

## **TITLE: Hanbok, the traditional Korean clothing**

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The hanbok (한복) is a traditional Korean clothing. As a matter of fact, the word hanbok literally means “Korean clothes”. The hanbok was worn daily by the Korean people since ancient times. Its first recorded history can be traced back to the Gogureyo Kingdom (37 BCE - 668 CE). However, the introduction of western-style clothing in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century led to the gradual decline of the popularity of the hanbok until it ultimately vanished as the everyday wear by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Today, Koreans still wear hanbok on traditional holidays such as the Korean New Year, *Seollal* (설날), or the Korean Thanksgiving, *Chuseok* (추석), as well as on special occasions such as ancestral rituals, a traditional Korean wedding ceremony (폐백), or a baby’s first birthday (돌잔치).

As an everyday wear, the hanbok was initially designed to be functional, yet still beautiful. A traditional hanbok consists of an upper garment called *jeogori* (저고리) and a lower garment. Women’s lower garment is known as *chima* (치마), or skirt, while men’s lower garment is referred to as *baji* (바지), or trousers. The ribbon used to fasten the *jeogori* is called *goreum* (고름). In addition, a women’s hanbok may also include a *dangui* (당의), which is worn over the *jeogori*. Moreover, there are a variety of accessories, such as hair pins and ornamental pendants, which are worn together with the hanbok. A common accessory is the *daenggi* (댕기), a ribbon used for tying and decorating a women’s braided hair.

Throughout the centuries, the hanbok has undergone continues variations, leading to the development of multiple styles for different purposes such as wedding dresses, funeral clothes, and children clothes, including the *baenaesjeogoli* (반회장저고리), the *pungchabaji* (풍차바지), and the *dolhanbok* (돌한복). Styles even vary according to each season of the year. Nonetheless, the basic traditional features of the hanbok remained overtime, such as the emphasis on lines and the Korean concept of the silhouette.

The hanbok’s unique yet diverse style has inspired numerous fashion designers both inside and outside Korea. As a result, the hanbok has been displayed in multiple fashion shows all over the world including, but not limited to, the 2022 National Day Hanbok Fashion Show (held to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Türkiye), the 2022 Hanbok Fashion Show and Cultural Performance (celebrating the 140th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America), the Milan Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2023, or the New York Fashion Week Spring 2011, where the Venezuelan-born fashion designer Carolina Herrera displayed her hanbok-influenced spring collection.

In recent years, the adoption of traditional Korean cultural elements by K-pop idol groups has contributed to the rising global popularity of the hanbok. These idol groups have worn hanboks not only in their music videos, but also as part of their state outfits. Examples include boy bands such as BTS, A.C.E, and Stray Kids, as well as girl bands like BLACKPINK or MAMAMOO. On top of that, there are countless Korean historical movies and series depicting characters wearing hanbok. Some examples include the following: *Jewel in the Palace* (2003), *The King and the Clown* (2005), *Scandal* (2013), *The Royal Tailor* (2014), *The King's Affection* (2021), or *Pachinko* (2022).

Having introduced the relevance of the hanbok in Korean society, it is no wonder why, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the Cultural Heritage Administration (CHA) designated the Hanbok *saenghwal* or lifestyle (생활한복) as National Intangible Cultural Heritage. According to South Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korean Culture and Information Service, the Hanbok *saenghwal* refers to “a series of cultural practices that encompass the entire experience of making, wearing and enjoying the traditional attire in accordance with specific etiquette and formalities depending on occasion...”

As an anecdote, last semester I had the chance to study at the University of Seoul (UOS) as an exchange student. Because I wanted to immerse myself in South Korea's vibrant culture and show my genuine love for Korean traditions, I once wore a hanbok to the Joseon dynasty Gyeongbokgung Palace (경복궁) located in Seoul (see photo below). It was a truly great experience that I recommend everyone to try.



Photo. Here I am wearing a hanbok at Gyeongbokgung Palace (Seoul, South Korea).

I hope that this article has contributed to your understanding of the relevance of the hanbok in Korean society. 감사합니다! (Thank you!)

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