

Special Feature

Plantain Designs on Goryeo Celadon, How They Developed, and What They Meant

LEE Jun-kwang



The Review of Korean Studies Volume 24 Number 1 (June 2021): 41-84

doi: 10.25024/review.2021.24.1.41

©2020 by the Academy of Korean Studies. All rights reserved.

www.kci.go.kr

Introduction

After Goryeo resumed exchanges with Northern Song in 1071 (25th year of the reign of King Munjong), Goryeo celadon rapidly changed and developed. From the 12th century, various designs started to be applied using diverse techniques, with major plant designs used then being lotus blossoms, peonies, and sunset hibiscus. In comparison, the number of celadon vessels decorated with plantain designs is very small, but it is worth noting that the composition of the design as well as decorative techniques changed over the years.

Studies on various celadon designs have been published recently, enhancing understanding of the original meaning of the designs and aspects of foreign exchange related to Goryeo celadon (Kim 2014, 351-86). However, there are few materials on plantain designs as they have been treated simply as one of the pictorial design themes for celadon, and hence no independent study has been conducted on the subject (Kim 2011, 60-61). Nevertheless, the Goryeo people's awareness of the plantain can be understood through historical materials as well as literature and paintings of both Goryeo and China. Moreover, with the study of excavated shards of celadon with the plantain design or vessels that we have today intact, it should be possible to understand the meaning of plantain designs on Goryeo celadon and how the designs changed over time.

To explore this subject, the first chapter of this paper examines Chinese literary and art materials to grasp the cultural meaning of plantain and looks at examples of Chinese ceramics decorated with the plantain motif. The next section investigates through written records the extent to which the Goryeo people accepted and internalized the meanings attached to plantain that had been formed in China. Also, the development of the plantain design, as an established Goryeo celadon design, is studied according to period. Lastly, this paper puts in order changes in usage unique to Goryeo celadon plantain designs and explores the creativity of the designs, which are clearly distinguished from those of China.

In the process, this paper will bring together all information on Goryeo celadon with plantain designs that have only been reported sporadically until now. Furthermore, by understanding the meaning held by plantain, it will be possible to understand the background of the ideas and beliefs of the Goryeo people, who placed such importance on the design.

Cultural Meaning and Application of Chinese Plantain Designs

The plantain discussed here (also referred to as the banana plant, K. *pacho*, Ch. *bajiao*) is a large, temperate zone plant with ornamental leaves that is native to China. The young leaves are furled and shoot upwards, then grow to a long oval shape, reaching up to two meters in length. Though characterized by its thick growth of broad leaves, the plant has an empty, pithless trunk, and in autumn, the once thick leaves turn brown and fall. Noting the ecological characteristics of the plantain, the ancient Chinese imbued the plant with specific meanings, which can be explored through extant literary and art materials. This chapter investigates the meaning of the plantain through literary works and art materials and looks at examples of Chinese ceramics featuring plantain designs.

Meaning of Plantain in Old Stories and Classical Chinese Poetry

The direction for studying the meaning of the plantain design can be found in a prior study that deals with the subject from the perspective of Chinese literature. First, there are three aspects to consider in old stories associated with the plantain.

The first aspect is the meaning of the plantain in Buddhist stories. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the plantain has a stem that looks strong at first glance. Nevertheless, noting that while the tree has many leaves the trunk is actually hollow, the plantain is taken as a symbol for the futility of existence: "This body has no firmness inside it, like the plantain..." Also, the Nirvana Sutra states, "This body is as frail as reeds, eranda plants, bubbles, and plantain..." while the *Samyuktagama Sutra* says, "The plantain dies when the fruit ripens, and reeds die as they flower..." Buddhist scriptures hence use the plantain as a metaphor for fundamentalism—that all things live and die and constantly change and that everything is impermanent (Lee 2010, 300-03).

Next, there is the legend of Yuan An (?-92), a statesman of the Later Han dynasty who remained lying down at home throughout a big snowfall in Luoyang as he did not want to go out and distract the officials from their efforts to relieve people who were starving because of the snow. Later, the painter and poet Wang Wei (701-761) depicted this story in a painting titled *Yuan An Sleeps Through the Snow*. It is said Wang Wei painted it thinking of "the plantain in

the snow” when the plantain has already lost its leaves in winter. That is, the plantain is a symbol of Yuan An’s noble mien and superlative spirit as a scholar (Lee 2010, 303-04).

Huaisu (725-785) was a Buddhist monk of the Tang dynasty famous for his free-spirited cursive script. As paper was hard to obtain, he planted plantain and later practiced calligraphy on the leaves. Thanks to this story, the plantain became a symbol of hard work in scholarly endeavors (Lee 2010, 306-08).

Even more important than these old stories imbued with special meaning are classical Chinese poems (K. *hansi*) that give direct insight into the hearts and minds of the people of the time. Poems that take the plantain as subject matter can be found beginning from the Tang dynasty. The poet-official Bai Juyi (772-846) wrote in the poem “Rainy Night” 夜雨, “Outside my window/ I know it is raining/ The first sounds are on the banana leaves.”¹ In this way, he conveys the elegant mood of the sound of raindrops falling on the broad leaves. Many examples of plantain imbued with poetic sentiment can be found among Tang dynasty poems, indicating that such works formed part of the literary tradition of classical Chinese poetry (Lee 2013, 294).

Scholar-official Zhang Zai (1020-1077) of the mid-Northern Song period wrote a poem titled “Banana Leaves” at a time that coincides with the Goryeo dynasty in Korea. It is notable for expanding the meaning of the plantain.

When the leaves fall new branches come forth
The new leaves furled and curled quietly follow.
Study the new leaves to cultivate new virtue,
Following the new leaves in the hope of cultivating new knowledge.²

Using the ecological characteristics of banana leaves the poem rouses scholars who must resolve to expand their knowledge day by day. This metaphor brings to mind the saying “Renovate yourself one day and keep doing it every day” from *Daxue* (*Great Learning*). In the same way that the philosopher Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) compared lotus blossom to the superior man (of Confucianism) in his essay “On the Love of the Lotus,” the plantain was

perceived to be the symbol of the scholar.³

To sum up the above, the plantain first made its presence felt in China as the representation of the Buddhist concept of impermanence. Afterward, throughout the Tang and Song dynasties, the meaning of the plantain was expanded and closely connected with literature as it came to symbolize the spirit of scholars and their attitude toward learning, and also became a motif for a unique poetic sentiment connected with rain.

Meaning of the Plantain in Chinese Painting

Picture of Learned Men (Fig. 1) by Sun Wei, who was active in the late ninth century, the Late Tang period, is a painting of the Seven Sages in the Country (“the bamboo grove”). Only the sections of four of them in the center remain today. Painted behind the strange rock between Wang Rong (234-305) sitting at the front and Shan Tao (205-283) at the back are four plantain trees. In the late Tang period, the plantain had already gained a certain symbolism as mentioned above, and the trees placed between Wang Rong and Shan Tao can be regarded as the representation of the lofty character of the two sages.



Figure 1. *Picture of Learned Men* (section). Tang dynasty, late 9th century. Colors on silk, 45.2×168.7cm. The Shanghai Museum

1. “隔窗知夜雨，芭蕉先有聲” (qtd. in Lee 2010, 303-04).

2. “芭蕉心盡展新枝，心卷新心暗已隨。願學新心養新德，施隨新葉起新知” (qtd. in Lee 2013, 294).

3. In this way, Song poetry looks to the properties of plants such as plum blossoms, chrysanthemums, bamboo, and the plantain for the image of the superior man of Neo-Confucianism (Jo 2010, 194).

During the Liao dynasty, elements of the plantain design were inherited from Tang, but it is difficult to ascertain whether the meaning was also transmitted. The plantain tree in the *Jijintu Mural* (Fig. 2) and inside the lid of the *Gilt-silver Mirror Box and Bronze Mirror* (Fig. 3) was seemingly used as a seasonal element in the background scenery without any particular meaning. A Liao-period tomb dated to the 10th-12th centuries that follows the structure of Tang tombs was discovered in Zhangpu, Linxi County, Chifeng in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. In the painting *Strange Rock and Plantain* (Fig. 4) discovered on the painted wooden panels inside the tomb, it is also hard to read any symbolic meaning in the tree. However, this work is significant for showing that the plantain design transmitted by Tang had changed to form the central subject in combination with the peony rather than simply being part of the background.



Figure 2. *Lady of High Rank Sending a Brocade Scroll* (section). Liao dynasty, first half of the 10th century, Ar Horqin, Chifeng, Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. South mural of the stone chamber, Baoshan Liao Tomb No. 2



Figure 3. *Gilt-silver Mirror Box and Bronze Mirror*. Liao dynasty, first half 10th century. Wood, lacquer, gilded silver, and jade, 25.0×25.0cm. Research Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology of Inner Mongolia



Figure 4. Painted wooden panels. Liao dynasty, 10th-12th centuries. Color on wood, 115.5-116.0×59.5-62.5cm. Zhangpu, Linxi County, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Museum of Linxi County

In Song dynasty painting, which could have exchanged inspirations with its Goryeo counterpart, the plantain design not only has direct visual connection with the image of the scholar, reinforcing the symbolism identified in the literature mentioned above, but is also used for spatial differentiation.

