

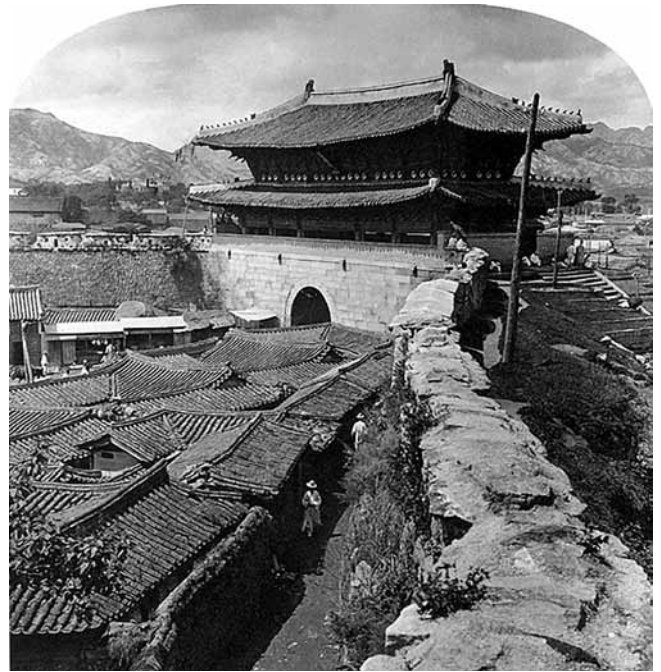
KOREAN REPUBLIC

Restoration of Sungnyemun Gate Destroyed by Fire

Sungnyemun Gate (more commonly known as Namdaemun or South Gate) was the southern gate of the old city of Seoul, capital of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), and is the oldest gate still in existence of the original walls surrounding Seoul. Sungnyemun has preserved the architectural features of a gate tower of a capital city very well, and was therefore given the status of National Treasure No. 1 in 1962.

Sungnyemun, the symbol of Seoul, was severely damaged by a fire set by a Korean citizen in the night of February 10, 2008. The fire damaged 90% of the second floor gate tower and 10% of the first floor. The Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea (CHA), in charge of the administration of cultural heritage in Korea, conducted an investigation of the damage caused by the fire right after Sungnyemun was burnt down, collected wooden members and conserved the remaining materials. The CHA decided to restore the wooden structure of Sungnyemun while retaining its value as cultural heritage, and announced the following as basic principles for the restoration of Sungnyemun:

- To retain the value of the historical structure by reusing as much as possible of the remaining materials from the old structure;
- To reconstruct the walls on the left side and right side of Sungnyemun currently not in existence;
- To restore the original ground of Sungnyemun through on the basis of historical research and evidence found at the site;
- To have the best cultural experts and artisans participate in the restoration process;



Sungnyemun Gate, historic photo, around 1900

- To constitute and manage a restoration advisory committee consisting of experts;
- To let the Korean government be in charge of the budget and technical support.

To fulfill the above principles, the CHA announced a basic restoration project for Sungnyemun in May 2008 and constituted a com-

Sungnyemun Gate in the heart of modern Seoul, before the fire (photos: Jungman Kim)



mittee fully in charge of the restoration. The basic restoration project for Sungnyemun consists of the following three steps.

1. Providing a storehouse for storing materials, making accurate records of the damage, issuing reports on the damage, etc.
2. June 2008 – December 2009: planning of restoration, supplying wooden members for restoration, conducting an accurate investigation of damaged materials, excavations, conducting historical research, etc.
3. January 2010 – December 2012: conducting construction work for restoration of Sungnyemun and original walls.

As of September 2010, the progress of the restoration work at Sungnyemun is as follows:

- The existing tower gate has been dismantled and exact measurements have been made.
- 50 meters of the original walls on the east side of Sungnyemun (total length of the original walls to be restored: 88 meters on the east side, 16 meters on the west side) have been restored.
- Stone-cutting and processing of gemstones required for the restoration of the original walls are in progress.
- Excavation: The investigation has been completed for the 2,500m² area adjacent to Sungnyemun.
- Construction site reopened: The construction site is open to the public every Saturday and Sunday until the restoration is completed in 2012.
- Historical research: Traditional roof-tiles and roof-tile kiln have been restored, and roof-tiles and hardware have been manufactured on the basis of research on the manufacturing of traditional hardware.

Budget: 2.5 billion won

ICOMOS Korean Republic



The fire of 10 February 2008

The gate immediately after the fire

