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Asia Society Korea's 10th Anniversary



Sept 19, 2017 – After a long-anticipated wait, Asia Society Korea got its 10th anniversary celebrations underway by hosting a Kickoff Gala at Lotte Hotel Seoul. Lotte Group Chairman, **Shin Dong-bin**, welcomed more than 300 dignitaries, members of the diplomatic community, and the Asia Society family to the fundraising dinner to celebrate ten years of building bridges between Korea, the United States, and the Asia-Pacific region.

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South Korea's Life-Defining Exam



On Thursday, November 16, a 5.4 magnitude earthquake shook the southeastern part of Korea, injuring 14 and damaging many buildings and roads. Arguably, a bigger shock was the government's decision to postpone the *Suneung*, South Korea's critical college entrance exam, by one week in response to the natural disaster.

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Monthly Luncheon Series

From Pyongyang to PyeongChang



Daniel Pinkston, Mason Richey, and Leif-Eric Easley

October 24, 2017 - Asia Society Korea resumed its 2017 Monthly Luncheon Lecture Series on Tuesday with a panel discussion titled “From Pyongyang to PyeongChang: Belligerence or Cooperation?” The panelists included: **Daniel Pinkston**, Advisory Committee Member at Asia Society Korea and Lecturer in International Relations at Troy University; **Leif-Eric Easley**, Associate Professor of International Studies at Ewha Womans University; and **Mason Richey**, Associate Professor of International Politics at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. With the PyeongChang Olympics fast approaching, there has been a great deal of speculation from participating countries regarding how safe South Korea will be during the games. The three academics each gave a different perspective on the issue before opening the floor for discussion.

Daniel Pinkston started the discussion by giving a positive take on the threat of North Korea in the build-up to the Winter Olympics. Sport plays a vital role for North Korea as an instrument for propaganda, social mobilization, and public health. While in the 1980's the country carried out a number of terrorist attacks in an effort to disrupt South Korea's hosting of the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympic Games, North Korea has taken a different approach in recent years. They sent cheering squads to South Korea to participate in the 2002 Asian Games, 2003 Universiade, 2005 Asian Track and Field Games, 2014 Asian Games, and most recently, to the 2017 World Taekwondo Championships. This soft power acts as both a smile campaign and intelligence collection operation, and Pinkston is confident that North Korea will participate in PyeongChang.

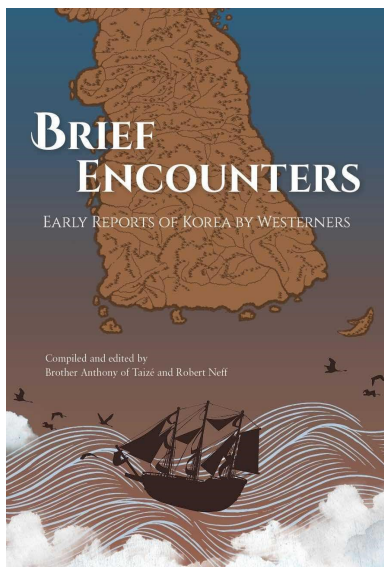
Mason Richey spoke about the potential security issues that could happen between now and the PyeongChang Olympics, and what threats North Korea might carry out before, during, and after the games. While we may not be in a full-blown crisis, we are in a conflict spiral, especially as both the U.S. and North Korea have expressed a preference for war over compromise. While it has been one month since the last missile test, there is a high possibility of more provocative actions in the coming weeks or months, and a 3-star general in the South Korean army recently commented that the chance of war with the North now stands at 50%. That being said, Richey believes an international attack on the Games would hinder, rather than help, North Korea's strategic objectives. More likely are cyber-attacks, which are cheap to execute, low risk, likely to damage the reputation of South Korea, and often lucrative.

Leif-Eric Easley finished the discussion by talking about regional issues in Japan and China. The recent lower house election win for Prime Minister Abe was significant in that it highlighted a fragmented opposition and strengthened the position of the ruling conservative government. North Korea has played an important role in Japanese politics of late with Abe looking to develop military strategies, improve missile defense, and potentially change Japan's pacifist constitution. The development of a robust Japanese army will have implications for both North and South Korea. With China also continuing its building of a world-class military, and Xi Jinping wanting to dictate how the international community deals with North Korea, South Korean influence in the region is becoming ever more limited.

