The Role of Buddhist Monks in the Development of Archives in the Korean Middle Ages

Kyong Rae Lee

Abstract

This study compares the roles of Buddhist monks in medieval Korea and Christian monks in medieval Europe in the development and management of archives. Buddhist and Christian monks and monasteries played similar roles in preserving both religious and secular texts, but the archival role of Christian monks was limited to monastic archives, whereas Buddhist monks were integral to the management of both monastic and secular archives. The establishment early in the Koryo dynasty (918–1392) of a centralized bureaucratic system required a centralized archival system, of which monastic archives were one branch. These monastic archives were managed by one of the major government departments of the secular authority and by Buddhist officials, who consisted largely of Buddhist monks. The findings of this study suggest that different political and social structures in medieval Korea and Europe, as well as the differing religious philosophies and cultures of Buddhism and Christianity, resulted in divergent archival development in the two societies.

During the Korean Middle Ages (tenth–fourteenth centuries CE), Buddhism was Korea's state religion and played a role in the shaping and maintaining of the Kingdom of Koryo, and Buddhist doctrine served as the rationale for national stability. Buddhism as a state religion promoting "the defense of the fatherland" in the Korean Middle Ages differed from Christianity in the European Middle Ages because Buddhism was subject to and cooperative with the secular authority. The Buddhist monk, however, played a role similar to the Christian one in the production and dissemination of knowledge and the development of archives.

This paper asks the following questions: What kinds of archives existed in the Korean Middle Ages? Did the monks play a role in creating and maintaining the archives? If so, in what kinds of archives—only in religious ones or in

secular ones as well? Was this parallel to the role of Christian monasticism in the West? This paper approaches this topic through a historical analysis of Buddhism and its monks within the political and social structures of the Korean Middle Ages, especially their involvement in intellectual activities and archives. The paper then surveys some of the similarities and differences between Buddhist monks in medieval Korea and Christian monks in medieval Europe.

This study is important because, first, it offers a systematic analysis of the medieval archival system in Korea by addressing questions about the formal aspects of creating, writing, and storing records. Second, it illuminates how medieval Korea and Europe adapted their systems of secular and monastic archives by examining the monks' roles in archival development in both societies. By contributing to the understanding of archival management in the Korean Middle Ages, the study seeks to bring an international and intercultural perspective to the history of archival development, a subject often viewed only through a Eurocentric lens.

The Koryo Dynasty and Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and the Political and Social Structures of the Korean Middle Ages

In 918 CE, Wang Gon established the Koryo (or Goryeo) dynasty, which ruled the Korean peninsula until 1392, when Yi Seong-gye established the Chosun dynasty. Korean scholars regard the Koryo era as the beginning of the Korean Middle Ages and the establishment of the Chosun dynasty as its end. Unlike the European Middle Ages, characterized by a decentralized feudalism based on the relationship between liege lords and vassals, the Korean Middle Ages featured a centralized state that appointed provincial magnates to rule local governments.[1]

Wang Gon, a military commander, overthrew the United Silla dynasty and reigned from 918 to 943 as founder, or *Taejo* (Korean for "first king"), of the Koryo dynasty. Buddhism had been a strong influence under the United Silla dynasty, but Wang Gon, the *Taejo*, formally established Buddhism as the state religion of the peninsula to control the new government and to stabilize his political authority. Buddhism provided a major rationale for the authority of the state since the Buddhist doctrine of *karma* supports the status quo and regards any challenge to the existing social order as a challenge to Buddhism. The Buddha advised slaves, for instance, "to bear patiently with their lot," since being born a slave was the result of bad acts in an earlier life. Hence, a slave's salvation

[1] "Central government officials were dispatched to head all of the provincial and local administrative units. Under these officials dispatched from the capital, local provincial magnates and other petty-functionaries performed the administrative tasks involving direct contact with the population at large." Carter J. Eckert, Ki-baik Lee, and Young Ick Lew, eds., *Korea Old and New: A History* (Seoul: Ilchokak, Publishers for the Korean Institute of Harvard University, 2002), 83.

lay "in complete submission" to the master—a conclusion the Buddha derived "from the widely accepted belief in the theory of *karma*," as a scholar of Indian history has noted.[2] The enduring political effects of this doctrine are aptly summed up in a recent history of modern Tibet:

> . . . the underlying theoretical framework of Tibetan Buddhism effectively inculcated political passivity among the lower classes and the poor. . . . Tibetan Buddhism taught . . . that the cause of suffering is one's own bad behavior in past lives transmitted to the present via the laws of karma and reincarnation. The impoverished poor in Tibet, therefore, were suffering not because of the inherent oppression of their lords and the estate system but, rather, because of their own deficiencies in a past life or lives. The way to improve one's current circumstances, moreover, was to perform religiously meritorious actions so as to amass karma in this life and thereby secure a better rebirth in the next life; it was not to kill the lords and change the current socio-political system.[3]

The *Taejo* also found Buddhism especially useful for incorporating local nobles into the central government, since they historically had been closely related to local Buddhist temples. He therefore gave extensive support and privileges to Buddhism and the Buddhist monks as soon as he came to power. With government funds, he built hundreds of temples and exempted them from taxation and compulsory state labor or military service. The secular authorities awarded vast tracts of rice paddies and woodlands to temples and monasteries,[4] as well as armies of servants to work the land. Many more temples were built after his reign, and in them elaborate "state protection" rituals were carried out continuously. Throughout the Koryo era, the king regularly sought the opinion and consent of Buddhist monks as advisors to the court. Moreover, sometimes monks were appointed as special counselors to the king or to the government on policy matters and often had a significant effect on the decision-making process.[5]

The rise of Buddhism's involvement with the state coincided with a rise in state bureaucracy. Under Sungjong (the sixth king of the dynasty, who reigned from 981 to 997),

[2] Dev Raj Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House Private Ltd., 1960), 61–62.

[3] Melvin C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 24.

