

Influence of the Spiritual Culture on the Spatial Organizations

In-Wook Oh/Professor, Kyung-Won Univ.

1995년 10월 4일 - 10월 6일까지 일본 나고야에서 IFI(International Federation of Interior Designers/국제실내디자인연합)가 주최한 총회 및 학술대회가 개최되었다. IFI 대회는 2년마다 개최되며 교육, 실무, 정보교류를 위해 네덜란드 암스텔담에 사무국을 두고 IFI 유네스코의 상호 정보교류를 하는 실내건축, 실내디자인의 국제적인 단체의 대회이다.

'95 IFI NAGOYA 정기총회 행사기간중에 개최된 국제 학술대회는 주제인 「NEXT WAVE」 속에 3개의 Session 으로 구성되어 1 Session에서는 Natural Features and Living Spaces, 2 Session에서는 Universal Design, 3 Session에서는 The Beauty of Environment로 발표가 진행되었으며 첫번째 Session, Natural Features an Living Spaces에서는 한국, 인도, 중국, 타일랜드에서 온 각 나라 대표들의 발표와 토론으로 진행되었다. 이번 IFI '95 NAGOYA 국제 학술대회에는 본학회 오인욱 부회장이 참가하여 주제발표를 하였다.

오인욱 부회장이 1 Session에서 발표한 "Influence of the Spiritual Culture on the Spatial Organizations" 내용을 원문으로 게재하기로 한다.

Abstract

Our natural desire to exuviate old theory and search for new ideas means conversion and reformation. However, the new idea of the present moment will soon become an ancient history when the next generation emerges with more advanced ideas.

Naturally, we have learned to accept the past history and utilize it as a the foundation for the future. Through the repeated process of the learning method, the population cultivate themselves with proper understanding and appropriate attitude toward design. By analyzing social behaviors of the past and living conditions, we can expand our imaginations beyond limits. Each society and its local condition have tremendous effects on the development and progress of artistic theories, techniques and craftsmanship, and potential design of every day use

products.

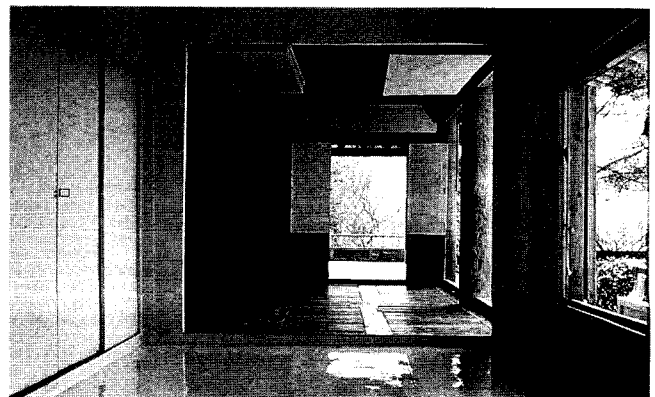
Today, interior design can not afford to ignore the organic relationship of life style and space. Thus, the planning of space means the planning of life style. Life style, as it is, has a vast definition and changes with time. That is why spaces, which consider the life style and its environment when designed, show different aspects according to its corresponding time.

Interior design, in particular, differs by time and region to create its unique style. The change in space is the natural result of the change in life style which again is sensitive to the change in cultural and environmental elements. Design is no longer designing of mere physical elements and environment. Design should be taken as the equivalent of creating spiritual culture.

1. Nature and Climate

Issue of owning a piece of land has been important for most Koreans since agriculture has been the main source of industry through out its history. Surrounded by ocean on three sides, Korea's geographical condition have had tremendous effect on the nation's tradition and culture, especially nature related elements.

Showing accommodation and humble attitude, obeying and respecting surrounding nature became the ultimate goal in every aspect of Korean culture. Koreans believe spirits of nature exist everywhere. Worshiping of the spir-



