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# The World of Old Korean Books\*

Author YOSHIDA Mitsuo

## Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the physical characteristics and present preservation of books written mainly in classical Chinese from the viewpoint of the history of premodern Korea. Books published in Korea prior to the 20th century, i.e. stitch bound books which evolved in Korea before the introduction of stereotypes and Western-style binding, are generally referred to in Japan as “Old Korean Books” (*Chōsenbon* 朝鮮本 or *Kanpon* 韓本), compared with “Old Japanese Books” (*Wahon* 和本) or “Old Chinese Books” (*Tōhon* 唐本). Maema Kyōsaku 前間恭作 (1868–1941), a pioneer in the field of the Korean bibliography, called them “Korean xylographs” (*Chosen hanpon* 朝鮮板本) [Maema 1937]. However, Old Korean Books were printed with not only engraved wooden, but also cast metal type, meaning in terms of cultural history that type-printing was a characteristic feature of the Old Korean Books. Moreover, although often overlooked in bibliographical studies, there are also many handwritten manuscripts bound in the same fashion (*shōhon* 抄本), which possess important historiographical value as records outside of the strict genre of *tenseki* 典籍. Thus, the definition of Old Korean Books itself is fairly ambiguous, given the different meanings ascribed to it by a bibliographer, historian, literary critic, or linguist. In the field of bibliography, for example, although Old Korean Books are classified mainly as *tenseki* there are by no means any strict criteria beyond that classification, since materials other than *tenseki* fit the Old Korean Books description, and furthermore, there are no strict lines that can be drawn to delineate a *tenseki* from some other piece of writing.

Therefore, when we study Old Korean Books from the historical viewpoint, it would seem most effective to regard them as a source printed in premodern Korea with physical characteristics distinguishing it from Old Japanese Books and Old Chinese Books, regardless of author/publisher (Korean or Chinese) or script of the text (Chinese or Hangul).

## 1. Physical Characteristics

The pre-20th century era of Old Korean Books is divided into the Goryeo 高麗 Dynasty Period (916–1392) and the Joseon 朝鮮 Dynasty Period (1392–1897), but the term generally refers to books bound during the Joseon Period. Before describing the physical features of the genre, it should be mentioned that from the standpoint of the historiography of premodern Korea, there are important sources outside the genre, like loosely bound ledgers created at government agencies, discussion of which lies outside the purview of the present chapter.

### 1. Binding

Probably the feature that most clearly distinguishes Old Korean Books from their Japanese and Chinese

counterparts is front covers and the binding method.

(1) Front covers consist of multiple sheets of paper of the quality of the inner leafs glued together into pasteboard, on which wood-engravings are pressed to make reliefs of such designs as swastika, lotus blossoms, foliage patterns, arabesque discs, hexagons, thunderclouds, auspicious clouds, peonies, water chestnuts, chrysanthemum, plum blossoms, dragons, phoenixes, spiders, or latticework. For the more valuable titles in royal libraries, the whole cover would be wrapped in silk.

Paper was mostly dyed yellow with either gardenia or sophora emulsion, blue with indigo solution for works of Buddhist scripture, or simply left plain white. Dyeing might have been carried out not only from the aesthetic consideration but also for the purpose of preventing insect infestation.

Back covers were mostly constructed from discarded documents, making them historical sources in their own right.

(2) Volumes were sewn with five stitches and relatively thick threads, in such styles as *Ochim anjeongbop* 五針眼釘法, *Ochim anbop* 五針眼法, *Ochim cheol'yeop jangbop* 五針綴葉裝法, or *Ochim anjeongbop* 五針眼訂法. Books with yellow covers were sewn with red thread, white with blue thread. More valuable books in royal libraries were reinforced with iron or brass flanges and then bound together with iron or brass rivets instead of threads, which thus referred to as “steel-bound books” (*tekkanbon* 鉄卷本) in Japanese.

(3) Book titles were inscribed directly on the cover in Chinese ink, labels (*jecheom* 題簽) being rarely used. This is why books with the same content often have different titles. There were several methods of numbering multi-volume collections, including numerals, 上中下 (first, middle, last) and 天地玄黃 from the poetic glossary *Qianziwen* 千字文, with the number of total volumes in the series appearing on the sewing, like “共廿” (twenty volumes in total).