[4] In the medieval Christian church, bishops presided over dioceses and held services in cathedrals, and the "secular clergy" or priests, ministered to local parishes. These institutions existed alongside the monasteries presided over by abbots. In Buddhism, there was no such distinction; temples (especially large temples) functioned at the same time as monasteries.

[5] On various occasions, the *wangsa*, or "advisor to the king," and the *guksa*, or "advisor to the government," who were always Buddhist monks, intervened actively in the government's policymaking process. For example, the Buddhist monk Myochung, as advisor to the king, argued for the transfer of the capital from Kaesong to Suhkyung, but his plan was frustrated and in 1135 he instigated a rebellion (the Rebellion of Myochung).

> A centralized bureaucratic system was established . . . to replace the old aristocratic tribal system that had governed the country. Education and civil-service examinations were used as a means of selecting the most capable officials and of absorbing the provincial magnates into the central government to consolidate its control over the countryside.[6]

Parallel to the civil service examinations (the *Guago* system), an examination of Buddhist monks for official ranks of clerics (the *Seunggua* system) was established to control the enormous number of temples, monasteries, and monks under the secular authority.[7] In the Koryo era, having an official cleric rank (*Seunggae*) determined through the *Seunggua* system was a prerequisite not only for the *wangsa*, or "advisor to the king" and the *guksa*, or "advisor to the government," but also for a monk to be the head of a temple.[8] A monk with a high official clerical rank could become the head of a large temple in the capital city (Kaesong). Although the temples in the Koryo period had some degree of independence and the secular government respected the temples' opinion when dealing with monks, the appointment procedure for monastic offices was the same as that for secular offices.[9]

Apart from the *Seunggua* system, another bureaucracy in the Koryo dynasty, the *Seungkwan,* affected monks. Monastic officials of the *Seungkwan,* who included some laymen, administered the religious system on the national level, supervised important national rituals and events and, more significantly, managed monastic census records at the national level. While the *Seunggua* system regulated the appointments of the *wangsa*, the *guksa*, and the heads of temples, the *Seungkwan* system institutionalized the cooperation between Buddhist monasticism and the secular authority. Both of these systems demonstrate the extent of the bureaucratization and institutionalization of Koryo Buddhism. Through those institutional structures, the Buddhist monasteries and monks were absorbed into the bureaucratic system of the Koryo dynasty and became an integral part of the state bureaucracy and regarded as an essential ideological component of national stability.

Monks were actively involved in a variety of ways in the social as well as the political and bureaucratic systems. At the core of the social rationale, Buddhism

[6] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Koryo Dynasty," at http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9046099, accessed 14 September 2007.

[7] Although the *Guago* and the *Seunggua* systems were first established during the reign of Kwangjong (in 958), they were developed and emphasized under Sungjong. The examinations came to be held once every three years, although initially the *Guago* exam had been held every year.

[8] Heung-sik Heo, *A Study of the History of Medieval Korean Buddhism* [in Korean] (Seoul: Ilchokak Publisher, 1994), 21.

[9] In the late Koryo dynasty, however, independence of the temples was strong and the appointment of the temple head was left in the hands of a monk who was "advisor to the king," "advisor to the government," or head of the Records Office for Monks. Heung-sik Heo, *A Study of the History of Medieval Korean Buddhism*, 23.

formed the focus of social relationships even at the village level. The social role of monks as educators and counselors to the lower classes became increasingly significant. In addition to being centers of worship and meditation, Buddhist monasteries performed cultural activities and transmitted cultural traditions.

The Buddhist temples and monasteries were the main place for young scholars to pursue knowledge. Throughout the Koryo period, while the National Education Institute (the *Gukjagam*) was the central educational institution, Buddhist temples served as local educational institutions.[10] The widespread establishment of study rooms in temples demonstrates the educational role of temples and monks in Koryo society. These study rooms were eventually absorbed into the infrastructure of the National Education Institute. In such rooms, young scholars studied for the civil service examinations and received basic education in *Kyo*, or Buddhist doctrine, in preparation for monkhood.

The role of monks in both religious and secular education kept pace with their activities as scribes copying Buddhist scriptures. The intellectual development in monasteries led to the elaboration on and diversity of interpretation of Buddhist ideals and practices and finally to schism within Korean Buddhism,[11] which led to two branches of monastic bureaucracy representing the two doctrinal positions. Unlike the religious schisms in Europe, however, both sects remained part of the same state-sponsored religion. Although the schism can be seen as a sign of institutional weakening, it also signaled intellectual ferment—the burgeoning of ideas and activities within the monastic world.[12] Such controversies created the need to know as precisely as possible what the Buddha had taught and to a desire to obtain original texts from China and other countries.[13] Studying and copying scriptures became an increasingly important duty for monks. The translation and collation of Buddhist materials became a major enterprise absorbing large resources from the dynasty.

Unlike Western texts, which monks copied by hand, Korean, texts were printed using technology developed in Buddhist temples. Largely sponsored by the dynasty to spread the dominant religio-political ideology, only a limited number of texts were printed. The majority of woodblock books belonging to local governments, as well as those belonging to Buddhist temples, were

[10] Heung-sik Heo, *A Study of the History of Medieval Korean Buddhism*, 87.

[11] The representative schism of the entire Koryo era was between the doctrinal (*Kyo*) and the personal enlightenment (*Zen*) groups, and disunity and conflict arose from their respective prejudices. Eckert et al., eds., *Korea Old and New*, 86.

[12] Aurora Roxas-Lim, "Buddhism in Early Southeast Asia," *Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (April 1973): 78.

[13] A parallel can be drawn here with the rise of interest in the original languages of, and accurate translation of, the Bible that arose in the Renaissance and Reformation; in Europe, however, this signified the end of the medieval period and the rise of a new era, as was not the case in Korea.

engraved by monks and printed in the printing office of temples.[14] In the Koryo era, Hungwang Temple, Haein Temple, and Buin Temple each had a printing office.[15] Hungwang Temple and Geumsan Temple were the largest publishers of Buddhist scriptures.[16] Since most woodblock books owned by private individuals (usually members of the nobility) were Buddhist scriptures, we can assume the monks' role in making private libraries as well. Many monks were experts in the techniques of wood engraving, printing, and papermaking needed for book publication. This infrastructure promoted the early development of printing technology in the temples, which was furthered by the proximity of temples to forests that provided easy access to the wood needed for the process.

