Compiling Diplomacy: Record-Keeping and Archival Practices in Chosŏn Korea

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The Chosŏn court kept meticulous records of its interactions with their Ming, and later, their Qing neighbors. These materials, especially those that predate the nineteenth century, survive not in the form of original materials but rather as entries in court-sponsored compilations. For instance, the monumental Tongmun hwigo*, published in 1788, categorizes diplomatic activity according to areas of policy concern. Its organizational scheme, handy for a Chosŏn official searching for relevant precedents, has also provided ready material for historical case studies. What has been less appreciated, however, are how such records came into being in the first place. By interrogating the status of these compilations as "archives," this article follows how diplomatic documents were produced, used, and compiled as both products and instruments of diplomatic practice. In reading these materials as instruments of knowledge, rather than mere sources of historical documentation, this essay also makes the case for going beyond diplomatic history as interstate relations and towards a cultural and epistemic history of Korean diplomatic practice.*

Keywords: *Tongmun hwigo*, Sino-Korean relations, *tŭngnok*, tribute system, diplomatic ritual

INTRODUCTION

Over the five centuries of its existence, the Chosŏn court kept meticulous records of its diplomatic activities. As with most premodern Korean state records, they do not survive as original documents, but as entries in massive court-sponsored compilations.[1] The *Tongmun hwigo* 同文彙考 (*Assembled Reference of Unified*

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Writing) reproduced nearly verbatim the diplomatic documents exchanged with Qing China, and to a lesser extent Tokugawa Japan. First assembled in 1778, it eventually comprised over four million characters with its last addendum in 1881.[2]

The organization of the *Tongmun hwigo* conveniences the modern researcher in several ways. Its systematic organization provides welcome respite to a lone scholar otherwise overwhelmed by the sheer volume of Chosŏn's diplomatic records. It divides diplomacy into discrete areas—tribute missions, illegal border crossings, investiture, shipwrecks, and calendrical perturbations such as eclipses, so central to imperial claims of cosmic sovereignty—to give a few examples. Each area is then contained under its own subheading, where relevant cases are then arranged chronologically.[3] In lieu of original documents, every entry stands in for the curated archival file, ready-made for a historian's case study.[4]

It is easy to forget, however, that the *Tongmun hwigo* was not produced for the benefit of later historians. A product of the Chosŏn state's administrative needs, it compartmentalized diplomacy according to different areas to highlight the chain of precedents that could guide an appropriate response for the Chosŏn court's diplomacy. The charisma of its monumentality tempts a naturalization of its classificatory scheme, which is only further reified when scholarship proceeds along the grain of its organizational structure. And treating such compilations as source material to be mined for nuggets of information also perpetuates a persistent irony in the historiography of the Chosŏn period—ready appreciation for the state's sophisticated record-keeping as a hallmark of Chosŏn's bureaucratic capacity has not been accompanied by a deeper understanding of these records as both product and instruments of knowledge. What therefore needs to be placed into proper perspective is how compilations such as *Tongmun hwigo* worked within the apparatus of the Chosŏn state.[5] To do so, this discussion treats Chosŏn's diplomatic compilations in terms of the archival processes responding to the demands and objectives of Chosŏn's diplomacy with imperial China.

The term *archive* warrants discussion. According to the Canadian archival scholar Terry Cook, it has at least two common, but divergent uses. In the singular, an archive works as a "metaphorical symbol" for the collective memory of a community. The Chosŏn court's diplomatic records thus archive a memory of Korea's past relations. In the Foucaldian sense, it also instantiates a system of knowledge by reproducing the "matrices that contain the dominant discourses of [its] culture." But in the plural, "archives" also refer to brick-and-mortar repositories of "original" materials.[6] Their coherence derives from what modern archival science calls the principle of "provenance." To qualify as archives, their collections must be "organic entit[ies]" emerging naturally from the processes of their creation and "defined by the sphere of life from which they originate."[7] Certainly, there are libraries and institutions in South Korea, such as the Kyujanggak and Jangseogak Archives, that store not only Chosŏn period diplomatic compilations, but also a wide range of state records in general. Through their curation efforts

a wide range of transcriptions, reprints, and digital reproductions have become available for public learning.[8] But as is the case for the *Tongmun hwigo*, these state records have survived primarily in the form of compilations, and not original documents. They are "processed records" whose "provenance" is not to the moment of their creation, but as Sem Vermeersch notes, a result of mediation by processes of copying, editing, and reprinting.[9]

Without documents of organic origin, should Chosŏn's diplomatic records be disqualified as archives? Is the term *archive*, then, at best a metaphor, or worse, a misnomer? The problem may instead lie with the criterion of organic originality. Itself a product of relatively recent provenance, its valorization is connected to the historiographical positivism of Leopold von Ranke. It proceeds from a conceit that the paper trail of government machinery, stored in state archives, can capture history as it "really was" better than other materials. While revolutionary for its time, the archive can only be a "neutral and unproblematic reservoi[r] of historical fact" if archivists are imagined as "impartial guardian[s] of the surviving traces of the past," content to be "simply the obedient and silent handmaiden of the historian."[10] Whether such neutrality is attainable (or desirable) is up to debate, but this fantasy, combined with the ideal of "[keeping] all records permanently ready for almost instantaneous access," reflects far more the historian's desire for a "nonproblematic, pure . . . archive" of original, untainted evidence, than how actual archival records were curated and used. Indeed, given the political stakes of record-keeping and the prevalence of "counter-archival activities" such as purgation, destruction, and recycling, the "invisible caretaker" becomes ever more difficult to imagine.[11]

The specific curation practices of these materials in modern South Korea are beyond the scope of this essay. But awareness that an "archive" is not a static object but a result of active practices reminds us that, whether or not documents are of original provenance, our present experience of any archive is already mediated by the record-keeping practices that informed their creation. To speak of compilations such as the *Tongmun hwigo* in terms of archives, then, is less to fix their ontological status than to bring attention to the rationales and practices of record-keeping at the Chosŏn court. A Chosŏn official would never have imagined the records he produced would one day be privy to the public eye, a visibility inconceivable before the democratization of archival access in the nineteenth century that made Ranke's historical positivism possible in the first place.[12] The idea, shared in common by modern state-funded repositories, that national memory is best preserved through widespread accessibility of state records to the scholarly community and the general public, would have been an alien notion to the Chosŏn court agencies who compiled them. Therefore, rather than excuse as deviation from a Rankean ideal what Korean archives do not contain—original documents—it is far better to probe such absences by asking what the pattern of documentary survival can say about the Chosŏn court's information management strategies and the horizons of visibility to which they were beholden.[13]

This essay is a foray into this line of inquiry. It discusses how the Chosŏn diplomatic archive came into being through different stages of record processing. It begins with the textual objects the *Tongmun hwigo* collects: the diplomatic documents themselves and their place in diplomatic practice. It then moves on to the *tŭngnok* 謄錄 produced in the course of administering diplomatic activity. Literally a "copied record" or "recorded note," the tŭngnok straddles the conventional boundary between a registry and an archive, in which the former holds documents under regular use and the latter for preservation.[14] Finally, it will address the emergence of the *Tongmun hwigo* as a compilation in light of how its epistemic strategies compare with those of other institutional reference books for diplomatic practice, in particular the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 通文館志 (*Compendium of the Interpreters' Bureau*).

If we consider the diplomatic archive even more broadly, we may also include a wide array of other materials: language textbooks,[15] ritual guides, poetry anthologies,[16] and travelogues and diaries produced by Korean envoys and their entourage.[17] Needless to say, a full accounting of all these materials would be impossible to achieve in the space of one paper. Our goals here are necessarily more modest—to disentangle several strands from a complex tapestry, rather than explain its totality.

WHAT IS A CHOSŎN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENT?

The bulk of the *Tongmun hwigo* are transcriptions of diplomatic documents. But what exactly do we mean by a "diplomatic" document? The usual overarching historiographical term in Korean is *oegyo munsŏ*, "documents for foreign relations," a special subset of *komunsŏ*, "old documents," a broad category that covers legal contracts, deeds, wills, royal and other official decrees, slave status documents, and judicial rulings.[18] What all oegyo munsŏ have in common with komunsŏ, and what distinguishes both from other documents, such as private letters or books, is precisely their inclusion of certain "diplomatic" features (in the original sense of the word *diploma*) to ensure authenticity and official status: seal imprints, formal consistency, signatures, and administrative jargon.

But distinctive about oegyo munsŏ from the Chosŏn period, especially those exchanged with imperial China, is the degree to which they participate in a ceremonial program as a ritual object. Arguably all diplomatic communiqués, in any period—a diplomatic cable, a joint declaration, a treaty, or perhaps even a tweet—obey certain conventions and regulations constraining their format and language and may be regarded as "ritual" objects, insofar as they are embedded with routines and processes that endow them with meaning beyond the wording of the texts they contain. The ritual context of a signed treaty differs from that of a tweet, even if the semantic contents of the missives are identical; the former may have legal or political implications that the latter may not, even if issued by the same individual or institution.

