Zuzanna Krzysztofik
Polish Institute of World Art Studies

THE TRADITIONAL KOREAN HOUSE HANOK AS A REFLECTION OF THE FAMILY HIERARCHY

The traditional Korean house – the *hanok* – represents a specific eastern attitude towards nature, i.e. adapting to the geographical conditions instead of making efforts to control or modify them. Aside from socio-economically determined differences in the houses of the upper, middle or commoner class, the individual distinctions of a *hanok* have mainly resulted from their natural surroundings. A *hanok's* harmony with the environment comprises its location, structure, style and building material as well as the outdoor design.

Moreover, the architectural features are directly related to the traditional social order in Korea, which was developed during the reign of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) in line with the state ideology. Adopted from China, the orthodox ideology of Neo-Confucianism was believed to become a comprehensive recipe for social and political renewal in Korea. The government methodically implemented it as a state religion and law. According to the doctrine of the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, human relations as well as obligations for different social strata became strictly defined. Elaborate family rituals were introduced to reinforce and maintain the patriarchal system of Korean society, in which clans played a leading role. The residential architecture was also influenced by and adapted for profound changes in the social life of Korea.

This article focuses on the impact of Neo-Confucian thought on family life in Korean upper-class homes. Predominantly, the noble families strictly followed Zhu Xi's ritualism, i.e. the extended hierarchy rules and the complex ancestor cult rituals. As an example, the case of a contemporary *jongga* family

is examined, which provides additional information on the current developments of the traditional life in a *hanok*.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL KOREAN HANOK HOUSING

The term *hanok*, meaning "Korean house", is used to distinguish traditional Korean homes from western-style architecture (*yangok*). It is a designation of buildings which bear specific architectural features, and is applied to denominate not just residential houses, but also temples and Confucian schools. Since most *hanok* houses were wooden structures, the majority of them were prone to fire or dilapidation over the centuries. Hence, some researchers argue that the name *hanok* should be applied solely to buildings constructed from the late 19th to the early 20th century,[1)] i.e. that the term *hanok* should be used interchangeably with the distinct term *joseonok* ("house erected during the reign of the Joseon dynasty").

Korea's traditional architectural style was shaped by both climatic and cultural factors, which in turn stemmed from the country's geographical location. The predominantly mountainous terrain of the Korean Peninsula necessitated a specific village layout: houses were scattered irregularly across different elevations and faced various directions (figs. 1, 2).

The temperate climate with four distinct seasons gave rise to the development of specific Korean architectural solutions that combine elements of winter and summer housing. A unique example is the representative floor system which comprises a wooden-floored *maru* hall for the hot and humid summers, as well as underfloor *ondol* heating for the long and cold winters.

The simultaneously continental and insular characteristics of the country are factors reflected not merely in Korea's climate. Situated between mainland China and the islands of Japan, Korea has also been strongly influenced by the cultures of these neighbouring states. The architectural styles typical of these countries share a particular attitude towards nature: man-made structures are adjusted to existing geographical conditions in a manner that ensures harmony with the environment. Builders of traditional Korean housing would adhere to the concepts of geomancy (Korean: *pungsujiri,* related to the Chinese *fengshui*) and take into account local geographical features. Traditional

[1)] Yi (2015: 18).

Korean houses were usually built with their backs towards the mountains, and with soft contours (e.g. slightly elevated roof corners). The entire building would be harmonized with its surroundings.[2] Ideally, the open space in front should be protected by a stream and one or two hillocks (fig. 3).

The housing location and style was well-thought-out, as was its outdoor design. Even building structure and construction materials were carefully selected and attuned to the natural landscape. The *yang* and *yin* principle governed the selection of both residential and grave site location, as well as the floor plan and the space outside the building. One of the construction priorities was to avoid or minimize environmental impact, as well as human influence on the materials used (figs. 4. 5).

Two basic criteria are employed to classify traditional Korean *hanok* housing. One criterion examines the impact of a building's regional location on its shape, i.e. how it corresponds to geographical or climatic conditions. Six types characteristic of Korean provinces can be discerned here: Hamgyeong Province, Pyeongan Province (northwestern), central, Seoul, southern and Jeju Island. Although the room layout of all types is usually asymmetrical, it varies depending on the region.

