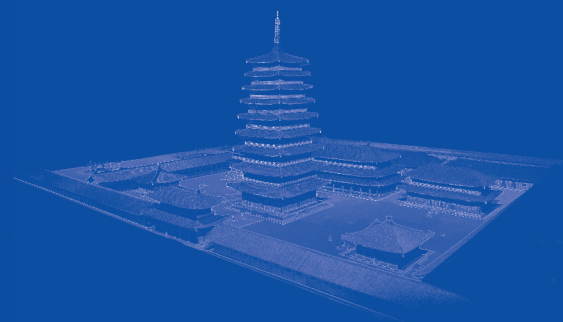




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Cultural Heritage Administration

# KOREAN HERITAGE

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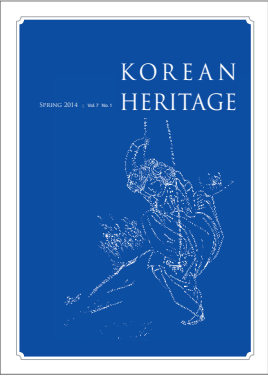
# KOREAN HERITAGE

Quarterly Magazine  
of the Cultural Heritage Administration

# KOREAN HERITAGE



SPRING 2014



### Cover

Blue symbolizes spring. The symbolism originates from the traditional “five directional colors” based on the ancient Chinese thought of *wuxing*, or *ohaengin* in Korean. The five colors were associated with seasons and other phenomena in nature, including the fate of humans. The cover design features *geune-ttwigi*, the traditional Korean swinging. For more explanation on this, see p. 3.



## CHA News Vignettes

***Kimjang Recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity***

*Kimjang*, the traditional communal practice of making kimchi in early winter, was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at the UNESCO intergovernmental committee meeting held in Baku on December 2 to 7, 2013. The time-honored custom was highly acclaimed for its cultural symbolism and social function of enhancing solidarity among the Korean people. With the inscription of kimjang, Korea came to have 16 cultural elements recognized as intangible heritage of humanity. The government has prepared a new legal framework for intangible cultural heritage, the Act on the Transmission and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage which is now under deliberation in the National Assembly, and is making further efforts to expand its institutional foundation.

***‘Moonlight Tour’ at Changdeokgung Palace***

“Moonlight Tour,” a program of nighttime walking tours of Changdeokgung Palace in central Seoul, takes place around the full moon evenings from April to June and from September to November. The night tour of the palace has been offered for five years now since 2010 and is phenomenally popular with visitors from home and abroad. It gives a rare chance to take in the breathtaking beauty of the palace at nighttime, its architectural grandeur and solemnity, ethereal under the soft light of the full moon. Known as a quintessentially Korean palace, Changdeokgung was inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 1997. Further details on the event are found on the website of the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation ([www.chf.or.kr/en](http://www.chf.or.kr/en)).

***On-Site Training on Conservation Science in Myanmar***

Technology training on the conservation of cultural heritage was carried out by the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage on December 21 to 28, 2013, in Bagan, Myanmar. The field training was a follow-up program as part of the provision of conservation equipment to Myanmar, which took place in September 2013. A team of five conservation specialists from the research institute, a sub-organ of the Cultural Heritage Administration, was dispatched to provide on-site instruction to 10 Myanmar trainees.

## Korean Flavor

***Geune-Ttwigi, Swinging into the Sky Like a Butterfly***

*Geune-ttwigi* is the traditional Korean folk sport of swinging for grownups, played mostly by women, particularly on festival days in spring. Attired in colorful *hanbok*, players take to the air riding the swings higher and higher, back and forth, seated or standing on a platform suspended from thick ropes tied to big trees or tall log towers. As a competitive sport, with players bent on swinging the highest to win, geune-ttwigi is elegant to behold. An outdoor game, swinging is most played from April to early May by the lunar calendar amid lush greenery and mild sunny weather. Historical records indicate that swinging was enjoyed by both men and women during the Goryeo period, and it was so popular back then that the royal family and the nobility spent big amounts on holding swinging events. During the Joseon Dynasty, swinging started to be regarded as a women’s game. To this day, traditional swinging remains one of Koreans’ favorite folk games enjoyed at festivals and local events.

A swing can be rigged up using felicitously located natural trees or by building a swing set tower. Suspension ropes are tied to zelkova or willow trees planted at the entrance or center of a village; or two log columns are erected with a cross-bar connecting the two on top, to which the suspension ropes are fastened. A sturdy board is attached to the other end of the ropes for the rider’s platform. One or two persons can get on board. A player can sit or stand; when two ride together, they have to be positioned facing each other and both stand or one sits and the other stands. At first, the other person has to get the swing in motion by pushing it hard at the back; afterwards the players control height and momentum by bending and stretching their knees.

Swinging is competitive: the player who swings higher wins. To measure how high the player goes up, a pole with a bell is positioned adequately apart from the swing set so that the player can touch the bell and make ringing sounds; or a long cloth strip is attached to the seat of the swing and then the length of the strip is measured when the swing is at its highest point.



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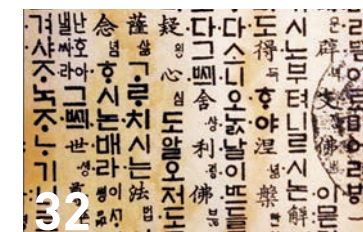
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1. Gangsehwangpil dosanseowondo (Picture of Dosanseowon by Gang Se-hwang) painted by Gang Se-hwang (1713–1791).

# Korea's Confucian Academies

## Living Legacies of History and Culture

Text and photos by Park Jin-jae, Korea Seowon Association

Confucian academies, or *seowon*, are private educational institutions built by reform-minded rusticated literati starting from the mid-Joseon period. For 500 years thereafter, they served the two aims of promoting academic competence and honoring Confucian sages and their teachings. Seowon embody the rural literati's ethical values, local history and national identity. They are a distinctive cultural legacy of Korea.

### Understanding *Seowon*

*Seowon* are private Confucian academies established by the rural literati, or *sarim*, starting the 16th century for the two primary purposes of educating students and venerating sages. The emergence of private academic institutions during the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) can also be understood as an antidote to the dysfunctional state education system, with the aim of nurturing a new educational climate. It is true that the educational model of seowon is not unique to Korea. China was ahead of Korea to have private Confucian academies, the systematic advancement of which was driven by the Confucian scholar Zhu Xi during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). But seowon in Korea have their own characteristics that set them apart from their Chinese antecedents, and their tangible and intangible legacies have been well preserved until the present.



2. A portrait of An Hyang (1243–1306), a prominent scholar from the late Goryeo period, designated National Treasure No.111.

3. A portrait of Ju Se-bung (1495–1554), a literati official and Confucian scholar from the Joseon Dynasty, designated Treasure No.717.

4. Sosu Seowon, the first private educational institution established in the Joseon period.



The first Confucian academy in Korea is Baegundong Seowon, the present-day Sosu Seowon. Ju Se-bung, the county magistrate for Punggi, had a shrine built to commemorate An Hyang (1243–1306), a prominent scholar of Neo-Confucianism from the late Goryeo period, in the sage's hometown Sunheung, Gyeongsang-do Province, in 1542. The following year, in 1543, Ju built Baegundong Seowon to the east of the shrine for the purpose of educating students. Through the intercession of Yi Hwang (1501–1570), the foremost Confucian philosopher of his time, Baegundong Seowon was endowed with a new name, Sosu Seowon, by King Myeongjong in 1550 along with a nameplate inscribed in the king's own handwriting. Sosu Seowon is the country's oldest private Confucian academy and the first to be granted royal authorization.

Seowon were welcomed as a model for local education and spread widely throughout the country, becoming the bases of power of the rustic literati. In the late Joseon period, however, the mushrooming of seowon brought about problems: the academic institutions became the strongholds of political factions espousing the various contending schools of thought in Neo-Confucianism and they came to exert excessive control on local communities. Consequently, the state came up with a series of measures to limit further construction of Confucian academies or to reduce the number of existing ones, which culminated in Regent Heungseon's order to shut down all except 47 academies following the principle of "One Seowon for One Sage." In the 1900s, many of the abolished institutions were restored, and today there are a total of 640 seowon nationwide.

