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### **TRADITIONAL JAPANESE WEDDING DRESS: *SHIRO-MUKU AND TSUNO-KAKUSHI***

In this paper I would like to introduce the traditional Japanese wedding costumes, *Shiro-muku* and *Tsuno-kakushi* from the point of their history and some associated meanings they have. By studying these traditions, we can see that in Japan some negative aspects toward women have remained unconsciously even though there is a trend towards more gender equality around the world, including Japan.

#### **What is *Shiro-muku*?**

*Shiro* means white, and *muku* means pure in Japanese. *Shiro-muku* is a wedding costume that a bride wears on her wedding day. Today, in Japan when a couple gets married, the bride generally chooses whether she will wear a wedding dress or *Shiro-muku*. Most people in Japan do not care about the meaning of *Shiro-muku*, but there is a deep traditional meaning.

From old times, in Japan, the color white has been recognized as sanctity color because it has meant the color of sunshine. White has also been a symbol of purity. So, white cloth is used when a baby is born, and when a person has died because these two are mysterious events of people's lives that no one can deal with. From the Heian period (AD 794-1192), white began to be used for wedding costumes and from the Muromachi period (AD 1336-1572), *Shiro-muku* has been used as a wedding costume.

As mentioned, white has special meaning, so to wear a white wedding costume is inevitable for a bride to show her great resolution to be a member of the bridegroom's family. In other words, the bride had to take leave of the house where she was born and had to be born again as a wife of her husband's family. In order to show her making up her mind, white was a very suitable color because whatever colors white can be dyed by.

#### **What is *Tsuno-kakushi*?**

The word *Tsuno* means a horn, and *kakushi* means to hide. *Tsuno-kakushi* is a head dress which a bride wears. It has also a deep meaning. From a long time ago, it had been believed that when a woman is mad with jealousy, she becomes a demon. The horn of the demon was a symbol of anger. So, in order not to be a terrible demon a bride wore this head dress. So, wearing it meant she would be an obedient and uncomplaining wife.

In conclusion, *Shiro-muku* and *Tsuno-kakushi* have deep traditional meanings and from them we can know how women have been treated from a historical perspective. In ancient times women were prohibited from being what she wanted to be by herself. Even though

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most people in Japan now do not know well its true meaning and do not care about it, some negative subconscious attitudes towards woman still exist in such subtle ways.

### References:

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