

SPRING 2023 VOL.60

# KOREAN HERITAGE



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# KOREAN HERITAGE



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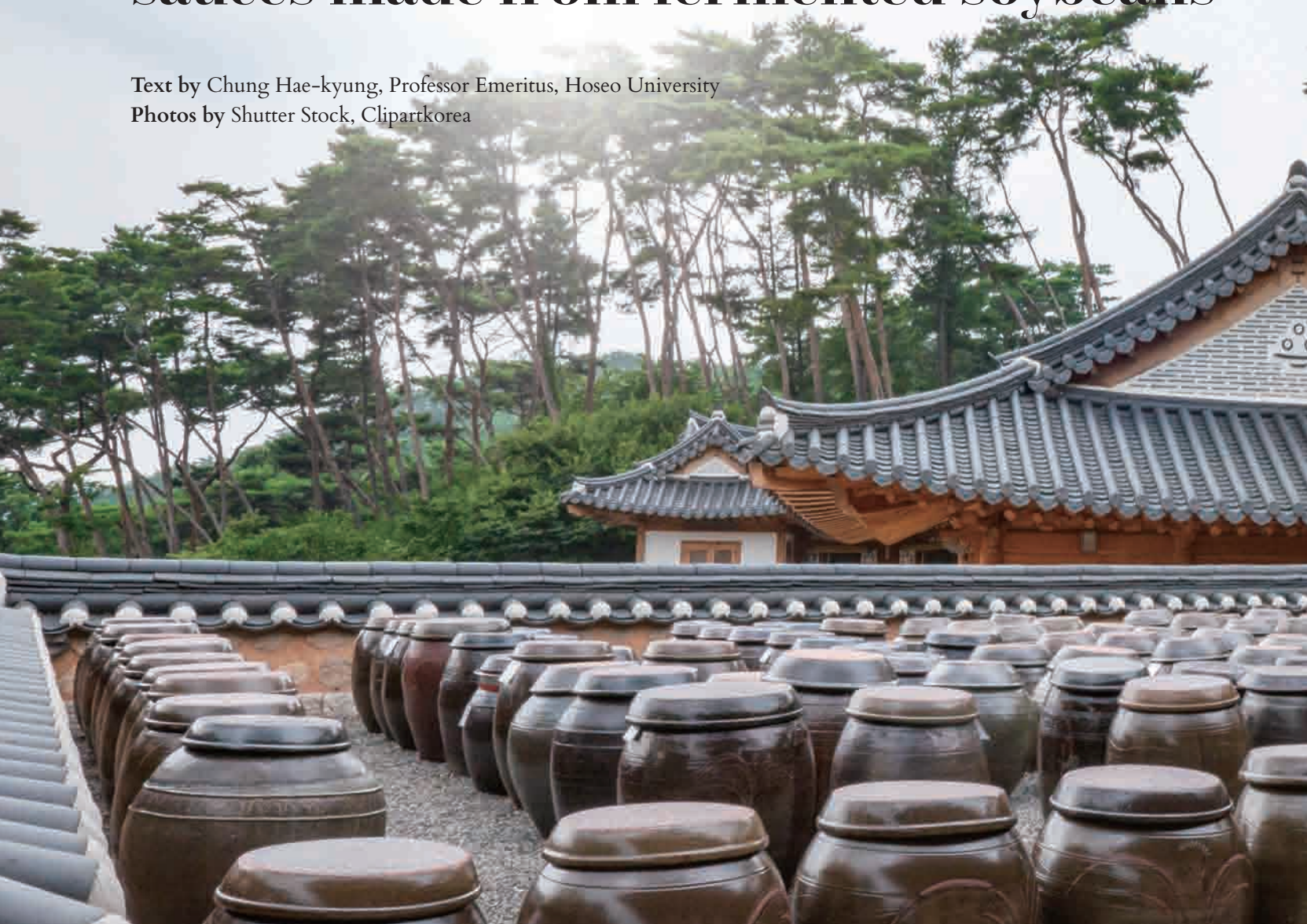
FEATURE STORY

# Traditional Korean Sauces Derived from Nature

A story on *jang*, the traditional Korean sauces made from fermented soybeans

Text by Chung Hae-kyung, Professor Emeritus, Hoseo University

Photos by Shutterstock, Clipartkorea





Buddhist temples make jang sauces using traditional methods and age them in *onggi* pots.

Making and sharing traditional sauces based on fermented soybeans has been an indispensable part of Korea's heritage and identity for millennia. This tradition is today registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

## Korea and Its Sauces

Fermented soybeans have held an important position in the diet of East Asians for thousands of years. Recipes based on fermented soybeans have been passed down within families through the generations, giving birth to a colorful range of variations. These traditional soybean-based sauces transmitted among Koreans are known as *jang*. The definitive examples include *ganjang* (soy sauce), *doenjang* (soybean paste), and *gochujang* (chili paste).

Traditional Korean sauces all start with *meju*, which is made by pounding cooked soybeans and shaping them into blocks that are then fermented. The development of traditional Korean sauces likely began around the time when *meju* blocks were first produced, which is estimated as the third century CE or before.



Traditional Korean sauces are made from *meju* blocks.



From the left: *gochujang* (chili paste), *doenjang* (soybean paste), and *ganjang* (soy sauce)

To make traditional Korean sauces, *meju* blocks are soaked in brine and fermented with microorganisms. During this process, the proteins in soybeans are broken down into amino acids that exude a distinctive flavor described by the Korean adjective *gusuhada*. This fermentation also allows for extended storage.

Confined to the mountainous environment of the Korean Peninsula, Koreans of the past filled their tables with wild vegetables collected from the mountains. Fermented soybean sauces added savory flavors to these vegetable dishes. The lack of protein in this vegetable-rich diet was supplemented by the soybeans in the sauces. *Jang* sauces also contain Vitamin B12, an essential nutrient that is not present in soybeans until they are fermented. The traditional Korean diet revolves around vegetable dishes and fermented foods, a cuisine epitomized by *jang* sauces.



*Jang* sauces are the primary factor in the flavor of many meals, including the popular Korean dish *bibimbap* (“mixed rice”).

## Ingredients from Nature

It is thought that soybeans originated in Manchuria, a territory north of the Korean Peninsula that was once under the rule of the ancient Korean kingdom of Goguryeo (37 BCE– 668 CE). These soybeans from Manchuria were brought to Korea where they grew well anywhere they were planted. It must have been natural to incorporate this abundant plant into the local diet. Another important ingredient for making traditional Korean sauces is salt, which is typically produced in the tidal flats along the southwest coast of Korea. Korean sea salt is characterized by regular grains and a sweet aftertaste. The fresh waters in Korea are generally of good quality and contribute to the flavor of traditional Korean sauces. These three elements of nature—soybeans, salt, and water—come together to produce these traditional sauces.