The Eighteen Scholars (Fig. 5), attributed to the Emperor Huizong of Song, is a painting of 18 scholars of the Tang dynasty, including Du Ruhui, who became scholars of the Great Imperial Library during the reign of Emperor Taizong (627-650). In a lively, happy atmosphere, the scholars admire the views from the garden, listening to music, and eating. Two plantain trees are placed in front of an empty pavilion along with a strange rock. Unlike bamboo or cranes, plantains were not a subject for aesthetic appreciation. Considering the connection between the scholar and the plantain, however, it is evident that the plantain trees in the painting are a symbolic device showing the garden as a place for scholars overflowing with literary vital energy. At one end of *The Eighteen Scholars* painted by Liu Songlian (Fig. 6) of the Southern Song dynasty, plantain trees also placed with a strange rock behind the scholars, who are enjoying literature and art. It seems that in paintings of this subject, plantain trees and strange rocks are fixed elements of the composition.⁴

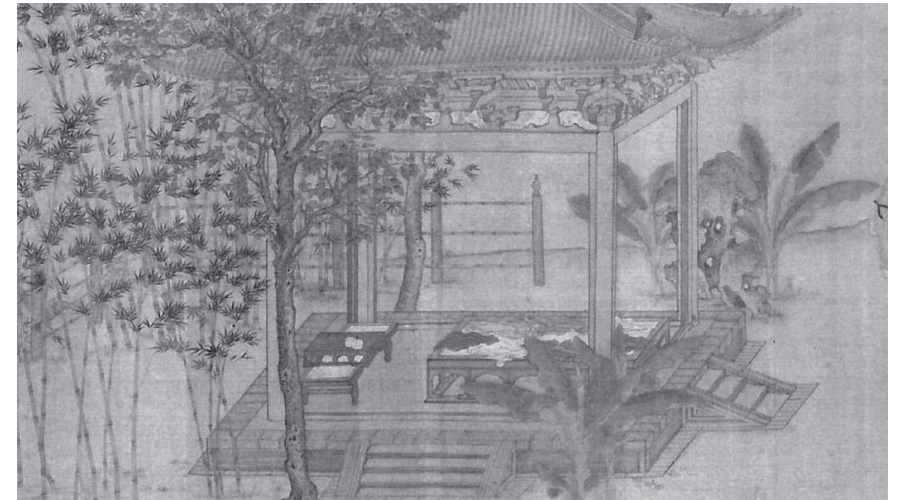


Figure 5. *The Eighteen Scholars* (section), attributed to Huizong. Northern Song dynasty, 12th century. Colors on silk, 28.2×550.2cm. National Palace Museum

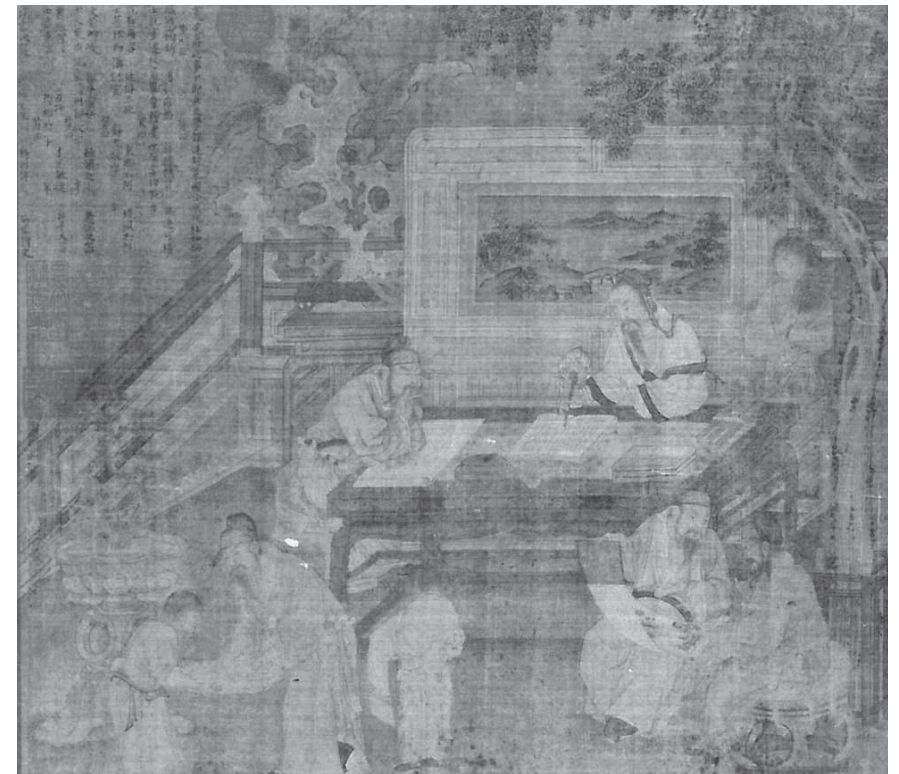


Figure 6. *The Eighteen Scholars* (section). Liu Songlian. Southern Song dynasty, late 12th century. Colors on silk, 44.5×182.3cm. National Palace Museum

4. Another text that deals with the connection between the plantain and the literati of Northern Song is *Record of the Elegant Gathering of Xiyuan* 西園雅集圖記 by Mi Fu. This record was written to accompany the painting depicting a gathering of scholars such as Su Shi and Mi Fu, invited by Wang Shen, advisor to Emperor Yingzong during the Yuanyou era (1086-1094), to attend the gathering in his garden at his home in Xiyuan. The painting has not been handed down but the record notes, "Plantains surrounded the area." Hence, it has been used to show that during the Northern Song period the plantain functioned to imbue a space with special meaning. However, it has been suggested that the record is a forgery made in the 16th century and that the gathering at Xiyuan never took place, a view that has gradually been accepted. Consequently, paintings of *The Elegant Gathering of Xiyuan* from the Southern Song period came to be regarded as works of the Ming dynasty. For this reason, this paper does not deal with this record (I 1997, 221-68; National Palace Museum, Taiwan 2019, 276).

Spring Banquet (Fig. 7), another Southern Song painting whose artist is unknown, has the same subject matter as paintings of the eighteen scholars of Tang. The sight of one of the scholars looking at the plantain tree with respect, as if fully aware of its symbolism, is a significant point of difference with Northern Song paintings of the eighteen scholars where the plantain tree is treated simply as a background element. This shows that the plantain tree as a symbol of the literati had become widely spread.⁵ *Literary Gathering of Southern Tang* (Fig. 8) by an anonymous artist is the painting that most actively employs this symbolism of the plantain. Four elegant scholars are composing works in the garden, and behind them, a number of women servants look on. The space is enclosed by around ten plantain trees behind the servants. In this painting, these trees are a device to create a refined, literati atmosphere. *Enjoying the Breeze in the Willow Courtyard* (Fig. 9), whose artist is also unknown, is a painting of a scholar cooling himself off from the heat as he looks out the window. In front of the window, between the willows that impart a sense of the season, is a plantain tree and strange rock. Here the plantain tree reflects the fine mien of the scholar and creates a special poetic sentiment when combined with rain.



Figure 7. *Spring Banquet* (section). Artist unknown. Southern Song dynasty, 13th century. Colors on silk, 26.0×15.3cm. The Palace Museum

5. Such change in iconography is rooted in the poem written by Zheng Bing of the Southern Song dynasty after seeing *The Eighteen Scholars* painting owned by Emperor Huizong. It has been argued that the painting that most closely reflects the contents of the poem and the scene described in it is *Spring Gathering* in the collection of the National Palace Museum of Korea (Hong 2008, 325-27).



Figure 8. *Literary Gathering of Southern Tang*. Artist unknown. Southern Song dynasty, 13th century. Colors on silk, 30.4×29.6cm. The Palace Museum



Figure 9. *Enjoying the Breeze in the Willow Courtyard*. Artist unknown. Southern Song dynasty, 13th century. Colors on silk, 28.9×29.2cm. The Palace Museum

As seen in the above, in Chinese paintings the plantain design was closely associated with the literati of the Tang dynasty, and though it was also used later in the Liao dynasty, it is not easy to specify its meaning in that period. Even after the start of the Northern Song period, it was still adopted as a scenic element, and during the Southern Song period, the connection between the plantain and the literati grew even stronger. By examining the expression of the plantain in Chinese paintings, we can confirm—literally visually—the meaning of the plantain earlier found in the literary materials.⁶

Plantain Designs on Ceramics

Though the plantain motif with its diverse symbolism has been confirmed in literature and paintings, there are surprisingly few cases of Chinese ceramics decorated with the plantain design. Among the small number of examples, however, some ceramic vessels feature the plantain as the sole decorative motif: *Green-glazed Pillow with Incised Floral Design* (Fig. 10) and similar items made at the Jizhou kiln from the Northern Song to the Southern Song period.⁷ These ceramic pillows all have an octagonal top surface, and the main decoration is an incised plantain leaf design. Almost identical in expression, the designs differ only in the number of leaves, ranging from three to five. The leaves are stiff like cacti and are characterized by the absence of the young, furred leaves shooting upward.

