

## Cultural Artifact #2



The cultural artifact that I focused on this week was Chuseok. Chuseok (추석) is basically Korean Thanksgiving and is one of the most important holidays in Korea. 추 means autumn and 석 translates evening. Chuseok is actually a three-day holiday held in both North and South Korea on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar on the full moon that is held every year. For 2020, those dates happened to be September 30th to October 2nd. It was originally known as Hangawai (한가위) in archaic Korean and is typically held on the autumn equinox. Back when it was known as Hangwai, this was a time for farmers to relax and enjoy the day after harvesting their crops. Some interesting historical facts are that back then, Korean farmers tried to predict the harvest for the upcoming season based on the weather on Chuseok. In fact, the ideal weather was a partly cloudy sky because rainy weather was a foreshadowing of poor crop yields, the moon being completely enshrouded by clouds signaled that buckwheat and other grains could not flourish, and a clear sky meant a bad sign for barley farming.

On this day, families typically tend to go back to their hometowns from work and gather in order to share and enjoy time together while also giving thanks and respects to their ancestors for the plentiful harvest (which is where its origins came from). In the morning of Chuseok which was October 1st this year, family members gather to hold 차례(Charye) which is an ancestral worship ceremony at home or at the grave to honor your ancestors. During this ceremony if at the grave you clear some plants and the area, and offer food, drink, and crops to their ancestors. If done at home, dozens of dishes like newly-harvested rice, half-moon shaped rice cakes stuffed with sweet fillings, Korean pancakes, and alcohol. The representative dish of Chuseok would have to be Songpyeon (송편) which is a rice cake steamed with pine needles. It is made using a

newly-harvested rice, stuffed with fillings like cooked soybeans, sesame seeds and crushed chestnuts, and steamed over a bed of pine needles (which gives it a fragrant smell of pine trees). One difference, in North Korea which still celebrates this holiday, because it was celebrated before the split into North and South Korea, is that North Koreans do not have family gatherings and only visit their ancestors' grave sites during the day.

Some other traditions, South Koreans follow on this day to celebrate culture and ancestors' history are Samounori (사물놀이) a traditional percussion quartet of music that originated from the farming days of Korea, Talchum (탈춤) a masked dance, Sireum (씨름) Korean folk wrestling, and Ganggangsullae (강강술래) which is a Korean circle dance.

I will go more into depth about one celebration called Ganggangsullae. Ganggangsullae is singing and dance typically performed by women and was done in order to bring about a bountiful harvest as it performed under the full moon. It has now become a cultural symbol in Korea as women dress in hanboks on this day and join hands in a circle and begin singing and dancing at a slow tempo which gradually accelerates and culminates in a fast-paced finale. I have linked a video below to see more of this traditional dance.

Sources:

[https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI\\_EN\\_3\\_6.jsp?cid=811650#:~:text=As%20Chuseok%20is%20a%20celebration,ssireum%20\(traditional%20Korean%20wrestling\).](https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI_EN_3_6.jsp?cid=811650#:~:text=As%20Chuseok%20is%20a%20celebration,ssireum%20(traditional%20Korean%20wrestling).)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA9Z9GsKw80>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHvXMHDle48>

<http://www.koreatimesus.com/millions-of-s-koreans-hit-the-road-for-chuseok/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkySuOoOO\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkySuOoOO_Q)

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140905000909>