Size is the second criterion used for the purposes of *hanok* classification. This feature was determined by the social and economic standing of *hanok* owners. Upper-class, middle-class or commoner houses were distinguished, depending on the social stratum of their proprietors. Upper-class houses were described with the conventional phrase, "a house covering 99 *kan* with 6 courtyards and 12 gates", where *kan* was the basic unit for measuring *hanok* space and corresponded to approx. 8 square feet enclosed by four columns[3]. The scale of the buildings was perceived not only in terms of the horizontal dimension. The height of the house and its individual elements was another aspect directly connected with the social and economic status of the family, e.g. a higher elevation than other village houses or a raised wooden floor *numaru* (fig. 6).

In accordance with the principles of geomancy, residential architecture seldom had more than one storey. However, roofs of high-class residences (including royal palaces) were raised with 5 or 7 props, whereas the commoner houses (including servants' quarters of high-class residences) were constructed with 3 props (figs. 7, 8, 9, 10).

[2] Choi (2007: 13).

[3] Choi (2007: 23).

A *hanok*'s size influenced not just a family's living conditions, but also determined their hierarchical relations. The bigger a house was, the more possibilities were given to divide the space as stated by the patriarchal and clan-oriented doctrine developed by the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, which became the official ideology during the reign of the Joseon dynasty. Only the aristocrats (*yangban*) could afford to comply with the doctrine and provide separate areas for family members, servants and visitors, not to mention ancestral shrines and burial grounds. Therefore, it was predominantly the noble families who strictly followed the extended hierarchy order along with the complex rites of the ancestral cult.

IMPACT OF THE NEO-CONFUCIAN DOCTRINE ON SOCIAL RELATIONS IN KOREA

During the reign of the Joseon dynasty, the sociopolitical system of Korea underwent thorough reorganization based on the Neo-Confucian ideology. Neo-Confucianism was a version of Confucianism established during the Chinese Song dynasty. It provided a philosophical alternative to Buddhism and Taoism, both of which had attracted a very large number of adherents by that period.[4] The Neo-Confucian ideology was perceived as the comprehensive roadmap for Korean social and political renewal. Its feasibility was believed to be anchored in the exemplary world of the sage-kings of Chinese antiquity. Nevertheless, success would be rendered impossible without full commitment to the program of social change.[5] That is why the government methodically implemented and strengthened its position of state religion and governing law. In the 15th century, the practical ethical and ritualistic aspects of Neo-Confucianism gained priority over its philosophical aspects. By publishing the *Samgang haengsildo* ("Illustrations of the Virtues of the Three Bonds"), *Sohak* ("Lesser Learning", the Korean version of the *Xiaoxue*) and *J̌uja garye* ("Zhu Xi's Family Rituals", the Korean version of the *Zhuzi jiali*), the Joseon dynasty displayed great interest in the enforcement of Neo-Confucian social ethics and Confucian rituals.[6]

[4] Koh (2003: 60).

[5] Deuchler (1995: 27).

[6] Koh (2003: 67).

On the basis of the "Zhu Xi's family rituals", the state encouraged the observation of *gamyoje* (the family shrine system prescribing that ancestral worship shrines should be kept at home), *samnyeonsang* (three-year mourning rituals prescribing that memorial rites should be held for twenty-seven months after the death of an ancestor), and *chinyeong* (the wedding rite where the bridegroom would enter the bride's house, spend the night there and bring the bride to his home during a wedding ceremony). State authorities succeeded even in imposing the observance of these rituals on scholar-officials. Like the "Lesser Learning", the "Zhu Xi's Family Rituals" was taught at official schools and was a mandatory subject in state examinations[7] (fig. 11).

While following Zhu Xi's ritualism was required of the educated upper class, the inculcation of social ethics to the unlettered masses was of perennial concern to the government. The examples of filial children or chaste wives were customarily marked as a measure to encourage virtuous behaviour.[8] The basic virtues of Neo-Confucian social ethics, i.e. the Three Bonds and the Five Relations (*samgang oryun*), were constantly preached and upheld. The philosophy of *samgang oryun* illustrates three kinds of obedience and five constant relationships and obligations between five sets of people: the father and the son who should treat each other with kindness and filial piety, the husband and the wife – with decorum and formality, the ruler and the subject – with benevolence and loyalty, an older friend and a young friend – with humanity and deference, and between friends – with trust. The ruling aristocrats of the Joseon dynasty period recognized these five relations as the most significant proprieties in human relations, and Korean Neo-Confucians made great efforts to convince the people to practice *oryun* in their daily lives. Since the 16th century, by the time that Neo-Confucianism had already become Korea's dominant ideology, *oryun* has become the universal way of Korean thinking. Thus, aristocratic owners made sure that their *hanok* houses were built to reflect Neo Confucian social and family relations.[9]

[7] Koh (2003: 68).

