

The Study of Costumes Historical in the Chosun Dynasty - Focused on the Children's Costumes -

Jin Kim[†]

Researcher, National Center for Standard Reference Data.

Korea Research Institute of Standards and Science

(Received September 9, 2006 : Accepted October 13, 2006)

Abstract

This Study in order to review the history of our children's costumes, this study examined the socio-cultural background of Chosun dynasty and then, reviewed children's costumes comprehensively during that period according to their considerations, kinds, colors and patterns. In addition, this study explored the possibility of making use of the characteristics of children's costumes during Chosun dynasty, since it was perceived that if our children should be dressed in a traditional costume designed with some traditional costume characteristics and ornaments, our tradition would be enlivened in their life and spirit. Its results can be summed up as follows;

Our traditional costumes consisted basically of Yut(襦), Go(袴), Sang(裳) and Po(袍) and additionally of Headgears(冠帽), Dae(帶), Hwa(靴) or Yi and Beosun, which must prove that the Korean people is cultural people. Our ancestors were dressed first in Yu(襦), Go(袴), Sang(裳) and Po(袍) to be supported by dae(帶). Our traditional costume style was 'front adjustment' or otherwise, left or right adjustment. Commoners' costumes would change after the series of foreign invasions and again during mid-late Chosun dynasty. During the period of King Sukjong, Jeogori was far shorter and smaller, while Chima was more diversified and voluminous enough to look like a jar.

Key words : Chosun dynasty, children's costumes, yu(襦), go(袴).

1. Introduction

The traditional costumes having its historical background and social elements must be our valuable cultural assets because they were developed reflecting our people's unique nature and life styles. Furthermore, the traditional costumes express our people's sentiments, aesthetic senses and various value systems and thoughts. Particularly,

harmony between lines and curves, rich and ample look, and flexible and elegant flows, all expressed by our traditional costumes, may not be comparable to foreign costumes.

Our traditional costumes as such began to change rapidly since infiltration of the Western civilization during late Chosun dynasty. Later since our emancipation from the Japanese colonial rule, our traditional culture began to be bombarded with the flooding Western civili-

This work was supported by the Korea Research Foundation Grant funded by the Korean Government (MOEHRD). (D00004)

[†] Corresponding author E-mail : kj0902@hanmail.net

zation to be overshadowed by it after all. During 1970's when 'Saemaul' Movement was launched, the Korean society, culture and economy would be subject to another rapid change, and in the last two decades of the 20th century, Korea would face a wider world with people's rising living standards. Accordingly, our costumes have been greatly influenced by the Western civilization, namely simpler.

Meanwhile, the efforts to keep our traditional culture have continued, and today, discussions are more serious than ever before to preserve and succeed our national culture, while cultural campaigns and academic researches are very active to review our diminishing traditional culture. It may well be important to protect, preserve and reproduce our traditional costumes, but it is deemed more important to reinterpret and re-create them continuously to have them match our today's life styles.

Since we were born, we have been inseparable from clothing. Since we were born, we have always been dressed to live a stable and rich life in aesthetic, practical and psychological terms. In particular, infancy is a period greatly influencing development of our whole personality essential for our growth. Brum(Banjamin, s. Bloom) emphasizes importance of infancy, because half our intelligence (assuming that our intelligence level is 100% at the age of 17) develops at the age between 0 and 4 and 30% develops between 4 and 8, and the rest 20% develops later. In addition, children requires an appropriate environment for their growth, which means that any poor environment would affect their growth much negatively. For children, the dress is not simple clothing but a part of their living body, and therefore, costume means more than clothing. In this sense, costumes are more meaningful to children than adults.¹⁾

In the past, children used to be dressed in adults' miniature clothing. In other words, they used to spend their childhood, being dressed

inappropriately. Today, children's physical, emotional, intellectual and motor development are taken into consideration when their costumes are researched into and designed; changes and development of children's costumes may well have been attributed to strenuous efforts made so far, but the history of researches into children is not so long. On the other hand, the reality is that our children are growing, while forgetting about our traditional cultural environment due to the materialistic abundance.

