

Goryeo Dynasty Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay

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I. Foreword

Mother-of-pearl inlay is one technique of decorating the surface of lacquerware, using fragments of shell, and lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay is the product made by using that technique. . This technique developed not only in Korea but in various nations of East Asia including China and Japan, and it has been at the center of the Korean wood lacquer cultural tradition for two thousand years. Along with celadon ceramics and Buddhist paintings, lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay is recognized worldwide as representing the high quality of Goryeo dynasty arts. In addition, the widespread recognition of this specialty product of Goryeo is verified by the records of the *Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo*, a Chinese text of the Northern Song dynasty that documents detailed information concerning Goryeo. The author states that “mother-of-pearl is very detailed and is of high value.” We also know from this text that these objects were utilized as royal gifts and were thought of very highly.¹

It was only in 1924 that the existence of Goryeo lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay was confirmed and the objects became a target of study. It happened when the Yi Royal Family Museum shipped pieces excavated from a Goryeo tomb to be repaired in Japan. There are a total of twenty

extant examples of mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware: five excavated pieces and fifteen (some of which are fragments) handed down historically. The five excavated pieces were severely damaged in fires during the Korean War² and it is not possible to reconstruct their original form. As for the ones handed down, only one piece—a Buddhist chowry—is in a Korean collection. The others are scattered in numerous foreign collections. Not only is there a lack of surviving examples, but with no inscriptions and no information on where the objects were excavated it is very difficult to date the objects accurately. Systematic reconstruction of the Goryeo inlaid lacquer tradition is further hampered by a lack of historical documents. Because half of the extant pieces are in Japanese collections, they have been studied primarily by Japanese scholars; there has been little research in Korea.³

This essay offers a comprehensive examination of Goryeo dynasty mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware. It uses available research and historical documents in addition to close evaluation of a select number of extant pieces. It attempts to confirm the superiority of Goryeo dynasty mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquers and to clarify the details of its murky origins. It will examine the tradition of Korean lacquer arts using the fruits of recent excavations and examine the origins and developmental process of Goryeo inlaid lacquerware. I categorize the extant examples by functional type and in terms of inlaid motifs and compare them to contemporary plain lacquer, celadon, metal ware, and Buddhist painting, and in so doing, will reveal the characteristic features of Goryeo dynasty mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware.

II. Origins of Goryeo dynasty lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay

Until recently, research has suggested that Goryeo dynasty lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay developed due to the influence of Tang dynasty lacquer techniques. I assert, however, that Korean lacquer developed internally from an old indigenous tradition of wood lacquerware crafts that had developed its own high-level techniques. Using research heretofore conducted as a foundation, I investigate the origins of Korean lacquer techniques.

1. History of Korean lacquerware arts

Faced with a lack of historical documentation and the small number of extant artifacts, scholars of Korean wood lacquer arts had assumed that the tradition in Korea had developed through Chinese influence. However, recent excavations and archaeological finds have proven that Korean wood lacquer arts began in the third century BCE, Korea's Bronze Age.⁴ The comparison of a fragment recovered from Namsungli, Korea, and a lacquer vessel from the Chinese Han dynasty in Lelang revealed that the lacquer used on the two objects was different.⁵ As for a large number of objects excavated in the Three Kingdoms period site, Daholi, although generally similar, they reveal many differences in form from Han dynasty lacquerware.⁶ This suggests that they are not Chinese-made but were produced in Korea.⁷

Most extant lacquerwares of the Three Kingdoms period are from Old Silla, and the pieces from Goguryeo or Baekje are only fragments. In the case of Goguryeo, although there is no definite material evidence, it appears that Koreans were able to produce their own lacquerware in Pyongyang—the site of Lelang, where the lacquer tree grows even to this day—with the benefit of Lelang influence.⁸ As evidence, we can look to the wall paintings in the king's chambers of the tomb sites Muyongchong and Kakjeochong. All the vessels depicted in the wall painting *Audience with the King* (*Jupkyeondo*) are black. Considering the examples of Han dynasty lacquerware that were used as luxury vessels, we assume that the objects rendered in the painting are lacquerware (fig. 1). The extreme sophistication of Baekje lacquerware production is evidenced by the following examples: the lacquerware excavated from the tomb in Sukchon-dong in 1986, those excavated in 1972 at King Munyeong's tomb, and the Baekje silver *pyungtal* case in a Japanese collection (fig. 2).⁹ Many lacquer pieces have also been excavated in Old Silla tombs. These pieces exhibit the influence of Lelang lacquerware—in form, decoration, general technique, inlay technique—as seen in objects from Daholi; however, they simultaneously manifest a unique “Korean” quality.¹⁰ In sum, Three Kingdoms period lacquer art used a native lacquer tradition as foundation and developed its techniques through influence from Lelang lacquers. Subsequently a uniquely Korean wood lacquer tradition was established.

Unified Silla continued the traditions of the Three Kingdoms period as it aggressively adopted elements of Tang dynasty China and established a sophisticated aristocratic culture. Similarly, in terms of lacquer arts, it continued the tradition of the Three Kingdoms and further developed it. *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk sagi, 三國史記)* states that the Inner Bureau that was in charge of palace crafts appointed a craftsman in charge of lacquers (*chiljeon*, 漆鈿), and the nation directly regulated the growth of lacquer trees and the production of lacquerwares.¹¹ Only nobility above head-level five could utilize lacquerware. As for *pyeongtal* (平脫) ware, it was even popular among commoners and soon its use by the non-nobility was prohibited.¹² We can also know the sophistication and the substantial demand for Unified Silla lacquers by their high quality and the large quantity of lacquerware recovered from the key Unified Silla excavation site, Anapji.¹³

From these facts we know that there was a systemic foundation established before the Goryeo dynasty for Korean production of superior lacquerware.

2. Origins of Korean lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay

There are many unanswered questions concerning the origins and development of Korean lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay because there are no solid documents or artifacts. To date, research has concluded that lacquer with inlay technique came from Tang China during the Goryeo dynasty; scholars have suggested that it was only at this point when it started to develop internally in Korea. The superior quality of extant examples, however, makes it hard to believe that they could have developed so suddenly. Their quality cannot be explained simply by the importation of a foreign technique. The technology must have developed over a substantial length of time. As for the formal qualities of the objects, we need to recognize how it displays a uniquely Korean tradition. In other words, I assert that Korea already possessed the techniques to imbue its art with a uniquely Korean aesthetic. It was on this foundation that Korea received stimulus from Tang's mother-of-pearl and

pyeongtal techniques and further developed them. I will attempt to find documents and material evidence to research the origins of lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay.

According to the *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*, the position name *chiljeon* (used in Silla), was changed to *sikgibang* (飾器房) during the era of King Gyeongdeok (r. 742–765). We get a sense of the importance attributed to lacquer arts as expressed on the level of governmental policy.¹⁴ It also gives us a clue to the origins of the practice of using the term *bosikgi* (寶飾器) to refer to vessels decorated with jewels or inlaid with mother-of-pearl, a practice still current today. The mention of how King Seongdeok (r. 702–737) was surprised by the ornaments decorated with gold, silver, and gemstones (*gumeunbojeon* 金銀寶鈿) sent by the Tang dynasty emperor Xuanzong¹⁵ and the story of King Heungdeok's (r. 826–836) forbidding a certain level of aristocratic women (*jingol* women) from wearing ornaments¹⁶ tells us that *bojeon* referred to objects inlaid and decorated with gems or mother-of-pearl. We know from these references that at this point in history the decorative techniques such as *pyeongtal* or inlaying with mother-of-pearl were already highly developed.

Especially in references to prohibition laws against luxury customs in *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*, the term *pyeongmun* (平文) seems to refer to *pyeongtal chilgi* (*pyeongtal* lacquer 平脫漆器), which is directly related to the mother-of-pearl inlay technique.¹⁷ *Pyeongtal* refers to the technique of applying designs cut from thin sheets of gold or silver on the surface of a lacquered object. The object is brushed with another layer of lacquer and then polished so the design is made distinct. If the gold and silver sheets are replaced with sheets of clamshells, that is mother-of-pearl inlay. Along with mother-of-pearl inlay, the *pyeongtal* technique was popular in Tang China and is first described in *The New Book of Tang*.¹⁸ The *Kenbutsuch*, the text that records the items in the collection of the Shōshin in Japan, mentions both *pyeongmun* and *pyeongtal*.¹⁹ In subsequent texts the term *pyeongtal* is used more frequently.²⁰ From this we can infer that at first Japan was influenced by Korean techniques but, as cultural exchange with Tang became more frequent, Japanese lacquerware changed due to Tang influence. We can further surmise that the fact that the Korean *pyeongmun*

appears earlier indicates that before the *pyeongtal* technique was imported from Tang China, Unified Silla already had an indigenous technique. Furthermore, we can surmise that *pyeongmun* and mother-of-pearl inlay—which share the basic technique—coexisted during this time.

