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## US-ROK Relations: Past, Present, and Future



Asia Society Korea was honored to host its October monthly luncheon on Tuesday with a room full of esteemed guests. Those in attendance had the opportunity to hear the newly appointed United States Ambassador, **H.E. Harry Harris** give an address and take questions on the status of the relationship between America and South Korea. The event was titled “U.S.-ROK Relations: Past, Present, and Future.” (Continued on Page 5)

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## Thailand: Pad Thai and Bualoy Kathi



Asia Society Korea organized its last cooking class of the year on December 9, 2018 in cooperation with the Royal Thai Embassy and the Lotte Culture Center. **H.E. Singtong Lapisatepun**, Ambassador of Thailand to the Republic of Korea, started the class by delivering his opening remarks, which addressed the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Thailand and the Republic of Korea and the importance of preparing a sophisticated dish for further elevating diplomatic relations. **Ms. Porndee Lapisatepun**, the Ambassador's wife, and three chefs from the Ambassador's residence (**Mr. Tatsayan Sri-Ampai**, Head Chef; **Ms. Pernjit Sri-Ampai**, his spouse and Assistant Chef, and **Ms. Thiravan Manussila**, Assistant Chef) led the class and taught the twenty participants how to cook Pad Thai and Bualoy Kathi as well as showing them a traditional fruit and vegetable carving technique.

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## Monthly Luncheon Series

# Security and Economic Challenges in the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region and Korea-Vietnam Cooperation



H.E. Nguyen Vu Tu

Asia Society Korea hosted its November luncheon on Tuesday, November 20. Those in attendance were fortunate enough to listen to the Vietnamese Ambassador to South Korea, **H.E. Nguyen Vu Tu**, giving a lecture titled “Security and Economic Challenges in the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region and Korea-Vietnam Cooperation.”

The ambassador opened with remarks about the stability and peace that the Indo-Asia-Pacific region has been able to enjoy over recent decades. H.E. Nguyen noted that the majority of countries throughout the region have cooperated and prospered as a result, and there are a vast number of international initiatives and agreements demonstrating this cooperative trend. The ambassador, however, pointed out that there are challenges in the region that threaten to harm and push back the progress that has been made.

H.E. Nguyen also shared his feelings on the current friction between China and the United States. He noted that Vietnam and Korea have a part to play since the power struggle could pull countries within the region in different directions. Nevertheless, the ambassador hopes that with time and work these complexities will be overcome for the benefit of everyone.

The ambassador then went on to talk about two other primary challenges that the region is up against at the present time. First, he mentioned the tensions on the Korean peninsula, but he spoke positively about the improvement in relations over the past year due to the continued dialogue that has been taking place between the major parties involved. The second is the South China Sea dispute, which he believes is a serious issue that needs to be settled through dialogue and other peaceful means and in compliance with international law.

Before taking questions from the distinguished guests in attendance, H.E. Nguyen made some interesting observations about the relationship between Korea and Vietnam. He noted that the two countries first agreed to engage in diplomatic relations as recently as 1992, but in 2009 it was upgraded from a cooperative partnership to a strategic cooperative partnership. This bond, he noted, has had huge benefits for both countries in the areas of security and the economy. The ambassador pointed out that Korea is currently Vietnam’s second largest trading partner, and Vietnam is the fourth largest trading partner of Korea. H.E. Nguyen added that the FTA between the two countries has helped accelerate the relationship and the benefits are being felt by both countries.

H.E. Nguyen closed by accepting that the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region is now in a period of uncertainty but that it will be overcome if countries such as Korea and Vietnam maintain strong and positive relationships. Finally, the ambassador was courteous in taking and responding to a number of questions from those in attendance before another intriguing luncheon was wrapped up.

**\*This series is sponsored by Lotte Chemical, Poongsan, Samjong KPMG, Best Network, Lutronic, and Mr. Young Joon Kim**



Young Joon Kim

## In the News: From Asia Society

### 한반도의 기적



북한 핵무기 프로그램에 대한 외교적 위기는 국제 안보에 대한 가장 큰 위협 중 하나로 널리 인식되고 있다. 그러나 문재인 대통령은 시대가 변하고 있다고 전했다. 지난 화요일 아시아소사이어티와 코리아소사이어티가 공동주최로 개최한 미 외교협회(CFR) 행사에서 문재인 대통령은 "기적적인 일이 한반도에서 일어나고 있고" 트럼프 대통령과 김정은 위원장의 관계가 강하다고 연설했다.