Thus, in order to review the history of our children's costumes, this study examined the socio-cultural background of Chosun dynasty and then, reviewed children's costumes comprehensively during that period according to their considerations, kinds, colors and patterns. In addition, this study explored the possibility of making use of the characteristics of children's costumes during Chosun dynasty, since it was perceived that if our children should be dressed in a traditional costume designed with some traditional costume characteristics and ornaments, our tradition would be enlivened in their life and spirit.

II. Literature Review

I. Characteristics of Traditional Costumes

Costumes must be an important cultural phenomenon featuring people's mentality and clothing psychology. Costume life is combined with dietary and housing life to form a basis for our life, so it seems to be most important among our living cultures.

There is no literature about when our Korean people began to be dressed, but there have been found some pre-historic remains showing our ancestors' clothing life. It is conceived that our ancestors during the Paleolithic age used to protect their bodies with barks, animal skin or fur. Meanwhile, various Neolithic remains have been found, including bone needle and spinning wheel

¹ Mary Shaw Ryan, *Clothing: A Study in Human Behaviour*, (N.Y.: Holt Rinehart and Wiston, Inc., 1966), 193.

with the traces of hemp yarn, pendants, earrings and bracelets, all of which suggests that our Neolithic ancestors were dressed in skin, woven or needled fabrics.

As it was, our traditional costumes consisted basically of Yu(襦), Go(袴), Sang(裳) and Po(袍) and additionally of Headgears(冠帽), Dae(帶), Hwa(靴) or Yi and Beosun, which must prove that the Korean people is cultural people. Our ancestors were dressed first in Yu(襦), Go(袴), Sang(裳) and Po(袍) to be supported by dae(帶). Our traditional costume style was 'front adjustment' or otherwise, left or right adjustment.²⁾

2. Characteristics of Chosun Dynasty Costumes

Ruling philosophy or ideology during Chosun dynasty was Confucianism. Kings preserved their crown with benevolence and ruled their people with civility, and to this end, they had 'Five Codes of Conduct' enacted. Civility was equal to law as well as norm of human life.

Chosun dynasty was strictly dictated by the social class system based on the Confucianism ideology that men's social and economic status and rank would be given at the time of their birth. Codes of law and conduct specified costumes in details according to statuses and ranks ranging from king down to middle class, but not for commoners.

However, on the occasion of the Japanese invasion in 1592, the costumes would begin to be changed and further on the occasions of the two-fold Manchurian invasions in early 16th century. Hence, the costume system could be divided between earlier and late periods of Chosun dynasty.

The class system also changed. The earlier system primarily of Yangban and commoners would be more divided later being influenced by Practical Learning and scientific development. Commoners' costumes would change after the series of foreign invasions and again during

mid-late Chosun dynasty. During the period of King Sukjong, Jeogori was far shorter and smaller, while Chima was more diversified and voluminous enough to look like a jar.

III. Methods

This study focused on children's costumes during Chosun dynasty reviewed their characteristics, colors and patterns.

In order to clarify the origin and sources of our traditional costumes, we need to review almost all of their cultural elements, which must be very difficult, but we may well examine how our traditional costumes have evolved by surveying literature, remains, paintings, folklore and other data.

Thus, this study was aimed at reviewing kinds and characteristics of children's costumes in consideration of their social and cultural backgrounds and particularly, those of children's costumes following Chosun dynasty.

Childhood would witness a rapid change and development in every physical and mental area, and so it has very important meanings for human development. Namely, children would grow acceleratingly and more variably, and therefore, childhood must be a decisive period in the process of human development. During Chosun dynasty, children were requested to always behave and control themselves like adults, as taught by Confucianism. In addition, since the earlier marriage was customary during Chosun dynasty, the childhood was short, urging children to behave like adults. Namely, childhood was the only period when childish costumes with luxurious primary colors, striped jackets and patterns could be worn. As the childhood was short, children's costumes could be less developed than men's or women's costumes.

