

CURRICULUM MATERIALS REVIEWS

Korea Folk Art Festival: A CD-ROM

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 1995
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 KANGNAM-KU, SEOUL, KOREA

IBM COMPATIBLE PC 386SX OR HIGHER (486DX RECOMMENDED), 4MB RAM (8 MB RECOMMENDED). CD-ROM DRIVE, MPC COMPATIBLE SOUND CARD AND SPEAKER, SVGA DISPLAY 32000 COLOR OR HIGHER, MICROSOFT COMPATIBLE MOUSE, MICROSOFT WINDOWS VERSION 3.1 OR LATER.



The Korea Folk Art Festival is held annually in the Republic of Korea so that the folk arts might not be lost to posterity. Handing down these lively arts, imbued with the wisdom and spirit of ancestors, is essential to preserving the long history of the Korean people. The folk arts are the very distillation of the people's ethos and culture.

The folk arts created a multifaceted culture against the background of the natural environment and living customs. Farmers' arts were formulated in farming villages; seaside villages created fishing-related dances and songs; mountain villages

inspired arts related to the surrounding peaks; all exhibiting the cultural characteristics unique to each area. As with so many cultures, during industrialization village populations have dwindled, causing folk arts to slowly die as well.

In order to preserve as much folk art as possible, the first annual Folk Art Festival was held in Seoul in 1958. Through these festivals, over 300 varieties of music, dance, drama, games and songs have been rediscovered and reproduced. Of those, thirty-four kinds have been designated by the government as intangible cultural assets. This designation lays the foundation for the

systematic preservation of the cherished folk arts.

The Korea Folk Art Festival CD-ROM explains and references eighty-one different folk arts which were demonstrated at four of the festivals from 1992–95. Still photos and videos with music are available for each category. One can visit a dizzying array of performances filmed at the festivals. Great varieties of dances, songs, games, and drama are not only displayed, but explained by the narrator and the text boxes.

This CD-ROM is superior to a book because of the dynamics necessary to participate fully in a performance. The music, drumming, chanting, singing, swaying clothing, and dancing work together to draw the viewer in. Each photo and video has links to a written explanation of the particular art and/or performance; the cross referencing is abundant. The sound and videos get an A+; the history and background glossary is excellent as well. The narrator's pronunciation of the place names shown on a map is useful. I tired of the overly clever transitions between still photos, however. There was such a variety of transitions that I began watching for the next clever transition and paid less attention to the photos themselves; however, this may be preferable to the same predictable ordinary transition. On the review copy there was a problem with the still photos; the color and resolution were skewed. However, the imperfect image on the screen printed on paper with true colors. The navigation of the CD-ROM is highly intuitive with documentation unnecessary. Installation is a snap; within one minute I had Korean dancers on my monitor and lively music through my speakers.

This lively resource might be used in a variety of ways; I would be tempted to preview it in the classroom, using selected arts as metaphor for cultural concepts. For instance, showing the farmers' dances, with dancers working together as a metaphor for the group-oriented philosophy in East Asia. Then I would assign students to use the CD-ROM in the computer lab as part of an ongoing project or as a source for reports. ■

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