

Indigenous Idea-based Historical Manuscript Collecting and Cataloging In Korea

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Received 15 May 2015; published 2 October 2015

Abstract: *The aim of this essay is to analyze and introduce how Korea has developed their method of collecting and cataloging old documents based on their indigenous historical backdrops. This involves defining the characteristics of the old documents to illustrate the counteraction of modernity, followed by a determination of the historic and distinctive influences on unearthing and collecting the old documents, which includes the clans' ancestral collections in the field. The history and trajectory of the clans are also applied to the classification and cataloging of the collected archives as a domestic approach. When it comes to collecting and cataloging Korean old documents, Korea developed their method based on their definition of archiving, which is from an indigenous attitude.*

Key words: Choson Dynasty, The Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), The Society of Korean Historical Manuscripts (SKHM).

1. Introduction

Historical manuscripts are one of the starting points in exploring indigenous historical backdrops in each culture. Korea, especially South Korea, has promoted their method of collecting for research in this field based on domestic characteristics. Their research field has not covered the paleography as an independent study; analyzing

handwriting and signature patterns is being done now, and the development of a collecting method and cataloging system is an important point today, highlighting Korean indigenous values. Korea has achieved their method over 70 years; however, this point has not been introduced overseas and comparative studies have been attempted with other Asian countries, such as China, Japan,

and Vietnam. Moreover, the indigenous values and features create the Korean distinctive method. For this reason, examining the historical backdrop of Korean historical manuscripts and explaining the research process are important to research in this field.

Historic backdrops bring about the characteristics of Korean historical manuscripts and this sense is applied in relatively practical part like collecting and cataloging. Historical manuscript research by definition begins with manuscript resource surveying, followed by the procedures of collecting in the field, classification, cataloging, and analyzing individually. Prior to this action, target resources are determined and they are strongly affected by how and where the materials were written and preserved. The vast majority of documents were created in the *Choson* period, so the central indigenous characteristics of this article about Korean historical manuscripts are combined with this period.

This paper explores the indigenous components that affect the characteristics of the Korean historical manuscripts and it illuminates the components of the practical aspects of collecting and cataloging. For this purpose, the definition of Korean historical manuscripts is evaluated for the first time and how the indigenous local community has an effect on collecting materials will be interpreted. The classification system and cataloging elements are explained,

along with the indigenous components, in the last chapter.

2. Domestic trajectory applied historical manuscripts definition

Three main elements, which are issuing and receiving, period and materials, are included to make up the definition of historical manuscripts. When it comes to these elements, some insist that the definitions of historical documents between Korea and Japan have similar ideas (Rhee, 2002: 83-84). This is because the Japanese colonial school applied their method in Korea during the colonial era between 1910 and 1945, and the Korean school adopted this system uncritically following independence. However, others emphasize that Korea has developed their method in accordance with the scholarly achievements of their past and established Korean historical manuscript studies different from Japanese one examining historical manuscripts with indigenous ideas. The three elements underline the distinctive features of Korean historical document studies.

The first element, issuing and receiving, is related to the effectiveness of the documents created in the past that is whether the documents have or had an influence on something. There are two main concepts related to this factor. On the one hand, historical manuscripts are old documents that have not organized by the element and simultaneously, they do not currently have power of influence in a broad sense (Heo, 1988, p.13-14).

On the other hand, it is suggested that this element is related to the effectiveness between the two parts-issuer and receiver-in a narrow sense (Paik, 1964, p.102). Regarding this limitation, the definition is that there is an issuer and a receiver and it has an effect on both of them to do something mentioned on the document. The interaction between them means that the contents have power and influence over something in this context. There is another idea that is the compromised idea between two approaches about historical manuscripts (Choi, 1989, p.17-23). He introduces more components such as old time and issuer and receiver, and suggests that historical manuscripts are a paper written in a former time to somebody with the purpose either revealed or contained.

