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Gyeongju University Weekly Newsletter

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MT Culture of GU Students

by Daniel Brown, MBA



Membership Training (MT) is a window into Korean culture. For Koreans, MT trips begin in middle school; continue through high school and university, then into one's professional life. MT iterates itself in a variety of forms. MT may be a single evening together, but more traditionally MT includes an overnight aspect. MT may be as casual as dining together with members of a common affiliation, or a more highly organized series of choreographed activities spanning several days to forge greater bonds between members of a particular group.

I set out Saturday, April 6, 2013, for my second MT experience which more closely resembled the highly organized variety of MT encounters. After three hours our chartered buses pulled up to a pension in mountainous Hapcheon county. 120 sleepy students, mostly freshmen, came off the bus holding bags, cooking gear, boxes of supplies including staples like *ramyeon* and *soju*. Student leaders clad in neon green gave directives through a megaphone. Under the cold drizzle they assembled into '조' (jo), which is translated as group, or lines. 조 (jo) 1 through 8 were each led by a more senior student holding a flag identifying their 조 (jo). This would be their family within a family for the next three days and two nights. While we waited in the rain, I asked senior student, Kim Ju Rim, to share her thoughts on MT. Ms. Kim shared, "It is gathering together, enjoying, playing together, and maybe becoming closer. Membership is to be one. We are the one." This is not the first time a student would describe MT as, "We are the one." I cannot help but feel that 'We are THE one' expresses an in-group ideology common among Koreans.

During my first MT experience, I learned a Korean toast in the Gyeongbuk regional dialect, "우리گا! 남이가!" "Oori-ga! Nami-ga!" Literally, this toast translates to 'We! Are we others?' The leader would call "Oori-ga!" and the others around the table call back, "Nami-ga!" We may roughly interpret this as, "We are one, and we are not others." It might be stretched to something like "We are us, and we are not divided." In this way, Koreans celebrate membership in a group whilst disregarding others as outsiders. If any reader has ever experienced meeting a Korean by way of affiliation, their level of hospitality and support is nearly overwhelming. While at the same time, it can be very difficult to meet a Korean, to say nothing of establishing a relationship with a Korean, who is not somehow affiliated with you. Have you ever noticed the lack of salutations in a marketplace or public area? Maybe you have noticed a lack of regard for others boarding a bus, entering a subway train, or the waiting in queue at the grocery store. We may experience this until such a time as we have been introduced, or our affiliation has been clearly defined. In this way introductions have come to play a vital role in Korean



life, including business interactions and even dating. In somewhat the same way, MT is the formal introduction of many strangers into their newest group, major, or department. MT is arguably an essential instrument to overcome elements of Korean culture that place an emphasis on group affiliation and actively disregard nonmembers. MT breaks the ice for new members, and welcomes them into the group. When I asked freshman, Ms. Bae, about MT she shared, "Alcohol. Alcohol is another word for MT." Ms. Bae did go on to express that alcohol helps build rapport, but it is not a tool for building deep and meaningful relationships. Mr. Kim, a junior, explains, "MT is membership training. But really I think it is just drinking a lot of alcohol." As I probed Mr. Kim, he went on to discuss the difficulty Koreans have in expressing themselves. He communicated that Koreans very often suppress themselves for fear that others may think about them, and pass judgment. "When I disclose myself, or express myself, other people will think about me...maybe very good, or maybe very bad." Mr. Kim explained. Alcohol he claimed, was an essential element to MT because it made people feel at ease, and helped build rapport. I spoke with Mr. Kim in depth as he seemed to enjoy reflecting on MT. I asked if MT homogenizes its members. Mr. Kim shared, "Yes. Very important. MT is not just game and drink alcohol. We are one. This is a type of rally. Very important." He begins to gesture with his hands, "Not one person, one person, one person, not. Just together, the same. Family. Just family. Have many good points, and just a little bad points." I asked Mr. Kim to explain "우리گا! 남이가!" "Oori-ga! Nami-ga!" He cracked a big smile, "These words together mean, we are not another, we are family. (When) Korean people think family we are very kind, but (when) people not relation then I don't care, I feel go away." Thus is born the two sided coin of family and outsider, a coin that we must learn to spend and save as expatriates and educators in Korea.

