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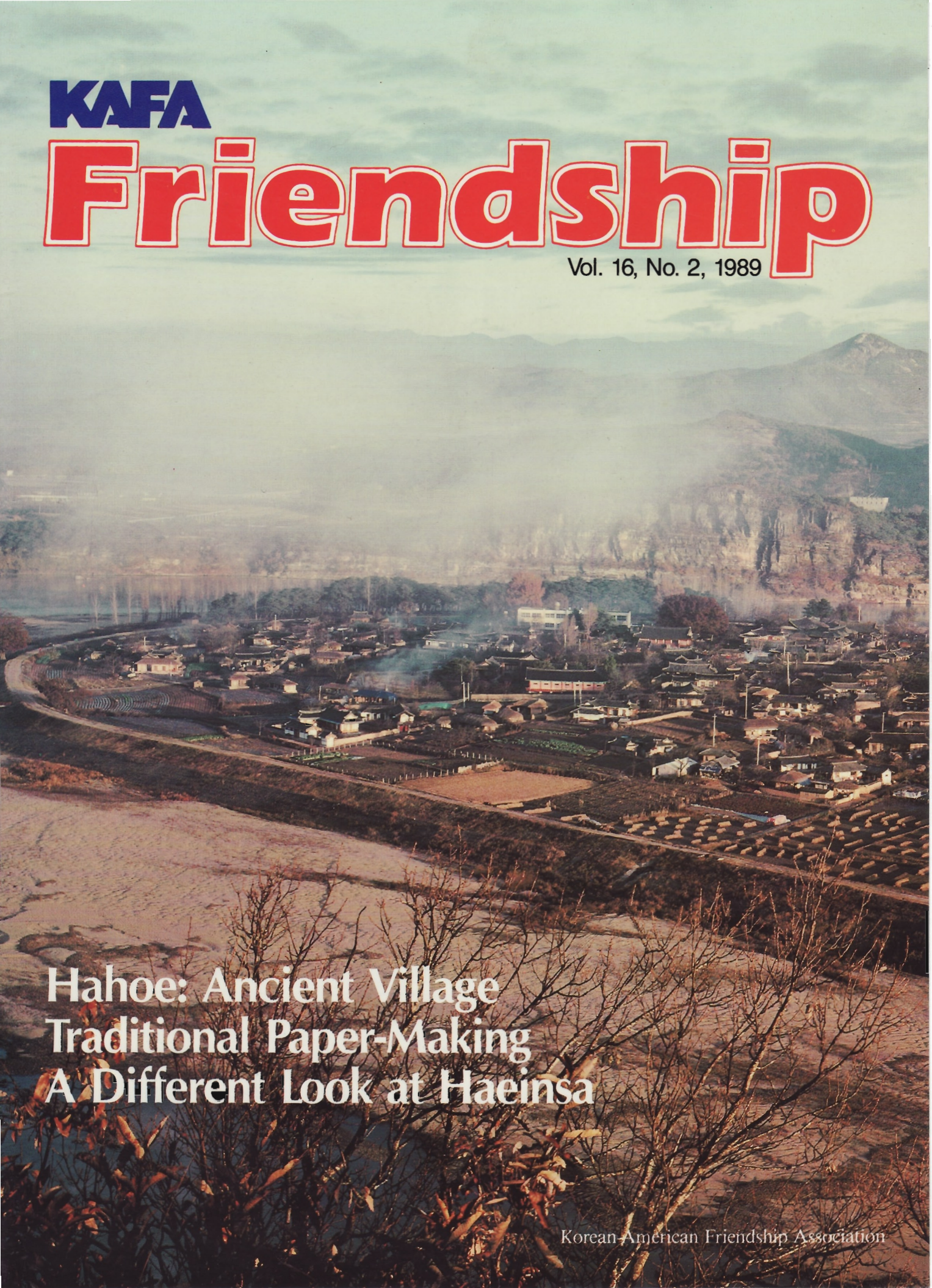

Hahoe: Ancient Village
Traditional Paper-Making
A Different Look at Haeinsa

Korean-American Friendship Association

KAFA
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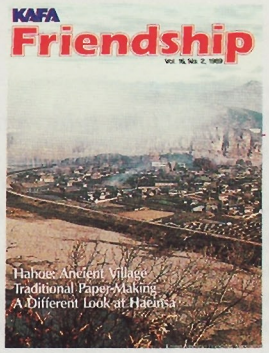

The cover photo shows the village of Hahoe, nestled in a bend in the Naktong River near Andong, Kyŏngsangbuk-do. Hahoe, which preserves the layout and architecture of a Chosŏn-Dynasty village, is a fascinating place to visit. Its history and points of interest are described in this issue's cover story. Photo by Lee Tae-Hyung.