또한, 문재인 대통령은 "트럼프 대통령과 김정은 위원장이 서로를 신뢰한다"고 전했다.

같은 날 트럼프 대통령은 유엔총회 연설 중 비핵화를 향한 김정은 위원장의 "용기"를 극찬하였다. 이는 지난해 유엔총회 연설에서 트럼프 대통령이 북한을 완전히 "파괴해야 할 수도 있고" 김정은 위원장이 자살 임무를 수행 중이라 했던 것과는 확연히 대조가 된다.

김정은 위원장은 지난 12개월간 북한의 외교적 고립을 탈피하기 위해 몇 가지 조치를 취했다. 그는 유일한 동맹국인 중국 정부와 여러 번 만났었고, 지난주 평양에서 만난 문재인 대통령과도 몇 차례 회담을 가졌다. 또한, 6월에 최초로 개최된 북미 정상회담 후 트럼프 대통령과 김정은 위원장은 빠른 시일 내에 다시 만날 의향을 전달했다.

고립에서 벗어나려는 김정은 위원장의 결정에 대해서 어떠한 설명이 가능할까? 문재인 대통령은 리처드 하스 (Richard Hass) CFR 회장과 가진 대담 중 김정은 위원장이 북한의 경제 발전과 미국에게서 안전보장을 대가로 비핵화를 진행할 용의를 밝혔다고 전했다. 또한, 문재인 대통령은 김정은 위원장이 미국의 보복을 감안하면서까지 국제사회를 속일 이유가 없다고 전했고, 북한의 대화 의지를 지지하는 차원에서 국제 금융 기구들이 북한 인프라 건설에 일조할 것을 요청했다.

그러나 대북제재를 해제 하는 것은 북한이 과거에 매번 반복한 핵 개발 프로그램의 실질적 포기 여부에 달려있다. 문재인 대통령은 이러한 실망스러운 과거를 인정하면서도 남북 정상회담이 최근 걸어진 행보를 보았을 때 과거와 비교해서 남북관계가 개선 될 가능성이 더 높아졌다고 밝혔다.

또한, 문재인 대통령은 전통적으로 긴밀한 한미 관계를 유지하려고 각별한 주의를 기울였다. 지난 월요일 트럼프 대통령은 그동안 지속적으로 비난했던 한미 FTA 개정안을 공개했다. 웬디 커틀러 (Wendy Cutler) 아시아소사이어티 정책연구소 부회장은 이 개정안이 극적인 변화를 가져 오지는 않겠지만 양측이 윈윈할 수 있는 방향으로 검토되었다 전했다.

마지막으로 문재인 대통령은 남북이 통일 된다 가정해도 굳건한 한미 관계는 지속될 것이라 밝혔다.

그는 또한 미국과 한국은 단순한 동맹국이 아니라 "위대한 동맹국" 이라고 전했다.

원문은 아시아소사이어티 코리아 홈페이지에서 찾을 수 있습니다.



## In the News: From Asia Society Policy Institute

### 북한과의 협상



이 글은 니케이 아시안 리뷰 기사에서 발췌하였다.

마이크 폼페이오 (Mike Pompeo) 미국 국무장관은 스티브 비건 (Steve Biegun) 대북정책특별대표와 함께 평양방문을 다시 준비하고 있다. 다소 생소한 한반도 상황에도 그들은 타고난 협상 전문가들이다.

폼페이오 국무장관이 북한과의 양자회담을 적극적으로 추구하고 있는 것은 분명한 사실이다. 그는 8월 아세안 외교장관회에서 동석한 리용호 북한 외무상과 좌담을 원했으나 이는 좌초되었다. 폼페이오 국무장관은 리용호 외무상에게 미국의 초대장을 거부하는 것이 북한의 “매력 공세”를 약화시킬 수 있다고 설득하면서 마침내 뉴욕에서 열린 유엔총회에서 리용호 외무상을 만났지만 실질적인 소득은 거의 없었다.

좋은 소식은 폼페이오 국무장관이 적극적으로 북한과 대화를 추구하고 있다는 점이지만 나쁜 소식은 북한이 오히려 밀고 당기기를 하고 있다는 점이다. 북미 정상회담 이후 4개월이 지난 현재, 평양은 비핵화 협상에서 약속한 점들을 아직 이행하지 않았을뿐더러 폼페이오 국무장관의 카운터파트도 아직 명확하게 발표를 하지 않은 상태다.