***This series is sponsored by Lotte Chemical.**

Meet the Author: Robert D. Neff

Brief Encounters: Early Reports of Korea by Westerners



By Matthew Fennell, Contributing Writer

October 2017 - Before Korea opened its doors to the world in the late nineteenth century, very few Westerners had experienced life on the Peninsula. A new book, **Brief Encounters: Early Reports of Korea by Westerners**, by Brother Anthony of Taizé and Robert D. Neff is a compilation of visitor accounts to the country, originally published in books or newspapers, that shed some light on the Hermit Kingdom. Robert D. Neff is a freelance writer and historical researcher specializing in Korean history during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Asia Society Korea's Matthew Fennell caught up with him to discuss this new release.

What was the inspiration behind wanting to publish a book about very early exploration to Korea?

There are several great books about traveling in Korea in the late 19th century including Isabella Bird Bishop's, *Korea and Her Neighbors*; A. Henry Savage-Landor's, *Corea or Chosen: The Land of the Morning Calm*; and, of course, various accounts published by missionaries. They are all fairly common and easily accessible, but what about the material that isn't, due to its limited publication or the language it was written in (French and German)? It is this lesser-known material that we wanted to make available to the average person with an interest in early Korean-Western encounters.

Your anthology is a compilation of Westerners' accounts of their visits to Korea. How were you able to get access to this information?

I guess the short answer would be through our hobbies. Brother Anthony, the co-author of the book, collects old books and magazines dealing with Korea and has a very impressive collection. I have a smaller collection but specialize in collecting narratives published in personal correspondences, newspapers, magazines, and government publications by shipwrecked sailors, naval officers, and wayward travelers. I think we were both a little surprised at just how much material we have. Due to space limitations, we confined ourselves to accounts before 1884 and did not include a lot of the shipwrecks around Jeju Island or the early diplomatic attempts by Western nations prior to 1882. Perhaps we will do a second volume in the future.

Are there any stories from the book that stand out for you?

I tried to study French in high school but failed miserably - so miserably that my teacher told me I would be lucky to learn English. So for me, the accounts in French and German that Brother Anthony translated are especially valuable as they were unavailable to me in the past. My favorite story is the Wreck of the *Narwal* - a French whaling ship - in April 1851. The subsequent rescue of the crew was published in an English-language newspaper in Shanghai just weeks after it happened and was amusing as well as informative. I especially like the resourcefulness of the sailors who taught French to the Koreans in exchange for tobacco. When the rescue party arrived, they were confronted by Koreans who exhibited their proficiency by pointing upwards and exclaiming "Le Soleil" and looking down to cry "La Terre."

From the impressions that you have collected, how welcome were foreign visitors to Korea at that time?

Well, I have heard Brother Anthony in the past joke that these early encounters were often shared with a good deal of alcohol and they definitely were. In fact, one of my favorite stories was when a naval vessel visited Jeju and a local Korean magistrate and his entourage - including several attractive young girls with long braided hair - were entertained with a generous supply of alcohol. The crew was somewhat shocked when they discovered that one of the 'young girls' needed to pass some of the alcohol and did so by standing up and urinating over the rail. But there was a serious side to these early encounters. In the 19th century, it was widely believed that Koreans were violently disposed to anyone who had the misfortune to be cast upon their shores, and Hendrick Hamel's account was cited as proof, but this was incorrect. Joseon Korea was nothing but humane to shipwrecked victims. Wrecks and their cargos were protected and looters were severely punished. After a couple of months, survivors were repatriated to China or Japan. Their treatment in Korea was described favorably, but that which they subsequently received in Japan and especially China was decidedly much worse. While people in need were well treated, casual visitors were not welcomed. Some of these encounters ended in violence, but they were the exception and not the rule. Western powers used the pretext of guaranteeing the safe treatment of shipwrecked survivors to force Korea to open its doors to the outside world. I think that is what is important about this book. It dispels a lot of these early misconceptions through the candid accounts of Westerners during their "Brief Encounters" in Korea.

