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The image on the cover is a painting of the “10 symbols of longevity” (*sipjangsaeng*), including the sun, clouds, mountains, pine trees, and deer. It was produced in 1879 to celebrate the recovery from smallpox of the Joseon crown prince (the future King Sunjong). The last two folds of the painting bear the names of the 14 physicians in the temporary medical office established for treating the ailing crown prince. This is an unusual element not found in other examples of this type of painting. It reflects how traditional society considered overcoming an infectious disease to be a great achievement worth being recorded. The world is experiencing a time of trials with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If there is one thing that we have learned from this crisis, it is the need to prepare ourselves for effectively dealing with COVID-19 or other viruses that might occur in the future. Another lesson is maintaining a positive attitude and helping each other as we rise to this challenge.



Cultural Heritage Administration

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CURATOR'S SELECTION

Heo Jun's

Systematic Battle Against Epidemics

Human history has long been plagued by infectious diseases, and Korea was certainly not spared. Research in historical documents from the Joseon Dynasty reveals that more than half of the 221 years from the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392 to 1613 contained outbreaks of infectious diseases. The year 1613 was yet another year of suffering from transmissible illnesses, but it merits further attention as it also saw the publication of two significant books.

Text by Shin Dong-won, Professor in Science, Jeonbuk National University

Photos by the Heo Jun Museum and the Cheongju Early Printing Museum



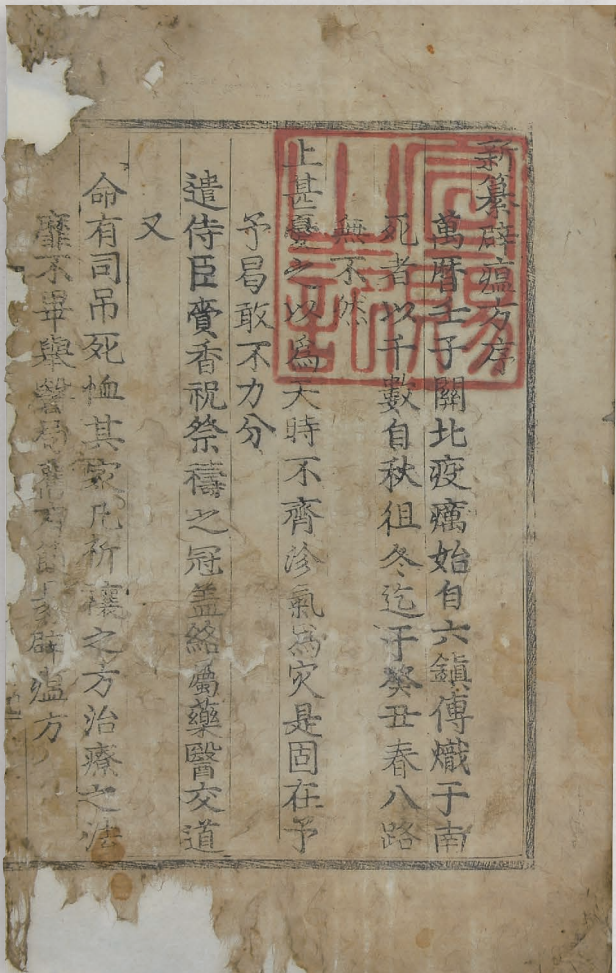
Portrait of Heo Jun (1539–1615)

Heo Jun compiled eight medical books throughout life. Along with the two published in 1613, he wrote *The Principles and Practice of Eastern Medicine (Dongui bogam)*, a medical book with far-reaching impacts in East Asia that was entered into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2009. (Photo courtesy of the Heo Jun Museum)

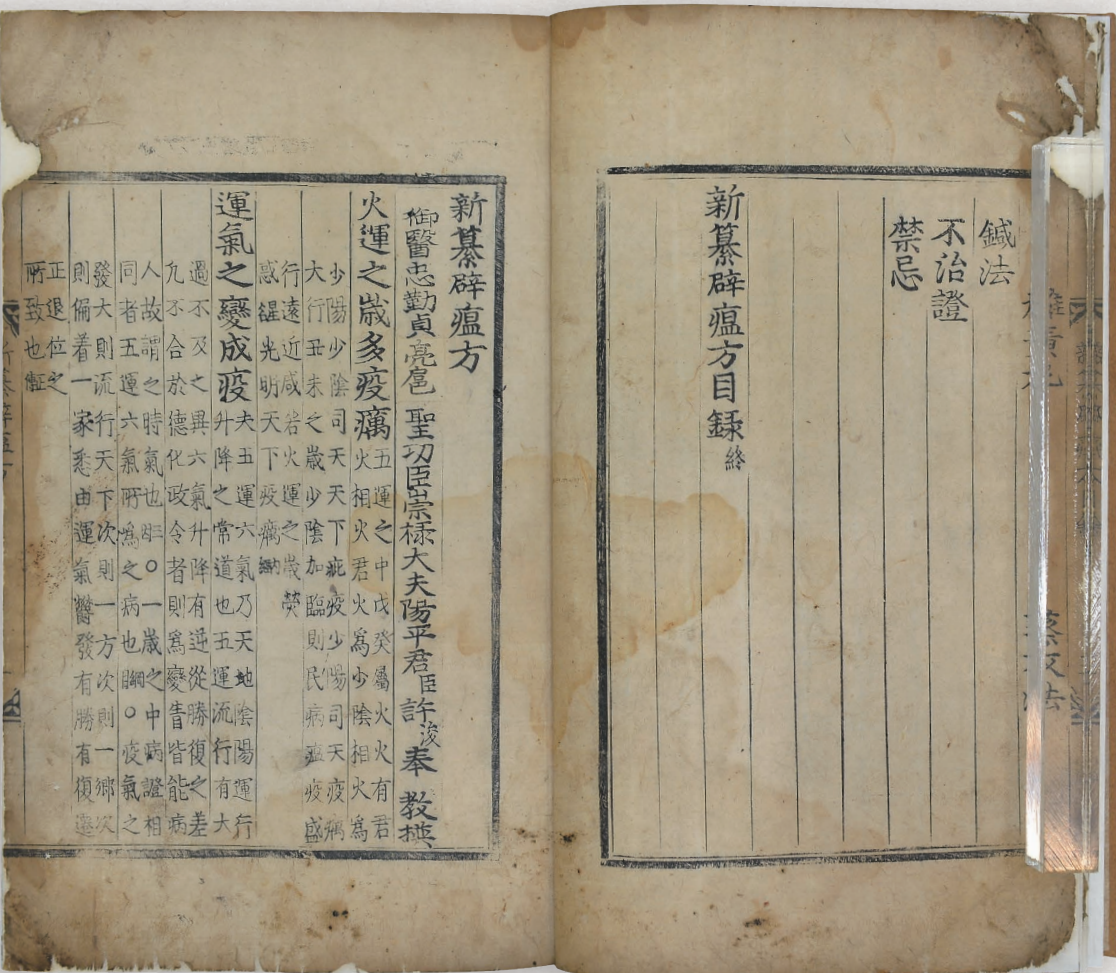
Royal Orders to Compile a New Medical Book

A major outbreak of disease occurred in 1612 in the northernmost province of Hamgyong and gradually spread south. It was called *onyeok*, or “an infectious disease causing a fever.” Its transmission had not subsided by the spring of the next year. In December 1612, the number of known deaths from this transmissible fever was reported as around 2,900 in Hamgyong-do Province alone. The febrile disease continued into the year 1613 and it is highly likely that this official number was intentionally minimized, so it can be presumed that even more people must have died in this epidemic.

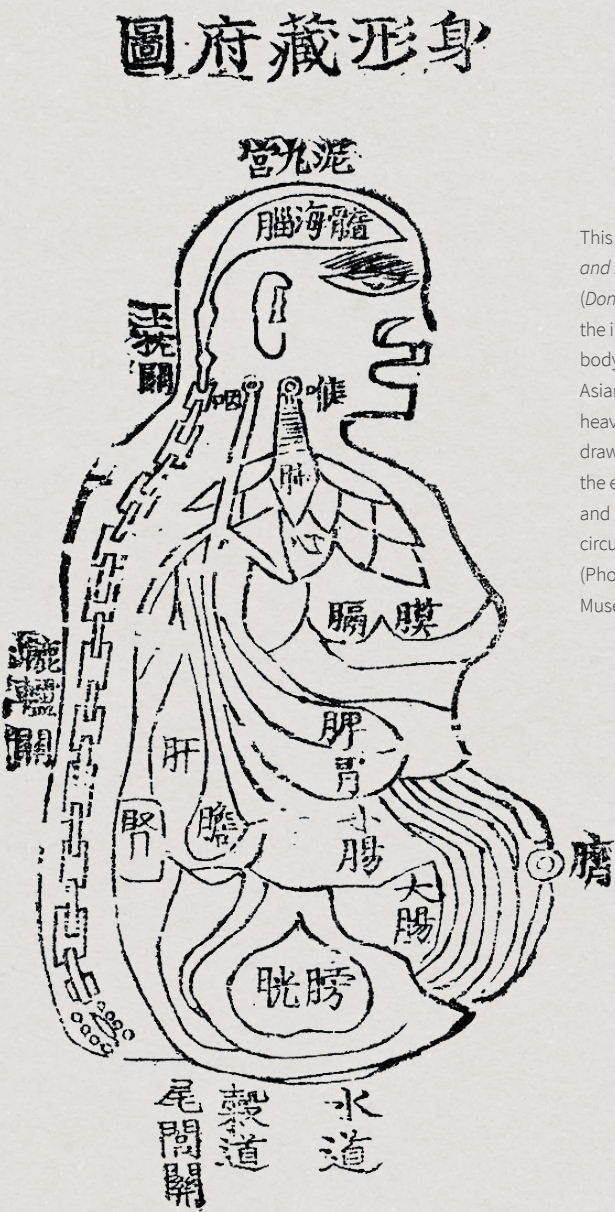
As the spread of *onyeok* accelerated, the Joseon royal court responded with increasingly stronger measures. Copies of the *Simple Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* (*Gani byeongonbang*), a medical book published in 1525, were printed and distributed to areas suffering from outbreaks. The prescriptions written in this 16th-century medical book were mostly superstitions, however, suggesting ways to dispel or ward off the evil spirits believed to cause illness. The dissemination of superstitions failed to contain the disease and criticisms were raised regarding the effectiveness of the recommended measures. Seeking some kind of breakthrough, the Joseon court had the royal physician Heo Jun compile a new medical book on *onyeok*. Heo Jun is an important figure in the history of medicine in East Asia. He is best-known for his medical treatise *The Principles and Practice of Eastern Medicine* (*Dongui bogam*, or "Treasured Mirror of Eastern Medicine") compiled in 1610 and published in 1613. It is known as the most



Newly Compiled Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics (Sinchan byeongonbang), Treasure No. 1087-1
The text in the photo records that the royal physician Heo Jun was ordered by King Gwanghae in 1613 to compile the book as an epidemic escalated across the nation from the autumn of 1612 to the spring of 1613. The book suggests methods for preventing and treating the "febrile disease" (*onyeok*) which took many lives at the time.
(Photos courtesy of the Cheongju Early Printing Museum)



Onyeok is caused by a surge in the power of “fire,” one of the five elements explaining changes in the cosmos according to traditional philosophy.