북한이 대북제재 해지를 바란다면 김정은 북한 위원장이 싱가포르에서 합의한 것들을 이행해야 할 것이다. 평양의 베테랑 외교관들은 협상을 통해 요구하는 가격을 높이고 상대방의 요구사항을 충분히 줄일 수 있다.

원문은 아시아소사이어티 코리아 홈페이지에서 찾을 수 있습니다.



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## Asia Society Korea's Cooking Class Series

### Thailand: Pad Thai and Bualoy Kathi



(Continued from Page 1)

Pad Thai is said to have become a world-famous Thai dish since the Second World War and it also has emerged recently as one of the most popular Thai dishes for Koreans. The main ingredients of Pad Thai are the rice noodles called 'Sen Chan' from Chanthaburi province, tamarind sauce, dried shrimp from the southern part of Thailand, and tofu from Chinatown in Bangkok. Combined, they develop bold and rich flavors. Mr. Sri-Ampai demonstrated the cooking technique and the participants followed his step-by-step instructions. While everyone was enjoying making their Pad Thai, Ms. Lapisatepun joined in and helped them.

Bualoy Kathi is a well-known dessert in Thailand composed of sticky rice balls and coconut milk. It is often served during blessing ceremonies such as weddings and temple festivals. In Thai, the word Bua means lotus and Loy means floating. Putting these two words together means floating lotus. Sticky rice balls represent the lotus and coconut milk resembles water. Sticky rice balls are made from a mixture of common flavorings and colorings including taro, pandan, and pumpkin squash. The two assistant chefs introduced how to make Bualoy Kathi and demonstrated the process of making sticky rice balls. Mrs. Sri-Ampai then taught a traditional carving technique for carving fruits and vegetables into roses.

All of the participants had a wonderful time at the cooking class. They expressed a lot of interest in Thai food and took pleasure in cooking with authentic ingredients. After the participants finished cooking Pad Thai, the chefs shared Bualoy Kathi with everyone as a sweet way to wrap up a great day of Thai cooking.

## US-ROK Relations: Past, Present, and Future



(Continued from Page 1)

Following welcoming remarks by Asia Society's Honorary Chairman, **Dr. Hong-Koo Lee**, H.E. Harris opened by talking about his forty-year military career, which culminated in leading the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), now known as the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). This, he explained, made him well placed to understand the military relationship between the two countries. Additionally, as ambassador, he now also has a responsibility to understand and implement all aspects of the bilateral agreements between Korea and America.

He closed his speech by noting that South Korea and America have forged a strong link, begun by those who served before, and it is up to those who serve today,

including himself, to maintain the bond between the two countries.

*This event was hosted by our board member, Mr. Young Joon Kim of Milbank.*



## Ambassador Interviews

### Interview with H.E. Manisha Gunasekera



**H.E. Manisha Gunasekera**

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence. Asia Society Korea caught up with Ambassador Manisha Gunasekera to share some thoughts on her life in Korea as well as Sri Lankan-Korean relations.

#### **I. You came to Korea in September 2015. Can you tell us about your life in Korea briefly?**

Yes I arrived in Korea in September 2015, and I am close to completing three years of my tenure here. This is a fairly long period in which to get to know a country.

Since the commencement of my tour of duty in Seoul I have had a very busy time focusing on enhancing Sri Lanka's bilateral relationship with Korea. A good part of my first six months was spent meeting key interlocutors and institutions on the Korean side with a view to further strengthening our cooperation. During my tenure here, there were many high-level visits between Sri Lanka and Korea, including exchange of officials visits by the two Foreign Ministers of the two countries, as well as the state visit of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena to Korea on the invitation of President Moon Jae-in in November 2017 in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Last year, we also organised many Sri Lankan promotional events and activities to celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Most importantly, I have been working hard to profile Sri Lanka, which is a small and beautiful island nation in the Indian Ocean located at the southern tip of India, in a positive light for the Korean people. The Korean people I met were curious to know more about Sri Lanka and there was much I could say about my beautiful country. I was greatly supported in this endeavour by the excellent team in the embassy.

So I must confess that my first year was extremely busy, leaving me little time for leisure or relaxation. But despite my busy schedule, I took the time to visit various regions in Korea, discover Korean culture and food, and to also get to know Seoul city. During my many travels, I was fascinated by the lush greenery and beauty of Gangwon province and completely bowled over by the beauty of Jeju island. During the few weekends that I have been free, I spent time visiting museums, special exhibitions, shopping, and book browsing. One of my favourite haunts is Kyobo book shop in Gwanghwamun square in Seoul, which has a most eclectic and up to date selection of English books. So I can truly say that my stay in Korea has been an exciting journey of discovery for me right from the start.

