

Traditions and Spirit of Hahoe *Can they be retained?*

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Abstract. This presentation is about the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in Hahoe village. It discusses two important cultural traditions: 1) Hahoe mask dance which became a theatrical performance, 2) Ancestral rites and clan assembly. Social change inevitably made mask dance to be revived through public efforts. However, ancestral rites and clan assembly are still sustained by villagers. Prime factor on this heritage is *Jongga* or official heir. Can we retain the spirit of Hahoe in the future?

1. Introduction

Hahoe village is a living community, with population of 257 in 127 household (June30, 2008), situated in a beautiful bend of the Nakdong River in Andong City area (36°48'N-128°40' E) and listed as a tentative site in the World Heritage List. It is a clan village with about four fifth of population Ryu clan.

Hahoe is primarily a subsistence agricultural village, producing a range of products for domestic consumption, revolving around rice and other cereal grain cultivation. Streams in the Andong region never dry up-creating favorably stable conditions for the cultivation of paddy-rice.

Until relatively recently the village was able to resist modernization because of its relative inaccessibility plus cohesiveness of the clan. This is now changing with the development of new national communications and transportation infrastructure. With the industrialization and urbanization that took place during the past four decades, the population decreased to one fourth level as compared with mid 20th century village population (1,000). The median age are 60 but increasing

The *Ryu's* settlement began when Ryu Chong-hye, the founder of the Pungsan Ryu clan, moved into this village in the 14th century. Since then, Hahoe village has become the clan's haven. The village has become better known as the home of Ryu Songryong, the sixth

generation of the founder and a Confucian scholar and statesman (premier) who led the resistance effort during the Japanese invasion in 1592, died here and left numerous relics including his war memoirs. There is a memorial museum, Chunghyodang (house of Ryu Seongryong's heirs), built in 1656.

Andong is home to the well-preserved Korean culture of splendid old temples and traditional Confucian academy. Homes of the hereditary nobility (*yangbans*) and academies (*sowon*) still exist and continue to be revered. Because the region is in the heart of the traditional Confucian culture, the provincial authority launched "Kyongbuk Confucian Culture Zone Development Plan" to preserve these traditions. Hahoe is in the heartlands of this Andong traditional Confucian culture zone.

Rich cultural heritages have survived in Hahoe Village. Houses and buildings of typical aristocracy and commoners are scattered throughout the village. Documents, artifacts and intangible assets are abundant.

It is one of few living communities with Ryu as dominant inhabitants. In the core of this cultural landscape are cohesiveness of the clan centering with *Jongga* (house of *Jongson* or hereditary great grand son) and practice of ancestral worship under the neo-Confucian code.

2. Setting and tangible heritages

When one overlook from atop of *Buyongdae* hill just across the river, the village commands a panoramic view with its sandy beach, pine trees along the bank, gently creeping farmlands and hills on the west. The village is split into two parts by the main road built along the ridgeline of the hill. The houses are positioned in such a way to harmonize with its natural environment and face all directions offering undisturbed vista. Village thus creates a winding and semi-circular layout to match its circling river.

Village of Hahoe is also called '*muldoridong*' (a village of water curve) because the Nakdong River circles around the village in the shape of "S" or "Ω". The *feng shui* theorists interpret the shape of village as representing a perfect pattern of *taeguk* (source of dual principle of *yin and yang* that form universe). They also believe, because of its good location, to be the reason why Hahoe could produce so many great people and enjoy peace over a long time.

Confucianism reached deep into the countryside, and this ideology has caused very real imprints on rural agricultural landscape. Hahoe rural settlement is a *yangban* (Korean hereditary aristocratic family)

dominated clan village with such prominent figure as Ryu Seongryong and his elder brother Ryu Un-ryong (1539-1601). The members of the *yangban* family continued to study for, and took the state examination and served in the royal court in Seoul. After retirement, they would return to their homeland.