6. In Southern Song paintings, the plantain was also simply treated as a still-life subject as seen in works such as *Plantain Leaves, Rocks and Flowers* or *Girl's Book of Filial Piety*. Also, as in Liu Songnian's painting *Arhats*, the connection with Buddhism continued, and the relationship between plantains and the literati or Buddhist arhats was carried over to the Yuan dynasty.

7. Jizhou wares such as Green-glazed Pillow with Incised Floral Design, produced from the Northern Song to the Southern Song period, have been excavated from Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Guangdong provinces, and it appears they were not used in the Huabei (Northern) region.



Figure 10. *Green-glazed Pillow with Incised Floral Design.* Northern Song dynasty, 12th century, H: 7.5cm, L: 21.5cm, W: 10cm. Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King

Ceramics from the Longquan and Ding kilns of Northern Song are different from those of the Jizhou kiln as they use plantain leaves not as a pictorial element but as a subsidiary design. *Celadon Faceted Ewer with Plantain Leaf Design* (Fig. 11) made at the Longquan kiln in the early Northern Song period has an incised design of three layers of plantain leaves, used in the same way as a lotus leaf design. *White-glazed Meiping Vase with Peony Spray Design* (Fig. 12), made at the Ding kiln in the Song dynasty, features plantain leaves as a subsidiary design, and though used instead of the lotus leaf design, the broad leaves and thick veins show that they are clearly plantain leaves.

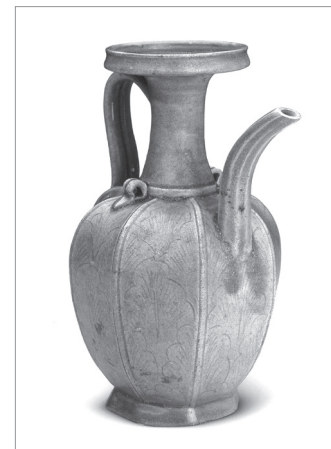


Figure 11. *Celadon Faceted Ewer with Plantain Leaf Design.* Northern Song dynasty, 11th century. H: 20.0cm, D: 7.7cm (mouth), 7.0cm (base). Zhejiang Museum



Figure 12. *White-glazed Meiping Vase with Peony Spray Design.* Northern Song dynasty, 11th-12th centuries. H: 45.3cm, D: 4.9cm (mouth), 10.8cm (base). The Palace Museum

The most pictorial plantain leaf designs can be found on ceramic wares of the Cizhou type. *Pillow with White Slip Design of Young Boys and Plantain Tree* (Fig. 13) features a pictorial design of a plantain tree and rock in the center with a young boy on either side. It is a good example of a 12th-century ceramic pillow that shares the same subject matter as the painting *Boys and Girls Playing in the Yard around Banana Trees and Rocks* (Fig. 14) from the mid-Southern Song dynasty, when plantain trees and strange rocks had obtained a fixed stature in seasonal pictures. *White Porcelain Dish with Stamped Plantain Tree and Rock Design* (Fig. 15) of the Jin period Ding kiln also shows plantain leaves used as a pictorial element. Beyond the low railing, the plantain and strange rock are arranged on the left and right with detailed depiction even of the young leaves shooting upward.



Figure 13. *Pillow with White Slip Design of Young Boys and Plantain Tree.* Northern Song dynasty, 12th century. L: 47.6cm. Hakutsuru Museum

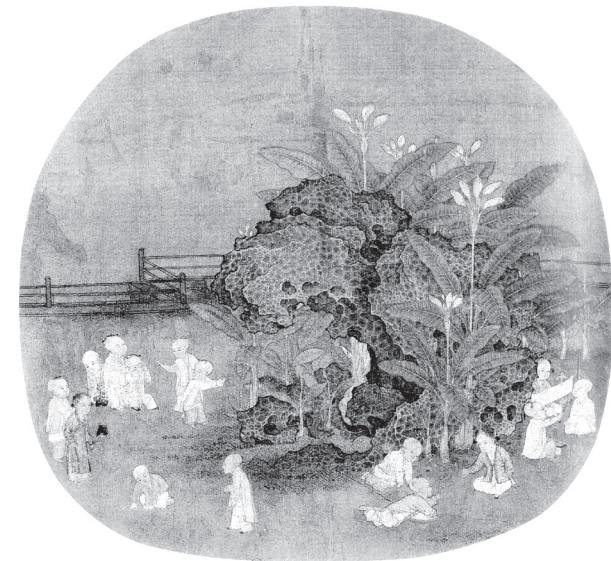


Figure 14. *Boys and Girls Playing in the Yard around the Banana Trees and Rocks.* Southern Song dynasty, 13th century. Colors on silk, 25.0×23.6cm. National Palace Museum



Figure 15. *White Porcelain Dish with Stamped Plantain Tree and Rock Design.* Jin dynasty, 12th century. H: 2.7cm, D: 13.5cm (mouth), 5.9cm (base). Pingding Office for Preservation and Management of Cultural Relics

While the plantain design was widely known among the literati, it is found on only a few examples of Song and Jin period ceramics. Though some Jizhou wares feature the plantain as the main design, the expression is clumsy while ceramics from the Longquan and Ding kilns, which were the most important kilns, plantain leaves appear only as a subordinate design element in place of lotus leaves. In Cizhou wares from the Song dynasty and Ding wares from the Jin dynasty, the plantain is a pictorial design element paired with a strange rock, but it is hard to say these examples are imbued with the scholarly symbolism found in the literature previously discussed.⁸

Adoption of the Plantain Design by Goryeo and Application on Celadon

This chapter explores through literature and art materials how the various meanings of the plantain identified in Chinese examples were shared with Goryeo. It also examines how the plantain design came to be applied on celadon and its subsequent development in Goryeo where the plantain also came to hold a special meaning.

Goryeo People's Perception of the Plantain

As the unique meanings held by the banana leaf design had already been established from the Tang period of China, the Goryeo people were aware of them from early on and made active use of them.

The earliest example can be found in a poem from *Gyewon pilgyeongjip* (*Collection of the Cassia Garden*) by Choe Chi-won (857-?) from the Silla period: "Do not ask about metaphors for the plantain tree/ Look at the flowers waving in the spring breeze." The writer is talking about the vain splendor of the plantain.⁹ Here the plantain is one of Mahayana Buddhism's ten metaphors

for the impermanence of all things, which corresponds to how the plantain was imbued with the meaning of impermanence based on the Buddhist scriptures. Such Buddhist perception of the plantain was transmitted to Goryeo. Evidence can be found in the inscription on the Stele of National Preceptor Hongbeop at Jeongtosa Temple, erected in 1017 (8th year of the reign of King Hyeonjong), which says, "Keep in mind the Buddhist tenet *sabbe sankhara anicca*, which means that like the plantain all conditioned things are impermanent, and comprehend the principle that the substance of Buddha-nature is emptiness..."¹⁰

On the other hand, many Goryeo literati shared the poetic sentiment of the plantain combined with rain. *Pahanjip* (*Writings to Dispel Leisure*), written by the mid-Goryeo scholar Yi In-ro (1152-1220), contains a poem by the scholar In Bin, who was active in the mid-12th century: "The plantain cries beyond the screen, so I know that rain is falling on the mountain./ The sail appears over the mountain, and I can see the sea wind blowing."¹¹ This reference to the plantain has the same poetic sentiment as Bai Juyi's "Rainy Night." This image of plantain in the rain was also transmitted to the literati in later times. *Dongguk isanggukjip* (*Collected Works of Yi Gyu-bo*) by the scholar-official Yi Gyo-bo (1168-1241) says, "Listening to the plantain leaves crying coldly in the autumn rain/ The azaleas bloom red to perfection in the spring breeze." The late Goryeo scholar Yi Gok (1298-1351) said in *Gajeongjip* (*Collected Writings of Yi Gok*), "The plantain leaves were soaked in last night's rain outside the window/ And on my plate is seasoned burr clover which grows everywhere in the spring," continuing to reflect the same image.¹² Therefore, it is possible to confirm from written records alone that the poetic sentiment endowed on the plantain continued for a long time from the mid-12th century through the 14th century.