As for Chosŏn diplomatic documents, they often find their significance as much in their performative role in a ceremony as the content of their testimony. For instance, when a Ming emperor acknowledged the legitimacy of a new Korean ruler, it was not enough that a message be delivered—for the act of imperial investiture to work, this document must be received in a ceremonial context agreed upon by all participants. Indeed, much of Chosŏn's diplomatic governance was devoted to managing the receipt and delivery of such documents. If the numerous contestations between imperial envoys and the Korean hosts concerning the protocols and ceremonies of receiving imperial edicts are any indication, rituals of diplomatic contact endow certain documents with an ontological status beyond what its text is communicating. One recurring issue in these contestations was whether the Chosŏn court owed ceremonial deference to the imperial envoy because of his status as a messenger from the emperor or because he was the bearer of the sacred object—the imperial document.[19]

Not all diplomatic documents necessarily have the same ritual status or performative quality. As illustrated in table 1, diplomatic interaction entailed the use of a wide variety of documentary forms. A number of variables determine what kind of document should be issued and for what purpose. The identities of the sender and receiver, their hierarchical relationship, as well as the context and message, determine the type of document issued. The documents vary in style—whether the ornate parallel prose (*pyŏnmun* 騈文) appropriate for ceremonial contexts or the "layered quotation" style of bureaucratic prose (*imun* 吏文).[20] The nomenclature is therefore highly specific; knowing what to call the document usually suffices for ascertaining the above variables. That said, any English translation of this nomenclature can only be provisional—the English language simply does not have enough synonyms for "epistle" to capture the full range of implications for each of these documentary forms.

In the case of the 1470 Ming embassy to Korea, the envoys read aloud as part of an elaborate ceremony five separate documents in relation to the Ming's affirmation of King Sŏngjong's (r. 1469–94) status as king of Chosŏn, a "proclamation" (*cho* 詔), two "patents of investiture" (*komyŏng* 誥命), and two "edicts" (*ch'ik* 勅). The first, arguably, most important document was the proclamation. It received exceptional treatment, both at its point of creation in Beijing and its moment of delivery in Chosŏn. During the Ming period, proclamations regarding an emperor's accession or the investiture of an empress or heir apparent were announced outside of the palace gates in Beijing before they were copied and delivered across the empire. On such an occasion, an envoy, usually a midlevel literati official temporarily granted robes of first rank, was assigned the task of bringing the document to Seoul.[21] In the case of the investiture of a Korean king or a member of his royal family, however, the task usually fell upon a chamberlain of the palace—a eunuch.[22]

A document with specific relevance for the Korean court was not distributed to all parts of the empire. Though Ming envoys still expected it to receive in Korea the same ritual treatment as any imperial proclamation would within Ming

Table 1. Main Documentary genres used in Korean diplomacy with imperial China (~1400–1800s). See Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn hugi sadae munsŏ ŭi chongnyu wa sŏnggyŏk."

Document name	*Approximate translation*	*Issued by*	*Recipient*	*Direction*	*Genre*	*Audience*	*Purpose*
cho (*zhao* 詔)	"proclamation"	emperor	Korean court	downward	parallel prose	universal	general injunctions; accession and investiture
ch'ik (*chi* 勅)	"edict"	emperor	Korean court	downward	prose	varies, usually Korean king	imperial command
komyŏng (*gaoming* 誥命)	"patent of investiture"	emperor	Korean court	downward	parallel prose	king, officials, and his people	investiture of Korean king or royal family
ch'amun (*ziwen* 咨文)	"rescript"	Imperial agencies/ Korean king	Korean king/ imperial agencies	lateral	bureaucratic prose	an imperial agency	varies
p'yomun (*biaowen* 表文)	"expression"	Korean king	imperial court	upward	parallel prose	emperor	varies
chŏnmun (*jianwen* 箋文)	"commemorative letter"	Korean king	imperial court	upward	parallel prose	members of imperial family	ceremonial
chumun (*zouwen* 奏文)	"memorial"	Korean envoy or Korean king	imperial court	upward	prose	emperor	policy oriented
chŏngmun (*chengwen* 呈文)	"memorandum"	Korean envoy	imperial agencies	upward	bureaucratic prose	an imperial agency	policy oriented

territory, the Korean reception was a sui generis ritual production.[23] The proclamation declared the emperor's intent to invest the Korean king, identified by his given name, explained his reasons for doing so (the death of the previous king), identified the official in charge of delivering the document, and implored all the king's "officials great and small, and all his subjects, to single-mindedly serve [him], bring tranquility to the eastern land, and be a protector of the Central State." The other documents carry rather different functions. The first patent of investiture (*komyŏng*) verifies Sŏngjong as the Korean king. Though Sŏngjong was already de facto king at the time, the patent of investiture therefore carries a performative function of establishing it as diplomatic fact. Translating a local political reality into an imperial reality was also the function of the second patent of investiture. Addressed to King Sŏngjong's consort, it invested her as Queen Consort and charged her with protecting the family line and serving as a moral model for the inner quarters. The two edicts (*ch'iksŏ*) accompanying the investiture served yet different functions. The first edict enumerates the gifts bestowed upon the Korean king to congratulate his accession. The second edict alone concerns "non-ritual" matters of diplomatic policy (if such a rough distinction between ritual and policy can be made). At the time Chosŏn court was engaged in hostilities with the Jurchens of Jianzhou, and this document spoke to the imperial effort in mediating between Chosŏn and Jianzhou, with a warning that though the Jurchens agreed to cease hostilities, the king should remain circumspect.[24]

In the diplomatic ceremonies, these documents, issued by the emperor, were themselves the subject of fanfare. The key stages of ritual program—arrival, handing-off, revelation, and proclamation—revolved around the documents. Except when they were handled directly during such ceremonies, an imperial edict or proclamation traveled in its own miniature covered palanquin, called a "dragon pavilion" (*yongjŏng* 龍亭).[25] After the Ming-Qing transition, the basic contours of these practices continued, with the use of bilingual Manchu-Chinese edicts perhaps the most obvious innovation.[26] The ritual life of these documents persisted beyond the conclusion of a reception ceremony. The documents were kept in various palace repositories. Imperial edicts, in particular the patents of investiture, were integrated into practices of royal commemoration, playing a role in the funerals of deceased kings, for instance.[27] Throughout the dynasty, these documents continued to be treasured as part of the royal palace's collections.[28]

Not all documents sent from the imperial court received this level of ritual deference. Documents characterized by their use of a "layered quotation" system (and imperial couriers who relayed such documents) were exempt from such treatment.[29] These documents of this type nest within a single text different statements from various levels of imperial and Chosŏn government as a case moved between different levels of administration.[30] It was a quintessential product of a bureaucratic context, where the agencies had to remain cognizant of the hierarchies of communication and chains of command. The system's precise origins in China are obscure, but their appearance in Korean diplomacy can be traced to how the Mongol empire integrated Koryŏ as its client state in the thirteenth century.

The king of Koryŏ received both patents of investiture and an appointment in the imperial bureaucracy as the Left Minister of the Eastern Expedition Branch Secretariat (Chŏngdong haengsŏng 征東行省). Previous imperial dynasties also granted bureaucratic offices to Korean rulers as honorary titles, but largely as discursive fictions without accompanying administrative duties. In the Mongol period, the bureaucratic integration was more substantial; Koryŏ's once independent state bureaucracy now interfaced directly with the imperial court, introducing a new set of conventions for communications between them. These conventions persisted until the end of the nineteenth century, even though the institutional arrangements that birthed them were long defunct with the collapse of the Mongol empire in the fourteenth century. In the Chosŏn-Ming and Chosŏn-Qing iterations of this system, lateral communications between agencies that reported directly to the emperor were called *chamun* 咨文 (C. *ziwen*, "rescripts"). Direct communications in both directions between Chosŏn and certain Ming agencies, in particular the Ministry of Rites (Libu 禮部), belonged to this category because both it and the kingdom of Chosŏn reported directly to the emperor. At least in name, the Chosŏn king remained, as one scholar has put it, an imperial "bureaucrat."[31]

PRODUCING A DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENT: THE CASE OF A *P'YO*

One way to think about the distinction between these different genres is in terms of a division of labor. The chamun, with its bureaucratic language and its "layered quotation system," largely carried the weight of the transmission of information relevant to a particular case or issue. The rhetorical burden of squaring these issues within imperial ideology and the ceremonies that sustained them fell more on the rhetoric-laden texts in parallel prose. The Chosŏn counterpart to the imperial proclamations and edicts were the *p'yo* 表 (C. *biao*), or "expressions." They could serve a wide range of functions, with one subgenre, the *chinch'ŏngp'yo* 陳請表, carrying the burden of "presenting the circumstances" of a situation to the imperial court, usually written to appeal an unfavorable imperial policy, and another, the *saŭnp'yo* 謝恩表, which "expressed gratitude for imperial grace" upon the favorable resolution of such an appeal.[32]

The majority of p'yo, however, were to "express congratulations" (*hap'yo* 賀表). These, along with the "expressions of gratitude," often accompanied a Korean envoy mission, sent to give thanks for investiture or gifts from the imperial court for the former or to congratulate the imperial court on the accession of a new emperor or the investiture of new heir apparent. In a sense, the sending of these documents was the conclusion of the ritual program that was initiated with the dispatch of an imperial proclamation or edict to Chosŏn. In the case of the three regular Korean embassies to Beijing, which were timed to regular events in the Imperial ritual calendar, namely the imperial birthday (K. *sŏngjŏl* 聖節; C. *shengjie*), the winter solstice (K. *tongji* 冬至; C. *dongzhi*), and the new year (K. *hajŏng*