At this point in MT, I left the games of hilarity and silliness to see what was happening at the outer fringes of MT. There away from the uniformed student leaders, away from the chants, away from the 조 (jo) and their flags, I found five senior students huddled around a TV rigged up with microphones singing Korean songs that are ten, twenty, or possibly thirty years old. They were singing, clapping, and drinking to the familiar trot music that we so often associate with older generations of Koreans. One student asked, "Do you like to sing? This is what we like to do, have a beer and sing together with our friends." Two seniors were sharing a small blanket to ward off the cold wet air. There was MT ~ 6 years ago (accounting for 2 years military service) and there were once 19 year old freshman strangers, or outsiders. Today they were enfolded within the same blanket as family. I pulled up some floor, sat with them, and built *jeong* (bonding).



# YES, WE'RE FRIENDS!



by Maria Veronica C. Fontanilla, Ph.D

Membership Training or MT, initiated by the Global Education Center (GEC) of Gyeongju University (GU), is a special part of Korean culture, an orientation, a "getting - to - know each other" and bonding between students and faculty members alike.

On April 6, 2013, GU students and professors in similar department preceded to Bulguksa, a place far away from the hectic life of the city and enjoy each other's company with foodstuffs, drinks, fun and laughter. Benefitting from the wonderful panorama of the place, this once-a-year experience especially among the freshmen and some sophomore students, provided them avenues to get out of their shells and be in their natural self to meet and know other students and their mentors as well. The said training afforded thirty (30) Alternative Medical Science students to showcase their concealed talents in singing despite the inclement weather during the event while Prof. Sunghwa Suh, a very friendly Korean Medical Science colleague, Prof. Ma. Reina Rose D. Gulmatico, and myself, interacted harmoniously with the participants.



As one headed home, a special type of friendship will forever be cherished by both students and their professors. In this very memorable undertaking, indeed, culture and position recognize no boundaries. YES, WE'RE FRIENDS!

## Is 'somaek' the 'power' behind MTing?



by Reynaldo D. Ramos, PTRP, MS Rehabilitation Science



For several decades, Korean Membership Training (MT) has been associated with drinking and some naughty actuations allegedly maneuvered by seniors in the guise of orientation and initiation rituals, yet, little has been shared about the "power" of this traditional event that survived the test of time in truly developing and building relationships. Why wasn't it changed into a structured program of activities that are designed and executed by experts that target relationship and team building and bonding? There must be something about it that allowed it to thrive over the years. I haven't realized it until I experienced one myself.

My MT experience started on a rainy Saturday a week ago. I was assigned to the Adapted Physical Education (APE) Department and had no clue where we were heading to and what awaited me. I had the least expectation though, that my body would be flooded with "soju" and beer (the combination of both drinks is called 'somaek' in Korean) before midnight. At 11:30 A.M. I found myself exchanging text messages with Shaun, an APE student, who speaks English fairly well and who made my presence comfortable for all. The rest of the students were waiting at the bus stop in front of the intercity bus terminal just before 12:00 noon. After a few minutes, we finally got on the bus. The students were hesitant to engage with me at first so Shaun became my chat mate for the first eight hours. After an hour of bus ride and walk with no one to talk to since Shaun was leading, we arrived in a one-storey pension house right across the Gampo coastline. Once inside, Dr. Kim Yoo Hwan led me to our room facing Gampo sea and the students went to their assigned rooms as well.

