

# Changes of Korean Living Space based on Cultural Factor

## Since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present

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**Abstract:** This study tries to understand Korean living space by analyzing the changes since the Chosun Dynasty to the present. Most of the existing studies on traditional living space of the Chosun Dynasty are focused on architecture shape, color and pattern. However, intangible element should be also considered with the tangible element. Understanding the living culture of one country should come with understanding of the intangible living culture most of all. In this study, we looked into the factors which have influenced the past and present living space through the cultural factors to understand the intangible element. In the Chosun Dynasty, such intangible culture as religion, philosophy, ideology and social system influenced the structure and role of the living space. Today, however, such intangible culture as value, perception and habit acts are considered as major factors to choose the living space. In the future, such intangible culture as individual value, perception and habit are expected to be focused more. It is, however, obvious that tangible factor stands out more distinctly in the living space. Therefore, the most crucial part for the future living space is how to apply intangible culture into tangible way.

**Key words:** Korean Culture, Living Culture, Human Life, Living Space and Human Behaviors

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Objective of Study

Understanding today's living space should come with understanding the changes of the living space from the past to the present. Moreover, understanding the living space of a certain period requires understanding the overall culture of that period. "The act of building a house is a cultural phenomenon, and hence its formal organization is heavily influenced by the cultural environment it belongs to", Amos Rapoport says in House Form and Culture. [1]

### 1.2 Method of Study

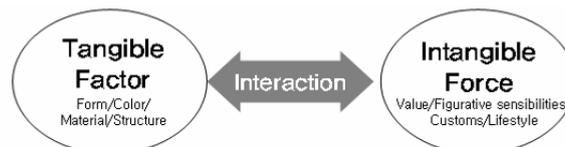


Figure 1 Characteristics of Cultural Design Factor [2]

We looked into the differences between noblemen's house of the Chosun Dynasty and living space of the present. Culture consists mainly of overt culture (tangible) model and covert culture (intangible) model. Tangible factors include disposition, type, color, pattern, etc whereas intangible factor include value, perception, habit and custom

which are expressed by religion, philosophy, ideology, system, etc. In this study, we've looked into the way how those intangible factors and tangible factors on the living space have affected each other in each period through previous studies.

## **2. Characteristics of the Nobleman's House of the Chosun Dynasty**

### **2.1 Classification of Living Space by Social Class (System - Social Class and Living System)**

In the Chosun Dynasty, the noblemen's living space should be a space not only to practice Confucian idea and life style but also to express their authority according to their social status. [3] The place disclosed at first to the visitors was Haengrang-chae where male and female servants stayed. Passing by Hangrang-chae, the visitors would see Sarang-chae, a home office of the male householder, which was involved with the visitors. Getting more deeply into the house, there was An-chae, which was the central place for housework and main place for the householder's wife. That is, the living space was strictly distinguished between nobleman and servants, and it was opened much or little according to the social class.

### **2.2 Classification of Living Space by Gender (Idea - Gender Distinguishing Law)**

Early in the Chosun Dynasty, living space was distinguished between Sarang-chae for male and An-chae for female but such distinction was neither quite clear nor big enough to be identified as 'Chae'. Middle in the Chosun Dynasty, however, gender based life was clearly distinguished. Then, living space was clearly divided into Sarang-chae, the householder's main place and An-chae, his wife's main place. The gender distinguishing law defined the role of male and female, and it was reflected in various social systems and custom.

### **2.3 Classification of Living Space by Age (Confucian Idea and Philosophy)**

In the Chosun Dynasty, Confucian idea was reflected into the living space to identify the order between senior and junior. A female child stayed at An-chae with her mother during her childhood and moved to Byeol-dang when she was old enough to get married. A daughter-in-law stayed at Geonneon-bang and moved to An-bang later, which was finally inherited to the daughter-in-law. A male child was raised up at An-chae during lactation period and moved to Sarang-chae later to learn etiquette and knowledge from his father and grand-father. Before becoming an adult, the male child stayed at a small Sarang-bang in Sarang-chae. After getting married, he moved to big Sarang, which was handed over to his son later on.

### **2.4 Classification of Living Space by Behavior (Idea - Gender Distinguishing Law)**

According to the gender distinguishing culture, the living space was divided strictly between male and female. Consequently, the dining, sleeping and respite space were also distinguished. An-bang or Daechung in An-chae was used as reception place of the householder's wife whereas reception for the householder was made in Sarang-bang in Sarang-chae or Daecheong Nu-maru.

## **3. Changes of Korean Living Space**

### **3.1 Changes of Living Space by Cultural Factor**

As time went by, the living space separation for male and female became stricter due to Confucianism. The females' space was enlarged as females' social status was enhanced. Traditional Korean house changed to urbanized traditional Korean house and Sarang-bang appeared as reception space and for the head of a family. A reception room and chair-sitting style furniture appeared in improved traditional Korean house. In 1970s, confusion era emerged with introduction of western style apartment. As the western style apartments increased,

they changed into Korean-style apartments. Also, the housing began to be regarded as a private place for a family and distinction between private place and common place became clear with living room, bedroom and home office for the head of a family.