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A village where ancient tradition lives on

Hahoe—"Where the River Returns"

by John Holstein

Way back in the 10th century a man whose name was Hŏ made his decision. He would bring his family across that low ridge to the west and settle on the pleasant pouch of land formed by the curl in the Nakdong River.

The first days were discouraging. If they tried to set a post on a stone footing, the footing crumbled into dust. No matter where they dug a well, the water came out foul. The food they had brought with them was devoured by mysterious creatures in the night, and their oxen died of a disease they had never seen before.

But then one night a monk appeared to Hŏ in a dream. This monk told Hŏ that those who would inhabit this place must deserve it. So, Hŏ led his people back across the ridge, and they all set to making straw shoes. They gave these shoes to the very poor in the name of Buddha.

When they went back across the ridge and tried again, stone footings did not crumble, and the water was pure and tasted good.

At some point in the murky history of undocumented times, fact begins to distinguish itself from legend. We can surmise, for instance, that the Hŏs came to Hahoe before the 11th century, because archeologists and art historians estimate the wooden Hahoe masks used in the peasants' mask dance to have been carved in the 11th century. And we know for fact that the Ans came after the Hŏs, and that the Ryus followed the Ans. "And these are the sacrificial vessels Ryu prepared inside the gate An built on the founda-

Ch'unghyo-dang, 'Hall of Faithfulness and Filial Piety,' is an excellent example of the type of Chosŏn-Dynasty architecture found in Hahoe.

tion Hŏ laid. . . ." So the Hŏs established the village, the Ans developed it, and the Ryus gave it prominence.

And we know that, within a hundred years of the arrival of the Ryus, the Hŏs and the Ans were gone from the village. The Ryus, with their servants, were now the sole occupants.

It is because of the Ryus that any 20th-century Korean high school student who has done his homework associates this hidden hamlet with the P'ungsan Ryu clan. Many these days, in fact, think mistakenly that this clan is the "Hahoe Ryus."

The Ryu clan can trace its origin back to the 12th century. They came from P'ungsan, a larger village about eight kilometers to the east, in the seventh generation of their clan. Ryu Jong-hye, a deputy minister in the court of Yi Sŏng-gye, founder of the Yi dynasty, moved the family to Hahoe in the late 14th century. Being in on the beginning of the dynasty probably boded very well for this clan down through the centuries.

Possibly it was Ryu Jong-hye who established Yangjindang, the oldest existing structure in Hahoe. The design of the house is from the late Koryŏ dynasty, which had just fallen to the Yis. He did not erect the imposing structure that we can see today, though; the house was expanded gradually over the next few centuries to the three buildings and fourteen rooms (not including several kitchens and utility rooms) it has today.

The wood pillars and floors and the door and window frames in Yangjindang are not finished with varnish or paint, and whisper to the visitor of a sophisticated and elegant feeling for nature's raw beauty in the tastes of the 15th century. It is also very easy to sense in this house (along with all the other major residences in Hahoe) the strong influence which Confucianism had on Korean life. The house is clearly divided between the men's quarters in front, near the main gate, and the women's quarters in back—out of sight—with the kitchen and sheds and pump and chickens.

The wall which surrounds this manor is a compressed mixture of clay and straw, coated with another layer of finer clay, and topped by tiles extending out over the wall to protect its coating. The capping tiles match those of the roofs on the buildings inside and are arranged in very much the same way as they are on the roof, giving a grand harmony to the whole compound.

In the first half of the 16th century Ryu Jung-yŏng left Yangjindang for Seoul to sit for the higher civil service examination. He had been studying the Confucian classics, composition, poetry, and calligraphy for several years, and it was now time to join the other young *yangban*s (the gentry) who would try to be among the standard number of thirty-three finally selected for government service. He passed the exam and eventually became magistrate of his native province. And during these years he fathered two sons.

The eldest, Un-ryong, shunned the higher exam and government service; he eventually became a noted Confucian scholar. As the eldest son of eldest sons from the beginning of the P'ungsan Ryu clan, he became master of Yangjindang, then and now the clans main house. At that time too, over a century after its erection, it was still a modest structure. In fact it did not even have a formal name yet—this would have to wait a couple more generations.

Un-ryong had another place just for his own use. Pinyŏn Chŏngsa (which he had built in 1583), a one-room structure in its own walled compound, was his study. One room was not all that small; as in any other traditional dwelling, there was also a *maru,* an unheated floor of wood planks which was attached to the house but wide open to the courtyard on at least one side. One feature of Pinyŏn Chŏngsa which may interest the Western visitor, besides the fact that a simple one-room structure could deserve its own walled compound, is the gate in the wall: even a gate for a building as humble as this one has a name. But then, in Korea, almost any gate to any building of any significance was given a name.