The plantain was indeed used in this way to create a poetic image, but it is difficult to find materials indicating that the plantain represented the scholarly mien or imbued a space with special meaning in Goryeo literature. However, *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*) contains a record suggesting that a space surrounded

撼浪花。”

10. Inscription on the Stele of National Preceptor Hongbeop at Jeongtosa Temple: “地聽芭蕉有警之譚悟濃性之皆空...”

11. *Pahanjip*, vol. 2: “蕉鳴箔外知山雨，帆出峰頭見海風。”

12. Yi Gyu-bo, *Dongguk isanggukjip*, vol. 11, 古律詩，文長老見和。多至九首。每篇皆警策遲鈍。勉強備數奉廢耳：“冷聽秋雨芭蕉響。紅賞春風躑躅層...”; Yi Gok, *Gajeongjip*, vol. 16, 律詩，次韻答順菴：“窓外芭蕉饒夜雨，盤中苜蓿富春蔬...”

8. In China, the plantain design was widely used as a pictorial element on blue-and-white porcelain of the Yuan dynasty and the blue-and-white porcelain and copper-painted porcelain of the Ming dynasty, as we can see from many examples that are easily found. However, as these examples date after the establishment and development of plantain designs on Goryeo celadon, they are not discussed in this paper.

9. Choe Chi-won, *Gyewon pilgyeongjip*, vol. 20, 詩，和金員外贈嶠山清上人：“...勸君休問芭蕉喻，看取春風

by plantains had special meaning for the Goryeo people:

“A banquet was held at Hyanggak to enjoy the flowers, and behind the building a separate tented pavilion was set up for a large performance of song and dance by women. Jungnangjang [senior colonel] Mun Man-su channeled water to the spot and created a space for the performance of drama, song, and dance, and made plantain leaves using blue wax and silk. The king was pleased and rewarded him with three *geun* of white gold.”¹³

The above record describes the creation of a temporary performance space in 1295, the 21st year of the reign of King Chungnyeol. Although it was too early in the year to enjoy the sight of lush plantains, Mun Man-su used wax and silk to make artificial plantain leaves and decorated the place with them, which pleased the king very much. Although it is not certain that the plantain leaves made the king happy because they brought to mind the symbolic meaning applied to scholars, it can be easily assumed that the finished space was similar to that depicted in the painting *Literary Gathering of Southern Tang* (Fig. 8) mentioned above. Therefore, it can be said that in 13th-century Goryeo the plantain gave special meaning to a place, and taking *Literary Gathering of Southern Tang* as reference, such a place would have been where the literati enjoyed themselves in a refined atmosphere.

One of the works that visualize and supplement this record is *Creating Poetry (Jaksido)* from *Elegant Gathering (Munin ajipdo)* (Fig. 16) in the collection of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art. A rare painting from the late Goryeo to the early Joseon period, it is meaningful in that it provides a point of connection between the literati and the plantain. In the center of the picture, scholars are sitting at a table reading or writing poems on fans. To their right and behind them are wide-spreading plantains, which depict the character of the literary men and the special nature of the space.



Figure 16. *Elegant Gathering*. Artist unknown. Goryeo-Joseon dynasty, 14th-15th centuries. Colors on silk, 139.0×78.0cm. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

In this way, Goryeo shared China's symbolism of the plantain, but evidence for its adoption by Goryeo and reasons for its later spread need to be further studied. In this respect, the record left by Kim Bu-sik (1075-1151) in *Dongmunseon (Collected Literary Works of the East)* is notable. Kim had traveled to China during the Zhenghe era (1111-1117), and after receiving various paintings directly from Emperor Huizong of Song, he wrote down

13. *Goryeosa*, “Sega” (Royal Records), vol. 31, 21st year of the reign of King Chungnyeol, 20th day, 4th month, Gabo year: “設賞花宴于香閣, 閣後, 別開帳殿, 大張女樂. 中郎將文萬壽, 引水爲戲, 剪青蠟絹, 作芭蕉, 王喜, 賜白金三斤.”

their titles along with much praise. One of those paintings was titled *The Eighteen Scholars*.¹⁴ If we think of the painting with the same title attributed to Huizong, the iconography of plantains used in the background where the scholars are enjoying themselves would have been accepted as well through the painting received by Kim Bu-sik. In addition, Kim Bu-sik's attitude of treating the Northern Song paintings he had received with great respect allows us to presume the subsequent spread and further development of the iconography, considering that he was a symbolic figure of the time and represented the opinions of the ruling class literati.

Though Goryeo then entered a period of military rule, the literati and intellectuals of the mid- and later Goryeo period, regardless of appointment to the central government, formed their own network and actively adopted Neo-Confucian thought and the literary theories of the scholar-official class of Northern Song, including Su Shi (Jung 2008, 273-376; Choi 2014, 299-321; Moon 2014, 1-38). In the process, they began to understand, compose and appreciate paintings of plum blossoms, orchids, and bamboo (Hong 1999, 551). It is thought that the Goryeo literati internalized the plantain motif and its meaning as well. Just as the Northern Song writers mentioned the plantain in reference to academic enlightenment or to capture a special poetic sentiment, Goryeo scholars recognized it as material for poetry appreciation and literary criticism, which continued to spread until the late Goryeo period.

Plantain Designs on Goryeo Celadon

It has been confirmed that the plantain design was passively used on Chinese ceramics. However, on Goryeo celadon it was used as a pictorial design motif, though not as often as lotus blossoms and peonies, and changes in its application over time can be found, such as changes in the decorative techniques and composition of the design. The plantain design was sometimes

used on ewers but mostly on prunus vase (*maebyeong*), which is a distinguishing characteristic of the use of plantain designs on Goryeo celadon.

Solo subject matter

Early examples of plantain designs on Goryeo celadon can be found on some fragments excavated from the Sadang-ri kiln site in Gangjin and the Yucheon-ri kiln site in Buan. All the shards feature the plantain as the only design in different compositions and executed with different techniques. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Plantain Design* (Fig. 17-1), retrieved from the ground at Sangdang-ri kiln site No. 43, is the most recently reported material. Discovered in poor condition, it shows heavy deformation and is a small part of the whole vessel. Even this remaining part was found in several shards. However, the design was easily identified as the plantain due to the furled young leaves, rhythmic expression of the broad leaves, and depiction of their thick central veins. Apparently, the design was arranged with one plantain tree each on the front and back of the vase surrounded by much empty space (Fig. 17-2). The design was incised on the surface while the area outside the leaves and around the central veins is partly raised, adding depth to the jade green color. As the design only partially remains, it cannot be confirmed whether the plantain was used in combination with a strange rock, as in Chinese paintings, or whether a subordinate design was used. However, considering that it has all the characteristic features of a plantain design and that the details of the leaves were expressed with incised lines, it seems the plantain was adopted as the subject matter based on a thorough understanding of the iconography. Hence, although the vessel's foot and stand have not been found, considering Sadang-ri kiln No. 43's period of operation and the other items excavated there, these celadon shards were probably made at the end of the first quarter of the 12th century or the beginning of the second quarter.¹⁵

14. *Dongmunseon*, vol. 35, 表箋, 謝宣示太平睿覽圖表: “伏蒙聖慈宣示宣和殿大平睿覽圖二册及成平曲宴圖, 仙山金闕圖, 蓬萊瑞靄圖, 姑射圖, 奇峯散綺圖, 村民慶歲圖, 夫子杏壇圖, 春郊耕牧圖, 玉清和陽宮慶雲圖, 筠莊縱鶴圖, 秋成欣樂圖, 白玉樓圖, 唐十八學士圖, 夏景豐稔圖, 太上度開圖各一卷者.” Korean translation: 성상계읍서 宣和殿 대평에람도 두 책과 성평곡연도 · 선산금필도 · 봉래서애도 · 고야도 · 기봉산기도 · 춘민경세도 · 부자행단도 · 춘교경목도 · 옥정화양궁경운도 · 균장중학도 · 추성훈락도 · 백옥루도 · 당십팔학사도 (*The Eighteen Scholars*) · 하경풍년도 · 태상도개도 각 1권을 신등에게 선사하셨나이다 (qtd. in Hong 1999, 164-65).

15. Considering the similarity between the celadon from Sadang-ri kiln site No. 43 in Gangjin and the celadon discovered off Daeseom Island in Taean in terms of in-oven supports, vessel types, decorative designs, and quality of the celadon, it is presumed the Sadang-ri kiln began operation at the end of the first quarter or in the second quarter of the 12th century and continued to the end of the 14th century (Minjok munhwa yusan yeonguwon 2015, 165-67; Goryeo Celadon Museum 2013, 7).