One thing to note is that the fermentation process for *jang* sauces involves three classes of microorganisms: fungi, bacteria, and yeast. Fermented foods elsewhere in the world typically apply just a single type.

## Completed by Care and Time

Some of the soybeans harvested in autumn are stashed away until winter and then cooked to create *meju* blocks. After fermentation, the *meju* blocks are used to produce *jang*. The *jang* sauces are brewed when it is cold so they can be gradually exposed to higher temperatures with the arrival of spring and summer. This process of fermentation progressing from low to high temperatures brings out all the different elements in the ingredients. At first they compete with each other, but with time a harmonious taste is generated.

*Jang* sauces require attentive care during their fermentation. In the daytime, the jar containing a *jang* sauce should have its lid removed to allow sunrays to destroy unwanted microorganisms. The lid is put back on at night to protect the contents from moisture. The surface of a *jang* jar should be cleaned regularly to keep any harmful substances at bay. The final ingredient for making traditional Korean sauces is attention and time.



Korean sea salt is used for making *jang*.



**Top** *Meju* blocks are placed in an *onggi* pot with water and salt and stored for fermentation.  
**Bottom** *Jang* sauces are completed through attentive care over a long period of time.

*Jang* sauces vary in taste from family to family, sometimes serving as an identity marker for a particular household. Family-specific *jang* flavors are supported by the practice of keeping soy sauce for an extended period and constantly topping it off with newly made sauce to replace what has been used. This aged soy sauce is known as *ssi ganjang*, or “seed soy sauce.” When talking about traditional Korean sauces, the importance of the containers cannot be overlooked. *Jang* sauces are traditionally stored in clay pots known as *onggi*. *Onggi* pots have small pores on the surface through which respiration can take place to improve fermentation.

Buddhist temples played a critical role in developing and disseminating the *jang*-making tradition across society. In Korea, Buddhist temples were mainly located deep in the mountains. This remote mountainous environment was combined with the Buddhist practice of abstaining from meat and inspired a diet rich in vegetables and fermented foods. Soybeans were the primary source of protein for Buddhist monks in Korea.

## A Tradition to Live On

Making and sharing *jang* is a time-honored tradition that has long been transmitted by ordinary members of society. They are therefore given the responsibility of passing down the tradition to future generations. After showing signs of decline with the emergence of factory-made condiments, sauces produced in the traditional manner have recently been regaining popularity. Koreans are turning back to traditionally made sauces due to their health benefits. *Jang* sauces do not just add flavor to foods: They also support the health of consumers. They suggest ecological notions about what people eat and underscore the value of slow food. The tradition of making and sharing *jang* will continue well into the future. 🌱

SPECIAL

# The Sky of Joseon Opened at the National Palace Museum of Korea

Astronomy as a science closely connected with the governing of the state

Text by Kim Jae-eun, Curator at the National Palace Museum of Korea

Photos by National Palace Museum of Korea, Cultural Heritage Administration,  
National Folk Museum of Korea



A celestial globe (known in Korean as a *honcheonui*), was perceived in close relation to the governing of a state during the Joseon era.



The National Palace Museum of Korea has recently revamped one of its galleries. After a major makeover, the Scientific Achievements of the Joseon Dynasty gallery was re-opened to the public in December 2022. This newly unveiled gallery focuses on the theme of astronomy as it explores the intricate relationship between science and the governing philosophy during the Joseon era (1392–1910). Astronomy enjoyed high status as a discipline connected with the ruler, assuming an important role in the governance of the state.

Astronomy during the Joseon period had two primary objects: observing celestial objects and other phenomenon on the sky and publicly communicating the time-related information obtained from these observations. In the agricultural society of Korea at the time, it was of primary importance for people to know when the seasons were changing and when to proceed with the annual cycle of agriculture. Joseon monarchs prioritized making observations of the sky and disseminating information on the changes in the seasons and tracking the months and days. To live up to this lofty duty of ensuring that people accurately reckoned time, Joseon kings sponsored research in astronomy. They supported the development of diverse astronomical instruments and had them installed at the palaces. A

dedicated office was maintained for astronomical observation, and the results of its work were compiled and published every year. Surviving paintings of the royal palaces show representations of celestial globes, sun-and-stars time determining instruments, and sundials, demonstrating that

the residence of a Joseon king played a central role in astronomical research. The renovated Scientific

Achievements of the Joseon Dynasty gallery showcases highlights of this astronomical research carried out by the Joseon court and its efforts to communicate the results with the public.



The rain gauge pedestal that was installed at Changdeokgung Palace

## Astronomical Achievements of the Joseon Court on Display

The gallery is divided into three sections. The first part is entitled “Astronomy and the Rule of Joseon Kings.” Highlights of this section include a celestial globe (known in Korean as a *honcheonui*) and a pedestal for a rain gauge. In Joseon Korea, a celestial globe was perceived as an object denoting that the monarch learned the will of the heavens and governed his people accordingly. The rain gauge pedestal displayed in this gallery is dated to 1782 and was once installed at Changdeokgung Palace. Inscriptions found on the four sides of this rain gauge pedestal show that Joseon kings were together with people in worrying about droughts and being elated about timely rainfall. This indicates that a Joseon king looked after phenomenon in the sky as part of his efforts at taking care of his people.

Under the theme “Astronomy Projects at the Joseon Royal Court,” the second section exhibits artifacts related to the dedicated office for astronomical observation known as the Gwansanggam. It also features publications on astronomical research such as almanacs, which functioned like a modern-day calendar allowing people to note the changing days, months, and years. Exhibits here demonstrate how much effort the Joseon royal court poured into the work of properly measuring time.



**Top** An *ilseongjeongsiui* clock for measuring time by following the position of the sun and stars

**Bottom** A sundial known as an *angbuilgu*, which tells the time of day and the changes of the seasons based on the shadow of a gnomon cast by the sun

The third part presents diverse astronomical instruments installed at the palaces. Aptly titled “Astronomical Instruments of the Joseon Dynasty,” it shows various forms of clocks, among other devices. They include sundials, which tell the time of day and the changes of the seasons based on the shadow of a gnomon cast by the sun. There is also a type known as *ilseongjeongsiui* that measures time by following the position of the sun and stars. To tell time at night, water clocks could be used. The type of water clock known as *jagyeongnu* tracked time through a regulated flow of water and could automatically announce the hour. Some components of this self-striking water clock are displayed in this section as well.



