The Symbolic Meanings of Louis XVI's Costumes in the Portraits

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Abstract
This study examines King Louis XVI costumes and his portraits according to symbolic meanings. This study analysis of costumes comes from portraits related various domestic and overseas literature, preliminary study papers, and web sites. Omnipotence, activity, nobility, openness and benevolence were distinguished in the symbolic meaning expressed in the portraits of King Louis XVI. Louis XVI in a portrait was drawn with god or expressed as a martyr and symbolically showed the omnipotence of god. Louis XVI was symbolized as almighty god by maximizing the authority and dignity of the king through the hands of justice that were used as a background or portrait accessory and a costume with the symbol of House of Bourbon. Kings of many generations were expressed as authoritative through portraits. However, Louis XVI showed a proletarian aspect in ordering portraits to reflect the daily working image of communicating with citizens. Active images such as the king riding a horse or administering the state affairs were emphasized in a political and military perspective; in addition, the benevolence of the king was symbolically presented through a family portrait. This symbolically signified that the king is a warm-hearted person who passionately takes care of state affairs and loves the people through a noble element coming from pastel colors and attributes of red colors. Historically, the political incompetence and indifference of kings was fragmentally emphasized; however, these portraits considered the king as one who tried to fulfill duties as the true king with a great interest in politics and the people.

Key words: Louis XVI, Costume, Portrait, Symbolic meaning

I. Introduction
Louis XVI who has been evaluated as weak and foolish king and Queen Marie Antoinette who has been recognized as representative figure of extravagance historically are being revalued recently, and a research on kings has meaning as welcoming 100th year of establishment of Korea-France diplomatic relations. Rococo culture was prevalent in the 18th century where kings existed and as the French Revolution broke out in the latter part, it is a very important time in the political aspect and the costume aspect. 18th century of Rococo era became an opportunity of developing a portrait as a salon culture was in trend. a portrait, which is realistic expression of precisely portrayed costumes, is the basics of costume analysis and it is one of the accurate reference as historical data. Although a portrait is a root of important costume analysis, studies about portraits of Queen Elizabeth (Bae, 2000), Queen Marie Antoinette (Kim, 2011) and Queen Victoria (Linada, 2001) are insufficient. Moreover, studies have been focusing on female costumes such as expressive effect of Marie Antoinette costume (Kim & Trout, 2010), Marie Antoinette costume based on formativeness (Kim, 2010) and design of women costumes (Cho, 2006; Nam, 2009) even though both male and female costumes must be considered to accurately analyze characteristics of costumes of that time for a costume study with 18th centry as a background. Studies about male costumes of the 18th century are insignificant and especially analysis on male portrait does not exist. Studies on male costumes in addition to female costumes are necessary to

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completely understand costumes of one era and a study about the king is important as data of male costume in the 18th century as the king who played an important role in the 18th century, which went through many changes, was a fashion leader. Therefore, this study is to analyze symbolic meanings of costumes through a portrait of kings that has never been covered. The purpose of this study is to use it as basic data for studies about costume design for a historical play or about kings by considering symbolic meanings presented in a portrait of kings. Costumes in a portrait have an important meaning in analyzing a symbolic meaning of a portrait, but the background expressed in a portrait also has an important effect in understanding symbolic meaning of a portrait. Thus, this study had included a background surrounding persons besides from costumes expressed in a portrait. This study attempted analysis of costume from portraits related literatures, France's Rococo history, the history of costumes of the era of Louis XVI of France, costume figures, and preliminary study paper of symbolic meanings of costumes presented in the portraits (Bae, 2000; Kim, 2011), and web sites of Louis XVI's portraits etc.