## Ambassador Interviews

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### **2. As a foreigner, what was the most interesting or intriguing aspect of Korean culture that you found?**

Well I find the Korean people to be most intriguing. They are friendly, passionate and full of emotion. I find this to be an interesting character trait. This in my view is a very positive quality as it shows that Korean people engage with whatever they do from the heart. It has endeared me to them.

Apart from that, I find the coexistence of high tech and traditional Korean culture in the same space to be an extremely interesting phenomenon. Korean people are well groomed and tech savvy. On the other hand we also see Seoul replete with historical monuments and palaces from the Joseon period, as well as traditional and historic Temples located in the mountains all over Korea with a most distinct Temple food culture. This can be fascinating to a traveler passing through Korea. Korea invests a lot in keeping its rich traditions and culture alive. Most of the major Korean events which I attend as Sri Lanka's envoy are well organised with the opening ceremonies well-choreographed, projecting to the world a blend of traditional Korean culture, k-pop and tech savvy modern Korea leading the fourth industrial revolution. This is my image of Korea and what I will always carry in my heart and mind.

I must also add that the K-wave or hallyu is very popular in Sri Lanka as well as in South Asia. My friends' teenage kids love k-pop, and many Sri Lankans of all age groups, including my mother, are fans of Korean drama which are now shown on our television as prime time series. The historical Korean drama Dae Jang Geum was a mega hit in Sri Lanka a few years ago. This has also resulted in the famous Korean actress Ms. Lee Young-ae being a household name in Sri Lanka with a wide fan base.

### **3. You stayed in Japan from 2004 to 2007 as a Political Counsellor of the Embassy. What are some of the similarities and differences between Korea and Japan in your experience?**

Yes, my stint in Japan as a mid-career diplomat gave me my first insights into East Asian culture and was an asset in subsequently taking up my very first ambassadorial post as Sri Lanka's envoy to the Republic of Korea. East Asia is very different to South Asia or even Southeast Asia. I had a certain vision of Japan since my childhood, which was one of colourful seasons, beautiful Japanese dolls and festivals and lanterns. Much of modern European aesthetic is heavily influenced by Japanese art or japonism.

But having lived in Korea for almost three years now, I have been able to look at this more deeply and more objectively. For example, I have now received much more information on Korean influence on Japanese culture, as well as the impact of continental Asian influences transmitted through or emanating from the Korean peninsula on Japanese culture and society. This is today the object of serious academic study and continues to yield fascinating results.

I see many similarities between Japanese and Korean cultures, but I also see differences, and the difference can be more subtle and more interesting. But it is important not to generalise too much on this topic. If I were to talk about differences, Japanese Temples are different from Korean Temples in art and architecture; Japanese food is very different to Korean food; Japanese language is different to Korean language; and the list goes on. But one very important similarity that I do see is the discipline and work ethic of the Korean and Japanese peoples and their approach to life, which has served both countries well in their miraculous economic advancement. I greatly admire these qualities which deserve emulation in other parts of the world.

### **4. Are there any similarities or common cultural traits between Korea and Sri Lanka?**

Indeed there are. First and foremost, both Sri Lanka and Korea are Asian countries. There is therefore a distinctly Asian cultural identity threading through both our countries. This is a very fine thread, sometimes barely visible. Both our countries are therefore steeped in values which one could call Asian, such as respecting our parents, looking after our parents in old age, respecting our elders and seniors, extending warm hospitality towards visitors, presenting gifts as tokens of appreciation, maintaining close links with extended family, being extremely polite, and the list goes on. If one were to look at food habits, both our people grow and consume rice as a staple food.

Another important cultural dimension which brings our two countries together is Buddhism. While Buddhist links between Korea and the Indian sub-continent can be traced back to 5th century AD, Buddhist links between Sri Lanka and Korea go back to 13th to 15th centuries. Thus there have been Buddhist cultural exchanges between our two countries since ancient times continuing to date. In modern times, the famous Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist of international repute Anagarika Dharmapala visited Korea in August 1913. He brought with him Sacred Relics of the Buddha which are enshrined in the Pagoda (stupa) in the Jogyesa (Temple) in Seoul.

