White Hanbok as an Expression of Resistance in Modern Korea

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Abstract

All aspects of clothing, including color, are a visible form of expression that carries invisible value. The purpose of this work is to study the expression of resistance in the white Hanbok in modern culture, specifically after the 1980s. Koreans have traditionally revered white color and enjoyed wearing white clothes. In Korea, white represents simplicity, asceticism, sadness, resistance against corruption, and the pursuit of innocence.

This paper looks at: (i) the universal and traditional values of the color white, (ii) the significance of traditional white Korean clothing, (iii) the resistance characteristics of white in traditional Korean clothes, and (iv) the aesthetic values of white Hanbok. The white Hanbok often connotes resistance when it is worn in modern Korea. It is worn in folk plays, worn by shamans as a shamanist costume, worn by protestors for anti-establishment movements, and worn by social activists or progressive politicians. The fact that the white Hanbok has lost its position as an everyday dress in South Korea (instead symbolizing resistance when it is worn) is an unusual phenomenon. It shows that the white Hanbok, as a type of costume, is being used as a strong means of expression, following a change in the value of traditional costumes as it take on an expressive function.

Key words: Clothes representing resistance, Resistance, Traditional Korean clothing, White clothes, White Hanbok

I. Introduction

Clothes serve not only the primary function of protecting the wearer from the external environment but also various other functions according to the time, place, and circumstances. In addition, the clothes one wear express the wearer’s personal or social beliefs, values, fashion sense, and even carry more specific messages. Color, which is one of the visual characteristics of clothing, also expresses specific beliefs or values. Barnard (2002, p. 73) wrote:

There are two kinds of explanation commonly given for the origin or generation of meaning. One locates the origin of meaning outside the garment or ensemble, in some external authority like the designer or the wearer. The other locates the generation of meaning in the garment or ensemble itself in textures, colors, and shapes, and the permutations of these colors, shapes, and textures. The situation is complicated by the fact that these two kinds of explanations may be found singly (that is, used on their own in a consistent way) or mixed together.

The meaning of clothes and the changes in the meaning are determined by many factors, including the color, which also affects how something is communicated. Even the same piece of clothing with the same color has different meanings depending on the times, people’s perceptions, the wearer, the viewer, and the designer’s intentions. The purpose of this work is to
study what the color white signifies in Hanbok in modern Korea, especially as a symbol of resistance, and study its intrinsic characteristics.

Koreans have traditionally enjoyed wearing white clothes and have revered the color white. Many religions, including Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, as well as different cultures have regarded white as sacred and noble, but this is especially apparent in the Korean culture, which has traditionally regarded white as a symbol of innocence and nobility. As a result, Koreans used to wear white all throughout their lives: from the moment of their birth until their death. Even though white clothes were banned during the Joseon dynasty, this tradition of wearing white clothes continued until the early 20th century when western clothes were introduced in Korea.

Traditional clothes have historical values as well as contemporary characteristics. Traditional white Korean clothes have usually represented self-reflection and the pursuit of innocence in addition to as a more general symbol of white, including such aspects as purity, nobility, integrity, honesty, and simplicity. Even though in modern Korea white Hanbok has virtually become obsolete and is no longer worn except for the purposes of mourning, we can still sometimes find instances where it is worn for other purposes. What these cases have in common is that they typically involve resistance. It is with respect to this in particular that this study examines traditional white clothing in modern Korea.

Note that in this study, while the term “Hanbok” is mostly used, when referring to the entirety of historical Korean clothing, the expression “traditional Korean clothing” is also used. Many other studies have investigated the colors of Korean traditional clothing or the color white used in Korean traditional clothes. However, these studies have focused on either the beauty or the general symbolic meaning of white clothes. This study is unique in that it examines white Hanbok as an expression of resistance during the modern period, specifically after the 1980s. More specifically, it reviews the general and traditional values of the color white; examines white Hanbok; looks at the meaning of white Hanbok as an expression of resistance; and finally, discusses the background and aesthetic values of white Hanbok.

