

ICOMOS Korea

Roundtable on traditional knowledge to cope with climate change

On April 25, 2023, as an event of the International Day of Monuments and Sites (IDMS), our committee held a roundtable with the theme of "Revisiting Traditional Knowledge to Cope with Climate Change". ICOMOS Korea and the National Scientific Committee on Climate Change and Cultural Heritage organized the meeting.

Theme: Revisiting Traditional Knowledge to Cope with Climate Change

Moderator: Kyung Rip PARK (Honorary Chair Professor, Interdisciplinary Program for International Cultural Heritage, Korea National University of Cultural Heritage)

Presentation 1: Traditional Villages and Relevant Forests: Prospectiveness of Ecological Knowledge: Dowon LEE (Emeritus Professor, Seoul National University)

Presentation 2: Traditional Geospatial Knowledge (*Pungsu*) for Reducing the Impacts of Natural Disasters: Soo-jin PARK (Professor, Seoul National University)

In his presentation titled "Traditional Villages and Relevant Forests: Prospectiveness of Ecological Knowledge," Professor Dowon Lee emphasized the value of local ecosystems and cultural knowledge in promoting long-term sustainability and resource conservation. This traditional knowledge, evolved over thousands of years to meet human needs, is empirically accumulated. Therefore it is inherent in habitual behaviors and experiences, and can be found in proverbs and residents' knowledge.

Recent scientific studies have confirmed the effectiveness of certain traditional practices. For instance, constructing ponds and planting buffer zones in village ditches, as well as planting grass and trees along the streams historically, can extend water retention time in the town and reduce water loss. Furthermore, the planting of oak trees near the village mountains, which have high utility and long lifespan, can contribute to mitigating climate change.

Efforts to rediscover and find traditional knowledge can help solve various problems in the modern world. Previously, traditional ecological knowledge was seen as uncertain, complex in forecasting, qualitative research, and associated with superstitious or religious beliefs. However, by integrating scientific adaptation and management, developing quantitative studies, and fostering the convergence of research, knowledge, and practice applications, we can uncover the new potential of traditional knowledge.

Next, Professor Soo-jin Park delivered a presentation titled "Traditional Geospatial Knowledge (*Pungsu*) for Reducing the Impacts of Natural Disasters." He highlighted how minor differences in the land surfaces can result in significant changes, and various factors interact in a specific order to achieve spatial self-organization. He explained that catchments and drainage basins in the Korean Peninsula have evolved, leading to the formation of mountain basins or flatlands along rivers through the self-organization phenomenon observed during topographical development. He expressed concern which the organized order of the topography that took

centuries was disrupted quickly in the modern era.

To compensate for its environmental deficiencies, the Korean peninsula has traditionally supplemented geographical conditions in harmony with nature, called as “*Bibo*.” This oriental empirical knowledge encompasses a broad understanding of geography and serves as a method for interpreting nature, including topography, water systems, and climate. Developing and applying traditional knowledge about natural environment is crucial for effectively responding to future natural disasters.

This roundtable provided a significant platform for exchanging views among experts in traditional ecology, topography, *pungsu*, as well as cultural and intangible heritage professionals from industry, academia, research, and government. However, the challenge remains in finding a compromise and practical utilization of traditional knowledge in the context of a changing environment. This meeting concluded with a consensus on the importance of discussions across various fields, ensuring that heritage continues to contribute to addressing the climate crisis through ongoing research and exploration of ways to apply traditional knowledge.





전통마을 유역의 물질 흐름

갈색화살표는 물질 흐름을 나타낸다.
안뜰과 바깥뜰의 물질 흐름 상대적 크기는 상황에 따라 다르다.

이도원 등. 2012. 전통생태와 풍수지리. 지오북.

Configuration and water status

Component (Major function)

- Forest (Source of firewood and water)
- Residential area (Human dwelling)
- Inner field (Food production)
- Grove (Protection and community activities)
- Outer field (Food production)

Lee, D. 2017. Geomantic practices of water acquisition and management during the Chosŏn Dynasty, pp. 115-138 In: H. Yoon, (ed.) P'ungsu: A Study of Geomancy in Korea, SUNY Press, Stony Brook, New York.