## Past Roles and Present Relevance

For about 500 years after the establishment of Baegundong Seowon, private Confucian academies, guided by the principles and cosmology of Neo-Confucianism, flourished throughout Joseon. The educational principle animating Confucian academies was the cultivation of both academic competence and ethical morality: education at seowon was not only about advancing knowledge but also about becoming a scholar of integrity and humane character. As countryside educational institutions, seowon were a reflection—in their distinctive architecture, documentary records and rituals that were defined by location and prevailing school of thought—as well as an influential force on the values and aspirations of their founding communities. Carrying out various activities in such areas as politics, arts and printing, Confucian academies also served as a venue for advocacy and sharing of ideas and opinions among intellectuals.

Confucian academies continue to serve present-day generations as centers of learning based on continually renewed teachings of the sages on moral and ethical principles. Seowon's educational principle of nurturing persons of character seems to be quite relevant in the contemporary world much in need of morals and values. In the recent resurgence of attention to Confucian values and perspectives, the spirit of education upheld by Joseon's Confucian academies is a reminder that such an important cultural legacy has to be preserved for all humanity.

5. *Jukgyeji* (Record of Sosu Seowon) is the first collection of records on Confucian academies, compiled by Ju Se-bung in 1544.

6. Namgye Seowon nestles in natural beauty through every change of season, surrounded by flowers and trees.

7. Donam Seowon houses hand-carved wooden blocks used to print books on Confucian rites and various subjects during the Joseon Dynasty.



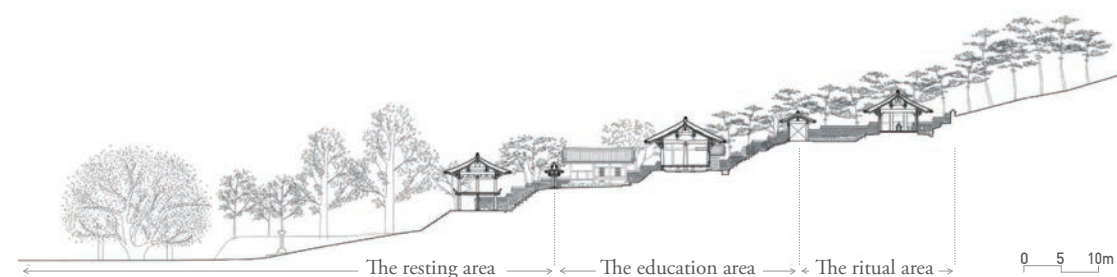


- 8. Museong Seowon is notable for modesty and refinement, the qualities required of a Confucian scholar.
- 9. The ritual space of Donam Seowon.
- 10. Byeongsan Seowon blends into the surrounding landscape including Nakdong-gang River.

## Tangible Heritage

The significance of the Joseon Confucian academies as tangible heritage stems from their geographical position and spatial layout. They are situated in places with beautiful natural surroundings, and each of their buildings is positioned in accordance with the cosmology of Neo-Confucianism. Reflecting Confucian values such as balance and refinement, architectural structures are not grand or ostentatious, but spartan and unpretentious, blending in perfectly with the surrounding environment.

Confucian academies in Korea are typically laid out into three spaces: a resting space where students get released from academic stress to refresh themselves through enjoyment of the natural environment; an education space where students read the classics and receive instruction about Confucian teachings; and a ritual space where ceremonies are held in veneration of the academy's enshrined sage. The composition of these three areas is characteristic of Korea's seowon. Scholars who established those educational institutions created names reflecting Confucian virtues not only for the different structures but also for natural objects such as mountains, water, trees and rocks. By doing so, they emphasized to students that nature and humans are at one, and this is an important reference point for understanding the world.



## Intangible Heritage

Confucian academies in Korea are vessels of intangible heritage as well. Ritual, which is integral to the philosophical underpinning of Confucian education, is the primary aspect of this intangible heritage: within the walls of each academy is enshrined the spirit tablet of a sage before which ceremonies are held as a regular part of learning. Ritual ceremonies were a chance for Confucian students to commemorate the sage's intellectual achievements and to imbibe his scholarly spirit. Rituals have been conducted for several hundred years until the present day and have variations across different Confucian academies.

Another intangible value is that Confucian academies were at the center of networking among like-minded thinkers and local activities putting Confucian principles to practice. Scholars gathered together as intellectual communities following the philosophical school of the sage honored at particular seowon. As their ancestors did, the offspring of those scholars today continue to be actively engaged with social, political and cultural issues of the day in their home regions, contributing to the development of local culture. Their unique organization and activities based on Confucian ideology is also a priceless asset that seowon in Korea have maintained to the present day. 🌐



- 11. The ritual, education and resting spaces of Piram Seowon seen from the mountain behind it.
- 12. Designating roles to each officiant before the beginning of a ritual at Dosan Seowon
- 13. Preparation for a ritual at Dodong Seowon. Rites serve as a chance to learn Confucian teachings and tradition.



# Korean Artifacts Returning Home: Thanks to Korea–U.S. Cooperation

Text by Kim Byung-yun, International Cooperation Division, Cultural Heritage Administration  
Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration

Cooperative investigative efforts between the government of South Korea and law enforcement authorities of the United States are bearing fruit. Cultural artifacts that were stolen or illegally exported to the U.S. during the Korean War are being tracked down and repatriated home. A “three-tiger” sword and very recently a printing plate of South Korea’s first paper currency have been returned; royal seals are on their way home as well.

## Hojo Convertible Note Printing Plate Returned

On September 3, 2013, an original printing plate of the Hojo Convertible Note, the country’s first paper money, was handed over to the Administrator of the Cultural Heritage Administration by Sung Kim, the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, on behalf of the U.S. government. The artifact was returned home 62 years after it was taken from Deoksugung Palace by Lionel Hayes, an American soldier, during the Korean War (1950–1953).



1. Hojo Convertible Note in 10 *nyang* denomination. Inscriptions on both sides, at bottom center, read “This convertible note is to be exchanged into money” and warn, “Those who counterfeit this or circulate the counterfeit knowingly will face severe punishment.”

Printed in 1892 by the royal court of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) as part of the effort to introduce a modern currency system, the Hojo Convertible Note retains historical value as an eloquent testimony to the development of Korea’s national currency.

When the missing printing plate was put up for auction

at the Midwest Action Galleries, in the U.S. state of Michigan in April 2010, the Cultural Heritage Administration, as an agency representing the Republic of Korea that is the legal successor of the Joseon royal court, initiated collaboration with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations. After three years and three months of joint investigation, the Korean artifact was recovered and returned to South Korea.

## Early Cooperation: Swift Return of ‘Three-tiger Sword’

Among the Korean artifacts taken out of the country during the Korean War, a *sam-in-geom*, literally meaning a “three-tiger sword,” did not remain long unrecovered; it was returned to Korea some 60 years before the printing plate of the Hojo Convertible Note.

The Chinese zodiac divides the year, month, date and hour into time cycles represented by 12 animals and their attributes; among the 12 animal signs, the character *in* (寅) means “tiger,” which traditionally stands for a powerful force that guards against malevolent spirits. The *sam-in-geom* refers to a sword that is made at the time when any three tigers overlap among the tiger year, tiger month, tiger date and tiger hour. The three-tiger sword was made for soldiers going to war to protect them from harm.

The three-tiger sword in this case was confiscated by the U.S. Customs on September 11, 1954, when the American soldier Tom C. Harrison attempted to bring it into the United States. In short order, on November 5, 1954, Ardelia R. Hall, an adviser to the U.S. State Department, delivered the sword to Korea’s Minister of Education Lee Sun-keun. The return of the sword symbolized friendly relations between the two governments.

## Ardelia Hall Records: Document of Wartime Looting of Artifacts

Serving in the immediate postwar period as a Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives adviser to the U.S. State Department, Ardelia R. Hall is a monumental figure in the history of heritage repatriation. She compiled the definitive document on the subject of World War II wartime looting entitled “Art Looting and Nazi Germany: Records of the Fine Arts and Monuments Advisor, Ardelia Hall, 1945–1961.” The so-called Ardelia Hall Records document the cultural artifacts that were illegally taken to the United States by American occupation soldiers during World War II (1939–1945) and the Korean War.

Stored at the U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland, the Ardelia Hall Records makes possible a milestone for the repatriation of Joseon’s royal seals, illegally removed from the royal ancestral shrine during the Korean War.