Events

Asia Society Korea's 10th Anniversary



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Following Chairman Shin's welcoming message, congratulatory remarks were given by **H.E. Sung-nam Lim**, First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and **Mr. Edwin Sagurton**, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, U.S. Embassy Seoul. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Embassy have played an important and valuable role in supporting Asia Society Korea since its inauguration ceremony in April 2008.

The keynote speech for the evening was given by **Charles Rockefeller**, Asia Society Global Trustee and grandson of Asia Society founder, John D. Rockefeller III. Mr. Rockefeller spoke of the need for dialogue and collaboration between the United States and Korea at a time when tensions in the region are at an all-time high. The two countries have enjoyed 67 years of friendship and it is vitally important that the current situation does not affect this in any way, undoing years of alliance and cooperation.

A poignant moment in the evening was the special tribute to the late **H.E. Hong-joo Hyun** by **H.E. Hong-koo Lee**, Honorary Chairman of Asia Society Korea. Hong-joo Hyun was a Global Council member at Asia Society, a former Ambassador to the United States, and a Korean Ambassador at the Permanent Observer Mission to the UN. He will be remembered for his role in ensuring Korea's membership to the United Nations in the early 1990's and for his lifelong efforts promoting Korea around the world.

Former Secretary General to the United Nations, **H.E. Ban Ki-moon**, was in attendance to give a special address where he talked about the North Korean issue, environmental and sustainability challenges, the importance of the Paris climate accord, and the need to strengthen and improve human rights around the world.

The event also included the ceremony for this year's Ambassador of the Year awards which were presented to **H.E. Vikram Doraiswami**, Ambassador of India; **H.E. Bader Mohammad al-Awadi**, Ambassador of Kuwait; and **H.E. Ramzi Teymurov**, Ambassador of Azerbaijan for their dedication and commitment to the Korea Center. The awards were presented by **H.E. Sung-joo Han** & **Mr. Young Joon Kim**, Board Members at Asia Society Korea.

One of the highlights of the evening was the live performance by traditional Korean folk singer **Song So-hee**, who opened with a fantastic rendition of the song Arirang. Following the entertainment, Mistress of Ceremonies **Yvonne Yoon-Hee Kim**, Executive Director at Asia Society Korea, and **Dr. John Delury**, Senior Fellow at the Asia Society Center for U.S.-China Relations led an auction. Among the items up for auction were cigars courtesy of H.E. Bader al-Awadi, Embassy of Kuwait; a carpet courtesy of H.E. Ramzi Teymurov, Embassy of Azerbaijan; a pashmina shawl courtesy of H.E. Vikram Doraiswami, Embassy of India; and wine courtesy of H.E. James Choi, Embassy of Australia.

Events

2017 ASEAN Entrepreneur Award



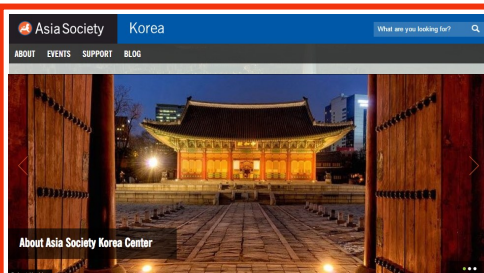
October 18, 2017 - Maekyung Media Group held its 18th World Knowledge Forum (WKF) at the Jangchung Arena in Seoul last week under the theme "Inflection Point: Towards New Prosperity." The annual forum welcomed visitors from around the world with more than 100 sessions offered over three days. Guest speakers included: former U.N. Secretary-General **Ban Ki-Moon** talking about environmental issues, former U.S. Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** focusing on the direction of the U.S. under the Trump administration, and former French President **Francois Hollande** speaking about international challenges and opportunities facing the world.

The forum also included a gala dinner which acknowledged the winners of the ASEAN Entrepreneur Award. Maekyung Media Group and Asia Society Korea established the award in 2016 to recognize and honor business leaders in the ASEAN countries. This year the recipients were **Le Van Kiem** of Vietnam and **Andrew Darwis** of Indonesia. The awards were presented by Maekyung Media Group Chairman **Dr. Dae-Whan Chang** and Asia Society Korea's Honorary Chairman **Dr. Hong-Koo Lee**. Despite Le Van Kiem being unable to make it to Seoul, his daughter was in attendance to receive the award on his behalf.

