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The Impact of the United States Fashion on Korean Fashion in 20th Century

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Abstract

Fashion trend is more than a social phenomenon that multitudes of people accept as popular styles of clothing. The purpose of this study was to understand the influence of fashion trend over time and distance. Geographically thousands of miles apart, the U.S. has strongly influenced fashion in Korea, revealed by references and historic depictions collected from literature and web sites. Results of the study are summarized as five issues: First, emergence of female missionaries from the U.S. American missionaries working in the late Great Korean Empire performed a significant role importing Western culture to Korea. Second, as opportunities of education increased, women studying abroad introduced Western fashion to Koreans when they returned to Korea. They were more open to Western culture than other Koreans and moderately harmonized their Korean sentiment and Western culture, mitigating cultural shock and enabled other Koreans to accept Western culture. Third, the effect of fashionistas on media. Singers working for U.S. armies stationed in Korea and movie stars appearing in Hollywood movies profoundly affected Korean pop culture and fashion trends in Korea. Fourth, following First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy of the U.S. She was an influential figure in those days and a fashion leader as well. Lastly, acceptance of working girl fashion depicted in American television shows. American working girls depicted on American TV shows were highly admired by young Korean women, so the fashion of American working girls became a major fad among young Korean women.

I. Introduction

Fashion trend means a lot more than just a social phenomenon that the multitude of people accept specific styles of clothes. Women's fashion has always reflected changes in women's status and roles in society as well as it played a key role in the history of women's liberation movement and participation in political activities. Nevertheless, the fashion trend of Korea in the early 20th century, an era of social turbulence in Korea, has yet to receive due attention by prior studies. The previous studies covering this period of time merely examined and showed what the trends were like in those days (Kim, Q 2005., Back and Lee., 1999.). The studies by Lee, J. (1991), Lee and Kim (1989) and Jung, M.(1989) covered various kinds of Fashion Adoption Theory explaining the theories and phenomena on the flow of fashion in respect of social psychology. Such studies analyzing the fashion trend of certain times through Fashion Adoption Theory are only limited in the given region such as in a certain country (Yang and Park., 2015., Kwon, M., 2008., Jeon, S., 2000., Park, M., 1996.) or in the same cultural boundary (Yang and Park., 2015., Kim, M., 2015., Seo, Y., 2004., Jeon, S., 2000., Kim, J., 1998.) Thus, studies on the adoption of flow of fashion among different countries and cultures are next to none.

The aim of this study is to compare and analyze the fashion trends and to understand the related factors of the two different countries, Korea and the United States which are geographically far-distant. This research demonstrates how American culture had influenced the dramatic and dynamic changes in women's fashion in Korea during the 20th century.

The first United States expedition to Korea (the Shinmiyangyo) took place in 1871, followed by which a trade treaty between Korea and the United States was joined in 1882. With this treaty agreement, mutual friendship and extraterritorial rights for American citizens in Korea were established. The first American Protestant medical missionary and a diplomat to Korea was Horace Newton Allen in 1884. The early American missionaries brought changes to premodern Korea (the Choseon

Dynasty) especially in women's education. They founded schools for young Korean women in the early 1900s. Such political and social influence of the States on Korea was quite notable in the fashion trend of Korea. During this early industrialization period (in the late Choseon Dynasty), women's fashion in Korea had been largely influenced by westerners from the US and its influences had persisted after the Korean War in the 1950s through the 1990s largely due to the close military alliance between the US and Korea.

II. Methods and Procedures

This study is focussed on understanding the influence of fashion trend in the United States upon Korean fashion in the twentieth century. In doing so, raw materials including relevant historic pictures were collected from the literature and the web sites to be analysed. It was analyzed in order of finding out trend of western styles and comparing it with Korea's historical photos with clothing which has similar styles

III. Results

Thousands of miles apart from each other, the United States had a strong impact on Korean fashion in the twentieth century. As a result, a lot of similarities are seen in both countries' fashion in those days. The main results of the study are summarized as the following five issues.

1. The Emergence of Women Missionaries

First, the adoption of western dress was found to have occurred in Korean society. "EwhaHakdang" (Ewha Girls' School; today, Ewha Women's University) was the first women's educational institution founded by Mary Scranton, who was the first representative of Women's Foreign Missionary Society to Korea in 1886. Early US missionaries established churches, Sunday schools, hospitals, and so on to provide education to children

especially to women who, back in the 1880's Korean society, were not even recognized by their own names, only as someone's daughter, sister, or mother.

