuments of classical architecture in the East and the West.

Jongmyo: Most Refined and Majestic Elegance

The ancestral shrine of a Confucian monarchy, Jongmyo houses the spirit tablets of kings and queens venerated in solemn state rituals. The Confucian world view holds that a human being consists of a soul and a body. Separated at death, the soul goes up to heaven and the body returns to earth. Therefore, to honor a deceased ancestor, a grave was made for the body and a shrine was built for the soul. Confucianism does not involve belief in supernatural deities. Instead, it regards ancestral spirits as major objects of worship. Accordingly, Jongmyo as the shrine for spirits of deceased kings was the foremost pantheon and the most sacred architectural structure.

1. The Main Hall of Jongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine of the Joseon Dynasty, exudes solemn elegance.

2. The Hall of Eternal Peace is an annex housing the spirit tablets of less worthy kings and their spouses.



UNESCO World Heritage Site
Jongmyo was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995, in recognition of its outstanding universal value as “the oldest and most authentic Confucian royal shrine that has been preserved almost intact along with relevant rituals.” China, the birthplace of Confucianism, also had imperial ancestral temples, called *taimiao*, during ancient times. However, when a new dynasty was founded,

the Chinese usually removed the royal ancestral temple of the previous dynasty. Therefore, China maintains no monuments of ceremonial architecture comparable to Jongmyo, which has thus become the only extant example of a living legacy of royal ancestral worship in the East Asian sphere of Confucian civilization.

The Main Hall (Jeongjeon), housing the spirit tablets of those kings who command great respect and their queens, is the most important building at Jongmyo. It is the largest among contemporary wooden structures in the world as well as the longest wooden building in Korea, with the front façade running 101 meters and the main roof ridge 70 meters. The impressive façade has a series of 20 identical entasis columns, and is topped with a gabled roof with an uninterrupted horizontal ridge and wing-type bracket systems. The sobering black roof tiles, the crimson frontal columns and the deep space behind evoke a deep sense of

3. Descendants of the royal family of Joseon conduct rites at their royal ancestral shrine to venerate the successive monarchs of Korea's last dynastic period.



4. The Acropolis of Athens has ancient Greek architectural monuments, with the Parthenon standing at the highest point.

evanescence. When it was first built in 1394, the hall had seven spirit chambers, flanked by a side chamber on either end. Four more chambers were added in 1546. When the Japanese invaded in 1592, the king and the crown prince fled north with the royal spirit tablets, saving them from a fire that burned down the entire shine. Jongmyo was reconstructed in 1608, the year Prince Gwanghae ascended the throne, and attained its present scale with 19 spirit chambers through two rounds of expansion in 1726 and 1836.

Parthenon: Ultimate Paragon of Western Architecture

The Parthenon, the globally renowned Greek temple on the Acropolis in Athens, is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece. Dedicated to the virgin goddess Athena Parthenos, the partially ruined marble structure retains its majestic beauty as an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece. The temple was built under the generation supervision of the genius sculptor Phidias. The architects, Ictinos

The Main Hall stands on an expansive stone platform that, unlike those in other royal palaces, nearly covers the entire square courtyard. The broad stone platform, 109 meters from east to west and 69 meters from north to south, is the largest of its kind found in traditional Korean architecture. The hall has side chambers, which have three bays each and extend southward on both ends. The eastern wing is used for rites and the western wing for storage.

5. A pediment of the Parthenon features bas-relief and colossal images of gods and humans.



6. Jongmyo is nestled amidst lush woods in the heart of Seoul.



and Callicrates, were responsible for design and construction, respectively. Construction began in 447 B.C. and was largely completed in 438 B.C., with work on decoration continuing until around 431 B.C. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987, the Parthenon is recognized as a culmination of the Doric order.

7. A series of 20 entasis columns adorn the front facade of the Main Hall of Jongmyo.



The Parthenon, which occupies the top of the Acropolis, can be seen from anywhere in the city, with roads running toward it from several directions. Although known as a temple, its location says the building was once the center of Athenian society, rather than a mere cult site. The colossal structure measures 160 meters along the perimeter, with a total of 46 marble columns with a diameter of 2 meters and decorative entablatures featuring elaborately carved images. At a glance it seems like a straight rectangular structure with all of its columns having the same thickness and arranged at identical intervals. In fact, the building is designed to create an optical illusion with irregular column intervals at 2.4 meters in the middle and 1.8 meters toward the periphery. If the columns had the same thickness and identical intervals, the building could have appeared to bulge upwards and sideways. Also, in spite of its rectangular appearance, the building's contours actually are curved. The

parabolic upward curvature of the stylobate on which the columns stand helps shed rainwater, and the columns leaning slightly inward, not outward, are for withstanding the weight of the roof.