We can also see the basis of the invention of inlay technique in various metal arts of the Three Kingdoms period. Although it is a stretch to say that the encrusting of colored glass or jade is directly related to mother-of-pearl inlay technique, we can see the foundation of a similar technique in that both were means of applying designs with a foreign substance on the surface of an object. Decorations with the jewel beetle as seen in the Goguryeo gold furnishing with open work design in gold and copper (*geumdong tujo geumgu*, 金銅透彫金具) (excavated in Jinpali no. 1) or the Silla lacquered saddle with openwork jewel beetle design in gold and copper (*geumdong tujo okchung jangsik chilan*, 金銅透彫玉虫裝飾漆鞍) (excavated in Hwangnamdaechong 皇南大塚) or the ornament with openwork jewel beetle design in gold and copper (*geumdong tujo okchung jangsik*, 金銅透彫玉虫裝飾) indicate that the craftsmen were pursuing similar color effects: they were experimenting with how the brilliance of the metal—like mother-of-pearl—changed the color effects of the other materials.²¹ The wooden black lacquer saddle (*mokje heukchil angyo*, 木製黑漆鞍) recovered from the south tomb of Hwangnamdaechong is noteworthy. Spindle-shaped shells decorate the lacquered surface; it indicates a transitional phase of mother-of-pearl inlay technique (that is, *pyeongmun* developing into mother-of-pearl designs). The black lacquer mask (fig. 3) excavated in Houchong, Gyeongju, shows an early instance of the technique of inlaying clamshells on lacquer. Atop a lacquered surface, colored dots and eyes of glass have been applied. It appears as if lacquer has been applied to the glass eyes and the pure gold that surrounds it. If this is so, then the technique is the same as that of *pyeongtal* or mother-of-pearl inlay lacquer. This is very meaningful.²² Another object that is related to the Three Kingdoms *pyeongtal* is the set of four silver vessels in the collection of the Shōshin in Japan. It is a *pyeongtal* vessel that exhibits inlay of silver *pyeongtal* on a lacquered surface. If it is indeed a Baekje artifact as

traditionally held, it evidences that in the mid-seventh century of the Three Kingdoms period lacquerware using *pyeongtal* technique was being produced.

We can count as examples of Unified Silla *pyeongtal* the following: the flower-shaped fragment with silver *pyeongtal* flower design (fig. 4) excavated in Anapji; the split bamboo-shaped fragment with silver *pyeongtal* (fig. 5) and the six-sided case with grape vinescroll design in silver *pyeongtal* (*eun pyeongtal podo dangchomun yukgak* case 銀平脫葡萄唐草文六角盒) in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum; and two examples of *pyeongtal* mirrors (*pyeongtal gyeong* 平脫鏡) (fig. 6) owned by the National Museum of Korea. Amongst these examples, the artifact excavated in Anapji is notable because the *pyeongtal* technique used is the same as the inlaid mother-of-pearl technique. Although there are no definite records concerning the *pyeongtal* mirrors in the National Museum of Korea, we can surmise that they were produced in the Unified Silla period. Compared to Tang dynasty *pyeongtal* mirrors, these are not as detailed and the motifs are simpler and manifest different compositions. This leads us to believe that these mirrors were produced in Unified Silla, confirming that the technique existed in Korea at this time. Although there are no examples of mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware from Unified Silla, we can use the similarity of the techniques of *pyeongtal* and mother-of-pearl inlay in addition to the co-existence of the two techniques in Tang China to surmise that mother-of-pearl inlay also existed in Korea during the Unified Silla period.

The copper mirror with wildflower and water bird designs inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 7) in the collection of the Ho-Am Museum (now Leeum Samsung Museum of Art) is noted as the oldest mother-of-pearl inlaid object discovered in Korea. There are differences of opinion on where it was produced.²³ Many have thought it was not a Silla product for the following reasons: on top of the inlay decoration intricate *mojo* (毛彫) has been added using thick shells (that glisten at night); a stylized lotus flower motif (*bosanghwa* 寶相華) design has been contrasted with imagery of birds and animals; amber is encrusted in the center of the flowers; in the empty spaces lapis lazuli fragments create a vibrant color effect. In terms of both technique and design motifs, this mirror is similar to the Tang

dynasty mirror inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 8) in Japan's Shōshin. Because of the notable similarities between these two mirrors and the fact that amber and lapis lazuli powder used in the background are not native to Korea,²⁴ many have argued that the Ho-Am mirror was not produced in Korea.²⁵

We cannot deny that these two mirrors are similar in terms of type and form of the motifs as well as the materials used. If we carefully examine the inlaid designs, however, we can see subtle differences. There is an attempt in the Ho-Am mirror to introduce irregularity to the rigid repetition of design motifs. We can interpret this as the expression of the Korean sense of design which celebrates a purposeful carelessness.

Considering the vigorous diplomatic activity and the transfer of material objects related to such cultural exchange in the eighth century, the mere fact that the materials of the mirror were not native to the Korean peninsula does not prove that the mirror could not have been made there. Unified Silla was aggressive in its material exchanges with foreign lands. Looking at contemporary textual records we know that trade with Tang China was active and there were comings and goings of Japanese, Arabs, the people of Balhae, and people of other various races. We know that there was direct and indirect trade of various luxury materials through China.²⁶ Just because a craft item was made of materials not produced indigenously in Korea, it does not necessarily mean that it was foreign made.²⁷ We should hope for more textual discoveries concerning these artifacts.

As discussed above, there are no extant examples of Unified Silla lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay. However, several objects that show a foundation of inlay technique lead us to conclude that *pyeongtal* or inlay technique might have existed already in the Unified Silla period.

In examples like the Tang dynasty mirror with figure with bird and flower design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 9) and the Eastern Wu dynasty black lacquer box with bird and flower design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 10), thick shells are used. In the Yuan dynasty a thinner shell started being used in some objects, although in Goryeo thin shells were used exclusively. The Chinese carved

lacquer technique (*jochil* 彫漆),²⁸ which became so popular after the Tang dynasty, was never used in the Korean peninsula until after the Goryeo dynasty. These facts indicate that Korean mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware did not simply adopt Tang practices nor blindly copy them. Rather, from Unified Silla onward, Korea independently developed its own traditions.

An entry in a Chinese record written at the end of the Unified Silla period describes a mother-of-pearl case that was gifted to the Silla king. This record indicates that it is likely that at this time the stimulus of Tang dynasty mother-of-pearl vessels entering Korea facilitated the development of mother-of-pearl inlay techniques.²⁹ We cannot find records that indicate that lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay was included in any category of gifts to China in the Unified Silla period, but after the eleventh century there are records of mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware being sent abroad as gifts with ample references to the ware's high quality. Therefore, it is not a stretch to assume that by the latter part of Unified Silla period, the level of lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay production was quite sophisticated.

III. Goryeo dynasty mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware and its development

The Goryeo dynasty was founded by powerful aristocratic clans who consolidated power during the Unified Silla period. The aristocratic kingdom embraced Buddhism as its state religion. The demands of an aristocratic class pursuing a luxurious lifestyle as well as the demand for Buddhist ritual objects brought about the advancement of various arts in the Goryeo, especially inlaid lacquer, celadon ceramics, and metal arts. More so than during any era before it, the conditions were established to encourage excellent craft arts production.

1. Documents and systemic conditions

Extant examples of Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware are scarce and few historical documents discuss them, but from brief references that do exist we can infer their excellence. The earliest record concerning Goryeo inlaid lacquer is from 1049 (the first year of the reign of King Munjong). *Compilation of Reference Documents of Korea (Dongguk Munhun Bogo, 東國文獻備考)* relates that gifts of lacquerware, including a folding screen displaying an image in mother-of-pearl, was sent to the Liao dynasty king's palace.³⁰ The chapter on tribute (*jogong*) from the document *Gyobingji* shares many records concerning Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware, including the fact that starting in the early twelfth century the Goryeo king Injong sent to Song China a mother-of-pearl inlaid inkstone box and a mother-of-pearl inlaid brush box. The fact that these objects were sent abroad as diplomatic gifts tells us that their technical level was very high. By the eleventh century mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer was considered a specialty product of Goryeo.

The contemporary judgment of the high quality of Goryeo inlaid lacquer is evidenced in the *Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo*. The Northern Song Chinese envoy Xu Jing wrote that “although the application of lacquer on the vessel is not expertly done, the mother-of-pearl inlay is detailed and of high value.”³¹ The reference to inexpert lacquering addresses the limited variety of techniques employed as compared to China. For example, the Goryeo did not employ various techniques of lacquering entire vessels, such as using red or other colored lacquers or sculptural lacquers. However, we can take this comment as an effort to emphasize the highly advanced technique of inlay. In the same text, there is this reference: “The saddle and saddle pad are very detailed and the saddle has been made of mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer.”³² This statement shows not only the intricacy of Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware but also the medium's wide use for everyday objects of the aristocracy, popular enough to be used in the making of an object like a saddle. We can take Xu Jing's positive view of Goryeo inlaid lacquer to mean that contemporaneous Chinese technique was inferior. The Northern Song writer Fang Shao (方勺, 1066–?) wrote in his autobiography that he thought that inlay originated in Japan.³³ This indicates that, compared to Japan at this time, Chinese inlay was not

as high in quality. We can interpret this to mean that inlay technique in China had deteriorated and the history of its widespread use in the Tang had faded from memory. We can also conclude that Goryeo inlay did not develop from Song influence. While *cheokhong* or *jochil* was widely popular in Song China, Goryeo independently developed its inlay lacquer traditions.