The first woodblock printing of the *tripitaka* (canon of Buddhist scriptures), the *Chojo Daejanggyong*, was published in 1087. Consisting of about 6,000 volumes of Buddhist texts, it was issued under royal authority in the belief that the power of Buddhism could bring an end to the repeated invasion of Korea by foreign nations and that the printing would strengthen the power of the king and the national unity between the king, the nobles, and the people. The *Chojo Daejanggyong*, however, was destroyed in the first Mongol invasion in 1232.

As a result of the monks' carving and printing activities, large numbers of books began to accumulate, both originals and copies, and the monks began to organize them systematically in the temples. Uicheon, a royal prince who became a monk, established the *Kyojangdogam*, the Printing Office, in the Hungwang Temple. Here he assembled an extensive collection of some 4,000 Buddhist scriptures from across Korea and from surrounding nations such China, Japan, and Kitan.[17] In 1091, he created a new catalog of Buddhist texts, the *Sinpyun Jaejongkyungjangchongrok*.[18] In 1101, based on this catalog, he published a new expanded woodblock *tripitaka*, the *Koryo Sokjanggyong*. Uicheon's *tripitaka* was also destroyed in the Mongol invasion of 1232 when the Koryo dynasty moved its capital to the Kanghwa Island along with the *Chojo Daejanggyong*.[19]

The Koryo dynasty continued to resist the next wave of Mongol invaders on Kanghwa Island. In the process, the dynasty established the Printing Office on

[14] Guan-hee Nam, *The Research for Recording the Culture of the Koryo Era* [in Korean] (Cheongju: Cheongju Early Printing Museum Press, 2002), 20.

[15] Tae-jin Yang, "The Management of Archives in the Dynastic Era," *Archives* 1 [in Korean] (Daejon: National Archives of Korea, 1987): 34.

[16] Heung-sik Heo, *A Study of the History of Medieval Korean Buddhism*, 88.

[17] From 925 CE onward, Kitan ruled eastern Mongolia, most of Manchuria, and much of China north of the Huang River.

[18] Tae-jin Yang, "The Koryo *Tripitaka* in the Tradition of Archival Culture," *Archives* 4 (1991) [in Korean]: 35.

[19] The catalog of the Koryo *Sokjanggyong* has survived, and thus we can reconstruct its contents. "The History of Korean Buddhism (4)–Buddhism in the Koryo Era" [in Korean], at, http://www.dharmanet.net/content/20020327/200203271017254233.asp, accessed 21 October 2007.

the island and ordered the carving of the *Tripitaka Koreana* (the *Palman Daejanggyong*—the "Eighty-Thousand Woodblock Tripikata"), which was created over a period of sixteen years beginning in 1238. This *tripitaka* is still preserved intact in the Haein Temple in South Kyongsang Province in South Korea.

The publication of this complete collection of Buddhist scriptures was a national undertaking, and the many copies of scriptures created in the process, on both paper and woodblock, required the establishment of large-scale repositories in the temples. As a result, the temples established shrines for Buddhist scriptures (for example, the *Daejangjeon,* the *Gyungpangak,* and the *Jangkyunggak*). Alongside the *tripitaka,* copies of the classic Buddhist texts that had come from China or other nations were collected and preserved in the shrines along with the monks' own writings.

The royal family funded building and managing the monastic libraries in the large temples of the Koryo. The funds for printing Buddhist texts in these temples came both from the royal treasury and from public funds.[20] In this period, one of the national temples even developed movable metal-type printing. At Hungdeok Temple in 1377, the *Buljo jikji simche yojeol* of the famous Buddhist monk Baekun Hwasang was printed by this method, and the surviving copy is the oldest metal-type printed book in the world.[21] The metal type itself and the molds for it have disappeared and the temple has vanished, and therefore it is difficult to document the circumstances surrounding the creation of movable metal-type printing. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the temple had a government-funded printing office for metal-type printing and that the monks played a significant role in making the metal type, just as they had done with woodblock printing.

The monks, however, did not write solely on Buddhist topics. Illyeon, one notable monk, wrote *The Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* (*Samguk Yusa*) at the end of the thirteenth century. In addition to a history of Korean Buddhism, this book contains various folktales, legends, and biographies from early Korea (the period of the Three Kingdoms—Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla—seventh through first centuries BCE). The *Memorabilia* is the earliest extant history of Dangun, the mythical founder of the First Kingdom, Gojoseon. It became the basis for regarding Dangun as the earliest ancestor of the nation and led people to believe in the historical existence of Gojoseon in the twenty-fourth century BCE. Although *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms* (*Samguk Sagi*), written in 1145 by the scholar Kim

[20] Tae-jin Yang, "The Management of Archives," 34.

[21] While in Western society Gutenberg's movable type played a significant role in the rise of the Renaissance and the Reformation, in Korea the technology did not lead to cultural revolutions of this kind. The reason for this lies in the difference between the two cultures' writing systems: the Roman alphabet, like the Greek one it was modeled on, contained little more than twenty letters, while the Chinese characters adopted by Korean culture numbered in the tens of thousands; thus Gutenberg's idea of movable type represented a great saving of labor compared to manual copying, whereas the same technology in Korea was much more labor intensive.

Bu-sik, functioned as the official chronicle of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, Illyeon's unofficial history has greater value than the official record because of the richness of the various historical materials it contains. Illyeon's work demonstrates clearly the intellectual influence of monks in Koryo society beyond monastery walls.

