

## A Comparative Study on the Sleeve Patterns of Women's Costume of the 16th Century

– Focus on the Joseon Dynasty and European Monarchy –

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### Abstract

Costume elements are closely related with human living environment and also play an important role in the costume patterns.

The East and the West have influenced and adopted each other's culture through mutual trade, which are well reflected in costume patterns and textile patterns. These days world wide fashion shows the designs applying costume details of the East and the West, which is much affected by the orientalism.

The purpose of this study is to compare the sleeve patterns which take an important part in women's costume design of the Joseon Dynasty and the European Monarchy in the 16th century.

Korean women's costume showed sleeves in rectangular shape with same width and long length, together with cuffs. Later they changed to diagonal shape of getting narrower toward the wrist.

Western women's costume showed sleeves with puff and slash patterns. Then they were classified into French, British and Spanish styles which were getting narrower toward the wrist. Later they adopted the shape of leg of mutton which was puffed in middle and narrower toward the wrist.

In Korea and Europe, they showed respective changes in sleeve patterns, but also similarity of getting narrower toward the wrist.

The East and the West are now exchanging their culture in every aspect such as politics, economics and social matters. Costume fashion is not an exception. The characteristic designs of traditional costumes are shown on global fashion, which is influenced by the orientalism.

**Key Words :** Joseon Dynasty, European Monarchy, Sleeves, Orientalism

### I. Introduction

Costume elements are definitely under the influence of human living environment and represent

the characteristics of the respective times. They are affected by politics, economics, social and cultural background and the way of living and vary accordingly. The representative costume design

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reflects human will and feeling in the society of the times. It means different costume designs and patterns according to each period.

The East and the West have had economical, social and cultural exchange, which affected the costume patterns and textile patterns. These days the orientalism gave birth to the combination of the designs of the East and the West. World wide fashion shows designs applying the details. The orientalism is newly represented in designs and patterns with the current of the times. Thus the comparative study on the costume patterns of the East and the West is needed. Especially the study on the sleeve among details can be meaningful in modern fashion design.

The purpose of this study is to compare the sleeve patterns which take an important role in women's costume design and represent the characteristics of the Korean and the European monarchy.

The study focuses on the Joseon Dynasty in the East and European Monarchy in the West (Italy, Germany, Spain, England, France which were enjoying flourishing economy). They are in common that women were inferior to men in social status in the men-dominated society and costume was just an indication of social rank.

The study is based on document research, which respectively focuses on paintings and portrait pictures showing history of costume for the East, and on paintings, magazines and exhibition books for the West.

## II. Period Background

### 1. The East

The foundation of the Joseon Dynasty was not an usual succession of power, but rather

transition from a society of aristocracy to one of nobility.<sup>1)</sup>

The Joseon Dynasty was governed under the centralism of a king influenced by Confucianism, which drew a sharp line between ceremonial costume and ordinary costume. It was also strict on costume code which distinguished social status among king, court subjects, noble class and ordinary people.<sup>2)</sup> It strictly followed the various court ranks in kingdom through costume, which was supposed to strengthen the authority of a king. Accordingly court costume in kingdom used luxurious cloths and ornaments banned from ordinary people, expressing the power and dignity of a kingdom.

The 16th century showed various cultural trends resulting from different social status and provincial tradition. There were many famous poets who praised Confucianism and satirized their life in seclusion and hypocrisy of great scholars.<sup>3)</sup>

Paintings were mainly drawn on scenery beauty in nature. There were many famous painters specialized in the Four Gracious Plants<sup>4)</sup> and famous paintings imitating Chinese painting methods.<sup>5)</sup>

### 2. The West

The Joseon Dynasty saw demise of the feudal society of the Middle Age and birth of the Modern Times.<sup>6)</sup> The Renaissance was a period of transition from the Middle Age to the Modern Times. It meant a discovery of human self in mentality as well as a return to classical ancient times in culture.<sup>7)</sup> The Renaissance influenced the history of costume between the end of the 15th century and the 16th century.

The Renaissance started in Italy in the late 15th century, flourishing in France which was stood out in art field. It was a period of cultural

and intellectual development in literature, art and philosophy.

The defeat of crusaders' war resulted in the criticism of church, followed by the religious reformation by Luther and Calvin. During the course, people cherished the idea centralized on human, bringing individualism and pleasure in full bloom. The spread of humanism led people to spend money for themselves rather than for donation to church. The need for luxuries caused the opening up of a new trade route. A discovery of new lands and exploitation of colonies made Europe an economic power.