This first page of *The Principles and Practice of Eastern Medicine* (*Dongui bogam*) provides a map of the internal organs of the human body. Drawing on the traditional Asian ideology of the “unity of heaven, earth, and man,” the drawing illustrates the principle of the endowed energy from heaven and earth and the acquired energy circulating within the human body. (Photo courtesy of the Heo Jun Museum)



Chinese licorice
This one of the most prevalent herbs in Eastern medicine. The *Newly Compiled Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* (*Sinchan byeongonbang*) recommends a brew of Chinese licorice and other medicinal herbs to treat the fever and thirst caused by *onyeok* (“febrile disease”).

frequently printed book from Joseon in China. Recognized for its significance across East Asia, it has been entered onto the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

Upon receiving the royal orders, Heo Jun hurried to produce a new medical compilation. His efforts resulted in *Newly Compiled Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* (*Sinchan byeongonbang*). He applied the same editing method in this book that he had used for the compilation of *The Principle and Practice of Eastern Medicine*. Information on each covered in the book is presented in the order of causes of the disease, the typical pattern of the patient’s pulse, symptoms of the disease, suggested remedies according to a particular combination of symptoms, other illnesses showing symptoms similar to the disease concerned, prayers and medical preparations effective for curing the disease, preventive measures, acupuncture therapy, incurable symptoms, and things to avoid while ill. For each point, relevant texts extracted from the traditional classics are first laid out and then followed by items from later compilations drawing on these classics. This systematic presentation of the content sets it apart from previous books on infectious diseases.

In his book, Heo Jun associates *onyeok* with symptoms including excessive sputum, a stuffy burning sensation in the chest, severe headaches, muscle pain, shivering and sever fever, sore throat and eyes sometimes to the extent that sound cannot be made and the eyes turn red, boils in the mouth, a swollen throat, frequent coughing, and severe sneezing.

Heo Jun suggests different remedies depending on how long the patient has been ill. He prescribes sweating for those two to three days into *onyeok* as “the evil spirit of the illness still stays on the surface of the body.” Four or five days into the course of the disease, the point when it resides in between the inside and outside of the body, he recommends “medications that can resolve whatever has been

clotted.” After six or seven days, when the disease has deeply penetrated the body, he suggests that it is beneficial to drive the fever-causing illness out of the body with a laxative.

A Comprehensive Compilation of the Existing Theories on Epidemics

Modern science can identify a particular bacteria or virus as the cause of a given illness and explain its impact on the human body in relation to environmental factors, local characteristics, and individual immunity. This kind of scientific interpretation of infectious disease was not possible before the introduction of modern medical tools and technologies. To explain the spread of *onyeok* in 1613, Heo Jun relied on the correlation between the energy of the cosmos and the emergence of epidemics as first theorized by Wang Bing from Tang China.

The *Newly Compiled Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* notes that “each year has a distinct pattern of energy that effects the human body and causes various kinds of disease.” The year 1613 was the Gyechuk year according to the traditional Chinese calendar system, which consists of sixty terms with each expressed in two Chinese characters. The character Gye corresponds to fire among the five elements or phases (*wuxing*) that explain changes in the cosmos. Heo Jun adds, “As the addition of Chuk [to Gye] further stokes the power of fire, people all across the nation suffer from *onyeok*.” Heo Jun explains that the inclusion of Gye in the year does not automatically lead to the eruption of an epidemic, however. It must meet abnormal climate conditions—for example, unseasonable hot or cold weather extremes—to arouse a malicious form of energy and spawn an infectious disease. Depending on the power of the negative energy,



Scale
This scale was used to weigh medicinal herbs. (Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea)



Acupuncture needles and case
(Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korea)

the disease may stop at an individual household or go on to affect a neighborhood, region, or even the entire nation. The explanation of the cause of *onyeok* offered by Heo Jun is not as scientific as it would be today. However, he managed to go beyond the common understanding of the time, which relied on shamanistic forces as the main culprit of disease, and devised his own understanding based on a well-established traditional cosmology.

The *Newly Edited Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* published in 1613 became established as the standard textbook for later theories on epidemics in Korea. In this compilation, Heo Jun offered a comprehensive overview of the various hypotheses of the *onyeok* outbreak that were put forward at the time, even referring to contemporaneous medical books from Ming China, such as *The Orthodox Transmission of Medicine* (*Yixue zhengchuan*) published in 1515 by Yu Tuan, *An Introduction of Medicine* (*Yixue rumen*) from 1575 by Li Chan, and *Recovery from Ten Thousand Diseases* (*Wanbing Huichun*) authored by Gong Tingxian in 1587. The *Newly Edited Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics* is considered to surpass preceding medical volumes on infectious diseases by including the systematic presentation of a theory and offering pertinent medical instructions.

Another Infectious Disease and Another Medical Book by Heo Jun

To make matters worse, another infectious disease emerged in the winter of 1613. Presumed to be what we know as scarlet fever today, this disease was completely unfamiliar at the time. Heo Jun was called upon once again to devise response measures for this unprecedented illness with no relevant information available in historical or contemporaneous medical books. His first tasks were to identify symptoms of the new disease and

their differences from those of other illnesses and ascertain the causes. Based on the information he developed through this characterization process, he had to suggest ways to prevent and cure the disease. He labored with a strong commitment to helping patients recover, dismissing groundless fears about the mysterious disease, and providing the medical field with effective preventive measures. His efforts resulted in the publication of *New Prescriptions to Avoid Epidemics* (*Byeongyeok sinbang*). The thesis presented in this book is the first in East Asia to differentiate scarlet fever from other similar illnesses. It came more than 100 years before any hypotheses put forward in China, for example, by Ye Tianshi in 1733 or Yu Lin in 1768.

It is considered one of the first and most accurate theses on scarlet fever in the world. Erwin Ackerknecht, a leading medical historian, summarizes the background of studies on scarlet fever in his book *History and Geography of the Most Important Disease*: “Scarlet fever was described for the first time as a distinct disease by Ingrassias in 1550. ... Sydenham distinguished scarlet fever from measles and smallpox in 1676. His merits in accomplishing this differentiation have been somewhat exaggerated. In this task he had been preceded by Horst (1624), Sennert and Düring (1627), Winkler (1652) and Fehr (1664).” According to this explanation, Heo Jun’s thesis on scarlet fever is set between those by Ingrassias and Horst, and precedes that of Sydenham by more than 60 years. In addition, Heo Jun did not stop at identifying distinct symptoms of scarlet fever, as did Ingrassias: he went on to systematically offer remedies for the disease.

KOREAN FOOD

A Dining Lesson from the Past for the Pandemic Era

Text by Joo Young-ha, Professor, Graduate School of Korean Studies, The Academy of Korean Studies

Photos by the National Museum of Korea; the Naju National Museum; the National Folk Museum of Korea; and the Korean Food Promotion Institute

The Korean harvest festival Chuseok fell on October 1 of this year. It is customary for family members to gather on the morning of Chuseok and observe rites for their ancestors and share food from a ritual table. This year's holiday was different, however. The tradition of getting together and eating on Chuseok was discouraged by government officials out of fears of spreading COVID-19. Except for rice and soup, the other dishes on a typical Korean dining table, known as *banchan*, are all shared by the people present. The Korean dining practice of several people eating directly from the dishes on the table is considered dangerous in an ongoing pandemic.

A representation of the typical individual table for a Joseon aristocrat
(Photo courtesy of the Korean Food Promotion Institute)

Different Eating Habits around the World

The Japanese anthropologist Naomichi Ishige suggested a way of categorizing the diverse methods of communal dining found around the world: private vs. collective and consecutive vs. simultaneous. The private type of dining refers to offering individual servings of each dish to the people eating together, while in the collective type a particular food is served in a single container from which the people present eat. Those following the consecutive type serve certain sets of foods one after the other, while in the simultaneous type all of the dishes to be eaten are set out at once.

Ishige arranges these different eating habits onto a matrix as below, designating four distinct styles of group eating practices. Individual or communal dishes can be served all together or offered one by one. When proposing these four varieties of collective eating practices, the Japanese anthropologist stressed that the dining habits in a particular culture are not fixed in stone, but can change over time. The Korean method of eating can be generally categorized as the second style (collective simultaneous) according to Ishige’s matrix.

	Private	Collective
Simultaneous	①	②
Consecutive	③	④

It is surprising to learn that this manner of communal eating is a relatively young tradition with a history of less than a century. George Clayton Foulk (1856–1893) was one of the first Americans to experience a Korean meal. He arrived in Korea as a U.S. naval officer on May 31, 1884 and traveled across the country over the next few months. His diary detailing his journey was published as the book *Inside the Hermit Kingdom* in 2007. It relates how Foulk visited the Jeonju municipal government and was provided with individual dishes set out on a *soban*, or a small portable table. He described this traditional Korean table as “a table reaching my breast” while evaluating the foods on it as delightful. He also drew a sketch of the dishes

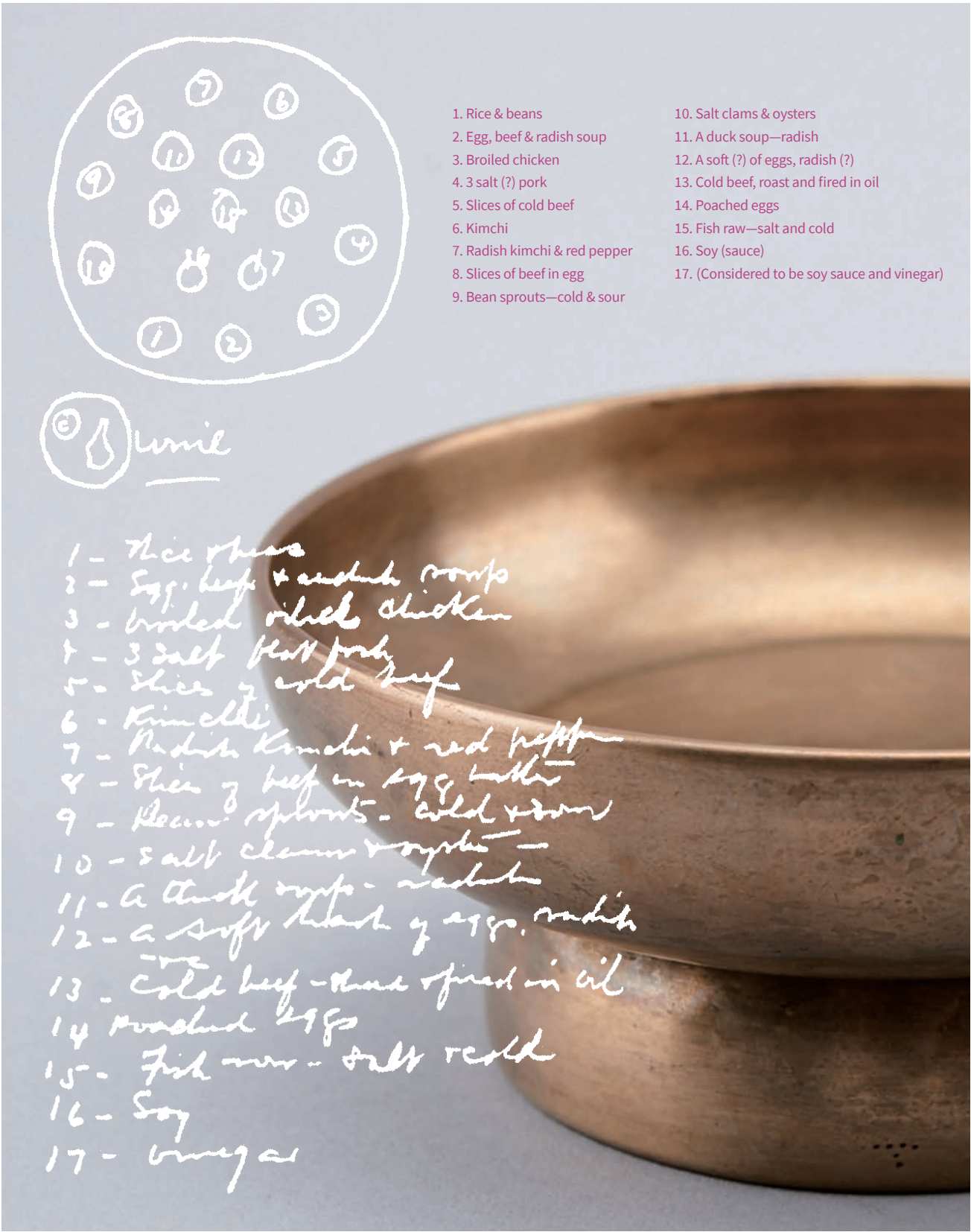
he was served. The way Foulk ate this meal, however, was different from how Koreans serve food today. Foulk’s meal can be classified as the first style in the abovementioned matrix—private and simultaneous.