賀正; C. *hezheng*), the Chosŏn envoys presented congratulatory expressions alongside the bulk of the imperial bureaucracy.[33] As ceremonial documents, their text and format were already largely formulaic when the Qing Ministry of Rites complained that Korean congratulatory memorials "differed in wording from year to year" in 1705. It promulgated a standardized template to "simplify the unnecessarily ornate language." While p'yo written as "expressions of thanks" or "explanations of circumstances" to deal with specific, less routine events were exempt from this template, the tendency to rhetorical repetition remained.[34] As a document tied to imperial claims of cosmocracy and universal rule, both the Ming and Qing courts (as well as their predecessors) sought to regulate the contents of these documents, lest they tread on uncomfortable imperial taboos, as was the case for two major incidents involving the Ming Hongwu emperor in early Chosŏn and the Qing Qianlong emperor in the late Chosŏn.[35]

These documents invariably assumed the voice of the Korean ruler. They expressed the sentiments of an embodied sovereignty: kingship personified as an incarnation of a state and its people. But it was also a fictive, disembodied voice. The p'yo, much like an imperial edict, was a ritual object. Though as state-level communiqués they do not identify their composers, literary compilations, such as the *Tongmunsŏn* 東文選 (*Literary Selections of the East*), usually ascribe authorship to an individual. Among their ranks included such venerable figures such as the Koryŏ statesmen Yi Kyubo 李奎報 (1168–1241) and Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢 (1297–1367), the famous Koryŏ literati Yi Kok 李穀 (1298–1351) and his son Yi Saek 李穡 (1328–96), and the Chosŏn dyansty's founding figures, Chŏng Tojŏn 鄭道傳 (1342–98) and Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1352–1409).[36] Later compilers of literary collections of individual authors (*munjip* 文集), which often postdate the composition of these documents by centuries, likely benefited from these attributions.[37]

Any one diplomatic memorial passed through many hands. It underwent a review and proofreading process before a final version was approved for delivery.[38] But wordsmithing was only one step in a longer chain of production. The materiality of the text was equally important and obeyed set conventions by the fifteenth century. The document would be written on specially prepared "memorial paper" (*chŏnji* 箋紙). An official with a good calligraphic hand was selected to transcribe the text.[39] Each character was written with thin strokes and light ink. The arrangement of each line also followed a format where references to the emperor and the imperial state elevated to show their superiority, making hierarchical distinctions further explicit in the materiality of the document.[40] Then, the Chosŏn king's royal seal, a gift from the imperial court, would be stamped on the document.[41] The dimensions of the document were fixed at 7.9 *ch'on* high and 3 *ch'ŏk* wide (24.85×6.54 inches), with space for twenty characters per column. In preparation for its voyage to Beijing, it would be placed inside a case of precise specifications, with dimensions of 8.8×3.1×2.9 *ch'on* (7.2×2.57×2.40 inches). It remained in this case until its arrival in Beijing.[42] There, the p'yo, along with any other accompanying documents, was delivered to the Board of Rites by the chief

Korean envoy, where he was received by its ministers.[43] In dealings with the Ming, Chosŏn's consistent observance of these protocols obviated the usual imperial practice of using tallies (*fuchi* 符勅) and matching seals (*kanhe* 勘合) to authenticate foreign envoys.[44]

After being delivered (and presumably read) by Ming and Qing authorities, the documents were stored in the imperial palace. The bulk of original Korean documents that survive to this day from this collection are memorials to the Qing court; the rate of survival is much lower for the Ming.[45] Though unlikely to explain all the loss, a contributing factor may have been the value late Ming literati placed on Korean memorial paper. The renowned Ming painter and calligrapher Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636), who at the apex of his career served as Ming Minister of Rites, evidently availed himself of Korean documents stored in the imperial archives. After washing off the ink bearing these royal missives, he repurposed the paper for his own artwork. The red cinnabar-based oils used for seal imprints, however, were not water soluble. For this reason, several of Dong Qichang's landscape paintings still bear the mark of the Chosŏn royal seal, and at times even the text of the original Korean diplomatic document is faintly visible on the paper (see fig. 1).[46]

Ultimately, it is still Chosŏn compilations that provide us with the most comprehensive record of their contents. Their survival owes to several convergent pressures. The first is how past writing becomes a guide for future compositions. Early Chosŏn period memorial writers drew from these earlier sources as models for their compositions, but in the process, they also left behind their own literary examples for later generations. To create these models was likely the intent of the *Tongmunsŏn*. While some diplomatic documents are quoted or paraphrased in official histories such as the *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (*The Koryŏ History*) or the *Koryŏsa chŏryo* 高麗史節要 (*Abbreviated Summary of Koryŏ's History*), they appear as illustrative pieces of a court chronicle, preserved less for their textual or literary value than for the political history they documented. Routine memorials, such as imperial birthday felicitations, were almost always omitted. The *Tongmunsŏn*, a literary anthology, was more inclusive, covering a range of p'yo-style memorials characterized by highly ritualized language. That the documentary record of pre-Chosŏn Korean diplomacy survives at all largely owes to these and other fifteenth-century compilations.[47]

CHOSŎN PRACTICES OF RECORD-KEEPING: THE TŬNGNOK TRADITION

The practice of diplomacy revolved around the delivery and reception of these documents as ritual items. Though more than the content of their text, their rhetoric was far from irrelevant. On the contrary, these texts navigated a complex

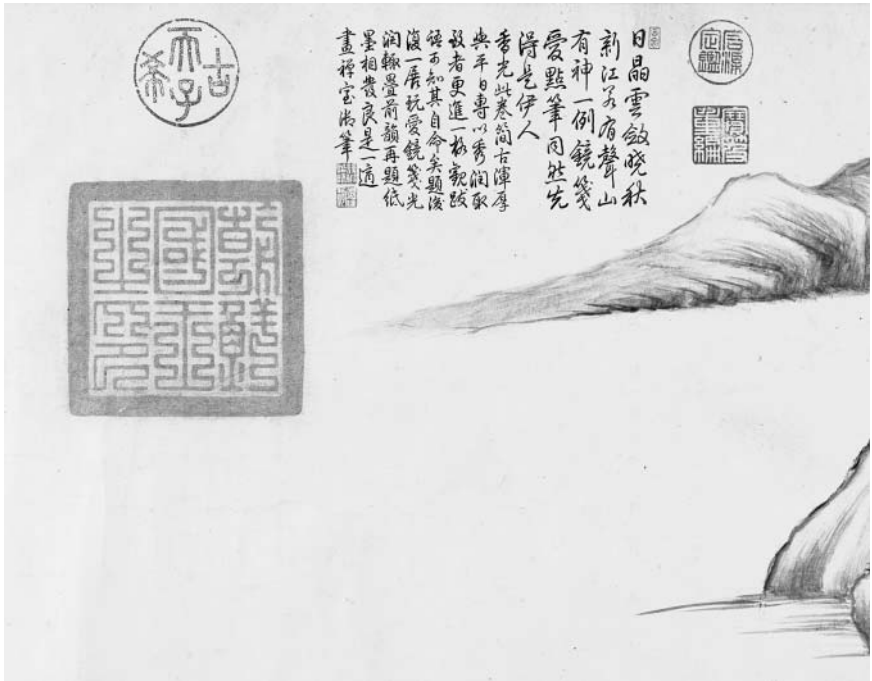

Figure 1. Detail of *River and Mountains on a Clear Autumn Day* (江山秋霽圖), c. 1624–1627. Dong Qichang (Chinese, 1555–1636), containing imprint of the Korean royal seal. Handscroll, ink on Korean paper; canvas size: 38.4 x 136.8cm (15 1/8 x 53 7/8 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1959.46. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

of competing demands. Like the Venetian *Cancelleria Secreta*, which reveals "more about the rhetoric of the self-styled Serene Republic," than about political realities, so too does the Chosŏn diplomatic record reveal how much diplomacy was about reconciling Korean interests with imperial ambitions and pieties with its ideology. This reconciliation entailed reproducing and sustaining templates of abstraction—that is, a way to address political upheaval, frontier incidents, controversies of succession, and matters of grievance that would be conceptually and rhetorically acceptable to the sovereign claims of the imperial court, but still assert the prerogatives of the Chosŏn state as a self-governing Confucian monarchy.[48]

Intercourse with imperial China relied on the activation of past precedents, whether found in classical models, protocols of ritual, past imperial edicts, or shared political commitments. The delicacy of precedent was imbued with a recursive quality—when the past guides the present, those who act in the present know that their actions will serve as examples for the future. But for this chain

of recursion to work, there must be a font of knowledge to draw upon. What knowledge base was available to the Chosŏn government? The question is more difficult to answer than it first appears. If the extent of archival loss is assumed to increase over time, it would seem that a Chosŏn functionary in one of the three permanent agencies overseeing diplomatic activity, the Office of Interpreters (Sayŏgwŏn 司譯院), the Ministry of Rites (Yejo 禮曹), or the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence (Sŭngmunwŏn 承文院), would have at his hands a much more comprehensive set of records than we do today.

