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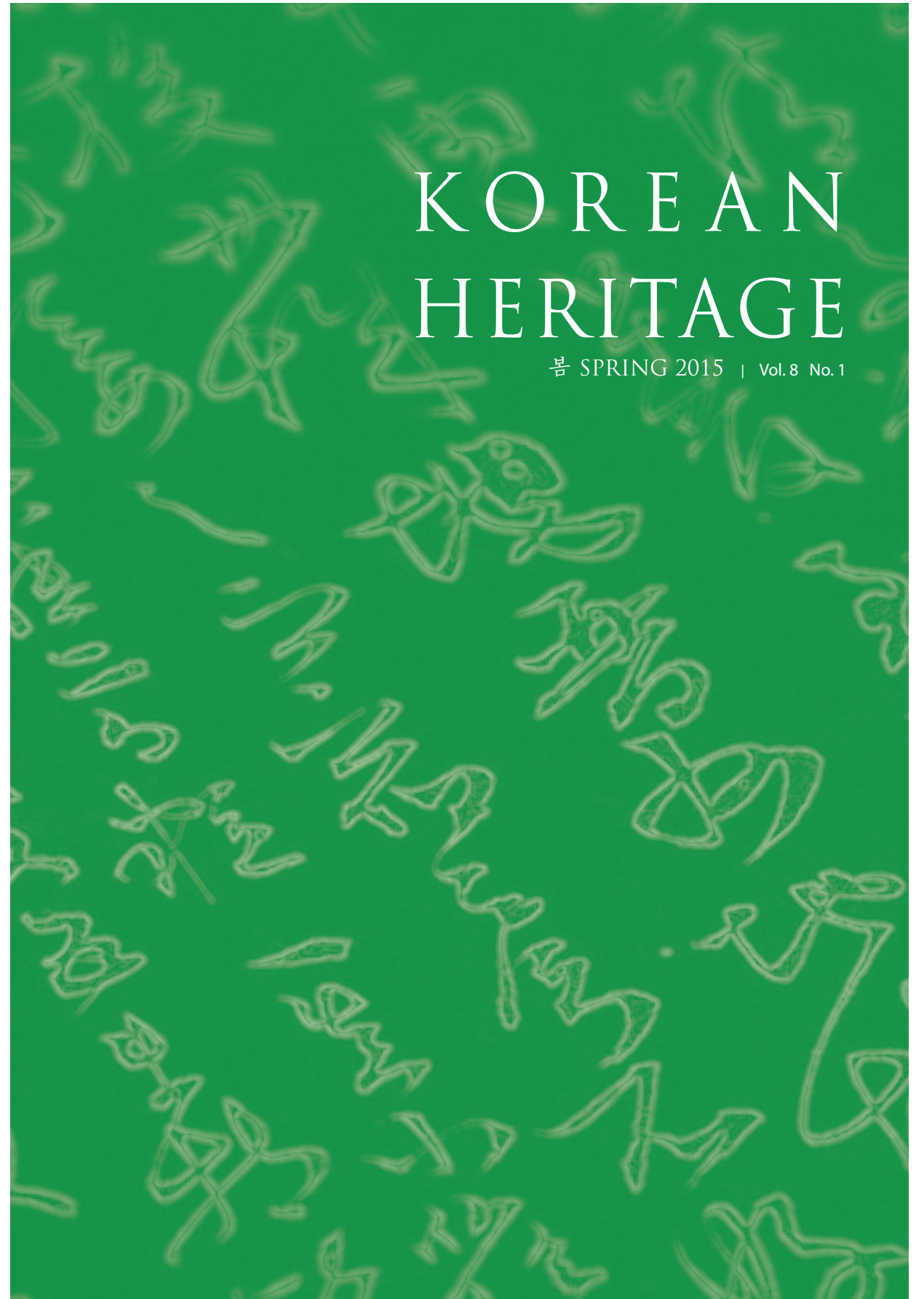
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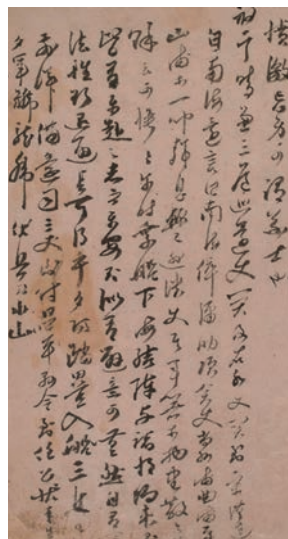
KOREAN HERITAGE

Quarterly Magazine
of the Cultural Heritage Administration

KOREAN HERITAGE



봄 SPRING 2015



Cover

Nanjung ilgi (War Diary of Yi Sun-sin) is the personal journal kept by Admiral Yi Sun-sin, commander of Joseon's royal naval forces during the Japanese invasions of 1592–1598. Written faithfully over the seven-year-long war period as he led the defense of the nation against imperial Japan's formidable military forces, his journal recorded day-to-day conditions in the battlefield and his personal reflections. *Nanjung ilgi* is prized as a significant material of historical documentation as well as a testament to the personal character of Admiral Yi, one of Korea's greatest military leaders and considered an immortal by the Korean people.

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CHA News Vignettes

The Royal Seal of King Deokjong Returned Home

A ceremony to celebrate the repatriation of the royal seal of King Deokjong (1438–1457), a crown prince of the Joseon Dynasty, was held at the Royal Palace Museum of Korea on April 1. Witnessing the ceremony were representatives of the two counterpart institutions from South Korea and the United States that collaborated in returning the heritage to its home—the Cultural Heritage Administration of ROK and the Seattle Art Museum—and the family of the American collector who had purchased and donated the artifact to the museum in the early 1960s.

The royal seal was crafted in 1471, ordered by Deokjong’s son, King Seongjong, to posthumously honor his father, who died prematurely before he could assume the throne as the first son and heir of King Sejo; after its making, the seal had been enshrined at the royal shrine of Jongmyo through the last days of Joseon and mysteriously disappeared. The return is praised as an exemplary case of heritage repatriation: the two counterparts sorted out difficulties amicably through negotiation and cooperation. The whole process was consistently uncovered and transparent, and the Seattle Art Museum, in particular, had been impressively proactive about cooperation. For its part, the Cultural Heritage Administration of ROK is planning to further strengthen collaboration with its American counterpart in the future through cooperative programs including exhibitions of artifacts on loan and exchanges of experts.

Complete Skeleton of Carnivorous Dinosaur Discovered

Well preserved fossil remains of a carnivorous dinosaur were found recently from the Cretaceous stratum in Gadeok Village in Hadong County, Gyeongsangnam-do Province. The National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage of Korean Cultural Heritage Administration conducted research on the fossilized skeleton and confirmed that the specimen belongs to a family of carnivorous dinosaurs with sharp teeth and two claws. The stratum from which the skeleton was discovered was formed 110 to 120 million years ago during the Cretaceous period of the Mesozoic era. The discovery has invaluable significance for scientific research in Korea: this is the first time that a complete dinosaur skeleton including the skull and lower jaw was found in the country. The skull measures about 5.7 centimeters long and 2.6 centimeters wide, and the entire length of the fossil is only 28 centimeters. The dinosaur is estimated to have been less than 50 centimeters long when alive, a rare example of a tiny dinosaur. The vertebrae were found connected to the ribs, giving rise to the intriguing question of its fossilization process. Next to this skeleton was found another piece of fossilized remains; further research will be conducted to confirm whether or not they are two different dinosaurs.

An Everyday Artifact

Homi, the Korean Hoe

Homi, the Korean hoe, is a multipurpose agricultural tool used for weeding or turning the soil. Consisting of a distinctively shaped iron blade, tang, and wooden handle, the *Homi* is hand-made, lightweight, eminently functional, and has been used by Korean farmers and gardeners for hundreds of years. Agriculture in rice paddies and fields requires different types of hoes for different jobs. While those employed to grow rice plants are large, long, and heavy, those used for other field crops are much smaller and lighter.

Universally used throughout the Korean Peninsula, *Homi* are marked by particular regional characteristics. Three types of hoes are found, differentiated by the shape of the blade, which reflect the prevalent agricultural conditions and products of each region: ploughshare, sickle, or triangle. Hoes with ploughshare-shaped blades, which are good for rice farming, are found in the middle section of the peninsula; sickle-shaped hoes with long, sharp blades are popular in rocky and pebbly lands in the southern areas and mountainous regions; and triangle blades, best for cutting weeds, are widely used in the northern regions.