Pinyŏn Chŏngsa is in the village, very close to the Un-ryong's home. When he wanted to get away from the distractions of village life, he could just walk the two hundred meters to the river at the north end of the village, where he would come upon a grove of pines. Here in Mansongjŏng (Grove of Ten Thousand Pines), about fifty meters deep and bordering the lazy Nakdong's broad sandy beach for a couple hundred meters, he would find utter stillness except for the gentle murmur of the river, a far-off laugh or shout from the kids swimming there, a comment from a magpie.

Then he would get on the flat-bottomed ferry and cross the placid Nakdong to the foot of Buyongdae, a granite, pine-studded cliff towering sixty meters above the river.

Where the cliff drops off at its west end, in a grove of elm, persimmon, and pine, is a two-room structure with a panoramic view of the village. Un-ryong used this *chŏngsa* to study and write, counsel a student, or pass the day splitting Confucianist hairs with his literati friends. After his death, this retreat was given his pen name, and became Kyŏm-am Chŏngsa. Un-ryong later built a *sŏdang,* a couple kilometers to the east. A chŏngsa was a private study, and a sŏdang was actually a school where a few students in their teens or early twenties received formal lessons in the Confucian classics.

Both Un-ryong and his younger brother Sŏng-ryong were students of the revered Yi Hwang (Yi T'oe-gye, whom T'oegye-ro, a major road in downtown Seoul, is named after). Though the terms student and teacher are used rather loosely in the history books—the relationship was more often an informal one of a student occasionally receiving counsel from an older literatus—the relationship between Sŏng-ryong and Yi Hwang seems to have been quite close; the scholar once referred to Sŏng-ryong as "a gift from Heaven."

Sŏng-ryong grew up in Yangjindang, but, in accordance with the customs of the time, left Yangjindang to his elder brother, now head of the clan, and established his own household across the path. While Ch'unghyodang is the main house of the family branch established by Sŏng-ryong, he never saw this house. Though his wife was of royal blood, a direct descendent of King Sejong, the two lived in a much more humble house which oral tradition says was on the same site as Ch'ung-

hyodang.

Like his brother Un-ryong, Sŏng-ryong had two compounds just for his study and writing. Wŏnji Chŏngsa, the one in the village, is a couple hundred meters from his home. It has its own raised pavilion almost as big as the one-room main building. But why a house *and* pavilion for his study, when the family residence was so humble? Just as the other major structures in Hahoe grew to their present size only gradually over many generations, this chŏngsa probably got its pavilion much later.

He had this chŏngsa built in 1576, when he had already attained ministerial rank in the royal court. One might ask where he could get the time to devote to his studies while he was attending to his duties in Seoul. It is explained that some of his positions were closely related to scholastics. And he, like many other yangban of the time, left a government post as soon as he could to get out of Seoul and return to the more reflective life of the countryside literati. This attitude was common among the Confucian yangbans, who preferred intellectual over material advancement and professed disdain for politics.

Sŏng-ryong, like all literati, had an abiding concern for intellectual development in the young. In P'ungsan, where the Ryus had come from, was P'ungak Sŏdang. It is said to have been established in the late Koryŏ dynasty in a quiet place on the outskirts of P'ungsan. But P'ungsan had grown over the last two centuries, and the bustle of the town was now distracting the students from their study.

Sŏng-ryong recommended that this sŏdang be relocated to a quieter place. It was moved in 1572 to the foot of a high hill on the broad banks of the Naktong, four kilometers around the bend from Hahoe. Since it was closer to Hahoe, Sŏng-ryong was able to devote more time to the young people studying there.

Sŏng-ryong's other retreat for his studies and writing was across the river, at the east end of the same cliff on which his brother's is located. It is set in a secluded niche in the cliff, surrounded by tall trees deciduous and conifer, above a trapped pool in the river of such translucent beauty it was called Ogyŏn, "the river's jade pool."

But Sŏng-ryong could not just up and build this retreat of his. This minister in the royal court, with all the authority he had in Seoul, was still only a poor country scholar when it came to funds for himself. He could not afford to build a retreat here by Ogyŏn with his own resources. But now, just as in the legend of the founding of Hahoe centuries before, a Buddhist monk helped out.

Sŏng-ryong and his brother Un-ryong, in this age of the Confucianists' suppression of Buddhism, had consistently refused to participate; they saw this suppression as motivated by political self-interest. In fact, the brothers had often protected the Buddhists at personal risk, both in their own province and in Seoul.

Now one of those Buddhists, a friend called T'anhong, learned of Sŏng-ryong's desire. He set out begging far and wide for the funds required to build Sŏng-ryong his study. And ten years later, in 1586, Sŏng-ryong had his Ogyŏn Chŏngsa.

If he climbed the gentle slope in back of his chŏngsa, Sŏng-ryong would come to the summit of the Buyongdae. From there he had an inspiring view of the broad Naktong bordered by high hills, coiling around Hahoe and on through its environs, like the seam of the two nestling commas in the symbol of the *t'aegŭk,* "the great ultimate" unity of yin and yang. It may very well have been the scholar Sŏng-ryong who first described this view as "mountain t'aegŭk, river t'aegŭk."