II. Theoretical Background

1. Socio-Cultural Background

Rococo style and a salon culture of aristocrats were in trend in the 18th century when kings existed. France had a great influence in costumes of Europe as they represented European culture in the early 18th century, however, a practical English style rose at the latter half along with collapse of French royal authority. Therefore, this study included the background surrounding persons besides from costumes presented in a portrait. Louis XV, succeeding Louis XIV, had rule for 30 years including the regency period but he diminished royal authority with incompetent reign. In international political aspect, the fight began in 1754 due to competition between England and France over the New World was progressed in Europe and America and it had ended with victory of England. Under this situation, the king who succeeded the throne in 1774 after death of Louis XV had tried reformation of criminal law in order to realize the Enlightenment philosophy and humanitarism. However, it could not be successfully reformed and it aggravated economy and overburdened tax of people as supporting the American Revolution. The king tried to burden taxes to aristocrat class but aristocrats have opposed to it and convoked the Estates-General in 1789, and common people have claimed their rights and entered into enactment of constitution by forming the National Assembly. When royalists have mobilized the military, the crowd stormed the Bastile, which symbolizes tyranny of the king, and the revolution broke out. In the middle of the 18th century, Rousseau advocated the Enlightenment, which served a momentum of the French Revolution in 1789 (Bae et al., 2008). Fight with powers who worried about spread of post revolution continued, and Napoleon suppressed the revolt broke out along with conflict between revolutionary groups. Rococo culture disappeared along with fall of feudal aristocrats due to the French Revolution and the existing the bourgeois class, new intellectual class, and specialized work had appeared as new aristocrat, the new ruling class, and created a culture that reflects their preference on behalf of the old aristocrats. Colors of the 18th century use soft colors of high brightness compared to dark color tones of the 17th century, Blue color was in trend along with red color in the 18th century as it has been considered as important and beautiful color as the color of the Virgin Mary and king since the 12th century (Michel, 2002).

2. Characteristics of Costumes in Rococo Era

Unlike a natural costume style of the early Rococo era, disposition of the upper class of pursuing pleasure and artistic sense had developed French costume into fascinating and splendid as entering the middle of the era. In the era of kings, an art form that is mainly formed with concise and graceful classical decorations was developed through influence of opposition to splendid Rococo culture in the era of Louis XV and excavation of ancient ruins such as Pompeii. Three-piece suits changed gradually in the 1760s and 1770s. The more formal coat, with its large cuffs and pocket flaps, was increasingly replaced by the frock coat in England (Payne et al., 1992). After 1770s, horizontal and vertical lines
were used instead of complicated curves, and plant patterns and motif of rocaille have returned to a natural form of excluding decorative richness. Diamond and cutsteel were in trend (Hong, 2006). Curvy silhouettes became more straight as classicism based on England was united with the elegant and splendid Rococo style. Pastel colors and thin fabrics were preferred for costumes. Flower patterns or stripes were used, and tranquil patterns have emphasized feminine feeling. Blue color that has been in trend since the 18th century was preferred color of Europeans as it was used in fabric and clothes most. Red color in harmony with nature, which gives strong energy, has been used as meanings of activity, passion, courage, health, affection, and revolution. Before the 18th century, dull blue color with grayish tinge was used by blue collar and the upper class wore vivid, deep, and dark blue colors rather than light blue or sky blue. However, light blue began to gain popularity in a place in the early 18th century and it was spread to aristocrat and bourgeoisie classes since the middle of the 18th century. ‘Burning open house’ color that aristocrats of the late 18th century was a red color like the flames and achromatic colors were mainly used in the time of revolution. Use of splendid surface ornaments over a decorative material was standing out as luxuriousness of surface represented high status in costumes of the 18th century. Costumes of this time formed strong contrast between extremely splendid court costumes and frugal costumes of common people. A costume was a visible symbol of social status and it showed that a wearer's status is high when it is more detailed. High hat decorations with feathers were in trend for both male and female at this time and a shoes buckle covering the entire top of the foot appeared in the 1770s, and it became the basic item of outfit until the 1790s. Architecture, furniture, and pottery of the East influenced European artists and craftsmen as an opportunity for Europeans to contact with architecture, furniture, and pottery artists of the Orient has increased. For the case of menswear, splendid decoration was reinforced in the middle of the 18th century and a habit à la francaise that is embroidered with a gold thread on expensive fabrics such as silk and velvet was in trend. Later, simplification tendency was shown in menswear due to rebound of Rococo and a form of preferring functionality and straightness was showing with the influence of military uniform of the British army. Vests in a high grade silk or a woolen fabric material with diverse embroidery decorations were splendid, and a gilet of people's style in the late 18th century was spread from the common people to aristocrats. Tight culottes of knee length and wide pantaloons of ankle length were worn. Citizens resisting against aristocrats wearing culottes at the time of the French Revolution have worn pantaloons.

