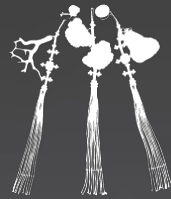


Traditional Korean Arts



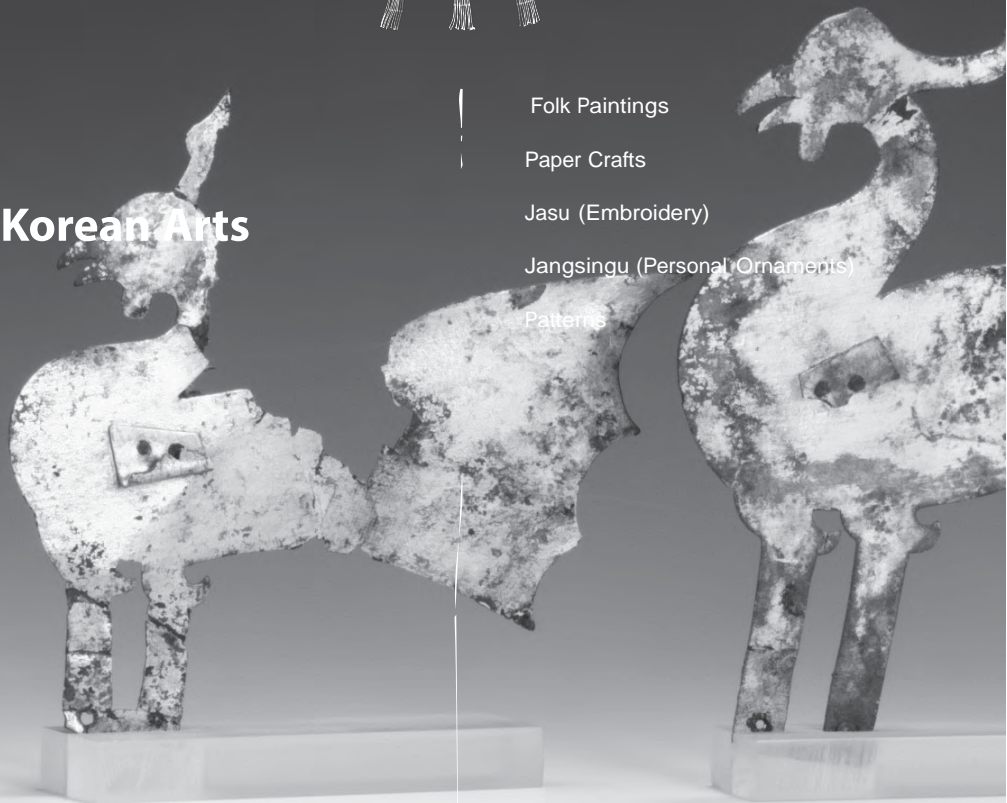
Folk Paintings

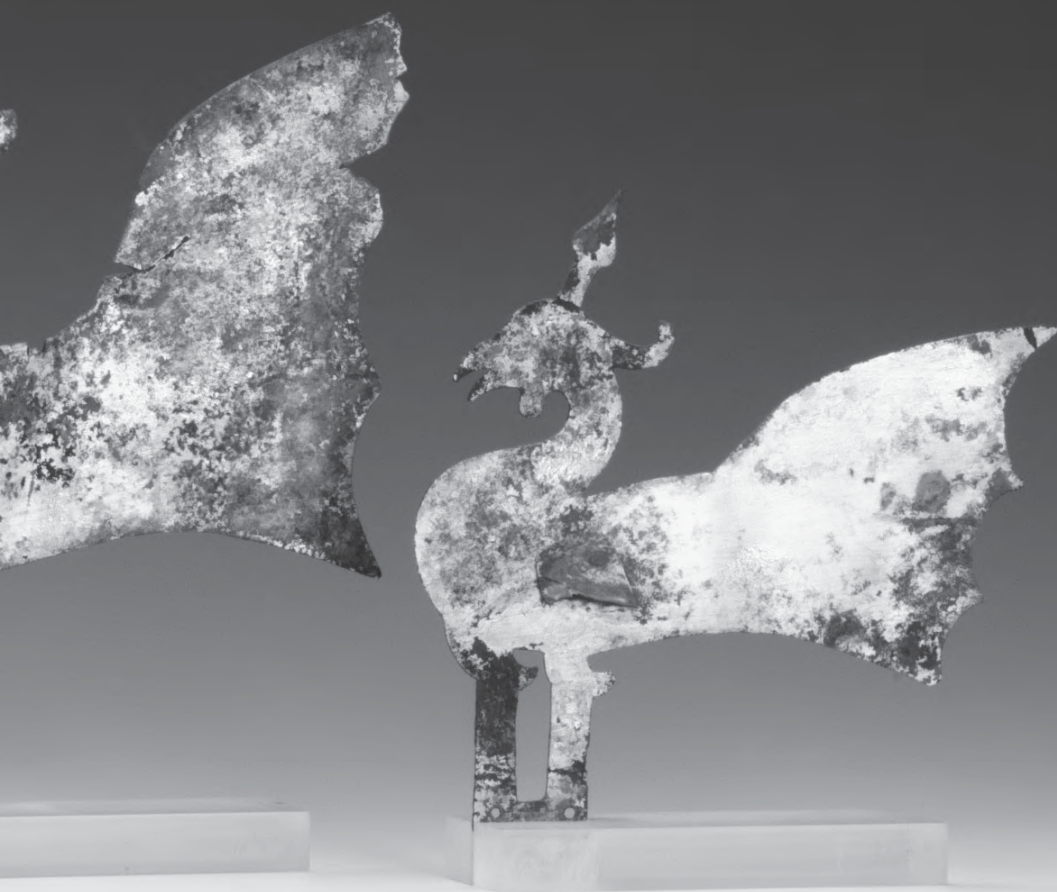
Paper Crafts

Jasu (Embroidery)

Jangsingu (Personal Ornaments)

Patterns





04



FOLK



PAINTINGS





Folk Paintings

Folk painting comprises the so-called “functional” pictures widely used by commoners in old Korea to decorate their home or to express their wishes for a long, happy life. Folk paintings, normally unsigned, often depict the same motifs as those of the so-called “orthodox” paintings including landscapes, flowers and birds, but abound with humor and simple and naive ideas about life and the world.

Korean folk paintings depict the age-old customs of the Korean nation. Their repeated themes well represent the unique lifestyle of the Korean people, their dreams, wishes and artistic imagination. Though folk painting, typified by simple compositions of stylized motifs and bright primary colors, is usually considered a low form of art, it does not necessarily mean that all paintings in this genre are technically inferior to those categorized as standard painting.

Folk painting actually includes a wide variety of paintings ranging from those by high-caliber professional painters at the royal court to those by wandering monks and unknown amateur artists. Some pieces demonstrate marvelous artistry, but some are considerably less skilled and sophisticated. The earliest examples of Korean folk painting, or minhwa, date from prehistoric times.

◆ A common drinking scene from the Joseon Dynasty

◆ Females swung on a swing on the 5th day of the Fifth Moon or Dano.



The figures on the walls of Muyongchong (the Tomb of the Dancers) from the Goguryeo Kingdom

Pictures and patterns in the folk style are found in artifacts from all periods, including Neolithic rock carvings, early bronze articles, the murals and bricks in the tombs of the Goguryeo period (37 B.C.-A.D. 668), and handicraft objects from the Goryeo (918-1392) and the Joseon periods (1392-1910). It may be said that folk painting has its roots in animal patterns on the primitive rock carvings, the four Taoist guardians and immortals in the tomb murals, pictures of the ten longevity symbols, hunting scenes and bricks ornamented with landscape designs.

Folk paintings were produced by artists who obviously belonged to a relatively low social class in traditional Korea. But their paintings were used by people of all social strata, from the royal household and temples down to the farmers in remote villages. The paintings were needed for rites in various religious denominations like shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, and for decoration of public facilities and private homes. They were intended mainly to stand for the common wishes of the public to repel evil spirits and to invoke good fortune, or to depict daily customs and moral concepts.