Buddhism was integral to everyday life in Koryo society and served as a powerful means of propaganda through the monasteries and temples found in cities, towns, and even villages, where the monks had close contact with the people. The Buddhist monks' status and political influence in Koryo society encouraged them to extend their influence into lay society. While Koryo-era Buddhism was an ideology supporting the state and contributing to its stability, Buddhist monks participated in the transactions of the secular government both officially and unofficially, as they occupied vital positions in the state bureaucracy. Furthermore, monks, the professional intellectuals of the time, produced the major cultural achievements of the era through their pioneering contributions in fields such as education, writing, and printing.

The Archives of the Koryo Era: Archives in the Korean Middle Ages

Because Buddhism was the state religion, the Koryo dynasty had two kinds of archives: secular archives and monastic archives. The secular archives comprised the royal and government archives. Since the founding of the dynasty, the chancery had issued and managed royal documents. The Koryo dynasty royal chancery was called the Literary Office (*Hanrimwon* or *Munhanseo*)[22] It created and managed the documents about the royal family's coronation, royal proclamations and edicts, royal responses (*bidap*) to inquiries from administrative agencies or individuals (usually high-level officials), and the incoming and outgoing documents of the dynasty's foreign affairs. The Literary Office consisted of the prime literary official (*panwonsa*), the vice prime literary official (*haksaseungji*), four literary officials (in descending order or rank: two *haksa*, one *sidokhaksa*, one *siganghaksa*), and four clerks of whom two were temporary employees and the other two were medical officials. All six literary officials (*munhankwan*), including the prime literary official, who was usually the prime minister, were outstanding scholars in writing (calligraphy), literary composition, and humanities among the public officials who passed the civil service examination.

The government archives of the Koryo dynasty included documents sent from administrative agencies (central and local) to the king as well as

[22] The name of the Literary Office was changed several times during the Koryo dynasty, from the Primal Phoenix Office (*Wonbongsung*) in the time of the *Taejo*, to the House for Scholars (*Haksawon)*, the House for Literary Flowering (*Hanrimwon*), and finally, in 1275, in the time of King Hyunjong, the Literary Office (*Munhanseo*).

incoming and outgoing documents between administrative agencies (both central and local). In addition, government documents were issued to individuals and temples guaranteeing their rights to property or bestowing royal rewards such as lands, servants, or titles of nobility or cleric rank, or appointing individuals to certain offices. The government agencies kept the original records and issued copies to individuals or temples.[23] These rights, rewards, and appointments were also recorded in census registration, which, during the Koryo dynasty, included information on social status, official rank, and landholdings, as well as the number of people in a household. The officials who created and managed government documents in the central and local government agencies were mostly low-ranking public officials (called *seori*, or petty officials). These petty officials were the foundation of each administrative agency's business transactions and were employed even in local government agencies.[24]

King Sungjong, whose reign began in 981, initiated the systematic management of government records. By 987, if not earlier, official forms for government documents were established for both central and local government agencies[25] as part of the dynasty's project to firmly institute both a central and a local government system. The widespread use of paper and increased levels of literacy (at least among public officials) during the Koryo dynasty made such documents more efficient for centralizing government functions than in previous eras. The subsequent increase of government records made the systematic arrangement of archives necessary. The large-scale arrangement of government documents during the Koryo dynasty parallels that of the ancient Egyptians, the Sumerians, and the Persians, all of whom arranged their archives for efficient administration after they had established centralized administrative systems.[26]

The form of secular records (including government records and royal documents) generally followed a basic tripartite structure, although it varied slightly according to document type and status of both the sending and receiving agencies. The document heading included the sending agency's name and the receiving agency's name. The body of the document included the final decision, details of the decision-making process, and even the document's previous history. The body also referenced related documents, indicating their

[23] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty* [in Korean] (Seoul: Hye-an Publisher, 2007), 187.

[24] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 102–22.

[25] *The History of Koryo*, vol. 3, *Chronicles*, "August of the 6th year of King Sungjong (987 CE)" (Seoul: Photographic Reproduction of Yonsei University Oriental Studies Institute, vol. 1, 70–71).

[26] James Gregrory Bradsher and Michele F. Pacifico, "History of Archives Administration," in *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions*, ed. James Gregrory Bradsher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 19.

dates of issuance and the name of the person responsible for the document.[27] The final part consisted of the creating date, which indicated the month, day, and year (the Chinese name of the era or the year of the sixty-year cycle in the Chinese calendar), the signature of the official in charge, and the signature of the literary official[28] responsible for drawing up the document.[29]

The Koryo dynasty regarded the signature as very important since it was the main method of validating documents. A public official's rank determined the form of his signature: the higher the official rank, the simpler the signature. High-ranked officials signed only with a monogram; lesser officials signed with their family name and monogram; even lower-ranked officials signed with their family name and personal name; and the lowest-ranked signed with their official rank, family name, and personal name.[30] The signature of the literary official was also required for government documents and included his official rank, family name, and personal name.[31]

Secular records were organized by functional classification depending on the category of the document. For example, documents about appointments to official positions were classified and filed in one of three subject categories: certificates of those who passed the civil service examinations and the rank awarded to each; announcements of individual appointments; and documents assigning clerical ranks to monks. Property documents were placed into two classes, those dealing with lands and those dealing with servants. Documents about royal benefactions were placed into classes for awards for meritorious service to the crown, rewards, and royal commendations. Within each functional classification, secular records were arranged chronologically.[32]

Although each agency maintained internally the records it sent and received, the Koryo dynasty also established central archival repositories for long-term preservation of royal documents and the records of many government agencies. The House for History (the *Sakwan*, later the *Chunchukwan*) was established early in the dynasty[33] for compiling and preserving the annals of the dynasty and drafts of them (the *Sacho*), which were created and edited by

[27] The record was registered by its creating date and the record manager's name, not the name of the head of the creating agency. Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 135.

[28] Royal documents, however, did not include the name of the literary official who drew up the document but only the name of the king. Jae-kwon Shim, "Study on Royal Documents *Bidap*" [in Korean], *Historical Manuscript Study* 32 (Seoul: Society of Korean Historical Manuscripts, 2008): 67–92.