### Return of Nine Royal Seals: The Start of Further Cooperation

Throughout the long history of dynastic rule on the Korean Peninsula, royal seals were made for distinct purposes: state seals, or *guksae*, for official documents; and ritual seals, or *eobo*, for national rituals such as royal investitures and posthumous titling. Although all royal seals have much in common in physical appearance, their purposes and symbolism are clearly discrete: state seals stood for national and political identity; and ritual seals represented the philosophical and religious underpinning of state rituals. This is why ritual seals created during the Joseon Dynasty had been enshrined at Jongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine.



2. *Sugang taehwangje bo* (Seal of The Great Emperor Sugang), created in 1907 to confer the status of Great Emperor on Gojong.

The return of nine royal seals is currently under discussion within the framework of ongoing South Korea–U.S. investigative cooperation. Among them are *Hwangjejibo* (Seal of the Emperor), which was made in 1897 in commemoration of the establishment of the Daehan Empire as an independent state succeeding the Joseon Dynasty; and *Sugang taehwangje bo* (Seal of The Great Emperor Sugang), which was created in 1907 to bestow the status of Great Emperor and the commemorative title of *Sugang* on Gojong, the empire's founder.

The Cultural Heritage Administration provided relevant materials including photos of the seals to the Homeland Security Investigations on September 23, 2013. After confirming that the nine seals are the property of the Korean government by researching a number of historical documents and records, the Cultural Heritage Administration requested its American counterpart to investigate the case. Thus the Korea–U.S. collaboration came into full swing in the effort to repatriate the nine royal seals.

### Breakthrough by Investigative Collaboration

War obliterates records; countless cultural properties which were taken out of the country during the Korean War might have vanished without a trace. Precise information on what or how many cultural artifacts were thus stolen during the Korean War is hard to come by. Despite the lack of official records, the Korean government has succeeded in taking back the original printing plate of the Hojo Convertible Note and is just a few steps away from recovering the royal seals.

South Korea's experience presents a new breakthrough in the international issue of returning cultural properties to their countries of origin: the significance and effectiveness of collaborative criminal investigation between stakeholders.

The case for returning cultural properties to their countries of origin is both high-profile and controversial in the international community. Greece has been making long-drawn-out efforts for 200 years to recover the Parthenon marbles, which are now on permanent exhibit at the British Museum. The Icelandic Sagas were passed back to Iceland from Denmark about 270 years after the historic literary treasure was taken out of its homeland in 1710.

Another notable case involves five celebrated paintings by the Austrian artist Gustav Klimt. Maria Altman, a Jewish war refugee and heiress of the paintings' original owners, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in her new home in California against the Austrian government in 2000 to reclaim the family-owned paintings that had been seized during the Nazi occupation. The legal struggle was finally decided by an arbitration panel of three Austrian judges on January 15, 2006, in favor of Maria Altman, who consequently recovered the family properties. The case is also famous for its tremendous legal costs.

Given the above examples, intergovernmental negotiations and civil lawsuits are the method of choice that countries around the world adopt to resolve the problem of recovering cultural artifacts. But these strategies require an enormous amount of time, energy and costs.

Compared to these ways of dealing with the issue, investigative collaboration carried out within the criminal justice system has a number of advantages: first, it is easier to prove criminal intent than to prove the fact of theft in civil cases; second, criminal investigations do not cost a lot of money unlike civil lawsuits; third, criminal procedures take a relatively short period of time to achieve progress; and fourth, statutes of limitations on civil restitution of stolen art can be avoided, which improves the chances of success.

The Cultural Heritage Administration will build on its recent accomplishments and further solidify cooperation with American criminal investigation authorities in order to continue to recover cultural properties illegally removed from the country during the Korean War. 🌐



3. The nine royal seals including *Sugang taehwangje bo*, which are currently under cooperative investigation between South Korea and the United States.

# Queen Seondeok: Female Monarch with Enduring Charisma

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration  
Photos by Eurocreon

Queen Seondeok is the first female ruler in Korean history. She was born to King Jinpyeong as Princess Deokman and succeeded her father as the 27th ruler of Silla in 632. A historical record of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, *Samguk sagi*, documents that people addressed her as *seongjo hwanggo*, or “the one fully qualified to take the throne.”

## Korea's First Female Ruler

Queen Seondeok (r. 632–647) is Korea's first female monarch who ruled in her own name. She was born as the second daughter to King Jinpyeong, the 26th ruler of Silla (57 B.C.–A.D. 935), and his official consort Maya and was named Deokman. King Jinpyeong had only three daughters with Maya including the older sister Princess Cheonmyeong and younger sister Princess Seonhwa. Although King Jinpyeong had sons with concubines, none of them survived. Under the kingdom's strict rank system, only those of “sacred bone,” or *seonggol*, were qualified to assume the throne. With no son to take over the throne, the 26th monarch of Silla decided to have his oldest daughter Cheonmyeong married to Prince Yongsu, the first son of the 25th ruler King Jinji, so that the son-in-law could succeed him as the next ruler of his kingdom. But the king's plan did not work out: the Council of Nobles (*Hwabaek*), the state deliberative body of Silla, vetoed Prince Yongsu's accession to the throne on grounds that he is the offspring of the troubled king Jinji who was overthrown for bad governance. This is the background against which the second daughter of King Jinpyeong, noted for her extraordinary vigor and intelligence, rose to power in 632 as the 27th monarch of Silla. Internal and external conditions at that time were not conducive to her enthronement: domestic opposition was strong, and Silla lost 40 areas to its neighboring kingdom Baekje. With the support of competent courtiers such as Kim Yu-sin and Kim Chun-chu, however, Queen Seondeok rose above the problems and paved the way for the subsequent unification of the three kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula.

## Three Stories of the Legendary Queen

Legends have been transmitted illustrating the unnerving deductive abilities of Queen Seondeok. There are three stories recorded in *Samguk yusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), written by the monk historian Iryeon in the 13th century. The first legend is about peonies. Emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) of Tang China sent a picture of peonies along with peony seeds to Queen Seondeok. After studying the picture, the queen predicted that the flowers would have no fragrance. When they bloomed, the peony flowers were indeed scentless. Full of curiosity, courtiers asked the queen how she knew it in advance. She replied, “There are no bees and butterflies around the flowers in the picture, so it tells that the flowers would have no scent.”

The second legend is about finding Baekje invaders sneaking into Yeogeungok, or Women's Root Valley. In the middle of winter, a large number of white frogs ceaselessly croaked for several days at Okmunji, or Jade Gate Pond. Informed about



1. Cheomseongdae, known to be the oldest astronomical observatory in East Asia.
2. A model of the nine-story wooden pagoda at Hwangnyongsa Temple, originally built during the reign of Queen Seondeok.

the unseasonal crying of the frogs, Queen Seondeok gave an order to immediately send troops to Women's Root Valley west of her kingdom's capital, where Silla soldiers found hiding invaders and successfully routed them. Courtiers once again sought to be enlightened how she knew. Her explanation: "Crying frogs are like angry soldiers, white symbolizes the west, and jade is another word for women. Therefore I knew that soldiers are hiding there."

The third story revolves around her choice of location for her tomb. Queen Seondeok assembled her courtiers one day and said that she wanted to be buried in the Tushita Heaven. Courtiers asked its location, and the queen answered that it was situated in the south of Mt. Nangsan. Upon her demise, courtiers honored her living will and conducted her funeral on the peak of Mt. Nangsan and constructed her tomb south of the mountain top. They realized that the queen was right about 30 years later when King Munmu (r. 661–681) built Sacheonwangsa, or Temple of Four Heavenly Kings below the queen's tomb. In Buddhism, it is believed that the Tushita Heaven is situated above where Four Heavenly Kings reside.



3. The tomb of Queen Seondeok at Mt. Nangsan, designated Historic Site No. 182.

### Achievements of Queen Seondeok

Queen Seondeok practiced good governance, winning the support of a wide range of people. But a woman becoming the ruler was very shocking and unusual, precipitating a chain of setbacks and disputes. The Queen saw a breakthrough in Buddhism. She made Buddhism the primary ideology for governing the kingdom. To nurture Buddhism, Seondeok ordered

the construction of about 20 Buddhist temples, two to three times more than were built during the reigns of other monarchs. This is seen as the queen's effort to show her firm hold on power to outsiders and to consolidate internal cooperation.