Confucianism was first introduced into Korea much earlier, but the Neo-Confucianism was finally proclaimed the official ideology and code in state affairs in 1392. When not working as officials for the government, Confucian scholars of *yangban* class liked to retire to the mountains and forests near to their original home where they were respected by their academic followers and fellow clan members, forming strong social and sometimes political groups on the basis of ancestral and academic ties.

The *yangbans*, retirees or descendants of scholar-officials, used the *seowon* as their scholarly and social activity. The *sowon*, modeled after the private Confucian academies of Sung China, began as local centers for the study of Confucianism and education. After the 16th century, the institutions became the hub of social and political power all over Korea

Besides these architectural structures, characteristic of the landscape is the *jeongja* – an open-sided, tiled-roofed wooden pavilion. These are usually built in locations overlooking or in places of natural beauty, particularly streams and rivers and on cliffs or hills. The right to enjoy the scenery from these pavilions and the opportunity to share leisure life was enjoyed only by *yangban* men. These *jeongja* created a particular symbolic imprint on the cultural landscape of the time. Such pavilions imbued with Neo-Confucian ideology, in particular filial piety, also served as symbolic places to bind a lineage group together.

There are 318 traditional houses, most of which are those of Ryu descendants. Houses such as *Yangjindang* (*Jongga* house of Ryu Unryong's , Treasure No. 306), *Chunghyodang* (*Jongga* house of Ryu Seongryong, Treasure No. 414), *Bukchontaek* (Important Folk Material No. 84), *Namchontaek* (Important Folk Material No. 90), *Ogyeonjeongsa* (Important Folk Material No.88), and *Gyeomamjeongsa* (Important Folk Material No.89) are designated as National Important Treasure. These and several other houses are regarded as a representative *yangban* house of the middle Joseon Dynasty. Besides this, there are numerous thatched farmhouses that intermingle with tile-roof houses. With these as background the entire village as 'Folklore Material #122' under the Korean Law in 1984.

Another noteworthy heritage is *sowon* in and around the village.

About three kilometers from Hahoe is the splendid traditional structure of the Pyungsan *Seowon* erected in honor of Ryu Song-ryong and Hwachon Seowon across the river from the village.

The clan's *Jokbo* or Genealogy registrar should also be noted as tangible heritage. In Korea beginning from about 15th century, important noble clans published genealogy registrar to record name, date of birth and date of death, place of burial and important career of each descendants. It is centuries old family history published every twenty to thirty years. Today, because of social change, it is disappearing cultural tradition. There are only few clans that still publish genealogy. Hahoe's Ryu clan published newest edition in 2006.

3. Intangible Heritages

Being a *yangban* dominated agricultural village, there exist both nobility and commoner's culture. Such unique heritage, which is rare, still survives.

3.1 MASK DANCE

The mask dance drama was a local tradition of the commoner class during the *yangban*-dominated agricultural community. This festival would take place every few years when there is abundant harvest. The practice of mask dance drama (*talchum*), performed outdoors in open-air venues on special feast days both the nobility and the common people could enjoy. After the feast/performance was finished, the villagers burnt the wood or paper masks believing that the spirit of the *tal* could be preserved that way. Because of this tradition, few masks were preserved. Masks from Hahoe (*Hahoe tal*) and Yangju have been preserved luckily, and thus have been designated as national cultural property.

During the 20th century, hereditary servants and hired laborers, which consisted commoners class, dissolved gradually. By later 20th century, Hahoe also witnessed shrunk of village population as young people left the village for education and better employment. Farming mechanization replaced laborers.

The last known staging of the Hahoe Mask Dance Drama by villagers was in 1928.

The present Andong Mask Dance Preservation Group was formed in 1975 and performs the mask dance drama of Hahoe. The group reenacted the mask dance in National Folklore Contest and in 1980 the

government has designated the dance drama as national intangible cultural property no. 69. It is officially recognized as holder of the intangible heritage.