Eating Alone: Dining for Joseon Aristocrats

The food service style experienced by Foulk was common at feasts organized by the royal court or local governments during the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). All the participants, however numerous they might be, were respectively provided with an individual table set with the prepared foods. The same applied to the head of an aristocratic family. Eating alone was the norm for male aristocrats in the Confucian society of Joseon. The practice of setting out individual tables was an observance of Confucian classics such as *The Book of Rites* and *The Rites of Zhou*. These books prescribe dining at an individual table as preferable for a Confucian gentleman whether he eats only with his wife or together with many others.

At a grand royal banquet celebrating the birthday of the king, his wife, or his mother, the foods were served one by one on individual tables. This corresponds to the third style in Ishige’s matrix. According to set Confucian protocols, the royal guest of honor was consecutively served with a series of cups of liquor or tea, each of which was accompanied by several foods. As each round of royal serving was completed, the participants at the event were offered the same set of foods on an individual table set in front of them. The number of food services offered at a large-scale royal feast ranged from three to nine.

A sketch of the table George Clayton Foulk was served when he visited the Jeonju municipal government in 1884





Brass vessels

During the Joseon era, a *soban* was set with—for example—rice, soup, soy sauce, stew, kimchi, fermented seafood (*jeotgal*), salted dry fish, boiled beef or pork slices, and seasoned vegetables, all served in ceramic or brass vessels. Noble families used porcelain vessels in summer and brass in winter. With its low heat transference, brass made a perfect material for wintertime food containers. They also used spoons and chopsticks made from brass. Their preference for brass utensils were based on ancient Confucian dining ideals from China which regarded bronze as the ideal material for utensils.

(Photo courtesy of the Naju National Museum)



Silver Spoons and Chopsticks

The Joseon royal family originally used porcelain vessels and brass spoons and chopsticks, but these were mostly replaced by silver starting in the 16th century. Silver changes color when touched by certain toxic substances. Silver spoons and chopsticks were adopted as a means to protect the king or crown prince from poisoning attempts. From the 20th century, a set of a silver spoon and chopsticks was a popular gift for a one-year birthday to pray for the health of the baby.

(Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea)



Soban, or “Small Table”

A *soban* is a compact table suited for individual dining. Being small, it can be carried with ease. The regions of Korea used different kinds of wood for making *soban*, including ginkgo, Chinese hackberry, and sawleaf zelkova. *Soban* can be categorized by the shape of their tops—circular, rectangular, or octagonal—or by their legs resembling either those of a tiger or a dog.

(Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea)

A 20th-century Invention

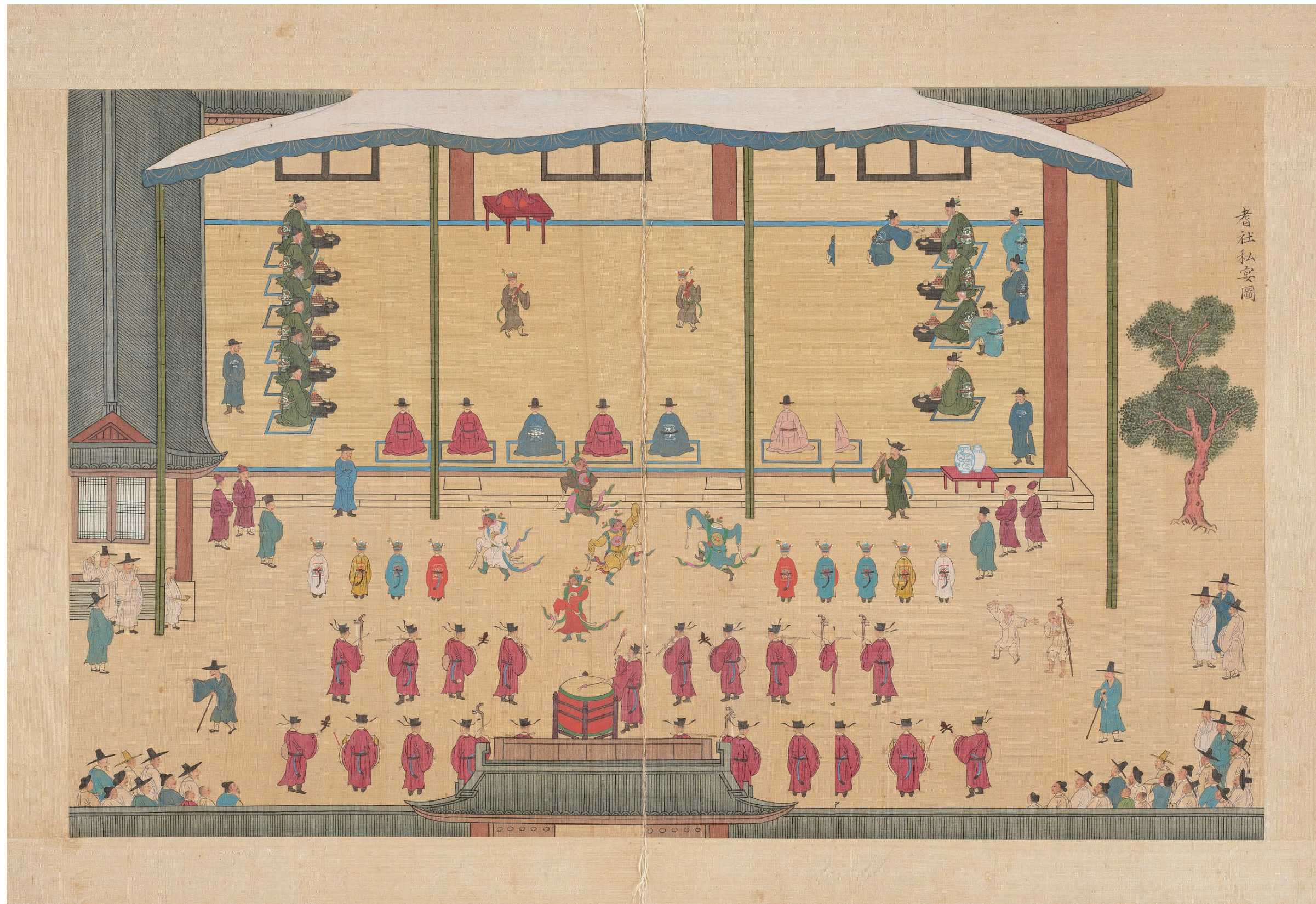
Today’s method of communal eating was popularized as late as in the 20th century. The Korean agronomist Yu Dal-yeong (1911–2004) made a case for the introduction of communal dining within every family, arguing that the practice of preparing a separate table for the head of a household undermines equality among the family members. However, the time-honored familial tradition of heads of households eating alone proved stubborn. In August 1949, one year after the establishment of the government of the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of

Culture and Education set forth a series of directives on everyday practices. One of them was “Abolish the practice of eating at an individual table, and introduce communal dining at a shared table.” Even at the government level, preparing a separate table for the head of a family was regarded as an inefficient eating habit.

In contrast to within families, the practice of eating from the same dish by the people seated at a dining table spread rapidly in modern restaurants in the 20th century. Both high-end and more affordable restaurants introduced



Photo courtesy of Korean Food Promotion Institute



large tables at which many people could sit in order to accommodate as many customers as possible within a given area. With the influx of population into urban areas starting in the 1960s, several people enjoying a meal at one large table while sharing food became established as the norm.

Kate Bratskeir, a journalist based in New York City who writes about food and health, made a call to Cecilia Hae-Jin Lee, the author of the book *Eating Korean*, seeking advice before her first visit to a Korean restaurant. In response, Cecilia Hae-Jin Lee suggested the only rule to remember, “All *banchan* [dishes except for individual rice and soup] is communal.” During the current pandemic, Koreans are questioning the appropriateness of their relatively new tradition of eating from communal dishes. They may find a solution in their older traditions. The Joseon Dynasty practice of eating at an individual table, once considered a symbol of patriarchy, could offer a beneficial model for dining while controlling the transmission of coronavirus.

A leaf from the *Album of Paintings of the Gathering of Elders*

The painting describes a feast held for high-ranking officials aged 70 or older on April 17 and 18, 1719. In the picture, each participant is being served at an individual table.

(Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korea)

CULTURAL ROOTS

The Past and Present of Epidemiological Response in South Korea

Interview with

Lee Hyun-sook, Research Professor at the Institute of Medical History,
Yonsei University College of Medicine

Lee Jacob, Associate Professor with the Division of Infectious Disease,
Kangnam Sacred Heart Hospital, Hallym University

The world today finds itself in a constant struggle against a pandemic. Social distancing measures are restricting everyday life in unprecedented ways. With the number of COVID-19 cases spiking in many parts of the world, South Korea is being recognized for its success in containing the pandemic at a relatively stable level. This section looks at previous epidemics that swept the country and the Korean responses to infectious disease in the past and the present. Two experts discuss the issue: Professor Lee Hyun-sook at the Yonsei University College of Medicine and Lee Jacob from Hallym University.

Text by Choi Min-young

Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration; the Gaya National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage;
the National Hangeul Museum; the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies; and Jung Meen-young

Professor Lee Hyun-sook
at the Yonsei University College of Medicine

Epidemics in Traditional Korean Society



In her online interview, Professor Lee Hyun-sook emphasizes that Koreans of the past implemented strong social distancing measures during epidemics.

The oldest Korean document mentioning infectious diseases is *The History of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk sagi)*. It records, “In the fourth year of the reign of King Onjo of the Baekje Kingdom [15 B.C.], it was dry in the spring and summer, a famine occurred, and an epidemic broke out.” The epidemic mentioned here is likely to have been caused by the southward movement of peoples fleeing the expansion of Han China in 108 B.C. Many of the infectious diseases that have been transmitted on the Korean Peninsula remain on the list of communicable diseases managed by the government today. Professor Lee Hyun-sook explains:

“Traditional Korean society saw regular occurrences of smallpox, malaria, dysentery, influenza, typhoid, and cholera, all illnesses that are today included on the list of communicable diseases subject to management by the government. They mostly arrived through China. A large epidemic that took place in early 661 in the Silla Kingdom is an example. There is a record saying that there was an outbreak of smallpox in China in 653. Later, as many as 200,000 soldiers from Tang China entered the Korean Peninsula over the course of Silla’s unification efforts. Given this, it can be reasonably assumed that the epidemic of 661 was smallpox coming in from China. Cholera first arrived in Korea in 1821, killing about one million people over the next 10 years. Originating in India, cholera came to Korea overland through southern China and then across Manchuria. At the time, infectious diseases traveled mainly through military conflicts and trade.”