Components of a *jagyeongnu* water clock from Changgyeonggung Palace



Visitors can have an immersive experience of the Joseon-era chart of the constellations known as *cheonsang yeolcha bunyajido*.

## The Sky of Korea in a Single Chart

The stone slabs inscribed with a chart of the constellations are two items that should not be missed. These planispheres present comprehensive information on the sky as seen from Korea—the arrangement of the stars, theories on the movements of the moon and sun, and the 24 seasonal subdivisions of a year based on the constellation appearing due south when the sun rises or sets. One of the two was created in 1395. The founder of the Joseon Dynasty, King Taejo, had this celestial chart produced as a means to show that his rule enjoyed the mandate of heaven. A copy made in 1672 is on display here as well. To help visitors better understand the complex information contained in the charts, digital content is on offer to give an immersive experience of the artifact. This digital video based on projection mapping is screened every fifteen minutes. 🌐

HERITAGE REDISCOVERED

# The Changing of the Guard at Gyeongbokgung Palace

*Travel in time back to the 15th century*

Text by An Tae-wook, Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation

Photos by Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation





Performers stand in position to re-enact the changing of the guard ceremony from the Joseon era.





## Twenty Years into Its Restoration

Reverberating drumbeats and a colorful array of flags regularly attract the eyes and ears of people around Gwanghwamun Gate of Gyeongbokgung Palace. It indicates that the changing of the guard ceremony is soon to take place here at the front gate of the primary palace of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) with Mt. Bugaksan as a backdrop.

The construction of Gyeongbokgung was completed in 1395. The main gate was named *gwanghwa*, meaning “light and harmony,” to express the wish that the monarch’s virtuous light would shine on the state and bring peace and prosperity. Today, the area around Gyeongbokgung has become an attractive tourist attraction and its main gate welcomes visitors from all over the world. Along with the auspicious animals painted on the ceiling of this three-portal gate, the guards standing at the front serve as symbols that safeguard the wellbeing of people visiting the palace.

The Joseon palaces sustained severe damage in the first half of the 20th century during the colonial period (1910–1945) and Korean War (1950–1953). Reconstruction efforts started in 1983 with Changgyeonggung Palace, another royal residence

A re-enactment of the ceremony for appointing the head of the royal guards

to the east of Gyeongbokgung. At Gyeongbokgung, Heungnyemun Gate, the inner gate behind the front gate, was reconstructed in 2001, followed in 2010 by a project restoring Gwanghwamun Gate to its original appearance.

The royal palaces were the main arenas for the five categories of rites (*orye*, “five rites”) the Joseon court regarded as central to the governance of the state. They were made up of *gillye*, state rites for gods associated with the peace and prosperity of the nation; *garye*, celebratory occasions for members of the royal family; *billye*, ceremonies welcoming envoys from abroad; *gullye*, performative rites involving the military; and *hyungnye*, or royal funerals. The changing of the guard was an important example of a *gullye* rite.

Today’s changing of the guard ceremony at Gyeongbokgung Palace is a re-enactment of the Joseon-era version. This recreation of the military ceremony was launched in 2002, a time when particular concern was given to the resurrection of traditional culture prior to the hosting of the World Cup international sporting event. The changing the guard ceremony was reconstructed based on historical records created in 1469 when a dedicated official was installed to institutionalize the palace guard system.



Tourism allows people to explore their sense of self by experiencing different cultures and comparing them with their own. Cultural programs can accelerate this process. The changing of the guard ceremony at Gyeongbokgung helps visitors to better appreciate the culture and history of this main palace of Joseon-era Korea and Joseon society in general.

Costumes for the head (left) and deputy head (right) of the royal guards



Royal guards safeguard the entrance of Gyeongbokgung Palace.

## Color Codes at the Ceremony

The changing of the guard ceremony is re-enacted two times a day at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. by approximately 100 actors wearing traditional military costumes. This regular event offers a rare opportunity to experience the palace culture of Joseon Korea in action. Examining the clothing and symbolic colors provides an interesting perspective that can enhance the pleasure of enjoying the re-enactment.

The most conspicuous element of the ceremony is the garments and accessories worn by the performers. Their clothing was recreated based on 15th-century practices found in surviving documents and artifacts. They wear gown-like upper garments, a round-rimmed hat decorated with feathers, and shoes with upturned toes. Performers, particularly those



A rectangular garment known as a *bangnyeong* (left) and a *cheollik* overcoat that is pleated from the waist down (right)

portraying soldiers with higher ranks, wear an overcoat that is pleated from the waist down (*cheollik*) and a rectangular garment somewhat like a tunic, which is known as a *bangnyeong*. Their military hats (*jeollip*) are made from woven bamboo strips.

The performers' costumes are based on the five principal colors of the Joseon court: green/blue, red, yellow, black, and white. These five colors also symbolized the directions: the center (yellow) and the four cardinal directions. These five colors were applied in various aspects of court life from uniforms of courtiers and *dancheong* painting on the woodwork of palace buildings to ceremonial flags. Red and yellow in particular have traditionally represented authority in many cultures worldwide, and are still adopted as colors to decorate major state events today.

Among these five colors, red can be found in the hats of the head and deputy head of the royal guards, as well as in the *bangnyeong* of the head and the pleated overcoat of the vice-head. A yellow circular badge is attached to the front of the hat worn by the head or the deputy head. This yellow circle shows the rank of the wearer. The pleated overcoat of the

head of the guards is also made from yellow cloth, indicating his high status. Blue or green tones can be found in the *bangnyeong* worn by the head and in the tassels decorating his and the vice-head's swords. Their shoes are black and white, and the collars of their upper garments are white.

Besides the outfits, there are other traditional elements displayed at the ceremony. Spectators may find it pleasant to study the diverse range of flags and their decorative images as well as the weaponry carried by the performers. The cheerful and energetic music played on traditional instruments by red-garbed musicians adds further charm to the experience.