From many documents we can confirm that the Goryeo government attempted a systemic reform in order to mass-produce excellent inlaid lacquerware, including efforts to collect craftsmen and materials. What was referred to as *chiljeon* during the Silla was established as the office of Gongjoseo (洪造署) (Jungsangseo, 中尙署) by King Mokjong, and this office operated until the end of the dynasty.³⁴ According to *The History of Goryeo* (*Goryeosa*, 高麗史), the mid-eleventh century (era of King Mungjong) list of court offices names carpenter (*somokjang*(小木匠), graving master (*jogakjang* 彫刻匠), mother-of-pearl inlay master (*najeonjang* 螺鈿匠), master of weaving blinds with strings of beads (*juryeomjang* 珠簾匠), bamboo craft master (*jukjang* 竹匠), comb master (*sojang* 梳匠), grinding master (*majang* 磨匠), and so forth. These craftsmen connected with the production of lacquerware (also wooden and bamboo crafts) were regulated by the Jungsangseo, the office responsible for the production of special products to be used exclusively in the king's quarters. This indicates that craft objects such as inlaid lacquers were being produced primarily for use in the king's quarters, and there was systematic specialization of craft categories as seen in the titles of painting master (*hwajang*(畫匠), carpenter (*somokjang* 小木匠), graving master (*jogakjang* 彫刻匠), mother-of-pearl inlay master (*najeonjang* 螺鈿匠), and lacquer master (*chiljang* 漆匠). The specialization allowed for large-scale production of luxury craft objects.³⁵

During the Goryeo dynasty a temporary bureau, Dogam (都監), was set up whenever a need for various special craft objects arose, either in the palace or in the government. There is a documentary reference to the temporary establishment of the Directorate for Sutra Box Production (Jeonham joseong dogam, 鈿函造成都監) that was put into place after the Mongol invasion in 1272 (year 13 of King Wonjong's reign), when there was a need to produce large numbers of inlaid sutra cases.³⁶

The record above indicates that craft objects like inlaid lacquerware were produced according to the demands of the king's palace or other authoritative body and they were produced by the Jungsangseo or Dogam. The place where these objects were produced was the National Workshop (*Kwanyeong gongbang*, 官營工房). An entry in the *Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo* states that "Goryeo's craft technology is excellent and it is the work of the nation."³⁷ The most talented craftsmen of the times were called to serve in the government bureau.³⁸ The makers of specialized craft objects (*gyeong gong jang*, 京工匠) in particular received very high offices with salaries ranging from seven sacks of rice to twenty in exchange for working more than three hundred days a year.³⁹ The differentiation of official positions and according of various rankings demonstrates that there was a hierarchy in terms of level of skill and the content of the craft work.⁴⁰ In late Goryeo, a government official sent a letter to the government requesting that it "reward the talented craftsman with money not with elevation of position."⁴¹ This implies that there were incidents of craftsmen whose skills resulted in elevation of class status. This evidences that the practice of devaluing the craft profession is a later historical phenomenon. At the least in the twelfth century the treatment of craftsmen was quite good and it inspired the desire and demand for craft production.

In examining the system of craft production in the Goryeo dynasty we see that the governmental production of crafts was very active. Even in the fields of crafts among the common people and in temple contexts there was development. We can surmise that many mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquers were produced by craftsmen in the Buddhist temples to be used as Buddhist implements, although there are not enough documents or inscriptions to verify the fact.

2. Extant Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer pieces

A total of twenty extant lacquer vessels is known, five which were excavated and fifteen handed down. Of the latter group, fourteen are intact while one is in fragments. All show typical characteristics of Goryeo inlaid lacquer.⁴² However, damage to the five excavated vessels is extensive

and it is not possible to imagine their original form. Of those handed down only one is in a domestic collection; the rest are in collections in Japan, the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

I have illustrated these vessels in a chart categorizing them according to function, vessel type, design motifs, and their current condition. (chart 1) In an additional chart I have categorized the design motifs according to inlay types. (chart 2)

Chart one insert here

(1) Extant vessels by type

From the various terms that are referenced in historical documents— mother-of-pearl brush case (*pilgap* 筆匣), inkstone case (*yeongap* 硯匣), comb box (*soham* 梳函), flat box (*pyeonggap* 平匣), writing desk (*seoan* 書案), writing desk, (*seogwae* 書廊), saddle (*angyo*, 鞍橋), and so forth.—we know that a variety of lacquered objects was produced in the Goryeo. However, the only extant objects are either of Buddhist function—sutra case, rosary case, incense case, Buddhist chowry—or for cosmetic uses—cosmetic case, oil bottle, and box. (chart 1) As the chart shows, there are nine sutra cases (including one fragmented example), three cases, six boxes of assorted forms with lids, and one example each of a chowry and an oil bottle.

Sutra cases (chart 1, 1)

Of the extant Goryeo inlaid lacquer objects sutra cases are found in the largest numbers. In terms of form and size they are all roughly the same (h 26.4 cm; w 47.3 cm; l 25.3 cm), but there are subtle differences in terms of production and repairs done to them in later periods. Basically speaking, the lid's four edges have been beveled. The rectangular box has a decorative lock in the front, metallic handles on either side, and two hinges on the back to enable the lid to open and close. We see such a box rendered in the painting of Jiz Bosatsu in the Engakuji temple, Kamakura, as well in other Goryeo Buddhist paintings. This suggests that the form is typical to Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid sutra cases. (fig. 11) The same case type is seen in a Northern Song tomb sculpture—where a figure rendered in stone who appears to be a Goryeo envoy holds a similar case type—and suggests proof of the fact that Goryeo inlaid lacquers were sent to China. (fig. 12)

Mother-of-pearl inlaid sutra cases use the following technique. According to the *mokshim jeopi chilgi* (木心苧被漆器) technique—the traditional technique since the Three Kingdoms period—once the hemp cloth has been applied to the wooden body (*mokshim*, 木心) and the vessel has been lacquered, one inlays the sea shell, tortoiseshell, and metal. The edges of the lid and body are outlined with metal

wire and the design motifs are laid out with a linked circle motif (*yeonjumun*, 連珠文). Three categories can be discerned according to subtle differences in primary decorative motifs, use of tortoiseshells, and construction of the mother-of-pearl surface. It appears that each of the types was produced in large numbers when large quantities of sutras needed to be produced. The different types are labeled as A, B, and C in chart 1.

The sutra case in chart 1 categorized as belonging to Type A is the lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum design inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the Tokyo National Museum. (fig. 13, 13-1) In contrast to the other sutra cases, the main motif is the chrysanthemum and in the center of the lid, the characters for the name of the sutra (*dae bang gwang bul hwa eom gyeong* 大方廣佛華嚴經) are inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The inscription makes the box a rare sutra case in that it confirms its function.⁴³ The primary motif of the chrysanthemum is treated in a flat manner on the lid. On the beveled surfaces of the edges are chrysanthemum vinescrolls, and on the four sides the flowers appear as seen from the side. This design arrangement gives the illusion of three-dimensionality and evidences the craftsman's superior aesthetic sense.

In contrast to Type A, Type B sutra cases feature as primary motif the chrysanthemum vinescroll. Including a fragment, there are seven extant examples of this type as seen in chart 1. The main motif is the chrysanthemum vinescroll, while the border motif is treated with peony vinescrolls. Currently because of the consequences of restoration we can see some differences, but they appear to be from the same era. It seems that minute differences in motifs can be attributed to different craft workshops or the character of the particular sutra that was to be placed in the case.

The beveled surfaces on the lids and the sides of the sutra case in the Tokyo National Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Art's lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 14) bear the characters *ja* (字), *bo ha* (寶下), and *ryung* (靈) in brass. This seems to be a reference to the title numbers of the sutras.⁴⁴ Examples owned by the Tokugawa Reimeikai, Tokyo, the British Museum, London, and a private collection in Kyoto are almost identical.

It appears they were all made in a single craft workshop in order to store a single type of sutra. (fig. 15) As for the lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, it is thought to have been nearly identical originally to the one in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, although due to its restoration they now appear quite different.⁴⁵ One fragment which until now was thought to belong to a different object type seems to be one side of a sutra case. This leads one to surmise that many Goryeo inlaid lacquer pieces existed but have been destroyed or lost.

Lastly, the lacquered sutra case with peony vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the Kitamura Museum, Kyoto, is of the C type. Compared to the other types, it is slightly smaller and flatter and instead of the chrysanthemum vinescroll it features the peony vinescroll as the main motif. On the flower's petals *mojo* has been added, resulting in a more complex and naturalistic expression. The border motif uses cloisonné and tortoiseshell, characteristic inlay techniques of the Joseon dynasty. *Sangsapae* (상사패)⁴⁶ was used to form long lines both straight and curved, exemplifying an early technique of *kkeuneumjil* (꿨음질).⁴⁷

Box types (chart 1, 2)

As seen in chart 1, number 2, we know of three examples of Goryeo inlaid boxes. In contrast to the similarity of the mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquered sutra cases, they are quite different from one another. The lacquered incense box with willow and water bird design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 17) and the lacquered box with chrysanthemum design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell⁴⁸ were excavated from Goryeo tombs and introduced in volume 9 of the *Picture Record Book of Joseon Artifacts* (*Joseon gojeok dobo* 朝鮮古蹟圖報). They were in the collection of the National Museum of Korea but during the Korean War they suffered severe fire damage. Fortunately, we still have Yoshino's observational records from 1923 written during their repair.

First, the shape and decoration of the lacquered incense box with willow and water bird design inlaid with mother-of-pearl are unique. Along the lip of the box in the interior is a rectangular shelf on which smaller cosmetic cases rested.⁴⁹ (fig. 17-1) The existence of similar boxes such as the inlaid celadon box with tortoiseshell design (fig. 18) or the black lacquer cosmetic case (fig. 19) suggests that this was a popular design. On the lid and on the sides we see the willow and water bird design commonly seen in metallic Buddhist utensils. Chrysanthemum vinescrolls and peony vinescrolls appear in the border designs and on the shelves inlay of flatly rendered chrysanthemums appears slightly askew. It is not certain if gold wire had been used in the vine stems, or whether tortoiseshell had been used, but in delicate areas it appears as if gold powder, perhaps even silver powder, has been applied. Amongst extant Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid examples, this box is sometimes considered the oldest because it exhibits qualities of *myogeum* 묘금(描金) technique used since the Three Kingdoms period as a type of gold painting.