In 1592, with Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, Sŏng-ryong was appointed supreme military commander and in the following year chief minister of the government. During his years as chief minister he tried to establish reforms based on the underlying principle that the purpose of both philosophy and government is to serve the people. Some historians see in his attempts, and in his related writings, the seed of the later *silhak* (loosely translated as "the pragmatic school"), the movement which arose a century later and ultimately contributed to the modernization of Korea.

Two books which contain his writings are preserved in Ch'unghyodang along with some of his personal effects and others of his documents. One interesting document is a letter from the King's secretariat rejecting Sŏng-ryong's request to resign from his position as chief minister. Yi Sun-shin, in the 20th century the most revered figure in Korean history next to King Sejong, owed his position as admiral of the fleet to Sŏng-ryong. Yi Sun-shin's deputy commander, covetous of Yi's position, accused Yi of having ignored important intelligence on Japanese troop movements (which turned out much later to be pure fabrication). The admiral was arrested and would have been executed had the deputy commander's faction had their way. Sŏng-ryong did not have the power to defend the admiral, so as a last resort he tried to resign to register protest. (Later Sŏng-ryong was finally able to arrange for Yi Sun-shin's release and eventually even got him reinstated.)

Ryu Sŏng-ryong was himself the next victim of calumny and so finally did get out of government for good. He probably chuckled all the way back to the village he had always been trying so hard to return to. But, as the story goes, almost as soon as he got back the usually placid Naktong flooded its banks and wiped out many of the smaller homes in Hahoe, including Sŏng-ryong's. It seems that even the pension provided by King Sŏnjo was not enough for Sŏng-ryong to build himself another house, because he accepted the offer of a small cottage a few kilometers from Hahoe. He never did return to settle in the beloved village he had longed for over so many years in Seoul.

In 1607, at the age of 66, scholar and statesman Ryu Sŏng-ryong died in that humble cottage. King Sŏnjo announced a national mourning period of three days.

And in 1613 Sŏng-ryong's prominent former students and some other Confucianists built a shrine to Sŏng-ryong in his sŏdang, thereby raising it to the status of a *sŏwŏn;* with its dedication to Sŏng-ryong, its name was changed to Byŏngsan Sŏwŏn. As a *sŏwŏn* it was now no longer just a school for young students but more a place where accomplished literati would gather to discuss the Confucian classics and inevitably quarrel over

how many bows should be made to one of a certain rank at his memorial rite or how many days one king or another should be mourned—shades of the Western scholastics.

When Sŏng-ryong died, King Sŏnjo appointed the court geomancer to select a site for Sŏng-ryong's grave. Within a few years a hamlet had formed at the base of the hill, whether in devotion to the occupant of the grave or in an attempt to share in the benefits of a site considered auspicious enough for a favorite of the king, or both. Years later Sŏng-ryong's grandson Wŏn-ji, a scholar-statesman renowned for his skill in geomancy, was fretting over the court geomancer's selection and finally had Sŏng-ryong's remains moved to another site. Soon those same villagers who had set up their hamlet at the original site moved, household by household, to the second site.

Ryu Wŏn-ji can also be thanked for Ch'unghyodang, to this day the main house of Sŏng-ryong's branch of the P'ungsan Ryu clan. Wŏn-ji built this house and dedicated it to his grandfather Sŏng-ryong. Just as Rome and Yangjindang were not built in a day, Ch'unghyodang has also grown to its present size section by section, not only through the efforts of succeeding generations of the Ryu family but also with contributions from former students and others.

One of Wŏn-ji's sons was Ryu Man-ha. He was not the eldest son, so he left Ch'unghyodang and set up his own household just in back. He built a modest house which, like the other major residences in Hahoe, grew only later to its present size. One of those who added to it was his son Hu-jang, a prominent scholar who also held high positions in the government. After he died, in 1706, the house's status was elevated when it was given Ryu Hu-jang's pen name, Juiljae.

Over the next two centuries Hahoe continued to grow in population but not much in political power and certainly not in wealth. Not many Ryus appeared on the national scene during these years, mostly because the Andong Kim faction had a tenacious hold on all the high positions in the royal court. Hahoe remained purely residential and never developed into an industrial or commercial town; this fact, along with the pride of the Ryus in their scholarly ancestors, might explain why Hahoe has preserved its Yi dynasty character till now.

In the second half of the 19th century, the tyrant regent Hŭng-sŏn T'aewŏngun, father of the child King Ko-jong, moved to retrieve control of the government from the factions. They were stymieing his efforts to consolidate his power and pull the country together. At this time there were almost 700 sŏwŏns throughout the land, where the literati squabbled as much over politics as they did over philosophy and rites and meddled in national politics with their petitions and their delegations to Seoul. The four major factions are said to have used these sŏwŏns in their battles for power in the court.