[8] Lee (1985: 484).

[9] Academy of Korean Studies (2009: 178).

THE SPATIAL DIVISION OF AN UPPER-CLASS HANOK REFLECTING THE NEO-CONFUCIAN FAMILY ETHIC

The structure of residential buildings reflected the Neo-Confucian orthodox ideology, which clearly differentiates between the status of master and servant, man and woman, and senior and junior. Aristocratic residences were erected high above the ground to emphasize the social hierarchy between the upper and lower classes. The houses of the nobility had higher foundations than the dwellings of servants. Such building construction forced anyone standing in the courtyard to look up to see a person present in the main hall. Room dimensions were also varied. For instance, the patriarchs' rooms were much taller and more spacious than the rooms used by other family members (fig. 12).

The Neo-Confucian ethic advocated a patriarchal, extended family system, so it was not seldom that three or more generations resided together in one upper-class home[10]. Therefore, the large aristocratic residences comprised up to six *chae*, i.e. buildings with adjoining fence-enclosed courtyards. The rather low walls surrounding *hanok* houses were predominantly designed for dividing inner household space. They protected the inhabitants of respective *chae* – especially women – from unexpected visits or glances, both of non-family-member guests and other household members (figs. 13, 14, 15, 16).

In accordance with the Confucian concept of separate roles for men and women, male family members were supposed to maintain ties with the outside world. Therefore, their centrally-located quarter (*sarangchae*) was clearly visible either directly after passing through the large main gate with a high upper roof (*soseuldaemun*) or after crossing over the *soseuldaemun* and the yard in the servant's quarter (*haengrangchae*). *Sarangchae* evolved from a small room beside the front gate where guests would be received. Its evolution occurred parallel to the strengthening of the patriarchal system and separation of the sexes. It became the symbol of a family's authority, where the head of the household and the eldest son carried out their everyday activities.[11] The master of the house occupied the most important room called *sarangbang* – for dining, sleeping, reading, drinking tea, receiving guests, resting, studying, practicing calligraphy, and playing music and games. His eldest son was trained to continue the family line and inherited the room

[10] Choi (2007: 28).

[11] Choi (2007: 87).

when his father died or reached an advanced age. The detached quarter (*byeoldangchae*) for the master's aged parents and other dependent family members, such as grown-up daughters or younger sons, was located near the men's quarter (*sarangchae*) or the women's quarter (*anchae*).

Another main part of *sarangchae* was the adjoining wooden-floored hall *daecheongmaru* (literally meaning "big *maru*") which facilitated household ventilation and provided a pleasantly cool escape from summer heat. *Daecheongmaru* connected two areas, usually located between the main and second bedroom, or between the *sarangbang* and *numaru*. *Numaru*, a terrace-like high elevated wooden floor with railings, allowed the master and his guests to enjoy the view of a given *hanok*'s natural surroundings. The head of the household was the only family member entitled to use the whole *maru* space on a permanent basis (fig. 17).

The women's quarter was situated next to *sarangchae*, behind a low wall. From there the mistress ran the household. Its name *anchae*, which literally means "inner quarter", captured the essence of women's lives in the noble class residences of the Joseon dynasty period. After marriage, a woman moved into the *anchae* of her husband's house and, in extreme cases, did not leave it for the rest of her life. Her contacts with the outside world were restricted to an absolute minimum. It was not seldom that she would not even venture out to the market, but send the servants to run her errands (fig. 18).

As a household's "headquarters" had to be concealed from onlookers, the location of the *anchae* was the starting point for planning out the layout of the whole house. The men's quarters and courtyard were positioned in relation to this space. The next step was to determine the size of the women's courtyard on the basis of the number and size of rooms in the *sarangchae.*[12] The *Anchae* was composed of a mistress' room (*anbang*), a daughter-in-law's room (*geonneonbang*), a kitchen and a storeroom. The *anbang,* which was tucked away into the most secluded corner of the house, was where the mistress spent her first night as bride, gave birth and raised children, slept and did housework such as sewing, and passed away. The *anbang* was connected to other rooms by the *daecheongmaru*, which was, in effect, a pantry. Its walls were lined with massive chests for storing rice, food shelves and cupboards.[13] The terrace for *onggi* (earthenware jars containing basic condiments such as soy sauce, soybean paste, red-pepper paste and salted fish) was also placed

[12] Choi (2007: 34).

