

LESSON 1

Five National Treasures

Korea has many national treasures including artifacts, temples, palaces and other landmark buildings, instruments, costumes, artisans and artists who represent distinct contributions to Korea's rich cultural history.

In 1995, the World Heritage Center of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) placed three Korean treasures — Sokkuram Grotto, Tripitaka Koreana, Chongmyo Shrine — on its World Heritage List. In 1997, two more treasures were included, Changdokkung Palace and Hwasong Fortress. To qualify for the World Heritage List, a cultural monument must be a masterpiece of creative genius, have exerted great architectural influence, be associated with ideas of universal significance, or be an outstanding example of traditional life. The World Heritage List aims to protect and conserve the world's cultural and natural treasures.

What do the following five national treasures tell us about Korea?

LINKAGE WITH CURRICULUM

- *World Religions and Philosophy (Buddhism, Confucianism)
- *Printing History

MATERIALS

- *Handout on the Five National Treasures
- *Data Retrieval Chart
- *Map
- *Web Sites

Purpose of Lesson and Overview

Students will examine five cultural treasures — Sokkuram Grotto, Tripitaka Koreana, Chongmyo Shrine, Changdokkung Palace and Hwasong Fortress — for a basic understanding of distinct periods in Korean history.

Students will be divided into small groups. Each group will examine one of the five cultural treasures and share with the class what the treasure reveals about the religious, cultural and political climate of the time period it represents.

Content Focus

Sokkuram Grotto, Tripitaka Koreana, Chongmyo Shrine, Changdokkung Palace and Hwasong Fortress are five examples of Korea's rich cultural heritage. Their beauty and relevance in a global context have extended beyond Korea's borders and are included in the list of UNESCO's World Heritage Treasures. UNESCO's World Treasures include the Great Wall in China, the Acropolis in Athens and the Taj Mahal in India. Treasures are selected by an international committee for their outstanding universal value in artistic achievement and influence on architecture, landscape design and culture. These treasures serve as examples of achievements of a culture.

Sokkuram Grotto, built in 751 A.D., is a Buddhist stone grotto nestled in the mountains near Kyongju, capital of the Silla Kingdom (35 B.C.-935 A.D.). It is unique in that unlike most grottos that are built from natural caves, Sokkuram was constructed by piling up large and small stones to create a cave like effect. Designed as a place of worship and meditation, Sokkuram houses a large stone Buddha surrounded by stone figures of disciples and guardians.

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Tripitaka Koreana is the world's oldest collection of carved wood blocks used for printing. First carved in 1011 A.D., the collection of over 80,000 blocks contains the complete Buddhist scripture and is housed in Haeinsa Temple in South Korea. One reason for creating the Tripitaka was to achieve national unity during the Mongol invasions. Despite wars and invasions during the Koryo Kingdom (918-1392), printing emerged as a way to satisfy a widespread demand for books.

Chongmyo Shrine is the national shrine for royal ancestors. Plans for its construction began with King Taejo, who founded the Choson Kingdom and selected Seoul as his capital. The Choson Kingdom (1392-1910) began at a time of peace and prosperity and its contributions included the invention of the Korean alphabet, *Hangul*. Chongmyo is used for seasonal memorial services and reflects a significant part of the Confucian practice of filial piety. The shrine embodies the values of Confucianism, which were adopted by the Choson Kingdom and are still at the core of Korean society today.

Changdokkung Palace was begun in Seoul in 1405 and housed Korean rulers for four centuries. The beautiful buildings and gardens reflect the palace's many purposes as the center of government and the home of the royal family.

Hwasong Fortress was built by King Chongjo (ruled 1776-1800) in the late Choson Kingdom as the site of a new capital in Suwon. The sophisticated western technology used to construct the buildings blends with traditional Korean architectural style.

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The Lesson: How and Why are National Treasures Chosen?

OPENING

1. Suppose that the President of the U.S. is accepting nominations for U.S. National Treasures to be considered for the UNESCO World Heritage List. “What do you think are the most valued treasures in the U.S.?” Ask students to write down their nominations as well as three reasons for each selection. Ask students to explain why they selected certain treasures and the historical context of each. What do these treasures tell other people about U.S. history and culture?