The period, the second element, represents when the documents were produced, and there are two suggestions related to the period factor. Historical manuscripts are translated in diverse ways, such as old or ancient documents, due to the literary meaning in Korean language. The old or ancient time is a vague sense of a moment, and for this reason, scholars have made an effort to clarify the time. Two main emphases have been suggested at present. Some advocate that a paper created by 1910 is an 'old' historical manuscript (Choi, 1989, p.23). The Japanese stole the sovereignty of the *Choson* dynasty which is an midieval Korean monarchy and colonialized the country from 1392

to 1910, and then the characteristics of Korean history were distorted and changed by force. The Japanese colonial government, led by the Japanese Government-General of Korea, had altered the indigenous document administration system and changed document forms drastically. This policy was eliminating and excluding Korean indigenous historical manuscripts structure under the name of the modernization. Others suggest the period by 1945. Chung insists that the paper written under the colonial era is also included as old documents with conditional situation that is the document influenced by the *Choson* character or not (2002, p.12). An official paper written between 1894 and 1910 is classified as a modern official document (Kim, 2008, p.14-15), because of the conception of the modernity of this period as a transition to the modern state system. The periods of 1910 and 1945 involve a relative approach to the 'old' literal concept, so it is a variable definition. The consequence of the indigenous document system, however, is the criteria for historical manuscripts and the time is 1945 in the case of domestic influence.

The material for documents in relation to the historical manuscript definition represents the third factor. A piece of paper is commonly regarded as an old document in Korea. In addition to this, diverse materials have been included in documents, such as cloth, jade, gold, and wood. Written ordinances were recorded

on silk and issued for the queen, crown prince and princess, the brother of the king in the *Choson* dynasty (Son, 2004, p.105), and the *Chekmooon*; a eulogy was issued simultaneously made of bamboo, jade, and gold related to the hierarchy in the royal court (Choi, 1989, p.57-60). Wood was popular in ancient times, but it yielded its seat to paper because paper documents were common during the united Silla period from 676 to 935; analyzing documents on wood advanced the study of wooden slips in Korea (Jeon, 2012, p.16).

Considering several scholarly definition about historical manuscripts, Korean historical manuscripts is that issued to someone with a purpose on paper by 1945. This idea contains the Korean historic background and domestic culture, but there are some complaints as well because of excluding exceptions. The exceptions, such as an unclear issuer and receiver or a sheet of paper or not, are other factors for research sources related to historical manuscripts. This part requires alternative definition related to the practical concern like unearthing, collecting, and cataloging in the field.

Obtaining potential analyzing resources for historic manuscript study is a practical dimension, which is then applied to broaden Korean historical manuscripts. Aside from the categories of issuing and receiving or material, documents are also categorized into historical manuscripts (Chung, 2003, p.5). This idea is derived from the

practical case that any written document is a target for collecting and analyzing. Books that formed the historical manuscripts concept, for example, are suggested. This is a kind of memorandum, such as someone or a government writing down the properties and any rights. A list of slaves or land, a charter, regulations, and a procedure index are examples; these kinds of documents are not individual but bond books related to the issuer and receiver factor. In addition to this format-centered exception, literary works also are included in the category. Even though the receiver is not revealed clearly, the reader is a receiver or potential target (Jung, 2008b, p.38-39). These two cases are part of the Korean historical manuscript characteristics, including a flexible attitude for diverse resource collecting.

Considering both scholarly and practical ideas, the concept and form of aboriginality are key elements, because modernity was operated outside power and hegemony, especially during Japanese imperialism. The logical order or theoretical structure is not clearly established simultaneously, though.

3. Local community values and collecting clan documents

The majority of Korean historical manuscripts remain in private clans. The royal court and the government in the middle ages issued the official documents to people and people made use of the documents for individual purposes, which included official and

private documents. Although official documents have remained in public institutes, such as museums and libraries, excluding the North Korean government, which stores all materials in governmental institutes (Jung, 2008a, p.133-134), the total number is regarded as a part of the total number of historical manuscripts in Korea. In contrast, many clans and societies preserve old documents and they have begun to unveil these to the public more and more; the total number of historical manuscripts is increasing due to discoveries. This phenomenon represents another Korean historical manuscript characteristic.