Bunhwangsa, literally the fragrant emperor's temple, was constructed in 634, the third year of the queen's reign. The temple is home to a number of cultural monuments including the stone brick pagoda (National Treasure No. 30), the base of the stele commemorating Monk Wonhyo and a stone pond. The nine-story wooden pagoda at Hwangnyongsa Temple was also built during her reign. The temple was constructed earlier in 569 during the reign of the 24th monarch,

King Jinheung. The story has it that a yellow dragon ascended to heaven when a palace was about to be built on the site, therefore the plan was changed and a temple named "yellow dragon," or *hwangnyong*, was built in lieu of the palace. Although the temple and the pagoda were burned down during a Mongol invasion in the 13th century, the impressive size of the sites attests to their imposing appearance in the past. The nine-story wooden pagoda embodies the queen's commitment to defending her kingdom from enemies. With each story symbolizing each of the nine neighboring countries, the kingdom's first female ruler aspired for Silla to control all of the nine neighbors to become an invincible power. Besides Buddhist structures, Cheomseongdae (Star Gazing Tower) was also built during her reign, bespeaking the level of scientific advancement at that time. Designated National Treasure No. 31, Cheomseongdae is the oldest astronomical observatory in East Asia. The bottle-shaped observatory has a place to hang a ladder on its south entrance. Made of 362 blocks of granite, each 30 centimeters long, the tower consists of 27 circular layers. The number 27 is associated with the moon's orbit around Earth or with the 27th ruler of Silla, Queen Seondeok.



4. Bunhwangsa Temple, built during the reign of Queen Seondeok.

In stark contrast to her impressive achievements during her 16-year reign despite adverse conditions, the tomb of Queen Seondeok is unadorned and modest. It is just an earthen mound with two or three protective layers of natural stones at the base, and there are no decorations. The first female ruler in the Korean Peninsula, Queen Seondeok would be remembered as a charismatic leader who strengthened national power and laid the foundation for the unification of the Three Kingdoms. 🌐



5. The remains of the wooden pagoda at the site of Hwangnyongsa Temple.



# Agriculture Blending into Nature

## The Terraced Rice Fields of Gacheon

Text by Kim Hak-beom, Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, Hangyong National University  
Photos by Eurocreon & Lee Dong-Jun

In Gacheon Village, 680 strips of paddies carved on 108 terraced steps descend gradually into the sea. The terraced rice paddies in Gacheon were created on sea-facing hillsides sloping 45 degrees. These farm fields making the most of the land's natural features are a priceless natural heritage.

### Nature's Color Palette in More than 100 Steps

The terraced rice fields in the village of Gacheon are perched in orderly rows on steep slopes facing the ocean. The village is part of Honghyeon-ri, Nam-myeon, Namhae-gun County, in far southern Korea's Gyeongsangnam-do Province. The terraced paddies are called *da-rang-i*, meaning a small piece of field. The sloped surface was cut into a series of flat strips of paddy, each walled with stones. The paddies are narrow, in some places narrower than the height of stone walls that support them.

The terraced paddies of Gacheon are a product of necessity: people had to make a living on barren land by the sea, and by making it productive they created a breathtaking landscape. Consider the ever-changing spectacle when more than 100 terraces of paddies change colors with the seasons, endlessly variegated by changes in the weather and the different crops growing on them. Throughout the year the four seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter—paint the terraces with different colors; capricious weather brings clouds, rain and snow, fog and brilliant sunshine to the scene. The paddies gleam like molten silver in the rainy season and warm the heart, wrapped in soft mantles of colors from light green to golden yellow of their promised bounty. Stone walls make the paddies work; they are humanity's addition so they could live in their chosen spot in nature. The village nestled in the bosom of the hillside paddies and the cobalt-blue ocean before them should therefore be appreciated as very much of a piece, together with the terraced fields of Gacheon—nothing less than a work of art.

### Village Legends and Stories

The origin of Gacheon Village is not specifically documented, but longtime residents from the Gimhae Kim and Haman Jo clans assume that it dates back to the reign of King Sinmun (r. 681–692) of Silla. Buddhist legends transmitted from generation to generation tell that the village already existed before the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392). The existence of beacon towers in the mountain behind the terraced hills, arguably used during the Japanese invasion in 1592, also suggests that people resided in this place by that time.

1. The landscape of the terraced paddies seen from afar.
2. Planting rice in the rice paddies in Gacheon Village.





3. The terraced rice fields of Gacheon carved on steep mountainsides.

Gacheon Village is steeped in agrarian culture. Since fertility is the source of agricultural prosperity, agrarian societies put great stock in the ability to produce an abundance of offspring. This is why they openly express sex-related beliefs about diverse objects around them, such as, for example, the “man and woman rocks,” *amsu bawi*, of Gacheon Village. The rocks, designated as folklore cultural heritage by Gyeongsangnam-do, are also called the “male and female Buddha.” Found in the lower reaches of the village, the rocks face each other. The woman rock, looking fully pregnant, reclines on the ground, and the man rock is in the shape of a powerfully erect phallus. It was believed that infertile women could have a baby if they prayed in the shadow of the male rock. Women not only from the village but also from far-flung places used to flock there to pray to the rock.



4. The “man and woman rocks” in Gacheon Village symbolizing abundant offspring and prosperity.

It is known that the rocks were first found by Jo Gwang-jin, the magistrate of Namhae, during the reign of King Yeongjo (r. 1724–1776) of Joseon. He discovered the rocks following a revelation given by an old man in his dream. These days, the rocks serve as the symbol of deities who protect the village. People hold an annual ritual for the rocks to pray for a good harvest, abundant catch and well-being for the community. The ceremony begins with selecting the officiant and replacing old clay on the “rice tombs”

of the village with fresh clay dug up from the nearby mountain. Rice tombs are a three-tier stone pagoda, with the highest tier consisting of three walls covered with a flat slab on top. Designed to contain objects, the top tier is lined with clay on the bottom, which is to be replaced at every ritual. A table is set with fish caught in the sea facing the village and crops and fruits newly harvested from the terraced fields. After the completion of the community ceremony, the rice from the ritual table is put inside the rice tombs, which are positioned in the east, west and center of the village. The ritual naturally leads to a community festival full of music and folk games.



5. A “rice tomb,” where rice from a ritual table is placed after the completion of the ritual.

### Coastal Terracing with Great Beauty

Terraced rice paddies are also extant in many other countries including Japan, China and the Philippines, but most of them are located inland. The terraced fields of Gacheon are notable for its location facing the ocean, producing a rare landscape harmonizing the fields and the sea.

The terraced fields in Gacheon grow two crops consecutively, rice and garlic. Although farming takes place in areas that can benefit from agricultural machinery, many sections of the terraces are left idle where the slopes are too steep, along with other adverse conditions. But things are changing after the terraced rice paddies were designated Scenic Site No. 15 in 2005. The designation has stimulated tourism and the village is becoming lively again. Offerings to visitors include farm experience programs such as using traditional farming equipment or planting rice by hand, which are very popular among family groups and foreign visitors.

The carving of more than 100 steps on the mountainous slopes came about in the process whereby village residents were embracing the surrounding environment as it was and trying to make a living unhampered by natural constraints, but instead rising above them. Among the terraced rice fields of Gacheon, the past and the present, man-made and nature-created, are layered on top of each other in a place of sublime beauty and harmony. 🌿

# Yeongsangang River Mother's Milk to Korea's Southwest

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration

Photos by Eurocreon & Lee Dong-Jun

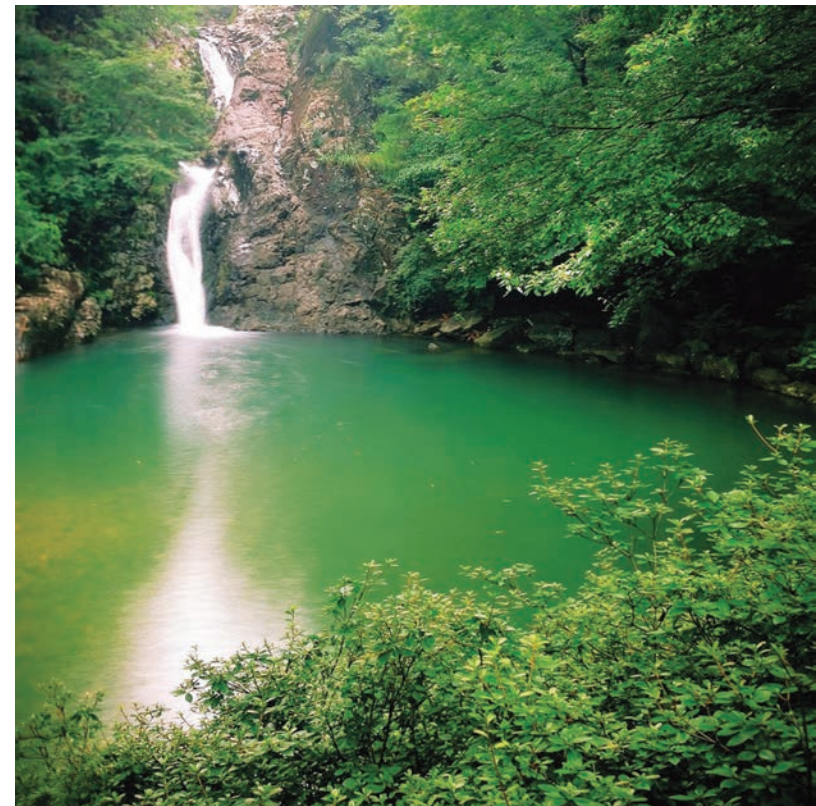
Yeongsangang River is one of the four biggest rivers in South Korea, originating in a small valley in the southwest of the Korean Peninsula and flowing into the West Sea.