Since books would be aligned horizontally on shelves, abbreviated titles and total volumes would appear on the tail at the bottom edge of the spine for convenience in searching, which are called “root titles” (*seogeunje* 書根題) in the Korean bibliographical studies.

## 2. Paper

Lustrous thick paper (*jangjii* 壯紙) made from the paper mulberry (*Brousonetta papyrifera*) was folded in two (folio) and bound with double leaves in the same manner as Old Japanese Books and Old Chinese Books, but the size of each sheet, 90×50 cm, is unique to Old Korean Books. Lustrous thick paper began to replace thinner white paper (*baekji* 白紙) from around the 17th century, giving Old Korean Books along with their pasteboard covers an appearance of durability and heft, an attractive feature for bibliophiles; functionally speaking, such construction, including thicker gauge sewing thread, eliminated the need for slip cases.

## 3. Printing

The first work ever printed with engraved metal moveable type was an anthology of the teaching of the great Zen masters entitled *Baegun Hwasang Chorok Buljo Jikji Simche Yojeol* 白雲和尚抄錄佛祖直指心體要節 (commonly known as *Jikji* 直指) printed at the end of the Goryeo Period in 1377 at Heungdeoksa 興德寺 Temple in Cheongju 淸州, a historic Old Korean Book which has been included in the UNESCO Memory of the

World Register. Despite the claims that parts of the work, now preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, were not printed using metal type, in the collected works of the well-known Goryeo Period author Yi Kyubo 李奎報 (1168–1241) we find a reference “遂用鑄字印成二十八本” (printed 28 books with metal types), suggesting the practical application of metal type in Korea by the 1230s, which thus predates the Gutenberg Bible by about 200 years.

Old Korean Books printing establishments can be divided into government offices, temples, shrines erected to honor great scholars (*sawon* 祀院), and private families.

Publications printed with moveable metal type were mainly the work of the Office of Collation (Gyoseogwan 校書館) in the central bureaucracy following the tradition of the Goryeo Period Library Department (Seojeokgwan 書籍館). The Type Casting Bureau (Jujaso 鑄字所), which was set up in 1403 and took charge of casting copper type and printing books with it, was later renamed the Jeongyoseo 典校署 and placed under the Office of Collation, which is why that Office is attributed with printing Old Korean Books. In 1777 the Gyoseogwan was merged with the Kyujanggak 奎章閣 (royal library of the Joseon Dynasty), which had been expanded as the center of learning, and was renamed the Oegak 外閣 (also called the Ungak 芸閣). The publications printed by the Gyoseogwan with copper type were mainly books important in the affairs of state, such as the works selected by the government bureaus beginning with legal codes and *Joseon Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 (the Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty).

Raw copper used to cast the type was imported from Japan through the Waegwan 倭館, the Japanese factory built in Pusan by the Tsushima 對馬 Domain. The early type was based on Wibuinja 衛夫人字 Font, which was created imitating the early Ming type used for government publications. By the end of the Joseon Dynasty, many more type casting projects were carried out, using such fonts as *Sillokja* 實錄字 (Veritable Records Font), *Hanguja* 韓構字 (based on the calligraphy of politician Han Gu 韓構 (1636–1715)), *Anpyeongja* 安平字 (based on the calligraphy of Prince Anpyeong 安平君, the younger brother of King Munjong 文宗), *Jeongnija* 整理字, as well as *Chwijinja* 聚珍字. Within the actual printing process, missing characters would be augmented with either type of a different font or woodblock type.