[29] *The History of Koryo,* vol. 84, *Penal Code Geography* 1, "Official Public Records Communication Form," 838–39.

[30] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 42–47.

[31] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 119.

[32] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Record Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 187.

[33] The House for History was established no later than 975 (the twenty-sixth year of King Kwangjong's reign). Guan-hee Nam, *The Research for Recording Culture of the Koryo Era*, 705.

historians. It also functioned as a central repository for long-term preservation of royal documents and government records. Headed by the prime historiographer (*kamsuguksa*), the House for History consisted of several historiographers (by descending rank, the researching historiographer (*suguksa)*, the honorable historiographer (*dongsuguksa)*, the scholarly historiographer *(suchankwan)*, and the honest historiographer (*jiksakwan*). Although high-level public officials such as ministers and the senior grade of second- and third-rank officials could hold at the same time the positions of prime historiographer, researching historiographer, or honorable historiographer, a literary official below the senior grade of the third rank held the position of scholarly historiographer. Four officials, of whom two were temporary, filled the lowest-ranked of these positions, honorable historiographer. Like the literary officials, the historiographers were all scholars with a knowledge of the classics and history. After 1308, the House for History was incorporated with the Literary Office into the House for Art, Literature, and History (*Yemun-Chunchukwan*),[34] and, as a result, the House for Art, Literature, and History created and managed all secular records, including royal and government documents, in a unified system.

The House of Records (*Gagakgo*, literally, "House of Wall Shelves" for storing manuscripts) also preserved official records, especially those no longer in active use. While the House for History mainly compiled the annals, the House of Records was established by 1280 as the permanent central repository, like national archives of modern times. Usually, the originals maintained by government agencies were transferred to the House of Records when no longer in active use. In its early period, the House of Records employed one public official of low rank, later increased to two.

The second major kind of archives in the Koryo era was the monastic archives. The Koryo dynasty established the Monastic Records Office (*Seungroksa*) at the time of the *Taejo*. As an administrative agency under the Department of Ritual (*Yaebu*), one of the six major secular government departments, the Monastic Records Office functioned as the focus of the centralized religious archives in the Koryo dynasty. The *Taejo* established the Monastic Records Office to institutionalize Buddhism and give the crown control of temples, monasteries, and monks.[35] During the Koryo dynasty, the Monastic Records Office managed the records of monks' official ranks at the national level, as well as national Buddhist ceremonies and celebrations. The records of clerics' ranks were especially required when the time came for promoting monks to high official ranks or for appointing heads of temples or monasteries.

[34] It was separated into the House for Art and Literature (*Yemunkwan*) and the House for History (*Chunchukwan*) in 1325 in the reign of Chungsukwang and again combined into the House of Art, Literature, and History in 1389 in the reign of Gongyangwang. The Chosun dynasty restored the House for History as a separate entity.

[35] Heung-sik Heo, *A Study of the History of Medieval Korean Buddhism*, 23.

The Monastic Records Office consisted of several Buddhist officials (*Seungkwan*) who were monks or laymen. Under the head of monks (*doseungtong*), the Monastic Records Office was divided along institutional lines, which represented the two Buddhist sects of the Koryo era, Kyo and Zen. Each line consisted of four Buddhist officials: the head of monastic records (*doseungrok*), the vice head of monastic records (*buseungrok*), the monk of rectitude (*seungjung*), and the monk of principle (*seungyu*). Although the Monastic Records Office maintained a centralized recordkeeping system, the records of monks, temples, monasteries, and other Buddhist institutions of the Kyo and Zen sects were managed separately in two record management lines. In each management line, Buddhist officials managed and arranged the monastic records in the same way as other secular administrative agencies did. As an administrative agency of the state, the Monastic Records Office was required to follow the pattern of the secular archives, in which documents were tripartite in form, organized by functional classification, and arranged chronologically within each classification. For example, just as census records in the Koryo dynasty were managed centrally in the Department of Taxation (*Hobu*) and locally in the government office of counties and prefectures[36] by year, the records of monastic census were managed centrally in the Monastic Records Office and locally in the government office of counties and prefectures by year.[37]

The government offices of counties and prefectures, which managed monastic records as well as government records at the local level, functioned as intermediary agencies between the Monastic Records Office and the temples. While the Monastic Records Office usually sent and received monastic documents by way of the government office of the region where the temple was located, temples also sent documents to and received them from the Monastic Records Office by way of their local government office. The local government office under the aegis of the Monastic Records Office issued copies of records dealing with monastic or temple property rights or clerics' ranks to monks and temples. Each temple and monastery also maintained copies of records issued to it. As a consequence, the monastic archives in the Koryo dynasty should be seen as existing within a three-sided set of interrelated hierarchies, those of the Monastic Records Office, of the local government offices, and of the temples and monasteries. As with secular (royal and government) records, monastic records were eventually collected in the permanent retention repositories, the House for History, and ultimately in the House of Records for long-term preservation.

[36] The Koryo dynasty had about 520 counties and prefectures, the smallest unit of administration.

[37] Eun-Kyong Kang, *Records Management in Koryo Dynasty*, 213.

Thus, the royal, government, and monastic records, which can be considered the official records of the Koryo dynasty, were managed in a centralized archival system under the secular authority—a system that arose in response to a centralized bureaucratic system. The operating mechanisms of the secular archives—for instance, the form of documents, their method of arrangement, and their mode of preservation—were the same as those in the monastic archives, which were regarded as a branch of the secular archives.