Up on the 523-meter-high Yongchu Mountain in Damyang-gun County, Jeollanam-do Province, are found the headwaters of the river in Gamagol Valley, so named for the kilns, or *gama*, in the area during the Joseon period.

Starting from the valley, the river is fed by a web of tributaries, and flows through Damyangho Lake, Wolgyecheon Stream, Jiseokcheon Stream and Yeongsanho Lake and empties into the West Sea through an estuary dam.



Yeongsangang nourishes the southern provinces on the Korean Peninsula.



Gamagol Valley where Yeongsangang originates.



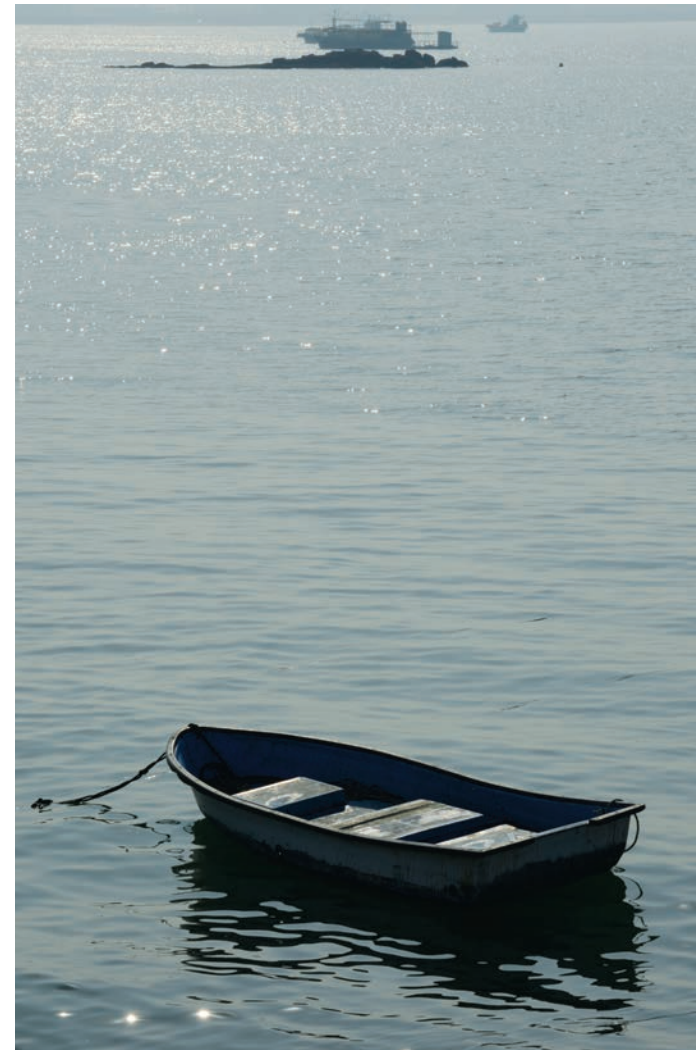
A spring scene by the riverside.



The riverside of Yeongsangang in morning fog.



Yeongsangang River water passes through Yeongsanho Lake before it flows into the West Sea.



A boat at the mouth of the river at dusk.

# How Exceptional Is Hangeul?

Text by Robert J. Fouser, Professor, Seoul National University

Photos by Goodimage & Lee Dong-Jun

Followers of things Korean quickly learn that Hangeul, the Korean writing system, frequently makes the news. This is odd because writing systems generate little news compared with spoken languages. Most languages around the world use a writing system that has evolved from another neighboring system or a combination of systems. People complain about the inconvenience of the details of orthography, but they rarely stop to think about the structure of a writing system, let alone the possibility that one writing system might be "better" than another. Hangeul is fascinating because it forces numerous questions about writing systems to the surface while offering insight into the contours of Korean history. To understand Hangeul in full, it is best understood from linguistic, historical, and political perspectives.

Koreans are taught that Hangeul is the most scientific writing system in the world. By nature linguists take a relativistic approach to language that views all languages as equal; no language is better than another; no language more beautiful than another. Claiming Hangeul's superiority, then, goes against the heavy weight of the tradition of linguistic relativism. Hangeul is, in fact, unique in many ways, thus lending support to the idea of "Hangeul exceptionalism."

The most prominent unique feature of Hangeul is how some of the letters indicate the shape of the tongue and mouth in making the particular sound. The letter **ㄱ**, for example, shows the shape of the tongue in pronouncing the /k/ and /g/ sounds. This feature, which Hangeul exceptionalists take so much pride in, led Geoffrey Sampson, a noted expert on writing systems, to classify Hangeul as a "featural writing system," the only such system in this category.

The addition of extra lines in Hangeul letters indicates a more complex sound. The addition of short line to **ㄱ**, **ㄷ**, **ㅌ**, and **ㅈ**, for example, indicates aspiration, or the sound of air flowing, in **ㅋ**, **ㅌ**, **ㅊ**, and **ㅉ**. Likewise, the doubling of letter **ㄱ**, **ㄷ**, **ㅌ**, and **ㅈ** into **ㄲ**, **ㄴ**, **ㄸ**, and **ㅆ** indicates a strong sound.

Hangeul also has a philosophical side. The vowels are divided into "light" and "dark" vowels, reflecting the ideas of *yin* and *yang*, the two polar opposites that coexist and complement each other in nature in Chinese philosophy.

1. Hangeul has only 24 distinct letters, 14 consonants and 10 vowels, making it easy to learn.

Consonants									
ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ			
g, k	n	d, t	r, l	m	b, p	s			
ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ			
ng	j	ch	k	t	p	h			
Vowels									
ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ
a	ya	eo	yeo	o	yo	u	yu	eu	i



2. Hangeul is well-suited for entering text in the computer or mobile phone



Letters for light vowels all have short lines, which were originally dots, facing up or to the right, whereas as letters for dark vowels are all written with short lines facing down or to the left.

Hangeul exceptionalists also take pride in how economical Hangeul is. All of the letters are composed of

a combination of two common shapes: lines and circles. Hangeul has only 24 distinct letters, 14 consonants and 10 vowels, making it easy to learn. Hangeul is also easily adapted to computers, mobile phones, and other electronic devices. Some people argue that the ease of inputting Hangeul into a computer or mobile phone stimulated the early diffusion of IT in Korea.

King Sejong the Great (r. 1418–1450) started the development of Hangeul in 1443 and promulgated it officially in 1446. The preamble to the promulgation is as famous to Koreans as, say, the Declaration of Independence is to Americans: "Because the speech of this country is different from that of China, the spoken language does not match the Chinese characters. As a result, many common people cannot express their concerns adequately. Saddened by this, I have developed 28 new letters. It is my wish that people may learn these letters easily and that they be convenient for daily use." (Four letters have become obsolete and are no longer used.) The preamble has since become a symbol of "Koreanness" and is used as a decorative motif for wallpaper, scarves, and even Starbucks coffee mugs.

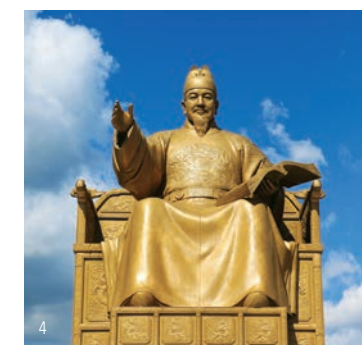


3. Souvenir mugs embellished with Hangeul patterns, made by the global coffee company Starbucks.

Koreans revere King Sejong today for developing Hangeul, forcing his other major accomplishments, such as strengthening the military, to the sidelines. The development of Hangeul allowed Korea to break away from its 1000-year dependence on Chinese characters as the only way to express the Korean language in writing.