Since few children's costumes remain from Chosun dynasty, it was difficult to check them directly, so it was inevitable to review the rele-

² Eun-Kyung Kim, "A Study on the Modern Children's Wear Design Applying the Beauty of Children's Wear of the Yi Dynasty." (Hong-Ik University, 1993): 32-33.

vant literature. And because it was also difficult to divide children's costumes between earlier and late Chosun dynasty, this study reviewed children's costumes at large through the entire Chosun dynasty. The scope or time span of this study was limited to Chosun dynasty because it is the nearest period when our history and culture were well preserved. After all, it was decided to review children's costumes during Chosun dynasty in terms of their considerations, kinds, colors and patterns.

IV. Results

This study reviewed preceding studies, folklore paintings, personal chronological paintings and relevant literature and thereby, suggested the ways to promote the costume design works using the traditional costumes. Its results can be summed up as follows.

1. Consideration of Children's Costumes in the Chosun Dynasty

The Korean costumes have a long history, passing through long trials and errors, which means that the Korean people have lived a unique costume life, called traditional, folklore, peculiar or national costume life style, uncomparable to any nation. In the past, our ancestors wore Jeogori and trousers primarily in case of men or Chima in case of women.

As few literature depicts children's costumes, it is estimated that children's costumes were similar to adults'. Fortunately, there are a few records about children's costumes from Chosun dynasty.

There were colorful costumes for royal children during the period: from a court costume Balgi to detail quilted costume, imaginable for common children in terms of luxury and diversity. In contrast, common children were merely dressed in Jeogori, trousers or Chima. Patterns or colors were even beyond their dream. Probably, such crude and simple clothing might

have provided for a clue to our people's alias 'People Dressed White'.

However, some cases show that children were allowed to be dressed in jade, beige, light pink or green clothing. By late Chosun dynasty, various silk patches left over were used to make color-striped Jeogori for the children greeting their first year after birth or on the occasion of festive days. Depending on families' financial conditions, children were dressed in magpie Durumagi, Jeonbok and/or Bokgun with a band around their waist and quilted Tarae Beosun on their feet³⁾.

During the enlightenment period, children's costumes would change in a similar fashion to adults'. After Reformation in 1894, a vest made of colorful silk was worn over Jeogori, mimicking adults' Western vest and replacing Baeja worn during Chosun dynasty but extinguished gradually later. Beside, the vest-over-Jeogori style used to be replaced by Magoja, a combination of Jeogori and vest.

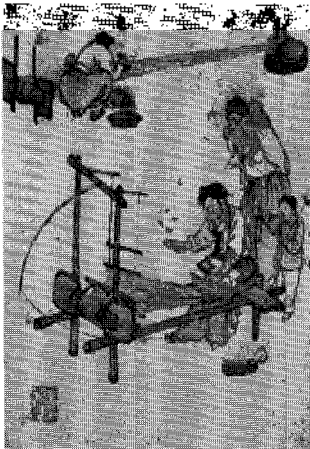
Today, our Korean people are usually dressed in Western costumes for their everyday activities, while being dressed in Hanbok or the Korean traditional costumes for rituals. Since such traditional costumes should be worn according to the traditional costume rules for special rituals, they should be designed differently from ordinary costumes. Namely, they should be designed to conform to the rituals proper.

To sum up, traditional children's costumes have undergone little great changes, just following the trend of adults' costumes, but keeping their unique prototypes. During Chosun dynasty centred about adults, children were not permitted to be dressed uniquely but in adults' miniature costumes.

2. Kinds of Children's Costumes in the Chosun Dynasty

There is a body of literature about adults' costumes during Chosun dynasty, which shows changes and forms of adults' costumes, but there

³⁾ Two Thousand Years of Korean Fashion, (Ministry of Culture and Tourish, 2001), 75-80.



