Textile Designs of the Joseon Dynasty

Koh, Bou-Ja
Graduate School of Dankook University

1. Prologue

Excavated remains mean everything found in a burial site with the dead body. These remains are classified into three groups: shrouds, relics (which fill the coffin along with the body) and other materials that are used to clean dress and tie the dead for the funeral.

This study is based on the excavated textiles from the tombs in Joseon dynasty.

2. Origin and creation of the designs

Design have been created in order to ward off any disasters or misfortune.

The carry symbolic meanings. The various textile patterns mean charms for longevity, richness, good luck, prosperity, success, and promotion. The patterns also show the beauty and respect for aesthetic reasons. The textile patterns reflect the cultural value of that time period.

3. A design and its symbolism

Designs can be categorized into three groups: natural patterns, abstract patterns and complex patterns. The natural patterns include animals and plants.

1) Natural patterns
(1) Plant patterns
The natural textile patterns include flowers, leaves, seeds, and plants.

We can see many different plants design: peony(牡丹), lotus(蓮), banana plant(芭蕉), immortal plant(靈芝, Ganoderma lucidum), gourd(胡虡)
and fingered citron (佛手柑) all are considered spiritual objects. Fruits patterns were also popular. Mythical peaches (天桃), pomegranates (石榴), grapes (葡萄), plums (梅花) orchids (蘭草) and chrysanthemums (菊花) were popularly used. These motifs appear either alone or with other motifs such as birds (鳥), butterflies (蝶), fish and scrolls that mean prosperity, endurance and harmony.

(2) Animal patterns
Animal patterns include butterflies (胡蝶), bats (蝙蝠), carps, mandarin ducks (鴨鶩), magpies and cranes (鶴). A carp is a fish that symbolizes success and promotion and A crane means good luck. These motifs were commonly used for men's attire. Lastly, the boy (男兒) and grape (葡萄) motif meant fertility and the bearing of many male children, these patterns were for ceremonial skirts of the early Joseon dynasty.

(3) Ten longevity symbol patterns (十長生)
These longevity symbols are the sun (日), mountains (山), rocks (岩), clouds (雲), water (水), pine trees (松), the herb of eternal youth (不老草), the elixir, cranes (鶴), turtles (龜), and deer (麂). Sometimes, bamboo (竹) was included instead of mountains.

(4) Cloud patterns
In nature, clouds bring rain and wind which are essential to agricultural regions. People worshiped them as mysterious objects and believed that they forecasted good or bad luck. For this reason the cloud pattern was very popular for official uniforms. The cloud pattern also indicated the social status of the wearers.

(5) Mixed patterns
Mixed patterns with flowers, birds, and fruit were used for women's attire.

2) Abstract patterns
(1) Geometric patterns
Originally geometric patterns were abstract designs of the objects found in nature and they appeared as concentric circles (同心圓), a Chinese character (回. shaped like a square within a square), taegeuk (太極, this means un 險 and yang 陽), palgoe (八卦, eight signs of divination), yeouidu (如意頭), waves (波狀), triangles (三角), crosses (十字), lattice (格子), and squares (菱形). These patterns were used as the background pattern supporting the main subjects rather than being used by themselves.
(2) Imaginary patterns

These patterns can be divided into animals and plants. The saryeong(四靈) motif included four spiritual animals which were a dragon(龍), a giraffe(麒麟), a phoenix(鳳凰), and a turtle(龜). There were also for holy guardians of east, west, north, south directions: dragon, a tiger(虎) and imaginary animals such as a jujak (朱雀, a black-red magpie) hyeonmu(玄武, a turtle-snake), a baiktaeg(白澤, a white dragon), a haechi (獬豸, a mythical unicorn-lion) and a Kalavinka that appeared in this pattern too. It was call a sasin (四神).

Plant motifs were used with floral roundel mixed with lotus, honeysuckle(忍冬), latticework, animals and vines.