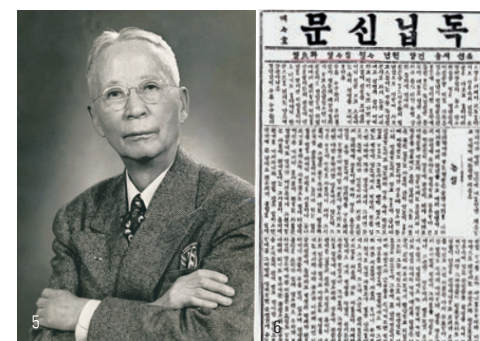
The promulgation of Hangeul caused a flurry of experimentation with the new writing system, but it failed to dislodge adherence to the classical Chinese.

*The Songs of the Flying Dragons*, a series of 125 cantos extolling the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, was published in 1447, and was the first literary work written in Hangeul. By the early 16th century, official writing in Hangeul had stopped, and classical Chinese reigned supreme in government and among the elite until the end of the 19th century. Hangeul was used for poetry, popular novels, and private writing, such as diaries. It was also used to annotate classical Chinese texts for children, such as the popular *Thousand Character Classic*.



4. King Sejong is revered by the Korean people for his invention of Hangeul, the Korean writing system.

The weakening of the Joseon Dynasty and rise of Japanese imperialism beginning in the late 19th century destroyed the centuries-old Sino-centric world, causing a nationalistic awakening. Nationalists adopted Hangeul as a symbol of Korea's independence from China, and promoted its use as the primary writing system in Korea. *The Independent*, a nationalist newspaper, which was published during 1896–1899, was the first newspaper to use only Hangeul, setting the standard for what has become the norm today. The newspaper, which also included an English edition, was published by Soh Jai-pil (Philip Jaisoh). Ju Si-gyeong (1876–1914), the father of Hangeul exceptionalism, was the assistant editor of *The Independent*. He also coined the term Hangeul in 1912.



The revival of Hangeul in the 19th century stirred debate over how best to arrange Hangeul into a standard orthography. Until the early 20th century, words and grammatical elements were written as they were pronounced, meaning that they could be written in different ways depending on where they occurred

in a sentence. The limitations of this approach, known as "shallow orthography" became clear as more people learned Hangeul. Scholars in the Korean Language Research Society, the forerunner of today's Hangeul Hakhoe, worked to rectify the situation by developing a standard orthography in which words and grammatical elements were the same way regardless of where they appeared in a sentence. As a result, many Korean words and grammatical elements are not pronounced as they are written, a source of frustration to foreign learners of Korean. This "deep orthography" was published in 1933, making Korean much easier to read and

5. Soh Jai-pil (1864–1951), an anti-colonial activist and politician, who published *The Independent*, the first private newspaper in Korea.

6. *The Independent*, published since April 7, 1896, was the first newspaper to use only Hangeul. The newspaper had an English edition.

7. *The Hangeul Introductory Textbook*, published in 1945 by the Korean Language Research Society to promote Hangeul after the end of Japanese colonial rule.
8. The Korean Language Research Society, the predecessor of today's Hangeul Hakhoe.



write. Deep orthography remains the underlying principle behind standard orthography in both Korean states today, with minor differences between the two systems.

Korean lost its status as the official language of Korea under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945, but the Korean Language Research Society promoted Hangeul through classes and the publication of books and dictionaries. Hangeul, with occasional use of Chinese characters, became the dominant writing system in all forms of Korean-language publishing during the colonial period until the Japanese banned Korean publications and the use of the Korean language in the late 1930s. In 1942, Japanese authorities arrested 13 leading members of the Korean Language Research Society because of their work in writing a dictionary of Korean.

Nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment since liberation in 1945 has led to Hangeul-only policies in both Korean states. North Korea adopted a Hangeul-only policy early, but the matter has caused considerable debate in South Korea. President Park Chung-hee (1917–1979) adopted a Hangeul-only policy in 1970 and the teaching of Chinese characters stopped in schools. Amid strong opposition, Park reversed himself and the teaching of Chinese characters in elective classes resumed in 1972. Most children learn Chinese characters to varying degrees today, but they are rarely used in daily life.

Hangeul has also seen its share of controversy. Shortly after its promulgation, some Confucian scholars wrote essays against the new system, arguing that it was designed to replace classical Chinese. To assuage these fears, King Sejong published a dictionary of Hangeul pronunciations of Chinese characters in 1448.

Jump 500 years into the future, and this early debate about the appropriate role for Chinese characters in Korea continues today in debates over the place of Chinese characters in the national curriculum. Hangeul-only supporters argue that Koreans must honor Hangeul by using it exclusively, whereas supporters of Chinese characters argue that teaching them creates an important link to Korean linguistic and cultural history and neighboring Chinese and Japanese languages. At heart, both sides have a different view of Korea's place in the world.

The debate over linear Hangeul and other experiments is not well known. As Hangeul achieved dominance during the Japanese colonial period, various alternative ways of writing it were proposed. Ju Si-gyeong and later Choe Hyeon-bae (1894–1970), his student and renowned linguist, were among a number of scholars to propose writing each letter separately on a line instead of grouping letters into distinct syllables. They argued that linear Hangeul was more "advanced" and that it was more suited to typewriters. Linear Hangeul never caught on, though remnants of it remain in a few school seals.

In the end, the story of Hangeul is the story of Korea's struggle to nurture its most important cultural product, a struggle mirroring Korea's efforts to create an independent, strong, and prosperous nation amid aggressive powers. Hangeul began as the ingenious invention of a benevolent king only to languish as a second-class writing system for centuries before being rediscovered by newly awakened nationalists in Korea's hour of greatest peril. Now pre-eminent at home, Hangeul is making its way around the world through an ever-increasing number of foreigners learning and using Korean.

And what of Hangeul exceptionalism? In discussing Hangeul in his 1985 book entitled "Writing Systems," Geoffrey Sampson concluded dryly: "Whether or not it is ultimately the best of all conceivable scripts for Korean, Han'gul [Hangeul] must unquestionably rank as one of the greatest intellectual achievements of humankind." Hangeul is exceptional not for its "superiority," but for the uniqueness and magnitude of its intellectual achievement. 🇰🇷

# Nagan Walled Village

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration  
Photos by Goodimage & Eurocreon

Editor's Note :

This section features a four-part series on historic villages in South Korea. Throughout the one-year series, cultural and historical aspects of those villages are presented, including their spatial and geographical features, natural environment and community traditions.



1. Naganupseong, a typical walled town of the Joseon Dynasty.

Nagan Village along with the ramparts encircling it, collectively named Naganeupseong, is a typical walled village of the Joseon era. In continuous use since its establishment, Naganeupseong is the best-preserved walled village in South Korea. The historic village presents a harmonious mixture of official buildings and commoners' houses, exuding a friendly ambience

### Prototypical Walled Village of Joseon



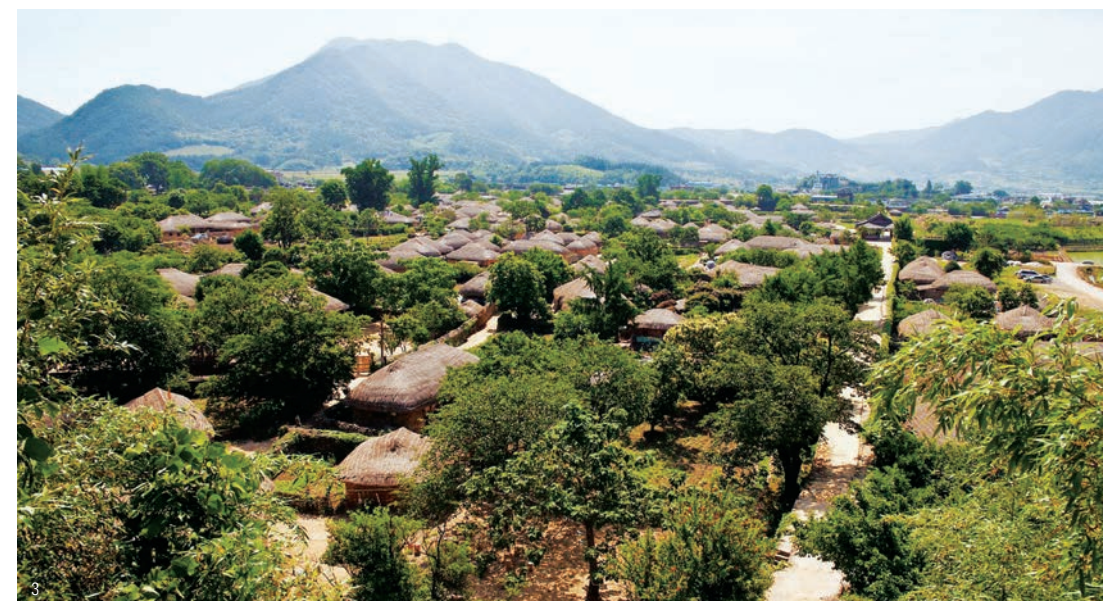
2. Nakpungnu Gate, the east entrance to Naganeupseong.

