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Traditional Textile Materials of Baekje Kingdom

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This analysis includes the kinds, colors, and patterns of textile materials, and shows Baekje attained a high level of weaving culture. Baekje was one of three kingdoms of ancient Korea (B.C.18-A.D.660). The territory of Baekje (Fig. 1) was included current Seoul, Gyeonggi-do, Gangwon-do, Chungcheongnambuk-do and Jeollanambuk-do during the fourth century. Also, Baekje influenced Japan many things about textiles including weaving technique. The study analyzed the documentary records of Baekje, such as literature, historical works, excavation reports, and preceding studies.

![Figure 1. Territory of Baekje in prosperous period (4C). Map by the author.](image)

The kinds of the textile materials of Mahan, pre-country of Baekje, and Baekje were obtained from historical documentations. The textile materials of Mahan were bast fiber fabric (Po), three kinds of silks (Geum, Myeon and Gyeom), woolen fabric (Gae) and leather. Geum is compound woven silk (Fig. 2). Myeon is plain weave. Gyeom is a kind of rib tabby. The name of Baekje textiles was variously described more than Mahan’s. Bast fiber fabrics were the Po of fine fabric and the Ma of coarse fabric. The various kinds of silks were described Geum, Gyeon, Sa, Yeon, Baek, Ra and Gyeom. And there were woolen fabrics (Topdeung like carpet) and leather (Fig. 3).

![Figure 2. Kinds of Mahan textiles from historical documentations. Diagram by the author.](image)
The textiles of Baekje were also described as trade items between countries, Baekje and Japan, Baekje and *Wei* or *Dang* Dynasty of China (Fig. 4). Baekje introduced silks (*Geum, Gyeon, Gyeom* and *Baek*) and wool (like *Topdeung*) to Japan. Hemp and Ramie in the dotted line on the left side of figure 4 were stated fabrics delivered from Baekje to Japan by a researcher who studied on the beginning of fabric of Japan. Besides, Baekje delivered silkworm culture, weave and sewing of clothes to Japan. The textiles exchanging between Baekje and China was described Baekje presented *Geum* to *Wei* Dynasty, and *Dang* Dynasty presented *Geum* and *Bake* to Baekje (Fig. 5). But, real exchanging seems to be taken place more often.

The fragments of fabric were excavated from King *Muryeong*’s tomb, *Neungsanri*’s 36th tomb and the back of *Wajeon* (tile). The fabric fragments (Fig. 6) of King *Muryeong*’s tomb are bast fiber fabric (Ramie; Fig. 7) and silks (*Geum, Gyeon, Neung* and *Moon-Ra*). The densest ramie (left of Fig. 7) has the density of 125 strands per inch for the warp and the weft. It is so fine fabric which never got from around countries. *Geum* is the warp-faced compound tabby of plain weave and its density is various from high to low one. *Gyeon* shows different kinds according to density. *Neung* is a variation of twill damask woven with a six strand warp thread. *Moon-Ra*, complex gauze made patterns as a set of 2 strand, 4 strand, 6 strand or 8 strand warp threads, was woven alternately with the weft.
Figure 6. Kinds of fabric fragments excavated from King Muryeong’s tomb. Diagram by the author.


Figure 8 (left image). Geum (warp-faced compound tabby) fragments from King Muryeong’s tomb. Gongju National Museum, p. 145. 2005.

Figure 9 (right, 3 images). Gyeon (plain weave) fragments from King Muryeong’s tomb. Gongju National Museum, p. 151. 2005.

Figure 10 (left). Neung (twill damask frag.,) King Muryeong’s tomb.Gongju National Museum, p. 148. 2005.

Figure 11 (right). Moon-Ra (patterned complex gauze, frag.)

The fragments of fabric (Fig. 12) from Neungsanri 36th tomb were excavated with decoration parts of a crown, which verified that a Ra-crown was worn, similar to the historic record. The Moon-Ra (patterned complex gauze; Fig. 13) made patterns as a set of 2 strand or 4 strand warp threads were woven alternately with the weft. Two kinds of plain weave silks (Joo and Sa) and hemp were also discovered underneath the Ra fabric.
The textile traces on the back of *Wajeon* (tiles) were notified the existence and weave of bast fiber fabric, Hemp.

Hemp and the various kinds of silks were mainly used in the three kingdoms of ancient Korea. Besides, *Silla* had various weave of hemp. This suggests possibility Baekje weaved various fabrics of hemp.

The colors of textile materials of Baekje were described in the historical documentations. The colors of king’s costume were *Ja* (purple), *Cheong* (green), *Oh* (the color of crows; black), and *Baek* (white). The colors of official costume were *Ja* (purple), *Jeok* or *Bee* (red), *Cheong* (green), *Hwang* (yellow), *Jo* (black), and *Baek* (white). Table 1 presents a comparison and arrangement of the color system of official costume according to records. It includes colors of dress, cap and belt, and prohibition of the use of official colors by commoners. This confirms that the contents of the official costume system were primarily concerned with color. A system of dress color based on official rank seems to have been instituted during the reign of King *Goi* (A.D.260) in the third century from the *Samguk sagi* report.