The heritage now sustains with government financial support and gives regular performance in the village for the tourists. Andong Municipality has been staging the Hahoe International Mask Dance festival since 1997.

3.2 BOATING AND FIREWORK CELEBRATION

If the mask dances are festival of those commoners, *Sonju-julbul-nori* or the Boating and Fireworks Celebration are that of nobility. The Hahoe *yangbans* held poem-reciting festival on boats on the river circling the village. Every few years in summer when busy farming is over and prospect for harvest is good, the clan's Confucian scholars gather and hold this festival in the evening. They invited scholars and noble family from other towns and aboard boats they recite poems and drink. It is charcoal fire that creates magnificent firework scene as they rolls down the rope like falling flowers. The festival held in 1928 was the last. The community of Pungsan (Hahoe is part of it) is trying to restage the show as local festival.

3.3. ANCESTRAL RITES (*JESA*)

Ancestral veneration is common culture especially in East Asia, where Confucian tradition is strong. They honor the deeds and memories of ancestors with the belief that ancestors tend to our well-being even after death. In these cultures, veneration serves to cultivate filial piety, continuity of family lineage and cohesiveness of family. The rites provide, they argued, a connection between the dead and the living. In Korea, ancestral worship is commonly referred to by the generic term *jesa* or *jerye*. Most notable example is royal veneration ceremony, *Jongmyo jerye*, held for kings and queens of Joseon period. It is a UNESCO World Oral and Intangible Heritage.

During the Joseon Period (1392-1910) the court-mandated indoctrination of Neo-Confucianism as national code. Neo-Confucian teaching considered it a primary responsibility of filial descendants to worship one's ancestors. From royal palace to common people throughout the country, it has been time-honored tradition to hold ancestral rites. The tradition is most obvious in erecting monuments,

shrines or memorial hall to honor Confucius, prominent scholars and family ancestors.

Modern Korean society still retains some of these traditions. Even now there are still large national movement of people to their rural homes and ancestral tombs during the two most observed folkloric holidays to pay homage to their ancestors and parents. This tradition helps strengthen unity and harmony among family members and relatives.

Jesa is divided into two category; deathday rite (*kijesa*) held in house and offerings at tomb (*myoje*).

Kijesa is held annually on the dawn of deathday. The tablet of ancestor is brought in from shrine house, and elaborately prepared sumptuous food is offered. Dressed in traditional mourning white robes and wearing traditional hats, elderly men offer libations of food and drink before the spiritual tablets of their ancestors. While offering first cup of wine to the spirit symbolized in the tablet, an invocation is read. After this, major offspring take turn in offering wine and bow two and a half times. In front of the table is a space large enough for persons to make a prostrate, head-to-floor bow.

The host of the service is direct grandson of a family, which is called *Jongson*. *Jongga* is the house where *Jongson* lives. Ryu's *jongga* retains age-old utensils specially for the ancestral rites and recipe for ritual good and drink. And thus Hahoe's *jesa* food is an important cultural heritage.

3.4. *BULCHONWI JESA* - Continuing deathday rite.

Annual observation of deathday rite is discontinued after fifth generation. 5th *Jongson* normally buries his ancestor's tablet at this juncture. But then there is another ever lasting *Jesa* which is called *Bulchonwi*. *Bulchonwi* means 'an ancestral tablet that should not be buried even after fifth generation descendants but to be enshrined so that the tablet can be brought in continuously for annual deathday rite'.

Veneration for those remote ancestors more than 5th generation, *myoje* is normally held at graveyard. On certain days in a year, such as arriving of spring or after harvest, male descendants do offer service to their ancestors collectively.

There are two different kind of *Bulchonwi jesa*; *royal bulcheonwi* endowed by Joseon kings to those prominent statesman/scholar and that recommended by *hyangyo* (local Confucian scholarly organization). It is observed in the same manner as *kijesa*, but the difference is that

bulcheonwi rite, non-family members notably Confucian scholars are invited to participate. Descendants of these ancestors take it as an honor of the clan.