[13] Crowder Han (2015: 60).

in the *anchae*. The *gobangchae*, where the female servants lived, was situated next to the women's quarter (fig. 19).

Although the gates leading from the outer to the inner courtyard existed, they were usually closed from the inside. The head of the family, however, was always free to pass through a small passageway between the *daecheongmaru* of the *sarangchae* and the *daecheongmaru* of the *anchae*. Some *hanok* houses had an additional small room where the husband could meet with his wife. Under the Neo-Confucian dictate, male and female family members led largely separated lives and did not see each other in somebody else's presence. Moreover, the royal command of King Taejong ordered married couples to sleep separately. Sexual segregation was most strictly adhered to in *yangban*, or upper class, households.[14)]

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TRADITIONAL HANOK LIFE: THE JONGGA FAMILY CASE

The observance of strictly prescribed family rites and ceremonies (modelled mainly after "Zhu Xi's Family Rituals") was enforced by law so as to maintain the Confucian moral code and reinforce the patriarchal system where clans played the leading role. Neo-Confucian scholars transformed historical studies of ritualism in ancient Chinese society into an important field of learning. The knowledge and ability of proper rite performance provided the *yangban* with an enormous source of authority. Great emphasis was also placed on the importance of genealogy, a means of fostering solidarity among aristocrats. Compiling a family tree clarifying one's position in the family and the clan was regarded as one of the most serious tasks which distinguished the *yangban* from the other classes.[15)]

The concept of *jongga*, which literally means "head household", is based on Zhu Xi's ritualism and genealogical studies. *Jongga* are households handed down from the original founder – the person who originated the family name – to the eldest son in each generation.[16)] The major *jongga* can trace their lineage back over 1,000 years. Lesser *jongga* are those that originate from a secondary clan founder who descended from the original founder. These

[14)] Crowder Han (2015: 59).

[15)] Wanne (1972: 301–302).

[16)] Korea Foundation (2014: 7).

secondary founders include those who have performed such a meritorious feat or have become so accomplished in learning that they were designated spiritual mentors of the nation.[17] From the middle of the reign of the Joseon dynasty, the government distinguished people who had achieved excellence to the benefit of their country. They received the honor of a memorial service after their death, which was supposed to be continued in perpetuity, from generation to generation.[18] The responsibility for and privilege of carrying out the ancestral rituals fell to the household of the eldest son of the family (*jongson*). Each year, on the anniversary of the ancestor's death, the members of this household prepared a ceremonial feast and performed rites[19] (fig. 20).

During the Joseon period, each upper-class family maintained a shrine where the tablets of male and female ancestors were kept, going back four generations. They were commemorated on the days marking the anniversaries of their death, as well as on certain other days in a year, such as the arrival of spring or completion of harvest. After the fifth generation, the annual death day rite would normally be discontinued, and the two oldest ancestral tablets would be buried. An exception was *bulchonwi,* the tablet of the ancestor honoured for his merits. Under government decree, their tablets should not be buried even after fifth generation descendants; they should be enshrined so that they can be always at hand for the annual death day rites[20] (fig. 21).

The tradition of *jongga* is still vivid in today's Korea. There are around 120 *jongga* houses in the North Gyeongsang Province alone, with countless more scattered across Korea, each with its own distinctive regional characteristics[21]. According to *jongson* Lee Sung-won, there are approx. 50 houses of this kind in the vicinity of Andong, where his "Nongam traditional house" is located.[22] However, in his opinion there are a number of prerequisites that a "genuine" *jongga* should fulfil. It is essential for a *jongga* to have a renowned, countrywide recognized ancestor. The house of the Lee lineage bears the name Nongam, which was the pen name of the Confucian scholar

17) Yi (2010: 9).

18) Jongga (2013: 19).

19) La Shure (2010: 24).

20) Kim (2008: 6).

21) Korea Foundation (2014: 7–8).

22) Interview with Lee Sung-won on October 6th, 2016.

and government official Lee Hyeon-bo (1467–1555). He became famous for his writings, especially for an adaptation of the old "Fisherman's Song". Another indispensable element of a *jongga* family is a group of relatives to assist the *jongson* in fulfilling his obligations. It is also important that his wife and, ideally, male descendant are conscious of their duties. Moreover, a crucial element of this tradition is the *jongtaek* – a house where *jongga* have resided for generations.