Mutual trade brought about various costume designs. It was a period of development in art, reformation in religion and exploration and conquer.

The development textile industry improved machines which made possible scientific advancement in dyeing process. Newly developed textiles were abundant, which affected the development of costume of the 16th century.

### III. Definition and Features of Sleeves

Sleeves can be made or not, apart from bodice. Long sleeves can be worn in hot weather because they are not simply intended for keeping warmth. Sleeves have esthetic as well as functional features.

Esthetic features are an expression of human mind. If they are only good for practical use and hygiene and lack esthetic elements, they may not be popular. In opposite case, they can be in fashion more than expected.<sup>8)</sup> Esthetic features are important in the shape of costume. They are significant in costume for the East and the West as follows:<sup>9)</sup>

First, sleeves in both areas were an expression of authority. For example, wide sleeves for noble class had a symbolic meaning of their wealth and no labor.

Second, ornaments reflected human mind seeking for beauty. They were especially shown in the western costume showing various sleeve patterns.

Third, sleeves express morality. Sleeves of oriental costume didn't show hands for the courtesy of respect.

Fourth, they were used indirectly to show body line.

Fifth, an excessively extended sleeves ignoring practical use were an expression of extension of human self and movement.

Thus, sleeves were proven to be a product of human desire seeking for new esthetic beauty.

In functional features the East didn't consider arm as an independent movement feature. The West regarded movement itself as a virtue, so western sleeves were designed to move freely in every direction as an independent moving feature.<sup>10)</sup>

In Renaissance the design of sleeves was complicated, causing problems in pattern making and wearing. Around 1540s sleeves were separately made and came to have an epaulette, shoulder flier, not to show connected parts.

Hanging sleeves were designed for ornament together with epaulette. They were enclosed at the end and functioned as keeping personal belongings like handkerchief and purse.

In Joseon Dynasty 'chupri' represented the costume with functional sleeve pattern. It was worn widely to move body actively even by noble class<sup>11)</sup>. It could be separated from bodice using knot button or seam, which made it suitable for an archery practice and usable as bandage.<sup>12)</sup>

Western and oriental sleeves with narrow width (chaksusome) were used in overall wear for active movement or for ordinary people. Wide pattern showed the authority and dignity of wearer. Oriental sleeves were wide in linear pattern while western ones were designed for uninterrupted wrist movement even if getting wider around wrist.<sup>13)</sup>

## IV. Changing Elements and Patterns of Sleeves

### 1. Changing Elements of Sleeves

Changing elements in costume pattern is a chain connection over times which endlessly varies under the influence of nature and society.<sup>14)</sup>

#### 1) The East

Confucianism cherishing ceremony and procedure influenced costume culture. There was a clearer distinction between ordinary and ceremonial wear than in any other period.

To improve bureaucracy based on the Confucianism, Kyungkukdejeon, the highest law code of the Joseon Dynasty, specified a strict dress code according to social rank. It made a clear distinction in social position including king, court subjects, nobility and ordinary people<sup>15)</sup>, and also improved ceremonial occasions and regulations to restrict extravagant costume and prevent the corruption of public morals.<sup>16)</sup>

Court costume signified the authority of kingdom and was controlled by of the concerned department. Court dress for women spreaded from court to outside noble class.<sup>17)</sup>

Ceremonial wear were divided into 'derebok' and 'sorebok'. 'Derebok' was worn for significant

national ceremony. Queen and her daughter in law wore 'bubbok' and the other noble spouses wore their designated costume according to occasion. 'Sorebok' was worn for reception or formal banquet. 'Sangbok' was a casual wear, on which 'dangeui' was worn.

#### 2) The West

During the Middle Age for about 1000 years Europe was strictly controlled by Catholic church in every field including mentality, social and political matters. As a result it checked the development of human mind. People were awakened on religious savagery by church and pope and started humanism focusing on human value. Expecially their interest in Greek and Roman classics revived and emphasized a new image of human.

Human value was established, expanded and heightened by the Renaissance influencing over the Europe which was actively involved in exploration.