## Ambassador Interviews

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(Continued)

Today, Sri Lanka is highly respected by Korean Buddhists including the main Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism as a repository of the authentic Theravada tradition of Buddhism. Many Korean Buddhist monks and scholars visit Sri Lanka and study the ancient Pali language and Buddhist civilization. Reciprocally, many Sri Lankan Buddhist monks live and study in Korea, including in Dongguk University. Having said this, I must emphasize that Sri Lanka is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country where many religions and ethnicities co-exist.

In brief I would like to say that we must value and treasure these commonalities in our respective cultural identities, and celebrate our 'Asianness.'

### **5. Sri Lanka is famous for black tea and Buddhism. What other cultural aspects would you recommend to those who have the chance to visit Sri Lanka?**

Yes Ceylon tea is world famous and considered to be the best tea in the world. Sri Lanka is the world's fourth largest producer and the third largest exporter of black tea. Ceylon tea's distinct flavours are influenced by a unique combination of climate, soil, precipitation, elevation and sun. This is similar to the case of wine growing. While Sri Lanka is a small island nation, it has an enormous range in elevation, so that the flavours and the colours of the black teas produced vary greatly according to region. A classic Ceylon tea flavour is generally bold and brisk with delicate floral or spicy fragrances, and has medium-to-full tannins. Most Ceylon tea is orthodox tea as it is processed by hand. Eleven tea-growing regions are found in the country, the best-known are in the central highlands of Uva, Nuwara Eliya and Dimbulla. Ceylon teas are traditionally hot teas, either taken black, or with lemon or milk. Today they are also the most popular base for iced teas in the world.

I am happy to say that there is an expanding niche market for Ceylon tea in Korea. Many young Koreans are enthusiastic about the health benefits of tea and are getting introduced to the mysteries of tea drinking. There are many Korean who want to become connoisseurs of tea, and we encourage them by introducing them to Ceylon tea varieties. The Sri Lanka Embassy takes every opportunity to promote Ceylon tea in Korea.

I spoke about the importance of Buddhism in Sri Lanka earlier and will say a little more on this later.

Apart from Ceylon tea, I would like to highly recommend that Korean visitors sample Sri Lankan food, including our famous seafood such as crab and lobster, when visiting Sri Lanka.

I would like to also recommend that Korean tourists visit Sri Lanka during the famous Kandy Esala Perahera season in August, to watch this beautiful and majestic pageant of traditional Sri Lankan dance, music and culture. It is a unique festival of light and sound in the world very popular with Western tourists.

### **6. What are some aspects of the Sri Lankan culture that you hope to promote in Korea?**

Well as I said, I am deeply committed to promoting Ceylon tea and the health benefits of tea drinking in Korea.

Apart from this, I encourage Korean people to visit Sri Lanka, a top tourist destination in the world. Tourism is also one of the most lucrative and fast growing industries in Sri Lanka. This beautiful island known as the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' is seen as very exotic.

Sri Lanka is a unique tourist destination which offers the tourist a remarkable combination of experiences. Within a mere 65,610 sq.km area lie 8 UNESCO World Heritage sites, 1,330 kilometres of pristine coastline, 15 national parks and eco-resorts with abundance of wildlife including elephant, leopard, and high biodiversity, nearly 500,000 acres of lush tea estates, 250 acres of botanical gardens, 350 waterfalls, 25,000 water bodies, and ancient cities and cultural sites which are 2,500 years old. Sri Lanka's centuries old Buddhist heritage is of particular interest to Korean Buddhist tourists. Sri Lanka's coastline is famous for whale watching (the Blue whale) and water sports such as wind surfing.

I want more Korean people, both young and old, to visit Sri Lanka and discover this resplendent island. The three direct flights a week by Korean Air between Seoul and Colombo offer excellent connectivity. There are also many other connections one can take to visit Sri Lanka from Seoul.



## Ambassador Interviews

There is also great potential for Koreans of the Buddhist faith to visit Sri Lanka and discover the countries' ancient and authentic Buddhist heritage beginning from 3rd century BC, according to recorded history, when Buddhism was first introduced to the island from India. For example, the oldest recorded tree in the world, a sapling of the great Bo tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya in India, still exists in the ancient capital kingdom of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. The famous Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, which is a UNESCO world heritage site, holds the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. These are venerated by Buddhist the world over.

Additionally, I would like the Korean people to discover Sri Lankan food. We hold a Sri Lanka food festival every year at the Millennium Seoul Hilton, which is very popular with the Korean people. Given Korea's increasing exposure to gourmet cuisine and international culinary trends, the combination of spices, coconut milk, and exotic flavours, as well as the cosmopolitan nature of Sri Lankan food, influenced by many peoples and cultures of the East and West over centuries, is extremely attractive.

