

KOREAN WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN CHOSUN-DYNASTY EXPRESSED THROUGH BEDDING

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The most important roles of Korean women in the Chosun-Dynasty (A.D.1392-1910) were wise wife and good mother. These roles were so emphasized that they had to stay at home as a homemaker. Identity is the expression of oneself. Korean Women expressed their identities through household goods or furniture they had and used frequently. Bedding was the most intimate among household goods.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Korean women's identity expressed through bedding. For the purpose of this study, a documentary research method was used. The major findings were as follows:

- 1) Bedding included mattress, quilt, pillow, and curtains. Various patterns were used on bedding to communicate with God at first and then later to express what they wish and want. Patterns were embroidered in many colors. They can be classified into patterns of animal, plants, natural beings like water, rocks, clouds, sun and moon, geometry, and Chinese characters.
- 2) Mattresses and quilts were made in red, or blue. Red was believed to expel evils and blue symbolized vitality. Patterns embroidered on mattresses and quilts symbolized a long and happy life.
- 3) Patterns embroidered on pads attached to both sides of a pillow expressed wishes of long and happy life, the birth of many sons and close relationships with their husbands. These patterns were a little bit different by gender of users. For example, tigers were embroidered only on men's pillows because wives expected their husbands to be as brave as a tiger. Pillows for two persons-husband and wife (about 20 inches long) were made for newly-wed couples.
- 4) Curtains were made in red, blue, yellow, white, or black which were based on the Principles of Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth). Patterns of animal, plants, natural beings like water, rocks, clouds, sun and, moon, geometry, and Chinese characters were embroidered. The curtains were very diverse and unique because women expressed their creativity and art on their own way through curtains.

In conclusion, the interests of Korean women were not pursuit of individual happiness nor self-actualization but sacrifice and service for their family members. They expressed their wishes through patterns and colors of bedding. Patterns and colors symbolized long and happy life, the birth of many sons and close relationships with their husbands and so on. These are the identities of Korean women in the Chosun-Dynasty. These embroidered patterns and colors of bedding have been through many changes because the current status and roles of Korean women are different from those of women in the Chosun-Dynasty. Researches to find Korean women's identity – what is current Korean women's identity and how do they express their identity through household goods and furniture – are needed.