〈Fig. 1〉 Beajaki.⁴⁾



〈Fig. 2〉 Birthday Party.⁵⁾

is little about children's costumes, which makes it difficult to research into them. Even this study could not convincingly review common children's costumes, because the data collected for this study were almost about Yangban children's one. The longitudinal life paintings referred to by this study are folding screen paintings as



〈Fig. 3〉 Children Costumes.⁶⁾

wide as 8~12 folders, produced to honor the figures and record their royal services.

The results of reviewing children's Jeogori, trousers and Baeja during Chosun dynasty can be summarized as follows; the types of Jeogori were similar to adults'. They were cotton Jeogori, double Jeogori, color with striped Jeogori, nubi Jeogori, flower Jeogori, Godumak Jeogori and the like. Despite such diverse types, their forms and tailoring methods were similar, while their fabrics and decorations differed depending on seasons or uses. Cotton was inserted for winter Jeogoris, and some Jeogoris were quilted for a convenient cleaning. The striped Jeogoris worn for the babies greeting their first birthday or festive days during late Chosun dynasty were common for boys and girls.

It is said that the striped Jeogoris began to be worn for monks' children to be distinguished from ordinary children. Having been influenced by Yin & Yang and Five Way theory, the Jeogoris were dyed with five colors to expel evil spirits and invite a fortune.

The trousers below Jeogoris had a wide waist, so children had to fold the part of waist in the center and thereby, tie the trousers with a belt. Infants' trousers consisted of cotton trousers, double trousers, nubi trousers and Pungcha trousers, and their tailoring methods were similar to

⁴ Two Thousand Years of Korean Fashion, 2001, Ministry of Culture and Tourish, 75.

⁵ Two Thousand Years of Korean Fashion, 2001, Ministry of Culture and Tourish, 84.

⁶ Korea 100 Years Ago in Photographs, 1986, 20.



〈Fig. 4〉 Children Costumes (Cheju Island).⁷⁾

adults' trousers. Baeja with no sleeves consisted of back and front, and back was longer than front.

The types of Baeja were quilted Baeja and double Baeja. Baejas dyed with such more refined colors than Jeogoris as blue, green, bright gray and brown were made of silk or Sampalju.

3. Colors Children's Costumes in the Chosun Dynasty

Their colors were quite contrasted between two groups: achromatic color group and primary color one. In particular, the colors shown on the fabric seem to have well expressed people's emotion, sense of aesthetics and colors.

During Chosun dynasty, the color concept was based on Yin & Yang and Five Way theory, a unique Asian philosophy as well as Confucianism, and therefore, the prevailing colors were of exorcism, hierarchy and order.⁸⁾

Especially, the stripe colors used for children's costumes were most luxurious and harmonized. Children aged between 1 and 6~7 wore the striped costumes for their birthdays or festive days. The striped costumes signified luxury and pleasure, representing our traditional costumes for children. The primary colors for the striped costumes were yellow, blue, white and red, being complemented by red, purple, green and violet.

4. Pattern Children's Costumes in the Chosun Dynasty

What our ancestors wished and desired most were wealth and safety in this world, prosperity of offsprings and longevity, which were supported by the realistic Confucian life philosophy during Chosun dynasty to encourage more realistic patterns. Thus, colors were more diversified than creative. Such a trend was more conspicuous for children's costumes. A baby is born to be an independent life growing through several stages. He would be protected by parents until he was celebrated for coming of age, while parents poured their hearts to pray for their children's



〈Fig. 5〉 Children Costumes.⁹⁾



〈Fig. 6〉 Children Costumes.¹⁰⁾

⁷⁾ Korea 100 Years Ago in Photographs, (1986), 12.

⁸⁾ Jeong-won Kim, "A Study on the Color of Little Children's Clothing," (Ewha Womans University 1987), 9.