So the regent decided to deprive the factions of one source of their power, and this he did with a decree abolishing the sŏwŏns. The sŏwŏn dedicated to Ryu Sŏng-ryong's brother, on the

Hahoe is famous for the carved masks that used to be used in the local masked dance-drama. The mask on the left was worn by the dancer who played the nobleman and the one on the right by the dancer who played the young, unmarried girl.

slope in back of the cliff Buyongdae, was degraded to a sŏdang and much of it ordered dismantled. Sŏng-ryong's Byŏngsan Sŏwŏn, though, and the sŏwŏns dedicated to a few others who had made outstanding contributions to the nation—like Yi Hwang—were left untouched.

A few decades later Korea and Hahoe entered the 20th century. Over five centuries Yangjindang had begot Ch'unghyodang, Ch'unghyodang begot Juiljae . . . And now with the turn of this century, Ryu T'ai-woo, second son, moved out of Juiljae and into the house just across the path—to establish Hahoe's next major residence? It has a few rooms arranged in the same Confucian tradition as the other homes in Hahoe. During the next few years Ryu T'ai-woo advanced to the post of magistrate of another township. And during these years he had two sons.

His second son, Si-dong, remembers way back to when he was a little kid in primary school. Hahoe primary school was a large school for such a small village of only three hundred households. It had to accommodate the kids from other villages which were not allowed schools. At that time the Japanese occupation government needed close control of education for more effective sway over the "hearts and minds" of the Koreans, so they prohibited the establishment of schools outside the cities and largest towns, where they had control. At the same time they wanted to avoid unnecessary trouble. They knew that Hahoe, a village of some prominence in spite of its negligible size—it was already becoming known internationally as a preserve of ancient Korea—was a village they had better handle very delicately.

One day, back in the 1920s as Ryu Si-dong recalls, the Japanese governor general of Korea and his retinue arrived from Seoul in a big cloud of dust after a two-day drive over two rough mountain ranges. These were the first automobiles Si-dong had ever seen. And that is when Si-dong got his first inkling of the importance of Hahoe in modern Korea. Then one day in 1989 another car arrived in Hahoe, in another cloud of dust, practically the only thing stirring in this quiet village. This time Ryu Si-dong, now in his 60's, was not outside looking at the car; he was inside his own car looking, with a big smile, at his village. He and his two companions (KAFA Executive Vice President Chang Yoon-Kul, and this writer) had come the comfortable four-hour ride from Seoul over two gorgeous mountain ranges. Ryu Si-dong, descendant of "grandfather" Ryu Sŏng-ryong, was back home again, to show these people around.

He had certainly had enough practice. He had already put up Claude Levi-Strauss and his team of twenty Western scholars in Ch'unghyodang, and he had given the one-day tour to an American ambassador, a British ambassador, and scholars from several other European and American universities.

"Thirty years ago I bought a piece of land here, and one day soon I'm going to build my own house—a nice house for my family." So he will establish one more branch in the genealogy of Yangjindang. And his home will carry on the Korean tradition of hospitality, because it will have two or three rooms for guests from abroad.

It will be in the traditional style, of course, because no other architectural style is allowed inside Hahoe. In fact, no additions or structural alterations of any kind are allowed on the original houses. Only repairs are permitted—at government expense, but also only with government approval. Ryu Si-dong's house, though, will be a new one, and he will be permitted to equip it with the comforts of the modern age.

At the village entrance the first thing to catch our eye is the two new houses going up there. These houses are being built by Ryus who left Hahoe years before to make their fortune in Seoul and are now returning to their "real" home for their remaining years. They must be well off since these days a traditional Korean house, with its thick wood pillars and beams and the expert craftsmanship it requires, costs much more to build than a house of modern design.

All the money in the world, though, cannot dictate authenticity, and Mr. Ryu winces at the round pillars in one of the new houses. This is a violation of tradition: round pillars were used only by those few appointed by the king. "But then they do say these days that money is king."

Fifty meters down the path I peek through the gate of one of the really old compounds and see a spanking new car in a courtyard of 16th-century Korea. Peeking is not really necessary, though; the visitor who knows how to say, "Do you mind if we look?" can walk in and look around. Fifty meters farther, on the right, another, less timid peek through the wall's gate discovers an elderly gentleman relaxing on the maru on a lawn chair straight from a suburb of Los Angeles or Detroit.

In this village walls border every path. These walls, over a foot thick and taller than a tall man, surround even the humblest thatch-roofed hut. This is an intriguing feature for a village of one family. Though the basic form of the village's walls is identical throughout, there is a great variety of materials used in them from the clay and straw compound to clay wattle to coated or uncoated random-coursed rock to split roof tiles arranged in the mortar in all sorts of patterns— all resulting in an array of patterns a design artist could lose himself in for days. The walls will be capped with either Yangjindang's elaborate arrangement of roof tiles or a neatly laid thatch, depending on the scale of the house they enclose. The wall here is certainly regarded more a work of art than a shield for privacy.

