

Academic Research and Utilization of the *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* during the Japanese Colonial Period, 1910–1945

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The government of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910) employed highly restrictive and secretive measures to preserve the integrity of the *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty; hereafter *Sillok*) and to impart them to posterity. During the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), the *Sillok* was used in research that served to justify Japanese colonial control, but the quality of that research often failed to meet scholarly standards. The Chōsen sōtokufu (Japanese Government General in Korea), the primary agent of colonial control, pursued a project to investigate the traditional customs of Chosŏn through study of the *Sillok*, which the Koreans held in high esteem for its value and integrity as a primary historical record. Using the *Sillok* as their primary source, the Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu compiled works such as the *Chōsenshi* 朝鮮史 (History of Korea) and *Heian hokudō shi* 平安北道史 (History of North P'yŏngan province), which explored the factors behind the collapse of the Chosŏn Dynasty and fabricated arguments justifying colonization. During the 1930s, the *Sillok* was photoprinted and publicly distributed, marking the beginning of its “popularization.” However, insufficient copies of the *Sillok* were made available, and few researchers were capable of reading them. Nonetheless, bibliographical research on the *Sillok* gradually advanced through the Japanese historians that were members of the Chōsenshi henshūkai 朝鮮史編修會 (Chosŏn History Compilation Committee). The body of their research emphasized the “heteronomy theory” and “faction theory” from the field of colonization history, or highlighted the association between Chosŏn and Manchuria to reinforce the notion of *Mansenshi* 滿鮮史 (Manchuria and Korea as one) to justify Japanese advancement into the mainland. The organization, utilization, photoprinting, distribution, and academic utilization of the *Sillok* in the Japanese colonial period were intended to facilitate Japan's colonial rule of Korea. Further, this approach to the *Sillok* has continued to

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