Consequently, folk paintings may be divided largely into two categories: religious paintings and nonreligious paintings. Religious paintings depict shamanist, Taoist and Buddhist themes as well as Confucian precepts for



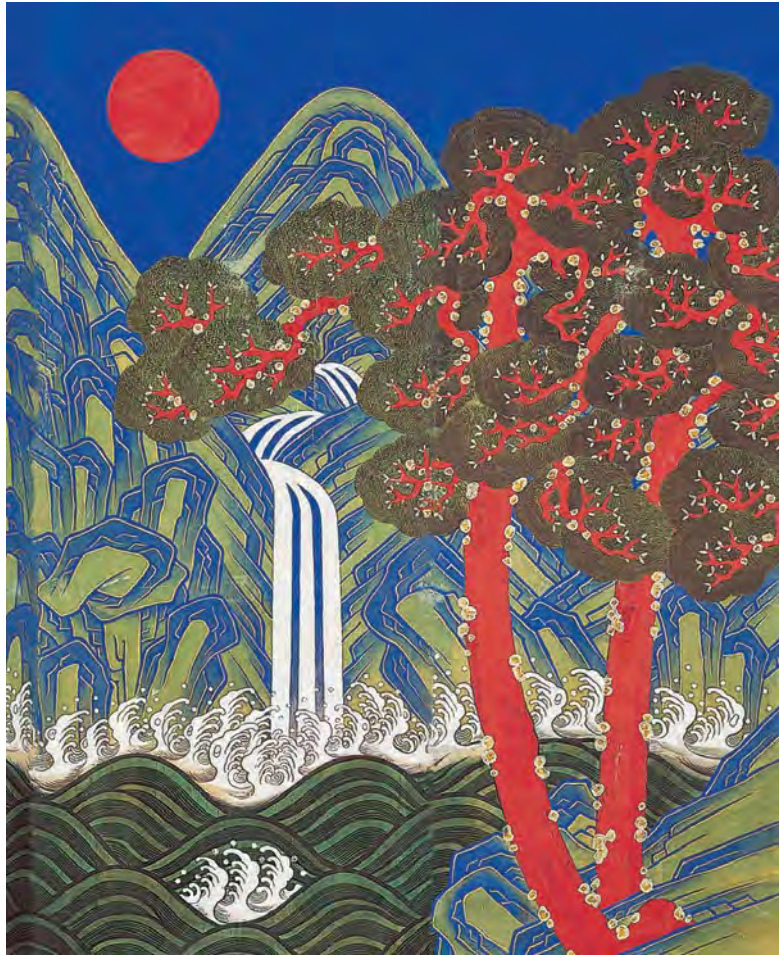
A family of the late Joseon Dynasty engaged in weaving and starching

ancestor worship and moral discipline. Non-religious paintings include genre pictures, portraits, illustrations of ancient episodes, documentary pictures, maps and astronomical charts. Folk paintings may be classified into the following categories by theme:

1. Tao-shamanist paintings

Longevity symbols: Pictures of the ten longevity symbols figure most prominently among folk paintings of this category. The ten longevity symbols, including the sun, clouds, mountains, water, bamboo, pine, crane, deer, turtle and the mushroom of immortality, are often presented all together in a single

The royal throne had a picture of the sun and the moon rising over a mountain of five peaks as a backdrop, symbolizing longevity.



picture. Also representing the predominant wishes for a long life are pictures of pine and crane, cranes or deer in large groups, and cranes and peaches presented with sea waves. It is of special note that the royal throne had a picture of the sun and the moon rising over a mountain of five peaks as a favorite backdrop.

Directional guardians and the 12 zodiacal symbols: Ancient folk paintings often depict the five directional spirits and the animal gods symbolizing the 12 zodiacal signs as an expression of the desire to disperse evil spirits and invoke happiness. The five directional spirits are the blue dragon of the west, the white tiger of the east, the red peacock of the south, the black turtle-



Magpie and tiger — the tiger is one of the most prevalent motifs in Korean folk paintings

snake of the north and the yellow emperor of the center. As time passed, the red peacock was substituted with a phoenix or a mythical animal called the kirin, and the black turtle-snake with a turtle. The 12 zodiacal signs are represented by the mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

Tiger: The tiger was among the most popular motifs in Korean folk paintings. Likely originating from the mythical “white tiger” guardian spirit of the east, the tiger was often personified in Korean folklore. A notable characteristic about the tiger as featured in Korean folk traditions is how it is seldom portrayed as a ferocious beast but as a friendly and sometimes even funny

Chochungdo, this decorative work was thought to imbue a sense of tidiness, a supposed characteristic of women. (right)

and stupid animal. The tiger appears as a docile companion and messenger of the mountain spirit in many folk paintings. It often appears with a magpie on a pine tree, a rooster or a lion. The magpie in Korean folklore is an auspicious bird believed to bring good news.

Immortals: As symbols of the Taoist ideal of harmony with nature as a way to achieve an eternal life, immortals have been important motifs in Korean folk tradition over the centuries. Immortals, often portrayed as hermits in the mountains, were also believed to help mortals to live happily, content with good health, wealth and many children.

The mountain spirit and dragon king: The popular mountain spirit and dragon king motifs have their origins in two famous figures in Korean history, Dangun and Munmu. Dangun is the legendary progenitor of the Korean people who is said to have turned into a mountain spirit in his old age; King Munmu of the Silla Kingdom is said to have become the dragon king after death, and his remains were buried in the East Sea in accordance with his will. The mountain spirit is portrayed in folk paintings as a benevolent old man with a white beard, accompanied by a tiger messenger. The dragon king is usually depicted

— Hwajodo, painting used to decorate a bridal room or the inner room of a house.

— Minhwa, folk painting that demonstrates a connection between Buddhism and shamanism.





© National Museum of Korea

as a mighty animal flying amidst the clouds over a sea of high waves. The pictures of the mountain spirit and the dragon king motifs are housed at shrines in the mountains or by the sea as the guardians of peace and prosperity of the nation. Also appearing frequently in ancient folk paintings are various other Taoist or shamanistic deities as well as famous kings, generals, ministers or their wives.

2. Buddhist painting

Buddhist temples and hermitages across the country are rich archives of folk paintings, ranging from large icon images for ritual use to illustrations for sutras and anecdotes about famous monks and their portraits. These temple paintings are noted for simple compositions and bright colors.

3. Confucian paintings

Confucianism, based on the teachings of Confucius and other sages, developed in Korea as an important intellectual and moral belief system. It also

Hyoje munjadobyeong (Munjado, character design), this character design can be classified as Confucian painting.



incorporated the nation's unique shamanistic and Taoist concepts of ancestor worship and respect of nature. Folk paintings in this category included character designs of the popular themes of loyalty and filial piety, pictures depicting the life stories of renowned scholars, and depictions of a carp jumping up from the river to transform into a dragon, symbolizing the aspiration for distinguished academic achievement and a successful career in officialdom.

4. Decorative paintings

The vast majority of ancient folk painting were used for decorative purposes. These paintings generally repeat popular motifs with relatively poor techniques, but attest to the nation's religious tradition harmonizing various faiths such as shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Ancient Korean folk paintings have the following characteristics: First, they demonstrate an unequivocal yearning for happiness. They stand for the universal desire to chase away evil spirits and to enjoy a long life blessed with good health, affluence and social success.





A husband and wife chase away a cat trying to make off with a young chicken.

Second, folk paintings attest to the honesty and simplicity of Korean people. The paintings are unrefined, sometimes even childish and crude. Yet they demonstrate the nature of Korean people, prone to simplicity and unpretentiousness.

Third, the folk paintings show the deep love of Koreans for nature, humankind and the deities. They are full of humanity, peace and warmth of heart, which are seldom found in more orthodox paintings.

Fourth, the folk paintings, with their bold compositions, dynamic brushwork and intense colors, are thought to display the indomitable will and courage of an agrarian society oppressed by the upper class and foreign invaders.



Fifth, the paintings abound with humor and satire. They manifest the mental rigor of a people who are able to wisely surmount difficulties. Pains and sorrows are sublimated into joys and happiness through the use of rich humor and satire.

Sixth, folk paintings have a unique style which was derived from the indigenous artistic flair of the Korean people.

Children draw their own folk paintings on fans.



PAPER



CRAFTS



© Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism



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Paper Crafts

Koreans have a centuries-old history of paper-making and have long enjoyed using indigenous high-quality paper.

