

JONGMYO (ROYAL SHRINE): ICONOGRAPHY OF KOREA **Hae Un RII*, Corée / Korea**

INTRODUCTION

Today, Seoul is a city with coexistence of traditional and modern landscape. Five palaces, Jongmyo (Royal Shrine), and other traditional Korean style houses from the Joseon¹ Dynasty still remain, while modern architecture with high-rise buildings constructed in recent years are located near the traditional buildings.

The city of Seoul was founded as the capital city of the Joseon Dynasty in 1394, although settlements in the city boundary of Seoul date from the Neolithic period, located near the Han River. Residential areas were scattered all over the site, especially in the southeast area, within the present city boundaries during bronze and iron period. At the beginning of the Paekche Kingdom the capital was established in the south-eastern part of the present city area. Soon after, the area of Seoul was simultaneously occupied by three Kingdoms – Paekche (18 BC-660), Koguryo (37 BC-668), and Shilla (57 BC-935). Since then the site was regarded as important to manage the Korean peninsula.

After Shilla unified the peninsula, the importance of the site had been reduced until the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392) founded a separated palace in this site according to the Geomancy concept. At this time the palace was not much used and Seoul was not considered as an important site. However, since the old city of Seoul was chosen as a capital of the Joseon Dynasty 1394, it became a central place of political, economic, cultural and social activities. For 600 years Seoul has been a very important and central place in Korea.

Jongmyo was one of the first state institutions supporting the power of the dynasty, and though played an important role throughout the Joseon era. The royal ancestral rites² in Jongmyo were performed five times a year with the royal ancestral ritual music [Jongmyo Jeryeak]. Originally performed by Kings to honour their ancestors, it became a national ceremony to maintain the people's spirituality. After the Joseon era, it seemed to be degraded to family-oriented ancestral rites. However, as people's interest on cultural heritage is rising, visiting Jongmyo and watching Jongmyo Jerye became popular and even. It was an important part of the 'Hi Seoul Festival' in 2003.

In 1995 Jongmyo was inscribed on the World Heritage List (Figure 1). Following Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak were declared Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001. This means that Jongmyo itself is an important site of cultural heritage as well as the performing place of Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak. In fact, Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak cannot exist without Jongmyo.

In other words, Jongmyo is the place preserving intangible values. In this paper, therefore, Jongmyo will be discussed as an iconography of Korea.

FOUNDATION OF THE OLD CITY OF SEOUL

Taejo, the first king of Joseon Dynasty, decided to move the capital from Kaegyong³ to Hanyang, the old name of Seoul. The annals of Taejo is written that he set up an office being responsible for the palace construction in the new capital. In accordance with geomantic principles, the office recommended auspicious sites for the main palace and two other important state facilities - the royal ancestral shrine and the national altars for the gods of earth and crops - as the foundation for a monarchy based on an agrarian society⁴.

Location and town planning of the old Seoul (Hanyang) were influenced by the geomancy concept: the topographical layout of mountains and rivers is directly related to the good or bad fortune of human beings and Confucianism. In terms of topography the area was surrounded by four mountains: Pugak (342.4m) in the north, Nam-san (265m) in the south, Nak-san (110.9m) in the east, and Inwang-san (338.2m) in the west. It means the old Seoul was located in a basin. The four mountains are associated with imaginary guardian animals that guard their respective cardinal point; the black tortoise the north, the vermilion bird the south, the blue dragon the east, and the white tiger the west.

The city walls of the old Seoul were constructed along the mountain slopes. Whenever we talk about the old Seoul during the Joseon era, this walled city is called Seoul. However, the administrative unit for the capital during the Joseon era included the area of 10 ri [4km] beyond the walls. Four major gates faced the cardinal points with four minor ones in between. Chongye-chon (stream), a tributary of the Han River, was running from west to east passing the central part of the city.

1 The name of Dynasty was used to be written as Chosun, but it changed to Joseon based on the new system of written English for Korean.
2 It is called Jongmyo-Daeje [great ceremony] or Jongmyo-Jerye [memorial ceremony].

3 It was the capital of the Koryo Dynasty and the first two years capital of the Joseon Dynasty.
4 Kyong-hee Lee, 1997, World Heritage in Korea, the Organizing Committee of the year of Cultural Heritage 1997 and the Samsung Foundation of Culture, p. 62.

After choosing the location of the main palace, Kyungbok-gung⁵, the royal ancestral shrine, Jongmyo, was located in the southeast of the main palace and the altars, Sajikdan, for the gods of earth and crops were located in the southwest based on the Chinese city model by Zhou-rye. The royal ancestral shrine is located to the left and the national altars to the right of the king's throne in the main palace.

The two facilities were considered as political and moral support of the monarchy. The officiating rites were one of the most important duties of kings.