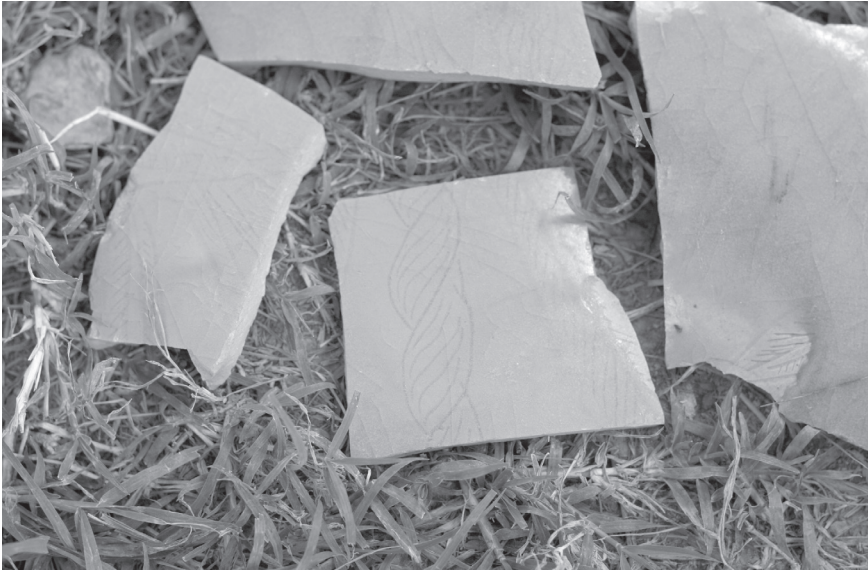


Figure 17-1. Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Plantain Design. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Current L: 22.6cm, Current W: 20.7cm. Sadang-ri kiln site No. 43, Gangjin County. Retrieved from the ground



Figure 17-2. Diagram of design on 17-1

Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Iron-painted Plantain Design (Fig. 18) from Sadang-ri kiln site No. 23 is a precious example showing that plantain designs were painted on celadon with iron pigment. The thick, powerful lines painted in iron pigment are impressive, but the leaves lack vitality and details such as the veins are missing, which poses some difficulties in accurately identifying the design. Nevertheless, the central vein on the leaves is expressed as empty space and the twisted appearance of the furled young leaves is superbly expressed by alternating iron pigment with empty space, which clearly indicates that the design is a plantain. Though the use of iron pigment differentiates the shards of this maebyeong from those discovered at Sadang-ri kiln site No. 43, the characteristic features of the plantain are well realized and depicted in a pictorial way in this case as well, suggesting no significant time gap between the two sets of shards.¹⁶



Figure 18. Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Iron-painted Plantain Design. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Sadang-ri kiln site No. 23, Gangjin County. Goryeo Celadon Museum

16. Diverse celadon shards were excavated from Sadang-ri kiln site No. 23, ranging from plain celadon dating to the 12th century to inlaid celadon dating to the 13th century (Goryeo Celadon Museum 2016, 17-18).

Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Plantain Design (Fig. 19-1), excavated from the Yucheon-ri kiln site in Buan, is another example of an incised plantain design. The whole vessel surface was decorated with vibrantly expressed plantain leaves and clearly depicted veins. There are no furled young leaves and the empty spaces are filled with incised lines resembling a scroll design, exhibiting truly original expression found on no other shards reported from Sadang-ri (Fig. 19-2). This type of expression brings to mind the vigorous scrolling leaves seen on *Celadon Maebyeong with Incised Lotus Scroll Design* (Fig. 20), a National Treasure, which suggests that the earlier freely drawn style changed under the influence of lotus scroll and peony scroll designs.



Figure 19-1. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Plantain Design*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Current H: 12.0cm-24.7cm. Yucheon-ri, Buan County. Ewha Womans University Museum



Figure 19-2. Diagram of design on 19-1



Figure 20. *Celadon Maebyeong with Incised Lotus Scroll Design*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. H 43.9cm, D 7.2cm (mouth), 15.8cm (base). National Treasure No. 97. National Museum of Korea

Lotus blossom and peony designs comprise two types—the floral spray type where the flower itself is the main subject, and scroll type where the flowers are combined with leafy scrolls to cover the whole *maebyeong* surface—and there is no great time gap between them (National Museum of Korea 2015, 189-97). *Celadon Maebyeong Shard with Incised Lotus Scroll Design* (Fig. 21), excavated from zone “ga” at Sadang-ri, is a good example of a scroll design covering the whole surface. Also, the vessel was baked on supports of white refractory clay, indicating that this type of design composition had already been formed by the first half of the 12th century and was continually used afterward (Chang 2006, 318-21).

This trend in production is also reflected in Buan celadon, which has much in common with Gangjin celadon in terms of vessel type, design subject matter, and decorative techniques (Jang 2001, 86-89). The composition of the

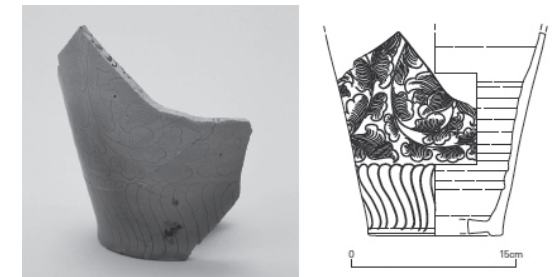


Figure 21. *Celadon Maebyeong Shard with Incised Lotus Scroll Design*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Current H: 18.8cm. Sadang-ri, Gangjin County. National Museum of Korea

design on *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Lotus Scroll Design* (Fig. 22), discovered in Yucheon-ri, Buan, shows similarities with Sadang-ri artifacts. As such, *maebyeong* from Yucheon-ri were baked on supports of brown refractory clay, a characteristic of the 12th century. Hence, they were probably made at a later time than the Sadang-ri *maebyeong*, which were baked on white refractory clay supports.



Figure 22. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Lotus Scroll Design*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Current H: 28.2cm. Yucheon-ri, Buan County. Ewha Womans University Museum

Based on the above, the following possibilities must be taken into consideration: that the plantain design variation covering the whole *maebyeong* surface was formed in the first half of the 12th century in Gangjin and later transmitted to Buan; and that the original plantain design from Gangjin was transmitted to Buan and changed after a certain period of time under the influence of lotus scroll and peony scroll designs. In this respect, the Buan shards likely date to the third quarter of the 12th century, a little later than the Sadang-ri shards but showing no great time difference.

Shards of celadon with inlaid plantain designs were also excavated from Sadang-ri kiln site No. 23. All three shards have their own characteristics (Fig. 23 center, bottom left, and top right). First, the shard in the center is very

detailed in expression of the veins of the leaves and in the way the leaves droop and twist. The design was also given a touch of coloring with light iron pigment, creating the overall effect of a painting. The bottom left shard has a clearly defined plantain design created first with black inlay and then white inlay added on top. In contrast, the top right shard features a plantain design with black and white inlaid lines that are rather stilted in expression, which suggests a time gap. Considering the incised designs examined above and the pictorial quality produced by the inlay technique, the shards in the center and at bottom left date to the latter half of the 12th century and the shard at top right to the 13th century or later.



Figure 23. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Incised Lotus Scroll Design*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. Current H: 28.2cm. Yucheon-ri, Buan County. Ewha Womans University Museum

Combined subject matter

When inlaid plantain designs emerged, the plantain started to be combined with other motifs. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Inlaid Plantain and Tortoise Design* (Fig. 24) is presumed to be a product of kiln site No. 12 at Yucheon-ri, Buan, dating between the latter half of the 12th century and the 13th century.¹⁷ Though the inlaid design of large plantain leaves covering the whole surface is rather stilted compared to incised plantain designs, great attention was paid to the details by outlining the leaves with white inlay and depicting the veins with black inlay. The new elements combined with the plantain are also notable. Underneath the leaves, two strange rocks are inlaid in black and white, and at the top a tortoise and bee sit on the broad leaves, adding life to the design. The appearance of other motifs in the plantain design is a new trend, but in these celadon shards the plantain is still the main element and the new subjects are only subordinate elements.



Figure 24. *Celadon Maebyeong Shards with Inlaid Plantain and Tortoise Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 12th-13th centuries. Current H: 30.8cm. Yucheon-ri, Buan County National Museum of Korea

17. This is one of the celadon shards from the National Museum of Korea's Dongwon Collection, known to have been retrieved from Sadang-ri kiln site No. 12 by Fukada Yasutoshi (National Museum of Korea 2011, 11).

In later years, however, the plantain was combined in equal proportion with willows, plum blossoms, bamboo, and cranes, which were the principal design motifs used to decorate Goryeo celadon, and hence was no longer placed in the center as before. *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Plum Blossom, Plantain, Willow, and Crane Design* (Fig. 25), in the collection of the Newark Museum of Art, is a good early example of the plantain combined with other subject matter. The design motifs are vertically placed on top of each other, from the bottom up, in the order of cranes, plantain, willow tree, and plum blossoms. The plantain design is executed in black and white inlay down to the finer details, which gives it a lively pictorial quality. It has an internal foot, and the surface of the foot was placed on brown refractory clay supports for baking. Judging by the shape and decoration, the *maebyeong* was probably made around the last quarter of the 12th century or the first quarter of the 13th century.

Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Plum Blossom, Bamboo, Plantain, Willow, and Crane Design (Fig. 26) at Horim Museum has a plantain design taking up one side of the vase, depicted in equal size with the plum tree, bamboo, and willow tree. The expression of the black and white inlaid plantain is so realistic that it gives the impression of depth, and at the bottom on either side, instead of strange rocks there are young plantain trees that look like bamboo shoots. To the left is a crane looking at the trees, reflecting the thought put into balancing the proportions of the design elements. The vessel was baked on supports of brown refractory clay mixed with silica, which is a characteristic of the 13th



Figure 25. *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Plum Blossom, Plantain, Willow, and Crane Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 12th-13th centuries. The Newark Museum of Art



Figure 26. *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Plum Blossom, Bamboo, Plantain, Willow, and Crane Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 13th century. H: 47.6cm, D: 7.1cm (mouth), 17.3cm (base). Horim Museum

century.

Celadon Ewer with Inlaid Plantain, Plum Blossom, Bamboo, and Bird Design (Fig. 27), in a private collection, is introduced for the first time through this paper. The surface is divided into four sections, two of which are decorated with a plantain design and the other two with plum blossom, bamboo, and bird designs in black and white inlay. The young leaves that shoot upward and the broad leaves that spread in all directions reveal themselves to be plantain, but the young leaves are not furled and the broad leaves are stiff like cacti. On either side of the tree are two young trees in stylized elliptical shapes. The depiction is very different from the strongly pictorial plum blossom, bamboo, and bird design in the section beside it, so the contrast cannot be attributed to a time difference. Nevertheless, this ewer is an important item that shows signs of change in the once vibrant inlaid plantain designs. The surface of the foot shows traces of firing on coarse-grained sand, and along with the stiff plantain design, this indicates production in the last quarter of the 13th century.



Figure 27. *Celadon Ewer with Inlaid Plantain, Plum Blossom, Bamboo, and Bird Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 13th century. H: 23.7cm, D: 3.5cm (mouth), 9.9cm (base). Private collection

Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Poem and Plantain, Willow, Crane, Plum Blossom, and Bamboo Design (Fig. 28) of the Kumsaem Foundation is a large vase probably made between the late 13th century and the second quarter of the 14th century.¹⁸ The same design decorates the front and back, and the motifs are piled on top of each other. Hence, it is very similar to that of the *maebyeong* in the Newark Museum of Art, aside from the inverse-triangular composition of motifs of the former. In this case, the motifs are in the order of cranes, plantain, bamboo, willow, plum blossoms, and bees from the bottom up. Though the plantain is combined with other subjects, it is arranged in the center of the surface, and while the young leaves are well expressed, the two strange rocks and young plantain trees that were placed on either side in other examples have been replaced with cranes. This *maebyeong* confirms that the subject matter and design composition seen on the Newark example were maintained for almost a century.



Figure 28. *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Poem and Plantain, Willow, Crane, Plum Blossom, and Bamboo Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 13th-14th centuries. H: 62.0cm. Kumsaem Foundation

18. This type of large *maebyeong* with taut, voluminous shoulders, long waist, and smooth tapering line down to the foot is dated to the mid- to later 13th century, or to the second quarter of the 14th century at the latest (Kim 2010, 158; Lee 2006, 186-87).

Characteristics by period

The plantain was chosen as a subject matter for designs used to decorate Goryeo celadon for two centuries. Based on the techniques used and changes in expression examined above, the plantain design can be divided into three periods, as shown in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of Plantain Designs on Goryeo Celadon by Period

Category	1. Introductory period	2. Perfection period	3. Change and repetition period
Date	First quarter to third quarter 12 th century	Fourth quarter 12 th century to third quarter 13 th century	Fourth quarter 13 th century to second quarter 14 th century
Production locale	Sadang-ri in Gangjin Yucheon-ri in Buan	Sadang-ri in Gangjin Yucheon-ri in Buan	Presumed Sadang-ri in Gangjin Presumed Yucheon-ri in Buan (celadon shards not discovered, however)
Decorative technique	Incising, iron painting	Inlaying	Inlaying
Design type	Solo subject matter	Combined subject matter (multi-layered composition emerges)	Combined subject matter (multi-layered composition repeated)
Subsidiary elements	None (possibly strange rocks)	Strange rocks, young plantain	Young plantain, two cranes
Combined subject matter	None	Tortoise, bees, cranes, willow, plum blossoms	Bees, bamboo, willow, plum blossoms
Pictorial quality	Pictorial	Pictorial	Both pictorial and stilted examples
Vessel type	<i>Maebyeong</i>	<i>Maebyeong</i>	<i>Maebyeong</i> , ewers

The first period is the introductory period, from the introduction of the painting of eighteen Tang scholars by Kim Bu-sik in the Zhenghe era (1111-1117) to the third quarter of the 12th century, when the design began to show signs of change. In this period, the plantain design was used on its own as the central motif decorating *maebyeong*. In the paintings of China's Tang, Liao,

and Song dynasties, strange rocks were often placed beside the plantain, but on Goryeo celadon of the introductory period, strange rocks did not appear with the plantain. However, this finding is based on the evidence of several celadon shards only. Considering the many examples of plantain with strange rocks from the following period, the formula of "plantain + strange rock" may reflect the practices of a prior period. The plantain was expressed pictorially, the characteristic features being the furled young leaves shooting up, the broad generous leaves, and the detailed veins. The main decorative techniques were incising and painting with iron pigment, but iron pigment made the design more rigid than incised designs due to the nature of the material.

The second period is the perfection period, from the fourth quarter of the 12th century when inlaid pictorial designs continued to the third quarter of the 13th century when unique combination designs centered on plantain were used. Only inlaid plantain designs were used during this period, indicating a complete change in decorative techniques. Changes are also found in decoration trends with the plantain, formerly used on its own, appearing in combination with diverse subjects such as the tortoise, bees, cranes, willow tree, and plum blossoms. Change is also seen in the subordinate designs flanking the plantain. At first, the tree was flanked by strange rocks, as in Chinese paintings, but a new trend emerged with a young plantain just starting to grow placed on both sides. Celadon shards from this period have been found only at Sadang-ri in Gangjin, but considering production trends at the time, the Buan kilns would have continued to make celadon also. In terms of vessel types, the plantain design is found mainly on *maebyeong*, as in the first period.

The third period is the change and repetition period, from the fourth quarter of the 13th century to the second quarter of the 14th century. The plantain design is found on *maebyeong* and ewers but is rather stilted compared to designs of the previous period. Designs featuring the plantain combined with other motifs, a feature of the previous period, are repeated in the third period. But making use of the shape of *maebyeong*, which grew wider during this time, it is notable that the structure of the designs changed. As for the subordinate motifs flanking the plantain, the young plantain trees appeared again but were later replaced with twin cranes. The cranes had not been used before and hence were a creative new change. As there is no excavated celadon from this period, accurate dating is difficult, but if any cases are reported in the future it may be

possible to extend the period of its supposed existence.¹⁹

Creativity of Goryeo Celadon Plantain Designs

Selected Use of Meanings and Creativity

The above confirms that China and Goryeo shared the diverse meanings imbued in the plantain, such as the Buddhist concept of impermanence, the spirit of the scholar, and a unique poetic sentiment. However, it cannot be said that all these meanings were adopted in Goryeo celadon plantain designs, for it seems that only those related to the literati and intellectuals were selectively applied. This is because the literati concept was the essence of the plantain design in Goryeo's classical Chinese poems, records from the reign of King Chungnyeol in the *History of Goryeo, and Paintings of The Eighteen Scholars and Gathering of the Literati* from the late Goryeo to early Joseon period.

The plantain, however, was a design subject on Goryeo celadon for around two centuries and also came to take on new, creative meaning in ceramics that cannot be found in written records or paintings. In this regard, the inscription on *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Poem and Plantain, Willow, Crane, Plum Blossom, and Bamboo Design* (Fig. 28) mentioned above is valuable material.

The world of the immortals carved on the jade green jar,
News of its profound beauty passes beyond the clouds.
As the green leaves fall and flowers bloom, cranes appear in the fields,
And the immortals indulge in happiness and enjoyment.²⁰

This inscription informs us that the world depicted on the celadon *maebyeong*,

19. On Yuan dynasty blue-and-white porcelain from Jingdezhen, the plantain is used as a background design for human figures or as part of a design of plantain, bamboo, rocks, flowers, and fruit. Though it is not possible to confirm whether any Goryeo celadon plantain designs were directly influenced by these Chinese designs, considering the influence of Yuan ceramics on Goryeo celadon, the Goryeo people likely used the plantain design based on a thorough understanding of it. As discussed in chapter 3, section 1 of this paper, the new scholar-official class of the time understood the poetic sentiment of the plantain, and it is possible that new examples of 14th century plantain designs will be reported in the future.