Le Van Kiem is involved in many companies in Vietnam and overseas, employing almost 10,000 people across various sectors. Not only is Le Van Kiem well-known and respected for his successful business career, he and his wife are two of the biggest philanthropists in Vietnam. To date, they have donated millions of dollars to different social charities in the country.

Andrew Darwis is the founder of Indonesia's largest online community, Kaskus. He started the company 17 years ago as a university project and hobby at the cost of only seven dollars. Thanks to a strong and loyal nationwide user base, his business has grown rapidly into the most popular online forum in Indonesia.

During the dinner, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized the importance of the award with this year marking the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Dr. Hong-Koo Lee used his speech to address the recent tensions in the region. While Asia has been a peaceful continent over the past fifty years, it is now one of the most explosive places on Earth. To overcome this very unfortunate situation, we need to gather our knowledge, build wisdom, and find ways to work together to avoid a regional catastrophe and preserve peace in the global village.



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In the News

Zandari Festa

By Matthew Fennell, Contributing Writer



Zandari Festa is an annual music showcase event that takes place in Seoul each fall. The event promotes youth culture and brings together acts and music industry professionals from around the world for concerts and conferences. Zandari Festa exposes audiences to a wide range of musical genres and helps build bridges to allow Korean and overseas artists to better communicate, work together, and learn from each other. Asia Society Korea's **Matthew Fennell** caught up with **Cecilia Soojeong Yi**, the Project Manager at Zandari Festa, to talk about how the festival can promote cross-cultural understanding.

Zandari Festa was started in 2012. What was the inspiration behind wanting to bring various music cultures to Korea?

I've only been working for Zandari Festa for the past two years, so I can't comment on what the original inspiration behind the festival was. But I can talk about what inspires us to keep doing the festival. Nationality is nothing. Musicians are musicians and music lovers are music lovers regardless of where they're from. Indie music scenes around the globe are continuing to grow and

we want to give them wider opportunities to grow in Korea and other parts of the world. Nowadays, even if you're not signed by a major label, you can find opportunities to present your music anywhere in the world and Zandari is a platform that musicians can use to take their first step in the Asian market.

Over the past five years, how have Korean musicians benefitted from the international influences at the festival?

I think the international influences at the festival have helped inspire Korean bands and opened their eyes to the global market. This is motivating an increasing number of local bands to try and perform overseas. I love to see all the bands getting along with each other so well during the festival, no matter where they are from. The opportunity to meet so many people is one of the benefits for Korean bands at Zandari. They make new friends with musicians and industry professionals from other countries and get to learn about different international music scenes without leaving Hongdae. These friendships are very beneficial because when Zandari takes Korean bands to overseas festivals, the bands can use their own networks and expand their tours through the contacts they made at Zandari Festa.

What has been the reaction to the local Korean music scene from international artists who visit?

Everyone has been so excited and loved it. Since the Korean music market is dominated by local pop music, it's not easy to get information about talented musicians in other genres. So a lot of international artists are surprised by the high level of talent in the Korean indie scene. Something that's been really interesting to see is that more and more of the international acts are doing some research about the Korean indie scene before coming to Zandari Festa and have their own list of local bands they want to see perform while they're here. Whether they're Korean or foreign acts, it's pretty awesome to see all the musicians checking the festival timetable and making lists of who to watch, just like other fest-goers at Zandari.

Do you think your festival can help connect cultures and improve understanding between different nationalities?

Definitely! Music is stronger than borders. If you come to Hongdae during Zandari Festa, you won't see any cultural conflicts. Instead, you'll just see people from different backgrounds and nationalities enjoying music. It's a powerful sight.

What are your future hopes for the festival and do you have any plans to expand?

For now we're working to make our festival more solid. After five years, we finally have a clear vision of what we have to do and what we can do. Despite facing many difficulties each year, thanks to our friends in Korea and from all over the world we can continue to make Zandari Festa stronger and improve the Korean indie scene too. We're going to be taking more Korean musicians to festivals overseas and will keep searching for brilliant international musicians to introduce to the Asian market.

Zandari Festa 2017 took place from September 29 to October 1.