One of the characteristics of Korean historical manuscripts is ‘accumulation’ related to clans and communities. The characteristic of accumulation states that every document is related to one another, supporting each other’s story and creates full story; the number of the materials is relatively large and more documents increases the quality of accumulation. In this aspect, finding and collecting documents are relevant to the indigenous societal distinction in Korea. The quality of accumulation relies on the communities: clans, private schools and shrines, temples, and mutual aid associations. In particular, during the *Choson* period (1392–1910), these communities created diverse documents based on the relation to the members, so each source is associated with fractured information and linked with the structure of all the documents. The core of these

communities is clans, because others are subordinate organizations to the clan; hence, illustrating community organizations highlights the feature of clan documents.

Private schools and shrines, *Seowon* and *Sawoo*, are organized and steered by some of the clans in the local community. These two institutes have shrines for the purpose of memorial ceremonies for distinctive Confucian scholars who are specific family ancestors, yet *Seowon* have lecture halls and play a role in social education. These were dominated by a special clan or family in the late *Choson* period since the 18th century (Lee, 2001, p.283-284). This is because descendants who were managing a scholar or scholar-enshrined institute made an effort to highlight their distinctive ancestor(s), and then they focused on their family or clan’s social and political hegemony. Under the situation, most documents inherited by these institutes reveal the connection to the clans’ social and political activity. Moreover, some temples are strongly influenced by the power of the clans. For instance, printing books (Ok, 2003, p.362) and preserving tomb-mountains are considered clan events; some temples were regarded as a part of property and the monks were subjects of the clans like slaves. The contents of the documents in the temples are closely linked to the clan’s activity. In addition to these cases, mutual aid associations are also related to clans. This society was organized in the local villages

where some clans lived; the clan village's male residents had the same surname to form the paternal line in admiration of some distinctive ancestors. These patterns support how clans affect the establishment of Korean historical manuscripts and they feature Korean domestic characteristics in the field.

The characteristics of local communities and clans are strongly connected to the indigenous aspects of Korean historical manuscripts. They support the relevance of the Korean historic backdrop in so-called clan documents handed down from ancestors. The organization of the clans in Korea was established in the late 16th century, as influenced by the neo-Confucian social order (Chung, 1998, p.199-200). Although clans have prevailed since ancient times, the development and divergence of each family brought about the established clan system; distinctive ancestors played key roles in combining their descendants and each family built their organization in the local community. In general, distinctive ancestors served as high-rank official administrators or had a reputation in the scholarly field, especially in the neo-Confucian schools, such as *sadaebu* (Deuchler, 1992, p.296). The descendants, in establishing the ruling hierarchy class *Yang-ban*, settled down or broadened their power in the local community with ancestor worship and by building clan villages, such as the *Kyung-joo Son* clan in the *Yang-dong* village and the *Pung-san Ryu* clan in the *Ha-hwae* village. These two points—the local community and

clans—are key to identifying a method of unearthing and collecting historical manuscripts in the field.

Turning to the practical approach, uncovering and collecting clan documents are closely related to examining the clan and village history. Most of the distinguished clans are eager to expose their history and introduce their 'traditional' villages to the public; therefore, it is quite easy to gather information. The examples of villages and clans introduced previously are representative of the preservation of massive collections. Prior to visiting, investigating a clan's history in association with the local community provided a chance to closely examine and negotiate collection in the field. The history contained in the genealogy books published for the public is a result of sharing family information through marital relations or academic interest in genealogy. In the latter case, anonymous scholars edited and produced genealogy books assembled for diverse families and clans, including illustrating clans' origins and genealogical trees and collecting all the clan's genealogical information. These genealogy books provide information on who the distinctive ancestors are and where the clan has lived. This basic information supports knowledge power in the field when meeting a member of a clan who possesses the historical documents.

Collecting historical manuscripts preserved by a clan is a kind of harmonious scholarly research project.

The members of the clan in contemporary times have a curiosity and interest in their ancestral trajectory; at the same time, one of the collecting operation's targets is to examine the layer of the documents containing the historical story. To achieve this mutual goal, the first step is obtaining genealogy books of a target clan or family and the older the book, the better. Indigenous genealogy books contain key information: when each member was born or died, where they lived and moved to, what the marital relations are, and how many children grew up. Some older books reveal the relations of legitimate and illegitimate children and birth order, regardless of sex. In addition, obtaining the story of preserving their ancestral documents from a member of the clan (Cho, 2005, p.167) and writing down their oral story sourced from story teller on the fieldwork diary (Ahn, 2002, p.50-51) play key roles in the investigation of the objects for classification and cataloging in the laboratory.