20. “細鏤仙境青玉壺，仙香馥郁雲外聞。錄陰花發聞野鶴，神仙別勸是喜樂。”

featuring the plantain as the central motif combined with other design elements, is the world of the immortals. It talks about the author's enjoyment of such a world. The content signifies expansion of the plantain's meaning to the realm of Daoist sentiment. In particular, the two cranes that flank the plantain bring to mind the cloud and crane design, which symbolizes the Daoist world, or the cranes mentioned in relation to the immortals on *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Design of Zither Played Under the Pine* (Fig. 29) (Kim 2014, 363-67). Such expansion of the meaning of plantain designs is not found in China and is hence worth mentioning as a creative change unique to Goryeo.



Figure 29. *Celadon Maebyeong with Inlaid Design of Zither Played Under the Pine*. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. H: 31.0cm. National Museum of Korea

Change in expression

In China, the plantain was not used as widely on ceramics as in painting. Nevertheless, there are examples of it being used both as the principal design motif and as a subordinate motif, which was unusual. And in Goryeo, although it does not appear as a subsidiary design on Goryeo celadon, the use of incising and iron-painting techniques gave the plantain design a more pictorial appearance than in China. With the ensuing introduction of the inlay technique, the lively effect of color was also achieved. Rather than being influenced by Chinese ceramics, the plantain design on Goryeo celadon seems to have been inspired by paintings such as *The Eighteen Scholars* or other specific paintings.²¹

The types of vessels featuring plantain designs also differ from China. In China, the plantain appeared as the main design on ceramic pillows and dishes, and as a subordinate design on ewers and prunus vases. However, in Goryeo it appeared mostly on *maebyeong*, though some examples of ewers decorated with the plantain exist.

The combination of the plantain with various other motifs is a feature unique to Goryeo celadon. In the latter half of the 12th century, a new multilevel composition was perfected with the plantain in the center, the tortoise and bees as added elements, and later plum blossoms, bamboo, willow tree, and cranes. A similar type of composition is seen in *Strange Rock, Peony, and Banana Tree* (Fig. 4) from the Liao dynasty tomb mentioned above. The connection between the Goryeo and Liao examples can be explored, but because of the great time difference the new composition should be understood as a creative change achieved by Goryeo rather than the result of any direct influence. However, as the multilevel composition formed by the crane and lotus seen in *Celadon Maebyeong with Raised Lotus and Waterfowl Design* (Fig. 30) at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is an early 12th-century example, it seems that designs of such subject matter had a lasting influence, eventually leading to perfection of the multilevel, combined plantain design.

21. Earlier studies have suggested that paintings by Huizong, which entered Goryeo in large numbers during the reign of Emperor Ruizong of Northern Song, had a direct influence on Goryeo celadon designs (Kim 2014, 367-74).



Figure 30. Celadon Maebyeong with Raised Lotus and Waterfowl Design. Goryeo dynasty, 12th century. H: 40.6cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art

In Chinese painting, the combination of the plantain with young children and strange rocks can be seen in the earlier example of *Pillow with White Slip Design of Young Boys and Plantain Tree* (Fig. 13) from Northern Song. From Southern Song, the combination becomes a fixed formula in paintings. On the other hand, though many Goryeo celadon items were decorated with a design of young boys, none of them



Figure 31. Bronze Mirror with Design of Young Boys Playing. Goryeo dynasty, 12th-14th centuries. D: 25.5cm. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

feature a design of the plantain and young boys. However, the *Bronze Mirror with Design of Young Boys Playing* (Fig. 31) at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art suggests that the existence of a similar design on celadon must not be ruled out.

The combination of plantain with other subjects is found not only on Goryeo celadon but also on Goryeo bronze handicrafts, which notably feature the plantain with waterside landscape elements that cannot be seen on celadon. *Bronze Mirror with Waterside Design* (Fig. 32) at the National Museum of Korea dates to the 12th-13th centuries, and the design combining plantain with strange rocks has depth and realism, which is enhanced by a bird in the overall view and in the distant view. *Bronze Kundika with Silver Inlaid Lotus and Waterfowl Design* (Fig. 33) is a craft item from the 13th century featuring the plantain by the waterside in a space of its own beside the willow tree. It has all the details of a typical plantain design, while the stylized young plantain on either side is a feature of the 13th century.²²



Figure 32. *Bronze Mirror with Waterside Design.* Goryeo dynasty, 12th-13th centuries. D: 17.7cm. Found near Gaeseong. National Museum of Korea



Figure 33. *Bronze Kundika with Silver Inlaid Lotus and Waterfowl Design (section).* Goryeo Dynasty, 13th century. H: 34.8cm. National Museum of Korea

The plantain in a waterside scene on both bronze craft items mentioned above is a design that cannot be found in China nor indeed on Goryeo celadon. However, in combination with the existing subject matter and with no sense of incongruity, the design achieves a high level of perfection. As the waterside scene is a subject common to both China and Goryeo that appeared on celadon from the 12th century, a celadon vessel with combined plantain and waterside design may be newly discovered and reported in the future. Such a discovery would be evidence of another creative change in the plantain design on Goryeo ceramics, different from Chinese examples.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the plantain design among the various designs used to decorate Goryeo celadon. Though very few examples bearing plantain designs have been handed down to us from the past, over two long centuries, plantain designs changed in terms of composition and decorative techniques. These designs contained cultural codes that reflected the ideological background of the Goryeo people's way of thinking.

To understand the plantain designs on Goryeo celadon, it was first necessary to investigate Chinese examples. In China, through the Tang and Song dynasties, the plantain design was closely connected with the literati as a symbol of the spirit of the scholars and their attitude to learning. It was also used to create a unique poetic sentiment. Such symbolism was reflected intact in painting, and from the Southern Song dynasty the connection with the literati grew even stronger. In the case of ceramics, however, some vessels were decorated with the plantain design at the Longquan and Ding kilns, which were the major kilns, but few examples remain, and there are no traces of any particular system of thought behind the design.

Next, the perception of plantain in the Goryeo dynasty was examined through Goryeo literary and historical materials. In Goryeo, too, the plantain design was closely connected with the literati and was used to express the refined aura of the intelligentsia. This spirit was also applied to Goryeo celadon designs.

The plantain designs decorating Goryeo celadon can be divided into three periods. The introductory period ranges from the first quarter to the third quarter of the 12th century. During this period, the plantain was the solo

22. This paper follows the dating of *Bronze Kundika with Silver Inlaid Lotus and Waterfowl Design* to the 13th century based on comparison with the ruyi design on *Bronze Censer with Silver Inlay* (Kim 2018, 483-89).

subject matter, depicted in a pictorial way using the incising and iron-painting techniques. The second period (“perfection period”) ranges from the fourth quarter of the 12th century to the third quarter of the 13th century. This is when the main technique shifted completely to inlaying, and the plantain design was combined with other motifs. The third and final (for Goryeo) period (“change and repetition period”) ranges from the fourth quarter of the 13th century to the second quarter of the 14th century, during which time the design became stiff in the expression of the leaves, and combined motifs from the preceding period were repeated.

Though Goryeo adopted from China existing perceptions of the plantain and reflected them on their own celadon ware, Goryeo plantain designs feature a unique creativity. Partially moving beyond connection with the literati, they were also used to depict the Daoist world, and new moves were made by combining them with other subject matters. Also, comparison with plantain designs on bronze handicrafts suggests the possibility that celadon vessels were also decorated with a plantain design combined with a waterside landscape.

Plantain designs on Goryeo celadon are hence a cultural symbol shared by the literati of the mid- and later Goryeo dynasty. At the same time, the plantain is a design subject that exhibits the special creativity of Goryeo celadon.