Korea's oldest paper, called maji, was made from hemp. Maji is produced using roughly the following process: scraps of hemp or ramie cloth are soaked in water for some time and then shredded into tiny pieces. These pieces are pulverized in a grindstone to produce a slimy pulp, which then is steamed, cleansed with water, ground and placed in a tank. This raw material is pressed onto a frame and sun-dried while being bleached. This method of papermaking was most popular during the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668).

In Baekje (18 B.C.-A.D. 660), one of the Three Kingdoms, paper thus made in this way served as a chief medium for documenting historical events in the second half of the fourth century. Notably, Damjing, a Korean Buddhist monk and painter of Goguryeo (37 B.C.-A.D. 668), another of the Three Kingdoms, introduced techniques of papermaking to Japan in 610, the 21st year of the reign of Goguryeo's King Yeongyang. All this testifies to the advanced state of papermaking that Korea had already developed by the early part of the seventh century.

In the Goryeo era (918-1392), Koreans began to make paper from mulberry bark, or dangnamu, which made it possible to produce paper in

♥ Paper lotus flower decorations

♥ Cabinet decorated with Hanji featuring a pressed floral pattern. The pattern is created by pressing dried leaves, flowers grass collected from nature.



© Korea Tourism Organization



© Korea Tourism Organization

♥ These paper cords made of Hanji are used to make other objects.

♥ Korea's unique paper Hanji is firm and strong yet soft.

large quantity, and in the 11th century, Korea began exporting paper to China. Between the 23rd year (1145) of King Injong's reign and the 18th year (1188) of King Myeongjong's reign, mulberry trees were grown virtually all over the Korean Peninsula as the private paper manufacturing industry became a thriving business. The government encouraged papermaking by setting up a jiso, an administrative agency designed exclusively to promote the production of mulberry paper. Eventually, Goryeo succeeded in producing fairly thick and sturdy paper whose obverse and reverse sides are both quite smooth and glossy. In later years, Korea's papermaking techniques further advanced, leading to the production of hanji, traditional Korean paper.

Along with the indigenous and ingenious development of papermaking, Korea has established a deep-rooted tradition in the versatile use of paper. Among numerous traditional items of papercraft were such household goods as wardrobes, cabinets, chests, boxes, calligraphy desks, writing-brush holders, candlestands, room curtains, mats, cushions, comb holders and comb cabinets, trays, bowls with lids, basins, jars and food coverings.

◉ Hanji craftworks

© The traditional Paper Artist Association



Comb box and dressing stand

Box for colored thread



Jewelry box



Stepped chest of drawers





☞ Scooping up paper in the process of making Hanji

☞ Removing bamboo screens from paper

Other popular papercrafts included tobacco pouches, spectacle cases, dippers, quivers, soldiers' armor, fans, umbrellas, apparel, footwear and hats, as well as artificial flowers, lanterns, and kites.

It is hard to tell exactly when Koreans began to produce this plethora of items from paper, many of them for household use. However, historical documents indicate that the popular use of paper items dates as far back as the Three Kingdoms (57 B.C. -A.D. 668). This period left many books documenting important historical and other data. During that period, Korea introduced the method of papermaking to Japan and exported its famous paper to China.

Interestingly, the great compilation known as the Samgukyusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) notes that Koreans enjoyed making and flying kites made of paper, a clear indication that papercraft had already been developed to a considerable extent in Korea at the time of the document's writing.

In the early period of Joseon, under the reign of King Taejo, a decree was proclaimed to emphasize austerity in daily life. Accordingly, artificial flowers made of paper replaced virtually all floral decorations at the sites of royal and private banquets and other functions from the beginning of the Joseon era. Artificial flowers most commonly used during the pre-Joseon period of



© The traditional Paper Artist Association

Goryeo were made of wax or silk cloth. During the reign of King Sejong (r.1418-1450), the use of paper flowers, in lieu of other kinds of artificial flowers, was further extended to Buddhist rites and festivals.

As the demand for paper increased rapidly, the royal court of King Sejong established a special office in charge of papermaking, leading to mass production of paper. During the early period of Joseon, the royal court supplied troops guarding the remote northern frontiers with jigap, armor made of specially treated paper. This armor was not only waterproof, but also effectively protected the soldiers from the severe cold during winter. More importantly, this armor was sturdy enough to serve as a protective covering against arrows, spears, swords, or other weapons. During the period of King Injo, jigap was steadily improved, often using scraps of paper and waste paper as raw materials. Jigap also inspired the invention of civilian attire made of treated paper.

As time passed, paper gained increasingly wider usage. For example, fans made of silk, widely used by Korean nobles, gave way to fans made of paper.



Modern-style Hanji-covered
lamps

In the middle period of Joseon, when tobacco began to be imported, tobacco pouches made of paper appeared and became the vogue. Other paper products made of old books and other used paper also made their debut. Frugality was considered a virtue in daily life. True to the spirit, Koreans came up with many other ways to make good use of scraps of paper. Paper recycled from scraps was used as lining for the walls of rooms. Scraps of paper were made into a string that was durable enough to be used as a ring (in lieu of a door knob) attached to a door or as a clothesline.

In the early 18th century, Koreans began to produce cushions and mats made by weaving paper cords dyed in various colors. Subsequently, a variety of other household and personal items made of paper cords emerged.

According to Korean folklore, if one collects hair that falls during combing and burns it outside the front door of one's home in the twilight of Lunar New Year's Day, it will ward off diseases and other evils.

This folk custom made popular a bag made of oiled paper for storing such hair. Also popular for the same reason was a comb cabinet.

In most cases, paper made from mulberry bark was used for traditional paper crafts. More specifically, second-hand mulberry paper — calligraphy-practice sheets, scraps left over from bookmaking or papering walls or the pages of old books — was especially favored. Traditional paper that was dyed various colors and oiled was also used.

Korea's traditional papercrafts can be divided into three major categories depending on the way the paper is used and on the shape of the items created. These categories are jido gibeop, jiho gibeop and jiseung gibeop.

In jido gibeop, many sheets of paper are pasted together. This multilayered, sturdy paper is then shaped into a desired form. The products thus made ranged from tobacco pouches and workbaskets to needle cases and comb cabinets. Also in this category are paper products made by pasting many layers of paper on both the outside and inside of a pre-shaped bamboo or wooden frame. Products made through this technique included wardrobes and trunks.

Colored paper was used mainly for such products as wardrobes and trunks used by women. Favorite colors were blue, red, yellow, green and purple, all obtained from natural dyestuffs manufactured at home. Often, colored paper was cut into the shape of a butterfly, a bat, a mandarin duck, the double-letter Chinese character meaning happiness, or the Buddhist left facing swastika and pasted onto paper products to wish for good luck.

Jiho gibeop is the technique of using “paper clay” to make such kitchen items as bowls with lids and large scooped bowls. Paper clay is made from scraps of paper that are soaked in water and then crushed and mixed with an ample dose of glue.

Jiseung gibeop applies to the technique of making paper cords and



Making fans with Hanji (above)
and fans with taegeuk designs
(below)



Making a lotus lantern with Hanji
for Buddha's Birthday

weaving them into a broad range of household goods such as baskets, mesh bags, jars and trays. Other popular items made by weaving paper cords included stationery cases, mats, cushions and curtains. Still other paper cord products included quivers, dippers, powder-flasks, footwear, washbasins and chamber pots.

Some paper cord products including small calligraphy desks and trays were reinforced with wooden bars to withstand the weight of the goods placed on them. Jiseung gibeop, developed during the Joseon period, is a unique technique that enabled craftsmen to put otherwise useless scraps of paper to good use.

Most of these Korean paper products were properly varnished to enhance their appearance and durability while making them waterproof. Since the use of lacquer for varnishing was discouraged under government regulations, the

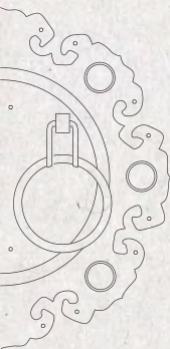


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most commonly used varnish was sichil, a mixture of unripened persimmon juice, rice glue and perilla oil. Colored papercrafts were often covered by liquified agar and beobyonyu, a mixture of litharge, talc and alum boiled down in perilla oil.

All in all, Korean papercraft has been long an ingenious part of the nation's creative and versatile folk culture.