Perfectly preserved *jongtaek* houses can be encountered in Hahoe Village in Andong and Yangdong Village in Gyeongju, which were declared UNESCO World Heritage sites in 2010. The members of the Lee and Son *jongga* lineages still live there. However, the daily life of the head families has changed radically, starting from the tumultuous 20th century, followed by functional amendments in individual housing elements. Although the ancestral rituals are still being held in family shrines, and visitors are received in *daecheongmaru* of *sarangchae*, the modern moral code caused a significant shift in the layout of these houses. The men's and women's quarters, along with the wall separating them, have been transformed into a symbolic and historical sphere (fig. 22).

The rapid intergenerational transformation was also caused by the economic changes occurring both among the *jongga* families and throughout the entire country. The observance of ancestral ceremonies incurs tremendous expenditure; therefore, it was always expected that relatives would support the eldest son and his family. However, from the end of the Joseon dynasty, the ties binding powerful historic clans started weakening, and the social focus shifted to the nuclear family, which replaced the patriarchal extended family. The socioeconomic transformation in Korea induced the *jongga* families to search for new livelihoods. One popular solution is to participate in the "Hanok Stay" program, which the Korea Tourism Organization launched in 2010. *Jongson* Son Sung-hoon moved with his family from Yangdong Village to another place to run a business. His mother lives in the *jongtaek,* and he visits her one or two times a week. Due to a tight professional schedule, he reduced the number of ancestral ceremonies by conducting the rituals for married couples only on the death days of the husbands (figs. 23, 24).

Apart from ancestral rites and protection of family documents and artefacts handed down from generation to generation, receiving guests is the most important responsibility of a *jongson*. Nowadays, hospitality also serves as a means by which the *jongga* families promote Confucian culture. Usually, the gates of *jongtaek* houses are left wide open, although there is no

regulation saying that the *hanok*'s owners are obliged to make the houses accessible to the public. A few *jongga* families even opened small museums or exhibition halls to display their treasures. They cooperate with different institutions, e.g. by entrusting the Advanced Center for Korean Studies with their family documents, providing objects for the exhibitions of the National Folk Museum of Korea or publishing books with the support of the National Museum of Korea.

The rise in the number of people who display a keen interest in their family roots, as well as the appreciation for traditional culture displayed by the general public, have inspired efforts to step up *jongga* household preservation. The policy measures recently adopted by the government include the provision of financial support so as to help maintain the traditional *jongga* houses and to preserve the *jongga* rituals and food culture.[23] The traditional houses are valuable cultural resources that serve as important data which enable understanding the Korean lifestyle, and have unsurpassed academic and artistic values.

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Fig. 1 ▲

Fig. 2 ▼

Figs. 1., 2. Houses in Yangdong Village in Gyeongju, scattered irregularly across different elevations, facing various directions. Photo: Seo Heunkang.

Fig. 3. The location of Hahoe Village in Andong is in line with the principles of geomancy: mountains line the sky in the background, and flowing water and hills are visible in the foreground. Photo: Ki Yang.

Fig. 4., 5. The natural shape of the material used has been retained. Instead of evening out the stone base, the bottom part of the wooden pillar has been fashioned to resemble a stone. Photo: Zuzanna Krzysztofik.

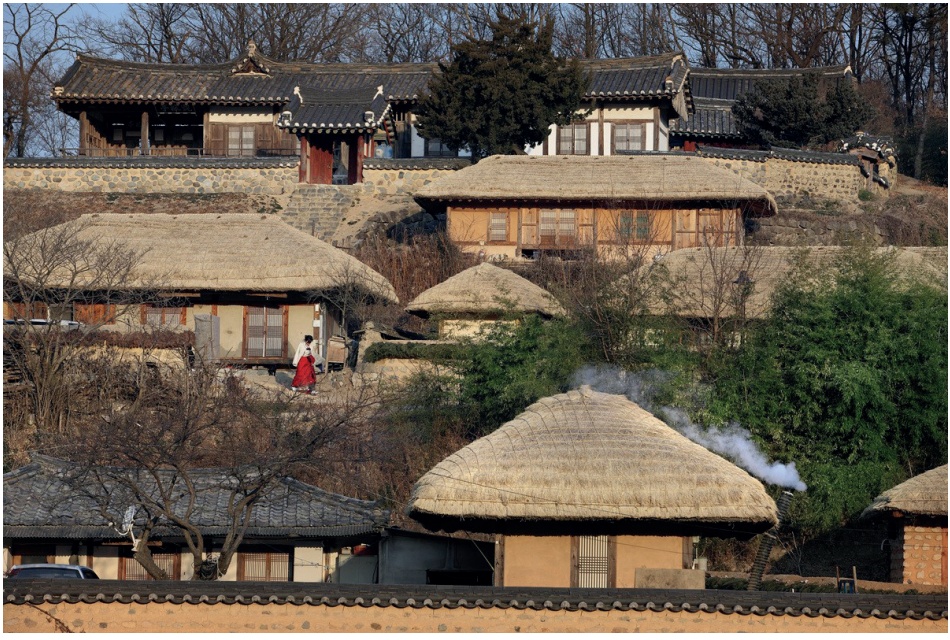
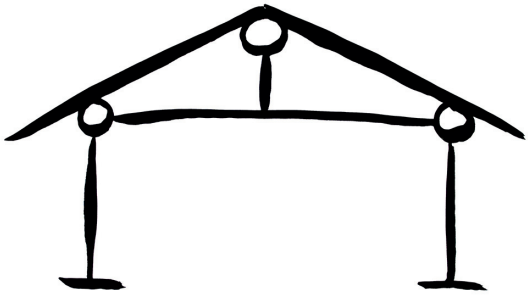