In addition to calligraphers and function, copper type fonts were also named for the year of the Sexagenary Cycle in which they were first cast, such as; the *Gyemija* 癸未字 (1403), the *Gyeongja* 庚子字 (1420), the *Gabinja* 甲寅字 (1424), the *Byeongjinja* 丙辰字 (1426), the *Gyeong'oja* 庚午字 (1450), the *Eulhaeja* 乙亥字 (1455), the *Eul'yuja* 乙酉字 (1465), the *Gab'jinja* 甲辰字 (1484), the *Gyechukja* 癸丑字 (1493), the *Byeongjaja* 丙子字 (1516), the *Gyeyuja* 癸酉字 (1573), the *Gyeongjinja* 庚辰字 (1580), the *Samju Gab'inja* 三鎔甲寅字 (1668), and the *Im'inja* 壬寅字 (1782). In other cases, the official chronicle fonts would be named after reigns of the Joseon monarchs, for example; the *Seongjong Sillokja* 成宗實錄字 (1499), the *Seongjo Sillokja* 宣祖實錄字 (1606), the *Hyojong Sillokja* 孝宗實錄字 (1661), and, the *Hyeonjong Sillokja* 顯宗實錄字 (1677). Until the last *Jeonsaja* 全史字 in 1822, fonts would be recast periodically every ten to twenty years.

Moveable type was created by first carving a matrix of each character from littleleaf box (*Buxus microphylla*) tree wood from which to make casting molds for copper type. Often numbering in the tens of thousands, cast type was not only expensive, but also required a great deal of skill to make. For example, the littleleaf box matrixes carved for *Saengsaengja* 生生字 in 1792 were used as type for three years before being made into casting molds for copper type. This is what is meant by *Jeongnija*.

Copper type casting projects outside of the Gyoseogwan were conducted by the Office of the Commandant (Hunryeon Dogam 訓練都監), which was in possession of rich stores of materiel for large scale military training

operations and began casting type at the end of the 16th century based on the calligraphy of Prince Anpyeong (*Anpyeongja*) and was known as *Hunryeon Dogamja* 訓練都監字. Books were also published with woodblock print by the Office of Astronomy (Gwansanggam 觀象監), which constructed yearly calendars, and the Office of Translation (Sayakwon 司譯院), which stood at the forefront of diplomatic affairs. Official Books (*gwanpanbon* 官板本) published by the above-mentioned government bureaus continue to occupy the center of attention in the biographical research on the Joseon Period, above all those published by the Gyoseogwan using copper type.

Public printing agencies like the Gyoseogwan were not exclusively involved in publishing books for the government, for during hiatuses in public printing projects, they would be commissioned by private persons to print and bind literary collections and the like.

Other than the *Veritable Records*, which would be printed in lots of four reprints and one collated version, copper type printing jobs at the Gyoseogwan would usually involve lots of between 20 and 100 copies, meaning that the possibility offered by moveable type of mass production printing was far from realized. Rather the intention of the Joseon Dynasty in employing cast copper type was to produce the original copies of highly valued works, with content that would not be altered by the often haphazard process of hand-copying. Editions printed by the Gyoseogwan were presented to bureaucrats with special relationships to the Dynasty as gifts (*naesabon* 內賜本) and on the backside of their front cover would be written,

同治七年七月日 (Date)

內賜三班禮式一件 (Name of the Work) 判宗正卿李敦宇 (Name of Recipient)

命除謝恩 (Salutation)

同副承旨臣洪東 (Name of Donor)

(From the copy of *Samban Ryesik* 三班禮式 (New Rules of Court Decorum)  
held by the University of Tokyo Main Library)

Since many Old Korean Books do not possess colophons, such descriptions (*naesagi* 內賜記) have become important clues to dating works published during the Joseon Period.

Books printed and released by the Gyoseogwan would then be reprinted in woodblock by regional government offices and private persons. At a time when there were no booksellers in the marketplaces, the practice of reprinting *naesabon* played an important role in circulating such valuable works. Under the direction of the regional administrative offices of Pyongyang 平壤, Jeonju 全州, and Daegu 大邱, for example, many works were reprinted and published in woodblock, concentrating mainly on the *tenseki* genre.

At Buddhist temples, the practice of printing the works of the Dharma had flourished since antiquity, and there were a large number of monks well-versed in the arts of engraving, printing, and papermaking for mainly woodblock publications. While the main concern of temples was publishing works of scripture, talented monks were also frequently pressed into service by local administrators in their reprinting projects. While many of the temple editions possess no colophons and are thus difficult to directly date, recently Fujimoto Yukio 藤本幸夫 has used the names of type cutters written on fore-edges (*pansim* 版心) of books to clarify with a fair amount of accuracy such information as dates and locations of printing, demonstrating empirically the important role played by temples and monks in premodern Korean bookmaking.