The *Homi* is a versatile farming tool used for tilling the soil, creating furrows, and leveling or hilling the ground to plant seeds and transplant seedlings, and also for weeding and clearing out an old crop. Capable of doing delicate jobs with a sharp blade tip, the *Homi* has been a mainstay for centuries in traditional farming and home gardening in Korea and increasingly abroad at present. Korea’s *Homi* of old is as reliable and treasured today as an everyday implement to keep handy for every use in contemporary life.



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C O N T E N T S



06

Heritage for the World

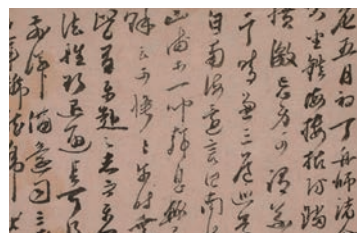
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Korean Buddhism and Its Cultural Influence

Text by Jeong Byeong-sam, Professor of History and Culture, Sookmyung Women's University
Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration & Good Image

Korean culture has been shaped by religious beliefs throughout the history; of these, the three most influential belief systems are Korean shamanism (*musok*), Confucianism, and, of course, Buddhism. Despite the strong onslaught of foreign religions that have swept the nation through millennia, indigenous shamanism persists to the present. Confucianism has formed the bedrock upon which pre-modern Korean society has built and organized political systems and social ethics through the modern present. Buddhism, in particular, is intricately intertwined with the development of Korean culture, having served as a source of inspiration for the advancement of spiritual ideologies and cultural expression.





Bulguksa, one of the preeminent Buddhist temples from the Silla Kingdom

Introduction of Korean Buddhism

Buddhism was initially introduced to the Korean Peninsula in the fourth century, then under the rule of the Three Kingdoms—Goguryeo (37 B.C.–A.D. 668), Baekje (18 B.C.–A.D. 660), and Silla (57 B.C.–A.D. 935). Buddhism was brought in through interactions with China, which it had filtered in from India. Due to cultural differences between the three contemporary proto-states, the importation and adoption of the nascent religion unfolded variably in each of the three kingdoms. While Goguryeo and Baekje adopted Buddhism directly from the Southern and Northern Dynasties of China in the fourth century, in Silla it gained official recognition only in the sixth century after the faith had long been embraced by the populace. The period of the introduction of Buddhism coincided with endeavors to strengthen monarchical authority through the stipulation of laws and the re-organization of central and local administrations. It is inferred that Buddhism was introduced as a novel ideology to underpin the social transformations that were underway at that time, contributing to the formation of a national identity and spirit in each of the Three Kingdoms. In addition, Buddhism functioned as a medium for the import of advanced influences in a wide range of sectors including music, painting, architecture, craftsmanship, and medicine, stimulating creative and innovative cultural development in the Three Kingdoms.

Buddhism in Silla Era

As mentioned above, the adoption and development of Buddhism varied in each of the Three Kingdoms. As for Silla, which was the last to adopt the faith, recognition of Buddhism came simultaneously with the establishment of centralized royal authority, denoting an inseparable relationship between Buddhism and monarchical power. The overarching doctrine embraced by Silla centered around the principle of karma, teaching that human deeds always come with consequences. Belief in Chakravartin, or the universal ideal ruler, was passionately adopted by Silla rulers; the cult of the future Buddha, Maitreya, formed the backbone of the Hwarang (“flower boys”) institution, an elite corps of male youths, and had been deeply rooted in Silla society. Silla was a Buddhist state which strived to bring peace and prosperity to the nation through faith in Sakyamuni and Maitreya, leaving behind a rich trove of material evidence in the form of temples and statuary of the Buddha such as the Sakyamuni triad at Hwangnyongsa Temple and the Maitreya image at Heungnyunsa Temple, in Gyeongju, the capital of Silla. Silla Buddhism took its complete form in the seventh century alongside the unification of the Three Kingdoms. Silla Buddhism incorporated Buddhist doctrines from Goguryeo and Baekje, which also accommodated teachings and writings from China.

Construction of Buddhist Monasteries in Silla

Temples and monasteries, as spaces for worship and meditation, are essential to the religious functioning of Buddhism. Buddhist temples were constructed in cities, not in the middle of mountains during the initial phase of Buddhist development in Silla, and then started to be built in rural areas around the period of the unification of the Three Kingdoms. During the middle phase, Buddhist culture reached its apogee and Buddhism was widely popularized, leading to a boom in monastery construction; the Ten Hwaem (*Huayan* in Chinese) Temples, presumed to have been built by disciples of Monk Uisang, were established during that period. Toward the final phase, Buddhist building architecture and artistry reached remarkable heights. In the mid-eighth century, artistic masterpieces embodying the flourishing Buddhist culture of Silla were born, including the Bell of King Seongdeok, Bulguksa Temple, and Seokguram Grotto. In particular, Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram Grotto, which form



Hwaomsa, a head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, was built in 544 during the reign of King Jinheung of Silla.

a magnificent religious architectural complex, are noted for harmonizing Hwaeom teachings—the primary doctrine of the day—and other Buddhist ideas in a single piece of Buddhist structure. Afterwards, the Seon, or Zen, School was actively adopted into Silla, which put a great stress on rigorous meditation.

Goryeo Buddhism and the *Tripitaka Koreana*

With the advent of the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392), doctrinal schools gained prominence, and Goryeo Buddhism saw a phenomenal growth benefitting from financial support of the royal court and the nobility. Buddhist temples, growing in physical scale, functioned as a cultural space where people from diverse social ranks and backgrounds would assemble for religious exchanges. Turning away from royal life as a prince to become a Buddhist monk, State Preceptor Uicheon established the Cheontae School of Buddhism, or Tiantai in Chinese, in an effort to create an umbrella school to incorporate both the Seon and doctrinal studies. Uicheon is noted for his lifelong endeavor to collect all Buddhist texts he could find and systematically organize and catalogue them, taking Goryeo Buddhism to a higher level.



The bell cast of King Seongdeok during the Silla period, is the largest and most beautiful among Korean Buddhist bells in existence.

One of the greatest achievements of Goryeo Buddhism was the publication of the *Tripitaka Koreana*, an enormous cultural project which would have not been possible without a thorough understanding of Buddhist teachings and efforts to secure massive amounts of Buddhist scriptures. Drawing on relatively small-scale printing and dissemination of Buddhist scriptures in the earlier period, Goryeo accomplished the publication of the *Tripitaka Koreana* in the 11th century, spurred by hopes that the effort would bring divine intervention to help the kingdom repel the marauding Khitans. After its precious collection of Buddhist scriptures were lost to Mongol invasions in 1232, the Buddhist dynasty of Goryeo immediately set about replacing the carved printing woodblocks of the *Tripitaka Koreana*. The work was completed in 1251. The woodblocks for the *Tripitaka Koreana*, created in the 13th century, are enshrined at Haeinsa Temple deep in the country's southern mountains and are prized for accuracy in text and delicacy in carving, arguably the most valuable, extant version of the *Tripitaka*. It is eloquent testimony to the exalted ideological status of Goryeo Buddhism of that time.

Buddhism in the Confucian Dynasty of Joseon

With the advent of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), whose monarchic rule was

founded on Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism in the Korean Peninsula suffered harsh repression. Buddhist priests were banned from entering the capital; Buddhist rites were drastically diminished; monasteries sustained severe losses in property and talent. With the exception of a few unusual cases of book publication and building reconstruction, Buddhism was marginalized, the number of monks and Buddhist schools reduced to insignificance. State policies for suppressing Buddhism might have succeeded in closing down monasteries, but had not been able to eradicate Buddhist beliefs and popular faith in the afterlife. Royal rituals continued to be observed at Buddhist temples; large-scale Buddhist ceremonies for pacifying resentful souls took place as before. Guided by their faith, people would assemble at temples, and to accommodate popular demand additional spaces such as the Avalokitesvara Hall and Ksitigarbha Hall, would be constructed as annexes to the main hall honoring Sakyamuni. This means that the Buddhist tradition had not been stamped out completely, but was continuously maintained limitedly. Toward the end of the dynasty, the harmonization of Seon and doctrinal schools with the Seon School in the center gained currency. Accordingly, it became natural for monks to conduct all three practices coming from distinct schools of thought, in studying Buddhist scriptures, practicing meditation, and invoking the Buddha's name (*yeombul*); Buddhist monasteries consequently were equipped with spaces for these practices. This trend reinvigorated Buddhism, and set in motion efforts for reconstruction of temples that were lost during the Japanese invasions of 1592–1598. The grand temples extant at present were mostly reconstructed in late Joseon.

