

A Study of Formativeness Expressed in Korean Traditional Costume

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I . Introduction

Geographically, Korea is located at a latitude of 30-40 North and at a longitude of 124-131 East in Asia. Korea has four distinct seasons; temperatures change from +30 to -30 degrees Centigrade.

The Korean language belongs to the Altaic language group which comprises Mongolian, Manchurian and northern Siberia.

Korean Traditional Costume is patterned after the northern equestrian style, which is divided into Go(pants) and U-(Chgori)or Chi-ma(skirt) and U-(Chgori).

The U-(Chgori) has narrow sleeves and the pants have narrow crotch. Its caftan style opens at the front side and ties at the left or right. This basic dress has been passed down in the last 3000 years.

II . Materials of Korean Traditional Costume

Korean Traditional Costume has mostly been made of silk, hemp and cotton.

Hemp and cotton were used mostly for clothing the commoners while silk was used mainly for royalty and the nobility.

They began to cultivate hemp since B.C. 2300, and to raise silkworms from the 3rd century. This was passed on to Japan in the middle of the 7th century. Cotton began cultivation in the 13th century.

III . Forms of Korean Traditional Costume

One of the formative features of the Korean Traditional Costume is the plane cut. Wearing a three-dimensional cloth naturally makes margins of cloth expressed by wrinkles, and many perpendicular lines are based on the posture of an upright man. This exemplifies the Korean U-(Chgori), Go(pants) and overcoat.

1. U-(Chgori)

The U-(Chgori)comprises the body plate, Git(the collar), Sup(the gusset), the sleeve width, the string and the collar. The points that mostly underwent changes over the ages are the length of U-(Chgori) and the types of edges and sleeves, by which the changes of U-

(Chgori) can be assumed.

The U-(Chgori) string was originally used for adjusting the attire by its function, but as the U-(Chgori) became shorter while the string became longer over the ages, its function became decorative. This rather demonstrates the beauty of change which is separate and makes the body feel free.

Git(the collar) can be changed independently, and this is important for easy laundering and clothing management.

2. Go(pants)

Go(pants) were originally outer garments for both men and women; but over the ages, it has become an outer garment for men and underwear for women.

The Go(pants) comprise the Marupok, Sapok and the waist. Since these are based on the body height, it is specifically made for convenience in sitting. It has more width and is different from western Go(pants) which are fit for the upright lifestyle.

3. Chi-ma(skirt)

The Chi-ma(skirt) is a lower garment worn below the U-(Chgori). The Chi-ma(skirt) comprises a Chi-ma(skirt) body, belt and string. The width of the Chi-ma(skirt) uses plane cloth to make it square, but it ties together the upper wrinkles as a belt. When worn, a string is tied from the front to the back, while the width of the Chi-ma(skirt) shows a rounded amplexity.

4. Po(coat)

Po(coat) is an outer garment that men and women put on their pants and U-(Chgori) against the cold, and is used for ceremonial purposes for more application.

IV. Colors of Korean Traditional Costume

1. Choice of Colors

Korea is surrounded by seas on all three sides. Its clear climate has colors of high brightness and low chroma. Buddhism and Confucianism has greatly influenced its colors, particularly, the doctrine of the five natural elements and the positive and negative. The Yang expresses masculinity, heat, brightness, dryness and firmness, while the Yin expresses passivity, cold, darkness, humidity and softness. These two elements interact to make the universe. Meanwhile, the five natural elements are blue, white, red, black and yellow: their harmonization decides compatibility, and greatly influences the choice of colors. These thoughts were the standards for the choice of colors; meaning that the colors are not only lights but that they are also filled with significant meaning.

Occultic significance of colors has also affected the primitive conception for color. For example, babies wear white clothes until the 100th day from birth to attract longevity and health.

2. Preference for Whiteness

Korean people have always preferred white. The color of the commoners' clothes has always been white since early times until the westernization of Korea. As an equestrian people, Koreans preferred white because they related the color to the sun. Koreans recognize themselves as the descendents of the sky. Therefore, for the Koreans, white is not just a color; it is pregnant with religious significance.

3. Contrast Color Scheme

1) Harmonization of Black and White

It is very rare for Koreans to use only black colors. Mostly they wear a harmonization of black and white where the black lines are placed on a white background or are used for partial effects. The surrounding black lines signify a serious mood. For a gentleman in particular, white clothes and black hats have a solemn, decent and lofty effect.

Mostly, this black on white pattern is used for ceremonial purposes.

2) Harmonization of Complementary Colors

The color scheme for Korean dress is relatively simple. This is because colors are not made by dyeing many colors on a cloth or by drawing pictorial patterns but merely by connecting multiple clothes with different colors. Color schemes for the Chi-ma(skirt) and U-(Chgori), like green U-(Chgori)-red Chi-ma(skirt) or yellow U-(Chgori)-blue Chi-ma(skirt) , are prominent.

3) Harmonization of Similar Colors

In Korean traditional Costume, white is used to indicate a mild and calm mood for both U-(Chgori) and Go(pants), followed by a blue colors and jade green, which are particularly prominent. The combination of white U-(Chgori) and jade Chi-ma(skirt) demonstrates quiet, mild and graceful beauty.

4) Multiple Color Scheme

In Korean Traditional Costume, the Sekdong harmonizes many colors on a part of a costume, as seen in a Chi-ma(skirt) that shows the mural of Ssangyeongchong of U-(Chgori). This pattern can also be seen in costume styles used in Japan and China, proof of the cultural exchange that took place between the three countries. While this Sekdong is composed of many different colors, they are usually based on the doctrine of the five natural elements and the yin and yang. That is why the Sekdong includes yellow, blue, white, green and red.