Down one of these side paths is Juiljae, of special concern to Mr. Ryu because his father was born here. The house today, except for the motorbike in the courtyard, a plastic mat under drying red peppers, and a plastic water dipper on the maru, is 17th-century Korea. But there is that vegetable patch—would that have been allowed inside the compound's walls when yangban lived there?

On the way back to the main road are a couple more ancient houses, with corn growing in their front yards. What on earth is a peasant's corn patch doing right smack in front of an exalted yangban residence? They would never allow something like this in a preserved residence in Seoul.

And now we come to the next shock, Yangjindang, grand old main house of

See manuscript*

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the P'ungsan Ryu clan since the 15th century. The outer walls are no more than the clay and straw compound surrounding the humblest thatch-roofed home. One would expect at least some of that white facing on a wall surrounding the center of such a proud history. Another blow is the main gate, through which many grand figures in Korea's history have passed. Once inside, I discover that the gate's right wall is the wall of a stable for lowly oxen or of a pigpen, and can hear an oink in reply to an announcement of the arrival of the king's minister.

There are at least two explanations for this bare-bones simplicity. One is that the people of that age had some special affinity with nature and felt neither the need nor the desire to separate themselves from nature or embellish what nature provided. Another is their "austere interpretation of Neo-Confucian philosophy, which viewed the world in strictly utilitarian terms." Take your pick.

In the reception hall this sense of the real thing, of ages and ages past, is transferred through stocking feet from the smooth thick wood planks of the maru and its soft gleam of centuries of natural polishing. The fire extinguisher on the wall does not enhance this sense of age, though it does provide a feeling of reality.

At the top and the sides of many of the door frames and on the walls in some of the rooms are those eerie black-on-white Chinese character invocations posted to ward off malicious spirits and beckon benign ones. These are pasted up at the beginning of the spring as Koreans reckon it (about February 5th). Along with the shaman shrines around the village, these invocations are evidence of the peaceful coexistence of a primitive shamanism with the sophisticated systems of Confucianism and Buddhism.

To the left of the main entrance, through a small gate, is the women's quarters. Mr. Ryu wonders where "Grandmother" is—she lives here during months of clement weather and moves back to Seoul in the winter, when this house would be too cold for a softy of modern times. As in the other grand residences of Hahoe, another family, not Ryus, lives here year round, maintaining the place in exchange for rent. They will also help prepare table for the four memorial rites each year, which the family has been holding over the centuries for Ryu Jung-yŏng, his wife, their first son Un-ryong (Sŏng-ryong's elder brother), and his wife.

Across the path is Ch'unghyodang, well kept as the showplace of this village, probably because it is the house dedicated to *the* most eminent resident of this village. One length of the manor's outer wall is the primitive clay-straw compound, another is random-course rock, and yet another length is an elegant herring-bone pattern of split roof tiles in a white-faced clay mortar. The entire wall, of course, is capped with roof tiles. Then there is a long structure the length of the main house's compound, which is both a wall and a string of utility rooms. This is separated from the main house by a lawn rather than the usual expanse of bare earth. Everything is spic-and-span.

A gentleman in his fifties, in traditional clothing, is reading a book on the floor of the room off the maru at the entrance to the house. He is the consecutive eldest son since the 16th century, which makes him head of Ryu Sŏng-ryong's branch of the P'ungsan Ryu clan. As such he is responsible for conducting the two memorial rites held here each year, one for Sŏng-ryong and one for Sŏng-ryong's wife. He was a high school teacher until he retired and came back home to live in Ch'unghyodang.

He invites his guests in and provides some orange juice, not green tea. Though our host is the head of the clan, Ryu Si-dong is his uncle, so our host speaks to Mr. Ryu in honorific speech while Mr. Ryu uses familiar speech.

Ryu Sŏng-ryong's writings and personal effects are housed in this compound in a building whose newness and bright pastel trimmings and painted concrete walls clash with the rest of village. Maybe this can be explained by the fact that it was President Park who ordered it built, in 1966, and had it enlarged and remodeled in 1975 in a period of transition when the money to restore and preserve had finally become available but tastes still reflected the preceding decades of hardship. If it were done again today, it would probably be in the natural colors of natural materials.

A group of soldiers from a nearby unit have unlaced their boots and, in a properly respectful hush, are viewing the displays inside. Some of Sŏng-ryong's letters and poems are written in an exciting bold cursive calligraphy, its free-spirited vitality making the admirer wonder whether it was not considered provocatively unorthodox in the age it was written. Personal effects on display amount to his steel helmet and leather-slat corselet from his days as Minister of Defense during Hideyoshi's invasion, his horsehair hat, a belt, and a few other things. On a later visit to Hahoe, my companion remarked on the small number of personal effects and furnishings we can find both here and in other museums in Korea compared with what we find in museums in Europe and ventured that it supports what we hear so often about old Korea having been a very nonmaterialistic culture.