READING

2. Explain that a similar nomination process is used by countries that want to have their treasures in the UNESCO List. “Today we will examine five national treasures of Korea to learn more about Korea’s history and values.” Divide students into five groups. Each group will read a handout about one of the five cultural treasures and will complete a Data Retrieval Chart on the treasure. Then each group will explain what they learned and answer the question, “What does this treasure tell us about Korean history and values?”

DATA RETRIEVAL CHART

3. After each group reads about its assigned treasure and completes its Data Retrieval Chart, the entire class reconvenes as a large group. Ask a spokesperson from each group (or a few students) to explain their treasure to the rest of the class. Be sure all students complete the Data Retrieval Chart on each of the five treasures.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

4. 4. Sample questions for large group discussion:
- a) What technology was necessary to create each treasure? How does each treasure use or portray nature?
 - b) How do you think the Tripitaka and Sokkuram contributed to the spread of Buddhism? How would Chongmyo have helped spread Confucianism during the Choson Kingdom?
 - c) There are many beautiful national treasures in Korea. Why do you think these five were selected as international treasures?
 - d) Chongmyo is a memorial to the achievements of the deceased. Select a memorial in the U.S. and compare and contrast it to Chongmyo.
 - e) Creation of the Tripitaka was extremely difficult and time-consuming. How might the king’s decision to have it carved again after it was destroyed have inspired unity during a time of invasions and wars?

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ASSESSMENT

5. Activities to assess students learning:
 - a) Ask students to select one of the treasures that their group did not study in depth. Have them write a brief description of this treasure and explain three things the treasure tells us about Korea.
 - b) Discuss qualities that a U.S. treasure or landmark would need to have to successfully represent U.S. history. Engage students in a debate about what the U.S. could offer to UNESCO for consideration as a World Heritage Treasure. Why?
 - c) Have students design brochures of one of the five treasures to be used by history teachers. What would they include in the brochure to make it interesting to teachers? How would they change the brochure if it was meant for young children?
 - d) Ask students to write a two-sentence description of each treasure for a national tourist guide. What are the most important features to point out in a few words?

REFERENCE

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- Lee, Peter ed. Sourcebook of Korean Civilization (Volume I). New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
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WORLD WIDE WEB

- <http://korea.emb.washington.dc.us/korea>
- <http://firebox.postech.ac.kr/treasure/>
- <http://www.shillazine.com/eng/culture.html>
- <http://www.pem.org/korea>