In addition to these official archives, which created, processed, organized, collected, and preserved official records—roles similar to those of modern records managers and archivists—the Koryo dynasty founded various institutions to preserve records along with books. The Office of Secret Documents (*Bisuhsung*) was established in 983 under Sungjong; the Office for the Management of Archives (*Susuhwon*) was established in 990, also under Sungjong; and the Tower of Secret Documents (*BisuhGak*) was established in 1058 under Munjong.[38] While the Tower of Secret Documents functioned purely as a library to preserve books (especially original copies), the Office of Secret Documents was responsible not only for the custody and editing of books and the pursuit of scholarly study, but also for creating and preserving some royal documents such as those containing state prayers and funeral orations. In these archives were various kinds of books such as the Chinese classics, history, literature, medicine, geography, and printed books and the wooden blocks for printing them. The Office for the Management of Archives established in the West Capital (Suhkyung) served scholars in the pursuit of their studies by providing access to historical books and royal and government records.[39] It functioned as a modern reference facility, providing access to royal and government records in the House for History and/or the House of Records. During the reign of the fifteenth king, Sukjong (1095–1105), the Palace of Virtuous Writings (*Mundukjun*) was established in the royal palace as the royal library to preserve precious books, one of several similar institutions established in royal palaces (the *Jungkwangjun*, the *Jangryungjun*, the *Yeonkyungjun*, and so on). The National Education Institute of the Koryo (the *Gukjagam*), established by King Sungjong in 992, contained archives that preserved various kinds of educational materials, including the classics, and later functioned as the institution in charge of the printing and publishing of important books. In 1101, Sukjong established the Book Publication Office (*Suhzukpo*) in the *Gukjagam,* and into it he moved the wooden printing blocks that had been housed in the Office of Secret Documents to preserve them more safely.[40]

[38] Tae-jin Yang, "The Management of Archives in the Dynastic Era," 28–29.

[39] Tae-jin Yang, "The Management of Archives in the Dynastic Era," 29.

[40] Guan-hee Nam, *The Research for Recording the Culture of the Koryo Era*, 702.

During the Koryo dynasty, the House for History was also responsible for producing the annals of the dynasty.[41] The historiographers of the House for History created the *Draft History* (*Sacho*), which recorded the official history—the king's words and deeds, and all the government officials' actions, both good and bad, along with evaluation and commentary. The historiographers' daily drafts and records from royal and government offices became the main resources for the compilation of the annals. Usually, after a king died and his successor had been crowned, the historiographers began the compilation of the annals of the preceding reign.[42] No officials were allowed to read the *Draft History*, not even the king, and any historiographer who disclosed its contents was severely punished. These strict regulations lend great credibility to these records. The historiographers created two copies of the *Draft History*, one of which was preserved in the House for History and the other in the historiographer's house, and if any question arose, the two were carefully compared.[43]

Destruction of the annals during the invasion from Kitan in 1019 finally led to the establishment of historical repositories in temples outside the royal palace. In 1227, during the reign of Kojong, the annals of Myungjong, Kojong's predecessor, were preserved in the Haein Temple in the southeast part of the country.[44] The neutrality of the temples and monasteries in times of political conflict or war made them safe archival repositories, and the monks' religious devotion added to the quality of their management and preservation of archives. As a result, during the Koryo dynasty, Buddhist temples served as historical repositories outside the palace in which valuable secular documents such as the annals and the draft of the annals were preserved safely.

Archives in the Middle Ages: Some Similarities and Differences between Buddhist Monks in Medieval Korea and Christian Monks in Medieval Europe

The roles of Buddhist monks and Christian monks in the Middle Ages show both similarities and differences. In the production and dissemination of knowledge, the role of Buddhist monks was similar to the role of Christian

[41] The annals are no longer extant, but the Chosun-era *History of Koryo* (*Koryosa*), composed nearly a century after the fall of the Koryo dynasty, refers to these annals as being in existence. *The History of Koryo,* vol. 95, *Miscellaneous Tales* 8, "Hwang, Ju-ryang," (Photographic Edition, vol. 3), 126.

[42] Due to invasion from Kitan, a kingdom to the north, and the ensuing destruction of documents, the annals of seven kings from the *Taejo* to Mokjong had to be laboriously compiled again during the reigns of Hyunjong (1009–1031) and Dukjong (1031–1034). *The History of Koryo,* vol. 95, *Miscellaneous Tales* 8, "Hwang, Ju-ryang."

[43] *The History of Koryo,* vol. 107, *Miscellaneous Tales* 20, "Won, Bu" (Photographic Edition, vol. 3), 355.

[44] Guan-hee Nam, *The Research for Recording Culture of the Koryo Era*, 707.

monks. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Christian monasteries assumed the task of making copies of sacred as well as secular manuscripts. The monks thus kept both classical and Christian learning alive during the Middle Ages.[45] Before the establishment of the university in the twelfth century, Christian monasteries were the only social institutions in charge of education and intellectual activity in Western society and had been so since the sixth century when Cassidorus included "to write" (*scribere*) as a part of a monk's labor in the monastery. In the fifth century, the central scholarly figure was a monk, Boethius, who was followed in that role by Cassidorus in the sixth century, the Venerable Bede in the seventh century, Alcuin in the eighth century, John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, Gerbert of Aurillac and Sylvester II in the tenth century, and St. Anselm in the eleventh century.[46] Christian scriptures and the works of the church fathers survived through the efforts of monks, as did the works of many classical authors such as Virgil, Horace, and Ovid.[47] Christian monks, therefore, were the intellectuals of the medieval period in the West, preserving both sacred works and the classics, as well as compiling chronicles and histories, just as Buddhist monks did in the Korean Middle Ages.

Buddhist and Christian monks also played similar roles in the development of archives. Like the Buddhist archives in the Korean Middle Ages, Christian ecclesiastical archives in medieval Europe structured a centralized archival system around the papal chancery. Employing a number of officials—the notary, the vice chancellor, and the chancellor—the papal chancery prepared and preserved large numbers of documents relating to everyday matters of administration. Like the Roman imperial chancery before it, the papal chancery preserved both incoming and outgoing letters addressed to emperors, kings, prominent laymen, patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, abbots, missionaries, and Roman ecclesiastical administrators, as well as various other kinds of documents.[48] Similarly, monasteries maintained archives that, in addition to classical and religious texts, also preserved the copies of records issued by rulers or popes granting land, property, or privileges to the monks and monasteries,[49] as well as documents pertaining to the rights of a people, the privileges of kings,

[45] David Diringer, *The Book before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental* (New York: Dover Publications, 1982), 292.