II. White in Traditional Clothing

1. The Symbolic Meaning and Historic Background of White

Generally, white is associated with positive attributes, such as innocence, elegance, cleanliness, goodness, truth, perfection, and sacredness. On the other hand, it also represents terror, cold, emptiness, defeat, and death. White goes well with any color and functions well as a background color to make other colors stand out. Kandinsky (1941/2007, p. 39) described white as follows: “It is not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities. White has the appeal of the nothingness that is before birth, of the world in the ice age.”

White is one of the oldest symbolic colors in history. In some countries, such as China, Britain, and Indonesia, white has sometimes been associated with death or other negativities. However, in most cultures and religions, white is considered noble and precious. Koreans are widely known to have a tradition of revering white as stated in many historical documents. This stems from their heliolatry and other religions adopted in Korea, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, which have many similarities and have intertwined culturally over the years. Confucianism, which had a significant impact on Korean culture, is about suppressing emotions and personal feelings, and Confucian culture emphasizes morals, formality, and standards. In Confucianism, color is regarded as a symbol of desires that need to be suppressed and, accordingly, white is revered and the use of other primal colors forbidden (gum-chae-saek, no-color philosophy) (Seo, 2007). In addition, Buddhist teaching on voidness (matter itself is void; voidness itself is matter) provided a basis for an aesthetic ground that says, “If you search for beauty, you will not find it. Not searching for beauty is beauty” (Cho, 1999, p. 95). Taoism teaches non-doing, which means self-searching and unselfishness. Chuang-tzu, one of the prominent religious figures in Taoism, explained non-doing in this way: “If you stop, you remain still. Stillness means
emptiness.” Yun (2006, pp. 443–444) later said that “this emptiness equals fullness.” In Buddhism, the pursuit of emptiness and self-control, as well as suppressing emotions or desires, influenced the color of the dress. Taoism’s focus on nature resulted in a preference for natural colors, and the Confucian philosophy of gum-chae-sae (no-color), based on self-control and askesis, resulted in a preference for white clothes (Seo, 2009). Koreans’ perception of colors was influenced by such traditional ideas as “come empty, return empty,” which emphasizes self-control and emptiness. As a result, Koreans have favored natural colors, known as so-sae (color without artificial modification or “natural white”). Influenced by these religions, Koreans sought natural beauty as it is found in nature, without artificial colors or human manipulation, and revered white.

Traditionally, Koreans considered so-sae white because it is close to no color—that is, it is the color of cotton or hemp cloth without any artificial coloring. In the modern world, this color is close to off-white or beige. Therefore, white in traditional Korean clothing varies from pure white to bright ivory or beige, sometimes with a hint of blue. In this study, we also consider so-sae white to be in line with the traditional Korean coloring scheme.

2. The Meaning of White in Korean Traditional Clothing

Koreans traditionally have been known as the “white-clad folk” because they revered white and liked to wear white clothes. Koreans’ esteem for white clothes is recorded in many historical documents, including the chapter of Dongyi in the Book of Wei, from the Records of the Three Kingdoms, which was compiled in the third century China. As seen from these historical documents, wearing white clothes was a very old custom, starting in Samhan and the Proto-Three Kingdoms of Korea (from before Christ to 7 AD). This tradition continued through the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392AD) and the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910). At times in Korean history, white clothes were banned. One example was in the late 13th century when King Chung Yeol in the Goryeo dynasty banned white clothes, although people did not obey this. After that, in the Joseon dynasty, many kings, including King Sejong, imposed a ban on white clothes, but the result was the same: people kept their white clothes. In 1895, when people were ordered to wear western clothes instead of traditional white clothes, Koreans protested against it, which is another evidence of Koreans’ obsession with white clothes (The Academy of Korean Studies, 1989b). Choi (1946, p. 47), a sociologist and poet, wrote:

Korean people’s respect for white clothes is a very old tradition. Koreans have been wearing white clothes since thousands of years ago, from the Buyeo dynasties. In ancient times, Koreans worshiped the sun and considered themselves the descendants of God, the sun. They thought white symbolized the light of the sun and so considered this color sacred. They wore white clothes to show their pride as the descendants of God. Later, this became a tradition.