Such an impression can be misleading. For one, we now have access to Ming and Qing records stored in Beijing that were once inaccessible to the Chosŏn court. But even many records located in Korea were off-limits to contemporaries. The Chosŏn *Veritable Records* is a case in point. Today, as a full-text, online searchable database, it is an eminently accessible source, thanks in part to the curation efforts of South Korea's National Institute of Korean History (Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe). It is invaluable for its coverage of early Chosŏn-Ming relations, for which textual records are relatively sparse. But the conditions of access during the Chosŏn period could not be more different. Compiled by committee after the death of each king, these chronicles of the Chosŏn dynasty were not for contemporary eyes. Once completed, the draft versions of the *Veritable Records* were washed away and burned as part of a mourning ritual for the deceased king. This practice likely doubled as a precaution against their dissemination, for the final copies were sent away to be locked in repositories. Closely guarded, access even to the court was granted only in rare instances.[49]

As Graeme Reynolds discusses in his contribution to this issue, these precautions did not prevent the tampering of the *Veritable Records*. Indeed, investment in history as both a source for moral guidance and authoritative precedent only raised the political stakes of controlling its narrative.[50] How veritable these chronicles are is therefore subject to historiographical debate, but their role in everyday administration during the Chosŏn was limited in scope. Produced for long term "archival" safekeeping, they were virtually inaccessible for administrative reference; they were not consulted as authorities of first resort by the royal court and its agencies. Government functionaries relied instead on the tŭngnok, "recorded notes," handwritten ledgers that documented the activities of their respective institutions.[51]

Instead of original documentary material or historical chronicles, the main administrative references for Chosŏn agencies were tŭngnok. To give an example in the domain of foreign relations, in 1725 the newly crowned King Yŏngjo (r. 1724–76) learned that twenty-six men from the Qing had been shipwrecked in Cheju. After consultation with a tŭngnok, his court ventured to follow the repatriation protocol observed in 1721.[52] These tŭngnok also provided the past paper trail, the source of past precedents to guide the practice of diplomacy and the wording of communiqués to the imperial court.[53] As King Yŏngjo's royal secretary at

the time put it, "all matters in our country, regardless of great or small, follow the examples in the recorded notes (tŭngnok). Even though we may occasionally face the problem of 'playing the zither with a glued-on bridge' (i.e. being inflexible even when the situation has changed), there is no other option besides observing the [precedents] in the recorded notes."[54] The tŭngnok served as a source of institutional authority, but it was also a practical device, to be examined in detail (*sanggo* 詳考), transferred from an agency for consultation, or copied in piecemeal when necessary.[55]

It was not always mentioned which agency's tŭngnok was consulted for matters of diplomacy, though those of the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence would be the logical choice. A chancery office that handled, created, and stored diplomatic missives, it was created in 1411 to replace legacy Koryŏ organs, as part of a general reform of record-keeping at the Chosŏn state. A post in the chancery was a prestigious assignment, reserved usually for most talented (and well-connected) passers of the *munkwa* civil service examinations.[56] At first, it kept only original versions of documents, but in 1421, to guard against "the calamity of water and fire," it began to make copies (*tŭngsa* 謄寫) of these correspondences to be stored in other repositories.[57] According to the procedures documented in the Chosŏn government's *Great Code of Administration* (*Kyŏngguk taejŏn* 經國大典), the secretary of a returning envoy mission was also to submit their written reports of their observations to the chancery for inclusion in its recorded notes.[58]

Tŭngnok took the form of bound manuscripts. Collation, binding, and the presence of a book cover guarded to some degree against damage and loss. Still, as essentially bundles of paper, they were no less vulnerable to water and fire than original documents. Their frequent use as objects of consultation likely also increased the odds of their being misplaced. But if later Chosŏn practices, such as annual exposure of these books to sunlight as a precaution against moisture, are any indication, careful attention was nonetheless paid to their preservation. Indeed, many tŭngnok and other bound manuscripts from the late Chosŏn period do survive in reasonably good condition.[59]

The same cannot be said for pre-sixteenth-century records, which suffered considerably during the Imjin War of 1592–98. In the wake of the Japanese invasion, the Chosŏn court abandoned the capital city. When the city's angry denizens rose up in protest, they set fire to the government offices to destroy the slave registers, and the resulting conflagration engulfed the royal palaces, reducing to ashes their extensive holdings, which included a copy of the Koryŏ-period *Veritable Records*.[60] The calamity may explain the partial record of pre-Imjin Chosŏn-Ming correspondence. In the Jangseogak Archives, one tŭngnok produced by the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence that does contain pre-Imjin material is identified as the *Koewŏn tŭngnok* 槐院謄錄 (*Recorded Notes of the Pagoda Tree Hall*). So-called because the Pagoda Tree Hall (*Koewŏn*) was the sobriquet for the agency, this collection comprises the surviving twelve of what appears to be thirteen total

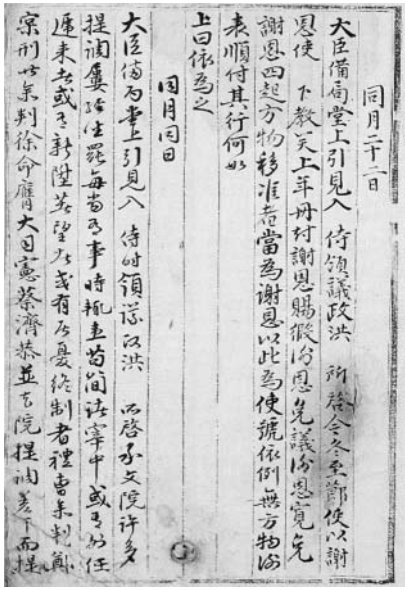

Figure 2. *Koewŏn tŭngnok* 3:3a. Kyu 27013, Kyujanggak Archives, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies Original Text Search Service. kyudb.snu.ac.kr/.

Figure 3. *Koewŏn kyedal* 1:3a (Detail). Kyu 27012, Kyujanggak Archives, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies Original Text Search Service. kyudb.snu.ac.kr/.

original fascicles (*kwŏn*).[61] The exact period of composition is not indicated, but this tŭngnok was likely a later recompilation of diplomatic correspondences with the Ming, rather than an original ledger.

The penmanship of many surviving tŭngnok are in a hurried grass or running script, bearing the rushed hand of a busy copyist. The calligraphic style varies from one area of the text to another, as the responsibility of keeping the ledger passed through many hands over the long time periods they span. In contrast, the *Koewŏn tŭngnok*, though still a manuscript, features a methodical, square style of handwriting, suggesting that it was recopied from a preexisting ledger. Indeed, this tŭngnok likely served a commemorative function, rather than as an administrative reference. Its inner cover is labeled with the characters *Hwangmyŏng si Koewŏn tŭngnok* 皇明時槐院謄錄 (*Records of the Pagoda Tree Hall from the Period of the Imperial Ming*), which suggests the provenance, at least of this sole surviving copy, to postdate the Ming. It is most likely a product of King Chŏngjo's (r. 1776–1800) efforts to recompile Ming period diplomatic documents in 1799.[62]

Moreover, of its 1,075 correspondences, which are organized by documentary form, and then by chronological order, only a minuscule portion (about 1/30) are

before the seventeenth century—that is, before the Imjin War. This body must represent only a small fraction of the total material that the Chosŏn court originally assembled, as many more such texts survive, often in partial form, in pre-Imjin *Veritable Records*.[63] In contrast, the Chosŏn court also kept a virtually unbroken record of correspondences with the Ming court from the beginning of the Imjin War through the reign of King Kwanghae (r. 1608–23) in the *Sadae mun'gwe* 事大文軌 (*Documentary Trail of Serving the Great*).[64] This collection, which survives only partially, essentially follows the format of the *Koewŏn tŭngnok*, though it is not identified as a tŭngnok. What is unclear is whether both were modeled after a pre-Imjin, but now lost, tŭngnok.

There are other surviving tŭngnok that bear the sobriquet of the Pagoda Tree Hall. Another bound manuscript volume, stored in the Kyujanggak Archives, is also listed as the *Koewŏn tŭngnok*, but it is of a different nature from the Jangseogak series.[65] Rather than reproductions of diplomatic documents, this tŭngnok is a running ledger of reported events and royal decisions pertaining to the dispatch and reception of foreign envoys from both Qing China and Japan, investigation of illicit border crossers, the training and review of interpreters, border markets, and other aspects of foreign contact. The organization is strictly chronological, spanning from 1764 to 1775. This tŭngnok, rather than the Jangseogak version, likely represents the closest we have to original documentary material whose "provenance" traces to the administrative activities of the Chosŏn court.[66]

No one set of tŭngnok covered all diplomatic activity. Since the responsibility of foreign relations fell on multiple agencies, and agencies kept their own tŭngnok, documentation was similarly fragmented across different ledgers. The Kyujanggak Archives contains a number of other tŭngnok related to diplomatic activity. Two series identified by their cover titles, the eleven-volume *Ch'iksa tŭngnok* 勅使謄錄 (*Recorded Notes for [Reception] of Edict Envoys*) and the seven-volume *Choha tŭngnok* 朝賀謄錄 (*Recorded Notes for Tribute and Congratulatory Envoy Missions*), are both chronicles of diplomatic activity, with the former concerned with the reception of imperial envoys and the latter the dispatch of Korean envoys to Beijing.[67] The similar cover titles of these tŭngnok, however, conceals an underlying diversity. Besides the published *Ch'iksa tŭngnok*, a number of other tŭngnok also employ the term *ch'iksa* and are concerned with welcoming of Qing envoys, but were created by other bureaucratic organs with a different administrative focus (see table 2).