International visitors to Gyeongbokgung Palace can enjoy an opportunity to deepen their understanding of cultural diversity, an important global value encouraged by UNESCO, such as through the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. The changing of the guard ceremony provides an excellent starting place for developing an interest in Korean culture and learning more about it. 🌐



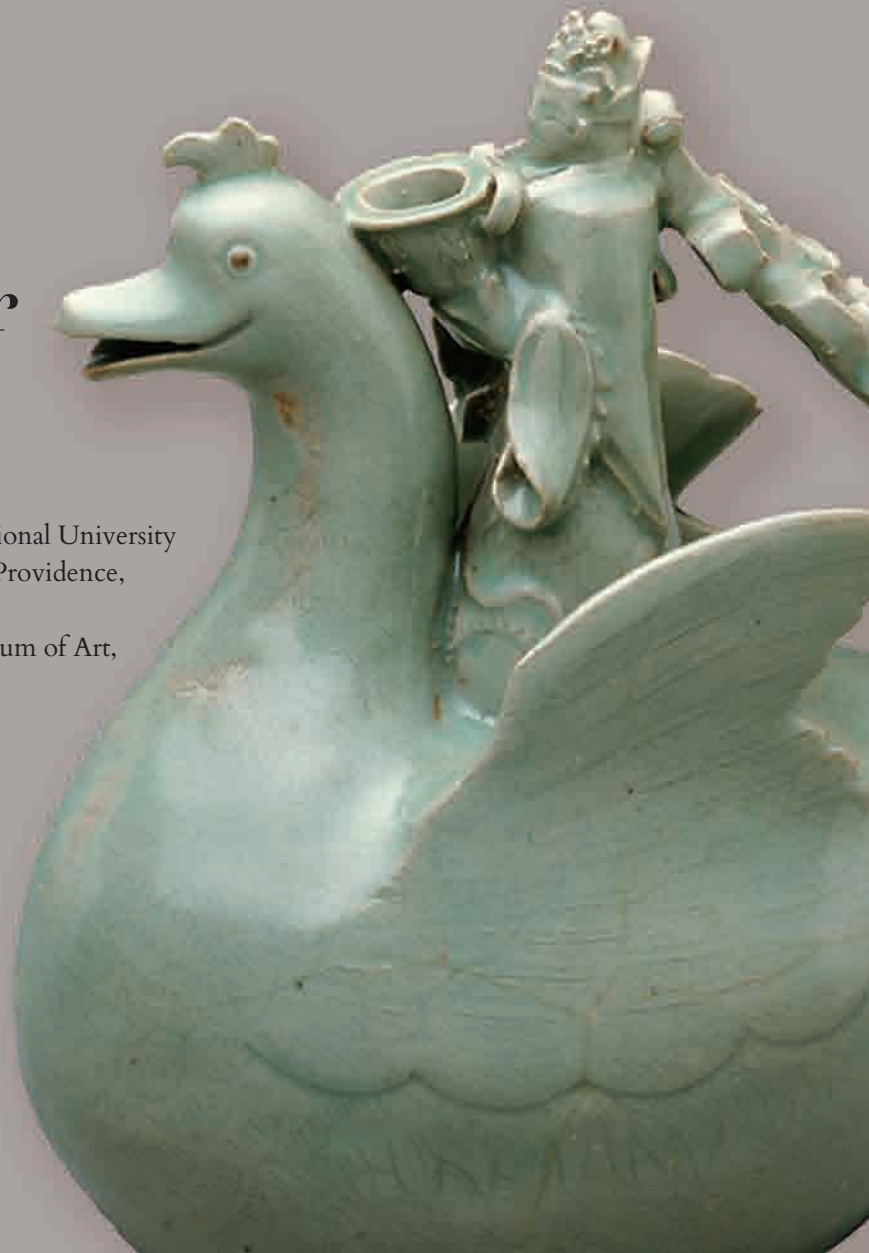
- ▲ Archery was the most widely used means of attack by the Joseon army.
- ◀ The image decorating the shields of royal guards

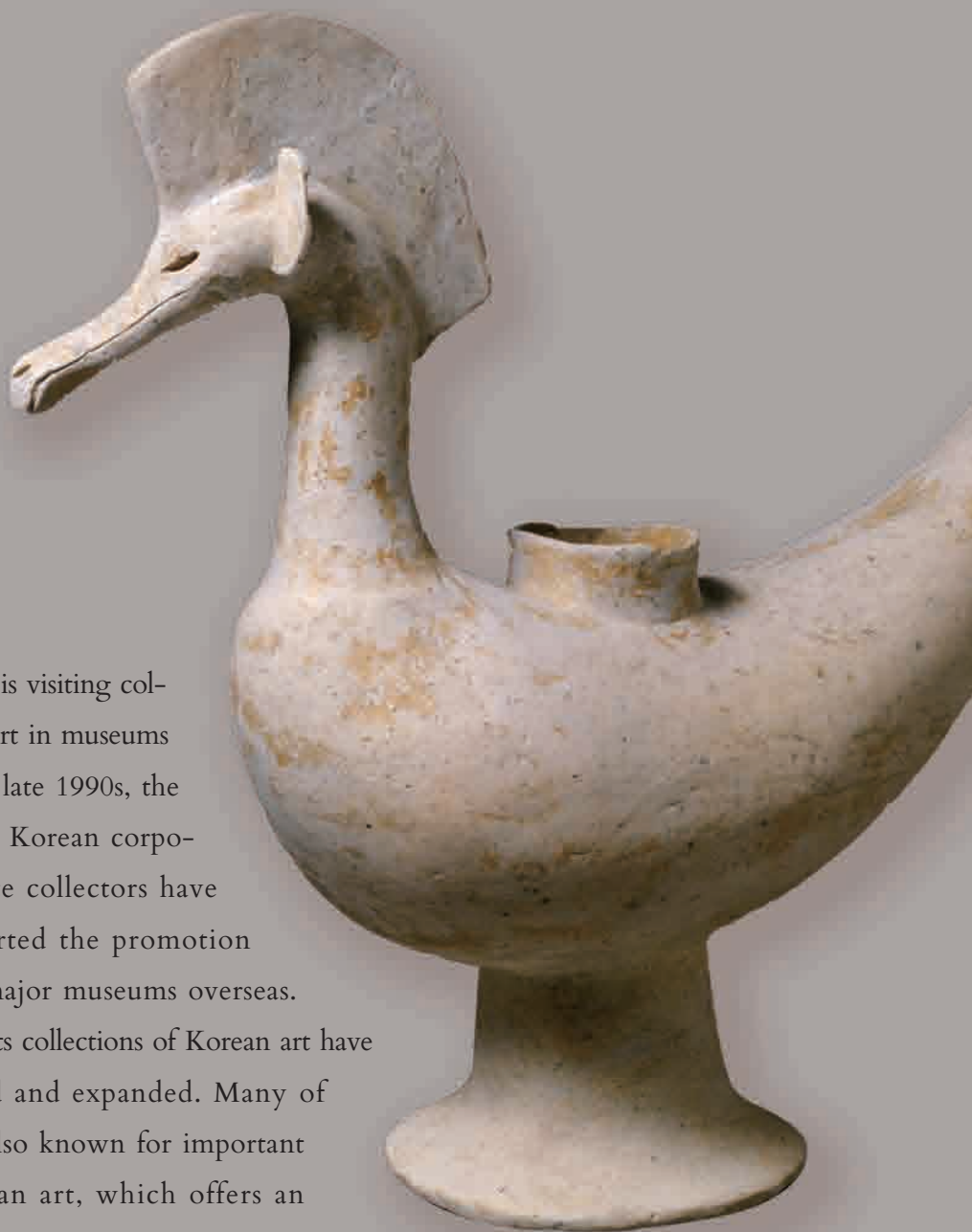
# The Road Ahead for Korean Galleries in American Art Museums