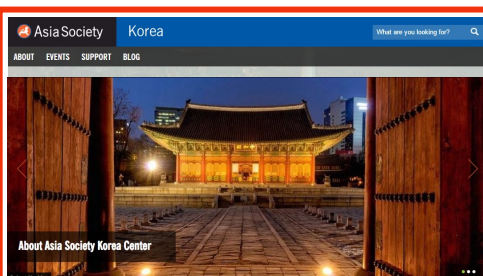
### **7. 2018 marks the 70th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence as well as South Korea's establishment of government. What do you expect for Sri Lankan-Korean relations in the future?**

Sri Lanka and the Republic of Korea celebrated 40 years of diplomatic relations on 14 November, 2017, and the Embassy held a series of Sri Lankan promotional events in Korea including a photo exhibition, a food festival, a festival of internationally acclaimed Sri Lankan films, and performances by a well-known dance troupe in Sri Lanka, to celebrate this important milestone. Sri Lanka and Korea also issued two stamps to commemorate this milestone. A highlight was the state visit of President Maithripala Sirisena to Sri Lanka in November 2017, which led to the elevation of our bilateral relations in every sphere.

Building on this momentum, a key priority for me is working towards an increase in Korean investment in Sri Lanka, as well as a significant increase in bilateral trade and tourism between the two countries. Further cooperation in the cultural sphere, including enhanced people-to-people contacts, is also important. This is where we find synergy with President Moon Jae-in's New Southern Policy and Sri Lanka's own policy of greater cooperation and integration with Asia. Sri Lanka is also a proactive player for cooperation in the Indian Ocean, and we see increased interest on the part of Korea in the Indian Ocean region. We hope to build further on these synergies and complementarities in the future.

I also want to safeguard and enhance our cooperation in the employment sector, where approximately 26,000 Sri Lankan workers are engaged in the manufacturing, construction, and fishery sectors in Korea under the Korean Government's Employment Permit System (EPS). It is important for us to remember that these Sri Lankan employees contribute significantly towards the economies of our countries. They are also our youth who learn from best practices in Korea and work towards improving their lives in Sri Lanka following their return to the country after ending their contracts. The Sri Lankan Government is deeply appreciative of the employment opportunities provided by the Korean Government.

But if I were to summarize in one phrase what my expectations are of Sri Lankan-Korean relations in the future, I would simply say that, more than anything else, I would want Korean people to discover Sri Lanka and its many facets and beauty. This would be 'serendipity' (or coming across something wonderful unexpectedly), which is a word in the English language whose origin is associated with Sri Lanka.



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## Korean Beauty

# Binyeo: A Dazzling Korean Traditional Ornamental Hairpin



By Asia Society Korea staff

People tend to disregard the small things in life. When someone is wearing a nation's traditional attire, we usually admire items such as the skirt, dress, or jacket. We don't always notice smaller accessories. Similarly, you may not have noticed **Binyeo**, a dazzling Korean traditional ornamental hairpin that varies in its material, shape, and color.

In traditional Korean society, married women used to brush their long hair into neat buns, and the *Binyeo* was used to hold the bun in place. The *Binyeo*, however, was more than just a practical accessory since Korean ancestors believed each *Binyeo* carried a special spell, which captured the wearer's soul. In other words, they viewed it as a reflection of the woman's inner self. If a woman were to lose or take off her *Binyeo*, it was believed that she would lose her fidelity and dignity.

*Binyeo*, surprisingly, used to be worn by both genders. However, after the Joseon Dynasty (1392 CE – 1910 CE), it became an item exclusively for women. Moreover, the groom would gift it to his bride as a symbol of love when they joined in matrimony. According to oral traditions of the ancient cultures, *Binyeo* also acted as a medium for lovers to meet.

Unfortunately, during the Silla Dynasty (57 BCE – 935 CE), a decree prohibiting the use of *Binyeo* was announced in accordance with the Bone-rank system that segregated society on the basis of hereditary proximity to the throne. For instance, the shape of the Chinese phoenix and dragon were only permitted to the imperial family; however, commoners were granted the opportunity to wear a dragon-shaped *Binyeo* at weddings.

Various materials were used to make *Binyeos* depending on who was to be the owner. Those who wore *Binyeos* made from gold, silver, and jade belonged to the upper class; whereas, people who wore *Binyeos* made of wood were widows.