3) Letter patterns

The most popular was the Chinese character, soo (壽), which means longevity, and the next most popular Chinese characters were boo (富), meaning richness, gui (貴), meaning nobility, and danamja (多男子), signifying having many boy children. These letters were always used with other patterns and embroidered with gold thread(織金).

4) Treasure patterns(寶紋)

The treasure patterns indicate good omens and they have either seven or eight good auspices. They are rooted in Buddhism, Taoism and everyday life of the common people. In Korea, the seven-treasure(七寶) pattern and eight-treasure(八寶) pattern were used together but mostly japbo(雜寶) was used (japbo means common and various treasures).

4. Textile patterns in the excavated Clothing

Textile patterns found in the excavated clothing included dragon(龍), dragon-cloud(龍雲), crane with dragon-cloud(鶴龍雲), dragon-flower(龍花), cloud(雲), cloud-treasure(雲寶), flame(花), flame-treasures(花寶), boy-grape(童子葡萄), diamond shape(菱), flower-bird(花鳥), flower with fruit and bird(花果鳥), and grapes.

1) Textile patterns from variaus garments

(1) Jungchimak (中直莫, garment with side slits)

This robe worn by men after the Japanese invasion in 1592. It had
very wide sleeves and slit on both sides. It was also worn between inner and outer clothes. Several patterns such as the flower, plants, flower with plants and butterfly patterns were found on this garment.

(2) *Danryung* (團領. official uniform)

This was worn by the king, the prince, and civil and military officials for ceremonial affair. This garment was named after the round shape of the neckline design and it was also called *sangbok* (常服), meaning regular clothing for working. In *『Kyunggook-daejeon』* (『經國大典』). The national code), it was said that the officials of first to the third rank (堂上官) wore this uniform made of simple or complex patterned gauze and trill and satin damask. In the motifs used for this garment, the cloud and treasure pattern was the most popular. Flower and treasure, clouds, or flowers also were designed. In the early period of the Joseon, this clothing was made with a single layer and later after the mid-Joseon dynasty, it was lined with the same cloud and treasure motifs that were used for the outer fabrics.

(3) *Dappo* (half sleeve jacket)

The *dappo* was a jacket worn either over a jacket or under other garments of the official uniform. The shape of this jacket was very different and it changed over time. The flower and the symbol for Buddhism, the *man* (卍) character, were rarely found on men’s clothes other than the *dappo*.

(4) *Chang-ui* (掩衣. Robe with slits)

As everyday wear, the *chang-ui* had very few designs. The flower-treasure or cloud-treasure pattern were found as on the *dappo*.

(5) *Cheollic* (military uniform)

It can be also called *cheoplí* (帖裡) or *cheonik* (天翼.天盔). This article of clothing had a blouse above the waistline connecting to a skirt and it was worn in case of national emergency or when an ambassador was sent to another country. It was also worn when going out hunting and do the work required quick movement. Among the excavated textiles and garments, this *cheollic* is found most often meaning this was popularly worn. It was mostly made with silk tabby and rarely with cotton or ramie. Patterned satin damask and gauze were popular for the *cheollic*. It shows the same motifs as the *danryeung* but sometime sit had cloud, flower-bird and *soonin* (純衣) patterned in continuous dots.

(6) *Chima* (裳. skirt)
This was a women's skirt. The ceremonial skirt had different sizes, color, and patterns from the ordinary skirt. Common motifs used for the skirt were flowers, flower and bird, flower and treasure, flower plants, cloud and crane, clouds, and small leaves. The boy(童子) and grape(葡萄) pattern was considered very precious. This pattern was woven with supplementary wefts (or gold wefts. 織金). Also patterned tape woven with supplementary gold weft was patched on the skirt.