In the 16th century social status was distinct according to wealth and power, which resulted in an exaggerated and gay appearance. Costume elements exaggerated or ignored human body in unmatched silhouette, which was an expression of human desire to show off self image caused by secularism as well as all around image of human.

Costume was used as a way of expression for power and wealth: length, width, exaggerated volume and excessive ornaments for domination and authority.

The influence of the Renaissance over the costume patterns peaked in the 16th century and spreaded from powerful ruling countries to economically flourishing countries.

## 2. The Elements and Patterns of Sleeves

Sleeve patterns include linear, curve and diagonal shapes.

There was no big change in sleeve pattern up to the early 16th century. Toward the late 16th century diagonal sleeves were shown. Western sleeves were designed as specially as possible which contributed to new change and harmony in costume. Western and oriental sleeves were emphasized on esthetic beauty rather than on practical use.

### 1) The East

Sleeves in the early 16th century can be seen from artifacts:

'myungjusomnubi jeoggori' in purple excavated in Kwangju, Kyunggido in March 21, 1968 and 'hwamunkumsunhoejang jeoggori' <picture 1, 2> found in Kwachon, Kyunggido. They are in rectangular shape with long arm length and widely biased cuffs.



<picture 1> hwamunkumsunhoejang jeoggori  
- Chungbuk University Museum



<picture 2> hwamunkumsunhoejang jeoggori  
- Chungbuk University Museum

Sleeves in the mid 16th century can be seen from artifacts:

'myungjusamhoejang jeoggori' <picture 3, 4> excavated in Chungwon, Chungbuk in April, 1977. It is also in rectangular shape with long arm length and widely biased cuffs, same as in the early 16th century.



<picture 3> myungjusomnubi jeoggori  
- Chungbuk University Museum



<picture4> myungjusomnubi jeoggor  
- Chungbuk University Museum

Sleeves in the late 16th century can be seen from artifacts:

'myungjusomhoejang jeoggori' <picture 5> excavated in Chungwon, Chungbuk in March, 1979 and 'mumyungsom jeoggori' <picture 6><sup>18)</sup>.

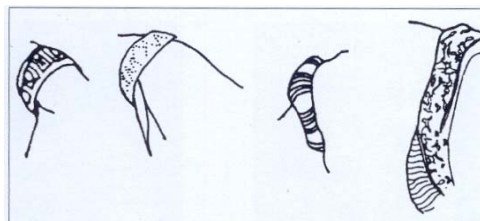
There was a change in width getting narrower toward the end. The diagonal shape remained up to the mid 17th century. Cuffs were getting narrower toward the late century. As the arm width was getting narrower, cuffs were also getting narrower.



<picture 5> myungjusomhoejang jeoggori  
- Chungbuk University Museum



<picture 6> mумыngsom jeoggori  
- Study on History of Traditional Korean costume, p.66



<picture 7> epaulette  
- Study on Costume Design  
Applying Renaissance Costume, p.43



<picture 8> hanging sleeve  
- Study on Costume Design  
Applying Renaissance Costume, p.43

## 2) The West

People in the Renaissance were attracted by something new and unusual. Sleeves were designed in unique shape as much as possible and became a major element contributing to change and illusion in costume.

As the design of sleeves was complicated, pattern making and wearing were also unsuitable. Around 1540s sleeves were separately made and worn matched by base cloth like stomacher.<sup>19)</sup> Matching techniques brought new change and nuance and made possible new mix up with various sleeves replaced on a dress. Sleeves were separately made and connected to robe with a string in armhole. Epaulette, shoulder flier<picture 7><sup>20)</sup> was designed to cover the connected part.

It was padded around the upper part of armhole and decorated with slash, embroidery and jewelry.

Hanging sleeves <picture 8> would be made for ornament together with epaulette. It was almost same as liripipe, ornament sleeves hung to cotehardie in the Middle Age. It was enclosed at the end and functioned as keeping personal belongings like handkerchief or purse.

Sleeves were shown in various ornament techniques such as puff<picture 9><sup>21)</sup> and slash. There were two kinds of puff sleeves: One was once puffed around upper part of sleeves and fitted for the rest part. The other one was puffed several times.