Also in the field of Confucian learning, *sawon* held large libraries of books for the education of future

scholars, but it was mostly Buddhist monks who were commissioned to bind and print them.

Those in the private sector who were active in publishing Old Korean Books were the literati ensconced in the regional society as the Dynasty's reserve of *yangban* 兩班 (scholar-officials), the accumulation of learning being the source of their power and influence, upon which they passed civil service examinations and won appointments in the government administration. They sent their sons to preparatory academies (*seowon* 書院) to study the works of Confucian masters covered in the civil servant examinations. In addition to having *tenseki* bound and printed for educational purposes, *yangban* families would have genealogies dating back to famous ancestors, in order to heighten their social prestige and influence by touting the achievements of family members who had passed the highest-level examinations to become top level government officials and outstanding intellectual leaders in the local society. This striving for social status also produced collections of the writing of ancestors who had been lauded as leading scholars (*seonbi*) during their lifetimes. Although genealogies and collected works were printed mainly in woodblock, it was by no means rare for *yangban* families to commission the Gyoseogwan or other government offices to print books for them.

All of the publications mentioned so far were bound and printed to meet the needs of their publishers, while books made in the private sector for sale on the market were known as *banggakbon* 坊刻本. On sale were mainly fiction and practical manuals, such as the poetic glossary *Cheonjamun* 千字文 and the Confucian primer *Yugol Pilji* 儒骨必知, but in the absence of bookstores, sales were limited, as the private sector publishing industry remained underdeveloped into the modern period.

## 2. The Present State of Old Korean Books in Korea

In early modern Korea, Old Korean Books were accumulated in (1) the archives of the Joseon Dynasty, (2) local administrative offices, (3) preparatory academies (*seowon*), (4) public schools (*hyanggye* 鄉校), (5) *munjung* 門中 and *jongga* 宗家, and (6) other personal collections. Whereas they were scattered from the beginning of the modern period, they have been systematically collected and stored by many research institutions and libraries. The following is an overview of their present state.

- (1) After being collected by the Yiwangjik 李王職, an office set up by the Japanese Governor-General of Korea in 1924 to manage the affairs of the Yi royal family, the family's books were placed in the Jangseogak 藏書閣 library and those related to the Joseon government were placed in the Gyujanggak 奎章閣 archives in the Keijō Imperial University Library (described in more detail below).
- (2) The books of local administrations were for the most part scattered or lost around the time of the Japanese colonization in 1910.
- (3) The Old Korean Books belonging to preparatory academies have for the most part been preserved along with their woodblocks to the present day.
- (4) Those belonging to public schools have also been preserved, but their number is quite small.

- (5) Literati families having been organized into patrilineal clans (*munjung*), with their head families (*jongga*) the centers for the worship of their ancestors, the collected works of their more illustrious *seonbi* and the woodblock textbooks studied by their children have remained intact with their woodblocks.
- (6) Personal collections accumulated for the pursuit of knowledge consist mainly of hand-copied Old Korean Books, the provenance and circulation of which is described, for example, in *Miam ilgi* 眉巖日記, the diary of court scholar Yu Huichun 柳希春 (1521–77).

Turning to the main locations of Old Korean Books and their preservation, we can grasp the overall situation by referring to the following three union catalogues.

- (1) Maema Kyōsaku, ed., *Kosen Sappu* 古鮮冊譜 [Maema 1944–57]

This comprehensive reference work contains the Old Korean Books actually observed by the editor and entries from the various catalogs he researched. This work constitutes the foundation of the bibliographical study of the genre containing insights by the editor and detailed information on various editions of the same works.

- (2) *Han'guk goseo chonghap monnok* 韓國古書總合目錄 [Han'guk Kukhoe Doseogwan 1968]

This work is a comprehensive catalog of premodern Korean books, including Old Korean Books, preserved in institutes (universities, private and public libraries, research institutes, museums, and *seowons*) throughout the world, including the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the United States, and in personal collections; however, a field survey of the reported titles was not conducted. Although titles are divided into printed books and manuscripts, there is little bibliographical information, except for the holders of each title, which provides a bird's eye view of the overall archival conditions of Old Korean Books on a global scale.