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Data Retrieval Chart

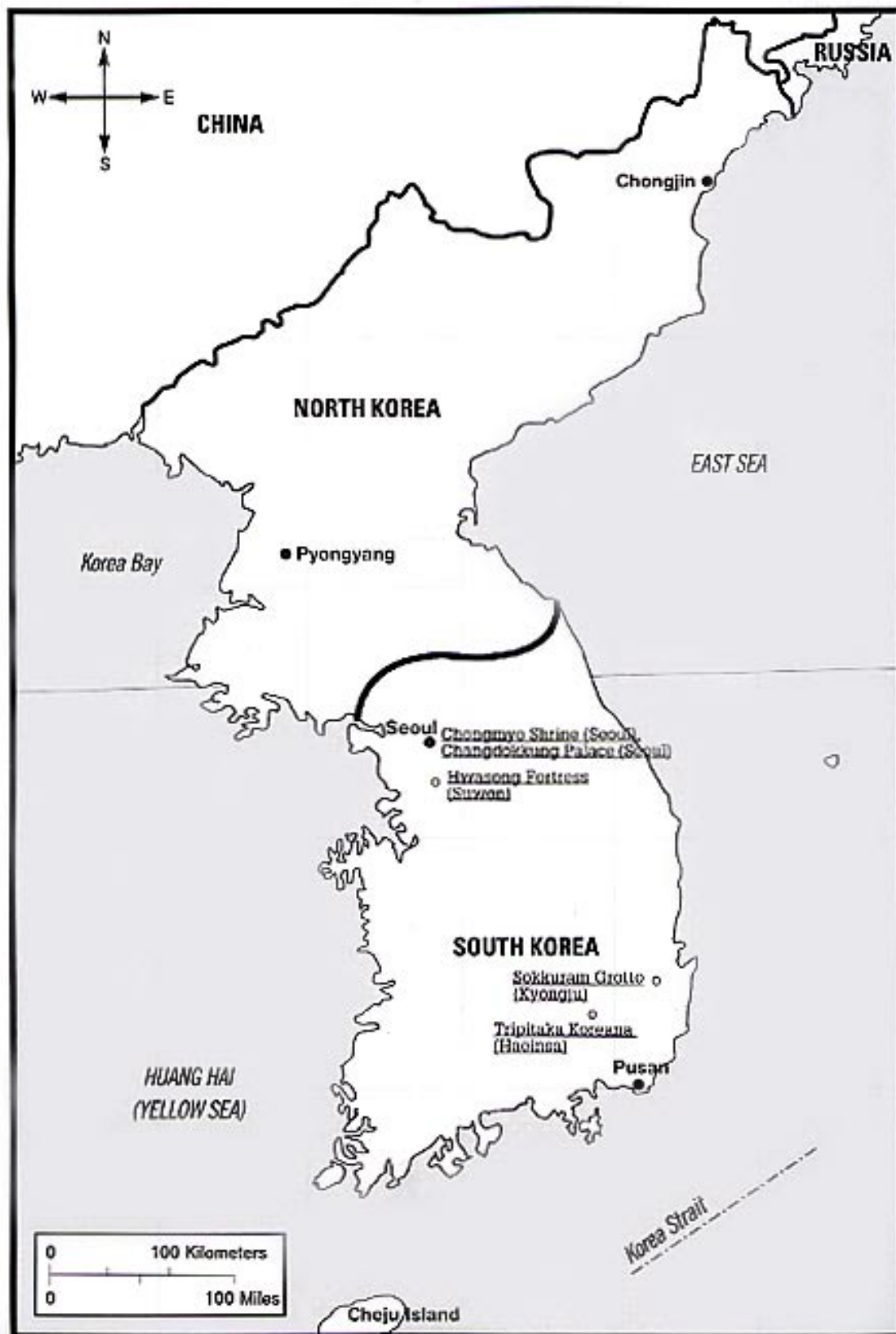
Aspects of Life

Treasure

What it tells us about Korea's	Sokkuram Groto	Tripitaka Koreana	Chongmyo	Changdokkung palace	Hwasong Fortress

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Korea Today



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Handout I

Sokkuram Grotto

Korean National Treasure: “A Tribute to Buddha”

Sokkuram, built in 751 A.D., is a Buddhist grotto, or cave and shrine nestled in the lush mountains of Kyongju, the capital of the Silla Kingdom (35 B.C.-935 A.D.). It contains a main shrine area for the Buddha and relief carvings of his guardians and other deities. It is also a place for meditation. Surrounded by wooded mountains, the grotto contains a peaceful, benevolent Buddha and, in front of him, an area for meditation and religious ceremonies. The stone Buddha is in perfect harmony with the beautiful natural surroundings. Sokkuram was included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List because of its unique construction and the importance of Buddhism in the political, cultural and scientific achievements of Korea. The Sokkuram Buddha is considered one of the finest examples of sculpture in Asia. The grotto is admired for its seamless synergy of science, architecture, geometry and philosophy.

Sokkuram was built during the Silla Kingdom, which ruled over parts of southeastern Korea. Silla was one of three kingdoms in Korea; the other two were Paekche in the southwestern Korea and Koguryo in northern Korea and Manchuria. The Silla Kingdom enjoyed a long period of stability during which it made great artistic and technological advances. It imposed a rigid hierarchical structure, called a “bone rank” system, which determined a citizen’s status from birth. All aspects of society were influenced by Buddhism. Buddhism was used to maintain the rigid social structure. Buddhism encouraged unity by focusing people on the same goal; following the Buddha and Buddhist scriptures. Temples were built for worship and people prayed to the Buddha for protection against war and other disasters. As Buddhism was used to control the large and burdened peasant class, monks became increasingly wealthy, land-managing bureaucrats. Buddhism was later replaced as the state religion by Confucianism during the Choson Kingdom (1382-1910).

King Kyongdok (ruled 742-765 A.D.) ordered the construction of many Buddhist temples, pagodas and bells, including Sokkuram. Sokkuram became a highly revered place of worship. Typically, there were three locations for shrine-temples — in mountains, in valleys, or in stone caves or chambers. While grotto temples were common in India and China, Sokkuram was unique because it was constructed by hand using piles of stones rather than being created within a natural cave. Large white granite slabs were placed next to each other to form an elongated antechamber and the inner rotunda where the Buddha is enshrined.

