



■ Compiled By: Suzy Guttler

The Korean Wedding

In Korea, the marriage between a man and woman represents the joining of two families, rather than the joining of two individuals.

As such, the event was often called Taerye (Great Ritual), and people from all over participated.

Steeped in traditional Confucian values, the ceremonies and events surrounding the actual marriage were long and elaborate, from the pairing of the couple to the rituals performed after the ceremony.

Professional matchmakers paired up likely candidates for marriage, with the new couple often meeting for the first time at their wedding! The families considered many factors in the decision, consulting with fortune tellers for predictions about the couple's future life together. During the Chosun period, people married in their early teens, with the girl often being several years older than the boy.

Wedding Attire

For over 2,000 years, the traditional Korean costume, the Hanbok, has been worn by men, women and children. Originally, the Hanbok was made out of white cotton, silk or a scratchy coarse fabric called hemp. Today Koreans wear Hanboks in many colors and types of fabrics.

The Bride's Attire

The women's attire includes a chogori (short jacket with long sleeves) with 2 long ribbons which are tied to form the otkorum. A chima, a full length, high waisted wrap around skirt is worn. Boat shaped shoes made of silk, are worn with white cotton socks.

The bride's attire might include a white sash with significant symbols or flowers. A headpiece or crown may also be worn.

The norigae is a hanbok decoration which has been worn by all classes of Korean women for centuries. It is tied to the skirt or the ribbon on the jacket. The knot on the top is called the Maedup.

The Groom's Attire

A jacket (chigori) and trousers (paji) and an overcoat (turumagi) are worn. The jacket has loose sleeves, the trousers are roomy and tied with straps at the ankles. A vest may be worn over the shirt. A black hat (moja) could be worn.

Wedding Feast and Reception

The wedding feast or reception, (kyorhon p'royon) can be a mix of traditional and western cultures.

At a traditional wedding feast, you would expect to find bulgogi (marinated barbecue beef strips), kalbi (marinated short ribs), a variety of kimchee (pickled cabbage with a variety of spices, with other ingredients such as radishes, seafood). There will be many accompanying bowls of sauces for dipping.

The meal is always accompanied with a vast quantity of white, sticky rice (pap) as well as kimpap which is rice, egg, spinach and other ingredients rolled in seaweed and sliced into 1-inch rounds. Mandu, a dumpling filled with an egg roll filling - cabbage, carrots, meat, spinach, peanut butter, garlic, onions, deep fried might also be served. Soup will be offered, very frequently a kimchee type, or a rice cake soup (rice dumplings with chicken broth), or Twoenjang guk, a fermented soybean paste soup with clams.

Also popular are a light broth boiled from dried anchovies and vegetable soups rendered from dried spinach, sliced radish or dried seaweed. Steamed rice cakes (ttok) sometimes embellished with aromatic mugwort leaves or dusted with toasted soy, barley, or millet flour are presented as tasty ritual food.

A large variety of fruits and pastries will be offered for dessert. A spoon and chopsticks are used for eating.

Although Koreans have kept several aspects of the traditional ceremony, most modern ceremonies resemble Western marriage ceremonies more than traditional Korean ones. However, many folk villages and museums across the country regularly perform ceremonies to keep the traditions alive.