The History of the Three Kingdoms records 27 outbreaks of infectious disease that

Simple Prescriptions to Prevent Epidemics (Gani byeongonbang)

This text written in Chinese characters is accompanied by a translation in the Korean alphabet so that it could be widely read and followed. This page states, “if a family member falls ill, the patient’s clothes should be washed thoroughly and steamed in a rice steamer. Then, the disease will not be transmitted to others.”

(Photo courtesy of the National Hangeul Museum)

Gilt-bronze Standing Bhaisajyaguru Buddha (Treasure No. 328)
Bhaisajyaguru is the Buddha of medicine and healing. He is normally expressed as holding a container of medicine. The practice of crafting statues of the Medicine Buddha came into vogue in Korea during the Unified Silla period. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korea)

Wooden sticks excavated from Gyeongju, the capital of the Silla Kingdom, with medical prescriptions written on them (Collected at the Gyeongju National Museum; photo courtesy of the Gaya National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage)

took place in the three ancient Korean kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. These epidemics all occurred in winter, spring, or summer. It is inferred that cold and dry weather during the wintertime and seasonal famines before the harvest could be brought in were the main causes. While *The History of the Three Kingdoms* features just one name for infectious disease, the records of the succeeding Goryeo Dynasty, *The History of Goryeo (Goryeosa)*, provides several names for specific infectious diseases such as *onyeok* and *jangyeok*. This history only accounts 20 outbreaks of infectious disease, but 17 more are listed in other historical documents. However, it is assumed that more than these 37 recorded epidemics must have occurred over the 475-year history of the Goryeo Dynasty. Information on epidemics during the Joseon era can be found in *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty (Joseon wangjo sillok)*, which describes diverse cases of epidemics. Over the more than 500 years of this dynasty, over 160 of them included an outbreak of infectious disease. What did traditional Korean society do to prevent and fight against these epidemics?

“When an infectious disease broke out, the king disseminated medical information and materials to local magistrates in response. The state operated public health facilities for healing patients, and even a designated office for managing infectious disease. Given the devastating impact of epidemics on the food supply, the state also distributed emergency rations during epidemics to prevent both the stricken and healthy people from dying from hunger.”

In addition, the state would pardon all inmates except for those on death row, preventing the prisons from turning into hotbeds for transmission of the disease. There is a record of emergency measures being implemented just one or two days after the king was briefed about a situation. The state’s reaction was nimble, and it must have been a great source of stability in people’s lives during an epidemic.

Social Distancing, a Traditional Method for Controlling Epidemics

“Koreans of the past already knew that prevention is the best policy for epidemics. Whenever an epidemic occurred, instructions on preventing the disease were printed in the Korean alphabet and circulated among the people. To ward off evil spirits [which they considered the major cause of infectious diseases], they customarily did things like taking a specially made pill and affixing branches from a peach tree to their front gates on the first day of the year, eating red bean porridge on the winter solstice, and playing with fireworks on the last day of the last month of the year.”

After the Japanese invasions in the late 16th century, a range of infectious disease outbreaks occurred. In response, the royal physician Heo Jun published two compilations on communicable diseases in 1613—one on *onyeok* (“febrile disease”) and the other on what is today identified as scarlet fever. He also saved a lot of smallpox patients with a treatment called *jeomigo*. Despite these systematic efforts, professionals with training in medicine were in short supply and therefore the responsibility for fighting an epidemic fell to individuals. When an epidemic broke out, people would take refuge in a mountain temple or in an unaffected area until the disease subsided. Self-isolation and social distancing were commonly used in traditional Korean society.

“*The Chronicles of Japan (Nihon shoki)* says in its records on the year 642, ‘When an epidemic occurs in Silla or Baekje, parents do not take care of their children and children do not take care of their sick parents’. Koreans at the time practiced extreme social distancing measures like this because they had learned from experience about the lethal impacts of infectious disease. According to records from the Joseon Dynasty, all planned feasts and ancestral rites were cancelled upon the outbreak of

A record on a shamanistic rite to drive away the spirit believed to cause smallpox (Photo courtesy of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies)



an epidemic, and even funerals were carried out in a highly simplified manner. It is recorded that there was no one out in the streets. Far stronger social distancing measures must have been implemented back then compared to today.”

With no scientific understanding of infectious disease, Koreans in the past believed that epidemics were caused by supernatural forces. They appeased evil spirits with shamanistic rituals, praying that no great harm would be inflicted.

As the scientific study of infectious diseases advanced starting in the late 19th century, communicable disease has seen a dramatic decline worldwide. With the rapid urbanization in many parts of the world and ever-increasing international exchanges, however, a single outbreak can be more dangerous than ever in terms of its speed and the area in which it can spread. This can be seen with COVID-19, which has been transmitted across the world at an alarming rate.

Lee Jacob from Hallym University

Universal Health Coverage in South Korea



Professor Lee Jacob stresses that what is underpinning the country's successful response to COVID-19 is people and their focus on the good of the community. (Photo taken by Jung Meen-young)

Professor Lee Jacob comments on traditional Korean culture and its relations with today's response to COVID-19.

“Koreans really like to meet and share food. It is a longstanding tradition to communicate and form bonds by coming together to eat and drink. This traditional practice unfortunately contributes to the transmission of infectious disease. Despite this longstanding practice, recent opinion polls indicate that the proportion of people abiding by social distancing measures is as high as 90 percent. This would be partly out of the desire to protect their own health. However, a greater motivation can be consideration for others and the desire not to harm them. Koreans are placing traditional habits aside in careful consideration of others.”

From the first COVID-19 case in late January until November 15, South Korea has seen 24,422 patients and 494 deaths. Given the spikes in coronavirus cases in many parts of the world, South Korea has been quite successful in containing the

spread of the virus at a relatively low level. Professor Lee Jacob points to national health insurance as a major contributor to the country's success in its fight against COVID-19.

“The universal healthcare coverage offered by the country's national health insurance was a great help. People with symptoms can get a test for about 10,000 KRW [approximately 9 USD]. When people test positive, they can receive necessary medical care for free. With universal health coverage in place, people can feel assured that money will not be an issue even if they catch the virus. This sense of security also causes people to go to the hospital without delay when they develop symptoms.”

It goes without saying that the bedrock of the country's medical system is its doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals who take care of patients day and night. Their dedication is a precious resource for the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Top_ The dedication of medical workers has been a tremendous resource sustaining the nation through the COVID-19 crisis.

Below_ South Korea pioneered drive-through coronavirus testing stations. Drivers and passengers can undergo the entire testing process without leaving their cars. The drive-through is celebrated as an innovative method for rapid mass testing.



People enjoying a traditional performance while observing social distancing rules (Photo courtesy of the Cultural Heritage Administration)

Power of Grassroots Collaboration

Facing the current pandemic, the president’s administration has worked nimbly and efficiently in South Korea, earning high confidence from the public. They learned lessons from the outbreak of MERS-CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) in 2016, when the government failed in its initial response after the occurrence of the first case in South Korea and suffered a rapid nationwide spread. After the MERS-CoV outbreak, the Korean government laid the foundation for a speedy and efficient first-response system. This is the secret of the country’s head start in implementing a testing system for COVID-19.

“With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, all the sectors involved—public, administrative, and private—began to respond quickly. After some conflicts over the division of roles, things have fallen into place and the harmonious system we see today was created. One thing to remember is that the greatest enemy in the response to a pandemic is complacency. The government should continue to

think about how to build upon the well-established response system, and the private sector should keep a watchful eye on the government’s policies and be ready to give both constructive advice and strong support as needed.”

Universal health insurance, dedicated medical professionals, and efficient administration are all important elements explaining the country’s success against COVID-19. However, none of these factors would have been fully effective if they weren’t supported by cooperation from the public. Koreans voluntarily followed the social distancing measures set out by the government. They also help each other out: if they catch the virus, people can rely on the social networks that they have formed at the personal and professional level to get through the difficulties.

“The sense of community and voluntary participation by the public has provided the basic fabric for the country’s successful response to COVID-19. It was through the unified action of the South Korean people that the country first achieved democracy and then overcome the



Koreans register their entry into a facility by submitting a QR code generated on their smartphones. The information gathered through this QR code-based system helps quickly trace the contacts of possible coronavirus patients.

The sense of community and voluntary participation by the public has provided the basic fabric for the country’s successful response to COVID-19.

financial crises of the late 1990s. It has been no different with the COVID-19 pandemic. People voluntarily practiced social distancing measures even before they were made mandatory, and fully supported the government’s response policies.”

It is being predicted by many that COVID-19 will be around much longer than first expected. It would be wise to prepare ourselves for effectively dealing with COVID-19 in everyday life, as well as any other viruses that might occur in the future.

“We have learned from the coronavirus pandemic how valuable human contact is. Contactless communication does not yet feel fully natural to Koreans. However, I believe that we will resolve these problems through technological development, and the new ways of communicating will also be good for the environment. I hope that there will soon be a solution that strikes a balance between the need for health security in everyday life and the traditional value of human contact.”

Professor Lee Jacob emphasizes that the recipe for success in responding to COVID-19 or any other infectious disease is addressing weaknesses within society. Those who are quick to identify what makes them vulnerable to infectious disease and respond properly will triumph. Those who do not will suffer. The least people can do is maintain a positive attitude and help each other out before the ultimate triumph is achieved.

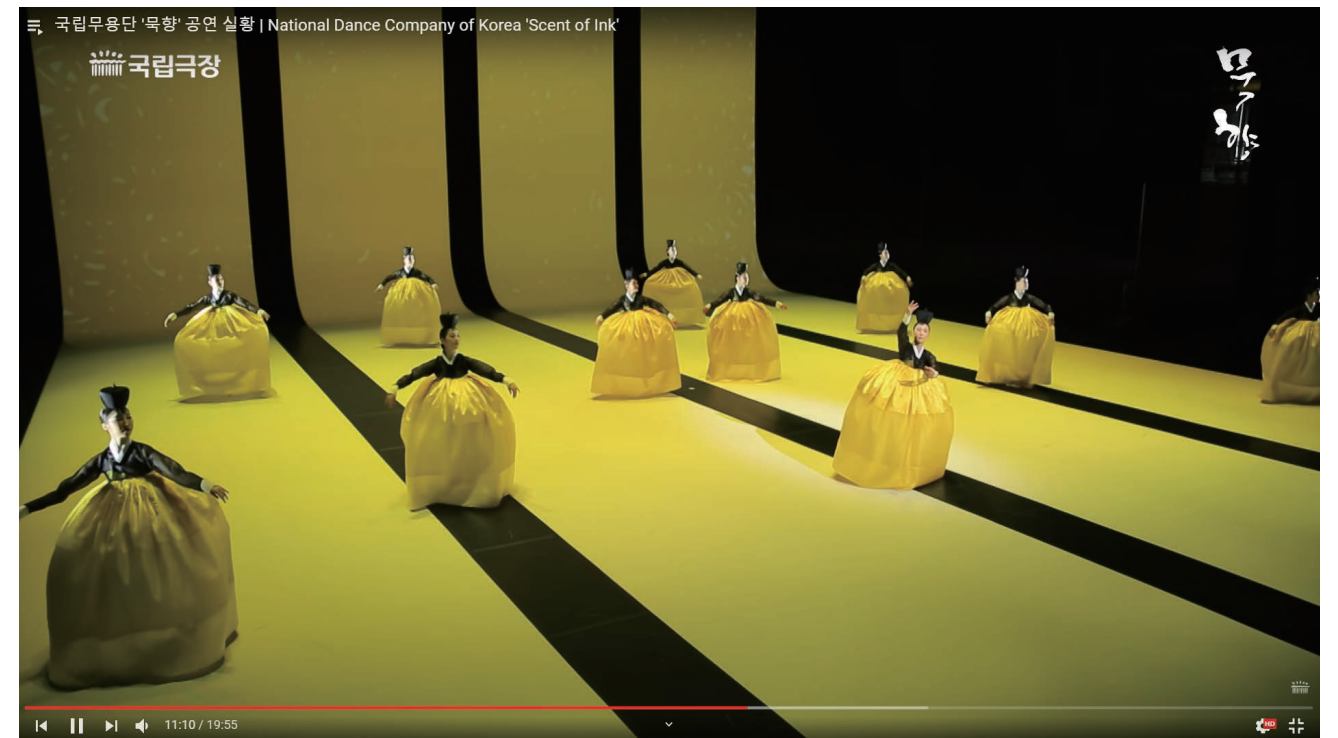
LOCAL HERITAGE GUIDE

Arts and Culture Enjoyed Online

Text by Yoon Da-young

As the COVID-19 pandemic restricts our lives in new and different ways, the craving for artistic experience is only increasing. Cultural institutions around the world are striving to devise creative measures to quench the public thirst for art. In Korea, a range of opportunities to remotely experience art and culture through online platforms are being created.