In the News

South Korea's Life-Defining Exam

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Every November, hundreds of thousands of high school seniors sit down to take the eight-hour-long College Scholastic Ability Test, an exam that many students have been preparing for since kindergarten. A team of professors and high school teachers from across the country creates the exam in a secret location, often in a sparsely populated, mountainous region of Korea. The test creators must surrender their cell phones and are effectively cut off from the outside world as they cannot contact their friends or family for the month they are in isolation for fear of them leaking test questions. The subjects they write questions for include math, history, science, Korean language, and English.

The Suneung is the culmination of an entire academic career for a student in Korea. Especially in high school, students' lives revolve around this test with most students arriving at school at 7am and not getting home until well past midnight. A typical day consists of around 10 hours of school, a quick dinner break, and the rest of the evening spent in study halls, cram schools, or libraries. For students, the exam can be a golden ticket to study at one of the country's top universities and a future job in the government, the banking industry, or at a large industrial conglomerate.

On the day of the exam, stock markets, public offices, and many other businesses all open an hour later to keep traffic off the roads. As students walk to the exam centers on the morning of the test, well-wishers hand out yeot, a type of sticky candy that is eaten in the hope of good luck. Despite regular classes being cancelled, other students still turn out to cheer on the test takers and Korean celebrities record encouraging messages and post them on the internet. For students running late, local police officers escort them to the test centers for free. Even protesters will often suspend their demonstrations for the day. The army halts aviation exercises, and the taking off and landing of planes at Korean airports is banned during the English listening test. Many students' parents pray at churches and temples and some even wait, pacing outside the school gates, while their children endure the eight-hour test.

The unexpected earthquake last Thursday provided students with an extra week to study and prepare for this life-defining exam. With many students having waited years for this day, all their attention is now focused on Thursday, November 23, where hopefully the Suneung will take place without any further drama or incident.

Asia Society Korea's Cooking Class Series

Kuwait



H.E. Bader Mohammad Al-Awadi, Ambassador of Kuwait

November 17, 2017 - Asia Society Korea held its sixth cooking class of the year by welcoming the Embassy of Kuwait and H.E Bader Mohammad Al-Awadi, who helped cook a traditional Kuwaiti dish at the main branch of Lotte Department Store. The ambassador and two professional Bangladeshi chefs showed the ten participants how to make a Kuwaiti version of murtabak, a dish made by stuffing fish with basmati rice and spices. Before the discovery of the oil reserves in Kuwait in 1938, the country relied heavily on trade with the Indian subcontinent. This trade included foods such as basmati rice and various spices, which has helped shape Kuwaiti cuisine and has many similarities with Indian food.

the ambassador and his family and involved stuffing pomfret fish with curry powder, spices, and rice. Those in attendance expressed great interest in the exotic cooking method and enjoyed tasting new spices and flavors. This simple dish is adaptable and can be made using a variety of different fish and fillings. While waiting for the food to cook, the participants watched a video about Kuwait and asked questions to the ambassador before eating the dish with their hands, Kuwaiti style.

The murtabak presented to the cooking class was a home-cooked version of the dish often enjoyed by

UNESCO World Heritage Series by Matthew Fennell

Part 9: Namhansanseong



Namhansanseong

For the 25 million residents of the Seoul Capital Area, Namhansanseong mountain fortress has long provided an escape from the hustle and bustle of living in the city. While many people visit the area for its hiking trails and scenic views, less is known about Namhansanseong's historical and cultural value. Asia Society Korea visited the fortress for this month's episode of our UNESCO World Heritage Series.

Namhansanseong, a mountainous site 25 km south-east of Seoul, was first constructed in 672 as a military installation during the Silla Dynasty's war with the neighboring Tang Dynasty. Sitting at almost 500 meters above sea level, the fortress became the most strategic of all mountain fortresses in Korea, built to incorporate the natural defenses of the terrain. Over time, the structure underwent numerous expansions, drawing on Chinese and Japanese influences, embodying the latest in engineering knowledge and know-how of the time. In the 13th century, Namhansanseong was used by the Goryeo Dynasty as a stronghold against the Mongol Invasion.