Many surviving tŭngnok also reflect partial temporal coverage. Without cross-reading these tŭngnok against other materials in the diplomatic record, it is difficult to ascertain whether a particular ledger begins and breaks off because of specific institutional reforms, evolution in record-keeping practices, or simply because of archival loss. What is clear, however, is that these tŭngnok emerged in the course of the Chosŏn court's administration of diplomacy, and (with the exception of the Jangseogak *Koewŏn tŭngnok*) were not post facto compilations.

Table 2. Extant *tŭngnok*-type ledgers related to Chosŏn-Qing diplomacy in the Kyujanggak Archives

listed title	*approximate translation*	*size*
弔勅謄錄	"Recorded notes for [reception of] condolence edicts"	1
譯官上言謄錄	"Recorded notes of communications to the court from interpreters"	1
勅使謄錄	"Recorded notes for [reception of] edict envoys"	1
勅使宴禮謄錄	"Recorded notes for banquet ceremonies for edict envoys"	1
勅使謄錄	"Recorded notes for [reception of] edict envoys"	11
勅使儀註謄錄 續一	"Continuation of recorded notes of ceremony guides for the [reception of] edict envoys, Part 1"	1
勅使時各項儀註謄錄 (迎勅儀註謄錄 第三)	"Recorded notes of various protocols on the occasion of [receiving] edict envoys." ("Recorded notes of protocols for receiving edicts," part 3)	1
勅使謄錄 (儀註謄錄十八)	("Recorded notes of protocols," part 18)	1
詔勅謄錄	"Recorded notes of proclamations and edicts"	1
勅使日記	"Diary for [receiving] imperial envoys"	19
朝賀謄錄	"Recorded notes for [dispatch of] tribute and congratulatory envoy missions"	7
槐院謄錄、槐院啓達	"Recorded notes of the pagoda tree hall" / "Reports to the throne from the pagoda tree hall"	12 surviving from 17
典客司日記	"Diary of the Custodian of Foreign Visitors Office"	99

In this regard, they can be seen as extensions to earlier, pre-Qing sets of documents, a series of "ceremonial trails" (*ŭigwe* 儀軌), that is, model protocols,[68] associated with the Envoy Reception Commission (Yŏngjŏp Togam 迎接都監).[69] While some ŭigwe are well known for illustrations of ritual processions accompanied with detailed descriptions of how particular ceremonies are to be performed,[70] most concern the materials, personnel, victuals, and logistics necessary for provisioning, lodging, and entertaining the imperial envoy.[71] With ceremonial and administrative precedents thus ensconced in the ŭigwe, later tŭngnok concerning envoy reception could therefore focus on running administrative decisions, while making incremental modifications.[72]

years of coverage	*associated agency*	*area of coverage*	*call number*
1681; 1684; 1689	禮曹 稽制司	Reception of Qing condolence envoys in the wake of Chosŏn royal deaths	奎12964
1637–1692	禮曹 典客司	Administration of interpreter-related affairs	奎12963
1637–1757	禮曹 典客司	Practical matters of receiving the imperial envoy: entertainment, lodging, and logistics	奎12904 #v.2
1636–1724	禮曹 典享司	Related to banquets of reception	奎12918
1637–1800	禮曹 稽制司	Ceremonial matters related to the reception of imperial edicts	奎12904 #1-v.1; 3-12;
1800–1861	禮曹	Ceremonial matters related to the reception of imperial edicts	奎12906 #2
1679–1683	禮曹	Annotated protocols for 34 different kinds of ceremonies related to envoy reception	奎12906 #1
1702; 1718	禮曹	Similar to above	奎12906 #3
1636–1670	禮曹 Likely 承文院	Copies of imperial edicts and diplomatic communications from the Qing	奎12904 #2
1723–1890	承政院	Administrative communications between the Yŏngjŏp togam and the Sŭngjŏngwŏn	奎12799 v.1-19
1648–1755	禮曹	Records related to the logistics, regulations, and documents related to missions dispatched to Beijing	奎12907-v.1-7
1743–1887	承文院	Administration of diplomatic affairs	奎27013; 奎27012
1640–1886	典客司	Administration of diplomatic affairs	奎13052-v.1–99

COMPILING THE *TONGMUN HWIGO*

The extensive records of the Chosŏn state reflected efforts by different agencies to maintain the institutional knowledge necessary for the administration of their respective policy areas. The documents held by the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence were available for administrative consultation, but they remained, as one Chosŏn official described it, "vast like the ocean."[73] Here the Chosŏn state confronted a challenge of information management common to many early modern states, with complex bureaucratic machinery. Not only was there potentially "too much to know," there was also the problem of coordination—how different

agencies could work together amid high turnover in personnel and the complexity of the tasks involved.[74]

The creation of the *Tongmun hwigo* can be understood from this perspective, but it was also connected to how King Chŏngjo envisioned publication as an expression of royal authority. During his reign, the court sponsored numerous projects, printing the neo-Confucian canon, orthodox literary anthologies, morality books, as well as statecraft and administrative works such as the *Tongmun hwigo*.[75] The *Tongmun hwigo* began as a reorganization of the various tŭngnok held at the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence. The project was likely spurred by a fire in 1784 that destroyed thirteen volumes of its tŭngnok, which led to efforts to repair the damage by consulting other government sources in Pyongyang and Ŭiju.[76] By 1786, the project to "edit and correct" (*sujŏng* 修正) the tŭngnok was well underway. As the corrected draft approached completion, it was proposed that it be printed in movable type in order to "facilitate its use by the state," expanding the scope and driving up the costs of the project.[77] As of the fifth month of 1787, final details remained to be decided, as the records in the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence were still found to be incomplete. The king ordered the compilers to consult the ŭigwe held by the Ministry of Rites.[78] By the tenth month, the king's secretary reported that the compilation was ready for publication, with *Tongmun hwigo* selected for its title.[79] For King Chŏngjo, the *Tongmun hwigo* finally satisfied an age-old stipulation in the *Great Code* for diplomatic records to be printed every three years (a rule that had virtually never been observed).[80] The *Tongmun hwigo* now remediated this long-standing oversight, but this attempt to rationalize record-keeping produced its own administrative burdens. Regular triannual printing ultimately proved difficult to implement. Instead, a series of addenda were produced every dozen or so years, accompanied by laments of bureaucratic malaise excusing the failure to follow the *Great Code* to the letter.[81]

The *Tongmun hwigo* was also conceived as a new-and-improved tŭngnok for the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence. It was intended as an authoritative reference, a purpose reflected in its novel organizational scheme. The *Tongmun hwigo* assembled the relevant documents according to policy area. This scheme, according to the editorial notes ("Pŏmnye" 凡例) of the compilation, was to "facilitate the examination of references"—that is, the set of precedents specific to each area of concern. For this purpose, "no [format] is better than compilation according to type, and divided in twenty-five headings." Each of the headings would contain its own "subheadings," under which "no other matters mixed in."[82] Although chronology was maintained under each grouping, this scheme departed from the general chronology of diplomatic relations found in other compilations, such as the early Chosŏn statecraft and practical knowledge encyclopedia complied by the official interpreter Ŏ Sukkwŏn 魚叔權 (fl. 1520–40), the *Kosa ch'waryo* 攷事撮要 (*Selected Investigations of Significant Matters*),[83] or the late Chosŏn institutional manual for the Office of Interpretation, the *T'ongmung'wan*

chi.[84] It also contrasts with the organization of diplomatic materials by documentary style in the Jangseogak Ming-period *Koewŏn tŭngnok*. The practice of diplomacy, at least as conceived by the organization of the *Tongmun hwigo*, was about the successful management of particular domains, rather than acquiring a diachronic narrative over the development of bilateral relations.