- (3) Fujimoto Yukio, *Nihon genzon Chōsenbon kenkyū* 日本現存朝鮮本研究 [Fujimoto 2006–]

This ongoing publication project consists of both a comprehensive catalog and detailed research on Old Korean Books preserved in Japan. Detailed surveys of each title have produced a full listing of various editions of each title and their whereabouts, accompanied by their bibliographical data and detailed research concerning them, which make this work a treasure trove of detailed bibliographical information. Data contained in this work is made open to public on the website “Nihon genzon Chōsen kosho dētabēsu kensaku shisutemu: Shibu, shūbu” 日本現存朝鮮古書データベース検索システム：史部・集部 (Database of extant Old Korean books in Japan; <http://www.fl.reitaku-u.ac.jp/~schiba/db/shuu/>)

- (4) “Han'guk gojeonjeok jonghap monnok siseutem” 韓國古典籍總合目錄시스템 (KORCIS)

Set up as a full search engine for old books in 2004, KORCIS is linked to institutes both in and out of Korea, including Japan, enabling international searches for Old Korean Books in several foreign languages including Japanese and unicode.

- (5) *Han'guk jeonjeok jonghap josa monnok* 韓國典籍總合調査目錄 [Han'guk Munhwajae Gwanniguk 1986–96]

Beginning with the Sung'am 誠庵 Collection, this catalog lists books stored in Korea by region and holder, and provides detailed bibliographical survey findings regarding Old Korean Books.

The following is a list of the major institutes holding Old Korean Books.

#### (1) Seoul University

The University Library's Gyujanggak archives contain the largest collection of Old Korean Books in Korea, most of which pertain to the Joseon Dynasty government administration. The Gyujanggak was built in the 20th year of the Sukjong 肅宗 Era (1694) as an annex to the Jongbusi 宗簿寺, the office of the royal genealogy which also stored autographs and writings of the kings, then expanded into a center of learning by King Jeongjo 正祖 (r. 1776–1800). After the Juhabnu 宙合樓 was relocated from the Gyeonghuigung 慶熙宮 palace to the Changdeokgung 昌德宮 palace, the Eojejongak 御製尊閣 on its first floor was remodeled into the Gyujanggak. All of the autographs and writing of the past Joseon kings and those of King Jeongjo were moved to the Bong'ogak 奉謨閣 for storage and the Bonghyanggak 奉香閣 was constructed separately as a reading room.

As part of his promotion of learning and scholarly research among literati bureaucrats, Jeongjo dispatched envoys (Yeonhaengsa 燕行使) to the Qing Dynasty Court to purchase a large number of Chinese works at the bookstores in Beijing. These along with books published in Korea were stored in the Gyujanggak's Yeolgogwan 閱古觀, Gaeyuwa 皆有窩, and Seogo 西庫.

In 1911, after the Japanese colonization of Korea, the library section of the Yiwangjik took over the management of the libraries of the Joseon Dynasty and government, and three months later was merged into the Investigative Bureau (Chwijoguk 取調局), which collected all the books held by not only the Gyujanggak, but also the Gungnaebu 宮内府 (Office of the Royal Household), Hongmungwan 弘文館 (Joseon Dynasty's administrative and research agency), Sigangwon 侍講院 (Office of the Royal Education), Jibokjae 集玉齋, the royal villa (*igung* 離宮) at Bukhan-san 北漢山, and the archives (*sago* 史庫) at Jeongjok-san 鼎足山, Jeoksang-san 赤裳山, Taebaek-san 太白山, and Odae-san 五臺山, and stored them at the Jongchinbu 宗親府 archives in Gyeongseong 京城 (present day Seoul). Then in 1924 the collection was moved to newly constructed Keijō Imperial University and named the Gyujanggak (hereafter the New Gyujanggak).

After Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War in August 1945 and the transfer of Keijō Imperial University to Korean control, the New Gyujanggak became the holding of newly established Seoul University, where it is located today with the above-mentioned archives intact, but also growing in size and quality with the accumulation of new acquisitions. Exceptions include the Jeoksang-san archive, which was returned to the former Joseon Royal Family in 1911 and is now held by the Jangseogak archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (Han'gukhak Jung'ang Yeon'guwon 韓國學中央研究院), without the copy of the *Veritable Records*, which was confiscated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the Korean War and remains today in that country's national archives. One more exception is the copy of the *Veritable Records* in the Odae-san archive, which was donated to the University of Tokyo in 1913. While a portion of it was returned to the Gyujanggak at Keijō Imperial University, the major portion of what remained in Japan was destroyed by fire during the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. The small part saved from fire was returned in 2006 to Seoul University and placed in the New Gyujanggak, and was designated as National Treasures by the Korean government with the copies of the *Veritable Records* in the other archives, and then included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

Finally, numerous collections of Old Korean Books donated by the people related to Seoul University, like the Ilsa Mungo 一蓑文庫 and Ganam Mungo 伽藍文庫, are now preserved in the New Gyujanggak or the Old Books Room of the University Library.

## (2) Jangseogak at the Academy of Korean Studies

The Academy's Jangseogak archive is a storage facility for the titles related to the Yi royal family set up by the Yiwangjik which managed the family's affairs under the Government-General of Korea, and holds royal family genealogies, records, and some 650,000 metal moveable types. In 1981 the archive was transferred to the Korean Ethos Research Center (renamed the Academy of Korean Studies in 2005) and presently serves as the Center's Library, boasting the largest collection of sources related to the Yi royal family in Korea.

## (3) The National Library of Korea

Originating from the Library of the Government-General of Korea, there are scant details on its earliest activities, but it seems that the original collection was purchased from private libraries. That is why the content is so diversified including many hand-copied books. Following national independence, the Library adopted a proactive collection policy resulting in constantly increasing archives. The collection contains many unique works of which other copies are not reported to exist, and detailed catalogs of the excellent works selected from the collection have been continually prepared and published.

## (4) Advanced Center for Korean Studies, North Gyeongsang Province

The Center's archives consist mainly of private libraries commissioned or donated by head families of the literati of North Gyeongsang Province, with its center Andong 安東 where they concentrated in the late Joseon Period. Owing to a growing lack of interest or a shortage of successors on the part of those families in the midst of rapid economic growth and urbanization in the region, many of them are finding it difficult to preserve their libraries. The Center is actively receiving those libraries into its archives, arranging them into collections named after their former owners, and storing them collectively.

## (5) Korea University

In addition to a proactive collection policy, the University has been the recipient of many personal libraries, including the Yuktang 六堂 Collection at the Asiatic Research Institute (Asia Munje Yeon'guseo 亞細亞問題研究所), formerly owned by poet, journalist, historian, and literary publisher Choe Namseon 崔南善 (1890–1957) and the Seogju 石洲, Sin'am 薪庵, Gyeonghwa-dang 景和堂, Hwasan 華山, and Mansong 晚松 Collections at the Main Library, all of which contain Old Korean Books in addition to many Old Chinese Books.

## (6) Other Universities with Substantial Old Korean Books Holdings

Other universities holding substantial Old Korean Books collections include Yonsei University, Hanyang University, Kookmin University, Sungkyunkwan University, Chung-Ang University, Dongguk University, Ewha Womans University, Chungbuk National University, Chungnam National University, Kyungpook National University, Keimyung University, Yeungnam University, Pusan National University, Gyeongsang National University, Chonbuk National University, and Chonnam National University. In particular, universities located outside of Seoul are gradually building up their collections from local sources of Old Korean Books in the midst of similar socio-economic conditions which have resulted in the burgeoning collection of the Advanced Center for Korean Studies.

### (7) Preparatory Academies

Old Korean Books, together with woodblock copies, are preserved by the Dosan 陶山 Academy founded by Confucian scholar Yi Hwang 李滉 (Toegye 退溪, 1501–70) and the other academies such as Seosan 西山, Namgye 濫溪, Donam 道南, Seoak 西岳, Ogsan 玉山, Sosu 紹修, and Gwisan 龜山.