Korean historical documents are on the verge of extinction because of modernization in contemporary times and because of the elimination of indigenous values in the local rural community; however, documents stored by the clans are waiting for new research operations with a value-centered perspective. The indigenous values of clans and communities are one of the solutions to address this situation, and develop academic and practical study from collecting to cataloging.

4. Indigenous elements in classification and cataloging system

Collected objects, including historical manuscripts from the field, are brought into the workshop, laboratory, or research office, and the next step, such as classification and cataloging, is taken in a practical way. There is no standardized form or order for cataloging, yet some essential points are available, as affected by the local community that has evolved from the indigenous historical backdrop.

The classification system has not yet been established under universal agreement. The first suggestion for document classification was presented in the late 1960s. Kim offers three categories, including international and domestic, monarchal and administrative, and official and private documents, and he then categorizes these into 10 main sectors in relation to the issuer and receiver (1968, p.2-4). The main sectors are from kings to citizens, and each sector creates a number of cases only in the *Choson* dynasty. Then, Choi developed the idea and introduced nine sectors (1989, p.46-54). First, he divided Korean historical manuscripts into domestic or diplomatic documents, and the domestic documents were classified into nine sectors depending on the issuer or issue institution. The nine categories are as follows.

- ① Monarchs, ② Royal Courts, ③ Governments, ④ Civilians, ⑤ Temples and Shrines, ⑥ Private schools, ⑦ Taoist Temples,

⑧ Social Associations, and ⑨ Prayer Houses

Second, Choi allocates these sectors to the receivers, such as monarchs, governments, civilians, and social associations. This idea evolved from understanding the *Choson* dynasty's characteristics, such as the temples and shrines and social associations sectors. In addition, diplomatic documents are combined between China and Japan. Choi's method of classification applies to Seoul National University, one of the distinctive owners of historical manuscripts, and so it became a major classification design.

The Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), another major institute for historical manuscript research, proposes an alternative classification system. The criteria of the design are extracted from the objects' contents, and 10 criteria are classified (AKS, 1994, p.57-70), which were evolved and adopted from the Korean decimal classification system. Moreover, the concept of this historical manuscript assortment and classification system, which focuses on the contents, has been drawn from the Eastern classical four category classification scheme: Scriptures, History, Religious, and Literary works. The criteria AKS has suggested are listed below.

- ① General, ② Appointments, ③ Civil Complaints, ④ Official Reports and Notifications,
- ⑤ Evidential Cases, ⑥ Treading and Dealing, ⑦ Letters and Notices, ⑧ Memorandum,

⑨ Literary Works, and ⑩ Diplomatic Documents

Every document is allocated based on these criteria. For instance, land sales contract documents belong to the treading and dealing classification, while official documents of endorsement about land dealing are classified as evidential cases. Leading universities and governmental institutions make use of this system in the field to collect documents.

These two main systems have tried to take control in the historical manuscript research field, and this creates an obstacle for information usage and public service. Therefore, the Society of Korean Historical Manuscripts (SKHM) suggests an alternative idea. The SKHM's aim for a universal cataloging system is to extract each system's strength points and share the information; then, they aim to adopt the Korean Machine Readable Cataloging (KORMARC) system for historical manuscript cataloging (2003, p.55-57, 119). The adjusted idea is suggested, as below.

- 000 Associated Documents, 100 Politics and Administration, 200 Legislation, 300 Economy, 400 Social, 500 Economy and Culture, 600 Life and Ritual, 700 Industry, 800 Religion and Folkways, and 900 Geography and Others

Each sector has appointed sorts of documents depending on the contents. This system has not been regarded as an

adequate idea from both sides, as it takes more time to apply to practical fields.

Cataloging systems developed in Korea focus on contents before morphology. The core part of cataloging is the identification of three factors of the documents: who, when, and where, although the cataloging system is debated. These factors are also rooted in historic backdrops, such as regionalism, school relations, and kinship. Clans created relations under these historic backdrops, and they play the role of a member of the local community.