Characteristics of  
Korean heritage  
distinct from other  
East Asian nations

**Text by** Robert J. Fouser, former professor at Seoul National University  
and currently an independent scholar based in Providence,  
Rhode Island, U.S.A.

**Photos by** Art Institute of Chicago, Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
Brooklyn Museum, Robert J. Fouser





One of my hobbies is visiting collections of Korean art in museums overseas. Since the late 1990s, the Korea Foundation, Korean corporations, and private collectors have generously supported the promotion of Korean art in major museums overseas. Through their efforts collections of Korean art have been strengthened and expanded. Many of the museums are also known for important collections of Asian art, which offers an opportunity to see how Korean art is presented within the broader context of Northeast Asia. Most of the museums I have visited in recent years are in the United States because international travel was difficult during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston has one of the most important collections of Asian art in the U.S., and the Korean collection is befitting of this reputation. The museum has a gallery dedicated to Korean art centers around the collection of Charles B. Hoyt (1889–1949), an important collector of Chinese art. The collection contains excellent examples of various



The University of Michigan Museum of Art (Photo Robert J. Fouser)

genres of Korean pottery from the Three Kingdom's Period (57 BCE–676 CE) through the Joseon Period (1392–1910). It also has excellent examples of Buddhist art, such as a Goryeo Period (918–1392) painting of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Jijang Bosal).

Though increasingly challenged by active art scenes in other cities, New York remains the art capital of world, giving Korean art a unique global stage. The Brooklyn Museum opened a permanent gallery for Korean art in 1974, one of the first in the U.S. Unlike most other museums, the collection includes painting, folk art, and decorative arts. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is one of the greatest art museums in the world and opened a gallery for Korean art in 1998. The museum holds five Goryeo Buddhist paintings,

the most of any museum in the U.S. The *Buddha Amitābha and Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha* (Amita Bul and Jijang Bosal), the oldest in the collection, was purchased by the museum in 1913.

In Washington, DC, The Freer Gallery of Art, one of the many museums that make up the Smithsonian Institution, contains one of the leading collections of Asian art in the U.S. Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919) was a major collector of Asian art in the early 20th-century who acquired Korean pottery through Japanese acquaintances who were admired Korean art. The collection contains outstanding examples of pottery and porcelain from the Goryeo and Joseon Periods.

The Art Institute of Chicago, one of the most popular art museums in the U.S. has a small collection of Korean art. The display shares a gallery with Chinese art, but its own space at the end of the gallery. Most objects are Goryeo celadon stoneware from the 12th and 13th centuries, including a wonderful 12th-century *Bird Shaped Ewer with Crowned Rider Holding a Bowl*.

Finally, The University of Michigan Museum of Art, in my hometown of Ann Arbor, contains an important collection of Asian art that supports the university's research in Asian studies. Though small, the museum is the only university art museum in the U.S. to have an entire gallery devoted to Korean art. The collection consists of pottery and roof-end tiles but, through generous private contributions, has recently expanded into painting and decorative arts.

In thinking about my visits to Korean art collections in the U.S., two important questions come to mind. First, what is the range and breadth of the collection? Second, how is it presented in comparison art from other countries and cultures in the museum?

The development and expansion of permanent galleries devoted to Korean art in major museums and museums with important collections of Asian art gives Korean art alongside long-established galleries of Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, and Southeast Asia art. But a closer look at the competing galleries of Chinese and Japanese art reveals a much broader collection. In the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for example, an entire gallery is devoted to Chinese furniture and decorative arts, displayed in a reproduction of a traditional residence. The exhibitions in Japanese galleries in the museums I visited include pottery, Buddhist statuary, woodblock prints, decorative screens, kimonos, and more.



**Top** Water Dropper in the Shape of a House, Joseon, 19th Century, Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Bottom** Kashyapa, Joseon, 1700, Metropolitan Museum of Art

For all the progress in establishing a presence of Korean art in major museums, most exhibitions remain limited largely to pottery. This is natural because the early 20th-century collectors whose generosity formed the core of most collections were most interested in ceramics and pottery, particularly Goryeo celadon and Joseon-Period *buncheong*. Korean art is more than pottery so building on the core collections to include other genres, such as painting, folk art, furniture, and architecture, will help viewers overseas developed a fuller understanding of Korean art. Some museums, such as the Brooklyn Museum were lucky to start with a diverse collection, but this is a notable exception; other museums need to focus on diversifying their collections. Temporary exhibitions of modern and contemporary have increased with the growth in permanent collections. Including more modern and contemporary art in permanent collections will help expand their breadth.

Korean art is almost always presented separately from other countries and cultures. The visitors guide in the Art Institute of Chicago, for example, labels galleries devoted to Northeast Asian art as “Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Art,” but the gallery spaces are divided clearly among the three countries. By contrast most

other galleries in the Institute of Art are labeled by continent or period, such as “European Art before 1900,” “Arts of Africa,” and “Modern Art,” a common practice in most museums.

Museums have different strengths and naturally organize their collections around those strengths. Some museums, for example, divide European art by nation, period, or a combination of both, such as “French Impressionism.” A museum with a substantial collection of Asian Art, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has enough objects to group by nation.

Decisions about how to group and display objects in a museum often reflect deep-seated ideas about the objects and their origin. What, then, does presentation of Korean art as separate from Chinese and Japanese art reflect? Most obviously, it reflects the nationalist impulse to put Korea on equal footing with China and Japan. In the West, Korea had long been viewed as minor and overlooked in favor of China and Japan, both larger countries



Silla pottery, Three Kingdoms Period, The University of Michigan Museum of Art (Photo Robert J. Fouser)

with a long history of interaction with the West. Some Korean objects, such as several Goryeo-Period Buddhist paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had previously been misclassified as Japanese.