⁹⁾ Korea 100 Years Ago in Photographs, (1986), 57

¹⁰⁾ The Special Embroidery Exhibition of Chosun Dynasty, (1988), 32.

longevity and fortune and sometimes, had diverse letters and patterns printed on their children's costumes to evoke a fortune for their future.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

As discussed above, this study reviewed considerations, kinds, colors and patterns of children's costumes during Chosun dynasty comprehensively, and its results can be summed up as follows;

1. The results of reviewing children's Jeogori, trousers and Baeja during Chosun dynasty can be summarized as follows; the types of Jeogori were similar to adults'. They were cotton Jeogori, double Jeogori, color with striped Jeogori, nubi Jeogori, flower Jeogori, Godumak Jeogori and the like. Despite such diverse types, their forms and tailoring methods were similar, while their fabrics and decorations differed depending on seasons or uses. Cotton was inserted for winter Jeogoris, and some Jeogoris were quilted for a convenient cleaning. The striped Jeogoris worn for the babies greeting their first birthday or festive days during late Chosun dynasty were common for boys and girls.
2. Their colors were quite contrasted between two groups: achromatic color group and primary color one. In particular, the colors shown on the fabric seem to have well expressed people's emotion, sense of aesthetics and colors. What our ancestors wished and desired most were wealth and safety in this world, prosperity of offsprings and longevity, which were supported by the realistic Confucian life philosophy during Chosun dynasty to encourage more realistic patterns. Thus, colors were more diversified than creative. Such a trend was more conspicuous for children's costumes.

References

- Kim, Eun-Kyung. 1993. A Study on the Modern Children's Wear Design Applying the Beauty of Children's Wear of the Yi Dynasty. Hong-Ik University.
- Kim, Jeong-won. 1987. *A Study on the Color of Little Children's Clothing*. Ewha Womans University.
- Mary Shaw Ryan. 1966. *Clothing: A Study in Hwnan Behaviour*. (N.Y. : Holt Rinehart and Wiston, Inc.).
- Korea 100 Years Ago in Photographs. 1986.
- Delong, M. R. 1987. *The Way We Look*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- The Research Journal of the Costume Culture*. 2005. 883-895.
- National of Korean Embroidery. 1988. *The Special Embroidery Exhibition of Choson Dynasty*. Seoul.
- Nation Folk Museum. 1995. The Exhibition of History of Korean Costumes. Seoul: The National Folk Museum, 1999. Wedding Embroideries and Ornaments. Seoul: The National Folk Museum. 26.
- Two Thousand Years of Korean Fashion*. 2001. Ministry of Culture and Tourish. 75-80.
- Ok, Myung-Sun, Park, Ok-Lyun and Lee, Joo-Young . 2000. The Type and Formative Characteristics of Seon Represented of Costume in the Chosun Dynasty. Kyung Sung University.
- Journal of Korean Society of Costume*. 2002. 52(4): 15-23.
- Kim, Eun-Jung and Kang, Soon-Che. 1999. A Study of the Clothing's Culture in Choscon Period with the Process of the Differentiating into Clothing's Names: Focused on the Names of Unisex Clothing. Catholic University of Korea.
- Journal of Korean Society of Costume*. 2004. 54(4): 97-111.
- Adams, Edwad. B. 1987. *Korean Folk Art and Craft*. Seoul: Scoul International Publishing House.
- Baek, Jung-won. 1994. *Korean Identity: a Collection of Feature*. Seoul: Yonhap News Agency.

- Eckhart, Andreas. 1929. *History of Korean Art*. London: Edward Goldston. Ewha Woman's University. 1982. *Women of Korea: A History from Ancient Times to 1945*. Kim, Yung-Chung. ed. Ewha Womans University Press.
- First, U. S. 1995. *Exhibition Devoted Exclusively to Korean Textiles and Asian Art Museum of San Francisco*.
- Kim, Kum-ja. 1995. *Profusion of Color: Korean Costumes and Wrapping Cloths of the Choson*. Seoul: the Museum of Korean Embroidery.
- Wilson, Kax. 1979. *A History of Textile*. Boulder: Westview.
- Yang, Sunny. 1997. *Hanbok: The Art of Korean Clothing*. Seoul: Hollym.
- Kim, Ho-Jung and Kim, Soon-Ja. 2001. *A Study of Formative Characteristics and Symbolic Meanings of the Exaggeration Type in Modern Fashion*, Sangmyung University.