Buddhist Temples, Vibrant Havens for Traditional Culture

Extant Buddhist monasteries are mostly located in mountains, not in city areas, which were massively reconstructed in the later Joseon period. Evolving over a long course of time, mountain temples have taken shape as building complexes with main halls at their heart, housing many priceless heritage objects and monuments. While studying Buddhist sutras and practicing meditation at monasteries, monks have preserved and safeguarded the Buddhist temples until the present. The teachings and practice of Buddhism commingled with indigenous culture and philosophy in its syncretic embrace of other religious ideologies in Korean society over more than 1,600 years, establishing itself as one of the nation's primary belief systems to the present. Furthermore, Korean monks, such as Wonhyo from Silla and Jinul from Goryeo, created and developed distinctive Buddhist schools of thought, contributing to the formation of a distinctive Korean Buddhist culture. Thus have Buddhist monasteries functioned as seedbeds for the flowering of Buddhist culture. ☸



A portrait of Monk Uisang, who established the Hwaeom sect (*Huayan* in Chinese) which became the dominant doctrinal school of Buddhism in Korea during the Unified Silla through the middle of the Goryeo period.



A statue of the eminent scholar-monk Wonhyo of Silla, whose syncretic views and embrace of all Buddhist schools of thought and indigenous beliefs greatly influenced Koreans' unique way of understanding the Buddhist canon.

The Jang-geum's Kitchen Restored after 100 Years

Text by Jang Gyeong-hui, Professor of Heritage Conservation Science, Hanseo University
Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration & Good Image

Sojubang, a royal kitchen in Gyeongbokgung Palace in central Seoul, has been restored in January 2015 and will open to the public in May. The restoration carries special significance for Koreans: it is the reclamation of a royal space that was obliterated during Japanese colonial rule. The rebuilt cooking space was also the setting for the hugely popular Korean television drama *Dae Jang-geum*.



Aerial view of *Sojubang* in Gyeongbokgung, recently restored 100 years after its destruction.

Dae Jang-geum Rides Crest of Korean Wave

The Korean television show *Dae Jang-geum* is a fictional drama series revolving around a real-life court physician, Jang-geum, during the reign of King Jungjong (r. 1506–1544), who is mentioned several times in the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty. In the drama, Jang-geum enters the royal court as an orphan girl and grows up to become the first female physician for the king and the royal family. The exciting stories and tantalizing plots of *Dae Jang-geum* brought the show phenomenal popularity not only at home but also abroad. The drama is considered one of the primary components of the Korean Wave of contemporary cultural products, which have become instrumental in getting Korean culture known around the globe. Big fans of the drama are expected to visit the home country of Jang-geum, particularly the places most associated with their heroine. The royal kitchen *Sojubang* in Gyeongbokgung, once more brought to life, is the very space where Jang-geum used to work and live.



The Korean television drama series *Dae Jang-geum* was aired from 2003 to 2004.

Buildings in Gyeongbokgung were mostly burned down during repeated Japanese invasions in the late 16th century. They were rebuilt in the 19th century during the reign of King Gojong (1863–1907), but were then pulled down during Japanese colonial rule. The structures standing today are restorations to their condition in King Gojong's reign. Due to its physical proximity to the king's bedchambers (Gangnyeongjeon Hall), *Sojubang* is presumed to be the royal kitchen that served King Gojong.

Royal Kitchen

Historical accounts indicate that the place for preparing foods for the king was called diverse names, such as *Sojubang* (燒廚房, “burning kitchen”), *Sojubang* (小廚房, “small kitchen”), *jubang* (“kitchen”), and *suragan* (“space for *sura*”). The king's food was referred to as *sura*, a borrowed term from the Mongol language, estimated to have been part of the Korean court language during the late Goryeo period, when Mongols wielded great influence on the royal court. *Suragan* and *Sojubang* have been known as synonyms.



A table set for the king.



The De Sojubang (exterior kitchen) in Gyeongbokgung.

A careful analysis of historical documents such as the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* and *Seungjeongwon ilgi (Diaries of the Royal Secretariat)* and of *Donggwoldo (The Eastern Palaces)* indicates, however, that suragan and Sojubang actually differed in function: while the Sojubang attended to cooking, suragan was more concerned with setting food on the table.

There were several *Sojubang* spaces in Gyeongbokgung; the king, the queen, and the crown prince had their own separate kitchens near their chambers; aside from the recently restored royal kitchen near the king's sleeping quarters, another is located behind the crown prince's private quarters (Donggung Palace).

Sojubang Spaces

A Sojubang consists of three units built and equipped for separate functions: *nae Sojubang* (interior kitchen), *oe Sojubang* (exterior kitchen), and saengmulbang (the equivalent of today's short order kitchen). The interior kitchen was used for preparing meals for the king three times a day. For breakfast, porridge made just from rice or with the addition of pine nuts, sesame seeds, or milk was prepared; noodles were usually served for lunch; and the night meal featured persimmon punch (*sujeonggwa*), sweet rice drink (*sikhye*), and fruits. The exterior kitchen was associated with ritual or ceremonial food. The space was in charge of serving tea at a building enshrining the king's portrait, preparing food for royal festivals and birthday celebrations for the king and the queen, and also making ritual food for ancestral rites and divination rituals. The saengmulbang was in charge of foods that are easy to prepare quickly for snacks and desserts. Rice cakes, fresh fruits, tea, porridge, and other light refreshments for the royal family were prepared there.

Structure of a Sojubang

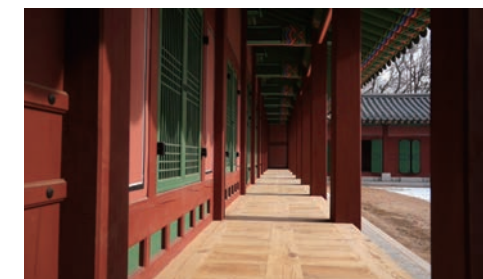
Each of the three units of a Sojubang has its own stand-alone building, laid out in a rectangular shape. Despite slight variations in size between the three sections, they have nearly identical structures, consisting of a kitchen, two rooms attached to the kitchen, and a wooden floor, which the recently restored *Sojubang* in Gyeongbokgung typifies.

The kitchen is an efficient sunken space about 60 centimeters (about 2 feet) below the floor level and the courtyard. A fireplace in the kitchen served simultaneously as a furnace to warm the rooms equipped with an underfloor heating system and as a cooking hearth to boil water or steam rice. The firewood used inside a royal palace during Joseon emitted less smoke than those for ordinary people, and a specially designated person had the job of making and tending the fire at a royal kitchen. The water used there was fetched by water maids, or *musuri*, and collected in a giant jar called *dumeong*. The mother of King Yeongjo, the 21st monarch of the Joseon Dynasty, used to be a palace water maid.

The two *ondol*-heated rooms functioned as the cookery. The raw materials boiled or trimmed at the kitchen were delivered to the rooms through a small door connecting the two spaces. The cooks in the rooms did their job using the prepared materials. The king's food was made with seasonal crops and vegetables, and the state of the year's harvest was reflected in the variety of the king's table. The royal food was prepared taking into account the harmony of yin and yang (陰陽). For instance, red bean rice was prepared in the eastern room, and white rice was cooked in the western one. Reflecting the king's profound care and affection for his subjects, the number of dishes put on the royal table was reduced in lean times, such as during droughts or floods.

The wooden floor space was used as a meeting place to discuss what to prepare for the king depending on his health conditions and the availability of seasonal materials. High-ranking courtiers in charge of medicine and food, and court ladies were participants. They assembled on the wooden floor everyday to have a discussion on the variety of food or to check the conditions of the prepared food. Other than the aforementioned spaces, there were storage areas near each of the three sections of a Sojubang. There were also living quarters for those who worked there.

Visitors to the restored Sojubang may be rather disappointed by its humble size and structure as a cooking space for the ruler of the country. However, it is evident that its unpretentious scale and appearance are a reflection of the ruler's loving care for the people; he would not spend much on his own table. The Sojubang gives contemporary visitors a glimpse of the king's tender love toward his subjects. 🌿



The De Sojubang (exterior kitchen) in Gyeongbokgung.



The De Sojubang (interior kitchen) in Gyeongbokgung.

