



**Special Review**

# Korean Cultural Legacies, Recognized as Part of the World Cultural Heritage

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## Editor's Note

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In the past, several issues and themes graced the pages of our Special Review sections, and since 2019 we have proceeded on two fronts. One of them was to review Korean Studies going on in other countries, while the other was to host a group of reviews based on individual themes, in order to inform people around the world with literally all things Korean.

In case of the latter, we arranged a Special Review to reflect on Goryeo-themed studies, conferences, and exhibitions (“Celebrating the Legacy of Goryeo after 1,100 years since its Foundation,” June 2019), on the astonishing achievements made in the area of art history studies (“Korean Art, Studies and Exhibitions, 2000-2019,” June 2020), and on current status of cultural properties in North Korea (“Korean Cultural Heritage in North Korea—Past, Present, and Future of South and North Korea’s Collaborative Exchanges,” December 2020).

And for the December 2021 issue, we wanted to organize yet another set of special reviews in the vein of the latter. A search for a relevant theme that would serve our goal to spread Korean culture abroad led to the ultimate conclusion that there would be no better way to do so than highlighting specific cultural vestiges or legacies of Korea that have been recognized by UNESCO, the world’s standing authority in acknowledging supreme and sublime global heritages.

Under that goal we contacted five experts, who all graciously agreed to take on the task, and here we are with five outstanding reviews.

**Seowon, Korean Neo-Confucian Academies, Historic Villages of Korea: Hahoe and Yangdong, and Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea**

Professor Lee Sang Hae (Emeritus Prof. at Sungkyunkwan University) has been more than instrumental in getting so many Korean heritages to be recognized by UNESCO, so we humbly asked him for an extensive review on the Confucian *seowon* schools, the traditional villages, Yangdong and Hahoe, and the Korean Buddhist monasteries in the mountains, *sansa*. These three groups of Korean heritage constitute the very essence of traditional Korean culture, and let us know how religious and philosophical spaces took root in Korean history as well as how traditional lifestyles prospered and prevailed. With his review on how they were established in the past, how they got recognized in the present, and how they will continue to inspire everyone interested in the Korean culture in the future, we are sure the readers will be able to appreciate the Korean culture even more.

### **Changdeokgung Palace Complex and the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty**

Professor Cho Jaemo at Kyungpook National University reviewed the Joseon royal mausoleums and Changdeokgung palace. According to him, the royal mausoleums of Joseon kings and queens show us how carefully the Joseon government and the royal family selected places for the tombs, and how everyone involved helped create those spaces as sacred zones with nature and human factors harmoniously combined. Meanwhile, as an expert in Joseon palaces' construction patterns and all the ceremonies held there, Prof. Cho explains with great details why Changdeokgung was recognized by UNESCO in the first place. Through his review on these two important legacies, we hope the readers will be able to feel the Joseon people's aspirations to honor both the dynasty and nature.

### **Jongmyo Shrine 宗廟**

Dr. Lee Hyun-jin at KAIST provided us with a review of the Joseon Dynastic Shrine. Dynastic shrine of Korea was called "*taemyo*" during the Goryeo period and later "*jongmyo*" in Joseon. It was where the ancestral tablets of late kings and queens were enshrined, and the place was literally the most sacred one for not only the royal family of the dynasty but the entire country as well. This Jongmyo space was also where all kinds of Confucian values like loyalty or filial

piety symbolically converged, while music was played and rituals were held in order to properly demonstrate such importance. In this review Dr. Lee take us through various zones inside the Jongmyo Shrine, like the Main Hall and the Yeongnyeongjeon chamber. Readers may look into all the ritual services that are still performed here today.

### **A Fortress Made in Heaven (Namhansanseong of Gwangju) and the City of a King's Dreams (Hwaseong Fortress of Suwon)**

Dr. Hyeonkyun Noh at GyeongGi Cultural Foundation provided us with a review on the Namhansangseong mountain fortress and the Hwaseong fortress city. The former, located at an important strategic spot which connected the capital city Hanyang and several southern provinces, was where the Joseon people witnessed one of the most tragic incidents of their time, while the latter was a city engineered by one king's intentions which only got stronger after suffering a tragic personal loss. But according to Dr. Noh, concentrating on only such aspects would be a shame, as both the fortress and the city are two of the most important places where we can vividly experience the Joseon history itself. Both facilities' inner layouts examined by him help us appreciate them even more.

### **Achievements and Significances of the World Heritage Inscription of the Gyeongju Historic Areas and Baekje Historic Areas**

Professor Shin Hee-Kweon at University of Seoul reviewed historical vestige complexes of both Silla and Baekje dynasties, which were two of the three ancient kingdoms in Korean history. The former contains the essence of Silla culture, while the latter is full of wondrous facets of Baekje. The Gyeongju Historic Areas house the palace vestige that prevailed for a thousand years, as well as vestiges of important monasteries, mausoleums, and not to mention the must-see Cheomseongdae observatory. Meanwhile, the Baekje Historic Areas show us vestiges for palaces, mausoleums, and monasteries from the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prof. Shin examines why they should be recognized, and offers his insight into the meaning they have as a collection of significantly important historical vestiges.

Of course, there are more Korean cultural heritages recognized by UNESCO other than those that are reviewed here, yet unfortunately they could not be included in this occasion. Such heritages include the Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple, Depositories for the Tripitaka Koreana Woodblocks at the Haeinsa Temple, the Dolmen Sites in the Gochang, Hwasun, and Ganghwa regions, and the Jeju Volcanic Island with all the Lava Tubes. We assure you they will be properly reviewed through other opportunities in the future. In the meantime, please enjoy all these spectacular reviews on Korea's proudest cultural legacies. Special thanks to all the scholars who graciously provided us with these invaluable reviews.