As Korea gained stature on the world stage beginning in the 1990s, the government promoted efforts to raise Korea's profile overseas through academic and cultural exchange.



**Left** Mountain Spirit (Sanshin), Joseon, 19th century, Brooklyn Museum

**Right** Tiger and Magpie, Joseon, 19th century, Brooklyn Museum

One of the Korea Foundation's most notable programs has been to offer financial support to museums to set up a gallery dedicated to Korean art, such as the one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Samsung Foundation of Culture has offered support while the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation has supported surveys and restoration projects that museums otherwise would not have been able to fund.

As a result, most of the world's leading art museums now have a gallery devoted to Korean art. Though smaller than galleries devoted to the art of Korea's neighbors, these Korean art galleries successfully convey the message that Korea is distinct from China and Japan.

Building on this success, the focus needs to shift toward integrating the galleries into the broader focus of the museum. Museums can, for example, present Korean art in the context of Northeast Asian to highlight not just similarities and differences, but also the complex flow of influences to and from Korean art. Displaying Buddhist art from Korea, China, and Japan together, for example, would highlight what is uniquely Korean amid broader commonalities. Korean pottery greatly influenced Japanese pottery, as a display of objects from both countries together would show. Likewise, museums can present Korean in the context of religious and spiritual beliefs, such as Buddhism and shamanism, that spread beyond Northeast Asia.

In the end, Korean art is unique not because it is isolated, but because it has created something new and unique through interaction with China, Japan, and more recently, the West. This creative give-and-take of influences throughout history helped set the stage for the contemporary give-and-take of influences that underpins a wide range of vibrant artistic activities from media art to K-pop and beyond. ●

NATURAL BEAUTY OF KOREA

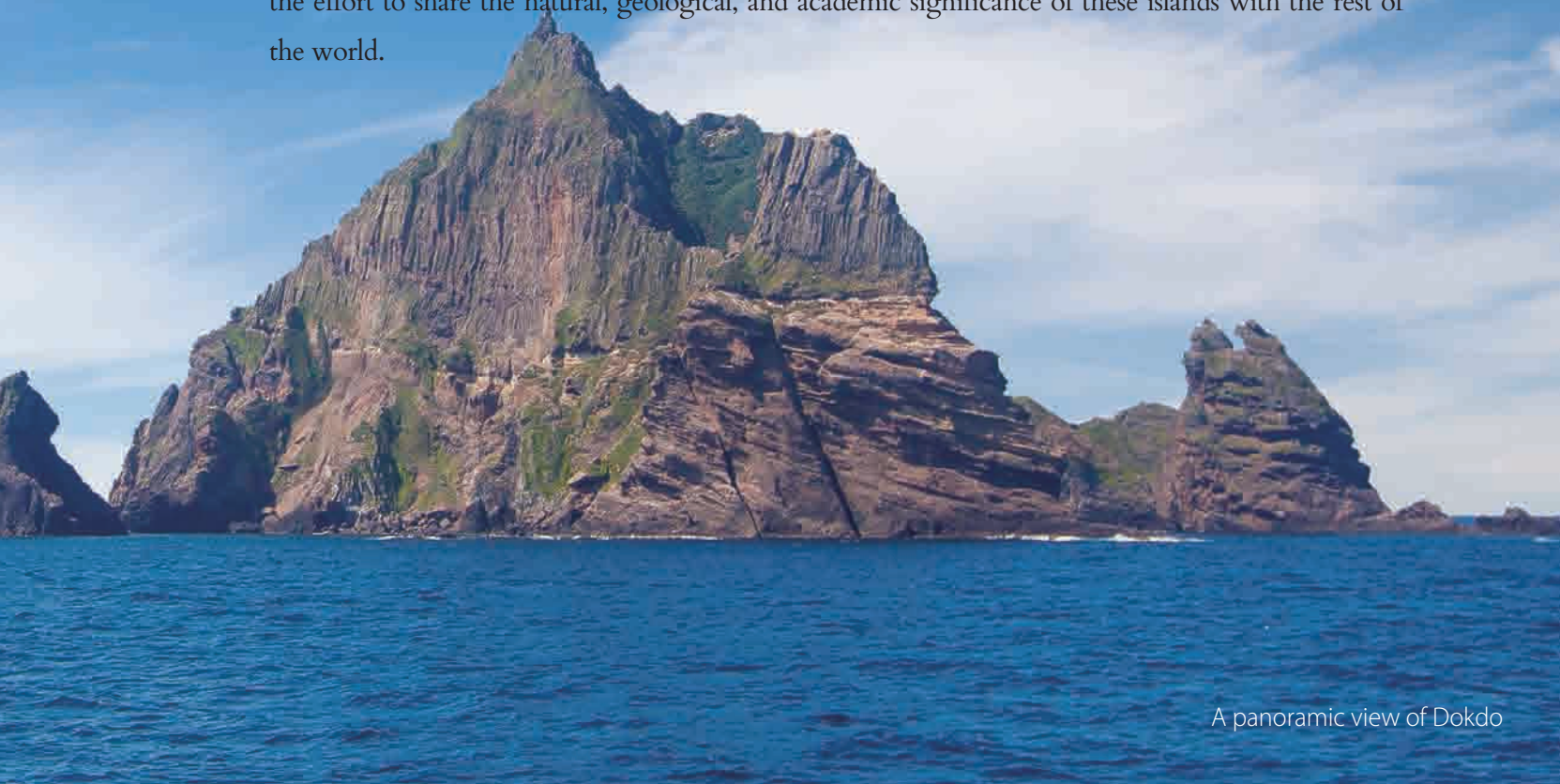
# Ulleungdo and Dokdo as Natural Monuments

Text by Cultural Heritage Administration  
Photos by Clipartkorea



# Beauty and Ecology Meet on Ulleungdo and Dokdo Islands

Ulleungdo is located in the deep waters off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The island was formed by the eruption of a 2,000-meter-deep underwater volcano about 2.5 to 4.6 million years ago. It is 72.86 square kilometers in area with smaller islands such as Gwaneumdo, Jukdo, and Dokdo scattered around it. Ulleungdo and its nearby islets boast unique geological and ecological characteristics since they have never been connected with the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese Archipelago, or mainland Russia. These easternmost islands of Korea are renowned for their stunning natural beauty. Along with their aesthetic qualities, they are highly valued for their ecological significance. They have earned the local nickname “the Galápagos of Korea.” With their maritime climate, the islands provide a home to a diverse ecosystem including a number of plants and animals endemic to the islands. Among them are endangered species that have been placed under government protection through the designation Natural Monument. A virgin forest on Seonginbong Peak, also designated a Natural Monument, is the main ecological feature of Ulleungdo Island. A process is underway to enter Ulleungdo and its nearby islets onto the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of the effort to share the natural, geological, and academic significance of these islands with the rest of the world.