After a few minutes, I was introduced to Dr. Ju Yeon Yun who is also teaching at the APE department with Dr. Kim. While talking, I heard the students yelling and shouting at the fun games orchestrated by a group of junior students and that to me signaled the "official" opening of the MT program. We did not join at first because we were brainstorming about the possibility of having a four-week structured training program of APE students in the Philippines. However, at dinner we ate together with the students and enjoyed the juicy *samgyupsal* and the famous *kimchi* with *somaek* on our table. Shortly after Dr. Kim gave his short warm-up message to the students, we hung out for a bit. It was at this time that we knocked back a few drinks with me learning the Korean drinking customs and practices. When everyone was done and ready for the next phase, we headed to a bigger room that happened to be our "auditorium" for the night. A junior student hosted the evening program where students from various levels who became our overnight performers entertained us with their special numbers, which I believed was their first and final rehearsal. Everyone was having fun especially when "unguarded" pictures of selected students were passed around for everyone to see and judged. I participated in the Korean games that were also introduced in between performances. We were tipsy and I was satisfied knowing that my body was able to handle the venom of *somaek*. But it was not after the program that considerable bottles of soju and beer were taken out from the refrigerator and junk foods pulled out from backpacks, which gave me the hint what was really up and brewing after dinner. So, I got myself a nice and sturdy wall to lean my liquor-laden body on and ended up hanging out with shy students for the rest of the night. They were all engaged and fired up. We chatted over a variety of topics until I was kicked out by the overwhelming strength of *somaek*. I slept at around 1:30 a.m. red headed, and was awakened at around 9:00 A.M. by the tempting smell of the Korean ramyeon and enigmatic spirit of Kimchi.



The following day, the sun was up and that Sunday greeted us with a good view, refreshing breeze of Gampo sea, and the nostalgic sound of its waves. At 11:00 A.M. we started hiking along the Gampo coastline to get to the bus stop where we could take the bus home. At this time, I thought that all the talking that happened the night before was *somaek*-powered and anticipated that I'd be walking alone. I was wrong because I found myself in the company of "used to be" hesitant and shy students. I was in awe to see them trying their best to communicate in English while sharing with me the volatile situation in the Korean peninsula and their personal life experiences. We removed our foot gears to enjoy the kinesthetic power of the sand and shared our phone numbers. Is this purely "somaek" powered with a strong carry over? Or the intrinsic power of MT in transforming a shy person unwittingly and unknowingly into someone he/she wants to be with the "unlocking power" of "somaek"?

My MT experience was a "paradigm shift" of some sort. I realized that such kind of a relationship building activity has a unique potential of developing and building relationships among and between students and professors. I thought all along that MT was just all about non-stop drinking and nothing productive evolves out of it. With MT instead, I found myself in the company of grounded and friendly students who are willing to defend their country and to help persons with special needs. This unconventional activity seems promising in transforming introvert or hesitant students and in encouraging them to share their skills and talents and most importantly, TALK in English! I also realized that MT has the potential of helping me discover my students' inner strengths and hidden interests that can be used to further their English communication skills. Indeed, MT, which is often a misunderstood university event, can be useful and in fact an effective tool for Koreans to reduce their anxiety or fear of engagement. Although there are several factors and dynamics that contributed to this outcome, thanks to the power of *somaek* that somehow released the students' inhibitions. We all had fun, and I, in particular, experienced the spirit of MT and saw the difference for myself, and the realization of its ultimate goal – to build a lasting relationship.

## An MT Experience with the Food Service Management and Culinary Arts Major



by Aubrey Bautista, MBA



On a rainy Saturday morning, the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, the Food Service Management Department and Culinary Arts of Gyeongju University proceeded to Yeongdok Chilbosan Sooryunwon for their Membership Training (MT). Four Filipino faculty members participated in the MT and experienced a very meaningful event with the Food Service Management and Culinary Arts: Prof. Tony Ligaya, Prof. Jonathan de Leon, Prof. Felicidad Chan, and myself. Certainly, we were amazed with the discipline of the students and how organized the flow of activities went by without a faculty supervising them. The student leader did a very good job in managing the activity. We were pleased

with the discipline of every student from the room assignments to queuing up in the dining hall as well as in cleaning up.





