


For the Preservation of Memories ***Jeju Haenyeo***

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Who is *haenyeo*?

- literally meaning “women of the sea”
- The female divers of Jeju Island who collect seafood and seaweed without using any breathing equipment
- Also called as *Jamnyeo* (diving woman), *Jamsoo* (going underwater)
- *Haenyeo* is a lifelong profession through which Jeju women have supported their families for many centuries



History of Jeju *haenyeo*

- Diving is considered to have begun before the Three Kingdoms period (38 B.C. - 668)
- *Jeju Topography* written by Lee Gun in 1629 recorded that *haenyeo* harvested abalones.
- *Tamna sullyeokdo* in 1702 shows the way of life and scenery of Jeju Island and *haenyeo* working in the sea

Jeju Topography (1692)



Tamna sullyeokdo(1702)



Characteristics – Diving skills

- Diving is acquired by training and experience

Haenyeos can do the work only if they can control diving time themselves by sensing water pressure and amount of oxygen and estimating the distance to the surface of the water

- Diving is highly dependent on the tides
 - Working 15 days per month according to the lunar calendar
 - The time to start work is different depending on daily tide times
- Diving three to eight hours at a stretch



Characteristics – Managing sea farms

- Sea farm in Jeju refers to haenyeo's workplace and common fishing ground
- The sea of Jeju is divided into 100 small farms and effectively managed by fishing village cooperatives
- Harvest sea products together and divide the profits evenly regardless of age and ability
- Managing sea farms effectively – cleaning sea farms and managing resources
- Operates a prohibition period for seafood catch



Characteristics – Conserving the ecology of the sea

- Recognizing sea geography, changing tidal currents, and habitats of marine life
- Estimating growing process of seasonal marine life and harvest them accordingly
- Enforcing restrictions during the spawning season in order to protect against depleting marine life

Item	Banning period for catching	Prohibited from catching all year round
Sea cucumber	July 1 ~ July 31	
Abalone	Oct. 1 ~ Dec. 31	The length below 10 cm
Conch	Jun. 1 ~ Aug. 31	The length below 7 cm
Hijiki	Oct. 1 ~ Next year Jan. 31	
Agar-agar	Oct. 1 ~ Next year Apr. 30	
Grateloupia elliptica Holmes	Oct. 1 ~ Next year Apr. 30	
Sea trumpet	Jan. 1 ~ Jun. 30	
Variously blue colored abalone	Settle the prohibited date by each village	The length below 3.5 cm

- **Prohibit catching seafood during the spawning season**
 - Octopus – ban catching from Spring to Fall
 - Sea urchin – from May to July
- **Clean the ocean regularly (e.g. removing starfish to protect marine ecology)**
- **After all, *haenyeo* contributes to preserving the ocean ecosystem by controlling the production of seafood**
- **Have accumulated knowledge of the marine ecosystem for many generations**
- **Have passed on the ways of co-existing to generations by preserving the natural environment.**



Haenyeo culture as a community

- **Practiced cooperative economic activities for centuries**
 - Collect seaweed together and divide the profit from the sale of seaweed evenly regardless of ability and age
- **Community reinvestment**
 - Donate a part of the profit for constructing village infrastructure facilities (e.g. school, village road, and public utilities during the 1950s)
- **The culture of *bulteok* (outdoor dressing room)**
 - *Bulteok* has served as a space for the following purposes: community life, changing clothes, protection from the weather, work activities, and training.
- **Shared seafood and discussed all private or public issues with colleagues**
 - *Haenyeo* gave some of their seafood catch to their colleagues who did not gain well
 - Discussed private or public matters at *bulteok*



Haenyeo culture - Shamanistic beliefs

- A shaman ritual such as Jamsu-gut and Yeongdeung-gut represents *haenyeo*'s community culture
- Yowangmaji, a type of shaman ritual, aims to cleanse the path for gods, enabling them to sow seaweed seeds in the sea
- Haesindang' is the shrine sacred to *Haesin*, the sea deity, who is worshipped by fisherman and women divers
- Before going to dive, *haenyeo* visited the shrine on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month to pray for their safety in the sea
- *Haenyeo* pays all the expenses to prepare shamanistic rituals



Change – Diving tools and wetsuits

- **Traditional outfit and diving tools**

- Until the mid-1970s, *haenyeo* wore flimsy cotton outfits called *mulsojunggi* (or *mulot*, meaning “water clothes”) and goggles.
- Could not work long hours during frigid winters

- **Current outfit and diving tools**

- Rubber cloth, goggles, orange color *taewak* (net sack), lead belt
- Enable *haenyeo* to work five to six hours at a stretch even during winter