[46] Gi-young Lee, "The Society and Culture of the Middle Ages," in *The Lecture of the Western History*, ed. Young-soo Bae (Seoul: Hanwool Academy, 1996), 127.

[47] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture,* trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 113–50.

[48] Thomas F. X. Noble, "Literacy and the Papal Government in the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in *The Use of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond Makitterik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 87.

[49] Steven Vanderputten, "Monastic Literate Practices in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Northern France," *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 114.

and treaties between nations.[50] This parallels the work of Buddhist temples, which preserved important secular documents such as the annals of the dynasty; in both cases, religious institutions served as the repositories of secular records in the unsettled times of the Middle Ages.

The usual form of documents in medieval Europe was similar to the form of official documents (including monastic documents) in the Korean Middle Ages and also consisted of three parts: the introduction, the main text, and the final protocol, or conclusion formula. The introduction contained the name and title of the sender and the addressee; the main text expressed the motive for the issuance of the document, the particular circumstances under which the document was created, and the purpose and actual legal enactment of the document; the concluding formula comprised the date and place of issue and the signs of validation (e.g., the monogram or seal).[51] Papal documents, which followed Roman imperial practice, also used a tripartite pattern: the protocol, the address, and the final protocol, which included the pope's personal "signature"—originally a personal blessing, but later a monogram and then a signature in the modern sense.[52] The final protocol following the body of the document contained lists of the names of all those, such as the scribe, who took part in issuing the documents, and the issuing date.[53] The tripartite form and the contents of each part are similar to the form and contents of official documents in medieval Korea. Remarkably, both societies deemed essential the recording of the name of the scribe on religious documents as well as a sign of validation on all documents.

The fixed custom of the papal chancery of making copies of papal documents before their dispatch and preserving them in the papal archives was the same as that of the Koryo dynasty's government agencies (including the Monastic Records Office), which usually created two copies so that the creating agency could keep the original and a copy was issued to the addressee. Although by the late ninth century there is evidence that only extracts went into the register in the papal chancery, from a very early date, at least two copies were usually prepared in the papal chancery, one of which went to the archives to be registered and the other to the addressee.[54]

[50] Barbara Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100–1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 146–78.

[51] "Diplomatics," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, at http://search.eb.com/eb/article-58770, accessed 19 June 2008.

[52] Vatican Secret Archives, "The Diplomatics of the Papal Documents," at http://asv.vatican.va/en/dipl/1_papaldocuments.htm, accessed 8 July 2008; for details of the papal documents, see Jane E. Sayers, *Original Papal Documents in England and Wales from the Accession of Pope Innocent III to the Death of Pope Benedict XI (1198–1304)* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[53] "Diplomatics," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, at http://search.eb.com/eb/article-58773, accessed 21 June 2008.

[54] Noble, "Literacy and the Papal Government in the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," 88.

While European ecclesiastical archives and Korean monastic archives have certain parallels, they differ significantly in the management of the centralized archival system, the method of arrangement, and, most significantly, their relationship with secular archives. First, the papal chancery employed notaries, vice chancellors, and chancellors to manage the flow of documents. Although the notary, a major official since the time of the Roman Empire who both wrote and maintained official records, was a layman, the vice chancellor and chancellor of the papal chancery, who became involved around the ninth century, were usually clerics, such as bishops and cardinals. Therefore, it is possible to draw a parallel between the recordkeepers in the papal chancery, which included laymen and clerics, and the recordkeepers in the Koryo-era Monastic Records Office, who were Buddhist monks and laymen. Christian monks, however, as distinguished from other Christian clerics, had no specific role as recordkeepers in the papal chancery, although it is certainly possible that monks were involved along with the wide range of clerics who occupied various positions in the chancery at various periods.

Second, regarding the arrangement of archives, the papal registers were organized by year and arranged chronologically according to Roman imperial practice.[55] This differs from the arrangement of records (including monastic documents) in the Koryo dynasty, which were organized first in series by functional classification and arranged by date with no central list or index. The use of a register in the papal chancery to number and abstract each document differs greatly from the Korean system. The arrangement of the documents in the papal chancery followed the arrangement of the register, which served as an intermediary in locating them for later use. In contrast, Korean documents were retrieved by physical location according to function and not through a register or list. Since the papal register was the model for ecclesiastical and even secular archives,[56] Christian monks followed the general pattern of the papal register in managing monastic archives.[57]

Finally, in their relationship with secular archives, Christian monks and Buddhist monks differed significantly. In medieval Europe, monastic archives were among several types of ecclesiastical archives, all of which were separate from secular archives. While new secular chanceries of the early medieval period, such as the Merovingian, followed the style of the papal chancery records[58] and later were staffed by priests of the royal chapel and by archbishops (as the royal

[55] Noble, "Literacy and the Papal Government in the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," 87.

[56] Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 213–15; Vivian H. Galbraith, *An Introduction to the Use of the Public Records*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1934), 15.

[57] Vanderputten, "Monastic Literate Practices," 112.

[58] Galbraith, *An Introduction to the Use of the Public Records*, 15.

chancellor) as well as by some laymen,[59] no institutional involvement among the various ecclesiastical and secular archives is indicated. In sharp contrast, in the Korean Middle Ages, the monastic archives were institutionally incorporated into the secular archives as part of a unified archival system managed under the secular authority.