Also related to the thematic and precedent-oriented organization of the *Tongmun hwigo* are its conventions of omission. Although large segments of diplomatic documents are produced verbatim, this reproduction is usually partial. The distinction between emperor and vassal, along with the rhetorical conventions that supported them, is a central feature in diplomatic documents. But many documents in the *Tongmun hwigo* omit these rhetorical flourishes, replacing them with the term *un un* 云云—the sinographic equivalent of ellipses.[85] The same elliptical gesture is used to truncate the "layered quotation" system, especially in cases where the previous instances of correspondence are already included. These omissions become the norm for documents related to the "routine" triannual diplomatic missions, namely those dispatched for the winter solstice (*tongji*), the imperial birthday (*sŏngjŏl*), and the new year's congratulations (*hajŏng*). Instead of a complete text, the *Tongmun hwigo* usually provides only a reference to the documentary template for this type of missive. When the text of missives are preserved, they concern embassies dealing with a "nonroutine" issue, necessitating an exchange of documents beyond the usual presentation of diplomatic memorials.[86]

The use of templates for formulaic documents drew from conventions long established in earlier compilations. Both the early Chosŏn *Kosa ch'waryo* and the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* featured templates for diplomatic documents. Though they, like the *Tongmun hwigo*, too covered diplomatic practice, these three compilations reflected rather different epistemic impulses towards the documentation of diplomatic activity. The *Kosa ch'waryo* conceived it as one of many branches of knowledge that fell under its purview. Besides diplomatic matters and a synopsis of Chosŏn institutions,[87] it also contained, for instance, conversion formulas for weights and measures and references for penal law and slavery regulations,[88] as well as remedies for common maladies and laundry techniques.[89] Rather than a statecraft manual adopting the gaze of a court official, it occupied the vantage of a generic Chosŏn elite, who "in the course of his life will deal with thousands of different matters in every move" for in "matters of public private, there are a range of matters to be understood by the highest official to the lowliest functionary, and even a gentleman who lives in leisure."[90]

The *T'ongmun'gwan chi*, in contrast, adopted a different epistemic relationship toward diplomatic practice. First compiled by an interpreter, Kim Chinam 金指南 (1564–?), and his son Kim Kyŏngnam 金慶南 (fl. 1720) over several decades, it was updated and reprinted several times until the very end of the Chosŏn period to reflect changes to the history, statutes, precedents, and practices of diplomacy.[91] At the time of its compilation, the day-to-day operation of diplomacy was carried out by Chosŏn's official interpreters of *chungin* background, but it fell to their

social superiors, the civil officials who hailed from aristocratic backgrounds, to oversee their activities. Its compiler, Kim Kyŏngnam, thus defended the value and urgency of the interpreter and his expertise, even as he acknowledged the low status of its person:

> [I have undertaken this effort] because I know humbly that interpreters are indispensable to the state. Although their person is insignificant, their duties are important. In serving the Great State and communicating with neighbors, these men have their Way; when it comes to exercising it, their tools are regulations, protocols, and templates. If we do not record these matters for preservation, from where can models be sought?[92]

In defending their craft, its compilers employed a different trope of knowledge: one of creating legibility. The urgency was not the loss of knowledge per se, for the "six hundred odd professional interpreters" who staffed the three-hundred-year-old bureau had "relied on mouth and ear, transmitting information to one another." Their expertise was tacit; the problem was "no one has written down its affairs in words," and without a "system," there was no way to "verify" different rules and regulations.[93] The compilation addressed these problems by transferring tacit institutional knowledge into a body of explicit and systematized knowledge common between those who staffed the organization and those who oversaw it. This move, implicit by its adoption of the nomenclature, organization, and conventions of a gazetteer (*chi* 志), made the operations of the agency legible for one who sought a top-down perspective.[94] Its greatest beneficiaries were unlikely to be the interpreters who staffed the agency, but instead the high-ranking officials who drew on its services during the embassies it led and the civil bureaucrats assigned to the agency's administration.

Though the contents of the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* overlapped with the *Tongmun hwigo*, their purposes were distinct. They both worked towards centralizing information to provide holistic legibility, but if the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* aided in the legibility of a state agency, the *Tongmun hwigo* was about the legibility of diplomacy as a practice oriented around established precedents. Both were products and instruments of bureaucratic knowledge, devices that facilitated the transfer of knowledge from different agents and between different institutions. With their respective functions largely complementary, the *Tongmun hwigo*'s emergence in 1778 did not make the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* obsolete; both texts were continually updated with new moveable type editions until the end of the nineteenth century, with the last revision of the *T'ongmun'gwan chi* published in 1888.

Once the first version of the *Tongmun hwigo* was completed, it became a model for organizing subsequent diplomatic records.[95] Later addenda were printed to the 1778 compilation, which only contributed to the monumental nature of the *Tongmun hwigo*. In 1851, court officials complained of its "enormous size" and sought to create yet another compilation, a "simpler," "easier to reference" version that

"trimmed it of complexities and duplications,"—the *Tongmun'go yak* 同文考略 (*Abbreviated References of Unified Writing*).[96] The last addendum to the *Tongmun hwigo* was completed in 1881, in the wake of a series of reforms that saw the establishment of a new foreign ministry, the T'ongni Amun 統理衙門. It contained additional entries for matters related to treaty diplomacy with Western powers, before the regime of diplomacy it modeled was made obsolete with the formal end of Qing-Korean tributary relations after the Sino-Japanese War.[97] Nonetheless, even after the total reorganization of the Chosŏn state with Kabo Reforms of 1895 and the signing of the Sino-Korean Treaty of 1899, the values, rituals, and practices documented in the *Tongmun hwigo* still lingered on in the "reluctance and nostalgia" of the Qing empire's officials.[98]

POSTSCRIPT: CHOSŎN DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVES AS INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Chosŏn-period statecraft compilations, from the various tŭngnok to the *Tongmun hwigo*, were not simply a collated edition of archival documents. Rather than collections to be stored away for safekeeping (and to gather dust), they retained their instrumental function as guides for action through their documentation of precedent. As such, their epistemic orientation was as much toward the past as the future; what mattered in the past they documented was what could guide future action. They were both products *and* instruments of diplomacy.

What, then, are the implications of thinking about these instruments of knowledge in terms of archives and archival practice? One basic historiographical observation is that while particular record-keeping practices emerge from context-specific rationales, the best practices of Chosŏn record-keepers would still be legible to bureaucrats working in very different cultural and institutional contexts. For instance, according to Dietmar Schenk, the typical Prussian *Sachaktenregistratur* "organized papers by subject matter and arranged in chronological order within each category." This organizing logic is similar to that of the *Tongmun hwigo*, with the exception that the *Hwigo* went a step further by assembling only the contents of these papers in a single volume. The *Sachaktenregistratur* of the Berlin Academy of Arts also contained what could easily be described as a tŭngnok, in which the contents of the papers were copied by hand into a ledger, which was then organized chronologically by date, alongside notes regarding the academy's administrative decisions.[99] Therefore, while we can identify practices specific to the Chosŏn court, it makes little sense to speak of a uniquely Chosŏn archival practice that is either quintessentially Korean or unequivocally premodern. Certainly, the emergence of new institutions, for instance, in the wake of the Kabo Reforms, and new long-distance and rapid communicative technologies such as the telegraph, also transformed record-keeping practices. But what

remains legible across different systems of record-keeping are common "structural features that . . . are not limited to a particular cultural environment."[100]

The archive has been fetishized in part because it was a hallmark of Weberian "bureaucratic rationality," that was supposedly tied to the modern nation-state. Insofar as the question of bureaucracy has entered the English-language historiographical discussion of the Chosŏn period, it has been through Eisendstadt's typological notion of a "patrimonial bureaucracy" or through the lens of an "aristocratic-bureaucratic" balance (in part to distinguish Chosŏn state and society from more "modern" state-society configurations).[101] Indeed there is little to gainsay the extent of the transformations of Korean *society* in the wake of modernization and colonialism or the scope and intensity of the bureaucratic rationalization these processes entailed, as Hwang Kyung Moon's recent book has shown. But to quote Alexander Woodside, "the rationalization processes we think of as 'modern' are more manifold than is often assumed" and can occur "independently" from "capitalism or industrialization."[102] It becomes less clear that the *epistemic* questions of bureaucracy—namely its relationship to the production of knowledge, its ability to develop holistic self-knowledge through the proliferation of protocols governing mechanisms of operation, and its tendency to accumulate information—are fundamentally different across the premodern and modern divide. With Chosŏn's archival practices in focus, the Weberian distinction between the premodern Korean state's orientation "toward definitely ancient ideals" and the "instrumental rationalization" of modern practices becomes less meaningful. Instead, a different historiographical question comes to the fore—it is the question of how "systematic, ideologically grounded, and textually based bureaucratization" of the Chosŏn state in fact operated and the roles the instrumentalization of knowledge played in such a process.[103]

The purpose of this discussion then is to restore a sense of historical life to these compilations as instruments of knowledge. If we recognize that the epistemic burdens they took on went far beyond the mere question of storage and retrieval, it becomes inadequate to view them solely as documentation for Chosŏn's foreign relations. Instead, a different kind of analytical gaze is necessary, and with it comes a different kind of historiographical promise. When compilations such as the *Tongmun hwigo* are placed back into their institutional context and viewed alongside their predecessors, such as the various tŭngnok with direct provenance to the processes of diplomacy, then the documentary itineraries they trace enable not simply a reconstruction of diplomatic practice at finer resolutions of detail, but also an appreciation of the administrative procedures, organizational logic, and cultural practices of the Chosŏn state that made diplomacy possible in the first place. On a methodological level, a move away from seeing these texts as documenting interstate relations per se to reading them in terms of the practices that created them is also tantamount to a move toward a different kind of diplomatic history, one not about the nature of relations between states, but about diplomacy's culture and practices. Combined with a serious appreciation of ritual and

ceremony, we can arrive at a new sort of cultural history of diplomacy that finally moves beyond the stranglehold of Westphalian fictions and modernist, nation-state-based normativities.[104] And with Chosŏn diplomatic records so accessible with recent pushes for digitization, such a retelling of Korea's history may lie just barely beyond the horizon.

NOTES

1. See Vermeersch, "Archival Practice in Premodern Korea," in this issue; and Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn hugi sadae munsŏ," 35.