3. Life of the Louis XVI and Costume Analysis

Louis XVI, full name of Louis Auguste, was born from the House of Bourbon and he ruled French kingdom from 1774 to 1792. He worked hard to reform the French society but he was last Louis to be executed by decapitation after abdicated with the French Revolution. The king is the grandson of Louis XV and he was born as the third son of Louis de France and Marie Antoinette Josephe de Saxe. The king was married to Marie-Antoinette, the princess of Habsbur Haus of Austria in 1770. Hereby, House of Bourbon and Habsbur Haus, which used to fight over succession of Austria, became one and were to rise as the central power of Europe. He was accessed when power of king became weak after death of Louis XV and became the king of France in 1774. The young king earned favorable comments as a gentle and austere person compared to vanity and extravagance of Louis XIV and XV, and he came to throne with expectations and blessings as a new hope of France which was going through disorder with many problems. The king was sensitive, keen, and frugal. He especially liked hunting and read quite a lot. He sometimes made precise machines by himself with outstanding craftsmanship. The king did not enjoy extravagant life compared to previous kings and he only love his wife only without paramour. He was recognized as kind, honest, and hope of a new generation to many people but it was inadequate to win through the crisis of that time. After accession, he tried to abolish tax exemption privilege of aristocrats and to realize equality of taxation in order to overcome financial crisis and to promote reform of governmental affairs. Eventually, the French Revolution has begun with the storming of
the Bastille. The king failed to escape to an overseas country, received a trial in 1793, and was executed. The king squarely maintained his dignity as king to the last even in the difficult times before execution. After the revolution, the French monarchy fell and Republic was born. Around 1780s, the king selected a frac habit (frock coat) as an official costume of a court for simplification of costumes and called it as frac habit. The king wears a vest with splendid embroideries and a simple gilet. A coat was used to show authority and luxuriousness, and fur was decoratated in the entire inner part or the edge of the coat. Aristocratical culottes that the king wore formed a contrast to simple pantaloons. Interests in hair ornaments were high at this time and men also used various wigs such as bob wig, catogan wig, back wig, pigtail wig, and ramillie wig. Both male and female scattered flour of various colors as an etiquette in a salon and they used white colors to be seen as wise. Height of heels for shoes became low during the middle unlike the early part, very light and low-heel pumps were in trend at the latter days, and jockey boots of knee length were worn for hunting or travel.

III. The Symbolic Meaning of Louis XVI’s Costumes in the Portraits

Omnipotence, activity, nobility, openness and benevolence were emphasized in symbolic meaning of costumes of king expressed in the portraits.

1. Omnipotence

Fig. 1 is an official portrait, painted by Joseph, of the king wearing a coronation costume. The king is in an apprentice knight costume of the Order of Holy Spirit, which is given to French king after coronation held in Cathedral of Reims, and wearing a blue cloak with massive volume with white sable fur and lily flower embroidery representing a royal family. The background of portrait drawn with thick circumference reminds a magnificent palace, and it gives strong feeling by portraying the king standing in front of dignified throne. Eyes of the king overlooking are even expressed as a prophet who predicts future. This pose of king in the portrait is connoting authority and even omnipotence. Gold has been mainly used by king and feudal aristocrats and as a symbol of religion of Europe and political reign since gold has been representing god. Gold color representing god and gold representing eternity are showing omnipotence of the absolute. A gold crown representing royal authority and a scepter of lily flower decoration representing political power are showing off absolute authority and sense of existence. A gold necklace with a large and splendid medal of the Order of the Holy Spirit that crosses the shoulder is strongly showing presence of the absolute through its material and size. The king is bearing the sword Joyeuse for coronation, which is the sword of Charlemagne bequeathed to French kings for generations. Like this, all decorative elements are symbolizing signified and omnipotent image of the king by emphasizing sacred, noble, and absolute status.

The king in Fig. 2 is showing the best times of life as the French king as he is expressed in noble and majestic attitude. In particular, a lily flower pattern of House of Bourbon, which is the symbol of France before the revolution, is embroidered all over the blue cloak in a yellow thread and gives absolute power through contract of colors and entire patterns. Authority as the king was represented through wearing necklaces of the Order of the Holy Spirit and Order of the Golden Fleece. A hat decorated with high feathers, a white sable fur cloak, and pumps with a buckle embedded with diamond in painting also represent high status. Hands of justice representing the crown and jurisdiction are on a chair covered with cloth embroidered with patterns of House of Bourbon. These symbols of a royal family is representing prestige and dignity of the king as a monarch. Authority of the king is presented through longer neckwear compared to the coronation costume at the time of early accession and by wearing 2 necklaces. He is wearing an elegant blue colored cloak with sable fur and golden lily pattern as a cape of covering the front chest. Omnipotence was displayed through a gold color that symbolizes eternity. Omnipotence of the king was maximized through a large size of cloak, sable fur, and the entire pattern of House of Bourbon.

Fig. 3 is the figure of king wearing arms and armor. The king in Fig. 3 is the goddess of wisdom and he is imposingly standing together with the god of war Athens (Minerva) as holding a spear. This, that the
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king is expressed equally as god, symbolizes the king is a owner of almighty power like god.