A commercial spine connected the east and the west gate; a shopping street linked this spine to the south gate. Together with a street connecting to Kyungbok palace these major roads constructed the basic street pattern of the city. Minor streets branched out from the main streets in a tree-like fashion to give access to residences. The major palaces, ancestral shrines, dynastic altars, and other facilities were situated in the proper locations based on the geomancy concept and Confucianism (Figure 2). In fact, the old city of Seoul was constructed to be in harmony with nature, different from the town planning concepts of Chinese cities.

CONSTRUCTION OF JONGMYO

Strolling on the grounds of Jongmyo at present time is like time travelling to the era of the Joseon Dynasty for a mysterious communion with the souls of its kings and queens. The sequestered ancient sanctuary maintains its mystic spiritual ambience in the very heart of the bustling modern metropolis of Seoul. Pervaded by deep silence, its classical structures and tranquil courtyards symbolize the eternity of the human soul and the paramount moral value of filial piety which have ruled the spiritual and philosophical world of Koreans throughout the ages⁶.

During the period of three kingdoms and the era of the Koryo Dynasty, there were shrines dedicated to their royal ancestors. Rites were observed at the shrines to appease the souls of deceased rulers and to seek their benevolence and protection for peace and prosperity in the nation. In the era of the Koryo Dynasty, the architectural structure of the royal ancestral shrine and the ritual procedures adopted much of Zhou rye.

Jongmyo was constructed from 1394 to 1395 at Yonhwa-bang, the eastern part of the old walled city. At that time, the shrine had only one memorial hall for keeping the ancestral tablets of Taejo up to the 4th generation, brought from Kaegyong. The auxiliary facilities included a hall for deceased meritorious officials, a hall for seven deities governing the grounds and buildings of the shrine, a royal pavilion where the king prepared himself for the performance of rites, warehouses for storing incense, sacrificial offerings and ritual vessels, a kitchen, and a dressing room for musicians.

Matters important to the nation were reported to the ancestral shrine first and then were enacted by the government.

In 1410, side wings were constructed to extend both ends of the main ritual hall under the orders of Taejong, 3rd king of the Joseon Dynasty. Under his rule, the artificial mounds were built south of the main worship hall to reinforce the geomantic strength of the grounds. The wall was built to surround the shrine. The main ritual hall originally had five spirit chambers and two side rooms.

During the reign of Sejong, the 4th king, another ritual hall with four spirit chambers and two side rooms were constructed to hold the tablets of the four ancestors of Taijo and of less importance kings and their spouses, being removed from the main hall. The original ritual hall was named Jeongjeon (Main Hall) and the second hall was Yongnyongjeon (Hall of Eternal Peace).

In 1547, the main hall was extended by eleven spirit chambers and four added rooms in the east due to the shortage of spirit chambers. Both Jeongjeon and Yongnyongjeon were repaired and expanded on several occasions thereafter, but Yongnyongjeon was always kept smaller in scale. Rites were performed less frequently there than Jeongjeon.

When Japan invaded Korea in 1592, Jongmyo was used as a camp for Japanese troops. The original buildings were completely burnt down by the Japanese. However, the royal ancestral tablets were saved by moving them when Injo, 12th king, evacuated from the old Seoul. Jongmyo was the first state facility reconstructed in 1608, even before the King's residence. This indicates that Jongmyo was considered as an important symbol of national survival. In other words, Jongmyo was the iconography of the Joseon Dynasty.

Under Sonjo, the 14th king, reconstruction started, and was completed under Kwanghaegun, the 15th king. He ordered to install all the ancestral tablets and conducted the memorial rites at the new shrines. Since then, the shrines had been expanded and repaired. The Yongnyongjeon was expanded in 1668 and Jeonjon in 1726. Both halls were extended in 1834 at the latest.

At present time, Jeongjeon, the main hall, has nineteen spirit chambers and keeps a total of 49 spirit tablets for eighteen kings, commanding greater respect, their queens, and one designated king and his queen (Figure 3). At Yongnyongjeon, in sixteen spirit chambers 34 spirit tablets are kept, including four generation's ancestors from Taejo, seven kings and their queens, four designated kings and their queens, and King Youngchin and his wife. Two of 27 kings of the Joseon Dynasty, Yonsangun and Kwanghaegun, could not be enshrined because of their misrule. They are denied the privilege of being honoured in the shrine. Beside are two major halls in Jongmyo: Chilsadang that enshrines seven gods of heaven, and Gongsindang that has 83 meritorious retainers.

5 Gung means palace in Korean.

6 Lee, op.cit., p. 54.

JONGMYO JERYE AND JONGMYO JERYEAK

Jongmyo Jerye, classified as 'Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 56' in Korea, is the royal ancestral rite performed in Jongmyo. Jongmyo Jeryeak, classified as 'Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 1' in Korea, is the royal ancestral ritual music performed in Jongmyo.