### (8) Personal Collections

While no general information exists, we can only assume that personal collections were either inherited from ancestors or purchased by bibliophiles during the modern period. In the former case, even if the collections are now “personally” owned, they might have been collected and accumulated by head families leading patrilineal clans of literati.

## 3. The Present State of Old Korean Books in Japan

The main routes by which Old Korean Books were transmitted to Japan are (1) gifts from the Joseon royal family or government to the Sō 宗 Clan of Tsushima Domain, (2) purchases through the Waegwan in Pusan, and (3) looting during the invasion of Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s 豊臣秀吉 forces during 1592–98. In modern times, as in the above case of the Odae-san edition of the *Veritable Records* transferred to the University of Tokyo, the Japanese colonial authorities of the Government-General would be involved in their transmission; however, the largest source consisted of Japanese bibliophiles residing in Korea.

The largest collections of Old Korean Books in Japan are as follows

#### (1) The Agawa Collection, Main Library, University of Tokyo

This is the collection of Agawa Jūrō 阿川重郎 (1870–1942), a construction entrepreneur involved in the building of Korean railways, which was purchased by the University of Tokyo in 1925. A dedicated antiquarian, Agawa extended his interests to the collection of Old Korean Books, which are more impressive in terms of their quantity than their quality. That being said, the inclusion of a fair number of royal gift editions (*naesabon*) suggests Agawa being connected to high ranking *yangban* families, from whom he acquired several rare and valuable titles. Since the collection has been cataloged according to the University’s general system, the titles are interspersed among the stacks.

#### (2) The Imanishi Collection, Central Library, Tenri University

This is the former collection of Imanishi Ryū 今西龍 (1875–1932), who held a joint professorship at Keijō and Kyoto Imperial Universities in the broad field of premodern Korean history, covering the period from antiquity to the early modern period. The titles in the collection reflect the fact that they were acquired as historical sources for Prof. Imanishi’s research, and many were hand-copied by Imanishi himself or hired professionals. Tenri University also chose to catalog the collection as part of its general stacks.

#### (3) The Kawai Collection, Kyoto University Library

This collection was acquired by economic historian Kawai Hirotami 河合弘民 (1872–1918) while serving as the assistant principal of the Tōyō Takushoku Academy’s Keijō Branch. The collection found its way to Kyoto

University after Kawai's death through the auspices of Imanishi Ryū. The collection can be divided into Old Korean Books, commerce-related sources (booklets and documents), and miscellaneous, also strongly reflecting the owner's academic interests; however, the Old Korean Books are of particular bibliographic value, demonstrating his expertise regarding the genre, which was highly praised by Maema Kyōsaku himself. The commerce-related sources mostly pertain to cotton stores in Seoul. The whole collection has been classified as rare books, requiring lengthy procedures before viewing them.

(4) *Kanpon* Collection, Nakanoshima Library (Ōsaka Prefecture)

This is the former collection of Chinese classical poet Satō Hiroshi 佐藤寛 (Rokuseki 六石, 1864–1927), which was purchased by the Sumitomo 住友 Family and donated to the Nakanoshima 中之島 Library. The titles seem to have been acquired during the years Satō served as a consultant to the Yi royal family through the recommendation of Resident-General Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文. The collection comprises almost all of the Library's *Kanpon*, including a fair number of rare and valuable titles and several unique works.

(5) Toyo Bunko

This is the final depository for the titles collected by Old Korean Books research pioneer Maema Kyōsaku, who spent a career in Korea as the official language interpreter of the Government-General of Korea. Donations were made in 1924 and 1942, including the cream of the crop in Old Korean Books selected by the foremost authority in the field, almost all stamped with “Zaisanrō” 在山楼 and “Maema-shi zōsho” 前間氏蔵書 marks. The Toyo Bunko also holds a small number of Old Korean Books acquired by Shidehara Taira 幣原坦 (1870–1953), who served as the first chancellor of Taipei Imperial University.