It was in the 17th century when the fortress evolved greatly in its size and purpose, mainly in anticipation of an attack from the Sino-Manchu Qing Dynasty. Consequently, Namhansanseong became a super-sized mountain fortress, accommodating 4,000 people and fulfilling important administrative and military functions. It also served as an emergency capital for the King of Joseon and his citizens during times of crisis. The idea was to build a city that could provide shelter but was also equipped with features that would enable people to fight off any approaching enemy.

As it was common for traditional villages of the time to be located adjacent to, rather than inside, military fortresses, Namhansanseong was unique in that both the ruling class and common people could take shelter during a war. Along with the Emergency Palace, the walled city contained homes, businesses, as well as religious buildings and has since become a symbol of sovereignty in Korea.

In 1907, the fortress experienced demolition, temples were forced into closure under the Japanese occupation, and the town was eventually downgraded to a remote mountain village. Further damage was inflicted on the population and buildings during the Korean War, and it took a large-scale restoration program to bring the fortress back to its former glory. The area is now designated as a provincial park, and Namhansanseong was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2014.

UNESCO World Heritage Series by Matthew Fennell

Part 10: Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty



Jeongneung Royal Tomb

October 2017 - Asia Society Korea continues its World Heritage Series this month by previewing the **Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty**. Joseon was Korea's last dynasty, ruling over a united Korean peninsula for more than 500 years, starting from the fall of the Goryeo Dynasty in 1392 and ending with the Japanese occupation in 1910. The cultural innovations and achievements of the period continue to influence society in modern-day Korea, with UNESCO designating the royal tombs a World Heritage site in 2009.

The tombs were built over five centuries, from 1408 to 1966, and the collection of 40 graves can be found in 18 different locations around Korea, the majority of which are in or near Seoul. The tombs contain the kings and queens of the Joseon Dynasty, as well as monarchs posthumously granted the same title. Areas of outstanding natural beauty were chosen for the construction of the tombs, which face south overlooking a lake, river, or pond, and are typically protected by a hill to the rear.

One of the most important burial sites is Yeongneung in Yeosu where the first royal tomb was constructed. It houses the legendary ruler King Sejong the Great and his wife, Queen Soheon. King Sejong placed great emphasis on education, and he helped promote cultural, economic, and scientific research. He is best known as the inventor of hangul, the Korean writing script that we use today. This phonetic and straightforward system broke away from the old Chinese writing characters, called hanja, and made it easier for less-educated Koreans to become literate. Another unique burial site is Seonjeongneung in the heart of Gangnam, a wealthy and well-known district of Seoul. The Seolleung Royal Tomb and Jeongneung Royal Tomb house the burial mounds of King Seongjong, his wife Queen Jeonghyeon, and King Jungjong. The tombs somehow survived the development of Gangnam and now provide one of the few green spaces left in the area.

The tombs at Yeongneung, Seonjeongneung, and other locations were built to honor the memory of the dead, respect their achievements, assert royal authority, protect ancestral spirits from evil, and provide protection from external dangers. All 40 royal tombs were built following Confucian traditions and etiquette, and display a familiar spatial layout that reflects the spiritual values of the time. Alongside the burial place, each grave features a ceremonial area and entrance. In addition to these burial mounds, associated buildings form integral parts of the tombs, and the grounds are usually adorned with a range of stone objects including figures of people and animals. The Joseon Tombs complete a 5,000-year history of royal tomb architecture on the Korean peninsula.

UNESCO World Heritage Series by Matthew Fennell

Part II: Haeinsa Temple Janggyeong Panjeon



Tripitaka Koreana

In the penultimate episode of Asia Society Korea's UNESCO World Heritage Series, we visited **Haeinsa Temple**, a site that has been on the heritage list since 1995. Located within Gayasan National Park, the temple, which was built in 802 AD, is regarded as one of Korea's three major Buddhist temples along with Tongdosa and Songgwangsa. The site holds great significance not only for its structures but also for the treasure it holds inside, with Haeinsa being home to the **Tripitaka Koreana**.

The Tripitaka Koreana, first carved by Korean Buddhist scholars in 1011 AD, is a set of 80,000 wood blocks, engraved with Buddhist treaties, laws, and scriptures. These wooden blocks contain the oldest and most complete version of the Buddhist canon and the Tripitaka Koreana is viewed as one of the most important Buddhist collections in the world. To prevent the decaying of the wood, tradesmen used innovative conservation techniques that were way ahead of their time. First, the birch was soaked in sea water for three years before it was cut. The cut blocks were then boiled in salt water, placed away from sunlight, and exposed to the wind for three years. Only at this point were the wood blocks finally ready for carving.