Nanjung ilgi: War Diary by Yi Sun-sin

Text by Ro Seung-seok, Director, Yeohae Research Institute of the Classics
Photos by Ro Seung-seok & Good Image

Word of a coming war was circulating in 1592 in Joseon. While the two emissaries who came back from Japan, Hwang Yun-gil and Kim Seong-il, presented divergent opinions on the intention of Toyotomi Hideyoshi to wage a war, the diplomatic document brought from Japan contained the statement “Japan heads directly to Ming China in February next year,” adding plausibility to talk of the imminent eruption of war. Seriously perturbed, the royal court swiftly set out an order to enlist a capable commander. Upon the recommendation of Yu Seong-ryong, Yi Sun-sin was appointed a naval commander in charge of the eastern section of the Jeolla region.

Yi Sun-sin’s Habit of Diary Keeping

Upon arriving at the eastern Jeolla naval headquarters, Yi Sun-sin embarked on preparations against invasion by Japanese forces. He focused on subduing pirates; reorganized troop formations; and installed iron trip wires across sea lanes. Most notably, Admiral Yi built large ironclad warships in the shape of a turtle and equipped them with arrowheads and blades, spears and cannons. The turtle-shaped warships were called *gwiseon* (“ghost ships”), though broadly known as turtle ship, and positioned at the vanguard of the fleet.



The turtle ship created by Admiral Yi Sun-sin, armored with a dragon head and iron plates.

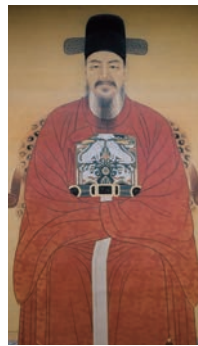
The previous year in Japan, upon the death of his beloved only son on August 5, 1591, Hideyoshi set his sights on conquering China: “Go to Joseon and have it surrender, and then proceed to Ming China.” Subsequently, the upstart overlord of Japan organized a land and sea invasion force of 280,000 soldiers dispatched to take Joseon and thence march into China.

Admiral Yi Sun-sin started keeping a war diary on January 1, 1592, even before the outbreak of fighting; he continued writing his journal until just before his death near the end of the seven-year conflict with Japan in 1598. For the entire war, he kept recording what he observed or what he was briefed on, and each diary entry was always accompanied by the date and information on the weather. Yi’s habit of diary keeping dates back before the Japanese invasion of 1592. He did so as he served on a garrison post and lost an islet on the Dumangang (Tumen) River to Jurchen raiders in the battle of Nokdundo Islet in 1587, and the recordings he had made would save his life later: about to be beheaded by his superior Yi II for alleged mistakes during the engagement, Yi Sun-sin presented his recordings as counterevidence and was able to escape execution. This episode illustrates that he had a deeply ingrained habit of recording everyday life.



An entry into Yi’s war diary, scribbled and hastily corrected, perhaps in the heat of battle.

An entry into Yi’s war diary, which was scribbled and hastily corrected.



A portrait of Admiral Yi Sun-sin enshrined in Hyeon-chungsa, a shrine dedicated to Korea's greatest military leader.

A close look at the entries of *Nanjung ilgi* (*War Diary of Yi Sun-sin*) around those dates when hard fighting took place shows how he struggled to keep on recording each day despite the difficult conditions of battle: some characters are hard to make out and others bear marks of several corrections and rewritings. The handwriting itself in places betrays urgency at the time of recording. Admiral Yi Sun-sin did not abandon the practice of taking up a brush and writing down what happened even in battle, with his life at risk. For him, diary keeping was a means of reflection, to correct what went wrong and to improve what proved good for the future.

Memory Aid for Reflection

Throughout the seven-year course of the war with Japan, Yi Sun-sin maintained the rigorous discipline of preparation by keeping a diary. This practice provided solace in times of suffering and insight that helped him find solutions to problems. His commitment to recording everyday life is confirmed by what he wrote after the end of the seventh battle at Ungpo in 1593: “I never stop thinking of the brush and inkstone, but it has been a long time since I buried them in memory because of the hectic course of events both on land and at sea. I resume writing from hereon.”

Mindful of the value of past recordings in assessing present events, Yi always came back to the brush after finishing a battle. For him, *Nanjung ilgi* was a record to learn from the past and to prepare for the future. The diary entries he made with a passionate yearning for victory served as a source of wisdom and strategy.

In 1597, Admiral Yi Sun-sin was stripped of his rank and position as naval commander and sent to prison, due to ungrounded allegations made by his rival, Admiral Won Gyun, who soon squandered the strength of the naval forces built up by Yi. On the march to war as a rank-and-file soldier after serving in prison, he was informed of the death of his mother but could not abandon his military duty to go home for the funeral. Despite all these, Yi never wavered; reinstated by the king following the death of Won Gyun and a looming new wave of invasion by Japanese forces, Yi Sun-sin wrested an unlikely victory with a much diminished royal navy pitted against a massive Japanese armada at the Battle of Myeongnyang. His unyielding will and spirit then and forever after would provide profound inspiration for the Korean nation.

A Soldier's Diary as Memory of the World

What is notable about the recordings in the war diary is Yi's filial devotion to his mother. The first entry describes his sadness about having to be away from home and

unable to spend time with her mother on New Year's Day. He was known to send an emissary to check on his mother, and referred to her as “heaven.” The diary also testifies to Yi's altruistic feelings: through the recordings, he deplored the impotency of the royal court, showed deep compassion for the suffering people, and expressed a strong desire for overcoming the national hardship.

As a military officer, Yi Sun-sin was also eminently equipped with literary knowledge and skills from rigorous study of the Confucian classics. Contemporary scholars regard his war diary as eloquent testimony to his writing prowess. The diary records and comments with acuity upon a great multiplicity of themes, ranging from military strategy and toxic discord among those in different positions in the military hierarchy, to family events and social, economic, and political affairs of the time. His daily notes and descriptions of various aspects of fighting off the Japanese invasions, in particular, were rendered in painstaking detail, making the diary one of the most important literary writing on warfare. Diaries usually have an intrinsic shortcoming as official record, because they are written from a private, one-sided viewpoint. *Nanjung ilgi*, however, is highly acclaimed as historic documentation since the diary records a diverse range of observations and affairs associated with the war and even includes details that have not been mentioned in official history. Admiral Yi's war diary not only tells stories about heroic achievements but also offers details on the overall war situation.



Nanjung ilgi (*War Diary of Yi Sun-sin*) has been inscribed on the Register of the Memory of the World.

Nanjung ilgi is not the only recording made during the Japanese invasions of 1592–1598; there are many other writings from the war period. However, these recordings were either written from a third-person perspective or over a short course of time. The war diary of Yi Sun-sin is distinguished not only by its literary qualities but also because its author was the battlefield commander; it was based on his own observations and experiences recorded over the entire seven years of the Imjin War. Recognized for its rarity and historical importance, the war diary was inscribed on the Register of the Memory of the World by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2013.

Admiral Yi Sun-sin exhibited an ingenious capacity to turn crises into opportunities and pulled off numerous victories during the 16th century war against invading Japanese forces. Behind the successive victories are his incessant efforts to reflect on the past and prepare for the future through the faithful practice of diary keeping. Revered as Korea's greatest military leader, Yi Sun-sin has become an immortal, his spirit and inspiration resonant among the people and as powerfully uplifting as when he first entered and faithfully recorded his nation's history. 🌐

Hongdo Island Natural Monument No. 170

Text & Photos by Yi Won-ho, National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage of Korean the Cultural Heritage Administration

On Southwesternmost corner, Hongdo Island was designated Natural Monument No. 170 in 1965 and also a Natural Preserve. The island is noted for its distinctive geological structure and spectacular rock outcroppings. It is home to rare species of marine life and extensive virgin forests. The island has remarkably remained undamaged by both humans and nature. Recognizing the significance of its preservation, the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage carried out research on the island for the conservation and management of Hongdo in 2009.



Jukhang Village

A Red Island

Hongdo is located in the southeastern section of the continental shelf in the Yellow Sea, about 115 kilometers away from the port city of Mokpo. A small island, Hongdo is only some 6 square kilometers in size, but it took a long time to form its rocky shores. The name *Hongdo*, literally “red island,” derives from the red reflection thrown on it when the sun sets into the ocean. Consisting of 13 islets, Hongdo is administratively a part of Heuksan-myeon, Sinan-gun County, Jeollanam-do Province, with two villages in its jurisdiction, Jukhang Village (District 1) and Seokchon Village (District 2). According to historical records, the island—open to the ocean on

all sides—served as a midpoint stopover for ships bound for China during the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). A steep topography and shortage of flat land prevented the development of irrigation in Hongdo so there is virtually no crop farming on the island. The primary source of income is fishing and female divers (*haenyeo*) still brave the deep cold waters around the island to gather abalone, conch, and other marine products; tourism has recently become a supplementary source of income.