Classes are taught in making different items out of Hanji.



JASU





© The Museum of Korean Embroidery

Jasu

(Embroidery)

The making of jasu, or embroidery, appears to have begun in the prehistoric era when the human race first started to make clothes. People used needles made out of bones of fish or animals to sew and weave animal skins and the bark or leaves of trees. Later, as civilization gradually developed, clothes were made, and with the advent of metal needles, embroidery emerged.

From then on, jasu developed as an art form used to decorate textiles, and it, like the embroidery of other cultures, reflects the nation's particular living environment, customs, and religion.

Korean jasu has a long history. As time went by, it expressed a Korean form of ideal beauty. Along with weaving and sewing, jasu was a method of cultivating beauty in every corner of daily life. Sincere efforts went into every stitch and required delicate dexterity. The full expression of certain "Korean" characteristics is embedded in jasu.

Among Korean prehistoric excavated relics, a bangchucha (a spindle cart) that was made out of earth or stone, big and small bone needles and stone needles, and needle pouches were found. Based on the finding of such weaving tools, it is clear that weaving and sewing existed during that period. Throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, metal equipment for farming developed, thereby remarkably improving the farming industry.

Jasu sagye bungyeongdo, folding screens handed down from the era of Goryeo



Women embroider patterns on their dress

In Korea, ma (hemp) and pong (mulberry) trees were cultivated; myeonpo (cotton cloth) and mapo (hemp cloth), as well as hapsa (twisted thread), were also produced. The development of weaving became the fundamental prerequisite for the development of jasu. Jasu later came to represent the status and rank of the ruling class in the form of decoration on clothes, flags, or wagons.

During the Three Kingdoms period, overall production technology developed greatly. Accordingly, looms were improved and textile skills advanced; not only was a variety of textiles produced, but their quality also improved. Naturally jasu became popular. A trace of jasu that was

embroidered with golden thread was found among the relics in the Cheonmachong (tomb for an unknown king of the Silla Kingdom) in Gyeongju, a good example that shows the status of jasu culture during that period.

During the Unified Silla period, horse saddles and things related to everyday life, not to mention clothes, were decorated with jasu. Buddhist jasu was also commonly created. Particularly during the 9th year (834) of King Heungdeok's reign, a prohibition on certain clothing styles was pronounced to strictly regulate the usage of textiles according to the golpum (aristocratic rank) system. During this period, due to the prosperity of Buddhist institutions, much of the nobility eagerly gave donations for the construction or decoration of temples. As such a phenomenon accelerated, King Aejang prohibited construction of new temples and allowed only the repair of existing temples to be done to prevent the waste of materials. Usage of golden threads in Buddhist items was also prohibited. This indicates that high quality silk and jasu had been used even in decorating objects in the beopdang, the main halls of Buddhist temples.

Gongbang (artisan shops) existed that were in charge of weaving, dyeing, and sewing. Artisans exported silk to China, and dyeing techniques were greatly improved at this time. Developments in dyeing techniques became a



The oldest gold and silver needles ever discovered in Korea were found at Bunhwangsa temple.

© Gyeongju National Museum

Flower embroidery used on an ornament

Beautiful embroidery on sleeve cuffs



© Korea Tourism Organization



© Korea Tourism Organization

major factor that enabled the diversification and delicate coloring of textiles and threads.

In the Goryeo Dynasty, jasu became excessively luxurious. Jasu of that era can be classified into boksik jasu, giyong jasu, gamsang jasu, and Buddhist jasu.

Boksik jasu refers to jasu embroidered to decorate clothing. Dress was strictly regulated according to social status and rank. For example, during the 3rd year (1034) of the reign of King Deokjong, children and women were prohibited from wearing golden ornamental hairpins or embroidered silk clothes. During the 9th year (1043) of Jeongjong's reign, ordinary men and women were prohibited from decorating silk with dragon or phoenix patterns along with golden stitches.

Also, during the 22nd year (1144) of King Injong's reign (1144), the King prohibited the use of golden thread in clothing and jade decoration in bowls. It can be inferred that during that era boksik jasu was more than simply delicate and refined; it became excessively luxurious.

The queen and noblewomen of that time enjoyed red clothing with jasu decorations. The guardsmen who escorted the king largely wore silk clothes with flowers in five colors or bird patterns, and their belts were also often decorated with embroidered flowers in five colors.

Giyong jasu embroidery decorated various materials used in the king's palace.

Gamsang jasu was embroidery that developed as a type of artistic work. Such jasu decorated various ornamental materials and was prevalently used in folding screens in the bedroom or living room.

Korean word for "Buddhist" jasu was embroidery related to Buddhism. During the Goryeo Dynasty, Buddhism, as a means of defending the nation and promoting prosperity, was supported as the national religion. As a result, more than in any other era, Buddhist institution became very prosperous, and jasu was heavily used in statues of Buddha or in various temples.

During the Joseon Dynasty, marked changes occurred in many aspects of the country: political, economical, social, and cultural. Due to the government's early advocacy of an agriculture-first policy as its basic principle and the suppression of commercial industry, the handicraft industry did not develop. As a result, farmers concentrated on the production of food as their main activity, and crafting hand-made artworks became a secondary



Pilnang – a pouch for ink brushes

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Sugwi jumeoni – pouches designed to
store money or personal belongings

© National Palace Museum of Korea



Hyangnang – pouches used for
decoration purpose in the high society

© National Palace Museum of Korea

Jasu crane, Joseon
Dynasty



Sujeojip (case for spoons and
chopsticks) with embroidery
symbolizing good fortune and
longevity

© The Museum of Korean
Embroidery





Jasu pattern on Hanbok

business. In spite of such circumstances, however, the production of clothing remained prominent.

Accordingly, the textile industry as related to the production of clothing, as well as weaving and dyeing, generally became filled with women. Female workers were encouraged to perform such work to increase productivity. It was also emphasized as a central virtue for every woman.

The legislation of the hyungbae (official insignia) system in the early Joseon Dynasty was indeed noteworthy. Such a system, which was related to the development of jasu, required the systemization of government offices' manual work. The organization of gwancheong (governmental offices) manual work developed from the Three Kingdoms era through the Goryeo Dynasty. It peaked during the 15th century, which was the early stage of the Joseon Dynasty.

Hyungbae refers to the embroidered emblems that represented the rank of the government's civil and military officials. They were first implemented



Jasu cushion used by the Empress, Joseon Dynasty



Hyungbae, embroidered insignia on the breast and back of an official robe of the royal family, decorated with a dragon or phoenix

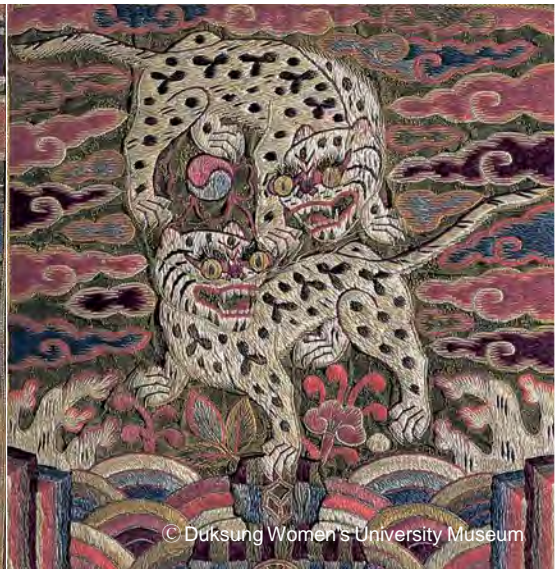
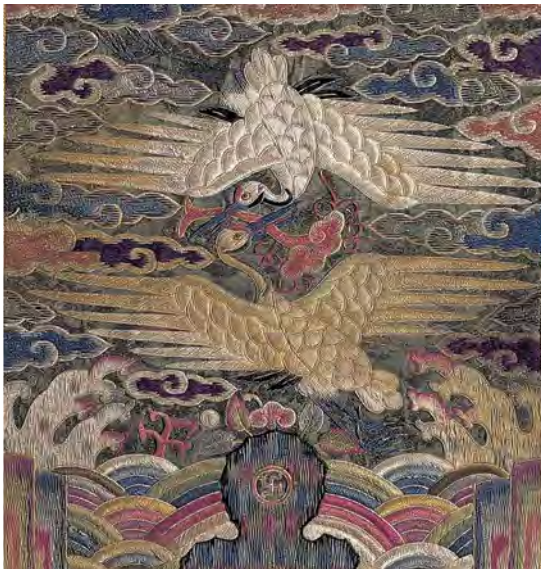
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Official robe of Joseon Dynasty with Hyungbae attached to the chest



A study of hyungbae, the embroidered emblems of official rank, is helpful in understanding the development of embroidery during the Joseon Dynasty.