Swimming suit - *Mulsojunggi*



Joksaenun (before 1960)



Taewak



Change – The number of *haenyeo*

- Economic development of Jeju has created various jobs for Jeju women
- Women receiving higher education have increased
- *Haneyeo's* work environment is tough compared with other professions
- The amount of seafood production has reduced due to the pollution of the sea and excessive catch of seafood



The number of Jeju haenyeos has decreased dramatically

1965



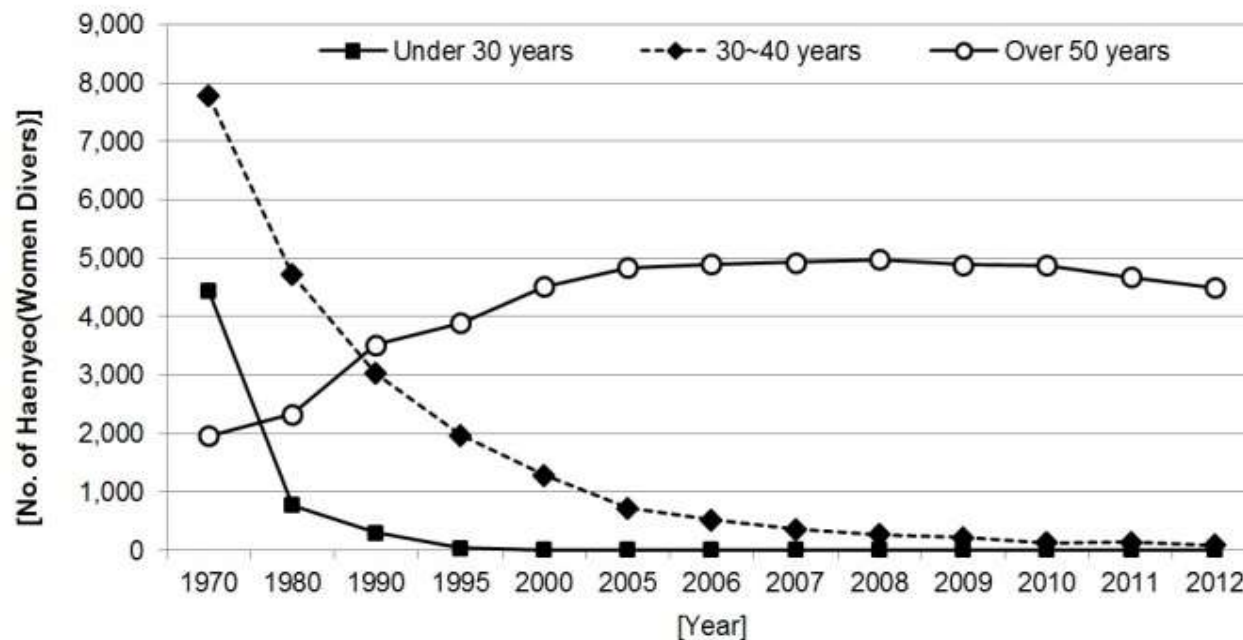
23,081 haeyeos
21.2% of Jeju females

2014



4,415 haeyeos
1.43% of Jeju females

- The majority is now in their sixties or older
- No longer passing diving skills from mother to daughter generation
- Concern about the extinction of *haenyeo* culture



Number of haenyeo by age group and year

Current efforts to preserve and pass down *haenyeo* culture

- Efforts to nominate *haenyeo* of Jeju on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage
- Offer courses to train amateur divers (e.g. *haenyeo* school)
- Organize festivals with the theme of sea women
- Provide overnight lodging and shellfish gathering tours
- Develop cute cartoon characters representing female divers, like “Little Diver Mongni”



We need more effort to preserve *haenyeo* culture and increase in the number of *haenyeo*

Challenges to preserve *haenyeo* culture

- Train *haein*, meaning person of the sea, male and female divers, in order to increase the number of divers like *haenyeo*
- Introduce aquaculture to sea farms in order to manage marine resources effectively
 - Be required to be an expert on the habitat and growing process of marine life
 - Needs to find out the best time to harvest sea products in order to acquire sea products of high quality and pursue the sustainable management of marine resources
- Preserve traditional *haenyeo* culture by:
 - Offering financial support
 - Enhancing research fields regarding *haenyeo* culture and Jeju female culture
 - Preserving tangible and intangible cultural assets (e.g. *haenyeo*'s diving tools, labor song, shamanistic beliefs, etc.)
- Identify effective ways to pass down *haenyeo*'s community culture
(e.g. *bultoek* culture, working together and distributing the profits evenly, community reinvestment, and so on)

Thank you!