South Gate Rock, located in southern Hongdo.



South Gate Rock is the entrance into Hongdo and also the most famous of the ten most beautiful sceneries of the island.

Since the whole island is designated a Natural Preserve and the area appropriate for settlement is severely limited in its center, everyday facilities are scarce and not in good condition. With the rising interest in the coastal scenery of the island, fast-sailing ships ferry tourists eight times a day in high season and two times a day in the low season. The number of visitors is on the increase, rising from 39,063 to 48,314 in 2008. The island was nominated to be declared a biosphere reserve under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme and also selected as one of the islands people most like to visit, adding vitality to its tourism. Most of the residents are Christian, but there are shamanic shrines (*dangsan*) found in forests between the two villages of the island.

The Topography of Hongdo

The formation of the island’s topography was influenced by the crustal movements of about 80 million years ago, and the four glacial and inter-glacial periods during the Pleistocene epoch. During the fourth glacial period, the sea level fell by 80 to 140 meters and the islets which had been submerged came to the surface; during the last inter-glacial period about 7,000 years ago, the current appearance of Hongdo was established.



The Silgeumni Cave, noted for a legend that an exiled literati official found this cave while searching for a place with beautiful scenery.

Hongdo is primarily composed of sediments of sandstone and quartzite. To form sandstone, quartz, feldspar, and many other sand fragments are deposited on the seabed along with clay. The sandstone of Hongdo is mostly argillaceous, which consists of clay by more than 15 percent. Quartzite is a metamorphic rock, which is formed when sandstone undergoes great compression. Since sandstone and quartzite are resistant to marine erosion, cliffs rise steeply from the water on the shores of Hongdo.

The Flora of Hongdo

According to the 2009 research of the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, Hongdo is home to 110 species of flora. The plants identified are evergreen broad-leaved trees including the *Cyathea Cuspidata* (*Castanopsis Cuspidata* var. (*Thunb.*) *Schottky*), Wax-leaf privet (*Ligustrum Japonicum*), Yeddo-Hawthorn (*Raphiolepis Umbellata*); evergreen needle-leaved trees including the red pine (*Pinus densiflora*) and black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*); kongijagae deonggul (*Lemmaphyllum microphyllum*); and *illyeopcho* or weeping fern (*Lepisorus thunbergianus*). The area covered by the research was limited, resulting in a smaller number of species identified than previously confirmed. According to earlier studies, the number of flora species had been on the rise: 251 in 1959, 274 in 1986, and 390 in 1968. Increasing tourism is expected to influence the number of naturalized plants and therefore the number of species inhabiting the island.

Primary varieties of plants are mostly evergreen broad-leaved trees such as the Common camellia (*Camellia japonica*), Japanese evergreen oak (*Quercus acuta*), Japanese laurel (*Aucuba Japonica*), Machilus (*Machilus thunbergii Sieboid et Zucc*), and Wax-leaf privet (*Ligustrum Japonicum*), the same as noted earlier. While these plants are expected to continue to thrive on the island in the future, colonies of the red pine, Korean hornbeam (*Carpinus coreana*), and Konara oak (*Quercus serrata Thunb*)—although decreasing in number— will still remain.

While coastal rocks are rich in the red pine and Hongdo Island day-lily (*Hemerocallis hongdoensis*), steep slopes are home to the Korean hornbeam and Konara oak. The plants growing in the lower areas of the island are the climbing

bagbane (*Trachelospermum asiaticum Nakai*), five-flavor berry (*Schisandra chinensis*), coralberry (*Ardisia crenata Sims*), songak (*Hedera japonica* Tobler), and Laurel. There are also old colonies of the Prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum ailanthoides*) and *hwangchil namu* (*Dendropanax morbifera*). The tourist route in the District 1 village is planted with the food wrapper plant (*Mallotus japonicus*) and Common camellia; the village in District 2 is vibrant with Common camellia, California privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium Hassk*), and silver magnolia. The Yeddo-Hawthorn and Hongdo Island day-lily around the top of Gitdaebong Peak creates a beautiful landscape.

The Fauna of Hongdo

Hongdo is located along the flyways of migratory birds, and the Korea National Park operates a research institute for migratory birds on the island. Major habitats are the area around a branch school of Heuksando Elementary School, and the borders of grassy or forest areas. As of December 2008, 244 species and 199,675 individuals were identified in Hongdo. The common gull (*Larus canus*) is the most predominant; other primary species include the Chestnut-flanked white-eye (*Zosterops japonicas*), Brown-eared Bulbul (*Microscelis amaurotis*), barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), rufous turtle dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*), grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), and Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*).

Sustainability of Hongdo

Hongdo is a treasure trove of diverse resources, which can be tapped into to develop stories for tourism and educational programs. The folklore, religion, and marine culture associated with the island’s traditional female divers, and breathtaking costal sceneries are all adding to the value of the island as a place for sustainable tourism. The development of marine touristic routes that do not undermine the historic significance and sense of place of Hongdo, is called for in the future. 🌐



coastal scenery.



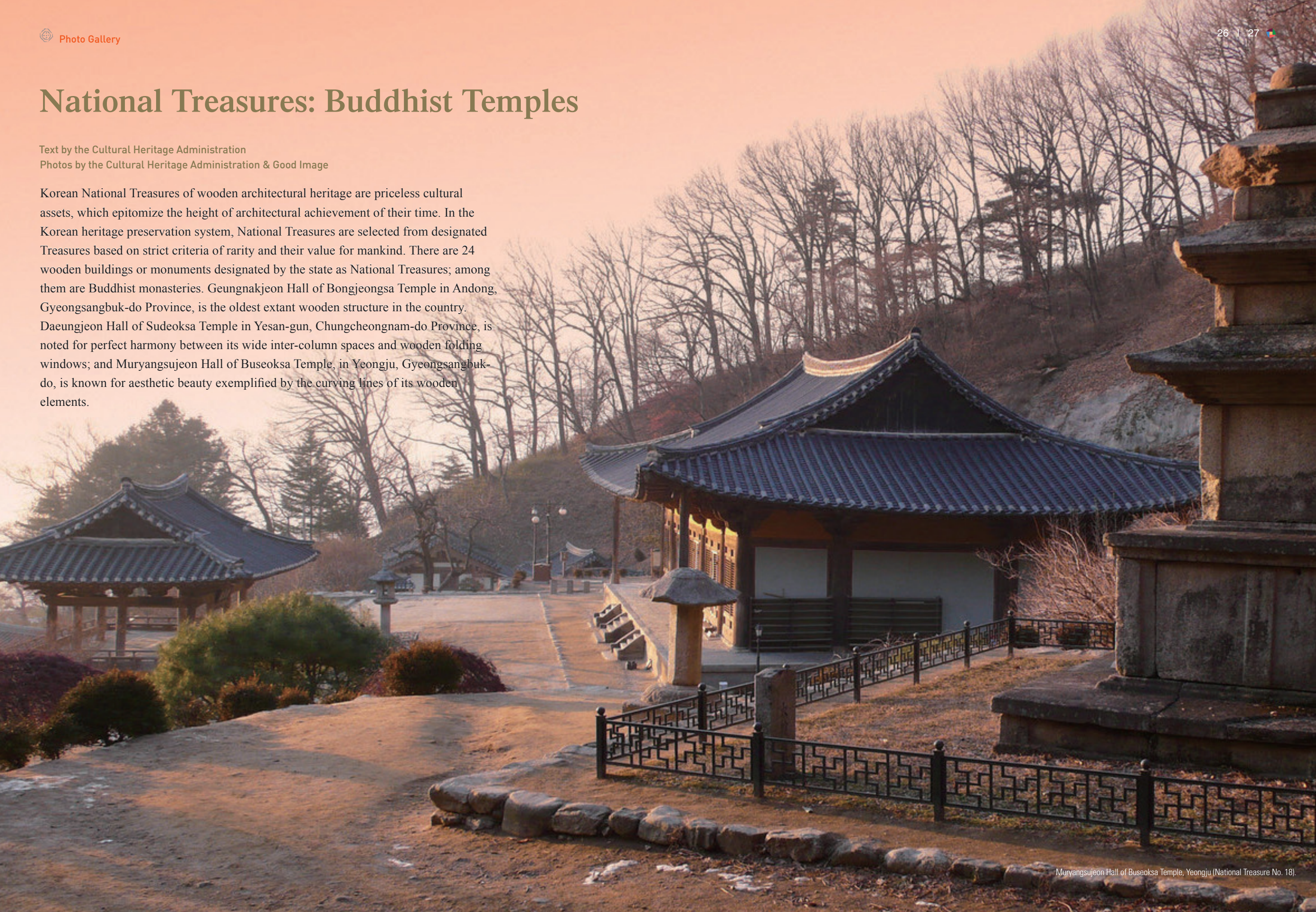
Evergreen needle-leaved trees growing on rocks.