<Fig. 4> is satirizing the king with other animal. The king is expressed as an omnipotent being through satirization of the king who is expressed as a martyr after Louis XVI’s death.

The king is wearing a gilet and heading to a guillotine. Major figures in the foreground are clearly painted in <Fig. 5>, but the public gathered at the background together with soldiers are portrayed vaguely. Benazech (1767-1794, Charles Benazech) is portraying the king as a martyricon of Royalists by expressing the king who is forced to an execution ground by soldiers as reverent and calm in addition to painting the people, which is the main agent of the revolution, vaguely (Hong, 2010). The modest costume with no embroidery is expressing a difficult situation.

2. Activity

The king is giving orders to Captain Pérouse (1741-1788) and discussing a foreign policy in <Fig. 6>. It shows active sides of the king through enthusiastic participation in state affairs. The king is wearing habit à la française, bag wig and shoes with buckle which were in trend at the time. The king is giving orders to Captain Pérouse (1741-1788) and discussing a foreign policy in <Fig. 6>. It shows active sides of the king through enthusiastic participation in state affairs. The king is wearing a bag wig and shoes with buckle which were in trend at the time.

A figure of the king riding a horse and leading the army with a sword in a hand symbolizes an image of constitutional monarch who passionately leads through red colored clothes. The cross of the Order of the Holy Spirit was attached to the chest and the king is wearing riding coat, jockey boots and a tricone hat that soldiers wear. <Fig. 7> symbolized the role as a ruler of governing country and the role as king of commanding the military and leading the war. These active scenes showed that it is only one side to think the king is irresponsible and is interested nothing but locks rather than paying...
attention, and it expressed true side of the king as a ruler through diverse activities of managing state affairs. The king's active sides are well expressed through confident and imposing pose of Louis XVI that harmonizes with red costume. The riding coat of king had emphasized active aspect through a plain and simple material.

The king is wearing a clock of purple color and a habit à la française is embroidered with a golden thread on an expensive red velvet material and a short white vest that is splendidly braided with a golden thread along the pocket or front chest line to tail line. The order of the holy cross is attached on the chest and a purple coat is slipped on the shoulder. Red color in <Fig. 8> (Shinjinbutsuouraisha, 2010) gives strong energy of human and it symbolizes meanings of activity, passion, and courage (Cho & Lee, 2004). The king tried to emphasize active and passionate side as king and to express strong energy of human through red colored coat such as the color of burning opera house (Cho & Lee, 2004). Bluesish colors were appear (Kim, 2011) but the king had portrait paintings with red colored clothes rather than noble blue color. A habit à la française of red color had emphasized an active side.

3. Nobility

<Fig. 9> is young prince days before becoming the king and it shows dignity through calm and intellectual image despite of a young age. A graceful and noble attitude is signifying a noble status (Caroline, 2007). Costume is richly embroidered in silver-gilt thread. Nobility was also expressed through gold thread patterns on a costume as gold color represents nobility apart from secular king.

<Fig. 10> shows the king is showing gentleness by wearing a habit à la française of a soft color with light pink in the portrait as refined pastel colors along with blue color were popular in the 18th century. On the chest of a habit à la française with embroidery on a noble colored velvet, symbol of the Order of the Holy Spirit holy knight cross and order of the golden fleece is attached and showing nobility of one's status. Silk materials represents nobility, too.

<Fig. 11> shows the king wearing a blue habit à la française which was in trend using blue color for a costume symbolizes high standing. Under this influence, Louis XVI also wore elegant blue colored costume. As blue color is positively expressed as active, warm, and bright image in a symbolic perspective of Goethe (Johann, 1810/2003) a bright future as the king can be found in blue color of clothes (Boyer, 2006). And or also showed a noble status through the mark of the Order of the Holy Spirit or a maniple.

<Fig. 12> is a oil painting of the king and queen of France by Joseph Hauzinger. The king is showing nobility and gentleness by wearing a habit à la française of a refined color with paler violet in the portrait. Nobility of the upper class was symbolized through splendid embroidery on a silk habit, the Order of the Holy Spirit and the Order of the Fleece were used for nobility. Symbolic effects representing nobility are often emphasized through colors, and a emblem was also used as a symbolic aspect of nobility.
4. Openness

<Fig. 13> is a painting of the king visiting a harbor of France Cherbourg and working on daily business. Open inclination is revealed through this picture as the king allows to paint his daily working images, even though most of paintings of the kings of many generations are splendid portraits that show authority of the king.

