

## Jagalchi Market Place

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Could it have been named Jagalchi because of the abundance of pebbles (jagal in Korean) getting in people's way? Some records say that the original name 'Jagalcheo' meaning the place with pebbles was modified into 'Jagalchi.' Others say that the name comes from a type of fish named 'Jagalchi.' According to oral tradition, 'chi' means abundance, hence the name 'Jagalchi.' When you consider that the Korean word for extravagance is 'sachi', with 'chi' meaning abundance, the name 'jagalchi' works on many levels as a descriptor of its properties.

**Citizens Crowded around the Roadside Stalls of Jagalchi Market in 1991, Before Renovation**

However, pebbles can no longer be found in Jagalchi. When the port was opened and land had not been reclaimed yet, there had been a beach in the place that used to be called 'Nambin.' At the time, the coast in the area near the mouth of Bosucheon stream at Chungmu-dong was covered in stones the size of fists. After the opening of the port in 1876 the surrounding neighborhoods of Donggwang-dong and Gwangbok-dong were turned into Japanese concessions.

The origin of Jagalchi market was a small scale fish market formed when fishermen in the area started selling their catch to Japanese from small fishing boats. The Japanese administration then established the Busan fish market here in 1910 to gain control of the fish distribution market in the southern coast. Distribution of live fish in Jagalchi market continued to take place on small scale boats and then expanded with the establishment of the 'South Port Marine Produce Association' in 1915. The combination of various circumstances finally led to the opening of Nambin market in August 1924, which can be seen as the original form of Jagalchi market.

A huge fire in 1985 led to the destruction of all commercial facilities in Jagalchi market. A modern building was reconstructed in January 1986 and opened as a seafood processing facility. The space within and around the building were tightly packed with

sellers of fresh raw fish at affordable prices, people selling sea squirts and sea cucumbers, vendors of cooked whale meat who would dish out slices on the spot and makeshift stalls selling a variety of seaweed. There were also shops selling dates, dried persimmons, and chestnuts. In December 2006, the seafood market was torn down and replaced by the Busan Seafood Processing Cooperative.

Thus the process of modernization took place in Jagalchi, with its pebbles being removed one by one. The pebble beach of Chungmu-dong with its proximity to the city center served both commercial and recreational functions, representing the essence of Busan together with the neighboring international market,

## **A Place to Drop by En Route to Busan Station**

### **Jagalchi Festival Parade along Gwangbok-ro in Jung-gu, Busan**

In its buildings small and large, including Jagalchi Market with its stone sculpture of the Jagalchi woman, the Busan Fisheries Cooperative Jagalchi Market next to it and the Shindonga Marine Products General Market, are shopkeepers, small merchants with kiosks and successors of the original Jagalchi women- women with their roadside stalls who await customers with sun-baked faces. The shops of Jagalchi sell everything one might need. There are even hardware stores, knife grinders, tiny sundries

shops, banks, carts that sell a variety of vegetables in sets, seal engravers, and karaoke. All of these goods and services are ready to serve whoever may need them. And it can be seen that they have been set up according to the needs of the people who go there.

Jagalchi under Japanese rule was called 'Nambin' or the southern coast, named for its location as the coast along the southern port. It was also in close proximity to Busan Station near the northern port. Today, Busan station has been moved a little further away from Jagalchi, but in people's minds and in actual physical distance they are still close to each other. Jagalchi and Busan station are separate but one. By their natures, stations and markets are sensitive to modernization. They adapt to changes as time goes by, creating numerous pasts along the way. In this process, Jagalchi is susceptible to both the strengths and weaknesses of Busan station by association. For example, the station can be thought of as an insensitive place where people are sent away or strangers arrive. It may not always be the case, but food sold near stations is mediocre and the prices pay no heed to the traveller's thin wallet. Because of its geographical proximity to Busan station, Jagalchi could have shared such negative connotations of the station.

On the other hand, Jagalchi was in a great position to become an iconic place of Busan thanks to Busan station. Just as some head straight to Jagalchi once they arrive at Busan station, there are those who feel as though they must drop by Jagalchi on the

way to the station, like going to visit the in-laws. The subconscious desire to bask in the atmosphere, take in the pleasure of human connections while buying seafood and enjoying a plate of raw fish slices is aroused.

It is a pleasure to shop for a multitude of goods for various reasons at Jagalchi, take in a meal of pan-fried fish and sit in the sea breeze with a shot of soju, watching a *pumba* (traditional folk play) performance on a makeshift stage. When one returns to Busan Station after that, the wide square feels accommodating to the body and soul. The dusk of the evening combined with the fountain and lights form a welcome relief to the fatigue of daily life. Jagalchi and Busan station are separate but one in that they are independent spaces that accommodate people in their own ways while being closely connected.

## Overflowing with the Soul of the Jagalchi Women

Alongside the waterfront of the ocean, the variety of seafood, entertainment facilities and affordable goods, the Jagalchi women have a unique presence. There stands a stone sculpture of the "Jagalchi *ajimae* (woman)' in front of the Jagalchi market building. Jagalchi market needs to be invigorated with the soul of such Jagalchi women of earlier generations.

No matter how great the song, it must be imbued with the soul of the singer to work. Upon the infrastructure formed by the

souls of the composers and lyrics writer, the singers have to add their own souls. The same goes for spatial character. Places are made by people. They have to come alive with the souls of their people. There is no Jagalchi without the ajimaes. The women who used to look upon strangers with familiarity, who would give away a couple of fish with every transaction and meals for a family of five or six that could be made from the fish cooked in a soup with radish and scallion: these are all memories of Jagalchi that should be revived.

Jagalchi has been rebuilt and transformed according to the changing times. We now have to engage in more meaningful rewriting. The soul of the Jagalchi ajimae has to live on. The 'Jagalchi soul' that welcomes all rich or poor regardless of circumstances will become the key to its longevity and prosperity.

## A Niche Space for Leisure

Jagalchi, which is inseparable from Busan station, where the once abundant pebbles are nowhere to be seen, having been replaced by modern buildings, where one hopes to see the soul of the ajimaes return, becomes more lively when dusk starts to fall. The successor ajimaes ready to call it a day sell off their goods at clearance prices while the scent of fish in the pan wafts over the air, making mouths water. The brightly lit market under

the pitch black sky fills hearts with excitement and Jagalchi is once again bustling.

Around this time of the year, the Jagalchi festival takes place. This festival with the famous slogan 'Oiso! Boiso! Saiso! (Come! Look! Buy!)' began in 1992 under the name "Jagalchi Marine Produce Festival.' In 1996, it was renamed the 'Busan Jagalchi Culture and Tourism Festival' and the 22nd Busan Jagalchi Festival was held this month from the 10th to the 13th. This festival has been attracting tourists from around the nation and the world to participate in the fun and games involving marine products.

Most of the people who come to Jagalchi are there to either earn or spend money. This sometimes leads to minor conflicts about someone's product displays getting in the way of someone else's business. Nevertheless, Jagalchi is a space of positive value, as it manages to accommodate the majority of the needs of its people. In the evening, one can indulge in the fantasy of being on an island in the ocean amidst the sea breeze. Whether in the shops in its modern buildings or in the messy array of roadside stalls, its abundant cheap and tasty offerings are good for both the body and soul.