National Treasures: Buddhist Temples

Text by the Cultural Heritage Administration

Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration & Good Image

Korean National Treasures of wooden architectural heritage are priceless cultural assets, which epitomize the height of architectural achievement of their time. In the Korean heritage preservation system, National Treasures are selected from designated Treasures based on strict criteria of rarity and their value for mankind. There are 24 wooden buildings or monuments designated by the state as National Treasures; among them are Buddhist monasteries. Geungnakjeon Hall of Bongjeongsa Temple in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, is the oldest extant wooden structure in the country. Daeungjeon Hall of Sudeoksa Temple in Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do Province, is noted for perfect harmony between its wide inter-column spaces and wooden folding windows; and Muryangsujeon Hall of Buseoksa Temple, in Yeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do, is known for aesthetic beauty exemplified by the curving lines of its wooden elements.





Geungnakjeon Hall of Bongjeongsa Temple, Andong (National Treasure No. 15).



Muryangsujeon Hall of Buseoksa Temple, Yeongju (National Treasure No. 18).



Josadang Shrine of Buseoksa Temple, Yeongju (National Treasure No. 19).



Daeungjeon Hall of Sudeoksa Temple, Yesan (National Treasure No. 49).



Janggyeongpanjeon Depositories of Haeinsa Temple, Hapcheon (National Treasure No. 52).



Palsangjeon Wooden Pagoda of Beopjusa Temple, Boeun (National Treasure No. 55).



Mireukjeon Hall of Geumsansa Temple, Gimje (National Treasure No. 62).



Gakhwangjeon Hall of Hwaeomsa Temple, Gurye (National Treasure No. 67).



Daeungjeon Hall of Bongjeongsa Temple, Andong (National Treasure No. 311).

Beauty and Symbolism of Traditional Designs on Wood Carvings

Text & Photos by Kim Gyu-seok, Master of Wood Carving, Jeollanam-do Province Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 56



Rice cake stamps in an array of rectangular and circular shapes.

Wood carving is the craft of working by hand with the volume and texture of wood to shape an object for functional or decorative use. Wood carving skills are applied to make Buddhist sculptures and traditional, everyday articles. Among the variety of skills involved in the wood carving craft, “design carving” (*munyanggak*) refers to the techniques to carve a diverse range of designs and patterns for stamping purposes. Design carving requires a significant set of skills as it reflects cultural references and vernacular art history.

***Tteoksal*, a Touch of Class to Traditional Rice Cakes**

Tteoksal is a wood carving used to stamp a pattern on the surface of rice cakes. The term *tteoksal* is made up of two words, *tteok* and *sal*, literally meaning “rice cake” and “flesh.” In this usage, “flesh” is understood as meaning “bones”; pressing *tteoksal* on a plain rice cake is perceived as giving it a bone structure, or a particular symbolism.

Rice cake stamps are usually hand-carved wood, but one can also find some made of ceramic or porcelain. The stamps come in a rectangular or circular shape. Rectangular rice cake stamps, mostly wooden, have the design carved on one side, two sides, or four sides. Circular ones are made of wood, ceramic, or porcelain with patterns on one side, two sides, or six sides. Rice cake stamps should be carved from hardwood with simple patterns.

Tteoksal designs are diverse but broadly symbolize abundance in three things, longevity, good fortune, and fertility. Each pattern has a symbolism: the sawtooth wave pattern for wealth, happiness, and fertility; peony for wealth; chrysanthemum for longevity and the Pure Land; waves for the royal court; crane, turtle, deer, or peach for longevity; a bat for the Five Blessings (longevity, wealth, health, love of virtue, and peaceful death) and fertility; butterfly for joy, conjugal harmony, and longevity; and fish for sunshine and rebirth in the Pure Land.



Rice cake stamps with handles, to easily imprint patterns on rice cakes.



Neunghwa pan, or a book cover stamp, carved from birch.



A book cover stamp carved with a Buddhist floral design (*bosangwha*).

Neunghwa pan's Aesthetic and Practical Functions

Neunghwa pan, a “diamond flower woodblock,” is used to imprint a particular design on a book cover, which is made of multiple sheets of paper pressed into a single sheet. Book cover stamps are mostly made from birch, but mountain mulberry or pear tree wood is sometimes used. Imprinting a design on a book cover is aesthetically pleasing; it is also a practical way of protecting the main body of a book by allowing in some air beneath the embossed cover. It is hard to ascertain when the practice of book cover imprinting came into being, but it is estimated to date back to the late Goryeo period. A swastika design is popular among the book cover stamps

from earlier periods, denoting that book cover imprinting had evolved from the practice of decorating Buddhist scriptures into a widespread secular custom. During the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392), Buddhism was a state religion and woodblock printing skills and experience were concentrated in Buddhist monasteries, giving rise to the assumption that the production of book cover stamps originated from Buddhist practice.

A book cover design generally consists of a background design and decorative patterns. The designs from the 15th and 16th centuries are mostly of the swastika, lotus, or *bosanghwa* (Buddhist floral design) patterns; designs with bird and fish motifs are also sometimes found. In the 17th century, a diverse range of designs appeared, including patterns of the seven treasures of Buddhism, circles, and arabesques; from the late 18th century to the early 19th century, swastika patterns and stylized Chinese characters were independently applied or accompanied with motifs of the seven treasures, lotus flower, or peach, and then the standardized form of serial patterns predominated. By the late 19th century, stand-alone motifs, such as a chrysanthemum, butterfly, dragon, phoenix, or Chinese characters were preferred over standard designs. After then, as Western bookbinding techniques were imported, book cover stamps fell into disuse.

Sijeonji pan, Delivering the Taste and Character of the Literati

Sijeonji pan is a carved woodblock design to stamp on paper to be used for writing a letter or composing a poem. Hardwood varieties are preferred so that the finished

Carving would not be easily worn down, including birch, mountain mulberry, or pear. The hard section of the ginkgo tree, a softwood, may also be used. Timber is first soaked in saltwater and then dried before it is ready for carving, in order to prevent shrinking of the woodblock and the possibility of distortion of carved lines. In the design of a paper stamp, lines are far more important than decorative motifs. Because lines on a paper stamp are fine and delicate, and therefore hard to carve, it requires skilled craftsmanship to create lines without mistakes. Along with line patterns, motifs of the Four Gentlemen of literati painting (plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum) and crane with pine tree are used.

Printing using paper stamps is done in the same way as ordinary woodblock printing. What is distinctive, however, is that paper stamp printing can utilize ink in the five colors of the traditional Korean color spectrum (*obangsaek*, corresponding to the five cardinal directions) rather than applying just black ink as in ordinary woodblock printing. The patterns printed on paper reflect the personal tastes and attributes of the person who wrote on it: the orchid pattern represents unfulfilled dreams; the chrysanthemum, gentleness; bamboo, fidelity; and the pine tree, virtue.

