

## *On this topic*

# Unearthing Joseon Court Life from *Uigwe*, Joseon's Documentary Heritage

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In June 2007, the *uigwe* (royal protocols) produced during the Joseon dynasty were selected for the UNESCO “Memory of the World” list. Among the over 100 archive holdings and library collections selected for the “Memory of the World” as of 2007, Korean historical documents and records including the *Hunmin Chongum* (*Jeongeum*) manuscript, *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Annals of the Joseon Dynasty), the second volume of *Baegun hwasang chorok bulja jikji simche yojeol* (Anthology of Great Buddhist Priests' Zen Teachings), *Seungjeongwon ilgi* (Diaries of the Royal Secretariat), and the printing woodblocks of the *Tripitaka Koreana* and miscellaneous Buddhist scripture, were selected, with the 6th entry being the Joseon dynasty *uigwe*.

The book known as *uigwe*, or royal protocols, means a “model of rituals.” But the *uigwe* can only be found in Korea. Even within Korean history itself, these books were only produced during the Joseon period. These unique historical documents were produced during the Joseon era because rites and rituals were so highly regarded at the time. In the Joseon era, five important state rites were performed, which included auspicious rites (*gillye* 吉禮), festive rites (*garye* 嘉禮,

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funerals (*hyungnye* 凶禮), rites for envoys (*billye* 賓禮), and military rites (*gullye* 軍禮). Because these five rites were of such importance to the Joseon dynasty, they were compiled into a book called *Gukjo oryeui* (Five Rites of the State). The preparation of every important state ceremony thereafter referred to this book. However, there were limits to the book. Minute details of ceremonies were not recorded in the book, and although they included drawings, only extremely simple ones were used. Because it was a printed book, diagrams or illustrations could not incorporate natural colors. In addition, of all the state rituals, there were some that could not be included in the five rites: constructing or repairing the royal palace, compiling annals, updating and publishing the royal family genealogy and its enshrinement were such examples. Therefore, the *uigwe* were created in order to compensate for these weak points.

*Uigwe* were first compiled in the early Joseon period. The *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Annals of the Joseon Dynasty) indicates that various kinds of *uigwe* were produced for state ceremonies, which included the *Gyeongbokgung Palace Construction Uigwe* (*Gyeongbokgung joseong uigwe*), which was made during the reign of King Taejo. However, the earliest examples are unavailable to use because they were completely burned or destroyed during the Imjin War. Thus, all remaining extant 637 *uigwe* were made between the late Joseon and Japanese colonial periods. Some *uigwe* that remain unknown to us were stored at the Outer Kyujanggak in Ganghwa before being lost or carried off by French troops at the time of the 1866 French Invasion. About 553 types and 2,700 individual volumes of *uigwe* remain in Korea at the Kyujanggak Institute of Korean History at Seoul National University, with 293 types encompassing 356 books housed at the Jangseogak Library of the Academy of Korean Studies. Of the remaining *uigwe*, 191 types encompassing 297 books continue to be stored at the French National Library, with around 69 types kept in Japan's Imperial Household Agency. The volumes stored in France are ones that were plundered by French soldiers at the 1866 French Invasion, and the volumes stored in Japan are ones that were taken during the period of forced colonization.

If one takes a closer look at the *uigwe* that are now in existence, the majority (numbering 135) were compiled during the time of King Yeongjo's reign, followed by those made during Kings Sunjo, Sukjong, and Gojong. If one looks at the form and content of the *uigwe*, they were at their roughest immediately after the Imjin War, and were kept in good order as time passed. From King Yeongjo's to King Jeongjo's reign, the *uigwe* reached their peak. Also, as the state rituals of the royal court became larger in scale and more splendid in the nineteenth century, so the *uigwe* also became more vivid and detailed.

Research on *uigwe* began with Dr. Park Byung-seon's publication titled *Joseon-ui uigwe* (*Uigwe of the Joseon Dynasty*), in 1985. Thereafter, domestic interest in research on the *uigwe* began, with the help of Han Young-woo and others, along with the many *uigwe* collected at Kyujanggak. Domestic academics started first with the work of creating a table of contents and bibliography, and during the process, scholars developed strong research interests in *uigwe* and began to conduct further research into them.

However, research into the *uigwe* remains at an elementary level. Han Yeong-woo defines the "documentary culture" contained in the *uigwe* in terms of 1) being a mechanism for the recording of the execution of rites and ceremonies in fine detail, 2) the recording of the detailed breakdown of expenses (both revenues and expenditures) for ceremonies, 3) the inclusion of detailed information about the royal family's everyday life, 4) the detailed recording of the name of each item used in ceremonies and architectural terms, and the names of the royal family's clothes and foods, and 5) the recording of ritual procedures through detailed illustrations. The most charming aspect of the *uigwe* is the pictures called *doseol* and *banchado*. These explanatory diagrams and illustration drawn as they were in natural colors and remaining unchanged over the ages, still preserve the ceremonies and rituals of that time to the present day.

Bearing in mind the significance of the *uigwe*, the *Korea Journal* has dedicated this issue to the subject. For this special issue, we have gathered the most recent research available on *uigwe*, as presented

through four papers from the top scholars on the subject. In his paper, Prof. Shin Byung Ju offers a complete overview of the *uigwe*. Prof. Shin gives us a lucid explanation of the history of the *uigwe*'s compilation, their creation and preservation, and the royal culture in which they appeared, as well as their value as archives in themselves. Prof. Kim Moonsik takes a close look at the *uigwe* that dealt with the king's trips. Although Prof. Kim has a special focus on royal trips and expeditions, he gives an even closer analysis of one of the most famous of the journeys by looking at the *uigwe* that recorded the 1795 journey of King Jeongjo to Hwaseong, while also considering the political meaning of the journey itself. The purpose of the journey to Hwaseong was to visit the tomb of Crown Prince Sado and to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Hyegyeong Lady Hong. Dr. Kim Ji-young examines in meticulous detail the changes to the *banchado*, an illustration of royal processions, recorded in the *uigwe*, while also tracing the political meanings of the text. Dr. Kim argues that royal processions were emphasized more in *banchado* after King Yeongjo's reign, and became even longer after the eighteenth century, interpreting this as being linked to the similar increase in the length of funerals and ceremonial parades at the time. She sees this as reflecting the social atmosphere of the time, which increasingly paid homage to the king and the royal family. Dr. Kim Jong Su concentrates on *uigwe* that recorded royal banquets, analyzing more closely the *uigwe* that have to do with festive state celebrations. According to Dr. Kim, while of course these *uigwe* recorded the ceremonies themselves, they also recorded the temporary preparation offices created for the ceremonies, as well as the preparation of food, the production of musical instruments, practicing for ceremonies, and accounting. Dr. Kim tells us that Neo-Confucian scholars believed that royal banquets were not only venues for celebration and entertainment, but also for realizing *ye* (禮 propriety) and *ak* (樂 music) and, even more importantly, experiencing happiness with people.

The four articles published in under the topic of *uigwe* represent an excellent overview of the state of all the *uigwe*-related research that has been conducted until the present day. Yet, it is an unfortu-

nate inevitability that not all of the many facets of the *uigwe* can be dealt with in this single issue. We hope to have the opportunity again in the future to further explore the many subjects that could not be addressed in this present issue.