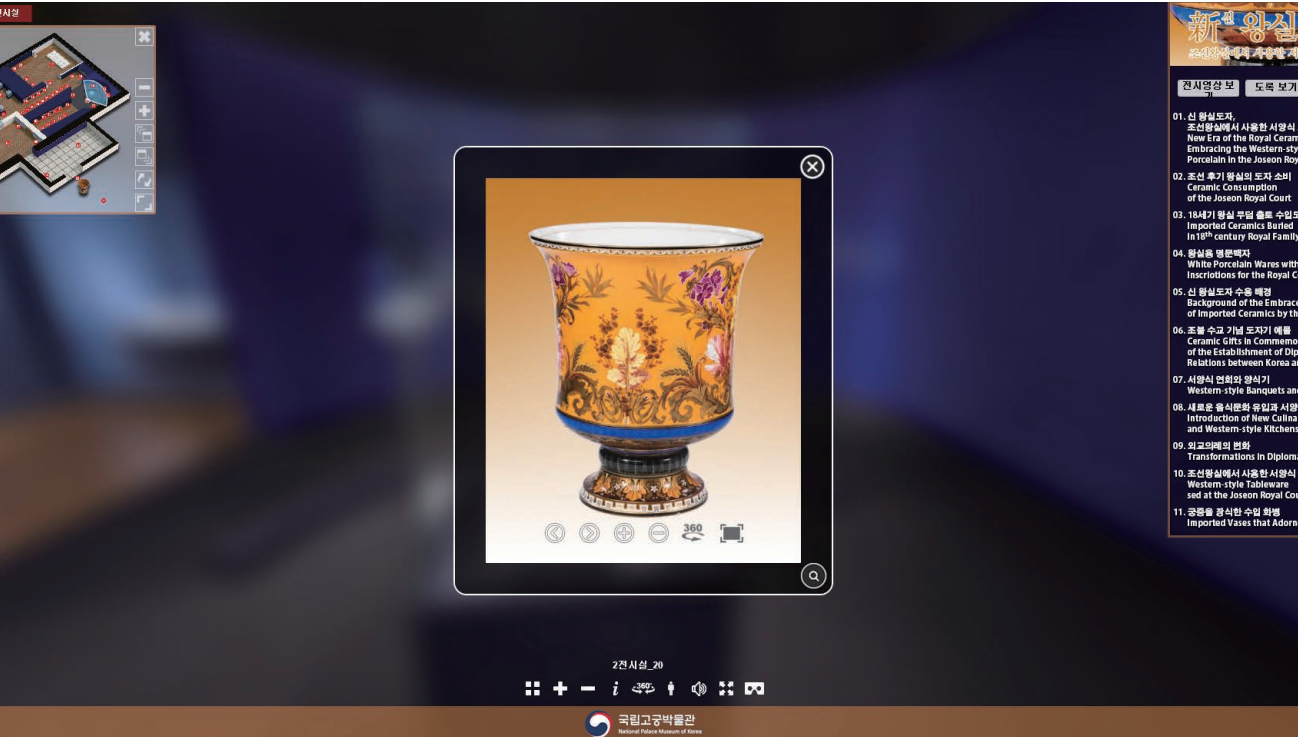
National Theater of Korea



The National Theater of Korea is promoting Korean art and culture by offering modern and global takes on the traditional performing arts. Along with hosting performances, it educates actors and other transmitters of traditional performing arts, conducts research activities, and carries out international exchanges. The National Theater has three resident companies—the National Changgeuk (“Traditional Korean Opera”) Company, National Dance Company, and National Orchestra—as well as four dedicated theaters.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, the National Theater put six of the most successful shows performed by its resident company onto online platforms. Named “National Theater Access,” the performances were recorded in real-time and have received a whopping 200,000 views. This provisional program has demonstrated the potential for online performances in promoting traditional performing arts to a wider public. The National Theater is planning to take a more active approach to utilizing recording and communication technologies for disseminating traditional performing arts. It is also paying careful attention to devising creative business models that respect the benefits to individual artists and protect the performing arts ecosystem.

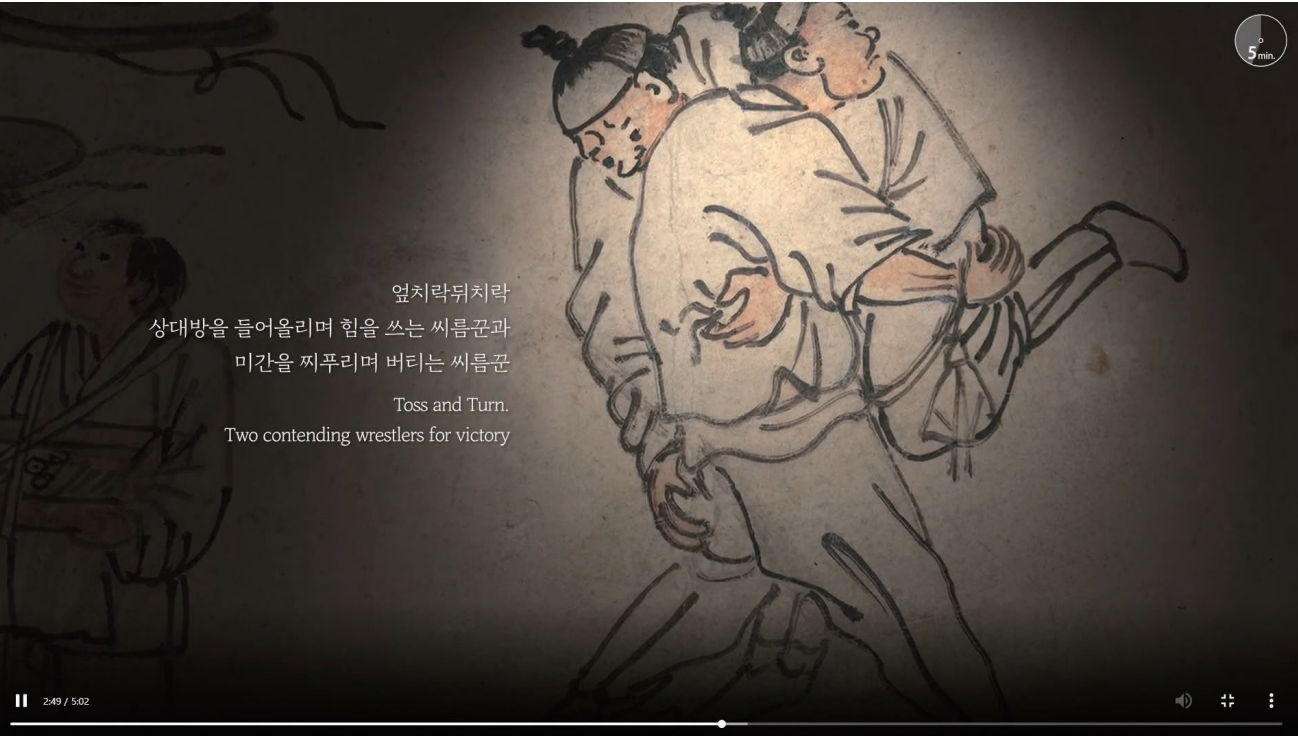
National Palace Museum of Korea



The National Palace Museum of Korea is dedicated to preserving and disseminating the history and culture of the royal household of the Joseon Dynasty (including the Korean Empire period). In order to better promote the royal culture of Joseon, the National Palace Museum holds permanent and special exhibitions and sometimes hosts exhibitions from abroad. It also conducts research on royal artifacts from related heritage sites such as the Joseon royal palaces and tombs, carries out conservation treatment, and implements education and experience programs.

The museum operates seven permanent exhibition halls dedicated to the respective themes of the sovereign, royal palaces, life of the royal family, the Korean Empire, royal rituals, scientific achievements, and royal painting. The online versions of these exhibition halls are currently available on its website. By logging on to the designated page, visitors can freely tour all seven exhibition halls in virtual reality. They can access the same information as they would in the actual exhibition halls since the on-site explanations are also available through the virtual experience. In addition, the website presents a special detailed visual and textual explanation of 50 highlights from the collection, allowing an opportunity to enjoy the royal culture of Joseon online regardless of geographical limitations.

National Museum of Korea



The National Museum of Korea offers an overview of Korean history from prehistory to the present as seen through diverse artifacts. Visitors to the museum can discover a wide representation of the material legacy of the past, from paleolithic hand axes to lavish gold crowns from the Three Kingdoms, Goryeo celadon, Joseon-era paintings, and photographs of early-modern Korea.

The National Museum of Korea has been operating an online exhibition program through its website. A virtual experience of its special exhibitions is offered on a designated page where visitors can navigate through them using virtual reality technology. They can appreciate exhibits at their leisure and even read the textual explanations accompanying the artifacts. The National Museum has also been offering real-time online guides of special exhibitions in cooperation with a major Korean web portal. These live broadcasts with a docent offering tours of an exhibition have received a great response from the public. The edited versions of these tours available online to allow visitors to gain a sense of atmosphere in their virtual experience at home. Other video clips created by the National Museum are being offered on its YouTube channel as well.

National Gugak Center



The repertoire of the National Gugak Center includes court and folk music from the past, but also contemporary Korean music that will become the traditions of the future. The National Gugak Center is working hard to integrate traditional music and dance as natural parts of everyday Korean life and to further disseminate Korean performing arts in a wider global community.

To offer an opportunity to safely enjoy *gugak* (“traditional Korean music”) at home, the National Gugak Center kicked off an online concert program in March of this year. Called the “Daily Gugak,” the program offers videos of *gugak* performances on the official website of the National Gugak Center, its YouTube channel, and the online broadcasting channel of the Korean web portal Naver. Each episode presents a different piece of traditional Korean music that anyone can easily enjoy as part of daily life. Watching the high-resolution video clips at home, the audience can note fine details from each performance—such as minutiae of the setting of the stage or the most nuanced changes in the expression of music—which could be difficult to observe during an in-person performance. At the start of the video, the audience can also listen to a brief explanation of the piece presented by the artist and a motivational message to help us overcome the everyday difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seoul Museum of Art



The Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA) opened in 1988 with the goal of raising public awareness of art and promoting its development. Along with collecting and exhibiting diverse works of art, the museum also operates a range of public education programs, carries out research activities, offers various publications, and provides support to artists.

