

HAHOE: VILLAGE ON THE WINDING RIVER

HERITAGE MATTERS



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Protecting the village atmosphere through parking in designated areas in Hahoe and other Korean villages is legal. From here visitors walk along clean and well serviced heritage walks. This approach is critical if we were to safeguard the traditional villages in the new Capital Region of AP and make them accessible for educational and experiential tourism.



The province also invested US \$5.4 million in the construction of the Hahoe Village Route to improve the circulation of visitors and minimize negative impacts on residents' quality of life. This route connects the village with the local Byeongsanseowon Confucian Academy and Bongjeongsa Buddhist Temple. Protected villages in Korea have established Heritage Walks so that the visitors can enjoy the village atmosphere. These are well kept with excellent services all-round the year. No encroachments are allowed by strictly enforced law. This framework could help the Amaravathi Heritage Walk to prevent encroachments.

Father and son carvers explain that the designated village visitor shopping area provides live craft demonstrations. Intergenerational transmission of arts and crafts is facilitated in the Hahoe village. Recognition of the skills and knowledge of the local communities has come to guide all conservation measures. Respect for them is crucial in all cultural experiences provided to visitors. Crafts include traditional roof tiling, wood craft and thatching for the preservation of diverse house types in the village.

Historic villages in the Republic of Korea are of diverse forms. About 80 per cent of them are clan villages. The genesis of this type of settlement dates from the late Goryeo dynasty (918-1392). They become typical of Korean villages from the later part of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910). They are now on the decline with the rapid urbanization and industrialization of Korea. Fortunately, the central, provincial, city and local governments are taking collaborative responsibility for safeguarding them.

The village complexes of Hahoe together with Yongdong are on the World Heritage list as representative examples of Korean clan villages. It is in their siting, planning and building traditions that they make an exceptional testimony to the Confucianism of the Joseon dynasty. This paradigm influenced village spatiality and associated heritage values across the Korean Peninsula over a period of five centuries.

These villages feature several historic buildings, including houses, shrines, study halls, Confucian academies and pavilions that are among the oldest and most remarkable in style to be found in the traditional villages of the country. They have preserved many ancient documents and works of art from the prominent academic and cultural activities of Joseon period Confucian scholars. Traditional family rituals and unique communal events still take place there.

Hahoe has a significant number of community members living in the village. It was designated by the Korean Government as an Important Folk Property in 1984 due to the large number of traditional upper-class houses built there during the Joseon dynasty. The Hahoe Mask Dance, traditionally performed by the servant classes, was made a state designated Intangible Cultural Asset in 1980.

Even though the village had received considerable recognition, it was in decline as the local population was ageing fast while younger residents were emigrating in search of a better quality of life in the bigger cities. However, UNESCO World Heritage inscription in 2010 and the subsequent developments have proved to be turning points, breathing new life into Hahoe.

One of the aspects of living heritage is that it could be used by a range of actors in societal development. For example, the Hahoe Byeolsingut Tallori Mask Dance Drama was revitalized as a symbol of anti-

establishment movements in Korea in the 1980s. It profiled the village nationally and attracted many dissidents and students to Hahoe. This new-found heritage consciousness made Hahoe a tourist destination from the early 1990s, resulting in the commodification of local heritage and threatening its integrity and authenticity.

As the custodians of local heritage, Hahoe villagers have had to struggle to resist the external appropriation of their culture and to reclaim the cultural stewardship of their village. World Heritage status and appreciation of Hahoe have become mediators to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the opportunities offered through responsible tourism as a vehicle to sustainable village heritage development.

The opportunities for jobs and economic development provided through the growth in local GDP have softened the traditional class hierarchy to one based on actual and increasingly equitable status. Census data from the past decade shows that the effect has been to stem the outward migration of local young people to the cities and contribute to the well-being of the older generation that was being left behind. Valuing rural life as the mainstay of traditional Korean life has become a concern at all levels of government. Moreover, villages such as Hahoe have become educational resources for schools to teach Korean history and culture.

The stabilization of the local population and the promotion of participatory democracy called for the creation of new structures for governance of the village. In response, a Historic Village Conservation Council was launched in January 2010 through a provincial Ordinance on Conservation, Management and Support for World Heritage. It takes charge of coordinated management for the village. It is now in full



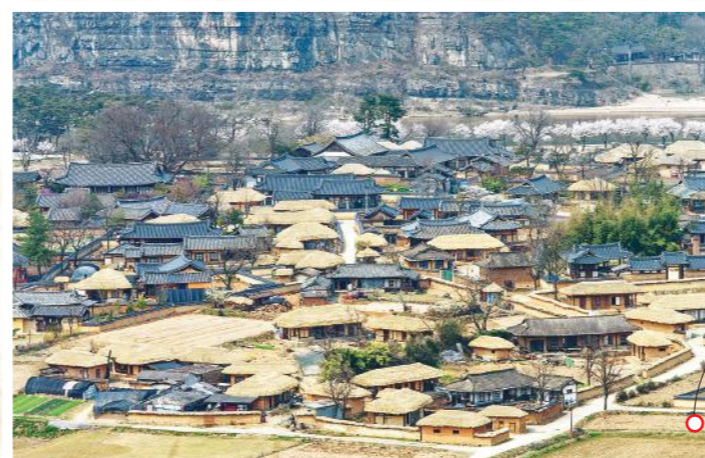
operation both legally and administratively. As a semi-public organization with representatives from central, provincial and civic governments working with village residents and experts, the Council ensures continuing and systematic participation of the residents as an integral part of safeguarding the village heritage. At the operational grass-roots level, Hahoe functions as an autonomous entity, sharing knowledge and experiences with other clan villages in Korea.