If we seek to understand this divergence in relationships with secular archives, we see two basic causes. First is the difference in the political and social structures of medieval Korea and Europe. Under the Koryo dynasty, a unified social structure had the king at its summit. Furthermore, as we have seen, early in the Koryo period a large-scale nationwide bureaucracy was established, the likes of which would not exist in Europe for centuries. This centralized bureaucratic system integrated Buddhist monasteries and temples into the secular administrative system by means of the Monastic Records Office. In contrast, one church prevailed in medieval Europe spread across many separate kingdoms, and thus the basic social structure was dualistic: two governments, one ecclesiastical and one secular. While the papal government maintained a centralized bureaucratic system, the secular one was largely decentralized and localized. Ernst Posner calls the European Middle Ages "a period of great experiment in governmental decentralization" in which

> [r]ecord-making and record-keeping became a concern of local authorities, and it was only in the Byzantine Empire and in the Arab lands that the governing of great empires still demanded record-keeping on a large scale. In Western Europe, on the other hand, where the direct nexus between the state and the individual had ceased to exist, records were no longer created on a country-wide basis, as had been the case before the downfall of the Roman Empire.[60]

The history of medieval England's public archives is illustrative:

> Since all national administration begins in the royal Household, the public records are concerned only with the king's business. For centuries this term has a restricted and almost personal meaning. In so far as a man could keep clear of the king, his history escapes the records.[61]

Given the two kinds of archives in the European Middle Ages, the ecclesiastical and the secular, two separate archival systems naturally developed, one for secular rulers and one for ecclesiastics, operating on different principles and serving different functions.

[59] Simon Keynes, "Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Use of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, 257.

[60] Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World*, 2.

[61] Galbraith, *An Introduction to the Use of the Public Records*, 4.

A second reason for European and Korean monks' differing relationships with secular archives lies in their differing religious beliefs: while both Christian and Buddhist monks generally served an ideology that maintained the dominant social order of the time, the relationship of each religion to the state varied. In medieval Korea, "Buddhism for the defense of the fatherland" was the dominant form of the religion; in contrast, medieval Europe struggled for centuries to define the differing roles and prerogatives of state and church, as well as, within each of these, to define the role of kings vis-à-vis nobles and monastic orders vis-à-vis the secular clergy. Although aristocrats and bishops granted monasteries significant privileges and legal immunities, as well as property and resources, this led not to a unified and centralized system, but to one in which local nobles and their overlords vied for control of these resources, one or the other having the upper hand depending on political developments at the time. This was particularly true in the ninth-century Carolingian period.[62] With the rise of Clunaic monasticism in the tenth and eleventh centuries, monasteries obtained significantly more independence and power in their own right, and monastic orders became important international organizations spread across the various European states.[63] As a result, European monastic orders were international organizations separate from national governments. Christian monks played no national role analogous to that of Buddhist monks, who, in the Koryo era, were completely intertwined in the national bureaucracy through official systems such as the *Seunggua*.

Conclusion

In the medieval period in Korea, Buddhist monks played a significant role in the creation and management of archives, as well as in production and dissemination of knowledge. In accepting the state's proclamation of Buddhism as a religion for "the defense of the fatherland," the monks allowed the distinction between the spiritual goals of the religion and the secular aims of the state to blur, and, as a consequence, Buddhist monks' political and social participation in the Koryo dynasty expanded their influence throughout the society. While Buddhist monks performed various secular roles under the protection and support of the Koryo dynasty, functioning as educators and contributing to the spread of knowledge, they contributed especially to managing the monastic archives. At the national level, monks worked as officials in the Monastic Records Office (*Seungroksa*) to manage the archives, and, at the local level, they

[62] Mayke de Jong, "Charlemagne's Church," in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2005), 120.

[63] C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Longman, Inc., 1984), 76–96.

managed the temple archives that recorded clerics' ranks and property rights and, later, preserved the dynastic annals. Furthermore, the existence of the Monastic Records Office as a division of the Ritual Department (*Yaebu*), one of the six major secular government departments, shows how integral the monks were to secular, as well as to monastic archives.

In many ways, Christian monks in medieval Europe played roles similar to those of the Buddhist monks of the Koryo era: as the intellectuals of their time, they copied old manuscripts and wrote new ones, preserved religious and classical texts, and ran schools. Christian monks also managed their monastic archives at the local level, preserving records of the rights and properties they had received from rulers and popes, and their monasteries even served as safe repositories for secular documents such as the treaties between nations.

These similarities in archival management between Buddhist and Christian monks, however, co-exist with some variations, which result from different political and social structures and religious beliefs. First, while Christian clerics were involved in the papal chancery and in the later secular chanceries, monks had no specific roles in these chanceries, although they may have been involved at times. In general, secular clergy, that is, those who did not belong to religious orders, held such positions. Second, the methods of archival arrangement differed. Koryo-era archives were arranged by function and then chronologically, but European archives were arranged chronologically and controlled by the register. Finally, and most importantly, since medieval Europe had no centralized government and was not managed by a central bureaucracy, secular archives were simply records of the royal household, and since Christian monasticism had varied and independent relationships with the various secular rulers of the time, different entities—secular authorities and ecclesiastical authorities—managed the secular and ecclesiastical archives in the European Middle Ages separately. Ecclesiastical archives had no institutional involvement in secular archives the way they did in Korea.

In conclusion, archives are a representation of the culture in which they exist and invariably they reflect the political and social structure and the spirit of the time. Archives are not simply historical repositories but often function as critical points of intersection between scholarship, cultural practices, and politics.[64] Although the religious and intellectual functions of monks in medieval Korea and Europe were similar, the differing beliefs of the two religions and the differing political and social structures of the two societies resulted in divergent roles for monks in archival development. In contrast to medieval Europe, medieval Korea maintained a centralized bureaucratic system and, as a result, established a centralized secular archival system, into which the

[64] Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, eds. *Archives, Documentation, and the Institutions of Social Memory* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

monastic archives were integrated. Therefore, it is reasonable to group the Koryo dynasty with the Byzantine Empire and the Arab lands mentioned by Posner as demonstrating "that the governing of great empires still demanded record-keeping on a large scale."[65] From the perspective of archival history, clearly the intellectual contributions made by medieval monks, despite their divergent roles, in both Korea and Europe were the main force behind the intellectual development of their respective societies.

[65] Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World*, 2.