



S. Korea's Confucian academies inscribed on UNESCO list

By Yoon Min-sik

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The Nine Seowon, Confucian academies from the Joseon era, have officially been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration said late Saturday. The CHA said it had been decided earlier in the day at the 43rd meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan, that "Seowon, Korean Neo-Confucian Academies" are to be included as a world heritage, bringing the number of South Korean items on the list to 14.

Seowon were educational facilities of the Joseon era (1392-1910) that served as libraries, publishing houses and venues for discussing social and political matters. They were also places where renowned Confucian scholars were honored.



(Yonhap)

The academies are: Sosu Seowon in Yeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, Nangye Seowon in Hamyang, South Gyeongsang Province, Oksan Seowon in Gyeongju, North Gyeongsang Province, Dosan and Byeongsan Seowon in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, Dodong Seowon in Daegu, Pilam Seowon in Jangseong, South Jeolla Province, Museong Seowon in Jeongeup, North Jeolla Province, and Donam Seowon in Nonsan, South Chungcheong Province. They each are state-designated cultural properties of Korea. The UNESCO committee recognized the "outstanding universal value" of the Seowon in reaching its decision.



(Yonhap)

“While based on common architectural forms, it has been creatively developed with individual characteristics to maximize the link to the surrounding environment and understanding neo-Confucian ideals,” a member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites was quoted as saying said during the UNESCO meeting, livestreamed online.

It was the second attempt by the country to add the Nine Seowon to the UNESCO list, with the first being deferred by the ICOMOS in April 2016.

CHA head Chung Jae-Suk thanked the committee for coming to the decision, and said her administration feels enormous responsibility to preserve the newly inscribed heritage.

“I would like to thank the entire Committee for its recognition of Seowon as a World Heritage property that contributed to the regional dissemination of Neo-Confucianism, a governing ideology that prevailed during the Joseon dynasty.

“In fact, the nomination of Seowon was a challenge and an opportunity for the Republic of Korea. After being recommended to be deferred in the 2016 evaluation, we received ICOMOS’s advice in preparing the second nomination and finally succeeded in being listed today. It is my belief that through dialogues with the advisory body, the local experts could more clearly understand the crucial concept of World Heritage and the nomination process,” she said in a statement provided in English.

The World Heritage Committee recommended the South Korean government come up with a preservation plan for the nine academies, to which the CHA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they plan to work with the country’s regional governments to implement necessary measures

By Yoon Min-sik (minsikyoon@heraldcorp.com)