© Daksung Women's University Museum

during the first year (1453) of King Danjong's reign. Later, after several modifications, hyungbae were improved and the emblems gradually became more luxurious.

As a type of publicly-used embroidery, hyungbae jasu is good reference material in understanding the development of embroidery of that period. Artisans who were mobilized to produce textiles and related items such as hyungbae, were among the most skilled people in the nation; they were placed in the central and regional governmental offices and devoted themselves to this field. They were responsible for the production of clothing and other textile products and embroidery decorations that were used by the royal family and high-ranking governmental officials.

Besides these organizations, there was an additional organization called the subang (embroidery room) that was exclusively responsible for the embroidery of clothes and miscellaneous materials for the family of the king.



Upon completion of a certain level of education and expertise, women were selected to enter the palace to work in the subang, and were registered accordingly; they exclusively produced jasu to meet the demands of the palace. During the Joseon Dynasty, interrelations among various artisan organizations and the subang provided the cornerstone of the palace jasu, which is also called gungsu. The gungsu tradition was sustained until the end of the Joseon Dynasty, and due to the standard format and the advanced skills of the artisans, the embroidery was delicate and perfectly executed.

In contrast with gungsu, was minsu (folk embroidery), which was produced by the common people. Unlike gungsu, which was highly specialized, minsu was a domestic skill passed down through the family or the region, and women in the household were in charge of its execution. As a result, in comparison with the standardized gungsu, minsu reflected the characteristics of the individuals who created it. If Korean traditional jasu is

Sipjangaengdo palpok jasu byeongpung, embroidered folding screens (Joseon Dynasty). The sipjangaeng are ten natural objects symbolizing long life: the sun, clouds, mountains, water, pine, bamboo, crane, deer, turtles and the mushroom of immortality.





Patches decorating both ends of pillows

classified according to function, it can be divided into byeongpung (folding screen) jasu, boksik jasu (decorative clothes and accessories used in the home), and Buddhist jasu.

Embroidered folding screens played an important role in major events in life. For example, they were widely used at congratulatory banquets, such as those for anniversaries, birthdays — especially the 60th birthday — and engagements and for mourning ceremonies and other rites.

Embroidered folding screens were not only used in the various rooms of the home, but also in temples and shrines, as well as in palaces, guest houses and lecture rooms.

The byeongpung jasu, therefore, exhibited a great variety. The majority of screens, however, were of flowers and birds, the sipjangaeng, or 10 longevity symbols, and subok, or Chinese characters for “long life” and “happiness.” For flower and bird

screens, the peony, chrysanthemum, water lily, plum tree, and paulownia trees were matched with a couple of pheasants, a mandarin duck, phoenixes or ducks to symbolize a happy family. The sipjangaeng are ten natural objects symbolizing long life: the sun, clouds, mountains, water, pine, bamboo, crane, deer, turtles and the mushroom of immortality.



The embroidery on the queen's state ceremonial dress symbolizes her high social status and authority.

© National Folk Museum of Korea

There were many other embroidery designs, usually pertaining to lucky omens and education. Educational subjects, however, faded away from their original intention and later adhered to simple subjects. Hence, in jasu, emphasis was centered on creating beauty rather than on education. Embroidered screens, like painted screens, consisted mostly of eight panels, followed by 12, 10, 4 and 2 panels; there were even 20-panel screens.

Boksik jasu refers to embroidery on clothes and accessories. Particularly during the Joseon Dynasty, dress styles were highly differentiated according to class and rank, and patterns used in jasu followed such distinctions. To represent high social status and authority, dresses worn in the palace usually had golden stitches or colored threads. Jasu was done in two styles: one was



Hwarot, the ceremonial dresses for the women of the palace, were luxuriously decorated with embroidered flowers and symbols of luck and longevity.

embroidering on the surface of the clothes directly, another was attaching jasu appliqué to the clothes. The former was used for the king's state ceremonial dress and various ceremonial dresses for the king's family members; the latter included miscellaneous dress embroidery, such as the embroidered

patches on the breast and the back of official uniforms.

On a hwarot, which was the ceremonial dress for the women in the palace, patterns of various flowers, such as peonies, chrysanthemums, mushrooms of immortality, and herbs, as well as various lucky omens and patterns of longevity were luxuriously embroidered. The clothing of males in the royal family and government officials did not have embroidery directly on the surface of the cloth; instead hyungbae decorated with patterns of cranes or tigers was attached to everyday clothing. Pyojang, an emblem which was attached to the dress of the king and queen, on the other hand, was differentiated from hyungbae and called bo; its embroidery consisted of dragons or phoenixes.

For the most part, common people were not allowed to wear embroidered clothes, except for a hwarot, or ceremonial dress, at the time of their wedding. Other materials that were embroidered included children's hats, vests, and belts. In particular, embroidered clothing for children used various colors and matching patterns to express their innocence.



Jasu also decorated numerous items used in the home. It would be impossible to list them all, but they include pillow cases, eyeglass cases, cushions and pouches for such things as tobacco, spoons and chopsticks and brushes.

Unlike embroidery for purely decorative purposes, Buddhist jasu, which decorated temples and Buddhist statues, was created out of religious devotion. They were executed with extreme care by artisans of extraordinary expertise. Accordingly, there are many masterpieces that are preserved to this day in temples and museums.

Exhibit goers admire a traditional folding screen

Bojagi (Wrapping Cloths)



Bojagi (wrapping cloths) made by sewing together many pieces of cloth.



Bojagi was not only practical, but also very artistic.

The word bojagi, or po for short, refers to square hemmed cloths of various size, color, and design, which Koreans used to wrap, store or carry things. Bojagi was not only a practical and versatile item in the daily lives of Koreans, but also an object of art. Po attests to the artfulness that Koreans seek even in the most mundane aspects of their everyday lives.

The use of bojagi in Korea dates back to time immemorial, and historical records show many ways in which they have been used. Although bojagi were created for everyday use, they also added flair and style to various ceremonies and rituals. During the Joseon Dynasty, the patterns and

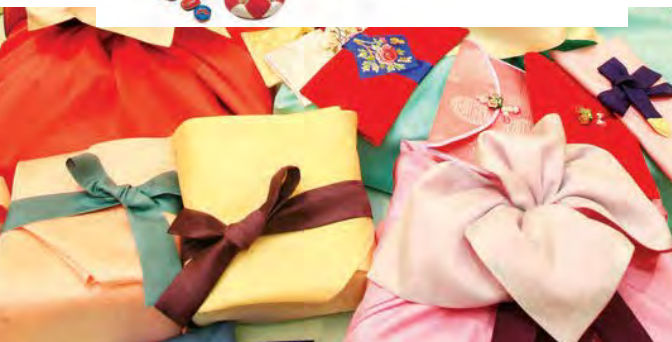
designs became particularly colorful. Because they are so easily folded and take up such little space, they eventually became a colorful part of everyday Korean customs and practices.

Bojagi's place in Korean culture began in part with the folk religions of ancient times, when it was believed that keeping something wrapped was tantamount to safeguarding good fortune. A typical example would be the use of bojagi to wrap wedding gifts. Elaborate needlework is applied to such wrapping to wish the bride and groom much luck in their new life together.

Patchwork bojagi particularly reflects Korean artistic flair. Bojagi was born out of the habit of



Instruments used for sewing-
thimble and pin cushion



Different types of gift-wrapping with cloths



Koreans still make wrapping cloths to use in their daily lives.



Sumokmunsubo, subo used mainly as hollyeyongbo (wedding bo)
© The Museum of Korean Embroidery

Korean housewives to make good use of small, otherwise useless pieces of leftover cloth by patching them up into useful wrappers. As time went by, the patchwork itself became a highly creative and artistic craft.