Sokkuram is located on Mt. Toham. It sits on a cliff far removed from the towns below. There, the stone Buddha has his back against the mountain and gazes across the East Sea. The rotunda that houses the Sokkuram Buddha contains walls with carvings of his ten disciples and of two bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas are men or women who postpone enlightenment in order to help others attain enlightenment. Sokkuram also includes an anteroom with relief carvings of guardian deities. This room offers space for ceremonies and meditation. Both rooms display fine craftsmanship that represent the spirituality of the Silla Kingdom. The setting enhances the power and beauty of the Buddha, whose serene, warm smile and massive form signify his generosity and majestic presence. Carved on the walls surrounding him are 38 figures from the Buddhist pantheon.

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The power and beauty of the Sokkuram Buddha was coveted by invaders. During the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), an attempt was made to move Sokkuram from Mt. Toham and relocate it to Japan. Between 1913 and 1915, the Japanese disassembled the grotto and then hastily sealed it with cement, damaging the natural ventilation. In the 1960's, the South Korean government restored the grotto and built a front facade with drainage system, ventilation system and dehumidifier to prevent the shrine from further decay. The original construction included a natural ventilation system that protected the Buddha from disintegration, but because of the irreparable damage, the Buddha is now protected by a glass vault and modern ventilation system.

The Sokkuram Buddha is known throughout the world for its artistic quality and religious significance. The Buddha's peaceful gaze has mesmerized visitors and the grotto is an inspiring place of worship. A lotus-shaped medallion behind the Buddha's head is much like a halo. The compassionate face of the Buddha and the unique construction of the grotto have helped make it the finest example of Korean sculpture and one of the most beautiful examples of Buddhist art in the world.

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Handout 2

Tripitaka Koreana

Korean National Treasure: “Spiritual Code Carved in Wood”

The Tripitaka Koreana is the world’s oldest surviving collection of carved woodblocks. They contain the complete Buddhist canon. It consists of 81,258 wood blocks and is housed in the Buddhist monastery of Haeinsa (sa means temple). The Tripitaka Koreana was included on UNESCO’s World Heritage List because of its universal significance, uniqueness, technological and artistic excellence and importance in the study of Buddhism. Buddhism was the state religion of the Koryo Kingdom (918-1392). The Tripitaka Koreana is a testament to Koryo’s support for Buddhism and to the great faith of the Korean people during a time of wars and invasions.

In search of deeper knowledge and spiritual awakening, Korean scholars traveled to China and India to study Buddhist scriptures and teachings. As early as 551 A.D., Korean monks had introduced Buddhism to Japan.

The Tripitaka contains the teachings of Buddha, important works by Buddhist scholars and practical advice for the Buddhist community to achieve spiritual awakening. Twenty-three lines of text, composed of fourteen Chinese characters each, are carved on both sides of each wood block. The Tripitaka Koreana has 6,778 volumes and would take eighteen years to read at the rate of one volume per day.

The wood blocks were created to unite the people and ensure the Buddha’s protection against invaders. The Tripitaka was first carved between 1011 and 1101 on the order of King Hyonjong (1009-1031). He believed that this act of devotion would help ward off invasion. The wood blocks were burned to ashes during the Mongol invasion of 1232. However, the Tripitaka’s success against earlier invaders inspired King Kojong to order a second set, which was finished in 1251.

The Tripitaka Koreana was created by a long, hard process with preserving the wood from weather and insects. The blocks were made from white birch and silver magnolia wood. The wood was soaked in seawater for three years, sawed into boards and boiled in seawater. Then the boards were dried and smoothed down. The text was first written on the blocks with ink and brush and then carved. The blocks were capped with wood and bronze to prevent warping and cracking. Although 30 craftsmen carved the 52,382,960 characters, the Tripitaka looks like the work of a single person. Its consistency symbolizes the hard work, scholarly achievement and undying faith of one unified country. Because the monks were inscribing the sutras, or the teachings of Buddha, they would bow down after carving each character.

The Tripitaka Koreana is housed in several buildings at Haeinsa, a beautiful Buddhist monastery in southeastern Korea. Today about 100 monks reside there studying Buddhist scriptures and customs. The Tripitaka Koreana is housed in buildings with natural ventilation to protect the wood blocks. According to the monks at Haeinsa, nature respects the wood blocks; birds do not fly over the buildings that house the blocks and insects do not venture into them.