In the village of Hahoe there are five *Bulchonwi jesa*. Annual *bulchonwi jesa* dedicated to Ryu Seongryong is more than four hundred years old tradition.

3.5. *Yuksohoe* (Gathering for visitation to six ancestral tombs)

Member of the Ryu clan gather en masse in the village to stage joint worship rites to six forefathers before Ryu Jong Hye, the clan's founding father. On the 10th day of lunar October every three years, descendant males gather, divided into six group, with offering food boxes in their hands at the six ancestral tombs and perform veneration rite together. This custom is vital in maintaining filial piety and cohesiveness of the clan. It is said that Ryu Seongryong initiated this gathering and thus is 400 years old tradition. A television media gave special coverage for this rare event in 2002. This custom is vital in maintaining Confucian filial piety and cohesiveness of the clan. Nearest one is due on October 2008.

4. Continuity

Changes in society that took place from the beginning of the 20th Century and culminated in 1970s affected the rural landscape and its intangible assets. During the last century, from collapse of kingdom of Joseon by Japanese colonization (1910-1945) to the division of Korea into the south and the north followed by Korean War (1950-53), Korea underwent great social change. Almost all the traditional community setup and class structure of the Joseon Dynasty have been dismantled during these period. Until 1960's nine out of ten lived in the rural area. As the nation embarked on an industrialization process from 1960s, drastic population exodus from the rural area took place. In the course, GDP ratio of agricultural sector, which was 70% until mid 20th century, has changed to mere 10%. Dissolving of class meant no more servants, nor seasonal farm helpers. Farm machines replaced them. Traditional fabrics were gone.

Only Hahoe and few other rural villages survived in terms of tangible assets. These villages still continues to be living communities as they have been for centuries.

Of the three intangible traditions, there are no Confucian scholars to

perform *Sonyu-julbul-nori*, nor are commoners to play mask dances. They are in the process of becoming theater programming or are reconstructed as a festival. It may be one of the desirable transformation and revitalization of intangible heritage that no longer be able to survive in its own rural context.

Jesa or the deathday rites would be the only heritage that are retained and being practiced by descendant villagers. It is a self-sustained heritage being preserved by clan with *Jongga* in the center. Causes for well-preserved *Jongga* system in Hahoe village are:

- 1) Awareness of and respect for Confucian value and traditions by the clan.
- 2) Awareness and sense of proud of their common ancestors.
- 3) Awareness by *Jongga* of the duty and privilege.
- 4) Recognition and respect accorded to *Jongga* by branch families.
- 5) Economic endowment from ancestor

Jongga, the house of *Jongson*, symbolizes long lineage of the family. Role of *Jongson* is to uphold tradition of the family and worship of ancestors. He keeps the estate handed down from his ancestor and preside several family rites.

Present *Jongson* is 14th generation grandson (of Ryu Sung Ryong), who returned to assume his duty from his teaching profession outside the village. In Hahoe Ryu clan, it has been tradition that *Jongson* would return to the village during his mid career and retire to engage in duty as *Jongson*. As long as the clan can preserve this tradition, they can sustain *Jongga* system, a tradition that vanished in most of the country.

The *Jongson* performs about 12 *jesa* annually. In the past cost for preparation and maintenance came from farm income specifically designated for this purpose. Machine farming reduced farm income and is becoming big economic burden to the host. Beginning from 2001, Hahoe Heritage Society provides some financial subsidy to *Jongson* to prepare these rites.

Tradition of ancestor veneration, clans gathering and the rite itself are few valuable traditions that can still be found in the village. How to conserve these traditional cultural heritages may be primarily the task of the clan themselves. Conservationists and authority must find means to help retain these intangible traditions so that the village continues to be living and heritage community.