The lacquered box with chrysanthemum design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell has its four corners pinched in the form of a heart. This appears to be a popular form for it is seen in Goryeo celadon boxes and black lacquer boxes. On the surface of the lid a flatly rendered chrysanthemum is composed and in the center a design of a house (*waokmun* 瓦屋文) is inlaid in the center; for this reason, the piece is also referred to as the mother-of-pearl inlaid *waokmun* box. The decoration on the four sides is similar to that of the lid.

Lastly the lacquered box with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 20) in the Okura Shōkan, Tokyo, does not have the beveled edges on the lid and its proportions are unusual, with the depth of the lid almost two thirds of the box height. Despite the rare form it exhibits a composition of motifs similar to those on the sutra cases and possesses characteristic properties of Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware.

Combination type (chart 1, 3)

Among Goryeo examples of inlaid lacquerware the second most common type is one with a lidded bowl (*hapgu* 合口) form. Included in this type is a round case that appears to be of Buddhist function, and a flower-shaped case that appear to be for cosmetic uses. In addition, there are a total of six pieces that appear to have been part of a set along with the flower-shaped case. Just as for the sutra cases, metal wire (*geumgangseon* 金剛線) is used to delineate the box's edges and the outlines of the decorative motifs. As for inlay, the craftsmen combine mother-of-pearl with tortoiseshells. These qualities demonstrate the production techniques of Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer.

Among these, the lacquered round case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell in the Nara National Museum (fig. 21) shows a sophisticated juxtaposition of design motifs. Alongside mother-of-pearl there is yellow and red colored (*bokchae* 伏彩)⁵⁰ tortoiseshell.⁵¹ With the vivid color contrast of these elements and the metal wire, this piece is considered to be the outstanding mother-of-pearl object from the Goryeo dynasty. Inside the case there is a rosary made of amber, thus it has been referred to as a rosary case. It is unclear if the case originally included the rosary. It is considered to be a Buddhist object because the character *beom* 梵, meaning Buddhism, is inlaid on the lid. A round inlaid celadon case with chrysanthemum and lotus vinescroll design contained jade, a crescent jade pendant, and glass marbles when found in the pagoda.⁵²

The lacquered case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 22) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, takes a six-lobed flower shape. Because it is similar to the black lacquer cosmetic case as well as the inlaid celadon cosmetic case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design (fig. 23), which includes a case of the same shape and four half-flower-shaped cases (all forming a single set), one surmises that it too was a part of a set. Its basic form is similar to that of the Nara National Museum lacquered round case, although it exhibits subtle differences in the composition and expression of the motifs, particularly in the subdued quality of the turtle shell colored yellow.

Additional examples of similar half-flower shaped cases which may have been part of flower-shaped case sets are in collections in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Keish in, Japan.⁵³ Two examples excavated from Goryeo tombs are introduced in the ninth volume of the *Picture Record Book of Joseon Artifacts*. All of these cases exhibit characteristic features of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquerware. Their subtle differences, however, suggest that they belonged to separate sets. As seen in chart 1, 3-A, the one in the Metropolitan Museum collection (fig. 24) is almost identical to the Nara National Museum case in terms of composition and arrangement of motifs and they are both examples of highly extravagant mother-of-pearl cases.

Buddhist chowry (chart 1, 4)

The lacquered chowry with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell (fig. 25, 25-1) in the collection of the National Museum of Korea is the only extant Goryeo inlaid lacquer piece owned by a Korean collection that is completely intact. A chowry is a utensil used in Buddhist ritual by a priest, who holds it in his hand and uses it to ward off anguish and troubles. Originally it may have been decorated with attachments above and below, but in its current state only the main part—a long, thin cylinder—remains. It is very similar to both the round case in the Nara National Museum and the case in the Metropolitan Museum in the way widely spaced flowers are composed on a ground inlaid with mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell, and metal wire. The main motif of the chrysanthemum vinescroll is very similar to 3 (in the case category: C, D, E) and 5 (oil bottle) in chart 1. It is particularly similar to 3-D, the Keish in case. However it is comparatively less orderly in design. It is very difficult to inlay on a long thin cylindrical surface and the detail and delicacy demonstrate the high level of inlay technology at this time.

Oil bottle (chart 1, 5)

The lacquered oil bottle with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl (fig. 26) introduced in volume 9 of the *Picture Record Book of Joseon Artifacts* is the only oil bottle in inlaid

lacquer from the Goryeo dynasty. It is of the same general shape as twelfth century celadon oil containers. Excavated from a Goryeo tomb, it is badly damaged and it is quite small (h 4 cm; w 8.9 cm), yet it exhibits typical Goryeo inlaid techniques. The chrysanthemum vinescroll is inlaid delicately on the rounded surface and flower motifs as seen in B-1 of chart 2 are composed in a pattern. Although it cannot be confirmed, the shape of the chrysanthemum petals are very similar to that of the box category 3 in chart 1 (C, D, E) and the chowry (4). From this we assume that tortoiseshell was used. Just as with the chowry the fact that a rounded surface could be so delicately inlaid shows that Goryeo inlay technology was at its apex.

(2) Categories of motifs

The difficulty of studying Goryeo inlaid lacquer lies in the lack of extant examples. According to textual documents there was a great variety in types of objects which leads us to surmise that there was also a great variety in design motifs, but without material evidence it is only a conjecture.

Chart 2 categorizes the inlay designs of extant Goryeo inlaid lacquer into the following types: single motif (*dandokmun* 單獨文), repetitive pattern (*banbokmun* 反復文), and combined and continuous pattern (*bokhap yeonsokmun* 複合連續文). Chart 2 categorizes motifs by function, whether it was used as a main motif or border design. Generally, a very simple design is repeated, filling the surface densely in a rhythmic manner. Each of the motifs is made of small units repeatedly composed, emphasizing the beauty of simplicity and regularity.

Insert chart 2

Single motif (chart 2, A)

There are two motifs, the willow and water bird and tile-roof house, that are used as single designs and they are exhibited in the lacquered incense box (fig. 17, 1 under A in chart 2) and the chrysanthemum case (2 under A in chart 2), both in the National Museum of Korea. These subject matters, found frequently in Chinese art, are also commonly encountered in Korea, not only in mother-of-pearl lacquerware but also in inlaid celadon and bronzeware. The ubiquitousness of objects found in nature as motifs in a variety of Goryeo mediums exhibits the culture's love of nature.

Repetitive pattern (chart 2, B)

The category of motifs most often inlaid in Goryeo lacquer either repeats the motif in two directions or in all four directions. These repeated motifs are more commonly used in borders and this is seen not only in inlaid lacquer but also in contemporary inlaid celadons and bronzeware.

Two-directional repeated motifs (chart 2, B-1, 1-5)

A single design motif is repeated to the left and right forming a border decoration. This two-directional motif forms a border on the edges of the object. There are five types: the circle motif, the X-shaped motif, the tortoiseshell flower motif (*gugaphwamun* 龜甲花文), flower pattern motif A, and flower pattern motif B.

1. A small circle of mother-of-pearl is laid out in a line. This is seen as a border motif in most Goryeo inlaid lacquer. It is also seen in other inlaid vessels across history and in various countries; it is popular because it harmonizes with any variety of inlay surface and with any design motif.

2. The X-shaped motif is also used exclusively in borders and is expressed in small units, less than 10 mm wide.

3. The tortoiseshell flower motif⁵⁴ refers to a design in which a small flower is positioned within a tortoiseshell hexagonal shape. This is seen in objects from early on in history. There are two types in

Goryeo inlaid lacquer. One tortoiseshell flower motif A is seen on borders of case lids. It is a simple design in which the Y-shaped design unit is mirrored across a horizontal axis.

4. Flower pattern motif A (= star-shaped motif, *seonghyeongmun* 星形文) is a star shape about 3 mm in diameter. The outer edges are made to look like saw teeth. It is more accurate to call it a flower shape rather than sun and it exhibits a different flower stamen from that of the border motif.

5. Flower pattern motif B is seen only in cases, chowries, and oil containers. Unidentifiable flowers (not a vine nor chrysanthemum nor lotus) are broadly scattered over the surface in a random manner. It is seen in objects in the first categorical type including the round case in the Nara National Museum (chart 1, 3-A), the Metropolitan Museum's cosmetic case (chart 1, -B), and the National Museum of Korea's Buddhist chowry (chart 1, 4). Centering on the small mother-of-pearl flower shape, tortoiseshell colored yellow and red through *bokchae* technique is added forming a flower shape. The shape is further outlined in gold wire forming a complex and extravagant image. On the lid of the Boston Museum of Fine Art's flower-shaped case (chart 1, 3-C) and the excavated oil bottle (chart 1, 5), a comparatively simpler flower design is inlaid. Because the flowers are inlaid on a subtle mother-of-pearl surface, the color contrast is dramatized. This can also be seen in the appearance of clothing in Buddhist paintings.

Four-directional motif (chart 2, B-2, 1-4)

One design motif is repeated in four directions. The borders are wide and there are four types: lozenge-flower shape (*neunghwamun* 稜花文), the seven treasure design (*chilbomun* 七寶文), the tortoise shell flower, and the chrysanthemum motif (*gukhwamun* 菊花文).

1. The lozenge-shaped flower motif is not a geometrical design but a small lozenge-shape mother-of-pearl with the edges cut in a saw-tooth pattern and made to look like flowers. Inside with *mojo*, a simple flower is formed thus the design is called *neunghwamun*. This design is only seen in inlaid lacquer. The design is continued on the bottom part of the vessel.

2. The seven treasure design centers on a very small circle of mother-of-pearl to which is connected a thin wire-like mother-of-pearl (*sangsa* 상사). This design is continued in four directions. Together with the B type of tortoiseshell flower design, it is inlaid with an early *kkeuneumjil* (꿨음질) technique.⁵⁵ This is found not just in lacquer but Goryeo bronze ware and in the decoration of Buddhist paintings.⁵⁶

3. In contrast to A, which was used as border decoration, tortoiseshell flower B is a more geometric composition that uses the *kkeuneumjil* technique, which became very popular in the Joseon dynasty. Inside three tortoiseshells is placed a small flower.⁵⁷ This motif is continued in four directions.