In the late afternoon, the Korean Faculty members arrived to meet with us. The team was headed by Prof. Choi Yong Seok, head of Food Service Management and Culinary Arts; Prof. Jung Hyun Chul, in charge of Bakery and Pastry Arts; and Prof. Jung Woog Young, in charge of Western Cuisine together with their assistants, Ms. Yoon Bora and Mr. Kim Min Je.

The MT activity was participated in by approximately 150 students from different year levels but mostly freshmen. Besides eating and drinking, there were games like soccer and kickball and presentations such as singing and dancing. The highlight of them all was the Ms. Korea contest where male students dressed in women's clothes. The Korean and Filipino faculty members judged the said contest after which, drinking, eating and bonding took place.



The following morning, Professor Choi made us appreciate the beauty of Korea's distinctive nature in Yeongdok. He showed us the river whose water comes from both the ocean and the mountain. We were mesmerized to see such a very beautiful scenery where the mountain water and the ocean water are linked to the river. To sum it all, the hospitality and warmth of both the Korean faculty members as well as the students were the best part of my MT experience.



## Spring Tour of the New GU Professors



by Engelbert Pasag, Ph.D.



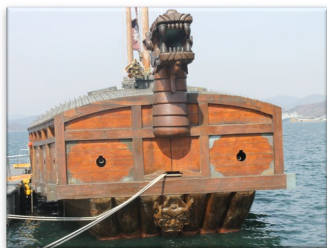
Waking up at 4:00 A.M. in a windy Spring morning is not an easy task. Some of the new GU faculty members were unable to sleep because of the much awaited Spring tour organized by GU President, Soon-Ja Lee, together with Dr. Larry Chong, Dr. Sang-Ho Han, Dr. Koo and the GEC staff. With our winter clothes, we headed down the street to catch the tour bus.

As we travelled, food and drinks were served by the administrators themselves, a kind gesture which was appreciated and valued by all participants in the tour.

First stop was at the Gyeonghwa Railway Station in Jinhae. It is included in CNNGo's list of 50 beautiful places in Korea. Known for its picturesque cherry blossoms, it has become one of the most loved tourist spots because it is the setting of 5 Korean dramas such as "Spring Waltz" and "Boy Goes to Heaven."

The Yeojwacheon Stream's Romance Bridge was the second stop. This is a famous spot for viewing the cherry blossoms. But not only that, it is where Gwanu and Chaewon met in the popular "Romance" TV series. Fishes also swim in its clean stream.

Republic of Korea's Naval Academy in Jinhae City, once used by the Japanese Army, is one of the most historic places in the itinerary surrounded by beautiful mountains covered with pine trees. Since 1963, it is the place of Gunhangje or the Naval Port Festival. It is only during the festival that the Academy is open to the public. The GU group was lucky to tour inside four naval ships including Dokdoham Ship, the second largest ship in Korea and the full-scale model of the turtle ship built by Admiral Yi Sun Sin which was used during the Imjin War in 1592-1598.



A full day tour was not complete without a sumptuous lunch in a local restaurant. Together with the famous Kimchi and other Korean side dishes, our delectable "fish" meal was enough to power up the tired legs of the GU professors for the next destination.

Next stop was the Dara Park in Tong Yeong City. This is part of the Hallyeo Maritime National Park along the Sanyang's Coastal way with a beautiful scenery of the sea. As explained to us by Dr. Han, "Dara" means a good place to observe the moon. The place also offers both relaxing and picturesque view of named and unnamed islands surrounding it.



The GU group soon arrived in the city proper of Tong Yeong. The group was greeted by a local tourist guide. She explained that the bay was a place where Korea showed its intelligence and strength by defeating 333 Japanese ships. Commanded by Admiral and navy strategist, Yi Sun Sin, and with only 13 Korean (turtle) warships, Korea won the battle.