Designated Historic Site No. 302, Nagan Village is located in Nagan-myeon, Suncheon-si City, Jeollanam-do Province. The village is typical of walled towns of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) and has retained most of its significant features such as defensive walls, official structures and ordinary residents' houses until the present. Administrative villages surrounded by ramparts in Joseon are different from those built during the preceding dynasty of Goryeo (918–1392) in various aspects such as geographic locations, spatial composition

and environmental landscapes. During the Joseon period, administrative buildings were usually set against the backdrop of a mountain and commoners' residences were built in front of them, the very composition embodied by Nagan Village.

### A Potential Candidate for World Heritage Listing

People have continued to reside in the village since the Joseon Dynasty, making it a living heritage. The thatched-roof houses of Nagan Village are typically three-bay residences in a horizontal layout, which is widely found in the southwestern section of the Korean Peninsula. The community inside the historic village has been functioning until the present. A living heritage, Nagan Village is also notable for its time-honored intangible cultural heritage such as farmers' songs, community rituals and chanted epics. In the light of its distinctive value, Naganeupseong was inscribed on the UNESCO Tentative List for South Korea in March 2011, a list of



3. Naganeupseong, a typical walled town of the Joseon Dynasty.

candidate sites for nomination to the World Heritage List.

The ramparts encircling the historic village were constructed early in the Joseon Dynasty for the purpose of defending it against Japanese invasions, which had been rampant from the late Goryeo period. The defensive walls were originally earthen built in 1397, the sixth year of the reign of King Taejo, the founder of Joseon. It is recorded in *Sejong sillok* (*Annals of King Sejong*) that the walls were expanded and reconstructed with stone, which took several years from 1424. The rectangular enclosure is 1,410 meters long in total and has three entrances in the south, east and west. Leading to main streets in the village, the three gates are protected by an additional layer of defensive outwork called *ongseong*. The ramparts were fortified by General Im Gyeong-eup in the late Joseon period, who served as the magistrate of Nagan during the reign of King Injo (r. 1623–1649). There is a commemorative stele for General Im standing intact along with other age-old buildings in the village.

4. Vegetation-covered stone fences line the alleys between straw roofed houses inside Nagan Village.

### A Village of Thatched-Roof Houses

*Saemaul undong*, a rural development movement in the 1970s, cleared away houses with thatched roofs throughout the country, and the remaining thatched-roof houses are mostly small annex structures for traditional houses. But Nagan Village is full of thatch roofs, making it a rare living example of a residential area of Joseon commoners.



Made of natural materials, houses with thatched roofs blend in harmoniously with the surrounding environment, creating a warm atmosphere. The most warm and friendly place in a thatch-roof house is the kitchen. Inside the wooden door is a neatly organized cooking area centered around a wood stove, called *a-gung-i*. The stove is fuelled by wood blocks, and a bowl of water is always on hand, with which the mother prayed to ancestral spirits for the well-being of the family. The kitchen is where the women of the household spent much of their time, so today one can say their spirit and emotions can still be felt in this part of their home.



5. Kim Dae-ja's house, the oldest commoner's house in Nagan Village.

The oldest residence in the Nagan historic village is Kim Dae-ja's House, Important Folklore Cultural Heritage No. 95, estimated to have been built in the early 19th century. The main building consists of four bays on the front laid out horizontally; the third bay from the west is wood floored. The kitchen located in the west end is one and a half bays in size; the half bay is an extension added to the original single bay. Inside the kitchen is a stove with fittings

for hanging big pots, and rafters are exposed on the ceiling. There is a well in the front yard, which is still in use, and to the left of the well are earthenware jars on a wide shelf and another stove. The outdoor stove was used for brewing herbal medicines or boiling laundry in summer. The house is now owned by a young couple, who opens their residence to visitors for a cultural experience in a traditional home.

Bak Ui-jun's House, Important Folklore Cultural Heritage No. 92, was built in the mid-19th century. The house is a typical local official's residence. The main building is four bays wide: one each for the kitchen, the main room, a wood-floored room and a small study with a narrow wooden side porch. The side of the kitchen area is wider than that of the rest of the house. The rooms open up to a narrow wooden veranda in front. There are nine such designated commoners' houses in the village.