Just outside Ch'unghyodang's sprawling compound is a small thatch-roofed house, uninhabited it seems, preserved nevertheless. It also has a wall, but covering this one, like those walls surrounding the village's smaller dwellings, is thatch rather than tiles. There are several of these more rustic houses in the village which are unoccupied now, and some vacant lots. It is difficult these days to keep them down on the farm, with Seoul beckoning, and the number of households is down to around 150, less than half of what it was when our host Ryu Si-dong was young. He, too, left Hahoe for high school in Taegu, went on to Seoul to make his livelihood, and never returned to live in Hahoe for any duration.

Mr. Ryu's son, Ki-ha, is of the first generation not born in Hahoe. He was born in Seoul and spent a lot more time in graduate school in the United States than he has in Hahoe. Unlike his father, who spends a lot of his leisure researching the history of Hahoe and its residents, Ki-ha devotes all his time to the company he founded three years ago upon his return from the States.

But Ryu Ki-ha has Hahoe in his bones. Maybe he wanted to put a new lustre on the name of this big small

This is the main lecture hall of Pyŏngsan Sŏwŏn, a Chosŏn-Dynasty school in Hahoe. The placard reads "Ipkyo-dang," meaning 'Hall of the Establishment of Education.'

village when he named his company "Hahoe Corporation." He may just do that, in his way—in just three short years the company is already dealing in imports, exports, and insurance, and is now expanding its scope of trade and is building a manufacturing plant.

Further on from Ch'unghyodang is Wŏnji Chŏngsa, closed, and Pinyŏn Chŏngsa, closed. But the ubiquitous Ministry of Culture explanatory signboard is there to tell the visitor about what he cannot go in to see for himself. Weeds and loose door fixtures and unpolished beams speak of benign neglect, so much more appreciated than the distorting trimmings of modern tampering. This is the value of Hahoe: in this village, except for the exterior of Ch'unghyodang's museum, we are not misled by the brightly painted eaves and mowed lawns of most other preservations of historical structures.

We turn away from the closed chŏngsa with a slight sense of disappointment, but this is soon dispelled by the grand sprawling pine tree four centuries old in front of the primary school. How can those twisting limbs stretch out those ten meters or so the way they do without breaking off, especially with the school kids climbing them? In this village they do not forbid their kids this inviolable right of youth. If the tree loses a limb, it probably has a few more centuries to grow another.

And there, along the placid Naktong, is Mansongjŏng, "Grove of Ten Thousand Pines," with its floor of brown needles providing a cushion over the yellow ground. Here, as in Yangjindang, the stillness tells us to hush up and listen for a laugh from the children swimming in the river, the call of a distant egret, the breeze in the pines. What a place to pitch a tent—which, in fact, is permitted.

Buyongdae looks down on us from across the Naktong; Un-ryong's Kyŏmam Chŏngsa and Sŏng-ryong's Ogyŏn Chŏngsa at each end of the cliff are hiding themselves behind the thick foliage. The ferry—but for its new coat of paint, it has got to be the same one Sŏng-ryong used—takes us across to the base of the cliff, and then it is only a short walk up a narrow path along the face of the cliff to Sŏng-ryong's retreat.

The low, crowned gate of the random-course rock outer wall of Ogyŏn Chŏngsa frames another, smaller gnarled pine. In the yellow-earth courtyard is that stillness of the ages again. Oaks and maples and persimmons filter the sun into a light which induces the richest tones of old wood beams and roof tiles and stucco walls—no wonder Sŏng-ryong did not want to be in Seoul. A lilting spate of chatter drifts over from the small house just outside the compound, where a family, not Ryus, lives under the same arrangement others not of the Ryu clan do in the village.

A narrow path out the east gate winds up the heavily wooded back slope to the crest of Buyongdae. Mr. Ryu gingerly leads his panting companions along till a sudden burst of clear sky announces their arrival at the summit. Hahoe nestles far below, mellow in the early evening sun. The blue Naktong curls protectively around the village and is itself sheltered by mountains gently rising to pointed peaks. At the base of one of these mountains around another bend farther downriver is Pyŏngsan Sŏwŏn.

The sŏwŏn is a four-kilometer ride along one of those bumpy one-lane

dirt roads we old-timers used to endure but which now, since they have all but disappeared, bring fond memories of a time now gone for good. At the end of this road we come to a solitary stand of six pines on the Naktong's bank which were already there before this sŏwŏn was even a sŏdang. And there to the right the buildings of the sŏwŏn step slowly up the gradual slope of a low mountain.