R. V. Laguerie, a French reporter for L’Illustration, visited Korea in the 19th century and wrote in his book “La Coree (1898)” that “everyone walked slowly and heavily, all in white” (as cited in The Academy of Korean Studies, 1989b, p. 416). Oppert (1932/1959, pp. 118-119), a German businessman, also wrote in his book, Ein verschlossenes Land, Reisen nach Corea, that “everyone male and female are in all white fabric.” He noted that “while the majority of people wore clothes made of cotton grown in Korea, the most widely used fabric is the coarsely woven hemp cloth.” Other books by westerners who visited Korea in the late 19th century, which focus on the color of Korean clothes, explain the tradition of wearing white clothes in more detail. Lee (1941) explained first that the no-color tradition in the Joseon culture was meant to “suppress any show of emotions” and that “under King Sejong, the color of clothing was used to show the wearer’s social status. Scholars were banned from wearing whites and commoners were not allowed to wear colored clothing.” Finally, “during the Joseon dynasty, frugality was considered a virtue and there were times when coloring was banned to suppress extravagance or luxuries. When dark coloring was needed, light coloring was used. When light coloring was needed,
white was used to comply with the ban.”

Yu (1934, p. 3), a Korean linguist, also gave reasons for Koreans' love of white clothes in his article, noting first:

In Tungusic culture, white symbolized the sky. People wore white clothes and offered white sacrifices during their sky worship rituals. The officiant, as well as all attendees, were dressed in white in these sacred rituals, the color that was considered auspicious. Why is it that only Koreans kept this tradition of wearing white clothes to the extent that white clothes became a symbol of Korean people? I believe it is due to Koreans people's religiousness and faithfulness. This resulted in their love of white, which became the nation's tradition.

Some scholars have argued that Koreans wore white clothes because of poverty, lack of cloth dyes, or because they were in continuous national mourning. Yu (1934) directly contradicts this view by claiming that Koreans' love of white clothes stems from their long-standing devotion to religion and their tradition of honoring innocence. The religions that influenced Koreans for a long period, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, also affected Koreans' love for white. Based on these influences, Koreans related white to innocence—perhaps because white clothes represented nature and non-artificiality—and nobility (Seo & Kim, 2008).

Koreans' love for white clothes may also be found in shamans' clothing. In <Fig. 1>, which is an illustration from a book showing different types of shamanistic rituals from the 19th century, the shaman is wearing a white long-sleeved Buddhist robe, symbolizing cleanliness and uprightness, with a white conical hat (Hwang, 1985). In Korea, shamans and other religious figures often wear white ceremonial robes, which have much the same meanings as when white is worn by the general population: absoluteness, sacredness, and purity; or for mourning clothes, grief and sadness. White attire could be seen in the seung-mu (Buddhist dance) or in the religious robes worn by clerics of Taoism or in Confucian rituals. In sum, white was universally used in all Korean religions.

As explained earlier, white clothes were worn by religious figures or monks during religious rituals or funerals. Even though white represented commoners the most, it was also worn by the upper classes, who wore white along with colored clothes, according to Ying-Yang and the Five Elements (Fig. 2). However, commoners almost always wore whites, from the moment they were born until they died (Lee, 1998). <Fig. 3>, a painting of a Korean wrestling match from the late Joseon dynasty and known for its simplistic style and well-structured depiction of commoners’ lives, shows everyone in the painting dressed in white. <Fig. 4>, a photograph from the early 1900s, shows that most people in the crowd are dressed in white. While the upper class wore white clothing by choice as their everyday wear or scholarly robes, commoners were allowed to wear only white owing to their class or because of a ban on luxuries. In this sense, then, white clothing represented the commoners.