Dongpirang Painting Village in Tong Yeong is an amazing village coping up with the pressure of modernizing while maintaining its beauty and culture. Prof. Veronica Fontanilla said, "What has impressed me a lot was when I was able to reach the highest part of the village as if it's telling me that slowly, I can reach the top." Indeed true, it is not an easy way up. But the wall paintings are impressive and entertaining at the same time. The village also impressed Prof. Kenn Lachenal, "I like the village with the painted walls. It was really nice and colorful. It felt like a haven for artists. It gives people an opportunity to express their artistic talents through paintings and makes the surroundings more pleasant through vibrant colors and original masterpieces," he explains. It was also interesting to note that the village has actually been used as a setting for the famous Korean drama, "Padam Padam." Prof. Lachenal recalls that the show was aired in the Philippines.

Tong Yeong visit is not complete without a taste of the squid kimchi with rice, which Dr. Soon-Ja Lee bought while going down the village. Our tired feet were soothed with a shot of Korean rice wine and a locally made "sake."

The long drive on our way back to Gyeongju was very rewarding with a water container given to us by the President herself as a token while witnessing a beautiful sunset scenery along the way. Upon reaching Gyeongju at around 8:00 P.M., the group was again surprised when the bus stopped in a local restaurant where a "samgyupsal" dinner awaited us. Our group was greeted by the owner of the restaurant with pride and joy. After feasting with the best "samgyupsal" ever, we finally thanked our hosts, President Lee, Dr. Chong, Dr. Han and Dr. Koo.



Words cannot express the joy that each professor felt that day. Prof. Maryam Paknahad said, "All events are memorable!" Indeed, the memories are so clear in our smiles. These were captured in the hundreds of pictures we took and posted in our Facebook for our friends and relatives back home to see that we are truly happy in Gyeongju University. We surely can't wait for another tour in Autumn.

To all the organizers, "Gamsahamnida!"

### Feature

## Attitude: The Difference Between Success and Failure



by Anthony Joseph Jackson, MBA

Sports are indeed a metaphor for life. Some teams continually lose playoff games because the coaches try not to lose rather than to win. They minimize risks instead of seeking opportunity. We are successful by building on strengths, not showing up weaknesses; by taking prudent risk in the hope of significant rewards; and by realizing, as Churchill did, that success is never final and failure rarely fatal. It's courage that counts.

These are words I try to live by and bring to and share with my classes as a professor at Gyeongju University. After spending twenty-two years in the U.S. Air Force in aviation and later as a Total Quality Management Instructor (TQM), teaching is almost natural for me. Teaching ESL in Korea has been very enjoyable for me and I enjoy encouraging students to strive and do their best at whatever they undertake. Adversity is something we would all like to avoid but adversity builds character and how you respond to it can mean the difference between success and failure. As a young pilot, I learned this lesson well especially after encountering critical situations in training flights and post briefings which required me to have the courage to continue on or quit!



Seeking to encourage my students at every opportunity during our discussion topics in Global English Conversation, I derive on my educational background of a Bachelors in Business Management, MBA in International Business Management and as a member of the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC-USA) by advising them on their career path and giving them first hand knowledge about management and leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In teaching ESL at Gyeongju University, I use a lecture and hands-on approach because some students require more help than others in English. Nonetheless, I

encourage my students to talk and voice their opinions about our discussions to help them improve their English as well as their logic reasoning, and building self-confidence.

Teaching classes which I love doing, keeps me busy but I somehow manage to find time to complete my dissertation for my Doctorate degree, working out with the weights, and mixed martial arts (UFC) Ultimate Fighting Championship. Although I am no longer a pilot for heavy aircraft, I still fly the small single and twin engine airplanes but not as often as I like.

## UP CLOSE: PROFESSOR NISHAT AHMAD



by Rica Joy Naranjo, MA Applied Linguistics and SpEd



Professor Nishat with wife Song Kyung Hee

Talking about the meaning behind a name, happiness is what the name “Nishat” stands for in the Persian tongue. Prof. Nishat Ahmad’s family calls him Nishat, even his wife. And because it already sounds pretty sweet, there’s no need for any nickname. As a colleague, I enjoyed learning about him over Chinese lunch and coffee. Had it not been for this GU Herald task, Prof. Nishat would remain to me and maybe to you, as just another foreign fellow in campus.