2. "Haesŏl," in Sŭngmunwŏn, *Tongmun hwigo* (hereafter TMHG), 1–3.

3. For topical organization of TMHG, see Kim Kyŏngnok, "*Tongmun hwigo* rŭl t'onghan Chosŏn," 69–103. For Korean translation and publication of border crossing and frontier-related sources, see Pae and Ku, *Kugyŏk* Tongmun hwigo *kanggye saryo*; and Ku et al., *Kugyŏk* Tongmun hwigo *pŏmwŏl saryo*.

4. Historical studies of Chosŏn-Qing diplomacy rely extensively on TMHG as a source base. For an exemplary study, see Kim S., *Ginseng and Borderland*.

5. The oeuvre of Kim Kyŏngnok is a major exception; see Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn hugi *Tongmun hwigo* ŭi p'yŏnch'an"; "Chosŏn hugi sadae munsŏ ŭi chongnyu"; "Chosŏn sidae tae Chungguk oegyo munsŏ"; and "*Tongmun hwigo* rŭl t'onghan Chosŏn."

6. Cook, "Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country," 601–2; Walsham, "Social History of the Archive," 11; in reference to Foucault, see *Order of Things* and *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

7. Schenk, "How to Distinguish between Manuscripts and Archival Records," 6, 8, 12.

8. For examples of digital databases, see Kyujanggak, Kyujanggak wŏnmun kŏmsaek sŏbisŭ, (kyudb.snu.ac.kr); and Changsŏgak tijit'ŏl ak'aibŭ (yoksa.aks.ac.kr/main.jsp). For a brief history of Korean studies digital databases, see Cha, "Digital Korean Studies."

9. Vermeersch, "Archival Practice in Premodern Korea."

10. Walsham, "Social History of the Archive," 8–11.

11. Friedrich, "Epilogue," 425–29; Cook, "Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country," 608–9.

12. Differences of accessibility apply generally to the early modern context. See Friedrich, *Birth of the Archive*, 201–4.

13. As Jürgen Paul has suggested regarding medieval Muslim chanceries, which face an analogous problem of archival loss. See Paul, "Archival Practices in the Muslim World."

14. Schenk, "How to Distinguish between Manuscripts and Archival Records," 7.

15. See, for instance, Sayŏgwŏn, *Nogŏltae*; *Nogŏltae ŏnhae*.

16. As in the *Brilliant Flowers* anthologies; see S. Wang, "Co-Constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea," 284–341.

17. As collected in Im, *Yŏnhaengnok chŏnjip*.

18. Therefore following Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn sidae tae Chungguk oegyo munsŏ," 134.

19. For how ritual and discourse interfaces with the conventional understanding of diplomacy as negotiations over interests and expressions of power, see Lee, "Diplomatic Ritual as a Power Resource," 309–36, 377. For ritual contests surrounding diplomatic documents in Sino-Korean diplomacy, see Van Lieu, "Politics of Condolence"; Lee, *China's*

Hegemony, 41–44; Yu P., "Chosŏn ch'ogi yŏng choch'ik"; Chŏng, "Oegyo ŭirye yŏn'gu ŭi maeryŏk"; and Han H., "Tae Myŏng ŭirye." For a reconstruction of Korean receptions, see Liu, "Ethnography and Empire through an Envoy's Eye." For the performativity of such documents, see Van Lieu, "Chosŏn-Qing Tributary Discourse."

20. For explanation of the former, see Van Lieu, "Chosŏn-Qing Tributary Discourse," 84–85; for examples of the latter, see Ku, *Chosŏn sidae oegyo munsŏ*.

21. For practice of robing, see Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, 11, 279.

22. For social identities of Ming envoys, see Sun, "Lun Mingchu de huanguan waijiao," 34–42; "Shi shuo Ming dai Xingren," 11–16.

23. Sin et al., *Kukcho oyerŭi*, 3:7a–14a; Wan, "Mingdai waijiao zhaoling," 39–40.

24. *Sŏngjong sillok* 5:1a [1470/5/1#1].

25. Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 4:13a–c; Kim Chinam and Kim K., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* (reprint), vol. 2:239–41.

26. Y. Wang, *Remaking the Chinese Empire*, 65–70.

27. Sin et al., *Kukcho oryeŭi koi*, 78b; 82a–84b; 89b–99a.

28. Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn sidae tae Chungguk oegyo munsŏ," 150–51. Ironically, their importance for royal commemoration may have been what led to their demise. Many of the treasures of the royal house were moved to the Busan National Gugak Center (Pusan Kungnip Kugagwŏn) for safekeeping during the Korean War, but a fire there on December 26, 1954, destroyed the majority of the materials. No comprehensive accounting exists of what was lost, but 3,400 objects is a widely cited figure. One of the famous surviving objects is a portrait of King Yŏngjo, virtually the only Chosŏn royal portrait to escape the conflagration relatively unscathed. Coincidentally, of all the Ming and Qing investiture documents sent to Korea, only those related to Yŏngjo are known to still exist today. It is likely that many other diplomatic documents preserved by the Chosŏn court survived through the Korean War, only to be consumed by fire shortly after its conclusion. On the Pusan fire, see Yun C., "Hwanyŏngjŏn Chŏngjo ŏjin," 243–46; on Yŏngjo's *komyŏng*, see Chang, "Ch'ŏngdae Chosŏn wangsil ch'aekpong komyŏng," 144–49.

29. King T'aejong, for instance, once refused a Ming envoy's attempt to read aloud such a document in the manner of a proclamation or edict. *T'aejong sillok* 7:13b [1404/4/18].

30. C. Wang, "Dilemmas of Empire," 18–33.

31. Chŏng (Jung), "Koryŏ-Myŏng oegyo munsŏ"; "From a Lord to a Bureaucrat," 115–36.

32. For a case study, see Van Lieu, "Chosŏn-Qing Tributary Discourse," 98–100.

33. The solstice mission was a replacement for the mission that was traditionally sent for the birthday of the Ming heir apparent (K. *ch'onch'u* 千秋; C. *qianqiu*). These missions also had Mongol period precedents. See Yun P., "Rethinking the Tribute System," 146–48.

34. "P'yojŏn chang chuja" 表箋狀奏咨, in Kim Chinam, ed., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 3:14b–16a; in Kim Chinam and Kim K., eds., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* (reprint), 1:112–15; TMHG 35:4a–b (1:672). For a summary of templates, see Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn hugi sadae munsŏ," 194–205. Chosŏn were continuing Ming period practices. In the Ming period, Chinese officials suspected that Korean memorials were recycled from year to year, but Chosŏn in fact wrote new ones every year. See Ŏ, *Korean Storyteller's Miscellany*, 194–95.

35. Pak W., "Myŏngch'o ŭi munja ok"; Chen and Shen, "Chaoxian yu Ming Qing biaojian"; Li S., "Qing chu Chaoxian biaojian," 88–91.

36. Sŏ K. et al., *Tongmunsŏn*, *kwŏn* 31–44.

37. For instance, the *Chip'o chip* 止浦集, the literary collection of the late Koryŏ official Kim Ku 金坵 (1211–78), dates only from 1801, and includes the diplomatic documents attributed to him in the *Tongmunsŏn*.

38. Ch'oe et al., "Yebu: Sadae" 禮部：事大, in *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* 3:32a; Ŏ, *Kosa Ch'waryo* 3:2a–3a. P'yŏn Kyeryang's collected works includes an undated diplomatic memorial that matches in rhetoric and form a memorial sent in 1420, recorded in the *Veritable Records*. Differences in diction and exact phrasing suggest that the revision process left multiple versions of the text. Pyŏn, *Ch'unjŏng sŏnsaeng munjip* 9 in Han'guk munjip ch'onggan 8:119d–20a; *Sejong sillok* 8:4b–5a [1420/04/15#1].

39. *Sejo sillok* 39:30b [1466/08/11#3].

40. Li G., "Ji Chaoxian guo de biaowen," 207–13.

41. *T'aejong sillok* 29:36b [1415/06/04#1].

42. Ŏ, *Kosa Ch'waryo* 3:4a–5a; Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 3:21a; Kim Chinam and Kim K., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* (reprint), vol.1:125. The measurements were to be based on the *chuch'ŏk* standard, of 21.04cm per *ch'ŏk*.

43. For an overview of the process, see Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn hugi sadae munsŏ," 212–14.

44. Chŏng, "Myŏngdae chŏn'gi oegyo sajŏl," 23.

45. See Neige daku dang'an [Grand Secretariat Archives]. On archiving practices in late imperial China and the provenance of the Grand Secretariat Archives, see Bartlett, "Qing Statesmen," 418–20; and Ye and Escherick, *Chinese Archives*, 329–30.

46. For imperial interest in Korean paper, see *Chungjong sillok* 100:62b [1543/05/08#1]; 100:73a [1543/06/10#4]; *Myŏngjong sillok* 4:72a [1546/11/09#4]; and Yun I., "Myŏngdae Tong Kich'ang."

47. On the organization of diplomatic documents in these collections, see Chŏng, "Koryŏ-Myŏng oegyo munsŏ sŏsik."

48. Walsham, "Social History of the Archive," 19; De Vivo, "Ordering the Archive in Early Modern Venice"; Van Lieu, "Chosŏn-Qing Tributary Discourse," 80–82.