Samseonam, or “Rock of Three Angels.” Legend has it that three sister angels descended to Ulleungdo Island for a bath but were late for their return to heaven. Angered, the Jade Emperor turned the angels into what are today known as Samseonam.



Dokdo Island is designated a Natural Monument and preserved in its entirety.





**Left** Ulleungdo and Dokdo Islands are collectively registered as a geopark at the national level.  
**Right** A virgin forest on Ulleungdo Island is protected as a Natural Monument.



**Top** Dokdo Island is a major habitat for black tailed gulls.

**Left** A cattle egret, one of the migratory birds that stops over on Dokdo Island for feeding, resting, and breeding

**Right** Ulleungdo Island, known for its clear waters, is a popular destination for scuba divers.

**Top** This type of chrysanthemum growing only on Ulleungdo Island is designated as a Natural Monument.

**Bottom** White coral in the waters off Ulleungdo Island





# Taekkyeon: a Traditional Martial Art from Korea

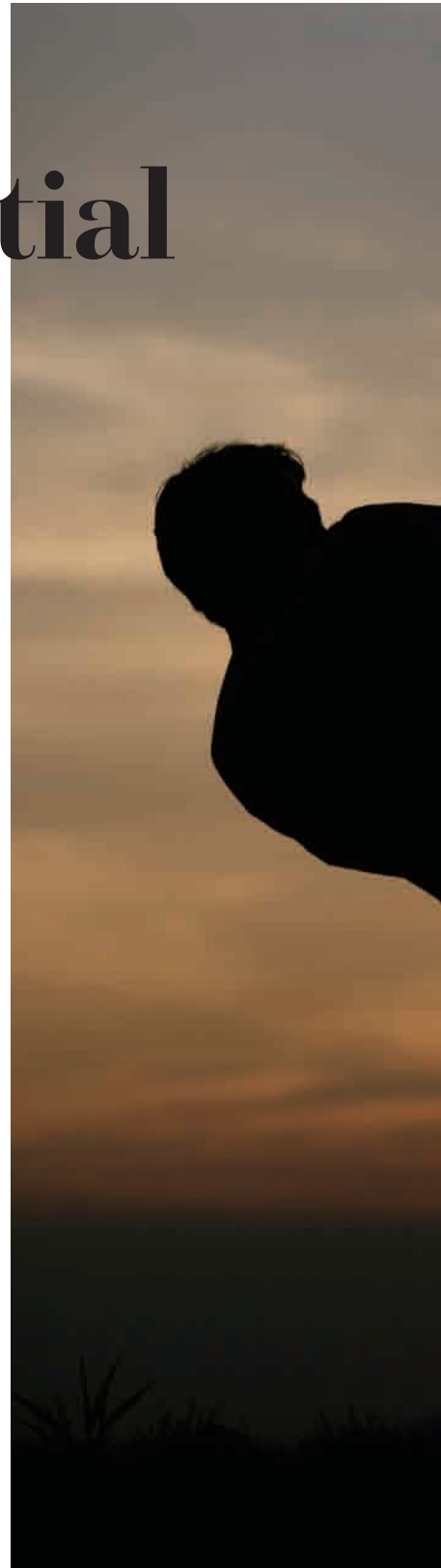
## UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Text by Shin Joung-kun, National Intangible Cultural Heritage Taekkyeon,  
Transmission Education Scholar

Photos by Taekkyeon Preservation Society

### Gentle but Dynamic

The traditional Korean martial art *taekkyeon* is characterized by undulating movements of the hands and feet and can easily be mistaken for a form of dance. However, these fluid and rhythmic movements harbor enormous energy and can explode out with great force. *Taekkyeon* is a Korean combat art that focuses on defending the self and others while valuing consideration for opponents. Skilled *taekkyeon* practitioners learn how to cause an opponent to withdraw without sustaining physical damage. This art of careful consideration and gentle movements gradually draws in its practitioners with its allure. Distinguished by the vast reserves of strength hidden within its soft and gentle motions, *taekkyeon* is considered to resemble the character of an ideal Confucian scholar.





## Transmission across Generations

Presumed to date back to the Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE–676 CE), *taekkyeon* has played diverse roles in Korean society through history, ranging from elite education, training for warfare, physical and mental development, to entertainment. In the later period of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), *taekkyeon* took on the form of a competitive sport. *Taekkyeon* in those days did not function as a strict training discipline for individuals. *Taekkyeon* matches were held between different villages for the pleasure of the spectators, but also as an opportunity to nurture a sense of belonging and strengthen solidarity.

Like many other Korean traditions, this entertaining sport declined under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945). However, it did not completely disappear and continued to be passed down by a small group of practitioners. After Korea was liberated from colonial rule,



*Taekkyeon* is an unarmed martial art tradition of Korea.



**Left** A photo of children practicing *takkyeon*, taken by a U.S. missionary in the 1890s

**Right** A painting of a *taekkyeon* match (*Daekwaedo* by Yu Suk) from the late-Joseon period

this martial art tradition was rekindled by a *taekkyeon* master named Song Deok-gi, who had learned it from Im Ho. Song dedicated his life to the development of *taekkyeon* and handed down his knowledge and skills to Sin Han-seung, who made great contributions to registering this traditional martial art on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 1983. It was the first martial art in South Korea to be entered onto the national heritage list. *Taekkyeon* was placed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2011. It was the first martial art tradition in the world to earn this UNESCO recognition.

*Taekkyeon* is an important part of the cultural heritage of Korea, and of the world as well. It exalts the value of “soft strength” in its movements. Its characteristic relaxed triangular step strikes a harmony with the swinging of the arms like a bird. *Taekkyeon* includes both striking and grappling techniques. It engages not only its practitioners but also spectators, pursuing a collective united experience while having fun. *Taekkyeon* is about persistent effort more than technical excellence.

## Shared Heritage of the North and the South

Another traditional Korean martial art, *ssireum*, was jointly inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List by North and South Korea in 2018. The sharing between the two Koreas of the UNESCO inscription of this wrestling tradition made a significant contribution to the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. As with the *ssireum* tradition, a martial art similar to *taekkyeon* can also be found in present-day North Korea.