Korean domestic clans built marriage networks among similar political and social statuses in regional society, along with school characteristics; this characteristic is linked with where they lived and what school they attended. The *Yeoungnam* province case highlights this kind of feature. The *Toegye* and *Nammyeong* schools divide this area into two parts, although they shared a similar attitude or idea regarding other provincial schools. *Toegye* School members lived in Southeast parts of Korea primarily and they built close networks and associated with other areas, sharing or deploying their thoughts and stances. Based on this account, when some clan's documents are collected and cataloged, this domestic characteristic supports the obtaining of organized and accurate information regarding the three factors: who, when, and where.

The three factors highlight the identity of each document, as well as the

identification of the written occasion, which clarifies the historical position. When each paper's written occasion is classified, the data lead to the distinctive part of total clan's materials which are the layer of clans' documents. There are two types of year declarations; that is to say, the era name influenced the Chinese emperors and the sexagenary cycle in the *Choson* era generally. The latter case needs to transfer to the former because the cycle cannot represent a clear time, as it appears in cycles. These cases appear in every sort of material, and the examples illustrate this case. On the one hand, certifications of appointment and land sales contract documents write down the era name; on the other hand, petition documents and private letters belong to the cycle method. Based on the clan documents' characteristics, the cycle case manuscripts make it easy to find the written time because of specific information about a person who appears in the manuscript, such as the birth and the death year in the genealogy. Matching the time of the birth and the death year with the sexagenary cycle leads to the Chinese era name, Anno Domini, and other calendars. One of the most important and difficult factors to determine is when, and this is completed in harmony with the other factors who and where.

The temporal distribution of historical documents resulted from determining 'when' to disclose domestic features in history. The documents classified as early *Choson* documents from the 14th to

the 15th centuries total 220 materials (NIKH, 1997), while certifications of appointment make up over half of them at 118 materials. A century later, the total number happened in this era to soar by six times to 1,254 materials (Lee, 2004, p.75-76). Documents related to the dealing and inheritance of properties form just over 40%, followed by certifications of appointment, which form 35%. This change describes the emerging value of property and the continuous importance of a clan's honor simultaneously. Land sales contract documents represent 1,254 cases in the 17th century and the portion is much higher in the latter half (Jung, 2013, p.222-223). Moreover, the number of petition documents about mountain ownership from the 17th to 19th centuries increased continuously by the end of the 19th century (Kim, 2002, p.33-35). This phenomenon suggests an explanation of the social change, the collapse of hierarchy, and their mutual influence on the historical manuscripts.

Diverse suggestions and practical methods are in service in Korean historical document classification, and attitudes toward how they interpret Korean historical manuscripts have brought about this diversity. The identification of the three factors of who, when, and where is a key point for cataloging in any classification system. Distinctive domestic characteristics in clan documents play a key role in this field. In addition, the three factors contribute to analyzing research.

5. Conclusion

This article has analyzed how historical indigenous components influence the establishment of Korean historical manuscripts. It started with the definition and next undertook combining every research step and domestic characteristic, respectively.

First, the definition elements are who wrote the document, when the document was written, and what material the document was about, but the key factor is when. There are two main limitations about documents written by 1910 or 1945, depending on whether an indigenous historic backdrop was distorted by Japanese colonial power. Korean historical manuscripts contain not a Japanese modern manuscript influence but the *Choson* domestic system tradition.

Second, documents collected in the field require application to a rural community idea, as most are preserved by the rural clan. Clans were structured particularly during the *Choson* dynasty, and they had accumulated old documents ancestrally. The core part of the structure is a distinctive ancestor, and its descendants' families created a network and took privilege in their local community. For this reason, collecting materials requires an understanding of this indigenous clan rule.

Finally, classification and cataloging systems for collected documents are also an outcome of indigenous factors. Classification yardsticks include the issuer and receiver or the contents of the

documents, and both contain historical characteristics, such as the private school sector in the former system and civil complaint criteria in the latter. Furthermore, a clan's historical backdrop supports obtaining systemic and accurate information, such as when, where, and who.

In summary, indigenous factors that have evolved from historical backdrops have led to building Korean historical manuscript characteristics. One of the factors is clans that dominated the local community in the *Choson* dynasty. This point provides a suggestion to focus on the local domestic community with regard to indigenous history when another country is considering taking on this project □

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