(7) Jeogori (赤古里. jacket)

A woman's jeogori was a blouse and outer jacket at the same time, so it had various colors and patterns. These patterns were shown only in some area. The samhwejang(三回裝)-jeogori, was ceremonial jacket, made with patterned clothes at the collar, front overlapping panels and on the cuffs. Satin damask with gold supplementary weft was used for the front overlapping panels, collar and the decorative patches under the arm. Flower and flower-treasured patterns were used most frequently. The cloud, cloud-treasures, flowering tree, small flowering tree, and diamond shape were also common. All these patterns were designed together. The cloud patterns in women's wear were scattered randomly while the ones in men's clothes had yeouidul(如意頭)

(8) Jeoksam (赤衫. single- layered top)

This was a woman's single layered blouse, used as either an inner blouse or a summer blouse. The patterns of flowering tree or floral roundel were found.

(9) Jang-ui (長衣. outer garment, veil- like garment)

A jang-ui was a woman's outer jacket in the beginning of the Joseon dynasty. It was worn over the head to hide the face to keep distance from the opposite sex in the late Joseon dynasty. It had fewer textile patterns than those of the blouse. Commonly used were the flower, flower and plant, flower and treasure, and flower and bird patterns.

(10) Baeja (補子. vest)

A baeja was a vest worn over a blouse. The length and the design varied depending on the time period. The textile patterns were flower, cloud, treasure, and flower and plant.

2) Class of pattern

(1) Independent pattern

This pattern consisted of one or more motifs.
Flower and cloud patterns were mostly used.

(2) Cloud pattern (雲紋)

This pattern mostly appeared in men's garments, particularly in the officials' uniforms, the cheollic and the danryeong. The official uniform was differentiated by the rank; patterned fabric was used for officials of the first to third rank and non-patterned fabric for the fourth to ninth rank.

The cloud pattern had various sizes and shapes. Most of the cloud pattern centered around four petals and hanging tails, connected to upper and lower clouds with a priest's staff. Some had four hanging tails, with four connecting staves. Some cloud patterns had two tails and connecting staves, and others had only one tail and one connecting staff. In women's jackets and vests a simple cloud pattern was found, it was depicted loosely without tails and a connecting staff, and carried symbolic wishes in the cloud pattern.

(3) Flower pattern (花紋)

Lots of different sizes and shapes of designs found in this pattern. Some show only flowers and others appear with leaves and vines together. Popular designs were the lotus (蓮), peony (牡丹), floral roundel (寶相華), chrysanthemum (菊), prunus (梅) blossom(), and hydrangea (木菊). These were found in women's skirts, jackets, coats (called jang-ui) and men's intermediate garments as well as shrouds.

(4) Mixed patterns

A mixed pattern showed more than one motif involved in the design. The cloud and flower pattern appeared together in most case. The cloud pattern was generally designed with treasures.

The flower pattern was designed either simply with foliate flowers or flower with scrolls. The flowering tree pattern depicted flowers with branches such as the prunus flower. The floral spray was designed mostly with birds, which is also found in the patterns of the Ming (明) dynasty.

① Cloud-treasure pattern (雲寶)

Various types of treasure motifs were found with pattern or spreading in the regular pattern. The center of these motifs was the cloud pattern. The treasure motifs were mostly miscellaneous treasure with the exception of a few Buddhist patterns. We can find in order of frequency the rhinoceros horn (犀角), coins (錢), cintamani beads (如意寶
珠), endless knots(方勝), coral(珊瑚), axes(?), yeouidu(如意頭), books and stylized books(書寶). The cloud-treasure pattern was used mainly in men's official uniforms (as mentioned earlier they were called a danryeong and a cheollic).

② Flower-treasure pattern(花寶)

Like the cloud-treasure pattern, the flower-treasure pattern was designed with different treasure motifs which included a rhinoceros' horn, cintamani beads, diamond shaped knots, coral, books, coins, etc. These were found in men's garments, called the chang-ui and the danryeong, as well as women's garments, the chima and the jeogori (a skirt and jacket respectively). The pattern was also found in shrouds, and shrouds for wrapping the dead. This design, with Buddhist and Taoist patterns like the conch shell(法螺), wheel(法輪), endless knot(盤長), Buddha's hand(佛手), castanets(陰陽板), was found in the coverlet for the dead.