6. Bak Ui-Jun's house, a typical local official's residence.



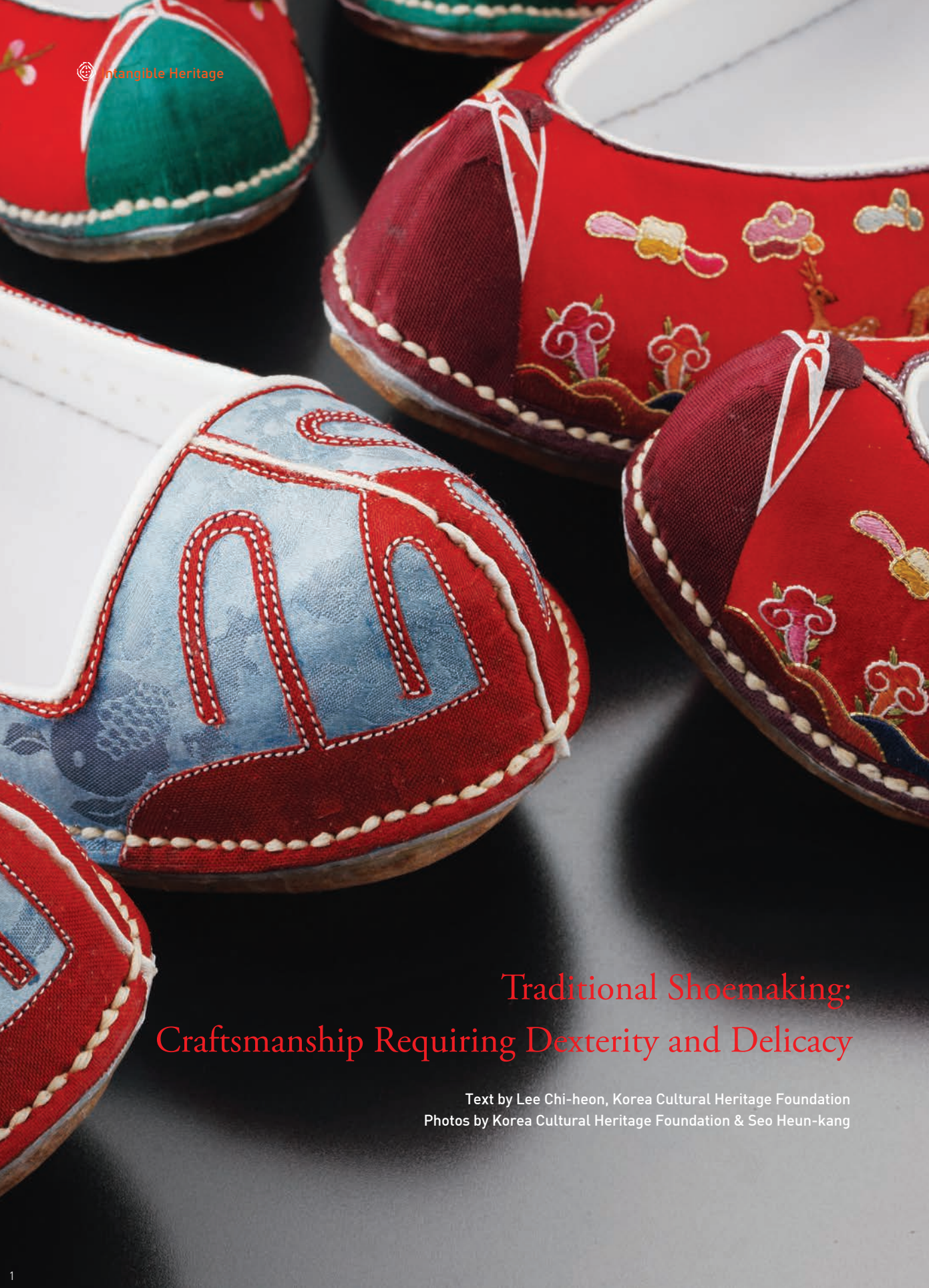
## Folklore Games

The Great Full-Moon Folklore Game Festival is annually held in the historic village, where memorial ceremonies for General Im and a variety of traditional folk competitions are held, including *neol-ttwigi* (jumping seesaw), *yut-nori* (four sticks game), knee wresting and *tuho* (arrow throwing game). Tug-of-war is also an important competition in the festival where two neighborhood teams from the eastern and western parts of the village compete with each other. It is believed that winning the game would bring well-being and prosperity to their community. There are also other events such as *hwaetbul-nori* (torch fight), *daljip-taengi* (burning a moon-shaped pile of straw) and traditional sauce making.



7. Traditional folk game transmitted in Nagan Village.

In South Korea, there are seven historic villages designated by the national government, including Nagan Village. The other six are Seongeup Village in Jeju Island; Hahoe in Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do; Yangdong in Gyeongju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do; Hangae in Seongju-gun County, Gyeongsangbuk-do; Oeam in Asan-si, Chungcheongnam-do; and Wanggok in Goseong-gun, Gangwon-do. Nagan Village is one of the rare historic villages where people are living inside the heritage site even today, preserving their tangible and intangible way of life almost intact. Containing both the present and the past, Naganeupseong will continue to make history well into the future. 🌿



## Traditional Shoemaking: Craftsmanship Requiring Dexterity and Delicacy

Text by Lee Chi-heon, Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation  
Photos by Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation & Seo Heun-kang

Shoemaking during the Joseon Dynasty was high in demand and diverse in styles. Joseon's *Gyeongguk daejeon* (*Grand Code for State Administration*) records that there were 16 craftsmen making high-top shoes and 14 making low-cut ones to satisfy the demand from the royal court.

### Different Shoes in Different Eras

Since ancient times, traditional shoes in Korea were made under two categories: *hwa*, high-cut shoes covering the ankle; and *hye* or *ri*, low-cut ones not covering the ankle. This shows that nomadic culture from the north represented by *hwa* and agrarian influence on the footwear style of *hye* coexisted side by side. But traditional shoes were transformed in their materials and styles as time passed. Historical records indicate that in the tribal states of Mahan (first century B.C.–A.D. third century) and Buyeo (second century B.C.–A.D. 494), shoes made of grass or leather called *chori* (straw shoes) and *hyeokgyodap* or *hyeongni* (leather shoes) were extant. During the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.–A.D. 668), people in Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla wore leather shoes in diverse colors: *hwanghyeongni* (golden leather shoes), *opi-hwa* (black leather shoes) and *jeokpi-hwa* (red leather shoes). In the Unified Silla period (668–935), people decorated their shoes with a band or strip (*hwa-dae*) made of various materials such as jade, horn and metal.

It was during the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) when official garments for the court were institutionalized and so were footwear appropriate for each garment. In the Joseon period (1392–1910), the clothing system for the royal family and courtiers was prescribed through *The Grand Code for State Administration*. In accordance with regulations, courtiers wore *heukpi-hye* (black low-cut leather shoes) when they were dressed in ceremonial robes (*jo-bok*) or ritual garments (*je-bok*). For the clothing they wore to court (*gong-bok*), *heukpi-hwa* (black high-top leather shoes) were the proper footwear. When wearing casual garments (*sang-bok*), only those of first to third ranks could put on *hyeopgeum-hwa* (black high-top leather shoes with spikes on the bottom). Local officials were supposed to match official clothing with black low-cut leather shoes and casual clothes with low-cut leather shoes. The king and queen wore *jeok-seok* (red low-cut leather shoes covered with silk) and *cheong-seok* (blue low-cut leather shoes covered with silk) respectively at ceremonies or rituals. As such, during the Joseon Dynasty the variety of materials and designs of footwear was stunning, depending on the social class and position of each wearer.



1. *Su-hye*, low-cut shoes made with embroidered silk.

2. Hwang Hae-bong is the master of traditional shoemaking, designated Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 116.

## Types of Shoes in Joseon

### Hwa (靴)

*Hwa* are high-top shoes that courtiers wore with official garments. *Heukpi-hwa* (black high-cut leather shoes) and *mok-hwa* (high-cut wooden shoes) are extant today. High-rise shoes have various names depending on materials used: *heukpi-hwa*, *heuk-hwa*, *gija-hwa*, *hyeopgeum-hwa*, *baekmok-hwa*, *baek-hwa*, *hwa-ja* and *pi-hwa*. In addition to these, waterproof versions are called *suhwaja*.

### Seok

*Seok* were worn by the king and queen, and the crown prince and his wife when dressed in ceremonial or ritual robes (*myeon-bok* or *jeok-ui*).

### Hye (鞋) or ri (履)

*Hye* is the generic term that refers to the low-cut shoes worn by the nobility. But it does not include those made of straw or wood. There are diverse names for these kinds of low-rise shoes, and the shape of the toe cap of *hye* determines whether they are for men or women.

### Sap-hye

*Sap-hye* are *hye* for men, worn by the king. They were also worn by the nobility and the literati.

### Dang-hye

*Dang-hye* are low-cut shoes with an arabesque design. It was known that the arabesque-patterned shoes were only for females. But it was found that *dang-hye* was part of the groom's costume in the late Joseon period, confirming that they were also worn by men. The shoes seem to be made for the nobility and the literati.

3. Mid-calf (22 centimeters):  
Mok-hwa, high-cut shoes  
to be matched with official  
garments.

4. *Cheong-seok* (25 centimeters):  
*Cheong-seok* were worn by the  
queen or the crown princess  
with *jeok-ui*, ceremonial  
garments.

5. *Su-hye* (left) are low-cut  
shoes for women made of  
embroidered silk.  
*Taesahye* (right) are low-cut  
shoes for the literati to be  
matched with casual garments.



3



4



5

## Crafting Process of Traditional Shoes

Traditional shoes are made through dozens of different procedures, which require high levels of skill and expertise. To make a traditional low-cut shoe, layers of cotton or ramie fabric are covered with silk to make the upper of the shoe. The sole is made of cowskin. Then, the upper and the sole are stitched together. To prevent the toe cap from getting distorted, a wooden frame is fitted inside the shoe to give it a firm shape. More than 20 kinds of tools and implements are needed for traditional shoemaking such as chisels, patterns for cutting the upper, cotton threads, awls, scissors and whetstone.

### Hwang Hae-bong, Master of Shoemaking

Hwang Hae-bong is the master of traditional shoemaking, designated Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 116 with the title of *hwahyejang*, along with the relevant craftsmanship. His family has been committed to this traditional skill for five generations: his great-great-grandfather Hwang Jong-su, great grandfather Hwang Ui-seop, grandfather Hwang Han-gap and his father Hwang Deung-yong were all shoemaking craftsmen who dedicated their lives to the transmission of traditional shoemaking skills. His grandfather Hwang Han-gap was one of the last shoemakers who supplied shoes to the court of Joseon.

Hwang Hae-bong learned the skills from his grandfather. He started practice and training at the age of 16 and has continued to the present carrying on the tradition of his family. Although his father also did shoemaking, he died early, making Hwang Hae-bong the only successor to Hwang Han-gap, who was also a designated living human treasure at the national level. Master Hwang succeeded in reproducing the ritual shoes of the king and queen of Joseon, *jeok-seok* and *cheong-seok*, for which he was awarded the Presidential Prize at the Traditional Crafts Festival in 1999. As the designated master, he is fulfilling his responsibility for the transmission of Korea's traditional shoemaking craftsmanship.



6. Cutting cloth for the upper.

7. Making the sole.

8. Hemming the ending lines of  
the upper.

9. Connecting the upper and  
the sole.

10. Putting the wooden frame  
inside the shoe.

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