This Sekdong is used for Obangjang for children, Sekdong Durumagi, Magoja and U-(Chgori). The shaman's costume attaches long, white bands at the edges of the sleeves. It is common to attach the white long bands at the Sekdong sleeve ends of the Hwalot and Wonsam, the bride's wedding dress. As with this, the Sekdong is usually applied on the arms; Sekdong on the sleeves allows for activity while expressing artististry. This is done by utilizing

the plane sides of the arms that is not subject to the influence of the body curve nor to the overlapping of clothes made by the motions.

V. Patterns in Korean Traditional Costume

1. Advent of Patterns

The Korean people believed that certain patterns of costume had superstitious significance, and they would use this to protect themselves from malicious forces. Sometimes these patterns signified artistic emotions, and sometimes it indicated position or social rank such as those seen in the breast marks.

2. Types of Patterns

1) Natural Patterns

Cloud patterns are often used for Korean costumes to signify glorious and bright happiness. Wave patterns are similar to overlapping waters with curves accumulating in semi-circles. Moon, sun, stars, mountains and stones patterns symbolize immortality.

2) Patterns of Plants

Koreans also love flower patterns like those of chrysanthemums, orchids, apricot blossoms and bamboo which signify chastity. Peony blossoms signify richness. Lotus flower has a Buddhist character. The flower comes out even from the muddy waters, symbolizing a purity that is never be altered by a dirty environment. Patterns of pomegranates were used for prosperity of offspring. There are some imaginative plant patterns such as the elixir of life or the Dang-cho. The elixir of life was used to supplicate for longevity while the Dang-cho was designed to materialize stems or tendrils.

3) Patterns of Animals

Koreans used patterns of real animals and those of imaginative animals. A representative animal pattern was the crane which signified longevity. The patterns of Ky-lin were preferred for auspicious fortune. It is as one of the four auspicious animals including the dragon, the phoenix and the turtle. The patterns of turtle and deer are meant for longevity, while those of bats were for strong fertility. The tiger pattern was favored as a breast mark to symbolize the valor of a fighter.

4) Geometric Patterns

The pattern of the Great Absolute expresses the opposition between two sides, yin and yang. The patterns of axes meant that they do not hate the shape of opposition. The pattern of convolution is a continuous pattern of the rhythmical curves. And the thunder pattern is materialized by the mysterious emotion of the sky.

3. Decoration Method

The patterns of Korean traditional costumes were usually made by the techniques of direct texture, gilt and embroidery.

Direct texture is not a decoration of new patterns on textiles such as gilt or embroidery, but it is an accomplishment of an intended pattern.

Gilt patterns have decorative moods, only with the brilliance of gilt. By this nature, gilt was hardly used for commoners. These were regarded as special clothes.

Embroidery has a long history, and has always been used in Korean traditional costumes. Production of embroidered silk began during the reign of Jin-deok Queen of Shil-la around the 6th century and then were exported to Tang.

VI. Korean Traditional Accessories

1. Uses of Accessories

The Korean people have always used accessories for discriminating social ranks. Accessories were used to demonstrate integral harmonization with dress. They were also used as amulets to pray for the success of their dreams and to avoid misery.

2. Types of Accessories

1) Head Accessories

① Headgear

In the Three Kingdoms' period(B.C.1th to A.D.10th century), the men's hats included Heuk-geon, Jeol-pung, Chek, Ip-hyeong-mo and Byeon-hyeong-mo, which were used with feathers. Through the Kory Dynasty period (10th to 14th century) to the Cho-seon Dynasty period (14th - 19th century), they used Mang-geon or Yu-geon for caps, Sat-gat and Gal-mo, Cho-rip, Jeon-rip or Juk-jae-rip for hats and Yang-gwan and Sa-mo for coronets. Hats were worn according to the social rank of the person who put it on.

The women's headgear were comprised of head towels or colorful flower coronet. Among them, the flower coronet and Jok-duri was the most special. The flower coronet was colorfully decorated with flower patterns, gems and beads, which a common woman could use only want for her wedding. While the Jok-duri and the flower coronet were only for decoration, Nam-ba-wui, Jo-ba-wui and Pung-cha were also used to guard against cold.

② Hair Accessories

While the headgear signified social position, hair accessories clearly represented the economic differences between people. Although the regulation for hair accessories was not strict, they could use accessories to boast about their wealth. In the Cho-seon Dynasty period, King Yeong-Jo restricted the Ga-chaе - the high hair style- because the women would compete with excessive hair decorations.

A representative accessory for hair was the ornamental hairpin which is inserted in the rolled-up hair. It is decorated with various jewels, according to the season. The tteol-jam was a luxury article for high-class women, which is decorated with various jewels for the added-up hair. Daeng-gi was used for beautiful hair arrangements.

2) Belts

Belts had practical purposes, but they were made of various materials and ornaments to signify different social ranks. In the men's clothes, decorations were more focused on the waist than in the women's clothes.

3) Accessories

① Pendant

The pendant is a representative accessory for women, which accents the simple composition of the Korean Traditional Costume. However, the pendant was also used for praying for wishes.

② Incense Case

Women during the Cho-seon Dynasty period enjoyed putting incense in the closets or in clothes. They placed incense cases inside their pendants in belief that it would expel malicious ghosts.

③ Rings

Rings were accessories that women could afford regardless of economic status. Gold and silver were preferred by Korean women than stones. The double rings were preferred for the eternal happiness of the married couple.

④ Earrings

Since earrings enhance the face, they are a very developed accessory, more than any other in history. Archaeological excavations from the Three Kingdoms' period yielded golden earrings of Shil-la to show various shapes of work, usually with jade products.

4) Shoes

Traditional shoes have a raised front point, while leather shoes had embroideries at the front and back.