Embroidery of various figures and characters also adds to the beauty of bojagi. The handicraft can often reach the beauty of levels of high artistic accomplishment. Embroidered bojagi is known as supo, the prefix su meaning "embroidery."



JANGSINGU



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Jangsingu

(Personal Ornaments)

The term jangsingu refers to various objects worn for ornamental purposes. In Korea, the original purpose of these ornaments was not only to enhance physical beauty but also to bring good luck and to drive out evil. The ornaments were also symbols reflecting the social status of the wearer. The history of these objects dates back to ancient times.

Tubular-shaped jade and necklaces made of animal bones were discovered among historical remains dating back to the Neolithic Age, and numerous relics from the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668) include exquisitely detailed ornaments made of gold, silver and gilt bronze.

The most representative Korean ornaments include headdresses and hair accessories, necklaces, earrings, chest pieces, bracelets, court hats, ring, and pendants. Primitive hairpins and combs made of animal bones are some of the hair ornaments that date from prehistoric times.

Hair ornaments from the third and fourth centuries were more delicate and splendid, and include combs, rod hairpins, and clasps used to hold hair together. Combs discovered inside the ancient tombs of the Silla Kingdom (57 B.C.-A.D. 935) were made of lacquered wood, and the teeth were fairly thin and long. A hair clasp discovered inside the tombs of King Muryeong (r. 501-523) of Baekje resembles an elegant bird in flight with a head section

♥ Norigae, a hanbok ornament

♥ Hanbok decorated with pendants



An ornamental comb decorated with gold and jade inlay, Unified Silla period.
© Leeum, Samsung Museum of Arts



Youngchin wangbi Dae samjak norigae (large pendant with triple ornaments) worn on the breastsash of coat or waist of skirt (Joseon Dynasty)

© National Palace Museum of Korea

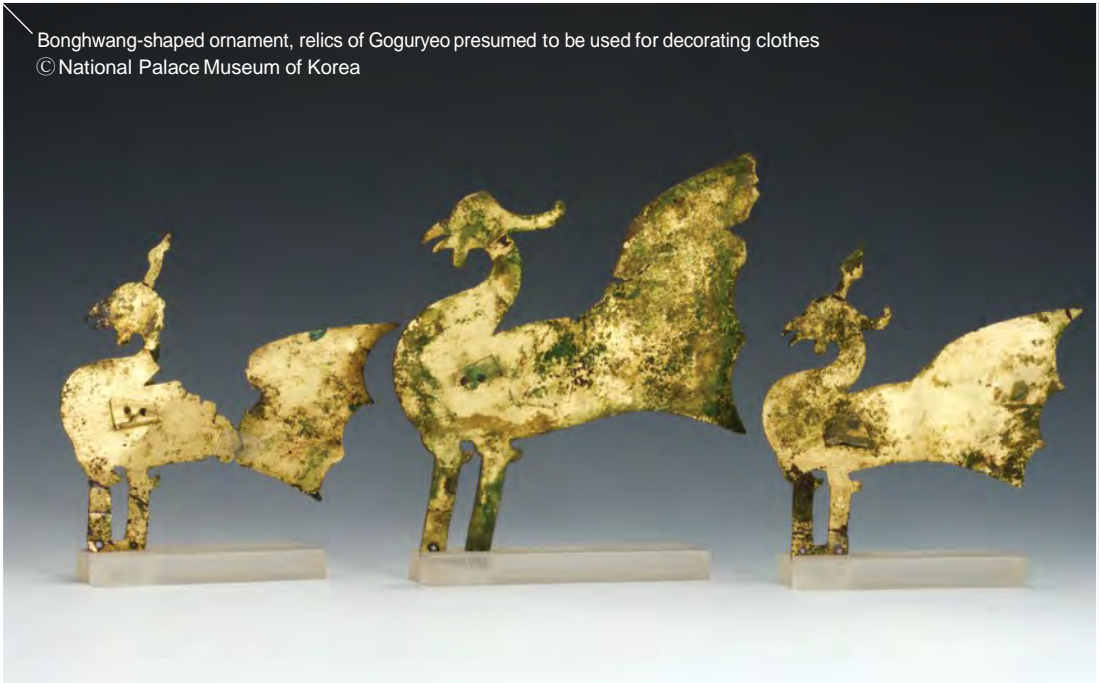


National Treasure No.159- a golden chignon (hair ornament) manufactured during the era of Baekje, which was excavated from Tomb of King Muryeong.

© Gongju National Museum

Bonghwang-shaped ornament, relics of Goguryeo presumed to be used for decorating clothes

© National Palace Museum of Korea



followed by three long branches detailed to look like the billowing tails of a bird. Hairpins from the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) are even more delicate and exquisite in their details, with a Chinese phoenix or rooster heads carved on the head parts.

Another object from the Goryeo Dynasty is the topknot hairpin, which was used by men to hold their topknots in place. In addition to this practical purpose, it also served as an ornamental piece. Magnificent gold topknot hairpins from the Goryeo Dynasty came in various shapes and sizes.

During the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) a national policy was declared imposing limits on the use of personal ornaments. Tight restraints on the use of gold and silver brought about a deterioration in the artistic value of the ornaments produced during this period and in the quality of craftsmanship in general. However, as a result, the production of ornaments using materials other than gold and silver flourished, and their use became widely popularized.

During the Joseon Dynasty, the use of rod hairpins was severely restricted, with social status dictating the use of different materials and shapes. Women of the royal court and high society wore rod pins made of gold, silver, pearls, jade, and coral, while those of lesser status were limited to ones made of wood, horn, nickel alloy, and brass.

The head shapes of the rod pins were also different according to social status. The queen and women of the royal court and high society wore pins shaped in the images of dragons and Chinese phoenixes, while common folks were allowed only plain pins or those shaped like mushrooms. The head shapes and materials of the pins also varied according to the season.

Several new shapes of ceremonial hair decorations including the cheopji and tteoljam, as well as hair picks and daenggi (ribbons) emerged during the Joseon Dynasty. The cheopji is a type of hairpin that women wore with ceremonial dress to enhance their beauty. It came in the shape of a phoenix or a frog. The phoenix-shaped pin was reserved for the queen's exclusive use, and the frog-shaped pin was for common folks. Tteoljam was worn by women of high society on ceremonial occasions. It came in round, square, and butterfly shapes and a variety of other forms. The pieces were lavishly decorated with cloisonné, pearls, and other precious gems.

Hair picks refer to all the ornamental pieces worn in chignons other than the rod pins. These include plain picks with pointed ends and practical ones that could be used as ear picks and also for parting one's hair. Chrysanthemums, lotus, apricot blossoms, and butterflies were some of the more popular shapes, and the picks were decorated with coral, jade, precious stones, cloisonné, and pearls. A daenggi (hair ribbon) was a piece of gold-inlaid cloth that was used to hold a woman's hair in a braid. The ribbons came in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Along with these hair decorations, Koreans traditionally favored the use of earrings as ornamental pieces. The use of earrings also dates back to prehistoric ages, and they became more lavish and detailed with time. Earrings from the prehistoric ages included those made from animal bones or curved jade. Relics from ancient remains clearly indicate that even during this early period, Korean earrings came in a variety of shapes.

In particular, it is interesting to note that during the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668), earrings were popular with both men and women. Earrings from that period can be divided into three groups according to their shapes: a single loop, a loop attached to the post, and those with multiple loops with lavish decorations dangling from one loop.

Materials used for earrings included gold, silver, and gilt bronze, with gold being the most popular. Among the relics of the Goryeo Dynasty are pure gold earrings. Some are simple in design with three connected loops, while others are decorated with round beads. While the use of earrings wasn't as popular during the Joseon Dynasty, the period is noteworthy in that it brought about a revolutionary change in the way earrings were worn. Until then, earrings were worn by piercing a person's earlobes and inserting the studs but it was now possible to simply clasp them onto the ears. Sometimes five-colored tassels were used to complement the simple ornamentation of the earrings. These types of earrings were reserved for ceremonial purposes and were not for everyday use.

The use of necklaces in Korea dates back to prehistoric times. During that period they were constructed from a variety of materials including animal teeth, bones, tubular jade, and jade stones. From the third to the seventh centuries, the use of necklaces grew more popular. The shapes became more

A daenggi was a piece of gold-impressed cloth used to hold a woman's hair in a braid, Joseon Dynasty.