Right at the entrance to it all is a pleasant surprise—an open pavilion set just back of the main gate, extending the full forty-meter width of the sŏwŏn's compound. A wide banner announces that a corporation is holding a weekend seminar here for its junior employees. They are taking a break now, but no one is smoking in the sŏwŏn, and the talk and laughter are whispers and chuckles.

Once inside the compound we make a beeline for that pavilion. We take off our shoes, climb the steps, and look out upon the Naktong and the mountains on its other side. The story is that the original sŏdang was moved way out here to escape the distractions of the expanding P'ungsan; but this stunning scenery could only have been an even greater distraction.

Further into the sŏwŏn are small buildings of a couple tiny rooms each, one on each side of the courtyard. In the old days the resident and visiting literati lived in these rooms. Black smoke traces on the back wall above the fire holes indicate that the rooms are being used even now, probably by the seminar students. In the storeroom next to Sŏng-ryong's shrine is the equipment for his annual memorial rite. This sŏwŏn is alive.

In the first half of this century, it was a different story. Times changed with the Japanese occupation and industrialization; old Korea and the yangbans and the literati faded from the scene. So this sŏwŏn, along with those others the t'aewŏngun abolished, fell into neglect. When the nation finally recovered from the Korean War and the government found the wherewithal in the 1960's to resurrect the sŏwŏn, the historians and craftsmen had only about twenty meters of its original wall and the dried out corpses of the buildings and a few other hints to figure out how to restore it to its original appearance.

Ryu Sŏng-ryong's grave is several kilometers away from Hahoe, but it is as much a part of the village as Pyŏngsan Sŏwŏn. Five or ten bumpy, dusty kilometers off the main road to Andong at the foot of the grave's hill is a village where much of modern Korea has not yet arrived. There is no running water, no toilets inside these cramped cottages. The sunken kitchen and the maru are not heated, and firewood is still burned to heat the cottages' one or two rooms.

But the lady we meet in one of these cottages does have a double-deck tape player. And she also has a nice fat watermelon, which is in our mouths before we have time to say, "That's very kind of you, but . . ." As we talk with her she assiduously scrapes clean each strand of hemp that will go into the very popular—and very dear—Andong hempcloth.

The grave itself, a ten-minute walk up the hill in back of the village, is a large mound. Standing guard in front to the right and left are a couple weather-worn life-sized figures of ministers of the court placed there to signify Sŏng-ryong's rank as chief minister. A granite stele blackened by the elements tells us that Sŏng-ryong's wife is buried there with him. Other than this there is little evidence of the former stature of the man resting here.

Mr. Ryu and Mr. Chang spend a few minutes pulling the more visible weeds from the grave mound, then come around to the front. They treat themselves to a look at the valley and the surrounding hills. All is heavily wooded, thanks to an effective reforestation policy started in the 1960s. Twenty years ago, even ten years ago, we old-timers here did not see a lot of hills with trees on them, but now with every trip into the countryside we find ourselves oohing and aahing at the land's green splendor. It must have been just like this way back in Sŏng-ryong's . . . but wouldn't you know it, a church steeple is there to wrench us back to the present.

The two gentlemen turn back to the grave. There is a low granite table at the foot of the mound for the vessels of rice and wine offered in the memorial rite. First Mr. Ryu gets down on both knees in front of the table and makes two full bows, head to the earth. Then Mr. Chang takes his turn. If they were here today for the memorial rite, they would do what others have been doing ever since who-knows-when at this rite—they would eat the rest of the rice and side dishes, have some good conversation over the wine, and then bow again and go back down.

On the way back to Andong we pass P'ungsan Middle and High School. Mr. Ryu's family elder brother, Ryu Si-sŏng, who lived and died in genteel poverty in Hahoe, gave all the fields and paddies of Pyŏngsan Sŏwŏn to a foundation which they founded to establish this school. Then they turned over operation of the foundation to the school. The 48 genuine sŏwŏns remaining after Hung-son T'aewŏngun's attack had fallen into disuse and were now serving no other purpose than to commemorate those enshrined in them. It was the Ryus intention that this sŏwŏn, at least, would again serve learning, the original purpose of its establishment.

It must be this same family tradition of devotion to learning and to the more generous aspects of Confucian principles that first gave Hahoe a name and then carried that name all the way into our time. Any of the Ryus could have moved to Seoul at any time over the last few centuries to acquire political or financial power. If they had, Hahoe today would amount to no more than any one of today's prosaic villages, where land reform or ambition impelled the yangban to sell his lands and manor and move on to another kind of life with other values.

Back in Seoul, though, I come to my senses and realize this explanation is too simple, too romantic. Hahoe's homes, its paths, its walls, its river, its residents past and present must have conspired to work some spell over me. Don't let them work it on you when you visit "where the river returns."

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His informant was Mr. Ryu Si-dong, chairman of the Hahoe Corporation, who has conducted considerable research into the history and residents of Hahoe, his home village.