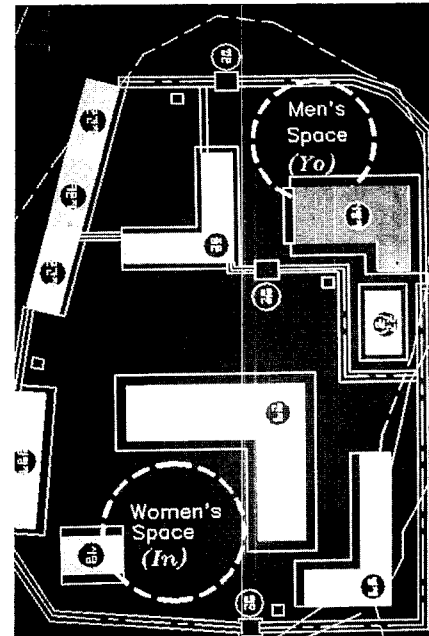
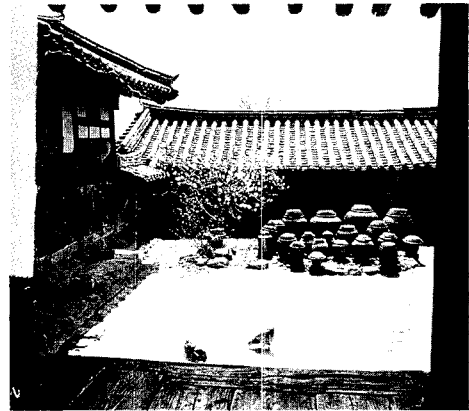
itual gods were a common tradition hoping to live harmonized life with nature continuously.

Traditionally, Koreans have considered that the origin of human life consists of an attitude toward nature Gods who bring all natural phenomena under control and they believed that they should bow down to those Gods. Their representation of the life sense which continuously flows in them can be seen in the idea that the original form of nature should not be lost. Therefore, Koreans give greater value for spiritual growth obtained by accepting nature with broader mind and having spontaneous disposition. Rather than evaluating materialistic wealth, the Korean people attach great importance on the spiritual abundance.

Fortunately Korea has four distinct seasons. It has a largely Continental-type weather except for its southern section. In summer the temperature may rise to 35 degree celsius in the central region. The cold current of the East Sea along the northeast coast contributes to relatively cool an short (two to four weeks) summer in the mountainous northeast inland. Precipitation is rather limited and air becomes extremely dry and cold in winter. The average temperature in January in the inner region of the northern part of the country is -20 degree celsius. Because the severely cold Korean winter is dominant over warm summer, Korean houses are built primarily to function as protection against cold weather. The design had to reflect adaptability and variability of nature according to the periodic changes.

2. Custom, Culture, and Tradition

A family is the most basic unit in Korean society rather than individuals. A large family (at least two generations living under a same roof) is controlled by father who is the master of the house and a provider for for the family. This tradition influenced even on the city planning, especially on the development of the residential planning. A house must serve as a basic but the most important living environment and it contributes to the regeneration of vitality for all human activities. The style and manner of life led in a house differ according to re-



gions, and inhabitants' customs and habit, and personalities. There may be style differences from region to region, however, the main stream of principle is the same no matter where you are living in Korea.

Based on Confucianism theory, even within a same family, men approaching women's territory was prohibited. "Nam(man)Nyo(woman) Yubyul(different)", "Nae(inside)Wae(outside) Bup(rule)", and "Yin and Yang theory" are the phrases often used to explain theory about man and woman being different. These theories are directly applied to the layout of the traditional residents. In the basic layout of the typical middle or upper class house is divided into two areas; one is the area occupied by men and the other is by women. Men's quarter is called "Sarangche" and women's quarter is called "Ahnche". Sarangche is located near the main gate to have an easy access to the outside. The Sarangche is a separate building used as the house master's study and drawing room and also to entertain, socialize, and to discuss with friends or other male family members. Ahnche, on the other hand, is the innermost of all buildings in the complex and away from the public. Women do their

daily chores, socialize, and support men's activities in order to run the house smoothly.

Another theory Confucianism which has been spiritually important to Koreans was honoring and worshiping ancestors as well as showing devotion and respect toward parents whether they are alive or passed away. Many ceremonies, celebrations, and gatherings happen in a large family situations with parents and ancestors. The living environment had to reflect all of those occasions.

Historical events such as 36 years of colonial period while Korea was under the reign of Japan, Korean War, and separation between north and south Korea had made Korea extremely hard to keep up the traditional customs and cultures. The living condition and environment had to go through a lot of changes and adjustments. However, Korea is in a process of readjusting and recapturing its many treasures and traditions.

3. Life Style

Even though there had been numerous changes and adjustments during the period of cultural rupture, there is one tradition which has never been altered in Korea. That tradition is the "Chuashik Saenghwal" which literally means lifestyle of seated directly on the floor since most activities of Korean culture is evolved around floor. For Korean who love to make compare and contrast in every situation, living environment must be different between inside and outside of a house. There is a clear division between interior and exterior. One way to differentiate is by taking shoes off at the front entrance foyer and seat directly on the room's floor rather than on sofas or chairs.