4. The chrysanthemum is a theme that appears commonly in Korean art across media, including paintings, sculpture, and crafts. In the Goryeo dynasty in particular it is expressed in varied ways in inlaid lacquer, celadon, and as decorative motifs in Buddhist paintings.⁵⁸ In Goryeo inlaid lacquer the chrysanthemum appears as if seen from above (“flat chrysanthemum”) or as seen from the side (“standing chrysanthemum”). The “flat chrysanthemum” can be seen in the shelf of the incense box in the National Museum of Korea and the lid of the sutra case in the Tokyo National Museum. The “standing chrysanthemum” is found in places like the sides of the vessel body. This indicates the aesthetic sophistication of the Goryeo artisan in his consideration of the aesthetic effects of the design. (chart 1, 2-B, 1-A)

Combined and continuous pattern (chart 2, C, 1-3)

The chrysanthemum vinescroll and the peony vinescroll are used separately, while the chrysanthemum and peony vinescroll combines both motifs. Just as with the chrysanthemum motif, it can be seen in Goryeo inlaid celadon ceramics and Buddhist objects. This is verified in various extant examples.⁵⁹

1. Chrysanthemum vinescroll motif

Like the chrysanthemum motif, it can be seen in Goryeo Buddhist paintings, inlaid celadon, and metal wares. In inlaid lacquer especially, as seen in chart 1, it appears most frequently and in almost every type of object, including sutra cases, boxes, oil containers, and Buddhist chowry.

A vine is rendered in metal wire on top of a flat chrysanthemum motif, executed either in mother-of-pearl or in tortoiseshell colored yellow, and the vine leaves are densely composed with mother-of-pearl in crescent forms. There are two types: one where the vine is almost round and creates a wave-like shape, and one where the vine divides into two. The flowers are evenly spaced and the vine surrounds the flower and connects them. Sometimes it is used as a border design. Other times the flower is scattered across the surface and the design repeats across the four directions forming the main design. There are detailed differences in the number of petals, the shape of petal tips, spacing of the *mojo*, and the use of the tortoiseshell. This is seen in chart 1.

2. Peony vinescroll motif

Peonies appear in various decorative designs after the Unified Silla period. The motif is popular in contemporary Chinese art, but when it appears it is rendered naturalistically and as fully blossomed. In Korea, in contrast, the flower is shown from the side, rendered schematically. This continues through the Joseon dynasty. The chrysanthemum of the chrysanthemum vinescroll motif has been replaced with the peony. It is often used in twelfth and thirteenth century inlaid celadon, although it is used as the primary motif in inlaid lacquer in just one example, the sutra case in the Kitamura Museum, Kyoto (chart 1, 1-C). Almost all sutra cases use it as a border motif. Usually, when the chrysanthemum vinescroll is used as a main motif, the peony vinescroll is used as border decoration. The juxtaposition of the varied flower motifs heightens the aesthetic effect of the piece. This demonstrates the high artistry of the craftsmen.

3. Chrysanthemum peony vinescroll motif

The incense box in the National Museum of Korea and the sutra case in the Tokyo National Museum show both chrysanthemums and peonies as they alternate. The flat chrysanthemum and standing peony alternate and are inlaid in mother-of-pearl in between the vines, which are rendered in

metal (that bends outward). In clothing decoration⁶⁰ rendered in Goryeo Buddhist paintings and in inlaid celadon, the chrysanthemum alternates with the lotus. In alternating two different flowers the design overcomes the tedium possible with repeated designs.

IV. Characteristics of Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware

It is difficult to reconstruct the history of Goryeo lacquer accurately due to the dearth of extant objects and documents, although we are able to see its distinction and superiority through characteristics manifest in the extant objects. Let us review the function, form, motifs, and techniques that characterize Goryeo lacquerware.

1. Function and the characteristics of object types

Amongst extant examples of Goryeo inlaid lacquers are Buddhist objects such as sutra cases, rosary boxes, chowry, and incense boxes. There are also cosmetic cases, oil bottles, and cases—everyday objects used by the aristocratic class. Thus we can divide the objects into categories of Buddhist and aristocratic uses. This is also true for celadon and metalware. It shows the prominence of Buddhist and aristocratic cultures of the Goryeo period.

In terms of form we can see a distinct formal sensibility. First of all, the sides of the rectangular sutra case lids are beveled. We see this in Lelang lacquer, Tang dynasty stone carvings and sculptures, and Liao dynasty tomb murals. In Korea this can be seen in Goryeo celadon⁶¹ and plain lacquer. In addition, it can be commonly seen in relic cases and seal cases. This form is certainly not unique to Korea, but in nuanced ways, it does exhibit a uniquely Korean quality. That is, although the objects of the other countries are basically similar in form, the sides of the vessel are precise and the corners are sharp. In comparison, the lid and the body of the mother-of-pearl sutra case do not form sharp edges. They have been beveled. The soft and natural line created by the bevels can be followed on the body of the case. This is a shared characteristic that is also found in other mother-of-pearl boxes and case types.

The forms unique to Goryeo are seen in the box with rings type, box with beveled sides of the lid, lobed cosmetic cases, and the single oil bottle's form. These unique qualities are also seen in Goryeo vessels made of other materials or in black lacquerware. The fact that the lobed cosmetic cases making up a set do not fit perfectly is also a characteristic quality. The craftsman avoids sharp edges and pursues a rounded, natural feeling, even in the way the parts of the set do not fit perfectly.

As discussed above, characteristics that define both the forms of the inlaid lacquer objects and their functions are shared by other craft object types of the Goryeo dynasty, such as celadon and metalware. They all exhibit a shared aesthetic: unlike the Chinese form that boasts sharp lines and a rigid beauty, the Goryeo craftsmen preferred an aesthetic of curving, natural lines with softened edges.⁶²

2. Motifs and characteristics of technique

The uniqueness and excellence of Goryeo inlaid lacquer is seen in its motifs and choice of materials and technique. As seen in charts 1 and 2, willow and water birds, chrysanthemum, chrysanthemum vinescroll, and peony vinescroll comprise motifs commonly found as the main design. Various motifs are used for border designs. This is true not only for lacquerware but also for contemporaneous celadon, metalware, and Buddhist objects.

With all of these motifs, small units are densely arranged; the repetition of the schematically rendered motif produces a beauty of rhythm and strong regularity. The effect depends on the materials and techniques used. It appears that contemporary technology did not allow for wide surfaces of mother-of-pearl, so smaller ones were used, resulting in the repetition of smaller design units. As Xu Jing related in his *Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo*, the intricacy of the mother-of-pearl motifs was probably encouraged in answer to the demands of the ruling class with its extravagant tastes.⁶³ Rather than creating a detailed arrangement of concentrated patterns that fill the entire surface or pursuing a minutely elaborate composition full of repeated units of design motifs, the Goryeo craftsman preferred spatial harmony and created an aesthetically pleasing surface design.

This is a characteristic seen in different types of craft objects of the era such as inlaid celadon and silver-inlaid bronze censers. That is, in the forms and surface design motifs of extant Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer pieces we recognize the era's craft design aesthetic, the same aesthetic expressed in contemporaneous inlaid celadon, metalware, and the decorative motifs rendered in Buddhist paintings.

The majority of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquer objects are made through the technique of combining tortoiseshell colored yellow and red through the *bokchae* method along with the use of metal wire. The coldness of the shell color is warmed by the tortoiseshell and its juxtaposition with the metal wire produces an effective color harmony. The emphasis of this visual beauty is a major characteristic.

Examination of the production methods of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquers reveals that the body of the lacquer object is produced using the *mokshimjeopi* lacquer technique, the traditional method since the Three Kingdoms period. That is, hemp is applied over the *mokshim* and, on top of a layer of lacquer, designs are inlaid with mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell, and metal wire.

As for the main material of mother-of-pearl, unlike the Chinese, Goryeo used thin layers shaved from abalone shells. China used thick slices of shell and, judging from extant evidence, only started using thin layers of shell after the Yuan dynasty.⁶⁴ This leads one to surmise that the practice of using thin layers started in Goryeo and that practice influenced China. Thin layers require comparatively simple tools and because they have the advantage of adhering easily to the lacquer surface they made possible the Goryeo preference for small design units of mother-of-pearl, as the early instance of the *jureumjil* (주름질) technique of cutting the mother-of-pearl using a motif pattern.⁶⁵ Only in the sutra case in the Kitamura Museum, a comparatively late piece, do we see an early expression of the *kkeuneumjil* technique in the inlay of the tortoiseshell and seven treasures motifs (refer to fig. 16, 16-1).⁶⁶

The combining of colored tortoiseshell (*bokchae*) and metal wire with mother-of-pearl is another characteristic of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquer. As mentioned above, the use of metal wire with red and yellow colored tortoiseshell enhances the color effects. It mitigates the potential monotony of mother-of-pearl design and produces an elaborate yet subtle color effect (fig. 27).⁶⁷ The Chinese also used tortoiseshell frequently in crafts; in contrast to Chinese treatment, however, in Goryeo dynasty mother-of-pearl lacquerware tortoiseshell is used almost exclusively in lacquerware made by the *bokchae* method.