Jongmyo jerye was one of the five kinds of rites performed by the royal family of the Joseon Dynasty. The five rites were Gillye (auspicious rite), Hyungnye (funeral rite), Binnye (reception ceremony), Gunne (military rite), and Garye (wedding ceremony). Gillye includes the ritual service to the gods of heaven and earth and to the royal ancestral spirits.

Besides the rites worshipping the royal ancestors, Jongmyo Jerye has also been dedicated to meritorious civil and military retainers⁷.

Among these rituals, the royal shrine ritual is the largest and most important. That is why we often say Jongmyo Daeje (great rite) rather than Jongmyo Jerye. It was divided into a regular and an extraordinary ceremony. The regular ceremony was held five times a year, in the first month of spring, summer, fall and winter and on the day of the Dog of the third cycle of the zodiacal horary signs in the 11th month with reference to the lunar calendar⁸. The Yeongnyongjeon Ceremony took place in spring and autumn. The extraordinary ceremony was held when auspicious occasions and national disasters occurred.

Jongmyo Jerye was performed by the royal family on state level in the era of the Joseon Dynasty. But during the Japanese occupation, the board of royal household affairs managed the ancestral rite once a year in May. At present time, the royal shrine ritual is also held only once in May by the Preservation Society of the Jongmyo Royal Ancestral Rite as a national event. In 2003, this ancestral rite with the royal procession was performed at the 'Hi Seoul Festival', the cultural festival of the Seoul Metropolitan City (Figure 4). Jongmyo Jerye remains a model of all ceremonies for spirits, and its order and procedures are very strict and solemn.

The process of Jongmyo Jerye is in the following order: Yeongsin-rye [welcoming of the spirits] → Cheonjo-rye [offering of jo] → Choheon-rye [first offering of wine] → Aheon-rye [second offering of wine] → Jongheon-rye [third offering of wine] → Eumbok-rye [partaking ritual food and drinking] → Songsin-rye [ushering out of the spirits] → Mangryo-rye [burning the ritual prayer]⁹.

Before the Jongmyo Jerye, in the era of the Joseon Dynasty, the ritual formalities started with purifying bodies and spirits for seven days. During this period, all of the officials including the king restrained from drinking, enjoying music, offering condolence and giving death sentences or signing such papers, among other taboos.

The king left for Jongmyo a day before the rites and stayed overnight at the royal pavilion of the shrine. Ready to perform their duties faithfully and devotedly, the king and all other officials, ritual attendants, musicians and dancers were aligned on their respective positions on the broad stone platform in front of the worship hall.¹⁰

'Filial piety' is one of the Confucian tenets and Jongmyo Jerye. The national manifestation of filial piety took the role of enhancing the solidarity of people and brought them closer together through that very common denominator. Jongmyo Jerye, as a standard of art in Confucian society, is a valuable cultural asset and the music, dance, ritual vessels, and libation of foods of Jongmyo Jerye are essential manifestations of aesthetics of performing arts based on Confucianism and cosmic principles.

Jongmyo Jeryeak, the royal ancestral ritual music, was performed whenever Jongmyo Jerye was held in the era of the Joseon Dynasty. The music was initially created in the reign of Sejong, the 4th king, to be performed at royal banquet and ancestral rites by replacing Chinese music with native Korean music as he believed the spirits of the deceased Korean kings would be better entertained with the music they had enjoyed while being alive. However, his attempt faced opposition from his cabinet members¹¹.

Sejo, 7th king and son of Sejong, selected two pieces - 'Botaepyeong' and 'Jeongdaeop' - to be performed when royal ancestral rites were held. Botaepyeong is complimenting the civil rule of the dynasty and Jeongdaeop is praising its military excellence. Each music piece consists of eleven parts. Since then, the music was performed during the era of the Joseon Dynasty although it was modified and refined partially by musicians of later generations. Discontinued in 1946, Jongmyo Jeryeak started to be performed again in 1971. Now it is performed every year when Jongmyo Jerye is held.

Two orchestras perform these pieces during the ritual procedures - one seated on the upper level and the other one on the lower level of the terrace. The first one, called Deungga, consisted of 36 instrumental players and the latter, called Heonga, of 72 players. But the number of players reduced to about 50 in all these days. Fifteen different musical instruments are played for the music.

7 Cultural Properties Administration, ROK, 2000, Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak (Royal Ancestral Rite and Ritual Music in Jongmyo Shrine), Application for 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

8 Ibid.

9 Pamphlet for Royal Shrine Ritual 2003

10 Lee, op.cit.p.72.

11 ibid., p. 83.