Table 1 Structural Changes of Korean Living Space

Changes of the Cultural Factor, Ideology, Philosophy and System-> Individual Value, Perception and Habit						
15C: Gender Equality Influenced by Goryeo Dynasty	17C: Gender Distinguishing and Men's Pre dominance over Women Influenced by Confucianism	18C: Females' Space Extended with their Social Status Improved	1920~: Couple Space Appear	1960~ : Family Reception Space	1980~ : Library Space Appear	2000~: Home Office Appear
			Social Class System Abolished -> Female Workers Increased -> Industrialized -> Housework Decreased -> More Women Involved in Public Affairs			
Female Space <span style="color: pink;">■</span> Male Space, Reception Space <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Space for Couple <span style="color: purple;">■</span> Family Reception Space <span style="color: green;">■</span>						

Table 2 Cultural Factor of the Chosun Dynasty and Contemporary Housing

Chosun Dynasty	Factor	Contemporary Age
Shamanism, Confucianism: Basic Idea for life	Religion	Buddhism, Christianity, Catholicism, Others: Various Religions Coexisting
Confucian Idea: Gender Distinguished, Social Classification, Age Discrimination	Idea/ Philosophy	Oriental Philosophy, Occidental Philosophy, Others: Various Philosophies and Ideas Coexisting
Social Class System: Noble men, Middle Men and Humble Men	System	Social System : Democratic System
Living System: Living Space Size Differentiated by Social Class		
Social Value: Moral Obligation Focused	Value	Social Value: Property Value Aesthetic Value: Structure and Composition
Housing: Living Space	Perception	Housing: Social Position Represented
Human: Discriminated by Social Class and Gender		Human: Individually Respected
Nature: Nature and human are one.		Nature: Nature Respected
Clothing: Social Class and Circumstances	Habit	Clothing: Circumstances
Food: Chair-Sitting Based Life Style		Food: Chair and Floor-Sitting Based Life Style Coexisting
House: Chair-Sitting Based Life Style		House: Chair- and Floor-Sitting Based Life Style Coexisting
Daily Life, Reception, Ceremony: Based on Confucianism	Custom	Daily Life, Reception, Ceremony: Traditional Custom Simplified

The living culture of the Chosun Dynasty valued idea, philosophy and social system, which influenced the life style, housing size and location in cultural terms. Today, however, living culture weighs heavier on cultural factors such as individual value, perception and habit, which play the standard in choosing the house.

### 3.2 Changes on Space of the Living Activity

Table 3 Changes of Life Pattern in Korean House [4]

Living Activities	Changes in Space		Changes in Methods of Use
	Traditional	Contemporary	
Dining	An-bang, Sarang-bang	Dining Room	Changed from floor-sitting to chair-sitting
Sleeping	An-bang, Sarang-bang	An-bang, Room	A mixture of floor- and chair-sitting
Family Gatherings	An-madang, An-daechung	Living Room	Use of maru; A mixture of floor- and chair-sitting
Guest Reception	Sarang-bang	Living Room	A mixture of floor- and chair-sitting
Housework	Kitchen, Madang, An-bang, Daechung	Kitchen	Even-leveling of kitchen floor with dining room

Recreation	Sarang-bang, Daechung, Kiosk	Hobby Space	Use of functionalized furniture; Changed from floor-sitting to chair-sitting
Ritual Ceremony	Sadang	Living Room, Kitchen	Established as a separate Chae, but uses the largest among indoor space
Telecommuting	Sarang-bang	Home Office	Introduction of new function

'An-chaе' and 'Sarang-chaе' were able to fulfill various life behaviours including sleep, eating, reading and writing, holding tea ceremony, resting like meditation and having reception with visitors at the same place. Consequently, the furniture there was also used for supporting diverse behaviours in everyday life. In contrast, the current residence has undergone with dramatically changed living patterns and lifestyles due to influence of western culture. The living space characteristics have been clarified and the space has been specified into living room, kitchen, dining room, and home office by function and activity from 'Sarang-bang' or 'An-bang. [5]

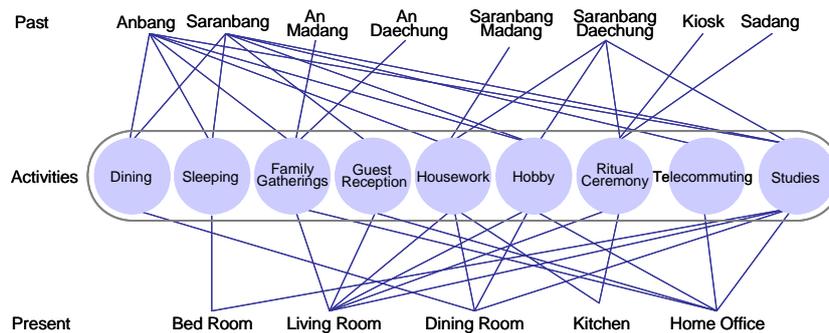


Figure 2 Change of living pattern in Korea [5]

#### 4. Conclusions

We tried to understand the changes of Korean living culture from the cultural viewpoint. The study result indicates that the living culture of the Chosun Dynasty was decided by idea, religion and social class system whereas that of the present is affected more by intangible cultural factors such as individual value, perception and habit. In the future, the living culture is expected to get focused more on intangible factors such as individual value, perception and life style and how to apply the intangible culture in tangible way will be a significant matter. This study with cultural viewpoint is a new attempt to understand the changes in resident cultures and even intangible inner. The significance of this study is that it's a basic research for proper understanding about changes in living culture.

#### 5. References

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