Sometimes two or more strands of silver or brass wires were twisted together to form a thick strand. These wires were used to enhance the color effects of the overall design, emphasize the shape of the vessel body, provide borders to design motifs, render the stems of vines and emphasize the forms of minute motifs.⁶⁸ Metal wire is seen almost without exception in Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquer, but it is not apparent in extant objects from the Tang or Song dynasties.⁶⁹ It is only in objects from the Yuan and Ming dynasties that we see metal wire used occasionally. From this we can recognize the technique of combining the use of metal wire with mother-of-pearl as a characteristic of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquer and that it was first practiced in Korea and then spread to China. Although the numbers of extant objects is few we can surmise that mother-of-pearl lacquers and the mass produced sutra cases made their way to China and Japan and that they exerted great influence on Yuan and Ming dynasty mother-of-pearl lacquerware. The absence of metal wire from Joseon dynasty mother-of-pearl lacquers is due to the development of tools that made possible the manipulation of mother-of-pearl into the form of long thin strands (*sangsa*). It appears that mother-of-pearl *sangsa* replaced metal wire.

Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer used its indigenous lacquer tradition, in terms of both materials and technique, as a base upon which to develop a unique aesthetic sensibility. The fact that it influenced Japan and China is a testament to its high quality.

V. Conclusion

This essay locates the origins of Goryeo dynasty lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay within the tradition of Korean lacquerware. Through an examination of its development along with a comprehensive analysis of extant vessels, it has attempted to reveal the unique characteristics that only Goryeo dynasty lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay possesses.

Recent research and important excavations have proven that lacquerware began to be produced in Korea during the Bronze Age. The influence of Han China lacquerware via Lelang stimulated its development and spurred the establishment of a lacquer arts tradition that we boast today. Mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware of the Goryeo did not emerge from a source in China, however; its origins can be found within Korea's own excellent craft tradition. First of all, we can see its foundation in the excellent craft technologies of the Three Kingdoms period. During the Unified Silla period, a revolution in the craft production system allowed for significant development. Both historical documents and extant objects verify the use of the *pyeongtal* technique, a technique virtually same in principle with mother-of-pearl inlay. Also the excavation of the mother-of-pearl bronze mirror at Gaya, a critical piece of evidence evidencing the origin of mother-of-pearl inlay in our own country, demonstrates that a foundation was put into place that would allow for the development of a superior mother-of-pearl lacquer production in the Goryeo dynasty. Korea's own mother-of-pearl inlay technique existed as early as the Unified Silla period. It was due to the influence of advanced techniques adopted from Tang China that the development of mother-of-pearl inlay technique was slow to develop until the Goryeo dynasty.

For the reason stated above, there are no references to lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay during Unified Silla. The fact that they start being sent abroad as diplomatic gifts in the eleventh century, however, along with the high praise of Xu Jing, evidences that there had been consistent and strong development of the technique and by the twelfth century it had achieved a high level of quality. During the Goryeo dynasty, the *Jungsanseo*, the office that produced furnishings for the king's palace, began to re-organize the system through division of labor, professionalization of lacquer craftsmen,

and the establishment of a Directorate for Sutra Box Production. Historical documents evidence the efforts on the national level to develop mother-of-pearl inlay crafts.

Part 3 examined extant Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware and categorized them by type and surface design. Although the number of these extant examples is few (only twenty), examination reveals that in terms of function, form, design motifs, or technique, as well as their excellence of quality, they exemplify a period style that is manifest in contemporary celadon, metalware and Buddhist paintings.

Finally, in both function and form Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer reflects the pervasiveness of Buddhism and the influence of the aristocracy that characterize the period. A notable characteristic is the pursuit of a natural and leisurely aesthetic best illustrated in details like the easing of sharp corners by the beveling of box edges. The Goryeo craftsman understood the limits of using thicker shells and used smaller units of thin shells to compose a composition of design units covering the entire surface of the object. He combined mother-of-pearl with red and yellow-colored (*bokchae*) tortoiseshell and metal wire in order to enhance the aesthetic sophistication of the design.

Considering the excellent quality of extant Goryeo dynasty lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay, it is surprising that not enough historical documentation exists. Before writing this essay I was able to examine several extant Goryeo objects closely, and this opportunity has helped enormously. The need remains for discovery of more documents or new scientific research that can serve as a foundation for a more comprehensive examination. Finally, this essay was not able to deal with Joseon lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlay and the relationships among Chinese and Japanese lacquers; these are my future research topics.⁷⁰

¹ Xu Jing, *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 高麗圖經 [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], volume 23. In 1123, year 5 of the Xuanhe era, the envoy Xu Jing made a month-long visit to the Goryeo capital, Gaegyeong. Upon returning to China, he compiled his accounts into a document, *Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo*, and presented it to the emperor in 1124. Originally produced as a picture book, it consisted of illustrations and descriptions, but the illustrations have been damaged and lost. What do remain are forty volumes with approximately three hundred text entries; they relate in precise detail information regarding the palace, important personages, religion, customs, and geography of Goryeo beginning with the time of its founding. Jung Yongsuk and Kim Jongyun, translators, *Seonhwa bongsa goryeo dogyeong* [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], Doseo chulpan umjikeun chaek, 1998.

² Volume 9 of *Joseon gojeok dobo* 朝鮮古蹟圖報 [Picture Record Book of Joseon Artifacts] includes photographs of the incense box with grape and water bird design inlaid with mother-of-pearl, round case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell, box with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with tortoiseshell, and two plain lacquerwares. With the exception of the round case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell (fig. 21) in the collection of the Nara National Museum, Japan, all of these objects are badly damaged and their forms cannot be discerned.

³ Research on Goryeo inlaid lacquer conducted in the Korean language includes Kwak Daeung, *Goryeo najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Lacquerware], Mijinsa, 1984, and Lee Jongseok, "Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi [Goryeo Dynasty Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Lacquerware]," in *Hanguk ui jeontong gongye* [Traditional Craft Arts of Korea], Yeolhwadang, 1994: 50–62. Works in other languages include Kawada Tadashi, "K rai raden no gih teki tokushoku [Unique Qualities of Goryeo Mother-of-Pearl Inlay Techniques]," *Yamato bunka* 70 (1981): 18–30; Kawada Tadashi, "K rai jidai raden ni miru us gih no kankokuka [Koreanization of Song Techniques as Seen in Goryeo Dynasty Mother-of-Pearl Inlay]," *Minzoku geijutsu* 2 (1986): 42–52; Takahashi Takahiro, "K rai raden ni tsuite no futatsu mitsu no mondai—kono hennen o megutte [Two or Three Problems Concerning Goryeo Mother-of-Pearl: Concerning Dating]," in *H ken shakai to kindai* [Feudalistic Society and Early Modern Period], Tsuda Hideo Sensei koki kinenkai, ed., 1989, pp. 662–684; Okada J , "Bunkenjo yori mita k rai raden [Korean Mother-of-Pearl Seen in Documents]," *Bijutsu kenkyu* 175 (1954): 42–44; Okada J , "K rai no raden [Goryeo's Mother-of-Pearl Inlay]," in *T y radenshi no kenkyu* [Research on the History of East Asian

Mother-of-Pearl History], Chōkron bijutsu shuppan, 1978, pp. 321–332; Hayashi Nobu, “Kōrai raden ni tsuite no futatsu mitsu no mondai [Two or Three Problems Concerning Goryeo Mother-of-Pearl],” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 138 (1981): 41–52; Basil Gray, “Korean Inlaid Lacquer of the Thirteenth Century,” *The British Museum Quarterly* XXXII (Spring, 1968): 132–137; and John Figgess, “Mother-of-pearl Inlaid Lacquer of the Koryo Dynasty,” *Oriental Art*, vol. XXIII (Spring, 1977): 87–95.

⁴ Important excavation sites include the late Bronze Age site of stone tombs in Namseong-li Chungnam Asan, the finds from Hampyung Chopo-li dated to the first half of the second century BCE, and the finds from Seoheung Chungok-li. In addition, Proto-Three Kingdoms period artifacts were found in Joyang-dong and Nopo-dong, Gyeongju.

⁵ Han Byung-sam and Lee Geomu, “Namsungli seokkwanmyo [Stone Tombs of Namsung-li],” in *Guklip jungang bakmulgwan gojeok josa bogoseo* (National Museum of Korea’s Report on the Examination of Ancient Artifacts) 10 (1977): 5.

⁶ Lelang, centered in Pyongyang, was one of four Han Dynasty commanderies for about four hundred years (108 BCE–313 CE). Many lacquerware pieces from the early to late Han dynasty era have been excavated there. Among these pieces, many include inscriptions. The site is very important in studying Han lacquers as well as the relationship between Korean and Chinese lacquerware.

⁷ Lee Geonmu, Lee Yakdong, Yun Kwangjin, and Shin Daegon, “Uichang daholi yujeok balgul jinjeon bogo [Report on Excavation Progress at Uichang Daholi],” *Gogo hakji* (Anthropology Academic Papers) 1 (1989): 41; Choe Youngsuk, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], MA Thesis, Hongik University Graduate School, 1998, fig. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, fig. 2.

⁹ According to the *Kokka jinbō chō*, King Uija gave Fujiwara no Kamatari a red lacquered chest that contained four cases. The Baekje silver *pyungtal* case might be one of these cases, and because of this, it is thought to be a Baekje artifact. Gotō Shirō, ed., *Tempyō no bijutsu: Shōshin*, Nihon Bijutsu Zenshū [Collected Works on Japanese Art] vol. 5, 1978, p. 191.

¹⁰ Excavated objects include vessels similar to *ibae*, typical of Lelang lacquerware forms, and those that look like *gobae*, the form commonly seen in Silla or Gaya pottery. The objects can be broadly divided into *mokshim* lacquerware with lathe-turned body and *mokshim hyeopjeo* lacquerware with hemp attached to the vessel.