The US missionaries in the late 1890s and the early 1900s in Korea were involved in social work establishing schools, relief houses, and medical works, etc. Figure 1 and 2 are the pictures of American missionaries including Mary Scranton wearing western style dresses. Owing to American missionaries, such western style one-piece dresses later became very common daily clothes for Korean women.

Figure 3 is a picture of a Korean lady wearing a one-piece dress and a jacket similar to those of American missionaries. This Korean lady is *Cha Mirisa*(1878~1955), influenced by the early missionaries who came to Korea in the late 19th century, devoted her life to women's movement such as women's general

education, participation in economic activities, and vocational education.

Figure 4 is a picture of *Yoon Korea*, who was an educator and a social worker in the late The Great Korean Empire and later under the colony of Japan. Her maiden name was *Kim, Korea*. She became *Yoon Korea* as she got married to *Yoon Chi-o*, who posted a public advertisement of soliciting a spouse for the first time in Korea, which she applied for. *Yoon Korea* (1891~1913) was the first person who adopted western dress in 1899 and as a social activist, she worked to promote women's education. The western dress and the hat that she was wearing is a precious record in the history of fashion.

It shows how the women missionaries from the United States who wore 1920s' Art Nouveau style dresses typically composed of blouses with bishop sleeves adorned with ruffles and frills and bell skirts widely



Figure 1. Mary Scranton (1904)
-<http://www.culturecontent.com>



Figure 2. The U.S. Missionaries (1900)
-<http://www.culturecontent.com>



Figure 3. Cha Mirisa. (1878~1955)
-<http://m.dspress.org/news/articleView.html?idxno=2333>



Figure 4. Yoon Korea. (1891~1913)
-<http://www.ktnews.com>

affected normal Korean women in their fashion trend. This is an example of Trickle Down Theory that social leaders and higher social class affect the public in their preference of fashion.

2. Emergence of Modern Girls (“New Women or Shinyoja”)

During the Colonial Korea era (1910–1945), even though Korean women’s education and social activities were extremely restricted, a few women of the upper class pursued their education abroad such as in the United States or Japan. They were called the “New Women or Shinyoja”. The New Women became a social icon showing a new female identity of modernism. They supported feminism and actively protested against the traditional marital institution in the early 20th century. They suggested a more comfortable and practical outfit for Korean women to improve their hygiene, health, and self-image.

A good example of these New Women was *Choi Seunghi*(1911~1969). She studied modern dance in Japan and appeared in the first coffee commercial Figure 5. She is showing off her perfect fit wearing a cloche hat and a flapper style dress in Figure 7 and 8.

Another example of so called Shinyoja, *Na Hyeseok*

(1896~1948) was a feminist, poet, writer, painter, educator, and journalist Figure 8. She often raised gender inequality issues in her work and challenged patriarchal gender roles and male-oriented mentality of Korean society at the time.

Figure 9 shows Princess *Deokhye* (1912~1989), who was a Shinyoja and also a member of Royal family, wearing western style clothes. Princess *Deokhye* was a daughter of King *Gojong* (the last emperor of the Great Korean Empire) wearing a flapper style dress and a cloche Figure 9. The flapper fashion style that was popular not only in the United States in 1920s, but the entire Europe as well, which affected Korean New Women who studied abroad to the States or Japan. Cloches and low waist one piece style or flapper style dress worn by Shinyoja were also easily found in the fashion trend of normal women in the late Great Korean Empire.

3. The Effects of Fashionists on the Media—AFKN and Hollywood Movies

After the Korean War, a large number of US troops stationed in Korea and American pop music was introduced to Korean society by means of AFKN radio and television broadcasting Figure 10, 11. Famous US



Figure 5. Choi Seunghi Appearing in a Coffee Commercial (1940)

-https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choi_Seung-hee



Figure 6. Choi Seunghi Wearing a Fur Coat(1940)

-<https://cecilianam.wordpress.com>



Figure 7. Choi Seunghi Wearing a Cloche(1929)

-http://www.noonbit.co.kr/special_5.html

singers such as Nat King Cole, Marilyn Monroe, and Louis Armstrong held shows in Korea for the US Army. Marilyn Monroe came to Korea in 1954 to perform for the US army serving in Korea Figure 12, 13.

In 1957, the US troops began their radio service, American Forces Korea Network, and in 1959, television service followed. Open auditions were also held to recruit musicians to perform at the US army clubs. Since Korea was impoverished after the Korean War, skilled Korean singers regarded performing for the US troops as

a good means to earn money. The shows at the US army clubs became so popular. The performance at the US army clubs provided an opportunity for Korean artists to gain exposure to Western pop music such as country, rhythm and blues, and rock 'n' roll.