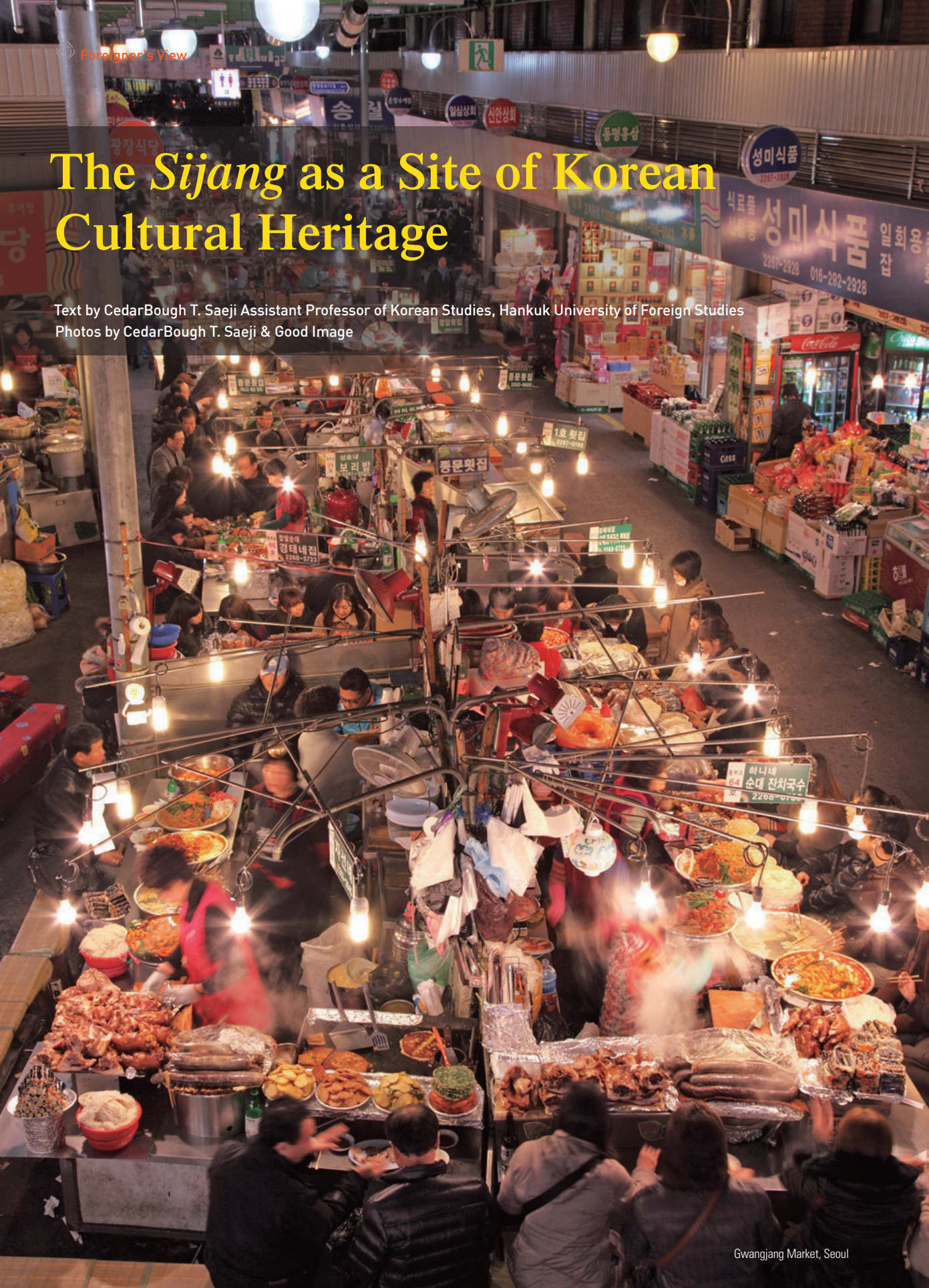
As seen above, Korean ancestors, utilizing wood carving skills, produced products necessary for everyday life and created a diverse range of designs attesting to their aesthetic sensibility and ingenuity. The traditional designs and patterns embody traditional Korean beauty and sentiments. With industrialization and mechanization, however, mass-produced objects have replaced painstakingly hand-made traditional artifacts and designs. Although factory-made products are available to play the function of the *tteoksal*, *neunghwa pan*, and *sijeonji pan*, there is today an increasing interest in the aesthetic value of traditional designs and the meanings they carry. In addition, traditional designs are being adapted by contemporary design and applied art sectors, transforming them into modern patterns. Despite phenomenal changes in the ways people live, eat, and dress in modern society, the importance of design has not changed. Decorative patterns and motifs are essential for architectural design and materials, as well as for garments and everyday products, including corporate logos. It is hoped that traditional designs would be adopted more widely and vigorously in many sectors of society. 🌀



Sijeonji pan is used to imprint a pattern on paper for writing a letter or composing a poem.

The *Sijang* as a Site of Korean Cultural Heritage

Text by CedarBough T. Saeji Assistant Professor of Korean Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
 Photos by CedarBough T. Saeji & Good Image



Gwangjang Market, Seoul

Korean heritage is not just an ancient sword at the National Museum of Korea, or a shamanic ritual, or a delicately beautiful piece of silver inlay work (*ipsajang*). Korean heritage, like heritage elsewhere, is the present-day process of meaning-making in reference to the past. This process produces a connection between individuals and heritage through memories—memories not just of your individual experience, but linking you to the web of meaning sustained by your cultural community. When a child carries out a cultural activity with a parent, learning how to live within their culture, hearing the parent's stories of the past, and creating new memories together, the child is connected to this web of heritage. This vision of heritage as something that does not exist without our participation runs counter to the understanding of heritage I often hear in Korea, where heritage is conceived of as museum objects, historic sites, and traditional performances. It is all of those things, but those things continue to be heritage only through multiple and interwoven connections to all aspects of Korean life, from education to etiquette to foodways.

My concern, as a scholar of Korean heritage, is that the web of interwoven understanding that sustains Korean heritage as a living, constantly evolving, storehouse of cultural knowledge is in tatters. I know I share these concerns with many others who witness the lack of involvement or commitment to Korean things in modern life. Yet sustaining heritage is not that difficult. Over-achieving modern parents seem to think that connecting their child to Korean cultural knowledge should be, even must be, a process carried out by professionals who teach a specific and measurable skill. Yet even the simplest of activities in the home can contain valuable lessons about Korean cultural values and ways of life connected to the ancestors. In keeping with the theme of this issue of *Korean Heritage*, something as simple as a trip to the *sijang*, whether permanent or temporary, can connect Koreans, young and old, to their cultural heritage. The memories of past trips to the street market a parent can share with their child, and the new memories they make together, can be significant and meaningful.



Jayang Market, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul.



Fruits neatly displayed on produce shelves of an indoor mart.

Changing Korea, Changing Markets

I began conducting research on Korean cultural heritage in 2004, but I became interested and started learning about this rich heritage from the moment I arrived in Korea in 1996. The first time I went to a Korean traditional market I had been in the country for less than twenty-four hours. There were two daily markets near my home in Daegu—the closer market was in a central (covered) area between two rows of commercial buildings, I was less than a half block away. For that first year in Korea I bought almost all of my fruits and vegetables in this market. I used my fledgling Korean language skills to determine costs and indicate what, and how many, I wanted to purchase. Not yet prepared for serious conversations I figured out things based on common sense and my own farm upbringing: tomatoes were plentiful in summer and fall because they were local and ripened only at that time of year. Strawberries were fleetingly present in the spring. Spinach and other fresh greens, dirt still clinging to their roots, must come from greenhouses in the winter. Honestly the selection of vegetables was rather boring in the winter, but a trip across town for extremely over-priced produce in the basement of a department store that recreated a vision



A variety of grains sold in Moran Folk Market, Gyeonggi-do Province.



Moran Folk Market, Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do Province.

of American commerce wasn't attractive, either. Many items we are accustomed to seeing now were absent in the past. It was amazing when I first saw a beet in a street market. I didn't start seeing broccoli in the *sijang* until after 2000, and even then it was more common to see it as side dishes (*banchan*) in restaurants, than for sale next to the squash. In the past all peppers were waxy green bells or slender and spicy. The plethora of yellow, orange, and red sweet bell peppers (called paprika by Koreans, I'm not sure why), the kohlrabi, multi-hued tomatoes, red onions—you couldn't find any of these until recently. Each aspect of what is available in the market is part of ever-evolving Korean foodways, and hence, cultural heritage. New foods have continually made their way to the Korean peninsula (think of the chili pepper!), each has changed consumption patterns—the broadened availability of produce mirrors other cultural changes in Korea. For example, today we can enjoy farming songs from Gyeongsangnamdo, flying-fingered *gayageum sanjo*, *pungmul* in a style from Jeollabukdo, court dances, and new *changjak gugak*, even within the same concert, no matter what our economic background or hometown.