49. Duncan and Lee, *Institutional Basis of Civil Governance,* 176–78; Sun, *Ming Qing shiqi Zhongguo shixue dui Chaoxian de yingxiang*, 22–30, 55–56; Choi, *Annals of King T'aejo*, xiv–xix. See also *Chungjong sillok* 9:22b [1509/9/12#2]; and *Sŏnjo sillok* 197:7a [1606/3/21#5].

50. See Reynolds, "Culling Archival Collections in Koryŏ-Chosŏn Transition," in this special issue.

51. The most voluminous tŭngnok belonged to the Border Security Council (Pibyŏnsa 備邊司). Covering two centuries of the agency's operation (1617–1892), its record of correspondences, minutes, and chronicles amounts to 273 volumes. Palais, "Records and Record-Keeping in Nineteenth-Century Korea," 587n12.

52. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 586, Yŏngjo 1 [1725/2/3#19].

53. See *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 608, Yŏngjo 2 [1726/1/9#34]; 656, Yŏngjo 4 [1728/2/16#16].

54. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 626, Yŏngjo 2 [1726/11/3#26].

55. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 640, Yŏngjo 3 [1727/6/13#15]; 652, Yŏngjo 3 [1727/12/25#3].

56. *T'aejong sillok* 21:31b [1411/6/19#1]; Pak H. "Chosŏn ch'ogi Sŭngmunwŏn," 188–94.

57. *Sejong sillok* 11:15b [1421/3/23#5].

58. Ch'oe, et al., *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* 3:39b.

59. Kim Kyŏngnok, "Chosŏn sidae tae Chungguk oegyo munsŏ," 150–54.

60. *Sŏnjo sillok* 26:7a [1592/04/14#28].

61. Kwŏn K. et al., *Koewŏn tŭngnok,* K2–3465, Jangseogak Archives.

62. Kim T., "*Koewŏn tŭngnok* haeje."

63. Li S., "Chaoxian dui Hua chaogong," 84–85.

64. *Sadae mun'gwe*, 1619, Kyu-Kwi 3446-v.1–23, Kyujanggak Archives.

65. Sŭngmunwŏn, *Koewŏn tŭngnok*, 1775, Kyu 27013, Kyujanggak Archives.

66. Kang, "*Koewŏn tŭngnok* haeje." The volume's cover indicates that it is the third of a series; no other titles, however, share its name. Despite its appearance as a lone volume, the Kyujanggak *Koewŏn tŭngnok* is in fact the missing third volume of another series of manuscripts held at Kyujanggak, labeled as the *Koewŏn kyedal* 槐院啓達 (*Reports to the Throne from the Pagoda Tree Hall*). The *Kyedal* also contains a running ledger of communications between the royal court and the Office of Diplomatic Correspondence and their administrative decisions from 1743 to 1887. The series is incomplete, with only eleven of seventeen fascicles surviving. Volume 2 spans 1755 to 1764, leaving off exactly where the "third" fascicle of the *Koewŏn tŭngnok* begins. The fourth fascicle is missing, but since volume 5 begins from 1783, one can surmise it covered activities from 1775 to 1783. See also Kim Kyŏngnok, "*Koewŏn kyedal* haeje"; Sŭngmunwŏn, *Koewŏn kyedal*, Kyu 27012, Kyujanggak Archives.

67. Yejo, *Ch'iksa tŭngnok*, 1637–1800, Kyu 12904–1-v.1, v.3–12, Kyujanggak Archives; *Choha tŭngnok*, 1648–1755 Kyu 12907-v.1–7, Kyujanggak Archives. The chronicles' volume and continuous coverage of more than one century of diplomacy explain in part why they were published by the National Institute of Korean History as a modern reprint edition in the *Kaksa tŭngnok*, vols. 90–91.

68. For overview of ŭigwe, see Han Y., *Chosŏn wangjo ŭigwe*.

69. An ad hoc agency, the Envoy Reception Commission was established to coordinate different branches of the Chosŏn bureaucracy, including local government offices, the capital ministries, storehouses, and the court's interpretation agency, to manage the reception of the imperial envoy and his entourage. For explanation of *togam*'s relationship to ŭigwe, see Na, "Ŭigwe rŭl t'onghae pon Chosŏn hugi togam," 237–44.

70. See, for instance, Yŏngjŏp Togam, *Yŏngjŏp Togam toch'ŏng ŭigwe*.

71. No diplomatic ŭigwe exists from before 1608 and none postdates 1637. For a Ming embassy, see Yŏngjŏp Togam, *Yŏngjŏp Togam toch'ŏng ŭigwe*, 1634, Kyu 14559, Kyujanggak Archives; for a Qing embassy, see Yŏngjŏp Togam, *Yŏngjŏp Togam kunsaek ŭigwe*, 1637, Kyu 14577, Kyujanggak Archives.

72. A tentative hypothesis to be tested against a more comprehensive reconstruction of the practice and administration of Korean diplomacy.

73. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 656, Yŏngjo 4 [1728/2/16#16].

74. Blair, *Too Much to Know*; Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 659–65.

75. An T., "Chŏngjo ŭi munye chŏngch'aek."

76. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1573, Chŏngjo 8 [1784/12/27#44].

77. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1597, Chŏngjo 10 [1786/3/26#24]; 1598 Chŏngjo 10 [1786/4/5#21].

78. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1626, Chŏngjo 11 [1787/5/29#28].

79. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1635, Chŏngjo 11 [1787/10/8#14].

80. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1646, Chŏngjo 12 [1788/9/27#24]. I thank the anonymous reviewer for alerting me to this issue.

81. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1680, Chŏngjo 14 [1790/7/19#32]; v.1863, Sunjo 3 [1803/2/10#20]; 1888, Sunjo 4 [1804/12/3#16]; 2187, Sunjo 25 [1825/1/25#14]; 2486, Hŏnjong 15 [1849/5/27#10]; 2492, Hŏnjong 13 [1849/9/17#13].

82. "Mongnok" 目錄 1a–12b, TMHG 1; "Pŏmnye" 凡例 1a, TMHG 1.

83. Ŏ, *Kosa ch'waryo* 1–2, ASAMI 35.7 v.1–5, Asami Collection.

84. Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi, kwŏn* 9–11, ASAMI 35.7, Asami Collection.

85. Retrieval of the full content of these documents requires cross-checking against other records, but absent surviving originals it would be impossible to ascertain whether any compilations represented accurately the wording of original documents. Pending their full digitization, a systematic comparison of these different sources through a "distant reading" method may be a promising workaround. See Moretti, *Distant Reading*.

86. For examples, see *Wŏnp'yŏn* 28:1a–25b, TMHG; *Wŏnp'yŏn* 7:4b, TMHG.

87. Ŏ, *Kosa ch'waryo* 3:9b; 3:22a–32b.

88. Ibid., 3:48a–49b; 5:35b–36b; 37a.

89. Ibid. 5:1a–20b; 21a-b; 22b; 56b.

90. Ibid., "Preface." Though instances of rhetorical flourish, these statements well capture the range of topics broached by the *Kosa ch'waryo*.

91. The most widely accessible reprint edition is the 1888 edition (Kyu-882) reproduced as part of the *Kyujanggak charyo ch'ongsŏ* series in 2006; see Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi*.

92. "Preface," in Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 1:2a; Kim Chinam and Kim K., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* (reprint), vol.1, 5.

93. "Preface," Kim Chinam, *T'ongmun'gwan chi* 1:1a–b; Kim Chinam and Kim K., *T'ongmun'gwan chi* (reprint), vol. 1, 3–4.

94. For the gazetteer model, see Dennis, *Writing*, *Publishing*, *and Reading*, 22–48.

95. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1680, Chŏngjo 14 [1790/7/19#32].

96. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 2516, Ch'ŏlchong 2 [1851/4/15#13].

97. *Pupyŏn*, TMHG 4. See also discussion surrounding the reprints of 1804, 1818, 1825, etc. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 1863, Sunjo 3 [1803/2/10#20]; 1888, Sunjo 4 [1804/12/3#16]; 2102, Sunjo 18 [1818/9/3#33]; 2192, Sunjo 25 [1825/6/27#21]. For diplomatic reforms, see Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea*, 26–30.

98. Y. Wang, *Remaking the Chinese Empire*, 198–212. For an example of this transition and a vestige of "tributary" precedents holding force after 1895, see Song, *Making Borders in Modern East Asia*, 134–36.

99. Schenk, "How to Distinguish between Manuscripts and Archival Records." One significant difference between the Prussian example and the Chosŏn case is the former's use of numerical sorting systems for cross-referencing the documents in the ledger.

100. Ibid., 14–15; Friedrich, "Epilogue," 429–39.

101. This pattern is reflected in Chosŏn period statecraft in general; see Palais, "Confucianism and the Aristocratic/Bureaucratic Balance," 427–68; and Duncan, *Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 59–98.

102. Woodside, *Lost Modernities*, 1, 7–9.

103. Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea*, 2–6, 25–26.

104. For an example of this approach see Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe,* 1–10; for a critique of Westphalia, see Larsen, "Comforting Fictions," 233–57; and Osiander, "Sovereignty," 251–87.

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