Prof. Nishat Ahmad was born and raised in Pakistan. He was born on December 23, 1966, and is the oldest of three siblings. His two younger sisters are married and live in Pakistan. He graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Electronics Engineering in 1990 and worked as an Engineering Professional since then. He gained his Masters degree in Computer Science. In February 2006, he came over to South Korea to pursue a Doctor’s degree in Information and Computer Engineering as a grantee of Korean government scholarship program. He graduated in Chosun University in Gwangju, South Jeolla Province. Call it serendipity or pleasant surprise, it was in Gwangju where he met the apple of his eyes, Song Kyung Hee, who became his wife. They have been married for almost six years now. Kyung Hee affectionately describes him as a very protective husband and a gentleman.

Prof. Nishat is in his third year with Gyeongju University as a faculty member affiliated with the Computer Department where he teaches content English courses, English related to technological vocabulary and its practices. He has a total of five years teaching experience. As far as teaching is concerned, motivating the students is something he considers as a great challenge. For him, drawing their full attention and convincing them to learn with English as the medium of teaching are never easy. But this challenge keeps him up on task. “Teaching is a learning process. Students have different learning abilities and motivational levels.” This is the philosophy that inspires him to help students irrespective of their levels.

There is more to know about Prof. Nishat. In his earlier years, he joined the Navy after Middle school and over the years became a naval officer, a Lieutenant Commander for that matter. As to sports, his interests depended then on time and opportunity. Hunting and horseback riding were his childhood games for 20 years while sailing and rowing were the activities he took seriously for over 10 years. Now he loves going free running. His best past time? It’s sitting next to his wife while talking to her. Reading is another thing Prof. Nishat is passionate about. In the shelves, the books are mostly Pakistani bookstore finds. He loves to grab multiple books at a time: poetry, literary works, philosophy and everything of all sorts but poetry gets his deeper passion. And because he believes that mother tongue is the perfect and ultimate expression of emotions, he inscribes poetry in his native language, Urdu, which is one of the six languages he speaks beside English, Persian, Arabic, French and Turkish. As to music, Prof. Nishat, who grew up as a very serious listener to classical and Pakistani semi-classical music, was also trained to be a vocalist and keyboardist.

Beyond any doubt, we’ve got a brilliant and talented colleague. To fellow teachers in GU, Prof. Nishat would like to share this wisdom as we impart knowledge to our students: “Always remember agriculture. Sow the seed, and let it grow!”



Professor Nishat teaching computer class

### Glimpses into Language

## What is Language?



by Matthew Schaffner, MM Music

*Language - a series exploring philosophies of language*

You can always check out the video series on our brand new YouTube page at <http://www.youtube.com/GyeongjuUniversity>.

I was a professional musician for 10 years. In that time, I played a wide variety of pieces but every note I played was an attempt to express something. I was determined that my audience would know what I was saying. The meaning behind the notes was more important than the notes themselves. As a musician, I’ve often wondered about music’s ability to communicate, to share, to convey meaning. Is music a language? It certainly shares many elements with language: reading, writing, listening, and producing sound. Music can easily convey sadness or joy, but it might have a difficult time expressing “apple” or “hello.” The larger question is, of course, what is language in the first place? This series delves deep into the minds of our own Gyeongju University professors to gauge their thoughts on the matter.

This week Professor Laurence Partan talks about sharing and its relation to language. He believes that language is the outward sharing of concepts that already exist in our mind. “I’m not really sure whether I’m thinking in my language, or actually trying to explain what it is I’m thinking about,” Partan says. He believes that language is a bridge between the mind and the external world. To Partan, linguistic determinism is false. While we all might drink the same water, our words, gestures, or other methods of conveying “water-ness” may be different. However, we all still share that same “water experience.” This interconnected view of language is no surprise coming from someone whose favorite writer is Wendell Berry, a Kentucky born author noted for his reflections on community and connectedness.