The Five-Day Market in Mohyeon-myeon

Now I live in an outlying area of Gyeonggi-do near a five-day market. I keep an eye on the calendar for the days ending in 2 and 7, and always try to stop in and

support the street market. I appreciate experiences like shopping there that give me a feeling of connection to the Korean people, to farmers like my own family, and to the Korean past. Our five-day market is small, and everyone recognizes me. We have a corndog and donut seller, a vegetable seller, a fruit seller, a dried seafood seller, a fresh seafood seller, a tofu seller, a butcher, a nut and dried fruit seller, a seller of pig hocks, a candy and cookie seller, a dried grains and beans seller, and a banchan seller, only one of each. Sometimes there is a man selling plants, or a couple hawking plastic bowls and cheap clothing. My favorite of the regulars at the market is an old (yet still vigorous) grandmother. This sweet woman squats on the pavement, hands busy, peeling *doraji* and picking the bad leaves off *naengi*. Depending on the season, she peels garlic, shells beans, and divides a few mismatched leeks into bundles. She has a limited inventory that cannot be predicted, but what she has tastes the best, as she either wild-harvested it or grew it herself, so I begin each trip with buying anything I can use from her. Sometimes I have to ask her how to prepare a *namul* I have never cooked before—most recently I decided to try *sseumbagui*. Many at the market also work other five day markets, at up to four other locations. The banchan seller works our market and a market in nearby Yongin, he and his wife prepare the banchan on the days he isn't selling. The vegetable seller is at a different market each day in the five day cycle—he buys his vegetables at night at Garak Sijang, the wholesale market. My favorite grandmother also visits one or two other markets in the five-day cycle. I asked her how she has time for farming and markets. She laughed and told me she

usually doesn't come to the market until 11 and goes home again by 3, leaving her the rest of the day to work in and outside her greenhouse.

My little five-day market in Mohyeon-myeon, like others in Korea, is struggling to hang on. These days Koreans choose to shop at big box stores over supporting small businesses. They purchase cheap produce grown abroad over supporting Korean agriculture. They choose anonymous workers in uniforms over building community through relationships with the sellers at the market (grandmother will remember to ask me about my *sseumbagui* success and the banchan seller always remembers my favorites). Casual conversations with these people in the market, and chatting with other shoppers, my neighbors in Mohyeon-myeon, connects me more closely to my local community.



Mohyeon-myeon Five-Day Market

Seeing the change in seasons reflected in the fruits and vegetables that are available draws me into my environment. Cooking with fresh and local ingredients protects my health.

Support the Local Community instead of Big Business

The various arguments that people bring up for shopping in a big box store do not ring true—certainly anyone who loves Korea and Koreans, cares about the environment, and wants to eat healthily will be shopping at five-day markets, daily street markets, or supporting the markets run by agricultural union Nonghyup—where the origin of the produce is clearly marked and Korean grown high quality organic food is always available. If I go to a big box store I sometimes see good deals—but if I buy I support a web of international economic exploitation where low cost is prioritized over any other value. The convenience of one-stop shopping at a big box store cannot be better than the freshness of buying the most recently harvested items at a traditional market walking distance from home.

Most of all, supporting a traditional market connects us to Korean cultural heritage. Each trip to the market reinforces a connection to the things that make up Korean tradition: the jeot which can become part of a batch of kimchi, the traditional snacks that can make even your grandfather tell tales of his childhood, the vegetables that grew in Korean soil, the block of *meju* dried in the sun, these are all representative of Korean heritage.

Learn when the markets near you operate, and make shopping at the market part of your weekly routine. The extra few cents you might pay for buying Korean instead of imported produce will be offset by feeling connected to your cultural heritage. Koreans just like you have been eating seasonally and locally grown foods for generations—your parents, your grandparents, they shopped at street markets, too. Take your children with you and share your memories of your own childhood. Grow to know the lives and concerns of the people who live closest to you. Through these activities you are participating in keeping your own cultural heritage alive in a meaningful and significant way, no matter how much society continues to change. 🌱



Gwanjang Market, Jongno5ga, Seoul



Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut, a Shamanic Performance at Chilmeoridang Shrine in Jeju, which is inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Gut, Korean Shamanic Rituals

Text by Kim Heon-seon, Professor of Korean Literature, Kyonggi University
Photos by National Intangible Heritage Center

Gut is a religious ritual rooted in musok, an indigenous Korean belief system with a time-honored history, which centers around communication between humans and gods through the medium of mudang (Korean shamans). Musok is, on the one hand, identical with the more-generally known animistic religion of shamanism, but, on the other hand, is different from it; musok is a mixture of divergent religious influences and historic origins.

What is *Gut*?

A Gut serves as an arena where human beings experience the presence of gods and realize their religious faith; the gods' divinity and human intellect are commingled; and mudang and their clients come together to seek religious salvation. In a Gut ritual, the three components—gods, mudang, and clients—become as one. A Gut is an occasion wherein the mudang and the client, as a celebrant and an adherent of the mudang, interact so as to commune with the gods. The gods are not unitary but multi-faceted. Shamanic divinities are so many that it looks chaotic at first glance, but it is not: each of the many spirits and deities is systematically manifested in a Gut ritual, in a particular setting and with a specific meaning.

Gods, *Mudang*, and Clients

Mudang are priests who have earned their religious credentials, and shamanic rituals are where they prove

their capability. Korean shamans are generally divided into two categories: *gangsinnmu* (destined shamans) and *seseupmu* (hereditary shamans). Although previously-clear, the distinction between the two types of shamans has been blurred in the present, but it is still relevant and appropriate.

Clients—or adherents—of shamans are called *dangol* in Korean, a term with an age-old history. Clients, together with shamans, regard the gods as deities to worship. The clients, however, cannot relate to gods directly but only through the intervention of shamans. The relationships between the gods and the shaman and between the shaman and the client underpin the execution of a Gut. The faith of the client is delivered to the gods through a Gut ritual presided over by the shaman.



A shaman riding on a sword during a Gut ritual.



OguGut, a term referring to the ritual for the dead in the Jeolla region.



Gyeonggido DodangGut, a village-level ritual participated in by all community members.

The Varieties of Gut

Gut are performed at different levels and are called *jip Gut* (family rituals), *maeul Gut* (village rituals), and *goeul Gut* (town rituals). Jip Gut are conducted for individual families. A member of a family—mostly female—requests a shaman to conduct a jip Gut on special occasions for particular purposes. Depending on purpose, jip Gut are subdivided into several types. *Jaesu Gut* (rites for good fortune), also called *chukwon Gut* (rites to pray for fortune), are intended to usher in good luck and fulfill wishes and, in accordance with their purpose, create a cheerful ambience. When a family suffers from unlucky events, *uhwan Gut* (rites against misfortune) are performed in order to drive away misfortune and bring back in peace and stability by petitioning divine forces. Uhwan Gut are also known as *byeong Gut* (rites against disease) or *chibyeong Gut* (rites to cure disease) and often observed for those who have been troubled by illness of undetermined cause. Gods’ anger is believed to have caused the illness, and a Gut is conducted to appease the divine wrath. *Saryeong Gut* (rites for the dead) are given the greatest importance among jip Gut, which are conducted for the dead, not for the living. Saryeong Gut are intended to harmonize the relationship between the living and the dead.

Maeul Gut are conducted to bring peace and prosperity to a village, and is open to participation by every member of the community. Unlike family-level rituals, maeul Gut are observed regularly and are, therefore, conducted in accordance with pre-set specifications as to the date and content of rituals and the kinds of food to be sacrificed. When a ritual date draws closer, it is customary for village residents to come together to discuss how to secure resources for the village ritual and to select an officiant. Maeul Gut



Seoul SaenamGut, a ritual for the dead.

are characterized by the wide participation of community members and—with the exception of the Seoul-Gyeonggi area north of Hangang River and the West Coast—by the fact that hereditary shamans serve as celebrants.

Goeul Gut happen at the level of *goeul*, or towns, which are much larger communities than villages. Primary examples of goeul Gut are Eunsan Byeolsinje and Gangneung Danoje. As large communities, the areas of Eunsan and Gangneung hold town rituals over the course of more than 15 days, and ritual procedures are intricate, in proportion to the size of communities covered.

Value and Meaning of Gut

The Gut is a quintessentially Korean folk ritual tradition, stemming from Korean shamanism, or musok. The Korean shamanic tradition has much in common with shamanism in other cultures. This is to say that the Gut is archetypically Korean and, at the same time, a universal ritual practice. Gut are also distinguished by immense regional variations and vital practical functions in modern Korean society. Gut have developed in a way that fosters and highlights both religious and artistic value. The three components of a Gut—*bonpuri* (myth recitation), *maji* (greeting rite), and *nori* (theatrical entertainment)—still serve as a wellspring of content for various literary and artistic genres. Bonpuri delivers the myths of gods through oral transmission; maji is the sacred communion of humans and divinities; nori is an entertainment-centered theater played by humans acting as gods.

The traditional shamanic practice of Gut has been transmitted to the present with a vast number of local variations. That a shamanic tradition retains vitality in modern society is a rare and remarkable phenomenon. Among its other functions, Gut today as in time immemorial acts as an expression of the people’s wishes and serves to enhance communal solidarity. This shows the vitality and power of Korean shamanic rituals that have been transmitted until the present. ☺



South Coast ByeolsinGut, a village ritual intended to bring about an abundant catch to fishers.

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