Koreans' tradition of wearing white clothing, as mentioned before, stems from their preference and reverence for white, the symbolic meanings of white—such as cleanliness and innocence—and the Confucian philosophy that considered colors to be lowly. However, the basis for this culture of wearing white was
distorted somewhat and changed under the Japanese imperialism. The Japanese claimed that Koreans wore white to show their sadness about losing their country or that Koreans wore funeral clothes in their everyday life. They argued that Koreans wore white clothing because the government forced them or because Koreans could not afford clothing dyes. These claims were made by Japanese scholars, as well as some Koreans who sided with them, in order to belittle Koreans and to claim the Japanese people’s superiority during the Japanese colonial era. Some people make those arguments even to this day. However, counter arguments to these claims include the fact that Koreans wore white clothes since the ancient times, which refutes the claim that they wore white to show grief over losing their country to Japan or because of continuous national mourning. Koreans also had advanced dyeing techniques, which disputes the claim that a lack of dyes was the reason they wore white clothes.

III. Traditional White Clothing as a Symbol of Resistance

1. Resistance Expressed in Korean Traditional White Clothing

Tylor (1871, p. 1), an anthropologist, defined cul-

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Fig. 2. *Portrait of Hwang Hyun*, Chae Yong-Shin, 1911.

Fig. 3. *Ssirum-do* (Korean wrestling), Kim Hong-do, 18C.

Fig. 4. A crowd in whites in front of Dae-An Gate, Deoksu Palace in the 1890s.
ture as follows: “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952, p. 357) observed that “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts.” Clothing, an explicit form of culture, symbolizes an implicit philosophy. In a counterculture, members wear distinct clothes to express their ideas or thoughts visually, and such clothes have existed in all ages and cultures. One example is subculture fashion, including the hippie look, punk look, and mods look, all of which represented resistance against the older generation, materialism, or wars (Kim, 2013).

Gelder and Thornton (1997) stated that “social groups labeled as subcultures have often been perceived as lower down the social ladder due to social differences of class, race, ethnicity and age.” Mainstream culture, by definition, is accepted by the majority, and it affects the mainstream social and cultural trends. Subcultures need to be understood in broad terms: they represent subversion of the mainstream, culture that is rejected by the dominant ideology, and a new and different culture from the dominant culture (Hebdige, 1979/1998). Subcultures, which are perceived as lower down the social ladder, express resistance against the mainstream in various forms. One visible form of this expression is clothing. Carter (1967, p. 803) explained clothing as a kind of a signal:

The nature of our apparel is very complex. Clothes are so many things at once. Our social shells, the system of signals with which we broadcast our intentions, are often the projections of our fantasy selves… Clothes are our weapons, our challenges, our visible insults.

Clothing as self-expression is an effective means to convey signals because it is very visible. Thus, resistance groups tend to signal their messages aggressively via clothing.

As already noted earlier, Koreans perceived white as a bright and pure color free from corruption and pollution; thus, the white clothes worn by various classes in various circumstances symbolized integrity, purity, and honesty. However, ironically, white clothing in Korea also symbolizes resistance. The History of Goryeo (Goryeo-sa) portrays Lee Ja-Gyum as wearing white clothes when he surrenders to Chuk Jun-Gyung's army. In the Goryeo and the Joseon dynasties, when there was corruption, loyal scholars put on white clothes instead of their working clothes during their protests to symbolize their resistance against corruption and injustice. An old Korean poem says, “Oh white herons, do not go near black crows,” using white as a symbol of honor, principles, and justice (Kim, 2001). When scholars were accused of wrongdoing, they wore white to show their innocence. In wearing white like commoners, they showed that they were willing to give up their power (or social status) to claim their innocence.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea, as already noted, the Japanese assigned a political interpretation to Koreans' wearing white; thus, in an attempt to annihilate the Korean spirit, the Japanese banned white clothes (Yu, 1934). In return, the Koreans wore white clothes more than ever, to show their resistance against Japanese imperialism, and in this way, the meaning of white clothing underwent a certain change. White clothing united all Koreans into one nation, regardless of their class or occupation, symbolizing Koreans' anti-Japan movement. <Fig. 5>, which shows an anti-Japan protest during the Korean Independence Movement in front of Seoul City Hall on March 1, 1919, portrays a Korean crowd of non-resisting demonstrators. Although some people are wearing dark school uniforms or western clothes, most of them are in white.

