



# MunGyeong - Korea

Berthold-J. Zavaczki

If you want to know the value of a bowl ask a Korean monk. He will explain to you how the energy of a bowl can be fathomed. Three hands are needed for this and fear of touching must be overcome. It is certain that the European market value is of no relevance in this context.

In Mungyeong Saejae Provincial Park, an area of approx. 70,000 m<sup>2</sup> and the a backdrop for various eras in Korean history, set between two magnificent palaces, the Hyeguska Temple and the three gates from the Chosun Period (16th century), is where the annual ten-day festival in honour of the teabowl takes place. Mungyeong is three hours away from Seoul, a journey that used to take as much as ten days. In the autumn of 2014, the hilly setting received the guests with decidedly fine weather. The streams of visitors (more than 1 million) were able to enjoy the 1 km walk up to the potters' village, with all its nooks and niches.

The potteries that have been established in Mungyeong put their faith in authentic naturalness and simplicity. And there is no lack of emerging young, rooted talent in Korean ceramics, perhaps due to the high regard that ceramics is held in and the defining role of the Korean tea ceremony. A female master of the tea ceremony said that only if you were able to make teabowls would you be fully versed in the preparation and enjoyment of tea. The preparation of tea is thus in the hands of tea masters, and

in the south, in the Chollanam Mountains, there is a region where quality tea is grown. The country shows its gratitude for its tea culture to the Buddhist monks, who preserved it in times of poverty and war with a joyful renaissance of tea drinking.

For years, an exchange with leading ceramists from all over the world has been on the agenda. As a tireless organiser and mediator, Charlie Youn looks after foreign guests, trying to make their stay as interesting as possible. In 2014, these included Douglas Black, Lee Love, Michael Martino, Julie Harbers, Jeff Brown and Robert Lawarre from the USA, Andrew Walford from South Africa, Andrzej Bero from Poland; from Italy: Rolando Giovannini, from Japan: Katsutaro Kikuchi, Kim Kyeong Duck, Nakazato Tarouemon, Kawakami Kiyomi, Murayama Kentaro and Mitoh Rul. Julia Winter, Berthold-J. Zavaczki, Karoline Wachter, Jutta Winkler and Monika Gass, director of the Keramikmuseum Westerwald, were there from Germany.

A special highlight of the festival was the study of typical Korean firing methods. The oldest mang-daeng-yi kiln in Korea, a five-chambered kiln built in



1843 and last fired in 1999, can be admired in Mungyeong, lying on a hillside like a huge silkworm. A slightly smaller model of the kiln was built for festival visitors and was fired over a period of several days under the motto of "Firing for everyone". The kickwheel competition for students, local Korean potters and international ceramists made even experienced throwers sweat. The tea ceremonies taking place in every corner provide time and space for contemplation and moments of intense perception.

An exchange on a theoretical level was also a major topic at the meeting with Cheon Han-Bong (an intangible cultural asset in South Korea) with a whole range of ceramic topics under discussion. For example, Monika Gass informed listeners of the Museum and the Ceramics Training and Research Centre (BFZK) in Höhr-Grenzhausen.





# Traditional Chasabal Festival 2014



In geographical terms, Korea is a transit country between China and Japan, and as such it has always sought an identity of its own; there is no doubt that in its rich and unique ceramic tradition (Koryon Period and Punch'ong ware from the Choson Period), it has found one. In contrast, there is the modern era, a high-speed digital world that already shaped Korea yesterday, so that today, one can hope that the country succeeds in caring for its organically evolved tradition. Currently everyone is talking about reunification with North Korea – in the same way as the two parts of Germany merged again, many Koreans yearn for a world in which North and South Korea can live together in peace and unity.

Thus the countless sources of inspiration and impressions of the thrilling authenticity of the Korean ceramists led to planning more lasting relations in co-

operation with Korea: Korean ceramics are to be featured at the Keramikmuseum Westerwald in Höhr-Grenzhausen in June 2015 in cooperation with the organisers of the Mungyeong Festival. Ceramics Professor Yoo Tae-Keun, who in 2014 conducted a raku firing in his studio with ceramics guests and students, has accepted an invitation to attend.

**MunGyeong  
Traditional  
Chasabal Festival 2015:**  
Friday, 1 May –  
Sunday, 10 May 2015  
<http://www.sabal21.com/2014.asp>

- above
- international group of guests
- middle row l. to r.
- Monika Gass, Keramikmuseum Westerwald
  - the Ceramics Museum in Mungyeong
  - throwing competition

- right
- tea-making utensils

**More images see page 2**



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