© Duksung Women's University Museum

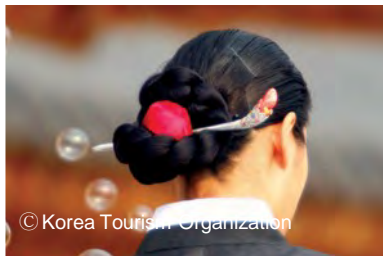


© Duksung Women's University Museum



© Korea Tourism Organization

Hair picks used to hold women's hair in place (Joseon Dynasty)



© Korea Tourism Organization



© National Palace Museum of Korea

Magnificent binyeo (hairpins)

Tteoljam lavishly decorated with cloisonné, pearls, and other precious gems, Joseon Dynasty

© National Palace Museum of Korea



© GOLDHANBOK

Necklace (Silla Kingdom)
© National Museum of Korea



White gem finger rings (Joseon Dynasty)
© Duksung Women's University
Museum



Gold and silver bracelets
© Gyeongju National Museum



Gold cap from 5th to 6th century (Silla Kingdom)
© Gyeongju National Museum



Gold taehwanisik (earrings with thick loop), Silla Kingdom
© National Museum of Korea



diverse as well, and necklaces were worn as a single strand or in multiple (two, three, four, or six) strands. The more popular materials were gold and jade.

Chest ornaments are objects worn on the chest for decorative purposes and differ from necklaces according to their lengths. During prehistoric times, primitive chest ornaments were made by drilling holes into sea shells and connecting them with a piece of string.

Chest ornaments of the Silla Kingdom eventually became much more lavish and exquisite in detail. In particular, the chest ornament discovered inside the Geumnyeongchong (Tomb of the Golden Bell) is spectacular in its beauty and is lavishly decorated with 152 glass beads. Another piece found inside Hwangnam daechong (The Great tomb at Hwangnam) is also exquisitely decorated with gold, silver, glass and jade.

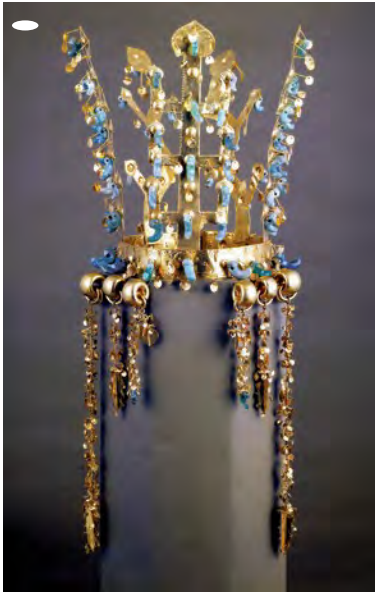
One article of ornamentation that was widely popular throughout the history of Korea is the bracelet, whose use dates back to ancient times. Early bracelets were primitive, made from sea shells, but with time the use of a variety of materials such as bronze, jade, and glass became more widespread. Bracelets, along with earrings and rings, were the most popular ornaments during the Three Kingdoms period. The discovery of numerous bracelets from this period attests to this fact, and most of these were made from jade, glass and metal.

The finger ring was another popular piece of ornamentation throughout the history of Korea. As early as in prehistoric times, Koreans are known to have used rings for decorative purposes. A ring made from a piece of bronze plate was dug up from an ancient tomb dating back to prehistoric times, which testifies to its early use.

From the Silla Kingdom, numerous silver rings have been discovered, and the lavish and exquisite details on these pieces clearly attest to the high quality of craftsmanship of this period.

Representative rings of the Goryeo Dynasty are a gold ring decorated with agate and another with green gemstones. Others include a pure gold ring with an embossed arabesque pattern, a silver ring with a jagged design, a silver ring with exquisite engravings, and a plain copper ring without any ornamental design.

During the Joseon Dynasty, rings were the most popular ornaments along



♥ Gold crown (Silla Kingdom)

♥ Geumjegwansik (gold ornaments for diadems)

with pendants. The materials used to make these rings were also diverse; they include gold, silver, cloisonné, jade, agate, amber, green jade, pearl, and bronze.

Court hats and crowns were worn by the king and government officials. In addition to their ornamental purposes, they served to represent the wearer's social status. The higher a person's position, the more lavish the hat. During the Three Kingdoms (Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla) period, each kingdom with its different social structure developed a unique style of court hat. Among those of Goguryeo, the most outstanding is the gold court hat created in the image of a burning flame. This gold hat was constructed by attaching nine ornaments, each shaped to resemble a burning flame, on a gilt bronze plate. Two identical ornaments were then attached to either side of the hat for additional decoration. A gold court hat excavated in Hwaseong-ri in Daedong-gun boasts a frontal ornamental piece resembling a half-moon.

A gold court crown discovered in an ancient tomb in the Bannam area of Naju dates back to the Baekje Kingdom. This crown is decorated with lavish ornaments on the broad front band and on each side. The most impressive crowns of Baekje are the ones discovered among the relics inside the tomb of



King Muryeong. The decorations on these crowns, presumed to have been worn by the king and queen, were cut from thin gold plates and created in the images of glowing haloes.

Among the most widely known crowns of Silla is one with five ornaments attached to a narrow band. Additional decorations on the three main ornaments on the front and on each of the sides resemble tiny twigs branching out of a tree, thereby creating cascading images of small mountains. During the Goryeo Dynasty, crown styles were deeply influenced by the Chinese: Myeollyugwan was a square, flat crown with dangling strings of small precious stones that was worn by the king with formal attire; Wonyugwan was a dark, silk hat with a jade ornament worn by the king when meeting his court; boktu was a formal hat worn by those who had passed the highest civil service examination when receiving their appointments; and, Samo was a round, black silk hat worn by civil and military officials, and is donned these days by the groom in a traditional wedding ceremony. Court hats similar to those worn by the Chinese were still popular during the Joseon Dynasty. It was not until mid-Joseon that the gat, a uniquely Korean hat

♥ A bride wearing jokduri, a crown-like headpiece for women

♥ Hwagwan - official hat worn by women when wearing formal dress (Joseon Dynasty)



An artisan making gat (traditional hat for men)

woven from horse-hair, emerged. Jade buttons and decorative egret shapes and strings were attached to the gat for ornamental purposes. Women's hats also grew more lavish as jewels were attached to flower hats and bridal tiaras, rendering them more appropriate for special ceremonies.

The most representative item of personal ornamentation from the Joseon Dynasty is the pendant. Pendants, worn by women on the outer bows or inner bows of their blouses or on their skirts, were very popular during this period. Materials included metals such as gold, silver and bronze and gemstones such as white jade, green jade, agate, red jade, blue stones, pure jade, rough diamond, and malachite. The use of precious stones and shells including amber, coral, pearl, and tortoise shell was also common. The pendants also came in a variety of designs with some resembling animals such as bats, turtles, butterflies, ducks, goldfish, cicadas, and terrapins while others were shaped like plants including peppers, eggplants, clusters of grapes,



acorns, and walnuts. Often the shapes were taken from objects that were part of everyday life, with some pendants resembling bottles, pouches, bells, gourds, drums, hourglass drums, and spectacle cases.

Another personal item women carried was the ornamental dagger. These were used for decorative purposes as well as for self-defense. The cylindrical dagger and others shaped like the letter “Z”, squares, and octagons are only a few of the variety of shapes representative of this period.

Visitors to Korea try making knots to be used for ornaments.



PATTERNS



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Patterns

Patterns were devised by people to decorate their homes as well as everyday items including dress, furniture and various handicraft objects. Traditionally, patterns were thought to be not only useful for ornamentation but also to symbolize human thoughts and philosophical and aesthetic pursuits.

Patterns often have their origins in early ideograms. They began as a means to express basic needs and feelings about one's surroundings and developed into a universal form of decorative art. Patterns can be largely divided into four main kinds based on motif-geometric patterns and patterns of plants, animals and other natural objects.

Geometric patterns in most cases consist of dots and lines forming symmetrical shapes. They include triangles, squares, diamonds, zigzags, latticeworks, frets, spirals, sawteeth, circles, ovals and concentric circles. It is interesting to note that most of these geometric patterns have their roots in primitive religious beliefs.