With physical access to cultural facilities restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum is working to create opportunities to virtually experience artworks. For example, *Collecting for All*, originally an offline exhibition designed to provide a space to explore the meaning of collecting and the future of collected artifacts as a common good, was shifted online with the spread of the COVID-19. Relevant lectures and performances, exhibition highlights, and interviews with artists have been uploaded. Furthermore, a public communication channel for the exhibition has been prepared on social network platforms under the hashtag “#SeMALink.” Online education programs are offered, contributing to ensuring people’s right to a cultural life even during a pandemic.

National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea

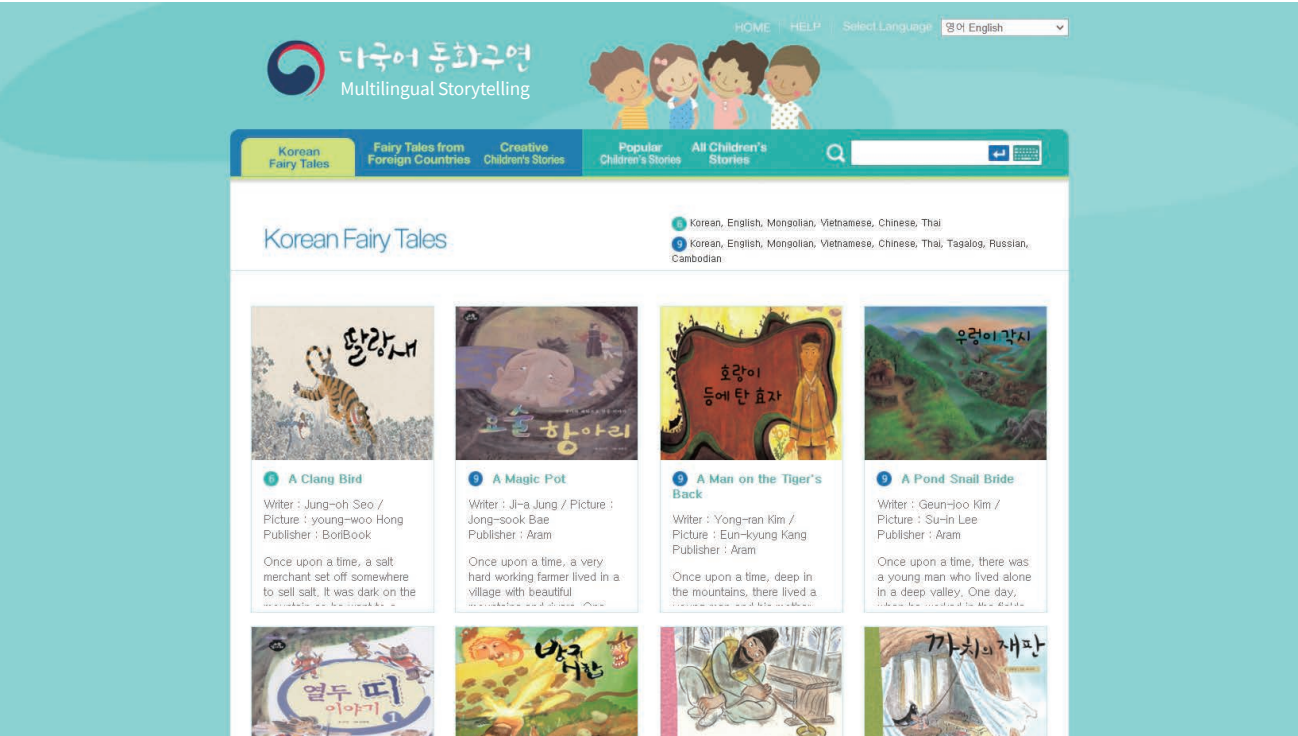


The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) was founded in 1969 inside the Gyeongbokgung Palace compound in Seoul, but was transferred to Gwacheon in Gyeonggi-do Province upon the completion of new facilities there in 1986. It later opened additional galleries in 1998 within Deoksugung Palace, in 2013 in central Seoul, and in Cheongju in 2018. The four galleries of MMCA was are striving to become an open cultural space for a broader community through their activities at collecting, researching, and exhibiting artworks along with art education and publication.

Faced with the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, MMCA is working to make it into an opportunity to transform its methods of sharing art with the public. As part of this effort, the museum launched a new menu on the first page of its website called Online Museum. The Online Museum platform offers the complete collection of video and audio materials that were formerly dispersed across YouTube and diverse other social media platforms. Visitors can enjoy tours of exhibitions, interviews with artists, art lectures and symposiums, children’s education classes, and audio interpretations of exhibitions.

This year’s first special exhibition, *Modern and Contemporary Korean Writing*, was held as an online event for the first time in the museum’s history and met with great success. The special exhibitions that followed have been offered with a stronger focus on online services. These online outreach programs by MMCA not only guarantee access to artworks when physical visits are restricted, but also provide an opportunity for deeper learning before and after museum tours.

National Library for Children and Young Adults



The National Library for Children and Young Adults provides a space where children and teenagers can nurture their dreams and expand their vision through books. This organizational purpose was embodied in a makerspace named the Workshop for Future Hopes and Dreams that was opened in 2019. Inside the space a wide range of public programs are being operated that blend reading activities with creative efforts.

The National Library for Children and Young Adults maintains a YouTube channel with diverse content not only for children and teenagers, but also for their parents and librarians. For example, classes on creative activities that can normally be taken only physically in the Workshop for the Future Dreams and Hopes are now accessible online. In addition, animated children’s stories are offered with narration: About 300 legendary or invented stories are narrated in six different languages—Korean, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, and Mongolian. About 100 of the stories are also available in Tagalog, Russian, and Cambodian. These multilingual animations for children are expected to enhance their capacity to understand other cultures and better impart the joy of reading.

JOSEON STORIES



King Yeongjo, a Monarch who Resolved National Crises

Text by Kim Paek-chol, Professor in History, Keimyung University

Photos by the National Palace Museum of Korea and the Suwon Hwaseong Museum

History portrays heads of state according to how they stood up to national crises and found solutions. The 21st monarch of the Joseon Dynasty, King Yeongjo (r. 1724–1776), is clearly remembered as a compassionate sovereign who introduced a series of innovative policies to address various social ills and improve conditions for his people. One of his most prominent accomplishments is the implementation of a new tax law designed to alleviate the onerous tax burden shouldered by commoners and distribute it more fairly across all groups in the nation. For this reason, it was called the Equalized Tax Law, or Gyunyeokbeop. (Note by the Editor)

Portrait of King Yeongjo

King Yeongjo was the 21st monarch of Joseon. Spanning a remarkable 52 years, he maintained the dynasty's longest reign. He is considered a compassionate sovereign who introduced a series of innovative policies on behalf of his people. (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum of Korea)

Military Service Reform

The Joseon Dynasty designed its fiscal system mainly around three forms of tax—the land tax, tribute tax, and obligation to perform military service and corvee labor. In exchange for the plots of land they worked, people were obligated to pay a portion of their harvest as a land tax. The tribute tax called on every household to provide the central government with a range of products found in the area. In addition, able-bodied men could be called up for service in the army or for labor at construction sites. This system of duties continued through the 15th century, but over the course of the 16th century people came to primarily deliver all their tax obligations in the form of rice or cloth, items which served as a form of currency in Joseon society. This shift in people’s tax-paying practices indicates that the Joseon economy was undergoing a structural transformation toward a more monetary economy.

From the early 17th century, a minimum rate was applied to the tax imposed on land; and by the early 18th century the tribute tax, which imposed a considerable burden on people’s lives, was completely replaced by a less troublesome land tax paid in rice under the Uniform Land Tax Law (Daedongbeop). The sole remaining heavy tax was the requirement for military service and corvee labor, an obligation which people mostly avoided by offering bolts of cotton cloth as a form of exemption. With the military requirement being fulfilled with cloth, its payment could be directly translated into state income. The problems of this period were exacerbated by a combination of a declining population with growing military expenses. The foreign invasions were accompanied by a severe famine that reduced the number of eligible taxpayers. Meanwhile, however, the external attacks pointed out the need to shore up defenses, which resulted in the establishment of five new military garrisons. Furthermore, a growing number of registered taxpayers—not only members of the *yangban* aristocracy, but also affluent commoners—were able to evade their military service duties and transfer a disproportionate burden onto ordinary commoners. Faced with the heavy military service obligation, some commoners would even abandon their land and flee.

Around 17th century, commoners were becoming the sole source of revenue for the government. Their number and their capacity to pay taxes were considered a determining factor for the future of the state. With the decline in the population and the expansion of tax evasion, however, the government had to come up with a response to the depletion of government funds. This was the background of the debate over tax reform.

Along with the nationwide application of the Uniform Land Tax Law, a first round of reforms was implemented in the later years of the reign of King Sukjong (r. 1674–1720) that standardized the military service exemption tax at two bolts of cotton cloth. Discussions on tax reform continued into the reign of King Yeongjo. A series of ideas was aired over the span of about 100 years. There was a proposal to search out and include in the pool of taxpayers those who had illegally avoided their military service obligation. This was followed up by another suggestion to impose the military service exemption cloth tax on every household across all social classes. A rather radical idea was also put forward arguing for the imposition of this cloth tax on every able-bodied man regardless of his social status. There was another idea—similar to the Uniform Tax Land Law—to correlate the levying of the cloth tax with the amount of land possessed. Despite the extended discussion over tax reform and the diverse proposals offered, a final decision was hard to reach. Meanwhile, there was a growing concern that the current taxation system placing a disproportionate burden on commoners was delivering a severe blow to the future of the state. The need to subject the *yangban* aristocracy to a tax-paying obligation gradually became clear.

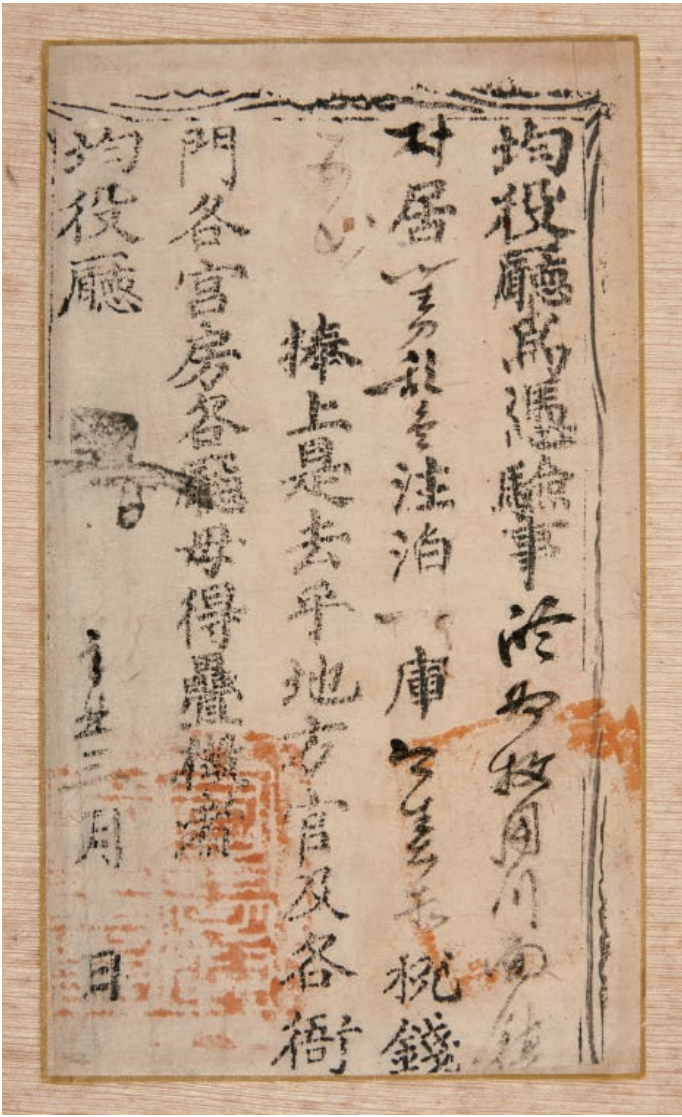
Listening to the People

King Yeongjo wanted to abolish the existing military service tax system altogether and introduce a new policy, as discussed above. However, a new policy alone could not solve the entire problem. At the time, social stratification had been taking place across the social classes—not only were commoners splitting into rich and poor groups, but also the aristocracy was becoming divided between successful families and declining ones maintaining their *yangban* status in name only. Without the adoption of a new classification standard based on economic capacity, no new policy could deliver its intended effect. During the decision-making process, King Yeongjo held three sessions of “inquiring into his subjects” (*sunmun*) where he listened to opinions from ordinary people. In the end, King Yeongjo decided to revise the existing system and completed the tax reform process. From this was born the Equalized Tax Law, the main ideas of which are as follows.