Local intangible knowledge, illustrated through the tangible heritage of structural and environmental resources, is the main tourist attraction. Visitor experiences are facilitated through the creation of products informed by the stories, performances and skills of the carriers and transmitters of living village heritage. Visitor numbers have increased substantially to millions stimulated by traditional festivals and special events.

The past decade has seen considerable government investment in Hahoe. Increased visitation and government support for conservation and infrastructure development have also led to increased prosperity for local households. This new-found affluence and job opportunities have become an incentive for young people to stay in the village or even move back from Andong and Seoul following their education and relevant training.

Expenditure supported by the government is limited to the physical conservation of the village, especially the repair and restoration of houses to maintain their original form, expansion of infrastructure, basic facilities for tourism, and the design of comprehensive plans for overall improvement of the village.

The Provincial Developmental Plan is fo-



cused on Hahoe village as an integral part of the Confucian cultural region. It has invested US \$40.1 million in the construction of an entrance to the village and tourist infrastructure including parking lots and a traditional shopping mall.

The local government provides a subsidy of over 40 per cent of the income generated from admission fees, which averages about US \$3 million per year. These funds are a direct investment given to and controlled by the Village Conservation Council. In addition, a similar proportion of revenue comes from parking charges and rental fees from the new store complex at the entrance to the village, the management of which Andong city has entrusted to the Conservation body. In addition to financial support for the historic villages, the central government provides a separate subsidy which is directly paid to families living in and managing the ancient houses.

The first lesson is the inclusion of village or local community culture in conservation. The conservation of Hahoe village offers a valuable insight into local community engagement, especially the value of traditional village officials. Village community culture requires a neighbourhood approach that brings all elements together.

The conservation and management of Hahoe village has been made possible only through the active participation of the residents. Top-down funding could easily lead to an external perspective in conservation, which not only marginalizes the heritage values of the residents themselves but also leads to lack of awareness among residents on dealing with conservation in the face of rapid change.

There are many lessons from Hahoe for us in AP. In the Capital Region of the new Capital Amaravati to safeguard all or some of the 29 villages, we need Village Safeguarding Plans including Visitor Management strategies. These need to vividly present the historical layers of the villages as well as reinforcing their integrity. Good cultural planning will encourage visitors to respect the heritage values and practice responsible tourism. Along with infrastructure for visitors, the village governance should be strengthened. Most importantly, the topography and nexus of relations between the villages need to be grounded in cultural planning. Only the active leadership of the village residents will ensure safeguarding the village atmosphere or Palleturi Vathavaranam of the Andhra people in the new capital region.



Pics : Your Columnist and Hyosang Jo, Cultural Heritage Administration, Republic of Korea

Hahoe village faithfully adheres to the pungsu (traditional siting principle, feng shui in Chinese), in village construction. It is one among the very few examples of intact traditional Korean clan villages that have kept their original spatial layouts featuring three areas for productive, residential and spiritual life. These are exceptionally still functioning. The Nakdonggang River meanders around the village in an S-shaped curve. It has retained the natural elements of the 'floating lotus shape' for six centuries, compatible with pungsu.



Kimchi is a vegetable dish made by seasoning various vegetables or wild edible greens with spices, fruit, meat, fish or fermented seafood. Then it undergoes lactic fermentation. Kimchi-making of Korea, known as kimjang, is inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Representative list. This culinary activity promotes cooperation among families, villages and communities. In Andhra variants of making traditional pickles such as gongura or magayi made with green mango are disappearing. These could be systematically studied and mapped for revitalisation.



At the heart of Hahoe Village is the 600-year-old zelkova tree called Samsindang meaning shrine of 3 gods. It is worshipped as Samsin, the village spirit. On 15th day of January in the lunar calendar, people perform rituals for Samsin to secure peace and harmony in the village. Similarly, in Amaravathi Heritage Town Balusulamma Thalli as the patron village goddess of Dharanikota, and the banyan tree next to her temple with the traditional Rachhabanda restored now, have similar ritual importance for peace, rains and prosperity.

The village pattern of Hahoe is socially structured around the neighbourhoods of yangban (literati or nobles) and commoners' houses. Their overall and individual planning reflects the precepts of Confucianism of the Joseon dynasty. In heritage tourism adaptive reuse of houses, both tiled and thatched has become popular. As in many parts of Asia, visitors want to stay in traditional houses for bed and breakfast. This model could be considered for the traditional houses in the villages of the new Capital region of AP.

NEXT WEEK Heritage Matters will focus on Humayun's tomb - Sundar nursery - Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti in New Delhi