One example is the fret design. The lightning pattern, which for primitive society depicted rain, represented people's wish for rainfall. A triangle symbolized reproduction and a woman's genitalia, and thus hope for childbirth. A swirl, resembling a whirlwind or a fern-brake, symbolized death and the boundlessness of the universe.

➤ Patterns decorating the doors of Hwaeomsa Temple in Gurye-gun

➤ Hanbok sleeves filled with beautiful patterns



Motifs of Korean primitive art as shown in a rock carving in Goryeong

Among favorite plant motifs were trees, flowers, fruits and grass. Animal designs engraved on stone or bone implements were related to the food-gathering activities of primitive people such as hunting and fishing. Stone Age rock carvings feature animal designs such as fish, whales, tigers, antlers and human figures. Natural objects include landscapes, rocks, waves and clouds. Next, ritual implements, weapons and personal ornaments from the Bronze Age show more diverse patterns executed with advanced technique.

Paleolithic sites on the Korean Peninsula have revealed some traces of early patterns. It is believed, however, that patterns were first used on everyday objects during the Neolithic Age. The comb patterns on Neolithic earthenware are among the earliest examples. Abstract delineation grew increasingly popular with time, so that most Bronze Age mirrors were engraved with fine lines that formed triangles, circles, concentric circles, radii and star shapes.



A ceiling painting in Ssangyeongchong (the tomb of Double Columns) from the Goguryeo Kingdom. A full-blown lotus flower is seen at the center.

More naturalistic patterns were employed in the Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.-A.D. 668) and motifs inspired by animism appeared in the Goguryeo Kingdom (37 B.C.-A.D. 668) as is evident in the tomb murals of the period. A typical example is that of the four guardian spirits — the blue dragon of the west, the white tiger of the east, the red peacock of the south and the black turtle-snake of the north. These four Taoist symbols of auspiciousness and authority appear over and over in all forms of Korean art.

Linear renderings of symmetrically arranged quasi-abstract phoenixes and dragons can be seen in many Silla (57 B.C.-A.D. 935) ornaments. But trees, antlers and bird wings, evidence of Siberian shamanistic traditions, are central to the motifs found in the crowns or pottery of Silla.

The swirling cloud and flame motifs of Chinese origin often decorate the personal ornaments and jewelry of Silla aristocrats. Honeysuckles and lotus flowers adorn the crowns of the Baekje Kingdom (18 B.C.-A.D. 660).



Various patterns of Sumaksae (roof-end tile) — a decorative tile placed at the end of a roof's eaves atop wooden structures (Silla and Unified Silla era) © Gyeongju National Museum



Yeonhwamunjeon — a Baekje-era clay brick with carved patterns

© National Museum of Korea



Sansumunjeon (Treasure No. 343) — brick with incised landscape (Baekje)

© Buyeo National Museum



Various patterns of Sumaksae (roof-end tile) — a decorative tile placed at the end of a roof's eaves atop wooden structures (Silla and Unified Silla era)

© Gyeongju National Museum



Inmyeon munui wadang
Eolgul munui sumaksae (Unified Silla)

© Gyeongju National Museum

A combination of Buddhist designs with shamanistic, Taoist and Confucian motifs is found in the arts of all periods. Lotus flowers, clouds, lightning and swastikas can be seen in nearly every Buddhist structure or painting, either singly or in various configurations.

Following the unification of the peninsula by Silla, allied with Tang China in the seventh century, patterns grew more colorful and gorgeous with influences from China and Central Asia. Arabesques in the Tang style and Korean native style flower designs, called bosanghwa, were of a more luxurious mode than the traditional honeysuckle and lotus patterns.

Delicate inlaid patterns on celadon, metalware and mother-of-pearl chests were one of the crowning achievements of decorative art in the Goryeo period (918-1392), which was characterized by a flowering Buddhist culture. Inlaying was a technique of carving out a desired pattern on the surface of a piece of pottery or metalware and filling in the recession with clay or gold or silver before coating the surface with glaze or lacquer. In particular, Goryeo artists displayed adroit craftsmanship in bronzeware with

Delicate inlaid patterns on celadon vase from the Goryeo Dynasty

Buncheong flask with peony design





Since ancient times, Koreans have used various patterns to decorate different objects. The ten longevity symbols above decorate a wall from the late Joseon period. Sipjangsaeng (ten symbols of longevity) chimney at Janggyeongjeon, Gyeongbokgung Palace.

silver inlay, which served as the foundation for the widely acclaimed inlaid celadon and mother-of-pearl articles in later years.

Naturalistic themes of leisurely, idealized life embellish many Goryeo celadon and lacquered articles. Line drawings of water fowl, willows, reeds, chrysanthemums, cranes and clouds attest to the refined poetic taste of the Goryeo nobility. Other favorite motifs included plum, orchid, and bamboo, which, together with the ubiquitous chrysanthemum, constituted the “four gentlemen” plants symbolizing the virtues of learned men of noble demeanor.

Many Goryeo celadon vases, incense burners and kundika bottles were skillfully adorned with drawings of water birds floating on willow-lined streams, carefree urchins frolicking among lotus leaves and wild geese flying against the clear autumn sky.

With the advent of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), which adopted Confucianism as the basic creed for state administration and public ethics, the Buddhist-influenced, subtle and tasteful Goryeo-style decorative art gave way to relatively simpler styles reflecting the frugal lifestyle of a Confucian-



dominated society. A preference for the simple and mono-chromatic is evident in the arts of this period.

The Joseon literati painting, characterized by simple but deft brushwork rendered in ink, finds a pleasant echo in the underglaze cobalt decoration of blue-and-white porcelain ware. Favorite motifs in both these genres included landscapes, flowers and birds, grapes, and the ever popular “four gentlemen” plants.

The coarse but charming buncheong ware deserves attention as a significant transitional stage connecting the elegant Goryeo celadon and the simple and pragmatic Joseon porcelain. Coated with white slip and glaze, the utilitarian stoneware vessels are ornamented with carefree peony scrolls, fish with humorous expressions and stamped tiny chrysanthemum heads, among other frequently used motifs.

Despite an obvious predilection for monochromatic simplicity, the wooden bracketing systems, pillars and beams of palace and temple structures provide rare examples of dazzling decoration with patterns of all imaginable motifs rendered in the five cardinal colors of red, blue, yellow, white and black.



Flower-patterned latticeworks, with rhythmical and symmetrical shapes, create a very harmonious look. Latticeworks are frequently found in temples.

Dragon and phoenix motifs adorn the ceilings of the throne halls of palaces, symbolizing the king's supreme authority.

The ten longevity symbols constituted a major theme of folk painting, and of the decorative motifs of handicraft objects used by people of all social classes. The ten objects, including rocks, mountains, water, clouds, pine trees, turtles, deer, cranes, the fungus of immortality and the sun, made appealing motifs for folding screens, lacquered chests, ceramics and embroidery on clothes and other fabric items for daily use.

In the same strain of the Taoist world view, Chinese characters denoting longevity (su), happiness (bok), many sons (danam), and wealth and high social status (bugwi), were widely used in stylized or pictorial forms. These characters embellish various articles of everyday use such as pillow pads, spoon cases or wooden wardrobes.

Attesting to the deep-rooted, Taoist-Confucian tradition among Koreans is the frequent use of the taeguk pattern and the eight trigrams symbolizing possible situations and processes of the interaction between the two contrasting but mutually complementing elements of eum (c.yin) and yang.



© Yonhap News

The taegeuk pattern, consisting of two whirling elements, symbolizes the “Great Ultimate,” or the primary source of all reality. The two whirls stand for eum and yang, the cosmic elements of tranquility and activity, weakness and strength, dark and light, and male and female.

Chu Hsi, the Chinese philosopher who founded Neo-Confucianism, said that the Great Ultimate is like the moon. It is one object, but its light is scattered upon rivers and lakes. Thus, he said, the Great Ultimate is both the sum total of all principles and principle in its oneness.

As seen in the Korean national flag, the pattern features yang in red at the top, and eum in blue at the bottom, symbolizing heaven and earth, respectively. Similar patterns of dualism are found on the doors of temples and shrines, clothes, furniture and daily objects such as fans or spoons.

USB memory sticks decorated
with patterns of Silla Dynasty