Comparison of the Two Iconic Monuments

Jongmyo, which epitomizes the aesthetics of traditional Korean temple architecture, serves as a sacred place for spiritual communion between the living and the dead. As if it exists in another world, a solemn ambience permeates the royal shrine in the heart of a modern metropolis. The majestic solemnity grows even more overwhelming as one approaches the Main Hall, the core structure of the shrine. Likewise, the Parthenon, rising from the summit of the Acropolis in the heart of ancient Athens, consummates the spirit of Classical Greece with its imposing edifice of stable proportions and restrained yet magnificent aesthetics. In particular, Jongmyo and the Parthenon share common architectural features represented by their spectacular colonnaded facades.

As iconic monuments of Korea and Greece, Jongmyo and the Parthenon obviously have different historical and cultural backgrounds. But they also share similar functional and aesthetic significance as the most distinguished examples of temple architecture of both countries. This is the reason many scholars of architecture refer to Jongmyo as “the Parthenon of the East.” Jongmyo is an abode of eternal repose for royal



ancestral spirits, an ideological pillar of a state, and a paramount edifice symbolizing the political legitimacy of a monarchy. The royal shrine perfectly expresses the fundamental principles of East Asian architecture and a magnificent and refined spiritual quality as well as the universal value of religious architecture. ☺

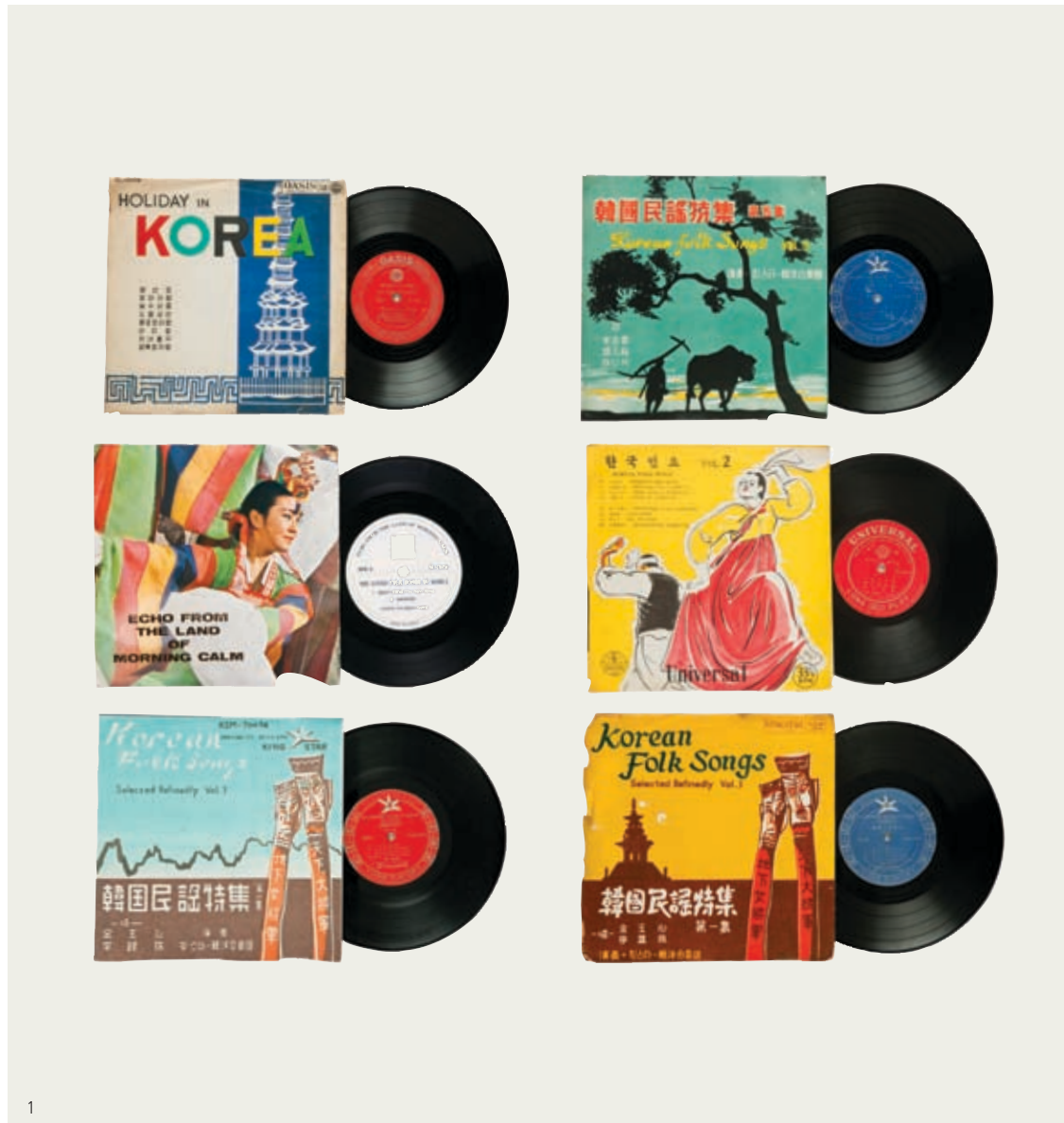
8. The Parthenon overlooks Athens from the top of the Acropolis.