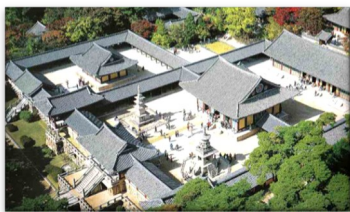
Professor Partan’s view of language also shapes his classroom. “I try very much to engage my students in a sharing of whatever experience, whatever feelings we can talk about. I think that has been quite successful. Usually it starts to fall apart on me when I begin to think of the language objectives. When I start thinking about language objectives, I lose sight of this natural way of just sharing. I want to engage them in sharing, and I think we all naturally get pulled into a chance to share.” For Partan, grammar takes a back seat to sharing, and this is what language is all about. He isn’t teaching English when he walks in the classroom, he’s teaching students how to share, and English is the medium.

### Around Gyeongju

## Bulguk-sa, the Magnificent Buddha-Kingdom Monastery



by David A. Mason, MA Korean Studies



Bulguk-sa as seen from the sky

Bulguk-sa is probably the most heavily-visited Buddhist monastery in Korea, a favorite of tourists and aficionados of ancient religious art. You may well have already been there, and only understood part of what you saw; but if you haven’t visited it yet, you really should soon! For one bonus reason, its grounds contain hundreds of mature cherry and magnolia trees, in full blossom this year!

The name “Bulguk-sa” (불국사, 佛國寺) means “Buddha Kingdom Temple”, which can be interpreted in two ways of equal validity: that its elaborate landscape architecture represents a pilgrim’s journey to the idealized spiritual realm of the Buddhas, and that by its magnificence it validated the Unified Silla Dynasty’s claim and self-image of being an authentic Buddhist nation.

It is located at the foot of the western slopes of Mt. Toham-san (토함산, Earth-Treasure Mountain) on the southeastern outskirts of Gyeongju, serviced by bus #10. It lies just within the southwestern border of the Toham District of the Gyeongju National Park.



The history of Bulguk-sa can be traced back to 535 when a small temple was first constructed on this site during the reign of King Beopheung (法興王, r. 514-40). It was constructed in its current magnificence in Gyeongju, then the capital city of the Unified Silla Dynasty (668-935 CE), under the inspiration and direction of Prime Minister Kim Dae-seong (more about him in my future article on Seokguram grotto-hermitage) between 751 and 774 CE, and its monumental architecture is still regarded as one of Korea's finest creations.

A grand complex of various worship-halls and pagodas, Bulguk-sa was intended as a state-scale monastery to serve the public and host major Beophoe (法會, Dharma Assemblies with lectures and veneration ceremonies). Bulguk-sa is said to epitomize the spirit of Silla, bearing witness to the great architectural achievements of that period and showing a highly refined form of aesthetic beauty. Its monument halls, stairways and courtyards were built after a series



the Front Gate with signboard that reads "Toham-san Bulguk-sa"

burn-down by Mongol invaders in the late 13th century and was painstakingly restored to grandeur during the 20th Century by governmental authorities, especially

by President Bak Jeong-hui (朴正熙, Park Chung Hee, r. 1961-79), who was determined to restore, display and revive Korea's former cultural glory. Its Main Hall is still the authentic wooden building from more than 200 years ago.

The Buddha Nation Temple was simply a major tourist attraction through the 1980s and 90s, with thousands of visitors every day, but around the year 2000 it was returned to the usage and management of the Jogye Order, and has since resumed

its role as a major sacred site of religious activities, with a Seonbang (禪房, Meditation Hall), Yebul (禮佛, worship services), a Temple Stay program, research

and study projects, Dharma-Assemblies and so-forth. It is now the largest monastery in our area and serves as the *gyogu-bonsa* (教區本寺, district headquarters temple) of the 11th District of the Jogye Order.