During the ceremony, twelve songs, 'Jongmyoakjang', are praising the civil achievements of the Joseon kings and their military exploits, and 'Ilmu' or line dances are performed, which are accompanied by the Deungga or Heonga orchestra in accordance with ritual procedures. Aligned in eight rows of eight, a group of 64 dancers moves to the music. Wearing purple gowns and black hats, the dancers move slowly and elegantly, holding bamboo flutes and feathered batons for the civil dance

(Munmu), and wooden swords and spears for the military dance (Mumu).

Hundreds of officials, musicians, dancers, and attendants create the ensemble of this composite art reflecting solemnity and magnificence typical in the Oriental world. Although the frequency of royal ancestral rites and the number of musicians in the orchestra has been reduced, Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak performances at Jongmyo have been continued without big impairment until today. Different from the era of the Joseon Dynasty and the Japanese occupation period, Jongmyo Jerye is open to the public. That is, where cultural sustainability exists.

Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak is not only a cultural heritage for the royal family's descendants, but for all Koreans. This is real intangible cultural heritage to be continued, to be handed down to our descendants. And Jongmyo is the tangible cultural heritage site where Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak are performed.

CONCLUSION

Jongmyo, the 125th of historic treasures in Korea and inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1995, is the royal ancestral shrine, housing the spirit tablets of the successive kings and queens of the Joseon Dynasty, and the place where the memorial rite is performed. According to Confucianism and the geomancy concept, the national shrine was built in the east side of the royal palace, Kyongbok-gung, at the beginning of the city construction. With the altars, Jongmyo was supporting the power of the Dynasty. It represents the Joseon Dynasty.

Jongmyo Jerye refers to the worship performed in honor of the ancestors of the royal family in the Joseon Dynasty. Jongmyo Jeryeak is the royal ancestral ritual music for Jongmyo Jerye. During the era of the Joseon Dynasty, Jongmyo Jerye was the largest and most important ritual, originally performed five times a year by the royal family at state level. In the first half of the 20th century, the ancestral rite was performed by royal family's descendants once a year. At present, it is performed once in May at national level, and citizens and tourists can watch the whole procedure of Jongmyo Jerye. The Memorial Rite and the Music for the Memorial Rite of Jongmyo were declared a 'Master piece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in 2001.

Jongmyo was the supporting power of the Joseon Dynasty, and an important site for the urban structure of the capital. It is an important place since here all ancestral spirit tablets of kings and queens are kept, seven gods of heaven and meritorious retainers are enshrined, and where Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak are performed as well. In other words, Jongmyo is the place itself keeping our spiritual heritage as well as the performing place for Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak. Both Jongmyo and Jongmyo Jerye with Jongmyo Jeryeak are regarded as our important cultural heritage without being separated one from another.

Jongmyo was an iconography of the Joseon Dynasty indeed, but the symbolic meaning had been reduced when the Japanese forced a reduction of the number of

Jongmyo Jerye. Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak are preserved and performed these days again at Jongmyo.

Jongmyo stands out among ancient architectural monuments in Korea for its simple and austere style with a highly restrained use of decoration emphasizing a solemn spiritual atmosphere. Particularly, the two major ritual halls are noted for their unique spatial concept based on repetition, symmetry and symbolism.

Without Jongmyo, Jongmyo Jerye and Jongmyo Jeryeak would not have such a value as intangible heritage. Jongmyo has been an important place of spiritualism for Korean people since its foundation. Thus, Jongmyo is regarded as an iconography of Korea, although its statement has been changed some throughout the 600 years of its history.

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ABSTRACT

Jongmyo, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995, is the royal ancestral shrine housing the spirit tablets of the successive kings and queens of the *Joseon(Chosun)* Dynasty, officiating a memorial rite. *Jongmyo-Daejae* (Royal Shrine Ritual) refers to the worship performed in honour of the royal family's ancestors of the Joseon Dynasty.

During the era of the Joseon Dynasty, *Jongmyo-Daejae* was the largest and most important ritual. This ceremony was originally performed by the nation five times a year. But the memorial rite was prohibited during the periods of Japanese occupation. Since 1969, it has been performed by the Royal family Association once a year in May. This Memorial Rite and the Music for the Memorial Rite of *Jongmyo* were declared World Intangible Heritage in 2001.

The ceremony was the national memorial rite in the era of the Joseon Dynasty. Being prohibited by the Japanese it lost the meaning as an iconography of the Joseon Dynasty. However, descendants of royal family have preserved and developed the ceremony as their own memorial rite to their ancestors. And now, *Jongmyo-Daejae* is a valuable intangible cultural heritage of Korea, and *Jongmyo*, where *Jongmyo-Daejae* is performed, is regarded as the iconography of the nation.

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