According to research documents produced in North Korea, a martial art from the Goguryeo era known as *subak* emerged and was further systemized into two forms of combat arts known as *taekkyeon* and *nalparam*. These disciplines were disseminated widely across the territory now occupied by North Korea as a system for self-defense and physical development. It is also noted in these documents that techniques from these traditional styles



*Taekkyeon* was the first martial art tradition in the world to earn UNESCO recognition.

of martial arts underpin the creation of the North Korean version of *taekwondo*, a Korean martial art now included as part of the Olympic Games.

*Taekkyeon* can offer yet another opportunity to further a spirit of reconciliation between North and South Korea. A step toward peace on the Korean Peninsula could be taken through North-South cooperation in the traditional martial arts *taekkyeon* and *nalparam* and their modern variant *taekwondo*.

*Taekkyeon* possesses considerable virtues for sharing with the world as well. The principle of mutual respect and reciprocity embodied in this traditional Korean art can help promote respect and consideration among different cultures across the globe. Hopefully, the potential of *taekkyeon* can be fully tapped to contribute to creating and deepening an atmosphere of peace on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. 🌍



*Taekkyeon* focuses on defending the self and others while valuing consideration for opponents.

# 2023

## Major Tasks for the Cultural Heritage Administration



### Intensify conservation efforts for the future of heritage

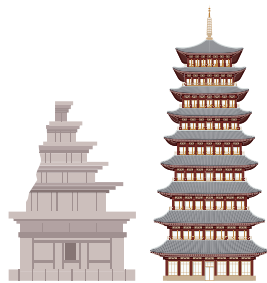
- Introduce the concept of “national heritage” into heritage policy
  - Prepare a law on national heritage; reorganize the categorization of heritage
- Identify and nurture new intangible heritage elements
  - Subsidize newly developed transmission activities
- Expand repair or maintenance endeavors to better preserve the historic state of heritage
  - Offer subsidies for repair projects at World Heritage properties, royal palaces and tombs, and other state-designated or -registered heritage sites
- Compensate the revenue losses of heritage owners/managers who forego entrance fees
  - Subsidize the electricity usage of Buddhist temples holding Treasures or National Treasures
- Strengthen disaster-preparedness and -response capacity at the local level
  - Expand disaster-response facilities at heritage sites and increase the number of on-site guards



### Expand public access to heritage to enhance quality of life

- Enhance the profile of the three heritage festivals currently in operation
  - Expand awareness of the Royal Culture Festival (held in May and October), World Heritage Festival (July–October), and Intangible Heritage Festival (September)
- Attract more visitors to heritage sites through diverse public programs
  - Implement programs such as the Visit Korean Heritage campaign and projection mapping programs
- Ensure easy access to heritage for all
  - Expand access to heritage sites for visitors with physical disabilities and improve heritage interpretation systems for the disabled
  - Make public programs at royal palaces and tombs more accessible to those unfamiliar with making online reservations
- Support the development of conservation technology and nurture other heritage-related industries
  - Implement programs such as digital twinning of heritage sites, organizing a heritage industry fair, and supporting the hiring of young adults by heritage-related businesses

# “Vision statement: To integrate cultural heritage more closely into people’s lives and create a happier Korea.”



## Incorporate sociocultural shifts into heritage policy

- Modify excessive regulations
  - Adjust the extent of protected areas and review the levels of restriction in the development standards for each listed heritage site
  - Introduce an integrated regulation system for development at heritage sites
- Support field surveys intended to diagnose the presence of archaeological relics
  - Offer subsidies for preliminary archaeological investigations to build houses and other neighborhood facilities
- Apply heritage to the enhancement of a sense of belonging in communities
  - Allocate funds for preserving historic cities, conducting research on cultural spheres and conserving early-modern historic sites
- Establish a master plan for responding to respective types of potential disasters caused by climate change at heritage sites
- Strengthen efforts toward the digitization of cultural heritage
  - Produce a digital reconstruction of the ancient capital of Silla, establish a digital database of heritage information, and expand public access to source data



## Improve the national brand of the Republic of Korea through heritage

- Enter elements of Korean heritage onto the UNESCO list and improve the protective system for UNESCO-inscribed heritage
  - Successfully register the Gaya Tumuli on the World Heritage List and two separate archives on historic events (known as the April 10 Revolution and the Donghak Peasant Revolution) on the Memory of the World Register
  - Better align the domestic system with UNESCO heritage impact assessment
- Enhance global awareness of Korean heritage
  - Open a promotional hall for the Visit Korean Heritage campaign at Incheon International Airport, carry out promotional activities in major cities across the globe, and expand overseas performances and exhibitions
- Extend the geographical reach of official development assistance projects beyond the Middle East and into Africa
- Strengthen the protection and utilization of Korean cultural heritage housed overseas

## CHA to Strengthen ROK-Cambodia Cultural Heritage Ties



Joint press release of CHA-APSARA

To advance bilateral cooperation in the area of cultural heritage, the Cultural Heritage Administration held a high-level meeting with the APSARA National Authority of the Cambodian government on February 28 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

\*APSARA National Authority is responsible for managing and preserving the Angkorian ruins.

The joint press release marks a milestone in strengthening cultural heritage cooperation and solidarity between the Republic of Korea and Cambodia, which has been ongoing since 2010. The signing of a MOU later this year is anticipated to be significant for both nations. 🌐

## CHA Opens Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center in Pakistan



View of the Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center

The Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center was inaugurated on March 2 in Islamabad, Pakistan, by the Cultural Heritage Administration and the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation.

The research center is the first facility in Pakistan for the systematic preservation and management of cultural heritage and is a part of an official development assistance project that the CHA has been carrying out since 2021. It commemorates the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Pakistan. It is expected to play a role in safeguarding Gandhara cultural heritage and strengthening cultural heritage cooperation between the two countries. 🌐



Video of a fan dance performance, courtesy of the National Gugak Center of Korea.





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### On the Cover

The cover of this issue features some diverse examples of Korean heritage. Included in the mix are an *onggi* pot, the preferred container for traditional Korean sauces, a Joseon-era rain gauge, a participant in the changing of the guard ceremony re-enactment at Gyeongbokgung Palace, a bird-shaped pottery object from the 12th century currently housed overseas, the UNESCO-listed Korean martial art *tradition* known as taekkyeon, and Ulleung-do and Dokdo Islands.