A famous Korean singer who worked for US Army left a remarkable footprint in Korean fashion history. She is *Yoon Bokhui* (1946~present). *Yoon Bokhui* was a singer performed at the US army clubs and was the first fashionist who introduced mini skirts to the Korean fashion society when she came back to Korea after performing at a show in the United States Figure 14.

Figure 15 is a picture of *Kim Sisters* (Korean women's band established in 1953) was the first Korean women's band and performed for the US army in Korea and overseas. In 1959, the *Kim Sisters* went to Las Vegas and became the first Korean artist to release an album in the US pop music market.

Through the modern American culture depicted in Hollywood movies, the new industrialism arrived in Korea during the 1960s and 70s Figure 16. Hollywood movies became big hits drawing hundreds of people to the theaters in major cities in Korea including *A Street Car Named Desire*, *The Godfather*, *Bugsy*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Waterloo Bridge*, *Giant*, *Sabrina*, *Cassablanca*, *The King and I*, *Roman Holiday*, etc.



Figure 8.
Shinyoja - Na Hyeseok(1927)
-<http://www.culturecontent.com>



Figure 9.
Princess Deokhye Wearing
a Flapper Style Dress
-<http://www.k-heritage.tv>



Figure 10. AFKN TV Stations, (1957) Chosun News
-<http://kusec.tistory.com/entry/AFKN>



Figure 11. AFKN Radio Stations
-<http://kusec.tistory.com/entry/AFKN>



Figure 12.
Performance in Korea of Marilyn Monroe 1. (1954, 2, 16).
-<https://kknews.cc/entertainment/blona9.html>



Figure 13.
Performance in Korea of Marilyn Monroe 2. (1954, 2, 16).
-<https://kknews.cc/entertainment/blona9.html>



Figure 14. Yoon Bokhui, Supposed to be the first Korean who worn mini skirts, (1968).
-<http://beautyk.tistory.com/entry>



Figure 15. Kim Sisters, Performing. (1978).
-<http://pictori.net/library/15/216>



Figure 16. Hollywood Movies Screened in the 1960s in Korea (1960)
-<http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0923063498&code=11171398&sid1=col>

In addition, Hollywood movie star, Audrey Hepburn's elegant style, called the 'Hepburn' style became style icons and adopted by many women in Korea Figure 17. Figure 17 has a group of Korean chic ladies wearing Jackie style or Hepburn style. *Park Heon-ok* is found among them, who had won a Korean beauty pageant, Miss Korea. *Park Hyeon-ok* won Miss Korea at the 1957, wearing a Jackie style two-piece dress.

Figure 18 shows the first Korean fashion show. The main concept of the show is Jackie look or Hepburn

style. In Figure 19 and 20, a famous Korean model and movie star in those days is making poses wearing a typical Hepburn style two-piece dress

American singers and entertainers visiting US military posts and bases in Korea affected Korean singers who worked for the US military posts and bases in their fashion trends. Hollywood films distributed in Korea played a significant role in the change of public fashion trends in Korea. This accounts for the Trickle Across Theory that members of the same class affect each other.



Figure 17.
Korean Chic Women Wearing Hepburn Look Dresses(1956)
 -<https://ifwartistsblog.wordpress.com>



Figure 18.
The First Korean Fashion Show (1956)
 -<https://ifwartistsblog.wordpress.com>



Figure 19.
Korean Model
Wearing Hepburn Looking Dress (1958)
 -<https://kpopreader.wordpress.com>



Figure 20.
Um Angran;
Korean Movie Star Wearing a Dress in Hepburn Style (1958)
 -<https://kpopreader.wordpress.com>

4. Following First Lady's Fashion

Jacqueline Kennedy who was First Lady of the United States played a great role in American fashion history in characterizing what American fashion is like. As the mistress of the White House, she made a grave impact on the fashion trend in the small country in Asia. Her fashion style was especially followed by Korean ladies who wore formal attire.

Jackie look was not only pursued by Korean models and movie stars, but also by the First Lady Figure 22. Korean First Lady, *Yuk Youngsoo*(1962~1974), who usually loved to wear *Hanbok*-Korean traditional clothes, sometimes wore western couture especially Jackie style. Such leading fashionists' love of western clothes especially Hollywood style largely influenced the way people wear in Korea.

