

EAST ASIAN WEDDING TRADITION

囍 LESSON THREE 囍 WEDDING CEREMONY DR. XIAOBING LI

In East Asia, a traditional wedding is lively, ceremonious, and joyful. The bridal sedan is the core of the traditional wedding. Accompanied by a bridesmaid, the bride wears a red veil and is led along by the groom, who holds a red silk scarf in his hand as she enters the bridal sedan. The bride sits in the sedan, and will then be lifted and carried from her mother's home to her husband's home while relatives and friends accompany the bride, holding festive gongs, umbrellas, and fans.

When the bride arrives, the wedding ceremony, the most important part of a traditional wedding, begins. In Korea, the newlyweds go to the table decorated for heaven and earth where there is a basketful of grain. Many coins are placed in the four corners of the basket to represent "luck" to the guests. The groom stands on the left, the bride by his side, while a Buddhist monk, a Taoist (Daoist) master, or a Korean village chief, officiates. "First, bow to the heaven and the earth; second, bow to the parents, and third, bow to each other." According to a folk saying, they will not be a formal couple until bowing to heaven and earth.

Japanese weddings usually take time to acknowledge the parents of the bride and groom. In some cases, the couple offers bouquets of flowers, a toast, or a personal letter of love and thanks. Any of these gestures at a wedding ceremony is a beautiful way to honor the parents of the bride and groom.

At the ceremony the bride brings her bridal dowry, consisting of gifts that the bride brings to her husband's home. Once a woman marries in East Asia, she leaves her home and becomes part of her husband's family. Her principle responsibility is with her husband's family. The value of the dowry is used to determine woman's status in her new household.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the bride get to the wedding ceremony?
2. Who administrates a wedding ceremony in Korea?
3. What does a Japanese newlywed couple do to honor their parents?
4. What is a bridal dowry?

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