Concept of Ahnbang which is a master bedroom in Korea is different from the westerners'. The function of the room is many therefore it needs to be very versatile. Ahnbang's basic function is for sleeping by putting blankets and cotton filled mats on the floor. The same room is converted to a family dining room when a low folding table replaces the blankets and mattresses. By placing a tea table in the center of the room, than the room is a entertaining room.

Because one room serves many different purposes as mentioned previously, all of the building's mechanical units must be versatile as well. And since the people lived and did most of their gathering and daily activities on the floors, the mechanical system providing heating and cooling for the floor was significant. One example is the the invention of the Ondol heating and Maru floor. Both have to do with traditional floors since most of the daily activities of Korean culture is evolved around on the floor. It is two opposing concept but always work as a group; Ondol is used for colder season and it is basically heated mud and stone panel. Maru, on the other hand, is for the warmer season it is wood flooring usually elevated from the ground level for maximum ven-

tilation. Ondol heating system began to be widely used during Koryo period (10th-14th centuries). Stone plates are placed on hypocaust, and a mud floor is spread on the heat-preserving stone plates.

The lifestyle of seating and living on the floor influence on the development of the living interior of Korea. Three results among those development is as follows.



- 1) Furniture is usually small in scale in order not to take up much space since a single room had to serve multi-functions.
- 2) Less furniture is required in order for easy transformation of a room.
- 3) Level between the room and front entrance had to be different to accommodate floor heating and ventilation system.

Therefore, the special characteristic of the Korean traditional house can be compared as a package space with multi-functions. What that means is that if you lay a piece of blanket than the room is a bedroom, if you lay a table than the room is converted into a dining room or a study. If you lift doors up and hang it on the ceiling, than the room turn into a large hall. The room is extended out and become a part of nature. The most treasurable concept of Korean house is the versatility and variability in order to accommodate different functions and its ability to absorb outside environment to the interior space.

4. Living Environment

After the Korean War was over in 1953, influence of the western life style and culture started to spread into Korean culture rapidly. Functionally western style did make our life easy and convenient. However, leaving our tradition completely behind has been impossible to most of Koreans. For example, the Ondol heating system continued even in western style houses and high rise condominiums because people preferred to receive direct warmth from the floor with their barefoot. Western style furniture such as sofas and bedroom furniture were adopted to the ondol heated room for the comfort and convenience of both culture. This adopting process has become very typical in Korean living environment today; logical combination of Korean culture and western convenience. Due to the fast growing economy and industrial life in Korea created so called 'high society' residential design, which often has unbalanced combination of both culture. Today, we are in a transitional period for people to decide what is pleasant and what is unpleasant design. The people are concerned whether to concentrate on the outside mass or on the beauty of overall spacial relationship. And also the idea of physical environment are taking large proportion over the traditional concept of living environment. Recently, however, many Korean designers are trying to bring back the beauty and traditional concept to the modern designs. I would like to present a few of those recent projects which has kept a good balance between modern functionality and traditional beauty and cultural concept of Korea.

The first example is a condominium project which is designed by Mr. Youngbaek Min whose success comes from his meticulous study of traditional design patterns and details and his ability combine it into modern design. His design always have just right amount of flavor of

Korea within the convenience of the modern facility.

Second example is called "Sujul-dang" designed by Hyosang Seung. The success of the Sujul-dang is that it expressed Korean traditions well and made easy for common people to understand. Designed on a small site but the house can accommodate many different function and family activities.

5. Conclusion

In order for a design concept to have a strong meaning and atmosphere, the concept must be derived and learned from the past history and spiritual culture. We believe that the newly invented design of today represent confrontation with past living environment and life style. That is certain concept must be reorganized for the life style of the modern time. However, the biggest task of modern day designers is that he/she should be able to keep the balance between "preservation and creation". Our design challenge will always be with us and we need to continued to try not to disconnect past from the new design concepts.

Korean houses have been developed to meet the needs of life of the Korean people. In modern times in which civilization has made remarkable progress, even some of the basic functions of the house are undergoing changes to a certain degree. The basic concept of Korean residential design is concentrated on the spatial organization and harmonization with nature. Most of interior planning and design elements were designed to blend into the natural surroundings. Meanwhile, our life style is also changing and adjusting to be more rational. In Keeping with these changes and improvements, decorative designs must also be updated to go with surrounding environment.
