

# History and Design of Nineteenth-Century Minbos, Korean Commoner's Wrapping Cloths

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This thesis has investigated the *minbo*, or Korean commoner's wrapping cloth, created exclusively by women of the late Yi Dynasty in the nineteenth century.

Women were subjected to severe restrictions in all aspects of daily life, because the government particularly encouraged women to become virtuous women by practicing the Confucian Virtues. Few outlets of expression were available to women: one of them was the creation of exquisite wrapping cloths, *bojagi*.

wrapping cloths, *bojagi*, refers to a square textile of various sizes, colors, and designs. They have been used throughout Korean life. *bojagi* had been an essential part of every day life for the common people before the suitcase or bag were introduced. *bojagi* have different names according to the class of the user, its usage, color, type of textile, material, structure, existence of motif, and kind of motif.

The *bojagi* were organized into two groups by users, *gungbo* for palace use and *minbo* for use by common people. This study focuses on the *minbo*, commoner's wrapping cloths, during the nineteenth century. Among *minbos*, *subo* and *chogakbo* are discussed in this thesis. The term *subo*, embroidered wrapping cloth, were used for only wedding ceremony for common people. The *chogakbo*, mosaic cloth, was the most popular wrapping cloth for commoners which was used for all practical purpose. It was made of patchwork designs from small pieces of leftover cloth. This thesis explores the history and background of *minbo*(*subo* and *chogakbo*), its characteristics, including forms, designs, materials, color and how they related to women's daily life during the Yi Dynasty in social and cultural aspects. The research undertaken here is done by classifying *minbos* according to composition, design, pattern and motif. They are analyzed and organized in design categories and researched for their provenance through museum records(the Museum of Korean Embroidery in Seoul) as well as through secondary sources such as published books, periodical, and journals.

Although *bojagi* have traditionally been widely used among all classes in Korea, many Koreans and foreigners do not recognize their proper value and significance in relation to

women's work and as one of the most important cultural heritages in Korea. Therefore, this thesis helps people, both Korean and foreign, understand one of the most wonderful Korean cultural heritages.