The quality and consistency of the calligraphy-style carvings suggest that a single man was responsible for the entire collection but scholars now agree that a team of around thirty men performed the work. The compilers of the Tripitake Koreana incorporated material from Northern Song Chinese, Khitan, and Goryeo scriptures and added further content written by respected Korean monks. After carving, the blocks were covered in a poisonous lacquer to keep insects away and then framed with metal to prevent warping.

The Tripitake Koreana is housed inside Janggyeong Panjeon, a wooden structure comprised of two buildings, Sudarajeon to the south and Beopbojeon to the north. The buildings are simple in design, without decoration, and their sole purpose is storing the wooden blocks. The buildings were designed with air circulation, a resistance to moisture, and temperature control in mind and they have never suffered the effects of fire or war. Today, to protect the Janggyeong Panjeon and Tripitaka Koreana from fire, full-time security guards, a 24-hour surveillance system, and a fire truck are in place to respond to any emergency and visitors' entries are restricted.



UNESCO World Heritage Series by Matthew Fennell

Part 12: Historical Villages of Korea Hahoe and Yangdong



Yangdong Village



Hahoe Village

Following a year of visiting Korea's 12 designated UNESCO World Heritage sites, we are concluding our Heritage Series by introducing the **Historic Villages of Korea: Hahoe and Yangdong**. Established in the 14th and 15th centuries, Hahoe and Yangdong are excellent representations of the historic clan villages of Korea. Clan villages are settlements that are comprised of people who share the same prominent ancestors, many of which were royalty, government officials, or revered scholars. While modernization has completely changed the landscape of these villages, the inhabitants still preserve the ancestral shrines, pray, and offer up food and liquor as offerings on a regular basis.

Clan villages developed and flourished in the Joseon dynasty, encouraged by Confucian ideals and principles. Government officials, and those who owned land, became part of the traditional ruling class during the Joseon Dynasty. In effect, these "yangban" were administrators and bureaucrats who oversaw the traditional agrarian bureaucracy and played a central role in the founding of new clan settlements, also based on the same Confucian principles. These clan villages also produced civil and military officials for the government.

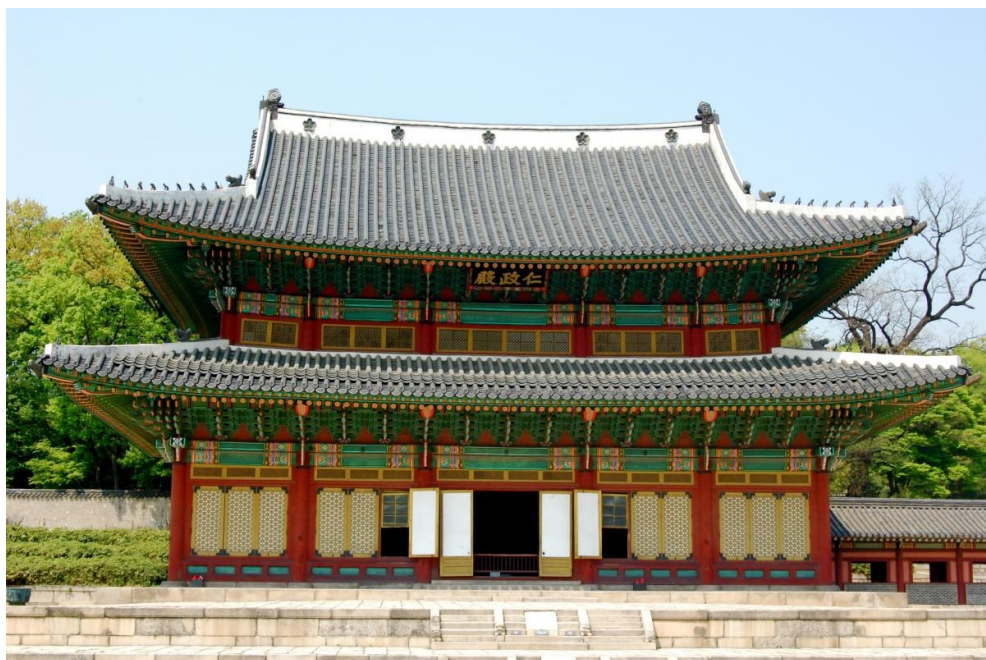
Hahoe village is a yangban settlement formed at the end of the Goryeo Dynasty, where members of the Ryu family have lived together for over 600 years. The village is especially well known as it is the birth place of two brothers: Ryu Unryong, the great Confucian scholar of the Joseon Dynasty; and Ryu Seongryong, Korean Prime Minister during the Japanese Invasion from 1592 to 1598. Over the years, the Ryu clan has produced notable politicians and scholars and this is reflected in the architecture of the village, particularly the study halls. As with many Korean villages, Hahoe decreased in size during the 1980's as many people migrated to larger towns and cities but there has been a recent revival with people returning and traditional houses being built.