2. Implications of White Hanbok in Modern Korea

In modern Korea, people wear Hanbok, traditional Korean clothing, only on certain limited occasions. Modern Hanbok is colorful, in contrast to the traditional white Hanbok. The colors show the influence of western clothing as well as a change in Korean society from a hierarchical to a free society where people could choose what they wanted to wear. As a
result, the colorful Hanbok that was allowed only for the upper classes or on special occasions, such as weddings or holidays, is now a core part of traditional clothing (Ha, 1989). White Hanbok is rarely worn in Korea except for funerals, and thus it is almost extinct in the every life of Koreans.

In addition, when white Hanbok is worn, in most cases it is to show resistance. Wearing white Hanbok as a symbol of resistance is based on the symbolic meanings of white already discussed, such as innocence, nobility, determination, and sadness. Wearing white Hanbok is thus an active expression of resistance against corruption and injustice. It is an attempt to communicate specific views via the color of the clothes. In this paper, several instances of wearing white Hanbok as a symbol of resistance are examined, including the following: when attending Korean traditional folk plays that were enjoyed by the commoners in the past, during the shamanistic ritual of gut, in social or political protests, and when worn by social activists or liberal politicians.

White Hanbok is worn in Korean traditional folk plays because in the past, folk plays were enjoyed by commoners, and the plays are performed by groups, not by individuals. Each village or region has its own folk plays. Folk plays originally started as a part of festivals, but as the government became more centralized and the conflict between the governing class and those governed deepened, these folk plays developed characteristics of resistance. Despite the development in meaning, folk plays can still be seen in traditional ceremonies, regional festivals, and university festivals. Most participants in these plays are dressed in white because these plays still have elements of resistance against authorities, in addition to telling the stories of ordinary people's lives and their sadness.

The Hahoe Byulshingut Talnori (mask dance) from the Andong region shown in Fig. 6 makes fun of the hierarchical relationship between the governing class, the yang-ban, and the governed class, the sang-min, by exposing the yang-ban's fatuity. In the performances, the sang-min class resolves its suppressed feelings and discontentment, which, in turn, reduces conflicts between the classes and the need for resistance against the governing class. The white clothing as a representation of both the lives of the ordinary people and their resistance against the establishment is present in traditional Korean folk plays in various forms according to the region, including the madangnori (tra-
Korean shamanism is rooted deeply in Koreans' lives as their traditional religion. The shamans, called mudang, perform religious rituals, known as gut, and their clothing is called mubok. The kinds of mubok, of which there are many, vary according to mudang, the goal of the gut, and the regions. They include the navy jangun-chima (skirt); red hogu-chima (skirt); the gu-gun-bok (overcoat), which is black with red sleeves; the nam-cholik, a top with long, wide sleeves, which is navy with white sleeves; grey bulsa (Buddhist clothing); the wonsam of five colors (ceremonial clothing worn by women); white chima-jegori (skirt and jacket); and white durumagi (traditional Korean overcoat) (The Academy of Korean Studies, 1989a). The mubok is mainly limited to five colors: white, black, red, blue, and yellow. However, many muboks have a combination of more than two colors. Among these colors, white is considered a clean color that keeps the bad spirits away. It also expresses earnestness and willingness to overcome sadness. These shamanistic rituals in modern Korea still play critical roles in anti-establishment movements. In the 1980s, shamanistic rituals became a tradition in the strong anti-establishment movements of that time. Kertzer (1983, p. 56) explains the reason for performing shamanistic rituals in anti-establishment movement:

People adopt religious rituals as their strategies because such rituals meet their organizational needs, provide legitimacy, and offer mechanisms to achieve solidarity without consensus. Moreover, rituals can inspire people to take political action by fostering a particular cognitive worldview.

One notable characteristic of shamanistic rituals in anti-establishment movements is that shamans always wear white mubok, contrary to traditional mubok in various colors. This is done to emphasize determination, earnestness, and willingness to fight against injustice and evil. Lee Ae-Ju, the traditional Korean dancer shown in <Fig. 7>, for example, is performing a requiem gut to repose the souls of the dead in a funeral held at Yonsei University for Lee Han-Yul, a student killed during a protest for democracy.