<Fig. 14> is a scene where the king is showing compassion to poor people of Versailles in harsh winter. <Fig. 14> proves that the king has a truly open minded personality without displaying authority through portraying the king communicating with people in addition to benevolent side of loving people. Portraits of kings of past are mostly showing authoritative aspects of the king of maintaining dignity, but here, the king is showing free and open tendency by painting daily lives with common people. In this aspect, the king was affectionate about his people and he longed for peaceful country. The king is presenting disparity in social standing through the cloak with fur lining in contrast to shabby clothes of his people. However, the painting is trying to symbolize that openness of the king for trying to get closer to its people with an open attitude beyond disparity in social standing is emphasized.

5. Benevolence

<Fig. 15> is a group portrait that shows the king and queen holding their first son prince Louis Joseph, and families looking over them. <Fig. 15> shows the king wearing a habit à la francaise and a cloak. A group portrait is not common in a royal family of history, but this painting symbolizes an image of the king as a person who cares about family with strong family love by showing the king as the father of one family being happy for the birth of his child. A benevolent image with catholicity of defending the people as a ruler of one country is conveyed by creating an unauthoritative portrait with a strong humane feeling and expressing loving image with a warm heart. In this portrait, the king is emphasizing family love by posing with his two children rather than showing authoritative side. The fact that picture of expressing the king as merciful king after his death was created is supporting benevolence. Costumes in a soft color had expressed a benevolent atmosphere.

<Fig. 16> is a scene of parting from a family. An benevolent side of the king is presented through attachment to his family. The gilet with no embroidery and emblem is expressing a difficult situation. In the late 18th, the gilet of king was influenced by England.

IV. Conclusions

In the symbolic meaning expressed of the portrait of King Louis XVI, omnipotence, activity, nobility, openness and benevolence were distinguished. The Louis XVI in a portrait was drawn with god or expressed as a martyr and symbolically showed omnipotence of god. Gold color symbolizing god and decorative elements using gold which signifies eternity were representing omnipotence of the king. The King Louis XVI was symbolized as almighty god by maximizing authority and dignity of the king through hands of justice that were used as background or accessory of a portrait, crown, scepter, sword, symbol of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the Order of the Holy Spirit cross, sable fur cloak, and costume with a symbol of House of Bourbon. Also, tri-
cone hat with a large feather or shoes with splendid jewel buckles that the king wears showed authority and it played a role of leading fashion. Like this, the king was presented as omnipotent by expressing authority at the full by using symbols to the point of surpassing the limit of authority a man can have. Kings of many generations were expressed as authoritative and dignified in portrait paintings. However, Louis XVI have showed open aspect as ordering to paint their daily working image of communicating with citizens, active sides such as the king riding a horse or administer the affairs of state were emphasized in political and military perspective.

Nobility was expressed through wearing clothes of pastel colors such as pink and blue besides from accessories and benevolence of the king was symbolically presented through a portrait of family. Blue color along with sophisticated pastel colors was especially in trend in the 18th century, but Louis XVI often preferred soft pastel colors or red colored clothes rather than blue color. This symbolically signified that the king is a warm-hearted person who passionately takes care of state affairs and loves its people through a noble element coming from pastel colors and attributes that red color has. Historically, incompetence and indifference in politics of kings were emphasized fragmentally, but active and open sides of the king were expressed in portrait paints. This is something that could not be found in a portrait of kings expressed as authoritative, which focused on disorderly behaviors of kings with women or establishing palaces for prestige of a royal family, and it considered the king as the one who tried to fulfill one’s duties as the true king with great interest in politics and people more than any other kings.

In case of item, omnipotence of the king was maximized through a large size of clock, sable fur, and the entire symbols of House of Bourbon. Nobility of the upper class was symbolized through splendid embroidery on a silk habit à la francaise, and a gilet had emphasized active aspect through a plain and simple material.

With pastel colors that were in trend in 18th century and development of exclusive fabrics, esthetic taste of the era was directly reflected as elegant pastel colors and luxurious costumes that were frequently used in royal costumes.

In the precedent study about portraits, the Queen Marie-Antoinette's esthetic side of artistic taste was emphasized but Louis XVI was differentiated through symbolically highlighting omnipotence. A symbolic meaning presented through activity, nobility, openness and benevolence in the queen was also expressed in Louis XVI's portraits. While the king had symbolically expressed openness of one's status through interchange with people, the queen had shown openness in selection of clothes that is diverging from a traditional custom of men and women or a traditional costume form.

References

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