Fig. 6. Houses located at the higher levels of a village were reserved for high-class residences. The roofs also indicated the status of the house owner: tile-roofed houses (giwajip) accommodated the upper class, whereas commoner families resided in thatched-roof houses (chogajip). Photo: Seo Heunkang.

Fig. 7.



Figs. 8.

Figs. 9.

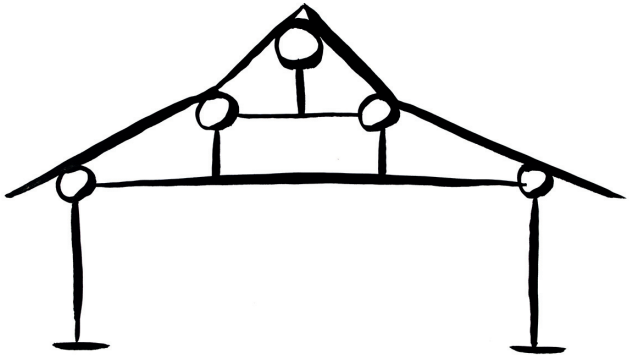


Fig. 10.

Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10. Roof constructions with 3 and with 5 props. Photo: Ki Yang, Zuzanna Krzysztofik. Figures: Carolina Guillermet.

Fig. 11. Dosanseowon Confucian Academy. Private Confucian academies (seowon) were centres of learning and local power that, from the mid-16th century onwards, trained prospective examination candidates for the central bureaucracy. Photo: Ki Yang.

Fig. 12. Men's quarter (sarangchae). Photo: Ki Yang.

Fig. 13.

Fig. 14.

Fig. 15.

Fig. 16.

Figs. 13, 14, 15, 16. A small wall (naewoedam) separated the women's quarter (anchae) from the men's quarter (sarangchae). In the permanent exhibition of National Folk Museum of Korea, a showcase is installed between the mistress's (anbang) and the master's room (sarangbang) to symbolize naewoedam and use the space. Photo: Ki Yang, Zuzanna Krzysztofik, Hanga Gebauer.

Fig. 17. Maru of the men's quarter (sarangchae) with an adjoining master bedroom, under which the *ondol* oven is located. Photo: Ki Yang.

Fig. 18. Occasionally, a second floor was added to the women's quarter (anchae) in order to extend the outside view. Photo: Ki Yang.

Fig. 19. The mistress's room (anbang) in the permanent exhibition of the National Folk Museum of Korea. Photo: Hanga Gebauer.

Fig. 20. "Nongam traditional house", a head house of the Lee lineage in Andong. Photo: Zuzanna Krzysztofik.

Fig. 21. The family shrine, where ancestral tablets were kept, was located in the highest point of a hanok house. Photo: Zuzanna Krzysztofik.

Fig. 22. Seobaekdang, a head house of the Son lineage in Yangdong Village. Photo: Zuzanna Krzysztofik.

Figs. 23, 24. The "Hanok Stay" program, which became a source of livelihood for some jongga families, aims to transform the old hanok houses used by the upper classes during the reign of the Joseon dynasty into a unique place where tourists can experience the traditional culture and lifestyle of aristocrats. In a few jongtaek houses, small museums or exhibition halls were opened to display documents and artefacts inherited from generation to generation and to give information about renowned ancestors. Photo: Zuzanna Krzysztofik.