Because the typical Han dynasty lacquer product was made using a different technique, without the use of *mokshim*, one can assume that this was a technique invented by the Silla. Jin Hongsup, "Gosilla sidae chilgi chaehwa e natanan Goguryeo ui younghyang [The Influence of Goguryeo on Old Silla Lacquer Painting], *Gogomisul* vols. 123-124 (1974): 6–16. It is the custom of Lelang lacquerware to have the outside black and the inside red or inlaying red lacquer on a black background. *Cheonmabun Balgul Josa Bogo* [Report on the Examination of the Cheonma Tomb Excavation], Munhwa Jae Gwanliguk, 1974: 190–195.

¹¹ *Samguk sagi*, 三國史記 [The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms], volume 39, *jabji* 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, volume 33, *jabji* 2. It prohibits persons below four-head level from using *geum eun yusuk* and *juri pyeongmun mul*. The *geum eun yusuk* here refers to dishes made of metal, and the *juri pyeongmun mul* refers to dishes made of wood. *Juri* specifically indicates those vessels with the interior in red lacquer and *pyeongmun* seems to refer to vessels decorated with the *pyeongtal* technique. Lee Jongsuk, "Samguk mit tongilsillagi ui mokchilgi [Wooden Lacquerware of the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla Periods], in *Hanguk ui Jeontong Gongye* [Traditional Crafts of Korea], Yeolhwadang, 1994, p. 32.

¹³ Anapji is the artificial pond next to Imhaejeon, a structure in the Eastern Palace of the Silla Kingdom, created by King Munmu in 674 (year 14 of his reign). This is an important site. Because so many crafts objects used by the king and large quantities of luxury everyday items were uncovered here, it has provided important evidence for the historical reconstruction of Unified Silla. *Anapji balgul bogoseo* [Report on the Excavation of Anapji], Munhwajae Gwanliguk 1978: 5-12, 246-247.

¹⁴ *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*, volume 39. In the eighth century, at the height of Silla culture, there was a name change from *chiljeon* to *sikgibang*. We can infer that the new name was used in response to changes in the vessels produced by the office, perhaps in response to the increased demand for these luxury objects. On the other hand, the name change could have occurred due to changes in lacquers used or innovations in technique, perhaps the incorporation of *pyeongtal* or mother-of-pearl inlay. Because the reign of King Gyeongduk (742-764) is the era of the height of Silla craft technology, the latter supposition is more likely. Because the reform of the Craft Bureau occurred during the middle years of the Silla period, it also appears that the changes were due to the increased need for products to be used for diplomatic functions by the king in his relations with China. Pak Namsu, *Silla sugongeopsa* [History of Silla Hand Crafts], Doseo Chulpan Sindangwon, 1996, p. 330.

¹⁵ *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*, volume 8. Year 32 of King Seongduk (733), twelfth month. (“The emperor gave the king a pair of white cherries, a red silk shirt with embroidery, metal objects... it dazzles the eyes of the witness and surprises the heart of the one listening.”)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, volume 33, *jabji* 2. (“*Jingol* women are prohibited from using saddles with jewelled decoration.”)

¹⁷ Refer to note 12.

¹⁸ *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書 [The New Book of Tang], Yeonjonggi Jideok year 2 (757).

¹⁹ Okada J , “Bunkenjo yori mita k rai raden [Korean Mother-of-Pearl Seen in Documents]”: 21-26.

²⁰ *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* is later in date than the Japanese *Kenbutsuch* . However, due to the fact that the prohibition implies that *pyeongmun* was already popular, I do not think we need to be concerned about the problem of dating.

²¹ Choi Young Sook, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], fig. 15.

²² “It is made of wood, lacquer has been applied, and the eyes are made of glass. The pupils are treated in blue. The eyes are surrounded by an outline of gold... it is unfortunate that the complete appearance cannot be known due to serious deterioration.” Kim Jaewon, *Houchong and Eunryeongchong* [The Burial Mounds of Hou and Eunryeong], in *Guklip bakmulgwan gojeok josa bogoseo* (National Museum of Korea’s Report on the Examination of Ancient Artifacts), vol. 1, 1948: 45. I had an opportunity to examine this piece but due to damage it was very difficult to reconstruct the original form of the object. Recent restoration has revealed that it constitutes a part of a quiver.

²³ These two examples are both made of wood from the linden tree that has been colored, but they are worn. It is not possible to know its function, but because this was a time of absolute support of Buddhism by the king and *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* records that Buddhist consciousness was pervasive in the Eastern palace, it is theorized that these objects were ritual vessels used in a Buddhist context. Lee Jongsuk, “Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi [Goryeo Dynasty Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Lacquerware]”: 67.

²⁴ Amber comes from northern Myanmar and light blue and yellow rocks are native to Persia. Dark blue stones are thought to come from Turkey, Afghanistan or Tibet. Oguchi Hachir , *Shiruku r do* [Silk Road], 1981, pp. 26–41.

²⁵ Until recently the prevailing opinion has been that this mother-of-pearl inlaid mirror was a Tang creation imported into Korea. Lee Jongsuk, “Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi [Goryeo Dynasty Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid

Lacquerware]”:61; Choe Sunu and Jeong Yangmo, “Mokchil gongye [Wood Lacquer Crafts],” in *Hanguk misul jeonjip* [Collected Volumes of Korean Art], vol. 13, Donghwa Chulpan Gongsu, 1974, p. 6; Kwak Daeung, *Hanguk najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Korean Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Lacquers], M. A. thesis, Hongik University Graduate School, 1978, p. 25; Kawada Tadashi and Takahashi Takahir, *K rai rich no raden* [Goryeo and Joseon Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], Mainichi Shuppansha, 1986, p. 230. The decorative motifs of the Tang dynasty mirror are quite different, so it is not a stretch to suggest that the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art mirror is not from the Tang. Since there is no definitive historical evidence to suggest that the mirror was produced in Silla, however, and to suggest such is an overreach, this article follows the scholarly consensus.

²⁶ *The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* volume 33, *jabji* 2. It records the situation of excess in a trend toward using expensive and rare imported products to decorate a variety of objects: decorating scarves and belts with peacock tail feathers, decorating with caterpillar fur, using purple, *chimhyang* tree, tortoiseshells to decorate wagons and saddle padding.

²⁷ The images of the military figure and the foreigner in the king's tombs of Wonseong and Hongdeok constitute naturalistic renderings of Manchu persons as foreigners. From this we can surmise that the Silla craftsman had witnessed foreigners. Amongst Unified Silla artifacts we find decorative combs such as tortoiseshell combs. In the use of tortoiseshell and jade we can know the active importation of materials to decorate luxurious crafts.

²⁸ *Jochil* refers either to a sculpted lacquerware or to its technique. It is also referred to as *cheokhong* lacquerware. The technique involves the mixing of a white stone powder with the lacquer and applying it on the surface where, once it solidifies to some degree, decorative shapes are sculpted with it.

²⁹ Han Chiyun, *Haedong Yeoksa* [Eastern Sea History], vol. 38, p. 2.

³⁰ *Dongguk Munheon Bigo* [Report on Documents of Korea], vol. 172 (Gyobinggo), p. 16.

³¹ Refer to note 1.

³² Xu Jing, *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], volume 15. Jung Yongsuk and Kim Jongyun, translators, *Seonhwa bongsa goryeo dogyeong* [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], p. 161.

³³ Fang Shao (Bang Jak), *Samul wonhoe*, Baktaekpyeon.

³⁴ *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo], *baekgwonji* 2. In 1310 *Jungsangseo* was renamed *Gongjoseo*. In 1369 the name reverted to *Jungsangseo*. In 1372, the name changed back to *Gongjoseo* and remained so through the Joseon dynasty. *Gongjoseo* produced furniture, dishes, and the like to be used in the palaces and governmental offices.

³⁵The *hwajang* drew the images for use on vessels or objects. The *somokjang* probably used these drawings to create the *mokshim* foundation. The *jogakjang* did the sculpture and the *najeonjang* inlaid the designs in mother-of-pearl on the *mokshim* foundation. The *chiljang* and the *majang* were probably responsible for the final phase of production, applying the lacquer and achieving a shiny surface.

³⁶ *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo], *saega* 27, Munjong year 13 second month Gapjin.

³⁷ Xu Jing, *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], volume 19. Jung Yongsuk and Kim Jongyun, translators, *Seonhwa bongsa goryeo dogyeong* [Illustrated Accounts of Goryeo], p. 198.

³⁸ Gang Mangil, "Sugongup [Hand Crafts]," in *Hanguksa* [Korean History], volume 5, Hanguk Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, 1975, p. 189.

³⁹ *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo], *sikhwaji* 3.

⁴⁰ In each department we see titles of positions that imply directorial duties: *haengdu daejang*, *haengdu bujang*, *haengdu gyowi*. It appears that they were either experts in the fields or the authoritative masters. Yu Gyoseong, "Hanguk sang gonggeopsa [History of Korean Commerce]," in *Hanguk munhwasa daege* [History of Korean Culture], 1965, pp. 1021-25.

⁴¹ *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo], *ji* 35, *byeong* 1.

⁴² Most Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquers continue the Korean tradition of the *mokshim jeopi* lacquerware technique. That is, on a wooden object surface lacquer is applied, then either hemp cloth or ramie cloth is placed, and after another thick layer of lacquer, mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell as well as golden lines are inlaid into designs. Finally another layer of lacquer is applied and polished so that the design shows through.

⁴³ It belonged to the Mori family then entered the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. Earlier, it had been owned by the temple Taineiji in Yamaguchi prefecture. The inlaid characters were revealed after it suffered damage in a fire in 1940, during the process of its repair.