③ Flower-bird(花鳥), and flower-butterfly(花蝶) pattern

The flower-bird pattern or flower-butterfly pattern are mainly found in men's and women's outer jackets. The cut-flower(折枝花) was always designed showing a flying bird with a branch in its beak and a butterfly with it's wings spread(飛上).

(5) Unique pattern

This big and bold pattern, not found in garments, is found only on shrouds, mattresses(地褥) and coverlets(衾. 天衾) for the dead, especially in the baeja (which is a vest). The pattern included Buddhist patterns, and treasures, and some patterns enclosed within. Different sizes of floral sprays were designed with dual auspicious patterns inside peaches(天桃), pomegranates(石榴), Buddha's hand(佛手), treasure and birds were used on the coverlet for the dead.

(6) Others

Diamond shape(菱), man character(卐. the symbol for Buddhism), and soonin(純仁) patterns are also found. The pattern of a small diamond shape repeated in all directions is found in the chima and the shroud wrapping for the dead. A similar diamond pattern was found in the excavated silk from a Han (漢)tomb in Mawangdui(馬王堆), Hunan (湖南) province in China. The pattern of flower with the man character was found in women's jackets. Soonin is a pattern of continuous geometric small dots.
5. Conclusion

We have studied generally the sort of textile pattern, symbolism and the representative patterns of the excavated textile from the Joseon dynasty.

1) Textile patterns from the Joseon dynasty are classified into two groups: natural and abstract patterns. The natural patterns include animal and plant patterns, and ten longevity symbols. The abstract patterns include geometric and imaginary patterns, imaginary animals, Chinese characters, and treasure patterns. Geometric patterns involve the shape of whe (回), latticework (錦), Taegeuk and eight signs (八卦) of divination. The imaginary animals are saryeong (四靈) and sasin (四神), the Buddhist spirit. The imaginary flower, plant and floral roundel were the most popular motifs among plant patterns. The most often used Chinese letter patterns were 寿富貴 and 多男子 which mean longevity, riches, nobility and plenty of sons. The seven-treasure (七寶) and eight-treasure (八寶) patterns were influenced by Taoism (道教) and Buddhism (佛教), and other miscellaneous treasure patterns were used by the middle class wishing good luck.

2) Motifs found in the excavated garments were the dragon pattern, dragon-cloud pattern, crane-dragon-cloud pattern, dragon-floral pattern, cloud pattern, cloud-treasure pattern, floral pattern, flower-treasure pattern, child-grape pattern, lozenge, flowers-bird pattern, flowers-fruit-bird pattern and the grape pattern.

3) The materials are categorized into official's insignia badges (胸背), shrouds (殮裹), and clothing. The numbers of patterns found in the shroud were as many as those seen in everyday garments. Particularly the cloud and the special pattern, the roundel enclosing the dragon and the dragon-flower, were used for wrapping blankets, coverlets for the dead and as coating inside coffins. The roundel pattern enclosing the dragon and the dragon-flower pattern were designed only for the king and the royal family. They occurred in the shroud wrapping for the dead and it proves that these patterns were banned several times for marriage articles and that people did not always obey the rules. Most men's garments were over jackets, such as the jungchimak, danryung, dappo, chang-ui, cheollic, baeja and the cloud pattern was very popular for the officials' uniforms. The flower pattern was commonly used in
women's clothing like the *chima, jeogori, jeoksam, jang-ui*, and the *baeja*.

4) Textile patterns are classified into the single design pattern, the cloud pattern, the flower pattern, and mixed patterns. The size and the shape of the flower and cloud patterns were various and especially the cloud pattern was well used for the officials' costumes because this motif conveyed the meaning of wealth, nobility, and success. Popular flower designs were the lotus, peony, floral roundel, chrysanthemum, prunus and the hydrangea, and these were found in women's skirts, blouses, and shrouds.

Patterns discovered in the textiles and costumes stood for good auspices and they were believed to ward off bad luck. The association of the images within the designs implied the intentions. The patterns reveal the desires of the people who created them. These desires were for riches, nobility, success, good luck and the protection from misfortune.