Yet another notable example of wearing white Hanbok to express resistance is in protests. “In protests by students after the 1980s, in particular, the demonstrations had the format of memorial rituals and the protestors taken in by the police symbolized sacrificial offerings” (Kan, 1998, p. 158). Student activists also started wearing white Hanbok as part of the cultural movement designed to keep Korean culture and its...
independence. In student protests, the leaders wore Hanbok as a symbol of their charisma and to express their desire to keep Korean ethnicity and its culture” (Kan, 1998, p. 159).

Since the resistance value of white Hanbok was emphasized in the nationalist mind-set symbolizing peace and justice, it has been worn more often during protests, as shown in <Fig. 8>. This figure shows that white Hanbok is worn by pallbearers to represent the desire for democracy and the resistance against the public authorities. This memorial service led to the June Democracy Movement, a nation-wide movement to secure a democratic constitution.

Cultures of all types are mechanisms produced, packaged, and adopted by their members. Culture, here, does not mean cults and customs, but the structures of meaning via which people give shape to their experience; and politics is not considered to be coups and constitutions but one of the principal arenas in which such structures publicly unfold (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, clothing that culturally represents resistance needs to be understood in a political context. Similar to the protestors who wore white Hanbok in the 1980s, some liberal activists or politicians today wear white Hanbok. Baek Giwan, an activist and politician; Kang Gigap, a former member of the National Assembly; and professor Kim Yong-Oak are some of the prominent figures who often wear a white durumagi (the traditional Korean overcoat). They are all deeply involved in resistance movements and, in that sense, their white durumagi can be understood in a political context. <Fig. 9> shows Kang Gigap criticizing government policies during a candle-lit protest, his white Hanbok representing resoluteness and resistance against the establishment, while simultaneously expressing Korean ethnicity and identity and being used to provoke the public.

It is important to note that, as it has become harder to find white Hanbok worn in the daily life in modern Korea (even at funerals, where people wear western black suits rather than traditional white Hanbok), it has become more strongly identified than ever with resistance of all types.

IV. The Aesthetic Value of White Hanbok as a Symbol of Resistance in Modern Korea

Although the white Hanbok worn in these various cultural settings has a common theme of resistance, there are subtle differences in the aesthetic values of each. Heller (2000/2002), a German writer, has poin-
ted out the universal characteristics of white, which, though there is a certain unity about them, cover a large range of values: firstly, white is colorless, which represents sadness; secondly, white symbolizes sacrifice and innocence because it is not stained by darkness; thirdly, white symbolizes cleanliness on the surface and purity deep down. Based on these characteristics defined by Heller, one can conclude that white as a symbol for innocence, purity, and sadness is universal.

Choi and Kim (2005) divided the images of white clothing into four categories: elegance, sublimity, asceticism, and avant-garde. These four categories are general characteristics not only of white clothing but also of all clothes, including western clothing. White Hanbok has the characteristics of the first three categories: elegance, sublimity, and asceticism. Koreans have always adored white clothing; even the upper class, who were permitted to wear colored clothing, enjoyed wearing white because it was considered the most beautiful and elegant of all colors. The white clothing worn by shamans or the white clothing worn at funerals represents sublime beauty. Scholars wore white clothes to display integrity while commoners wore them to display simplicity and honesty, in which asceticism is manifested. The fourth category, avant-garde, was not apparent in white Hanbok in the past, but it has appeared strongly in white Hanbok of modern Korea. Its visual impact is stronger than before because of its rarity in modern culture, which means that it now carries the messages of sadness and resoluteness even more strongly.

White clothing is also a unique way for Koreans to express their emotions, including sorrow (han), grief, and despair. Kim (1977, pp. 164–165), a Korean literature scholar, noted that the Korean people's sorrow was expressed in white clothing, while at the same time shedding some light on its connection to both resistance and sorrow:

*Arirang* is a passive resistance, a wish that the love who is leaving you would not make it past two miles due to weariness. It is a resistance by the weak, who accept the circumstances…. Both the person saying goodbye and the person leaving probably wore white clothes that flutter in the wind. Throughout Korea's long history, the one color that has persisted in the nation is white…. White implies resistance against everything - but, at the same time, it means accepting everything. It is the color of fate, the color of innocence, and the color of grief.