⁴⁴ A Chinese Yuan dynasty lapis and gold sutra case has a similar page reference in the form of characters carved onto it. The black lacquer sutra case in the Enj ji temple in Japan has the same character carved on it. Satoya Tadaomi, "K rai radengi zakk [Miscellaneous Thoughts on Goryeo Mother-of-Pearl Inlaid Vessels]," *Museum* 319 (1977): 18.

⁴⁵ In its current condition, this sutra case sits atop a jutting pedestal and instead of the lid it has a door that is used to open and close the case. Because of its unusual form it had not been thought of as a sutra case and was

categorized as belonging to a different type of box. However, once it was confirmed that the piece had been restored it was recategorized. John Figgess, "Mother-of-pearl Inlaid Lacquer of the Koryo Dynasty":87; Arakawa Hirokazu, "Kankoku no raden [Korea's Mother-of-Pearl Inlay]," in *Raden* [Mother-of-Pearl], D b sha, 1985, pp. 303–307; Choi Young Sook, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], illustrations 39, 39-1.

⁴⁶ *Sangsa* refers to long wire-like strands of mother-of-pearl shell used to inlay in the *kkeuneumjil* technique.

⁴⁷ *Kkeuneumjil* is a technique in which large and wide shells are used to make thin, long *sangsa* so that regular units of *sangsa* in length is attached to the surface creating long straight lines or even fluid curved lines. The cloisonné and tortoiseshell motifs expressed in this sutra case are considered to be an early example of the *kkeuneumjil* technique because it does not yet exhibit the curved *kkeuneumjil*, which is the characteristic element of Joseon dynasty mother-of-pearl techniques.

⁴⁸ Choi Young Sook, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], illustrations 48, 48-1.

⁴⁹ This is a traditional box type in which the lid covers the body of the box deeply. It appears in Joseon dynasty clothes boxes as well as square boxes (*bangham*).

⁵⁰ The technique of *bokchae* refers to the process of applying colors to the underside of a thin material so that the colors show through from the back.

⁵¹ The use of *daemo* (tortoiseshell being used instead of mother-of-pearl shells) and the *bokchae* technique are found in many Tang dynasty objects, although the Tang frequently used tortoiseshell, amber, and ivory as well. In contrast, Goryeo more often used tortoiseshell colored red or yellow through the *bokchae* technique.

⁵² Songlim Temple, Ocheung jeontap [Five-storied stone pagoda], Goryeo, National Treasure 325, Guklip jungang bakmulgwan [National Museum of Korea]; Kim Jaewon, "Songlimsa [Songlim Temple]," in *Jindan hakbo* [Korea Transactions], vols. 29-30 (1966): 13-28; Choi Young Sook, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], fig. 51.

⁵³ These boxes (*jahap*) are referred to variously as *songsilhyeong hapja*, *jubinhyeong hapja*, *banhwahyeong hapja*, *ujahap*, and *gyeothap*. In this essay I refer to them as *jaham*.

⁵⁴ The tortoiseshell design has been found in the king's foot rest and queen's pillow excavated from the tomb of the Baekje king Munyo, and we have the silver inlaid bronze knife handle and a desk leg from Unified Silla. In extant

examples from the Goryeo period there are many examples of similar designs on clothing rendered in Buddhist paintings. This is probably due to the fact that it is very effective to render very long lines through the use of the *kkeuneumjil* technique and the inlaying of silver in bronzes, as well as the *geumni* [painting with gold powder] technique.

⁵⁵ Refer to note 47.

⁵⁶ Choi Young Sook, *Goryeo sidae najeonchilgi yeongu* [Research on Goryeo Lacquerware with Mother-of-Pearl Inlay], fig. 64.

⁵⁷ Ibid., figs. 62, 63.

⁵⁸ The Korean chrysanthemum motif renders the *yaguk*, that is, wild chrysanthemum that commonly grow in the Korean fields. This *yaguk* suggests a plain and humble feeling. Even when it is stylized it does not lose this feeling and so it effectively manifests a uniquely Korean temperament, making it a representative “Korean” motif. No matter what type of artwork it appears on, it harmonizes well with the other elements, and depending on the particular natures of the inlay surface and the inlay materials the resultant look is different. It is a motif that exhibits the period style very effectively. Ibid., figs. 65, 66, 67, 68.

⁵⁹ Ibid., figs 72, 73, 74.

⁶⁰ Ibid., fig. 75.

⁶¹ Based on examination of many examples, celadon vessels of this type were used to store very valuable objects such as seals, relics, sutras, treasures, etc. Ibid., figs. 26-31.

⁶² Ibid., fig. 42, small box with mother-of-pearl inlaid figure design (Yuan dynasty, fourteenth century, Nezu Museum, Tokyo); fig. 43, case with mother-of-pearl figure design (Yuan dynasty, Idemitsu Museum, Tokyo).

⁶³ Refer to note 1.

⁶⁴ Refer to note 62.

⁶⁵ *Jureumjil* refers to the technique of using a fret saw to cut clamshells into design shapes. Because fret saws did not exist at this time we surmise that craftsmen used either a sharp knife or a special type of scissors to cut the designs.

⁶⁶ The frequency of geometric motifs made through the *kkeuneumjil* technique in Yuan dynasty mother-of-pearl lacquerware lead us to conclude that it was produced there due to Goryeo influence.

⁶⁷ Perhaps due to a problem in supply, late Goryeo examples of tortoiseshell use diminish in number. However, the main principle of the technique is continued in the *hwagak* technique of late Joseon as it becomes a common decorating technique in woodcrafts.

⁶⁸ Although there has yet to be a detailed investigation of the history of the metal wire technique, we surmise that it developed from the superior techniques of the Three Kingdoms period metal crafts tradition.

⁶⁹ There is one record referring the partial use of metal wire in a Song dynasty mother-of-pearl piece. However, this has not been confirmed on any known extant example. *Gyoekgo yoron* [Korean reading of Chinese text title], volume 8.

⁷⁰ In my master's thesis I attempted to date the extant lacquer pieces using my own research and the opinions of various other scholars. Because of a serious lack in historical documentary evidence my conclusions are speculative, and I have omitted them from this essay.

Captions

Figure 1
Audience with King Muyeongchong, King's chamber
Goguryeo, sixth century
Jinlin Province, China

Figure 2
Silver *pyeongtal* case
Baekje
H 4.5 cm; Diameter 11.5 cm
Japan, Sh s in

Figure 3
Black lacquered mask
Silla
Excavated at Houchong
National Museum of Korea

Figure 4
Flower-shaped fragment with silver *pyeongtal* flower design
Unified Silla
Excavated at Anapji
Gyeongju National Museum

Figure 5
Half bamboo-shaped fragment with silver *pyeongtal*
Unified Silla
Excavated at Anapji
Gyeongju National Museum

Figure 6
Bronze mirror with gold and silver *pyeongtal*
(Collection of Lee Wonhyeong)
Unified Silla
Diameter 15.3 cm
National Museum of Korea

Figure 7
Bronze mirror with wild flower and water bird designs inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Unified Silla
Diameter 18.6 cm
Excavated at Gaya
Korea, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

Figure 8
Bronze mirror inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Tang Dynasty
Nara, Sh s in

Figure 9
Bronze mirror with figure with bird and flower design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Tang Dynasty
China, Lelang Museum

Figure 10
Black lacquered box with bird and flower design inlaid with mother-of-pearl

Five Dynasties
Excavated at Suzhou, Jiangsu Province
China, Suzhou Museum

Figure 11
Bodhisattva Jiz (detail)
Goryeo
Japan, Engakuji

Figure 12
Goryeo envoy (detail)
Northern Song Dynasty
China, Gongxianhyeon

Figure 13
Lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 26 cm; W 37.8 cm; L 19.2 cm
Japan, Tokyo National Museum

Figure 13-1
Lid of Figure 13

Figure 14
Lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 26.4 cm; W 47.3 cm; L 25.3 cm
Japan, Tokyo National Museum

Figure 14-1
Detail of Figure 14: title number

Figure 15
Lacquered sutra case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 25.6 cm; W 47.3 cm; L 25.0 cm
Japan, Private collection

Figure 16
Lacquered sutra case with peony vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 22.8cm; W 41.8 cm; L 20.4 cm
Kyoto, Kitamura Museum

Figure 16-1
Detail of Figure 16

Figure 17
Lacquered incense box with willow and water bird design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 11.2 cm; W 29.1 cm; L 18.8 cm
National Museum of Korea

Figure 17-1
Tray inside box, Figure 17

Figure 18
Inlaid celadon box with openwork tortoiseshell design
Goryeo, twelfth century

H 12.1 cm; W 12.5 cm; L 22.4 cm
Korea, Gansong Art Museum

Figure 19
Black lacquered cosmetic case
Excavated in Asan-li Tomb, Jeonnam province
National Museum of Korea

Figure 20
Lacquered box with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 7.0 cm; W 13.1 cm; L 10.1 cm
Tokyo, Okura Shokkan

Figure 21
Lacquered round case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell
Goryeo
H 4.7 cm; Diameter 12.5 cm
Japan, Nara National Museum

Figure 22
Lacquered flower-shaped case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl
Goryeo
H 3.7 cm; Diameter 11.7 cm
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

Figure 23
Inlaid celadon cosmetic case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design
Goryeo
National Museum of Korea

Figure 24
Lacquered case with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell
Goryeo
H 4.1 cm; W 10.2 cm
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 25
Lacquered Buddhist chowry with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell
Goryeo
L 42.7 cm; W 1.6 cm
National Museum of Korea

Figure 25-1
Detail of Figure 25

Figure 26
Lacquered oil bottle with chrysanthemum vinescroll design inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell
Goryeo
H 4 cm; Diameter 8.9 cm
National Museum of Korea

Figure 27
Detail of Figure 24