Finally, the name of the *Binyeo* depends on the shape of the *Jamdu*, the convex part at the end. Many *Jamdus* signify auspicious signs such as wealth, good health, and longevity. So, if you get a chance to wear one, may good luck always be with you.

## Najeonchilgi: A Traditional Korean Decorative Design



By Asia Society Korea staff

In the past, Korean craftsmen and women developed a wide range of techniques to produce the items they needed at home such as wardrobes, cabinets, and tables. With time and practice they gained a keen eye for balance and symmetry. The artisans later developed the art of using aesthetically dyed oxhorn strips, iridescent mother-of-pearl inlays, and abalone shells for decoration, which were widely utilized in making attractive garments, household objects, and fashion accessories. The technique, known as **Najeonchilgi**, is a method where colorful pieces of shellfish are inlaid on an object.

This traditional decorative design has a 2,000-year heritage; however, it has been gradually decaying from existence. One key factor for this unfortunate phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that *Najeonchilgi* needs elaborate and careful handiwork to connect each of the little pieces of abalone, turban shell, pearl shell, and other necessary materials. Moreover, the procedure consumes a long period of time, which is a major issue as the lacquer, along with an unbearable smell, is detrimental to human skin. Naturally, there are not many skillful artisans who would willingly partake in this strenuous process today. The government, as a result, has been making great efforts to preserve these master artisans by addressing them as essential and intangible cultural assets in recent years.

Traditions and cultures such as *Najeonchilgi* have been slowly fading into the realm of history with each passing year. It should not be forgotten, nevertheless, traditions like these are like a beautiful exquisite light that have left an indelible mark on the modern world.



## Korean Beauty

# Hwangungu Shrine: The Forgotten History



*By Mark Sample, Contributing Writer*

Given that Seoul is a megacity, it is understandable that some important sites slip by the attention of the city's citizens and tourists. **Hwangungu Shrine**, located in Jung-gu, is one example, but its rich history means that it merits not getting lost among the many wonderful sightseeing options in South Korea's capital.

Hwangungu Shrine and the three stone drums that sit next to it were built in 1897 to accompany Wongudan Alter, which is also known as Hwagudan. The alter was built two years earlier but the location had been used for hundreds of years as a place for emperors to perform animal sacrifices to higher powers. Referred to as the Rite of Heaven, the ceremony was performed during the pre-Three Kingdoms period. The location was strategically chosen since it sits between Namsan and Bukhansan in a place that was auspicious to geomancers.

King Seongjong is documented as being the first of the Goryeo kings to hold the ritual that was designed to ensure a bountiful harvest in 983AD. Despite the rite eventually being abolished, it was briefly reintroduced by King Sejo of the Joseon Dynasty. However, he also brought it to an end during the tenth year of his reign in 1464. Since it was believed that only emperors could beseech the gods, the Korean rulers avoided the practice during much of the Joseon Dynasty because they used the title of "King" so as not to offend the Emperor of China. For this reason, the practice did not return until King Gojong's Korean Empire reintroduced it in 1897.

The Japanese colonial period saw the practice come to an end in 1910, and the site would go on to become the location for the Railroad Chosun Hotel. Today the Westin Chosun Hotel sits in its place. During the construction of the Railroad Chosun Hotel, the Japanese made the decision to destroy Wongudan Alter; hence, today's visitors to the site will only see the Hwangungu Shrine and the three stone drums. The three-story granite complex was designed to mimic objects of worship such as the sun and moon; furthermore, the three stone drums symbolize the instruments used for the rites.



## Asia Society Korea Travel Series

### Part 7: Fall Foliage in Korea



*By Mark Sample, Contributing Writer*

Fall is one of the best times to be in Korea as the intense summer heat finally gives way to more pleasant and cool conditions. This time of the year is also loved by Koreans due to the array of colors that can be seen during the fall foliage period. What's more, the air quality is at its best throughout the autumn months, so there is no excuse not to enjoy Korea's natural beauty. With this in mind, this month's travel series will document some of the best places to see those wonderful fall leaves.

For those wanting to truly enjoy the switch from summer greens to the rich palette of yellows, oranges, and reds, the Korean mountains, unsurprisingly, offer the best settings. When you say mountain to any Korean, the first place most recommend is Seoraksan Mountain, which continues to be an incredibly popular destination. In terms of the best routes to see the fall leaves, we would suggest Cheonbuldong Valley or Osaek Mineral Spring, but do be prepared to share the trails with many other visitors. Odaesan Mountain near Pyeongchang is another popular choice, and this is convenient for those without a car as there is a city bus stop near Sangwonsa Temple, which is a good access point.