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The monks at Haeinsa are very protective of the Tripitaka Koreana and encourage guests to help preserve the treasures. During the first year of the Korean War, North Korean communists took over Haeinsa but were surrounded by United Nations forces. The North Korean soldiers killed many villagers, stole food and other supplies and wanted to burn the Tripitaka Koreana for warmth. A monk named Kim Sang Hwa persuaded them not to burn the precious wood blocks. Meanwhile, the U.S. military ordered napalm to be dropped on Haeinsa to drive out the North Koreans. As he flew above Haeinsa, a South Korean Colonel Kim Yong Hwan, saw the main temple hall where his mother used to pray and was reminded of the cultural and spiritual importance of Haeinsa. He ordered his crew to return to base without destroying Haeinsa. To this day, the monks are grateful that these South Korean soldiers helped preserve the Tripitaka during the Korean War. Because of its scholarly and spiritual significance, scholars from all over the world visit Haeinsa to study the Tripitaka Koreana.

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Handout 3

Chongmyo Shrine

Korean National Treasure: “A Memorial to Ancestors”

Chongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine, is located in Seoul and houses 83 memorial tablets of the Choson Kingdom’s kings and queens. The shrine provides a visual understanding of the elaborate traditional memorial ceremonies of Korea’s Confucian past. Chongmyo is included in UNESCO’s World Heritage List because of its unique architectural design, the Confucian rituals and beliefs that it represents and its preservation of an ancient Asian civilization through the rituals it maintains. At the time of its construction, Chongmyo was the world’s largest wooden building. Today it remains a remarkable site not only for its size, but also for its solemn and elegant design.

Chongmyo is not seen as a shrine for the dead but rather as a place to remember the living spirits of ancestors who might help current and future leaders of the nation. The shrine was built in 1394, two months after the founder of the Choson Kingdom, King Taejo, moved his capital to Seoul. Chongmyo was burned to the ground during the Japanese invasion of 1592. It was rebuilt by 1608.

With the support of Confucian scholars, Taejo overthrew the last Koryo ruler and started his own kingdom. Confucianism had first been introduced to Korea during the Three Kingdoms (57 B.C.-668 A.D.). But it was not until the Choson Kingdom that rulers made Confucianism the official state religion. Under King Teajo, Chonmyo became a symbol of Confucian ideals that included emphasis on filial piety (loyalty to the family) and obedience to authority.

Confucianism teaches that the family is the root of social order and that the state is like an large extended family. When the family is well-ordered, towns, provinces and the state are also well-ordered. Filial piety, a major Confucian principle, requires younger family members to honor and obey their elders in exchanger for security, guidance and basic necessities. The country was seen as a nation of families. Its rulers served and protect the people, providing them with security, laws and order.

Officials of the Choson Kingdom used Confucianism to maintain order in the county. The royal family upheld Confucian family values through important rituals. The grandest and most public place where the royal family observed Confucian rituals was in Chongmyo. There they held annual public ceremonies to honor deceased members of the royal family.

While the architecture of the main shrine at Chongmyo is simple, it is the largest single surviving traditional building in Korea. The spacious steps in front of the building add to the dignity of Chongmyo. As a shrine, it is a memorial to the lives and contributions of Choson ancestors. The only decorations are two clouds on either side of the middle set of stairs, signifying the heavens to which the ancestors ascend. No trees are planted because shrines are not supposed to contain colorful flowers or trees. The main shrine has a plain roof and a row of large columns. Its limited colors and sparse form are very orderly. Although today Chongmyo is in downtown Seoul, the area is surrounded by trees and hills, so that traffic noise does not reach its quiet grounds. In front of each shrine is a large

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courtyard with terraces. Each shrine is surrounded by a simple wall. The courtyard is constructed of large slabs of irregular flake stone. The harmonious blend of order and randomness are meant to remind us of the purpose of the building and the nature of life.

Confucian memorial services were first held at Chongmyo during Taejo's reign. The first building constructed in his new capital was the Chongmyo Shrine. When a king died, he lay for 100 days before burial and a commemorative wooden tablet was constructed by his successor. Food was brought daily to the shrine. Only two kings of the Choson Kingdom do not have tablets in Chongmyo. Both were forced to abdicate, or step down, for betraying the country.