First, the tax paid in cloth in exchange for an exemption from military service was cut from two bolts of cotton cloth to one. The expected loss in revenue was to be made up for through other measures. This reduction in the cloth tax helped restore a measure of stability to the lives of commoners.

Second, taxes on fish traps, salt production, and vessels were added to the treasury of the central government. The right to collect these taxes had been held by the royal family, but it was transferred to the government as part of efforts to reduce tax rates. This loss to the income of the royal family was translated into an increase in government revenue.

Third, a cloth tax was imposed on wealthy commoners who had avoided military service by pretending to be of *yangban* status. To search them out, a new position was created called a *seonmu gungwan* (“selected military officer”). Wealthy tax evaders were encouraged take the examination to become “selected military officers.” Those who



Tax Receipt
This is a tax receipt issued by the Equalized Tax Service. These receipts, called *mulgeumcheop* (“orders not to violate the rights of the holder”), were used as evidence to prevent double taxation. (Photo courtesy of the Suwon Hwaseong Museum)

passed the examination were recognized as the new social class of “middle people,” one step up from the commoner class in the social hierarchy of Joseon, and granted immunity from the military service exemption tax. Those who failed remained subject to the ordinary tax rate of one bolt of cloth, but they were still endowed with this new social status.

Fourth, a form of taxation reflecting economic means was introduced. The tax deficit was originally allocated across the local provinces, but the measure soon turned out to be too burdensome for the local governments. Collecting an additional tax based on land, the primary yardstick of economic means, was suggested as a practical alternative. Hence a grain surtax was imposed on land. Those who were subject to this grain surtax were members of the *yangban* class, wealthy commoners, and local civil servants who owned plots of land. Ordinary commoners did not need to pay this new tax.

Profound Effects Across Society

The tax reform executed through the implementation of the Equalized Tax Law had far-reaching effects across Joseon society. First, the management of government revenue became more integrated. A central financial office called the Seonhyecheong (Uniform Land Tax Service) was established as part of the Uniform Land Tax Law. The funds accumulated at the Uniform Land Tax Service were utilized to make up for losses in revenue generated over the course of shifting from the existing military service tax system to the Equalized Tax Law. The Gyunyeokcheong (Equalized Tax Service), an office installed for the operation of the Equalized Tax Law, was later merged with the Seonhyecheong to create a more powerful agency for central government finances.



Secondly, the focus of the state’s economic policy was shifted from agriculture to commerce. King Yeongjo held regular sessions for listening to the opinions of government purchasing agents (*gongin*) and government-licensed merchants (*siin*). He also designated a special economic official with the task of managing merchants and addressing their issues. This testifies to the priority the merchant group was given in Joseon’s economic policy at the time.

Third, the social class system of Joseon was reorganized with “middle people,” commoners, and *nobi* (“serfs”) all receiving better treatment than before. After the tax burden on commoners was reduced by the Equalized Tax Law, a tax reduction was also granted to the state-owned serfs (*gongnobi*) who formed independent households like commoners. This tax benefit can be thought of as an extension of the Equalized Tax Law. The revenue loss resulting from this measure was actually made up for by the Equalized Tax Service.

Fourth, the Equalized Tax Law engendered a change in political philosophy that can be confirmed by accounts in the *Journal of the Royal Secretariat* (*Seungjeongwon ilgi*). When the Uniform Land Tax Law was enforced nationwide during the reign of King Sukjong, its meaning was considered “stabilizing the people and enriching the state.” After the enactment of the Equalized Tax Law, King Yeongjo took it a step further and commented, “The monarch exists for his people, not the other way around. ... If the monarch is incapable of protecting his people, his throne is nothing but a subject for revolution.” The 18th century saw the emergence of a more people-centered concept of state, or *minguk* (“people and state”), in Korea. It is considered that the tax reforms implemented during this period served as a driving force for the birth of this new political concept in Korea.

Plaque Bearing Yeongjo’s Calligraphy
This plaque was created in 1744. The phrase written on it was composed and executed by King Yeongjo. It reads, “Care for people through equalized taxes, and accumulate power through savings.” (Photo courtesy of the National Palace Museum of Korea)

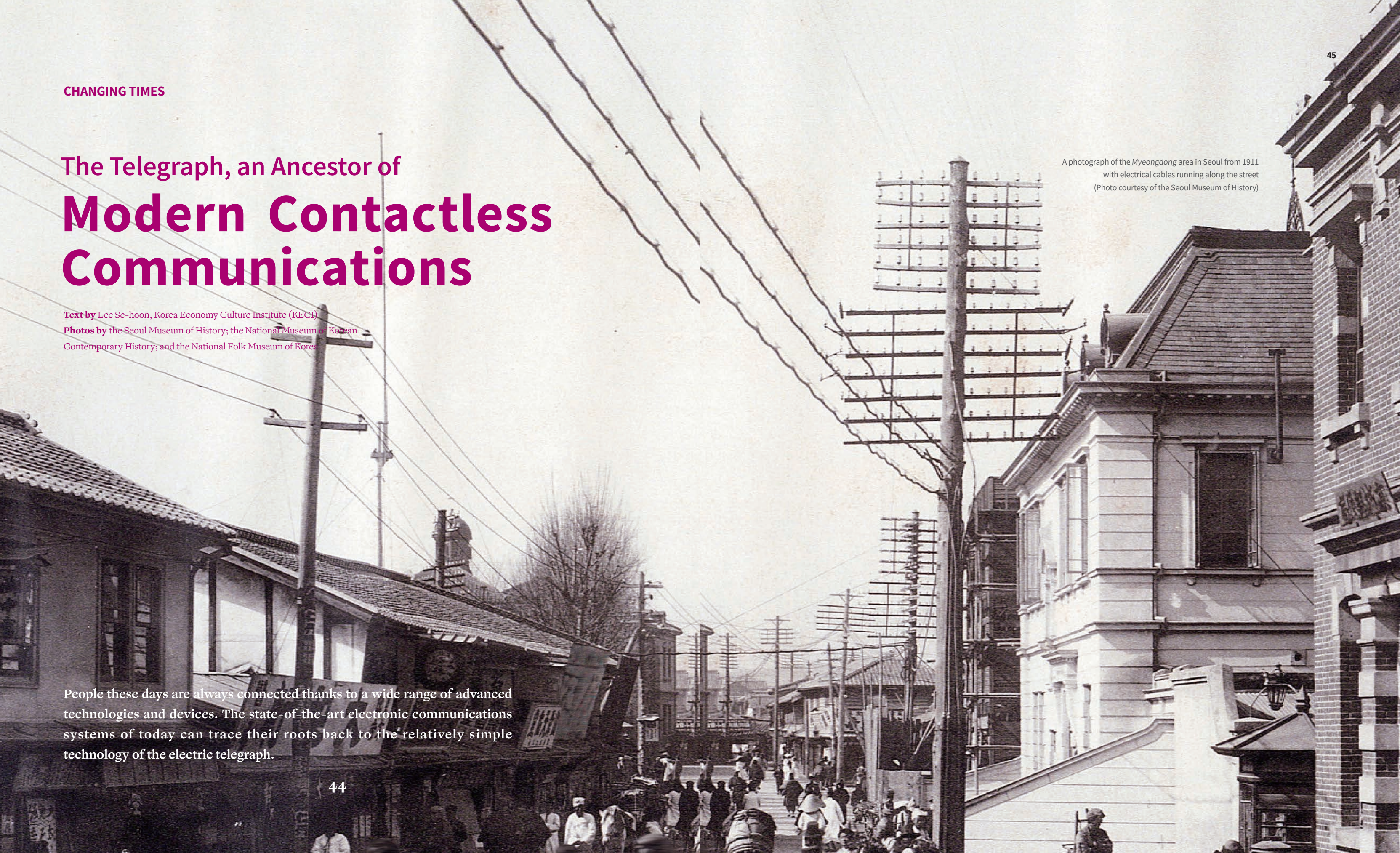
The Telegraph, an Ancestor of Modern Contactless Communications

Text by Lee Se-hoon, Korea Economy Culture Institute (KECI)

Photos by the Seoul Museum of History; the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History; and the National Folk Museum of Korea

People these days are always connected thanks to a wide range of advanced technologies and devices. The state-of-the-art electronic communications systems of today can trace their roots back to the relatively simple technology of the electric telegraph.

A photograph of the Myeongdong area in Seoul from 1911
with electrical cables running along the street
(Photo courtesy of the Seoul Museum of History)



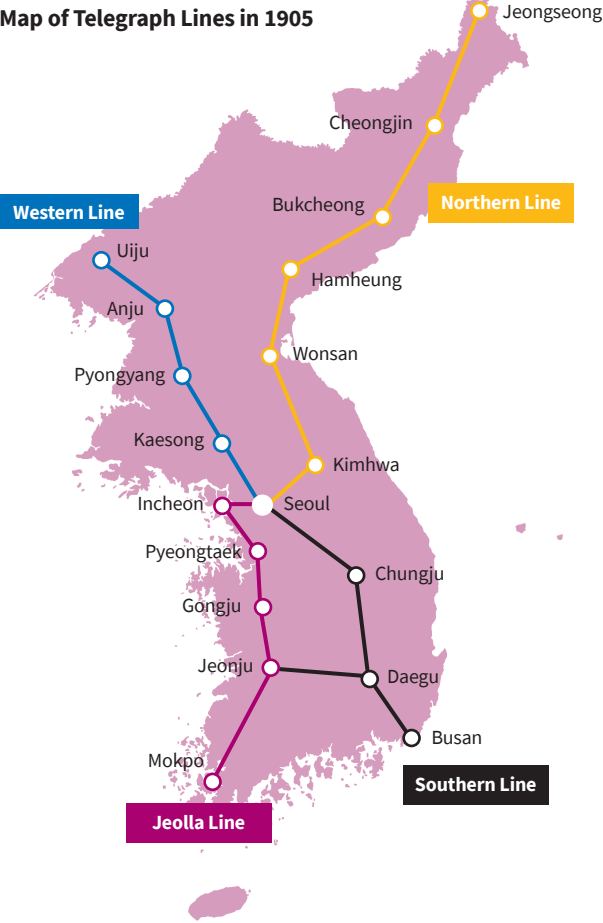
The Introduction of the Electric Telegraph to Korea

The first modern telecommunications system introduced to Korea was the electric telegraph, which distributes information in the form of coded signals transmitted by wire or radio wave. It is the direct ancestor of today’s information and communication technologies.