Yangdong village is an example of a settlement that grew into a clan village through the marriage of two families, the Yi clan and the Son clan. These two clans produced several distinguished figures in the 16th century. This village has continued to expand through the years and the 20th century saw a railway station, bridges, a school, a church, and a Buddhist temple all constructed. A community warehouse was built in 1971 and the village has not suffered a severe decline in population as other villages in Korea have.

In modern-day Korea, it is largely the elderly who live in villages that are associated with their ancestral clans. Most young people migrate to find work in big cities, and while some may eventually return, they often do so with people of different surnames. In some cases, high-rise apartments have forever changed the landscape and character of once-rural villages. However, Hahoe and Yangdong have bucked this trend and are rare living examples of real historical villages that once dominated the peninsula.

ROK'n Seoul

Korean Heritage Society



Korean heritage and culture is an area that Asia Society Korea is heavily interested in. As part of our interview series, we caught up with Mr. Ha-kyung Choi, President of the Korean Heritage Society, a non-government organization that focuses on Korean history, culture, and folklore. Mr. Choi also volunteers as a guide at Changdeokgung Palace and Jongmyo Shrine, a site we have previewed as part of our World Heritage Series.

What were some reasons for you wanting to set up the Korean Heritage Society?

After 30 years of service working for Hyundai Business Group, I decided that the next stage of my life would

involve pursuing my personal passion and contributing to Korean society by establishing the Korean Heritage Society. This appetite for Korean traditions grew following three years of study at the Korean Folk Cultural Institute operated by the National Folk Museum of Korea. During that period, my interest in history and culture led me to devote my time to educating, preserving, and spreading Korean cultural and heritage to future generations. I thought it important to highlight Korea to people from around the world as members of the same global village. That is why I set up the Korean Heritage Society in 2008.

Are most of the members of the group Korean or foreign?

Currently, we are running two different kinds of membership systems. Our online community involves Daum Café and Facebook and currently has around 800 members, both Korean and foreign. Our offline members pay an annual membership fee and the 100 members are almost all Korean. However, from next year we will open our offline membership to foreigners as we have recently revised our policies. That being said, we hosted nine programs in 2017 for foreigners living in Korea under the auspices of the Seoul City Metropolitan Government. Those who participated were very enthusiastic to learn more about the culture and heritage of Korea. From next year I believe the number of foreigners involved with our society will increase.

How much of Korea's heritage has been lost through its rapid modernization?

An uncountable number of Korean heritage sites, properties, and items have been lost, damaged, and stolen during the last 100 years or so due to Japanese colonialization, the Korean War, and modernization. For many years, a tremendous amount of national heritage items were taken from Korea, both legally and illegally, to Japan, the U.S., and other countries. During the Korean War, many heritage items were damaged by fire during the fighting. The more recent development of Korea has also contributed to the loss of heritage, for example, the city walls that surrounded Seoul have been destroyed.

Do you think the Korean government does enough to preserve Korean heritage?

Nowadays the government, with support from the National Assembly, is increasing its efforts to preserve and protect Korean heritage locations and items. Money has been allocated for this preservation and the Korea Heritage Administration is recognized and acknowledged as an important organization in Korea. Of course, non-government organizations like ourselves will continue to educate and push the government to realize the importance of preserving our heritage and we will support them to achieve these very important goals.

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