Translated by Yoon-Jung CHO

References

- Buan-gun, Jeollabuk-do, ed. 2006. *Goryeo Ceramics from the Kiln Site of Yucheon-ri*. Buan: Buan-gun, Jeollabuk-do.
- Chang, Nam-won. 2001. “Celadon of the 11th-12th Centuries of Koryŏ and Popularization of the ‘Kangjin Style.’” *Korean Journal of Art History* 231: 77-100.
- _____. 2006. *Study on Goryeo Celadon*. Seoul: Hyeon
- Cho, In Hee. 2010. “A Study on the Paintings in the Spirit of Song Poems in the Late Chosun Period.” *Journal of Korean Cultural History* 34: 179-202.
- Choi, Jae-hyuk. 2014. “Influence of Su Shi’s Literary Theory on the Literati of the Goryeo Era.” *The Journal of Chinese Language and Literature* 89: 299-

- 321.
- Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea. 2011. *National Treasures: Porcelain Ware and Other Works*. Daejeon: Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea.
- Editorial Committee of the Complete Works of Chinese Ceramics 中國陶瓷全集編輯委員會, ed. 1999. *The Complete Works of Chinese Ceramics 8 中國陶瓷全集*. Vol. 2 of *Song 宋*. Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Fine Arts Publishing House 上海人民美術出版社.
- _____, ed. 2000. *The Complete Works of Chinese Ceramics 7 中國陶瓷全集*. Vol. 1 of *Song 宋*. Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Fine Arts Publishing House 上海人民美術出版社.
- Editorial Group of the Connoisseurship of Ancient Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 中國古代書畫鑑定組, ed. 1999. *Complete Collection of Chinese Paintings 6 中國繪畫全集*. Vol. 5 of *Five Dynasties, Song, Liao, Jin 五代宋遼金*. Beijing: Zhejiang People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, Cultural Relics Publishing House 浙江人民美術出版社 文物出版社.
- Ewha Womans University Museum, ed. 2017. *The Splendor of Goryeo Celadon*. Seoul: Ewha Womans University Museum.
- Gangjin Celadon Museum, ed. 2013. *Special Exhibition of Recent Excavations of Gangjin Celadon*. Gangjin: Gangjin Celadon Museum.
- Goryeo Celadon Museum, ed. 2016. *Goryeo Celadon of Sadang-ri Kiln Site, Gangjin*. Gangjin: Goryeo Celadon Museum.
- Horim Museum, ed. 1999. *Masterpieces from Horim Museum I*. Seoul: Horim Museum.
- _____, ed. 2009. *Goryeo Celadon*. Seoul: Horim Museum.
- Ho-Am Art Museum, ed. 1996. *The Great Koryŏ Exhibition*. Seoul: Ho-Am Art Museum.
- Hong, Sunpyo. 1999. *Study on Joseon Dynasty Painting*. Seoul: Munye Publishing.
- _____. 2008. “Identity of the ‘Eighteen Scholars’ in a Private Collection.” *Art History Forum* 27: 323-39.
- I, Lo-fen. 1997. “An Unsettled Historical Case: Hsi-yuan Ya-chi (*Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden*).” *Bulletin* 10: 221-68.
- Jeong, Yang-mo. 2017. “Goryeo Inlaid Maebyeong with Inscribed Poem and Plantain, Willow, Bamboo and Plum Blossom Design.” *Hangeul Hanja munhwa* 218: 20-23.

- Jeonju National Museum, ed. 2018. *Acme of Goryeo Celadon: Celadon from Buan and Gangjin*. Jeonju: Jeonju National Museum.
- Jung, Sun-mo. 2008. "The Influence of Su Shi's Poetry in the Poetic Circles of the Goryeo Dynasty—Focusing on Missions of the Envoys and Transmission of Su Shi's Anthology." *Dongbang Korean Classics* 36: 273-376.
- Kim, Ha-na. 2011. "A study on Pictorial Motif Designs Shown on the Inlaid Celadon of Goryeo." MA diss., Hongik University.
- Kim, Jung-hoon. 2018. "Examination of the Chronology of the Bronze Kundika with Silver Inlay through Design Comparison with the Incense Burner with Silver Inlay." *Journal of Eastern-Asia Buddhism and Culture* 35: 465-99.
- Kim, Tae-eun. 2010. "The Uses and Visual Characteristics of Goryeo Maebyeong." *Korean Journal of Art History* 268: 139-67.
- Kim, Yoon-jung. 2014. "The Lyric and Pictorial Elements and Unique Icon of Designs on Goryeo Celadon." *Journal of Korean Association of Art History Education* 28: 351-86.
- Kyushu National Museum 九州国立博物館 et al., eds. 2011. *The Splendor of the Khitan Dynasty* 草原の王朝 契丹-美しき3人のプリンセス. Fukuoka: Kyushu National Museum.
- Lee, Eui-gang. 2013. "Plantain and Chinese Poetry." *Dongbang Korean Classics* 56: 277-98. Lee, In-suk. 2010. "Cultural 'Nets' of Meaning of the Plantain 芭蕉." *Daedonghanmunhak* 32: 295-332.
- Lee, Jong-min. 2006. "A Study on the Celadon Meiping of the Goryeo Dynasty." *The Art History Journal* 27: 157-90.
- Minjok munhwa yusan yeonguwon, ed. 2015. *Excavation Report of Goryeo Cealdon Kiln Site No. 43 of Sadang-ri, Gangjin*. Gangjin: Minjok munhwa yusan yeonguwon.
- Moon, Cholyoung. 2014. "The Neo-Confucian Thoughts Connecting with the Neo-Confucianism of North Song Dynasty through Lee Gyu-bo's Companionship." *History and Discourse* 69: 1-38.
- Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka 大阪市立東洋陶磁美術館, ed. 1992. *An introduction to Koryō Celadon* 高麗青磁への誘い. Osaka: Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.
- National Museum of Korea, ed. 2011. *The Song of Nature: Goryeo Celadon of Yucheon-ri Kiln Site*. Seoul: National Museum of Korea.
- _____, ed. 2015. *Excavation Report of the Kiln Sites of Sadang-ri, Gangjin*. Seoul: National Museum of Korea.
- National Palace Museum, Taiwan 國立古宮博物院, ed. 2019. *Friends Through Culture: A Special Exhibition of Paintings on Elegant Gatherings* 以文會友-雅集圖特展. Taipei: National Palace Museum.
- Ogawa Hiromitsu 小川裕充 et al., eds. 1998. *New History of World Art 5* 世界美術大全集. Vol. 5 of *Five Dynasties, Northern Song, Liao, Western Xia* 五代. 北宋. 遼. 西夏. Tokyo: Shogakukan 小学館.
- Park, Jinkyung. 2013. "A Study on the Production and Distribution of Goryeo Bronze Mirrors in the Jin Style." *Korean Journal of Art History* 279/280: 67-92.
- The Palace Museum, Beijing 故宫博物院, ed. 2005. *Figure and Genre Paintings of the Jin, Tang, and Song Dynasties*. One volume of *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum* 故宫博物院藏文物珍品大系. Shanghai: Shanghai Scientific and Technical Publishers 上海科学技术出版社.
- _____, ed. 2018. *Zhongguo lidao minghualeibian xilie gugong huapu-gaoshi* 中国历代名画类编系列 故宫画谱-高士. Beijing: The Forbidden City Publishing House 故宫出版社.
- _____. et al., eds. 1998. *Longquan of the World: Longquan Celadon and Globalization* 天下龙泉-龙泉青瓷与全球化. Vol. 1 of *A History of Thousands of Years* 千年龙泉. Beijing: The Forbidden City Publishing House 故宫出版社.

LEE Jun-kwang (jk.01.lee@samsung.com) is a Curator at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Korea. He is a PhD candidate in the area of art history at Hongik University. His academic interests include the circulation of Goryeo celadon, development or changes of celadon designs, and discourses on them as well. On such topics, he has published "Characteristics and Purpose of Goryeo Celadon with the 'Hornless Dragon' Design" (2017) and "A Study on the Celadon Excavated from the Site of Yeongtongsa Temple, Gaesong" (2018).

Abstract

Among the various plant designs that decorated Goryeo celadon, the plantain design is notable for the changes in composition, decorative techniques, and other aspects over a set period, despite the small number of celadon vessels actually made with plantain designs. The paper aims to discern the meaning of the plantain design and its development on Goryeo celadon, and the research outcomes are as follows. First, the cultural meaning of the plantain design was established in China. The plantain represented the Buddhist concept of impermanence, and through the Tang and Song dynasties it became the symbol of the spirit of the scholar as its meaning expanded. Such meanings were shared by the literati and intelligentsia of the mid- and later Goryeo period, and the study of literary and historical materials confirmed that the plantain design also functioned to imbue a space with special meaning. Second, in China the plantain was used as a seasonal background element in paintings from the Tang dynasty. During the Song dynasty, when direct influence on Goryeo is expected, the connection between the plantain and the literati grew even stronger. Though the plantain appears on few examples of Song or Jin dynasty ceramics, it can be found both as the main design motif, expressed pictorially, and as a subordinate design used instead of lotus leaves. Third, Goryeo celadon with plantain designs was produced in Gangjin and Buan for around two centuries, from the first quarter of the 12th century to the second quarter of the 14th century, focusing on maebyeong. This whole production period was sub-divided into three periods: the introductory period, the perfection period, and the change and repetition period. There were differences in decorative techniques and the combination of design motifs used in each period. Fourth, much importance was placed on the influence of Chinese paintings on the production of Goryeo celadon. From the start of the perfection period, however, Goryeo celadon plantain designs moved beyond Chinese influence, and the creativity of the Goryeo people was reflected in the meaning of the plantain and its expression.

Keywords: plantain design (*pacho*), Goryeo celadon, literati culture, Daoist, waterside landscape