(6) The Ogura Collection, Chinese Classics Corner, Faculty of Letters Library, University of Tokyo

This collection contains titles acquired by Ogura Shinpei 小倉進平 (1882–1944), a pioneer in the field of Korean linguistics [Ogura 1920] and professor of Korean language and literature at Keijō Imperial University. The collection consists mainly of linguistic sources for the professional researcher, reflecting the academic interests of Ogura, who was awarded the Imperial Award by the Imperial Academy of Japan in 1935 for his *Kyōka oyobi Ridoku no kenkyū* 郷歌及び吏読の研究 [Ogura 1929] and selected as Chōsen Person of Cultural Merits.

(7) Tsushima Folk Museum (Nagasaki Prefecture)

The Museum holds titles that were presented to the lords of Tsushima Domain during the Tokugawa Period by the kings of the Joseon Dynasty. Although not great in number compared with modern terms, the Sō Clan held the largest collection of Old Korean Books in Japan up until the end of the Meiji Period.

(8) The Asami Collection, C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California at Berkeley

These are the titles acquired by jurist Asami Rintarō 浅見倫太郎 (1868–1943) while serving as a superior court judge in the Government-General of Korea. Chosen by him as an expert philologist, whom Maema Kyōsaku also praised in terms of bibliographical insight, the titles were made a part of the Mitsui Collection in Tokyo in 1920, but within the chaos and confusion following the Asia-Pacific War they were sold off and sent to the United States.

## (9) Other locations

The Hōsa 蓬左 Library (Nagoya City), the Seikadō 静嘉堂 Collection, the Daitōkyū 大東急 Memorial Library, and the Iwase 岩瀬 Library (Nishio 西尾 City, Aichi Prefecture) all hold Old Korean Books, which are thought to have entered Japan during the Tokugawa Period, along with other institutions and individuals.

## Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have viewed the world of Old Korean Books which have enthralled bibliographers, philologists, and bibliophiles with their unique physical binding and printing characteristics, from the perspective of premodern historical studies. In conclusion, the author wants to point out two barriers to make future bibliographical studies of Old Korean Books more meaningful.

To begin with, in the bibliographical research done to date, the physical characteristics of Old Korean Books, mainly their copper moveable type printing, has been overemphasized. Surely, being the world's first metal moveable type printing is of great value in terms of cultural history; however, we must not forget the fact that the breakthrough was by no means a technological innovation aiming at the mass production of books. Rather, the cultural value of Old Korean Books printed with metal movable types resided in their character as a symbol of authority bestowed by the royalty to limited members of the society, as we can see in the case of *naesabon*. That is to say, the historical significance of metal type printing during the Joseon Period is completely different from that of Gutenberg's breakthrough. By ignoring that difference and emphasizing merely the date of the innovation, as historic as it may be, one is in danger of blowing the event out of proportion and avoiding the next step of evaluating it objectively within the overall history of book making.

Secondly, regarding the social significance of the Old Korean Books, in the same vein as the first point, Chinese books that were distributed throughout the early modern Korean society were predominantly either printed in woodblock or handwritten, metal type printed editions being comparatively few and far between numerically and extremely limited in circulation. This resulted from the peculiar situation surrounding the circulation of books in Korea at that time, where books were exchanged among the literati as personal gifts and lent out to be copied for wider distribution, lacking such a book market as developed like in China and Japan of the same era.

Hand-copied Old Korean Books, which were produced under such situation, retain physical characteristics significantly different from those of the books produced with metal movable types, but still they can be termed as Old Korean Books in terms of their contents. Old Korean Books actually circulated in many different forms in reaching their readers, making any attempt to generalize the character of the genre an oversimplification of its significance in the society or its true relationship to its readers.

## Note

- \* This paper is a Japanese translation of the following works. "Chōsenbon no sekai" 朝鮮本の世界. 2011. In *Higashi Ajia shoshigaku heno shōtai* 東アジア書誌学への招待 (Introduction to the East Asian Bibliography), ed. Ōsawa Akihiro 大澤顯浩, Gakushūin Daigaku Tōyō bunka kenkyū sōsho 学習院大学東洋文化研究叢書 (Gakushuin University East Asian Culture Research Series), vol. 2, pp. 23–40. Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten. The original work is part of the research result

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