Although Korean traditional white clothing was worn by scholars, upper class, and religious figures as well, it was mainly worn by commoners in their everyday life. White, in this regard, represented the suppressed class. This, combined with the color's universal symbols, innocence and sadness, white Hanbok implied sorrow (han), grief, and despair. In the end, the symbolic meaning of resistance in white Hanbok was derived from the color's universal symbols, such as innocence, honesty, truth, peace, and sacredness, and its Korean traditional values, such as simplicity, asceticism, sadness, death, sorrow, grief, and despair.

**V. Conclusions**

Koreans have been called “the white-clad folk” because of their esteem for white and because they often wore white clothes. Although colorful clothes were available and dyeing techniques were remarkable in Korea, the tradition of favoring white clothes remained strong throughout Korea's history. White was considered a bright and pure color that was free from corruption and pollution. It symbolized integrity, innocence, and honesty. Under the Japanese occupation when white clothing was banned, Koreans wore white clothing to show their resistance against the Japanese imperialism.

In the late 19th century when western culture was introduced into Korea, the clothes became westernized. Now, 100 years later, Hanbok is no longer worn in the everyday life of Koreans. It is worn only on holidays or weddings; even then, the Hanbok worn on these occasions is very colorful, and white Hanbok seems extinct in modern Korea. Thus, white Hanbok can be seen today in only a few instances: first, it is worn by the participants of traditional Korean folk plays which comfort commoners' sorrows and satirize the upper class; second, it is worn by shamans during
gut or shamanistic rituals as part of antigovernment movements; third, it is worn by protestors; and finally, it is worn by social activists or liberal politicians. The common theme in these four instances is resistance.

A traditional Korean folk play, as the culture of commoners, is a means to express pain and sorrow of the participants of the play through its content containing resistance against existing social norms. In such folk plays, white Hanbok is an element that maximizes dramatic effects. With the fact that white Hanbok has been worn by Koreans for the purposes of mourning for a long time, and when it is worn in shamanistic rituals, it has the effect of maximizing sorrow and eagerness. Especially, white Hanbok in a shamanistic ritual whose theme is resistance against the government creates a heroic feeling and enhances the mood of resistance. Furthermore, white Hanbok worn by protestors and social activists or progressive politicians are also used as a device to promote the mood of resistance and eagerness.

Although white Hanbok has been worn by many different classes of people in many different situations including their daily life, it is a strange phenomenon that white Hanbok is worn by people as a symbol of resistance even in the modern society where it is no longer worn and has all but disappeared from the everyday life of Koreans. This is borrowing from the image associated with the color white, such as soluteness and sadness, according to the ordinary symbolism of white, or according to the distinct Korean characteristics. Wearing white Hanbok as a means of resistance in a situation in which it has lost all meaning as ordinary wear, and in which colorful Hanbok is worn instead, emphasizes the desperate emotion of the willingness to give up one's vested rights; also, it is trying to utilize the attention-grabbing nature of white Hanbok. Ultimately, wearing white Hanbok is used as a powerful means of communication.

With the advent of industrialization and globalization, Koreans' dress code has changed significantly in the last 100 years. Nonetheless, individuals and groups everywhere throughout history have used clothing to convey signals, and particularly as a gesture of resistance. As demonstrated in this article, white Hanbok came to symbolize resistance during the Japanese occupation, and this particular image has only been strengthened as the universal values of white-innocence, purity, nobility, sadness-and the traditional Korean values-simplicity, asceticism, innocence, sadness, sorrow, grief-have all been subsumed into the resistance symbolism of the white Hanbok. The white Hanbok, which symbolizes resistance, borrows from many different values associated with the color white. The expressive function of clothing has changed the value of the Korean traditional clothing - the white Hanbok.

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