The real colors of official costume were shown from excavated data, reproduced two paintings of Baekje envoy traveled to the *Yang* Kingdom in the first half of the sixth century. Nothing has been found in historical works to confirm the colors of Baekje costume without these paintings. The colors delineated from two paintings (Fig. 14, 15) were *Cheong* (green), *Hwang* (yellow), *Bee* (red), *Heuk* (black), and *Baek* (white).

The primary factor, influencing the color system of Baekje, was the ideology of Yin-Yang and the five natural elements. The five natural elements are matched with five colors and directions (Fig. 16). The second factor was the ideology of Great Absolute concerned with the emergence and origin of the Creation. Purple was considered the most precious color based on this ideology.
The patterns of textile materials of Baekje were confirmed through excavated data such as crown, gilt bronze shoes, accessories, Wajeon, painting, and so on. It is caused by the rarity

Table 1. Color system of official costume of Baekje. Table by the author.

![Table 1](image)

of fabric relics. The pattern types were classified four groups, geometrical pattern, floral pattern, animal pattern, and others.

Slanting lines and Cross stripes patterns among geometrical pattern group were simply expressed on the Wajeon (tiles). Slanting line patterns show large or thin stripes (Fig. 17). Cross stripes express more polished pattern with flower on the cross point (Fig. 18). Pa (similar Buddhist emblem) patterns were expressed on the Wajeon and accessories as a kind of lighting. It was so simple in the early days of Baekje, but it was changed more complex and special feature in late Baekje. Guigab pattern was used as dividing pattern. It is open worked hexagon on the gilt bronze shoes. T-character pattern was used on the gilt bronze shoes by openwork. Also, wave and zigzag patterns were expressed as the border line of cap, belt, and others.

Floral patterns were popular in Baekje. The honeysuckle pattern of Baekje has elegant lines, and shows artistic technique by completing exquisite beauty of symmetry on the basis of splendid form (Fig. 22). Figure 23 is a tile with S-curve honeysuckle. This pattern of Baekje has the most rhythmical and liberal sense among three ancient kingdoms of Korea. And the Buddhism of South Dynasty of China influenced this pattern of Baekje. There are two types of lotus patterns, front and side view, in Baekje. Most of front view lotus shows on the Wajeon. The shapes of lotus leaf are various. Especially, lotus petal with flower pattern in late Baekje shows the feature of Baekje (Fig. 24). Side view lotus put in the vase was
arranged with honeysuckle. Holy tree pattern of crown decoration shows magic pearl shape on the top and honeysuckle on the lower part (Fig. 25).


Dragon pattern among animal pattern group symbolized the highest authority. Dragon patterns are two types. One is a face turned toward back, and the other one it is a face looked toward front. Dragon of figure 28 is similar to a dragon of wall painting in the late Goguryeo and the North and South Dynasty of China. Phoenix pattern was mainly expressed with a dragon pattern as one of the most important patterns. Phoenix is spreading its wings expressed like honeysuckle. It gives a feeling of soft and light exercise. Toad pattern was used at the end of belt decoration. The shape of toad is similar to one of wall paintings of Goguryeo Kingdom of Korea and Han Dynasty of China. But, toad of Baekje shows a point of difference having a heart turned upside down.
Mountain and Cloud patterns among natural patterns were expressed on the Wajeon. Mountain pattern is included mountains, pine trees and clouds as a distant view (Fig. 31). Cloud pattern is two types. One is C-character shape, and the other one it is magic pearl shape. The C-character cloud pattern of figure 32 is arranged with lotus on the center, encircled beads on the border, and clockwise cloud patterns between center and border.

In addition, goblin patterns were carved on the decoration part of belt or on the Wajeon. Goblin has mane, teeth, and horn.

Ritual parasol, one Buddhist pattern, was expressed on the left arm of Baekje envoy (see Fig. 15). This shows significant meaning as unique pattern expressed on the textile materials. Also, this means Buddhist 8 patterns seem to be used as textile patterns.

The conclusions of this study are as follows. First, the textile manufacturing technique of Baekje had been developed since Mahan era greatly prospered in Baekje era, and quality
silks, hemp, wool, and leather were used as dress materials. Second, six basic colors of Baekje costume were Five Colors (blue, red, yellow, white, and black) based on the ideology of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements plus purple based on the ideology of Great Absolute. Third, the honeysuckle pattern of Baekje has elegant lines, and shows artistic technique by completing exquisite beauty of symmetry on the basis of splendid form. Especially, floral arabesque used as the decoration of crown is the characteristic of the pattern of Baekje. We can assume that Buddhist and Wajeon patterns were used as textile patterns. The patterns of Wajeon in late Baekje era show that Baekje's own pattern was developed. Fourth, Baekje gave a critical influence to the textile weaving of Japan.

Consequently, from an historical viewpoint, the most important characteristics of textile materials of Baekje are that Baekje was the first to establish a governmental organization using six colors of textiles, and that the textile patterns show the esthetic sense and the mild disposition of Baekje.

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