5. The Acceptance of Working Girl fashion Shown in American Television Series

During the 1980s, American television series were popular in Korea including *Charlie's Angels*, *The Bionic Women*, *The Six Million Dollar Men*, *Wonder woman*, *Heart to Heart*, and so on Figure 23. Most heroines in these TV series were independent and professional career women who were highly admired by Korean young women Figure 24. The professional looks worn by actresses were androgynous and unisex looks, sophisticated looks, and power shoulder styles, which became very popular among Korean young career women and college students Figure 25, 26. Such a tendency seems to explain the Trickle Across Theory that owing to mass production, mass marketing, and mass media, fashions move horizontally between similar social classes rather than vertically from one level to another.



Figure 21. Jacqueline Kennedy, America's First Lady in Those Days
-<https://www.richardmagazine.com/jackie-kennedy-fashion>

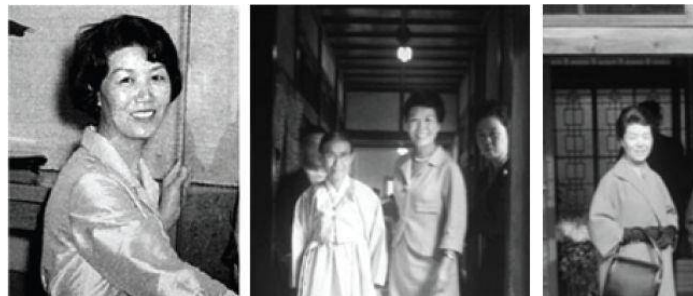


Figure 22. Korean First Lady, Yuk Young soo in Western Style Dress
 -http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/25/2012052501378.html



Figure 23.
 American Television Series “Charlie’s Angels (1976-1981)”, “The Bionic Woman (1976-1978)”, and “Wonder Woman, (1975)” Were Broadcast on Korean Networks.
 -<http://pictori.net/library/15/216>



Figure 24.
 Young Female College Students in the 1980s. (1980)
 -<http://www.koreatimes.co.kr>



Figure 25.
 A Coca-Cola Commercial in Korea, (1988)
 -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT2H26VGX2U>



Figure 26.
 Korean Young Actresses in the 1980s. (1980)
 -<http://www.koreatimes.co.kr>



Figure 27.
 Flapper Style of the 1920s
 -<http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=diakcns&logNo=5013550>














Figure 28.
 American Woman in Comedy Program (1980)
 -<http://pictori.net/library/15/216>



Figure 29.
 Korean Young Woman in the 1980s. (1980)
 -<http://www.koreatimes.co.kr>

Table 1. Comparison of the Two Countries' Fashion Trends by the Factors

Factors	The U.S.	Korea	Backgrounds	Relevant Theory
The Emergence of American Missionaries			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The emergence of American missionaries who wore western dresses 	Trickle Down Theory
The Emergence of the Modern Girls			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expanded Education - Generous acceptance of western culture - Returning home of those who studied abroad to the States or Japan 	Trickle Down Theory
The Effects of Fashionists on the Media		 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American pop music being introduced to Korea through American Forces - Distribution of Hollywood films 	Trickle Across Theory
Following First Lady's Fashion			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of Jackie fashion 	Trickle Down Theory
Acceptance of Working Girls			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced image of working girls with American TV series 	Trickle Across Theory

* Note: Sources of figures presented as example in Table 1 are presented on pages 82-88

IV. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of fashion trend over time and distance. Geographically thousands of miles apart, the U.S. strongly influenced the way Koreans choose to wear, which is revealed by the references and historic pictures collected from the literature and the web sites. The results of the study are summarized as the five issues Table 1: First, the emergence of female missionaries from the United States. The American missionaries who worked in the late Daehan Jeguk performed a great role in delivering western culture to Korea. The fashion of those were naturally accepted and followed by the public of Korea. Second, as the opportunities of education increase, New Women who studied abroad introduced western fashion to Koreans when they came back to Korea. They were more open to western culture than other fellow Koreans and they moderately harmonized their own Korean sentiment and western culture, which mitigated cultural shock and helped other Koreans accept western culture. Third, the effect of fashionists on the media. Singers who worked for the US armies stationed in Korea and movie stars who appeared in Hollywood movies aggressively affected Korean pop culture and fashion trends in Korea. Fourth, following First Lady of the United States. She was the influential figure in those days and the fashion leader as well. She was only one person, yet the significance was enormous. Lastly, the Acceptance of Working Girl fashion shown in American television series. American working girls shown on American TV series were highly admired by Korean young ladies, and the fashion of American working girls became a big fad among Korean young ladies.

The results of this research suggest that the two countries' fashion shared similar trends, and the Fashion Adoption Theory can be applied to explain how the US fashion styles influenced young fashionable women in Korea. Further research is called for to look at fashion interactions across different countries and cultures in the contemporary globalized world.

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