Today, the Choson ancestors are formally remembered in annual ceremonies. On those occasions, Chongmyo bustles with activities. Elaborate ceremonies are held in the courtyard, which is filled with dancers, musicians and ordinary citizens. Tables are set up with memorial tablets for each ancestor. Mats are placed in front of each table setting, where descendants make their bows. These annual services are held on the first Sunday in May. The music that is played during the rites was composed as early as 1464 by Korea's great King Sejong. It was originally intended as banquet music to praise the virtues of Korean rulers.

Korea's last royal ruler was King Sunjong, the 27th king of the Choson Kingdom. In 1910, he was forced by Japanese to abdicate. The last tablet officially enshrined in Chongmyo was that of Queen Yun, the second wife of Sunjong, who died in 1968.

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Handout 4

Changdokkung Palace

Korean National Treasure: “Palace of Illustrious Virtue”

Changdokkung Palace represents Korean culture in many ways. A very important political symbol, it was the site in Seoul from which Korean kings ruled for four centuries. It was burned several times, first by Japanese invaders in 1592 and then by accidental fires in 1623 and 1917. The persistence of Koreans in rebuilding the palace illustrates how much Changdokkung meant as a center of cultural and political life. Many painters, artists and writers were employed at the palace and foreign diplomats were also received there.

Changdokkung means “Palace of Illustrious Virtue” and describes King Taejong’s vision of his rule. King Taejong was the third ruler of the Choson Kingdom. He started building the palace in 1405 in order to make Seoul the center of government and create a place of residence for his family. This dual purpose – politics and family – is reflected in the way the palace is laid out. Rather than one big building, the palace is a series of buildings, large and small, as well as many gardens. Near the front gate is Injongjon (Hall of Benevolent Rule) where officials, both Korean and foreign, were met. In front of Injongjon (“jon” means hall) is a courtyard with stone tablets to show where various officials should stand. A throne in the hall elevated the king so that he could see the officials. For more private talks, the king used a nearby smaller building, Sonjongjon. The palace buildings were named after the virtues that the Confucian scholar officials upheld such as benevolence, righteousness and trustworthiness.

Behind these public spaces and separated by gardens, were the living quarters of the royal family. The king’s private hall, Huijongdang, was large, while the smaller Taejojon was the queen’s main living area. Other buildings showed that even in the “private” part of the palace, there were many people. There was a library, storerooms, offices and many pavilions among the gardens where the royal family could relax and entertain guests. One of the smaller halls was used by a queen during the reign of King Chongjo (ruled 1776-1800). She raised silk worms there to set an encouraging example for Koreans to engage in the silk trade.

Perhaps the most beautiful spot within the palace grounds is the Secret Garden, which is beautifully landscaped and serves as a place for reflection. One reason Changdokkung Palace was placed on the World Heritage List is that the buildings are well integrated into the landscape, which includes lotus ponds, rock pools and evergreens. Changdokkung Palace has been carefully restored by the Korean people and was placed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 1997.

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Handout 5

Hwasong Fortress

Korean National Treasure: “Western Influence, Eastern Style”

King Chongjo (ruled 1776-1800) was the 22nd ruler of the Choson Kingdom. He decided to move the capital south from Seoul to Suwon. In order to protect his new capital from the invasions, King Chongjo built a large fortress with royal residences surrounded by high walls and massive gates. King Chongjo cited his devotion to his father, Crown Prince Sado, as the reason for the move, but he may have wished to escape the political intrigues of Seoul. Later kings, however, moved the capital back to Seoul. Today the fortress remains as a testament to King Chongjo’s plan.

As an architectural monument, Hwasong Fortress is remarkable. There was a major debate in 18th century Korea among scholars over the issues of “Sirhak,” or Practical Learning. The question was whether or not Korea should accept learning from the West. Hwasong Fortress is an excellent example of how Koreans adapted western engineering principles while retaining their own architectural style. For example, one of the designers, Chong Yagyong, devised pulley mechanisms to move huge blocks that make up the walls and massive arches of the fort.

Construction of the fortress began in 1794. Strategically, the fortress was a departure from the tradition of building walls around cities and towns and erecting separate fortresses in nearby. Hwasong Fortress was incorporated within the city of Suwon. It was equipped with defense facilities such as command posts, observation towers, battlements and secret gates.

Today, the walls, gates, pavilions and an unusual water gate have been reconstructed to show King Chongjo’s plan for his fortress. Hwasong Fortress was placed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1997.