9. The columns of the Parthenon support an elaborate entablature.

Lyrical Folk Song ‘Arirang’ The Unofficial Anthem of Koreans

Text by Choi Joon-sik | Professor of Korean Studies, Ewha Womans University
Photos by The National Folk Museum of Korea



1

Arirang refers to a group of traditional Korean folk songs that share refrains containing the native words *arirang*, *arari*, or their variations, sung to similar melodies. The title derived from the repeated word, *arirang*.

The Song Heard Wherever Koreans Are

It is generally said that Arirang has been sung since ancient times, its lyrics and melody changing gradually as centuries passed. There are various theories and views concerning the etymological origin of the word *arirang*, but none has gained universal acceptance.

Arirang has been passed down orally to spread throughout the country, giving rise to a variety of local versions. Especially famous are the three regional variations of Jeongseon, Jindo and Miryang. But it may well be said that every district or region has its version. In North and South Korea, scores of regional versions and thousands of variations have been handed down, each of them evolved spontaneously to suit their local sentiment and environment. The basic melody is simple enough for anyone to learn easily and quickly, a smooth tune rich in historical, aesthetic and emotional elements.

Folk Tune Conveying Popular Sentiment

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of Arirang is its widespread popularity among the general public. In olden days the song



2

was sung by common people, not those of the elite class such as the nobility or literati. As the song contained the common joys and sorrows of the life of commoners, it could spread widely throughout the country. From the late Joseon to colonial periods, when the nation suffered under Japan’s imperial aggression, the song conveyed the anger and frustration of Koreans resisting colonial exploitation.

The “Arirang hill” mentioned in the song alludes to arduous moments of life, a symbolic expression of trials and tribulations in an individual’s life as well as the ceaseless suffering of the poor and powerless throughout history. In some versions of Arirang, it is referred to as “12 hills,” which is explained as the 12 months of the year or the 12 earthly



3

1. A variety of record albums feature diverse versions of Arirang.

2. Professional singers perform Arirang on the stage.

3. Books dealing with Arirang-related topics published at home and abroad.

4. Arirang was a popular hymn of "Red Devils" cheering for the Korean national team during the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup.



branches of the traditional Chinese zodiac.

Legendary Episode of Sad Love

As there are numerous local versions of Arirang, there are also legendary episodes associated with the song in different regions. For example, "Jeongseon Arirang" is linked to an old love story of a local boy and a girl who lived across the Auraji River flowing through the mountainous region. They were in love, but the river kept them apart. On the night they were to meet, it rained so hard that there was no boat to

carry them across the river. They fretted as the rain poured. By the time the rain stopped, the river had swollen so high that all they could do was sing a sad song, which became the local version of Arirang. Today, a statue of the legendary girl stands by the Auraji River, gazing across the river to the village of her love.

Arirang in Korean Daily Life

Whether sad or happy, Koreans have sung Arirang wherever they are, at home or abroad. Arirang has thus become a popular icon transcending music. Since the 1940s, Arirang has consistently been included among the 10 most popular commercial brand names in Korea: it has been used for a great variety of products ranging from Korea's first filtered cigarettes to radios, rat poison, children's stationery items, and even U.S. rice imports. This means Arirang is deeply entrenched in the hearts and minds of the Korean people.

In recent years, Arirang has been revived as vibrant modern adaptations. Most notably, the cheering crowds for

the Korean national team at the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup sang the song day after day, drawing keen attention from football fans abroad. Arirang also has been a popular subject and motif in literature and the performing arts, including poetry, novels, theater, cinema, dance and TV dramas. This is because the song speaks for the popular emotion and sentiment of the Korean people, thereby comforting and uniting them.

Song of the Nation

Like flower seeds that travel across continents and oceans, Arirang has spread around the world along with Koreans to bloom and take root in foreign soil, while eventually melting into the local songs. It is another national anthem of the Korean people, a kind of musical language that will help them reaffirm their ethnic homogeneity wherever they are in the world, through the generations to come.

5. A promotional poster for a commemorative performance in 1967, marking the 30th anniversary of the death of Na Un-gyu, who produced, directed and acted in "Arirang" (1926), one of the earliest Korean feature films and a legendary national sensation.



6. A wide range of 20th century items using "Arirang" as their commercial brand name, from the collection of the National Folk Museum of Korea.

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