Slash sleeves <picture 10> included various techniques including a long slash, several slashes across sleeves, tightened or fixed several times in the middle of long slash, several short slashes and puffed slash.<sup>22)</sup>



<picture 9> Puff Sleeves

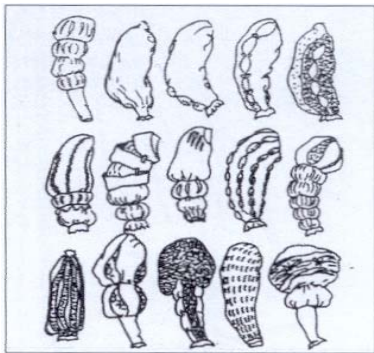
- History of Costume, pp.209, 216

To maximize puff, they used padding, mammal hair and wire with no wrinkles.<sup>27)</sup>



<picture 11> Sleeves in 1650s (1563)

- History of Costume, p.310



<picture 10> Slash Sleeves

- Study on Costume Design

Applying Renaissance Costume, p.44



<picture 12> Open over sleeves

- History of Western Costume, p.180

In the mid century, they showed French or English trend and then adopted Spanish trend.

In 1560s sleeves were puffed, getting narrower toward wrist and having a shell shape around armhole.<picture 11><sup>23)</sup>

Spain, one of the big powers showed open over sleeves <picture 12><sup>24)</sup> which were sometimes long enough to touch floor.

In 1580s sleeves were introduced in a shape of leg of mutton having ruff and pad in same size with shoulder width. <picture 13, 14><sup>25)26)</sup> They were characterized by big puff in the middle part and narrower width toward wrist.



<picture 13> Henry III's Court Dance Hall (1581~1582) -Costume & Fashion, p.120





<picture 14> Queen Elisabeth (1588) -Histoire Costume, p.99

In the 16th century the East and the West used costume to show social class and status. To show off authority and dignity costume was magnificent. In the early century the East and the West differed in sleeves and later had common feature of getting narrower toward wrist: a diagonal pattern for the East and a leg of mutton shape for the West. Western sleeves used puff and slash techniques and then were made separately because of complicated design while oriental sleeves still were a part of bodice.

<Table 1> shows comparative elements on the sleeve patterns of women's costume between the East and the West in the 16th century.

<Table 1> Comparison on the sleeve patterns of women's costume between the Joseon Dynasty and the European Monarchy in the 16th century

Period	The Joseon Dynasty	The European Monarchy	Commonness/Difference
Early	A rectangular shape, long length, widely biased cuffs and part of bodice	Puff and slash shape, long length and attached to bodice with string	Commonness: Long length Difference: A rectangular shape and part of bodice vs a shape of getting narrower toward wrist and string attached to bodice
Mid	A rectangular shape, long length, widely biased cuffs attached with 'wunmundan' and part of bodice	Puff shape getting narrower toward wrist, long length, shell shape around armhole and attached to bodice with string	Commonness: Long length Difference: A rectangular shape and part of bodice vs a shape of getting narrower toward wrist, string attached to bodice and shell type armhole
Late	A diagonal shape, long length, getting narrower toward the end, cuffs getting narrower and part of bodice	A leg of mutton shape puffed in middle, long length, getting narrower toward wrist and attached to bodice with string	Commonness: Long length and getting narrower toward wrist Difference: A diagonal shape and part of bodice vs a leg of mutton shape and string attached to bodice



#### IV. Conclusion

Costume elements are closely affected by living environment and play an important role in total harmony. Various sleeve patterns show respective cultural background.

This study reviewed common and different features on the sleeve patterns of women's costume between the East and the West in the 16th century.

Conclusions are as follows:

The East showed long sleeves in a rectangular shape with widely biased cuffs in the early and mid century. It showed a diagonal shape getting narrower toward the end. The trend continued up to the 17th century.

The West showed long sleeves using various ornament techniques like puff and slash in early stage and then specialized in French, English and Spanish trend. Puff sleeves were getting narrower toward wrist. In the late period, a leg of mutton shape was introduced, which was highly puffed in middle and getting narrower toward wrist.

They were long sleeves. They had a common feature of getting narrower toward wrist in late period even though oriental sleeves were a rectangular shape in early period. They were different in that oriental sleeves were a diagonal shape and the western ones were a leg of mutton shape much puffed in middle. Oriental sleeves were a part of bodice while western ones were made separately and attached to bodice with string because of complicated designs.

These days fashion design represents enriched and new sense in line with current trend, also using unique patterns and shape influenced by orientalism. Accordingly It is hoped that this study is helpful as a basic reference providing more various and collective research.

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