To the south of Seoul, three great choices are the mountains of Naejangsan in Jeongeup, Juwangsan in Cheongsong, and Jirisan in Gurye. Naejangsan is famed for its maple trees that were planted to form an incredible tunnel, and they can be conveniently found by the ticket office. Juwangsan's impressive trails provide glimpses of its rocky peaks, deep valleys, and elegant waterfalls. Most visitors take the Juwang Valley course that usually takes about four hours, but often takes longer due to all the fantastic photo opportunities! Finally, Jirisan always deserves a mention, and its vastness (it occupies three provinces) means there are many options, although the routes near Ssanggyesa Temple and Piagol Valley are our top choices.

Clearly there is no shortage of places to visit, but there is also good news for those who are unable to get away from Seoul. Jeongdang-gil, which stretches from Deoksugung Palace to Jeongdong Theater, offers a beautiful ambience with a number of cultural sites strewn along a kilometer-long road dotted with beautiful ginkgo trees that turn yellow in autumn. Samcheongdong-gil, near Gyeongbokgung Palace, offers a similar setting and is also popular. Let's not forget that Seoul also has its own mountains. Namsan provides an excellent view of the city below its dense forest that erupts into a myriad of colors during fall, and Bugaksan has a fantastic trail that leads hikers between beautiful autumn foliage on one side and the city skyline to the other.

Typically, the foliage season gets underway from the middle of September, but forecasters have already noted that the more northern regions, including Seoraksan National Park, will not see the leaves change color until the end of this month. That means that the southern areas of Korea will have to wait until mid-October or even early November. Luckily, this gives us more time to plan our trips!

Wherever you decide to go, it is important to remember that the daily temperatures vary significantly during these months so be sure to head out prepared as a hot afternoon can quickly turn into a very chilly evening. Fall, nevertheless, is a fantastic time to be in Korea and get out and about before the harsh Korean winter arrives!

## Asia Society Korea Travel Series

### Part 8: Baekje Cultural Land



*By Mark Sample, Contributing Writer*

This month's travel series will see us step back in time once more to educate ourselves on another part of the peninsula's expansive history. On this occasion we will experience what life was like in the Baekje Kingdom. Baekje is recognized as one of the Three Kingdoms alongside Goguryeo and Silla, and it existed from 18BC to 660AD. The kingdom was founded by King Onjo and was regarded for its great maritime power, which was significant as it resulted in the dissemination of Buddhism throughout East Asia. Baekje also maintained strong political and trade relations with both China and Japan during its existence.

In 1994, the Korean government set out to bring Baekje back to life. Given the scope of the project, it is no surprise that completion was not reached until 2010. In fact, it is the largest historical theme park in the country and many famous buildings have been reproduced as replicas. Since the complex is so big, it is possible to get overwhelmed, so we would recommend dividing your visit between some key areas.

First, take some time to explore Sabigung Palace, an area of 14 buildings that were all constructed using ancient palace architectural design. Junggungcheon, Donggungjeon, and Seogungjeon are particularly interesting as they recapture what life was like in the buildings of Baekje that were used for carrying out political, administrative, and military affairs. Neungsa is a great second stop with the photogenic royal temple acting as an excellent glimpse into one of the kingdom's places of worship. After you have taken some selfies in front of the pagoda, drop by the tombs (Gobungongwon) to see how the noble classes were remembered after death, and then head directly to the Living Culture Village.

This stop is possibly the most enjoyable as you get to see how the citizens of Baekje spent their days, with a myriad of houses dedicated to all the different artisans of the time. You will probably be ready for a bite to eat now, but do not take too long as there is still more to see!

Your final stop should be the Baekje Historical Museum, which provides a comprehensive account of life all those years ago with an array of excavated relics throughout the exhibition. Furthermore, there are a number of documentaries and other visual media that make for a very interesting and informative experience.

Baekje Cultural Land is a bit of a trip for those coming from Seoul, but the area is well worth a visit. The best way to get there by public transport is to take a two-hour intercity bus ride from Seoul Nambu Bus Terminal to Buyeo. At the terminal you should transfer to a local bus that is bound for the Korea National University of Cultural Heritage. You can see Baekje Cultural Land as soon as you step off the bus.

Baekje Cultural Land is a great day out for all ages. Fun, informative, and so beautiful that it was actually used in a number of films and television programs. Get there while the weather is still not too chilly!

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