The first overland telegraph line in Korea began operations in 1885 with the Western Line linking the port city of Incheon to Seoul and the northwestern city of Uiju. It was soon followed by telegraph wires stretching into other parts of the Korean Peninsula: the Southern Line in 1888 running from Seoul to Busan, the Northern Line in 1891 connecting Seoul to the Pacific coast city of Wonsan, and the Jeolla Line in 1898 linking the southwestern city

of Jeonju to Mokpo, a port at the southwestern tip of the Korean Peninsula.

The introduction of the electric telegraph into Korea was closely related to the fierce rivalry for control over the Korean Peninsula among the global powers in early modern times. Even before the installation of overland telegraph cables, a submarine telegraph line was established in 1883 joining Busan to the Japanese city of Nagasaki. This Korea-to-Japan submarine telegraph line was laid by Japanese officials as a tool to further the nation’s imperial aspirations. The first overland telegraph line—the Western Line—was also installed by an outside power, in this case China. China provided technology and funding to create this line across the northwestern portion of the Korean Peninsula with the ulterior motive of linking it with domestic Chinese telegraph networks. As a check against these two foreign powers and to strengthen ties with Russia, King Gojong, the monarch of Korea at the time, built a line independently in 1891. This Northern Line ran through the northeastern portion of the peninsula.



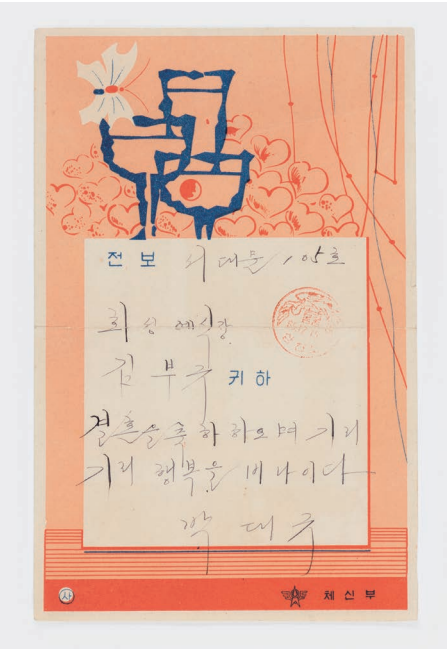
Telegrams for Everyday Communication

In their early days, telegraph cables ran along the courses of railways, transmitting messages between railway stations and contributing to operational safety. An electric telegraph could also be used over radio waves to wirelessly exchange information between boats at sea. Korea’s telegraph network also served as a military tool for facilitating Japan’s northward campaigns during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945).

After national liberation in 1945, affairs related to the establishment and operation of telegraph networks were assigned to a dedicated office within the Ministry of Information and Communication. By the 1970s, the electric telegraph had been established as an everyday means of communication among the citizenry. People could send messages over long distances at post offices or special telecommunication offices. A message received at the sending office was electronically delivered to the



Left_ A telegraph key from the 1970s based on an open circuit system. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History)
Right_ A telegram sent from the southern city of Samcheonpo to Seoul on December 15, 1965 delivering congratulations on the recipient’s wedding. It bears the emblem of the Ministry of Information and Communication on the bottom-right. (Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea)



destination office, where a telegraph operator wrote it down on paper and had a delivery person directly hand the written message to the recipient. It sounds cumbersome to us today since the entire complicated process can now be accomplished with a simple call or text message. However, telegrams were the best available means of long-distance communication before the invention of more sophisticated telecommunication technologies.

Remembering Telegraphs in the Digital Age

The most popular method of telegraphy in the world uses the Morse code system of symbols consisting of a sequence of dots and dashes. To dispatch a message, a telegraph operator taps on an electric switch, or telegraph key, connecting and disconnecting an electric circuit to create electric pulses of two different lengths. The Morse system is similar to how data is delivered in digital technologies by

expressing signals through strings of 0s and 1s. Korea relied on a Chinese four-digit decimal telegraph code until a Morse code for Korean letters was established in 1888 through the first law on telegraphy in Korea, the Regulations for Telegraphic Communication. Starting in the 1980s the electric telegraph gradually began to be replaced by other technologies such as the telex, facsimile, email, and mobile phones. In the minds of people today, Morse code and telegraph keys are most naturally associated with a scene from an historical film. Once a popular means of long-distance communication, the electric telegraph is vanishing from the landscape of contemporary telecommunication technologies. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, contactless communication is gaining more attention than ever before. Now might be a good time to ponder the role of telegraphy in human history as the first modern contactless telecommunication system.

Systematic Cultural Heritage Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has not left the heritage field unaffected. For example, the royal palaces of the Joseon Dynasty, one of the most popular heritage sites in South Korea, has seen a whopping 61.5 percent decrease in visitors compared to last year. In response, the Cultural Heritage Administration has installed a task force to more efficiently respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the heritage sector and to devise strategies for a future after the pandemic.

Text by Cho Ju-seong, Director, COVID-19 Task Team,

Cultural Heritage Administration

Photos by the Cultural Heritage Administration

A seminar held to develop future strategies for the heritage field in preparation for the post-pandemic world



Headquarters for the Management of COVID-19 in the Heritage Domain

The COVID-19 Task Force was launched on August 1, 2020 with a staff of five. It was placed under the direct control of the Vice Administrator to expedite decision-making. The COVID-19 team was tasked with devising and implementing heritage policies to address the pandemic. Its responsibilities include preparing COVID-19 response guidelines in consideration of the unique needs of respective heritage sites and facilities and disseminating them to relevant civil servants and those in heritage-related industries. It also supervises the on-site implementation of these guidelines. It is further charged with developing heritage policies in relation to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and new businesses based on contactless communication as part of the efforts to prepare for the sociocultural changes to come in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic Package for Affected People and Businesses

In compliance with the government's social distancing measures, which loosen and tighten according to the current scale of transmission, heritage sites and cultural facilities have been closed for many days this year. This has produced a series of challenges. The drop in the number of visitors to museums and other exhibition facilities has been directly reflected in their revenues. Restrictions on face-to-face communication have delayed the implementation of a wide range of heritage projects, from utilization, education, and experience programs to repair projects, causing financial difficulties for those involved. In this regard, the COVID-19 team undertook a survey on the impact of the pandemic on the heritage field in September and October, and has been offering need-based financial assistance since October to selected areas and groups.

In addition, the team has spent about 1.1 billion KRW (approximately 1 million USD) on supporting those responsible for the transmission of nationally designated intangible heritage since public performances and other activities through which they deliver traditional Korean dance, music, and crafts to future generations have been hit hard by the pandemic. Heritage educators who teach teenagers after completing a required training program but who have been deprived of job opportunities because of the pandemic are being provided allowances to develop educational materials for online teaching. Where a heritage repair project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the relevant rules have been revised to allow for an extension to the planned duration of construction without incurring any penalties on contractors.

As above, the COVID-19 task force of the Cultural Heritage Administration is making its utmost efforts to

meet the difficulties facing the heritage sector during this pandemic.

Future Strategies for a Post-pandemic Society

Beyond the heritage field, all of society is undergoing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are growing voices calling for the preparation of future strategies at the governmental level to deal with the diverse changes being brought about by the pandemic. In line with this public demand, the COVID-19 team has come up with plans for the future of the heritage sector with a view to transforming the fundamentals of heritage management and conservation to better adapt to the altered sociocultural environment that will follow the pandemic.

Under these plans, the conservation and utilization of heritage will reach beyond contact-based and two-dimensional methods to incorporate additional digital technologies and devices. New businesses drawing on three-dimensional heritage records will be developed and nurtured for the purpose of creating jobs. In addition, efforts will be made to utilize heritage sites as a source of wellbeing and healing for the public. Relations between communities and local heritage sites will be redefined by more actively engaging local residents in the conservation of historic sites in their localities and by allowing heritage sites to play a role in rebuilding communities.

From a Challenge to an Opportunity

Through its newly established COVID-19 task force, the Cultural Heritage Administration will continue with its efforts at establishing a healthy heritage conservation

Field research with a view to utilizing the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the heritage field



People participating in an experience program held at the palace while observing social distancing rules



environment that is safe from the adverse effects of viral pandemics or other similar crises. Recognizing the fact that the impact of COVID-19 will not immediately vanish, the Cultural Heritage Administration has drawn up and disseminated response measures customized to each of the six categories of heritage sites (repair sites, excavation sites, sites where interpretation programs take place, royal palaces and tombs, exhibition facilities, and education facilities). According to these guidelines, the Cultural Heritage Administration is monitoring the state of disinfection at the heritage sites

and facilities under its authority. Depending on how long the pandemic continues, it will also make efforts to offer additional financial support to those working in the heritage industry. The Cultural Heritage Administration hopes that the current and future strategies prepared by the COVID-19 team will transform the challenges posed by the pandemic into opportunities to make improvements to the existing concepts and practices of heritage conservation and management.

Cosmetics from Joseon Reborn as Modern Products

On September 22 of this year, the National Palace Museum of Korea unveiled modern versions of cosmetic products that they recreated based on remains excavated from the tomb of Princess Hwahyup (1733–1752), a daughter of the 21st monarch of Joseon, King Yeongjo. The recreation work was conducted as a collaboration with the Korea National University of Cultural Heritage and the cosmetics manufacturer Cosmax. The three organizations formed a memorandum of understanding to this end. This cooperation will continue over the next four years, starting with developing diverse products based on traditional cosmetics techniques and substances and progressing to developing public programs related to traditional cosmetics culture and conducting promotional activities and cultural content for the products.



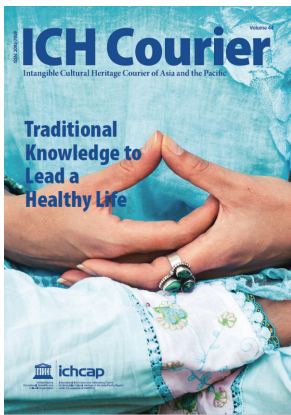
The excavation of the tomb of Princess Hwahyup, who died of measles at the age of 20, was carried out from 2015 to 2017. It yielded various cosmetic substances and tools alongside with small ceramic vessels used as to contain the cosmetics.

The modern cosmetic products developed based on the substances thought to have been applied by this Joseon princess will be available for purchase later this year under the brand name “Princess Hwahyup.”

ICH Courier Selected as a Gold Prize Winner at the International Business Awards

ICH Courier won the gold prize in the publication category at the 17th International Business Awards. It is a quarterly magazine published by the International Information and Networking Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP), a multinational organization affiliated with the Cultural Heritage Administration. The quarterly magazine of ICHCAP provides an effective vehicle for disseminating the latest discourse on intangible cultural heritage and information on diverse intangible heritage elements transmitted in the region and related safeguarding efforts. Celebrating its 11th anniversary

this year, *ICH Courier* is distributed free of charge to about 1,000 cultural organizations in 137 countries. Anyone who wants a subscription can apply at the ICHCAP website (<https://ichcourier.unesco-ichcap.org/>). The International Business Awards, renowned as the Oscars of the business field, is marking its 17th edition this year. It evaluates companies’ annual efforts in 13 different categories. This year, 3,800 entries



from 60 countries were submitted and more than 250 experts from around the world participated as judges.

Feel the Rhythm of KOREA



The videos in this promotional series released by the Korea Tourism Organization introducing Korean tourist attractions were born through a creative collaboration between the alternative pop band EENALCHI and the Ambiguous Dance Company. Their funky *pansori* beats and flamboyant choreography are a great accompaniment for an exploration of South Korea. The videos are available on the organization’s YouTube channel.