Bulguk-sa contains six official National Treasures, more than any other single site in Korea, except the Central National Museum in Seoul. These include a Seated Gilt-bronze Amita-bul (阿彌陀佛, Amitabha the Buddha of Western Paradise) Statue designated as National Treasure #27, a Seated Gilt-bronze Birojana-bul (毘盧遮那佛, Vairocana the Buddha of Cosmic Light, a.k.a. Biro-bul) Statue designated as #26, the

Cheongun-gyo (靑雲橋, Blue Clouds Bridge) and Baegun-gyo (白雲橋, White Clouds Bridge), a double-sectioned staircase and bridge that leads to the main courtyard entrance, designated as #23, the Yeonhwa-gyo (蓮華橋, Lotus Flower Bridge) and Chilbo-gyo (七寶橋, Seven Treasures Bridge) stairways that lead to the Amita-jeon

courtyard entrance designated as #22, and then the Seokga-tap and the Dabo-tap Pagodas (next weekly article).

An elaborate *budo* or *seungtap* (memorial stupa; funerary reliquary) from the Goryeo Dynasty in the central rear courtyard, taken to Japan in 1906 but returned in 1933, is designated as Treasure #61. Also, don't miss the field of hundreds of small dol-tap (stone pagodas), a characteristic Korean shamanist wish-making habit (they provide homes for good-luck nature-spirits), around the Nahan-jeon (Buddha's 16 primary Disciples Hall) in the left-rear corner of the complex!

Bulguk-sa was designated one of the World Cultural Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 1995 (together with Seokgul-am), and remains the best-known temple in all Korea – a very popular destination for pilgrims, monks and tourists.



a dragon painted on Bulguk-sa Main Hall

a Bodhisattva carved on the side of the Budo Treasure

## Learn Korean

# 한글 Hangul 101

## Korean Phrases for the week



by Hyong Joseph Chon, M.A. Education

| Hangeul      | Romanization                   | Meaning                                     |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 피곤합니다        | pigonhamnida                   | I am tired                                  |
| 어렵습니다        | eoryeopseumnida                | It's difficult                              |
| 쉽습니다         | shwiptseumnida                 | It's easy                                   |
| 공부하세요        | kongbuhaseyo                   | Please study                                |
| 조용히 하세요      | joyong-hi haseyo               | Please do it quietly                        |
| 영어로 하세요      | yeongeo-ro haseyo              | Please use English                          |
| 해보세요         | haeboseyo                      | Please try                                  |
| 숙제하세요        | sukje-haseyo                   | Please do your homework                     |
| 숙제했습니까?      | sukje-haesseumnikka?           | Did you do your homework?                   |
| 한번 해봤습니까?    | hanbeon haebwah-esseumnikka?   | Did you try to do it once?                  |
| 영어합니까?       | yeongeohamnikka?               | Do you speak English?                       |
| 피곤합니까?       | pigonhamnikka?                 | Are you tired?                              |
| 어렵습니까?       | eoryeopseumnikka?              | Is it difficult?                            |
| 왜 지각했습니까?    | waeh ji-ga-khaesseumnikka?     | Why were you late/tardy?                    |
| 왜 결석했습니까?    | waeh kyeol-seo-khaesseumnikka? | Why were you absent?                        |
| 성함이 어떻게 되세요? | seong-hami eotteohke dwehseyo? | What is your name? (honorific)              |
| 이름이 뭐예요?     | ireumi mwoyeyo?                | What is your name?                          |
| 연세가 어떻게 되세요? | yeonse-ga eotteohke dwehseyo?  | How old are you? (honorific)                |
| 나이가 몇 살이에요?  | na-i-ga myeoch sarieyo?        | How old are you?                            |
| 혹시 명함 있으세요?  | hokshi myeong-ham isseuseyo?   | By any chance, do you have a business card? |
| 저는 _____입니다. | jeoneun _____ imnida.          | I am ( job profession or name).             |



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Gyeongju University  
Tajong-ro 188, Gyeonju, Gyeongbuk, Korea  
postcode: 780-712

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