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ARTICLES

PROBLEMS IN CATALOGING KOREAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

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In March 1988 I wrote to the Library of Congress (LC) to call attention to some issues I perceived as problematic regarding LC’s practice in cataloging Korean literature. I circulated copies of this correspondence to Korean colleagues within the Committee on East Asian Libraries and received many positive comments from them. However, I have yet to hear from the Library of Congress. Since the issues are not confined to Korean literature only but have wider implications for other national literatures, including in particular Chinese and Japanese, I would like to share my thoughts on them with you. If I am fortunate enough to receive your support, we may together be able to approach the Library of Congress with much more effectiveness.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Before the invention of Hangul in 1443, the Chinese language had been the only practical means of writing for all Korean authors. Even after the invention of Hangul, most authors and scholars refused to use this excellent writing system for nearly five hundred years and continued to write in Chinese. Hangul has gradually gained in popularity over this long period of time and it began to achieve wide acceptance in the late 1800s. In the meantime, a substantial number of works were written in Chinese, forming an indispensable portion of Korean literary history. This situation has created the following cataloging question: are these works (in particular, literary works) to be regarded as Chinese literature or as Korean literature?

In terms of descriptive cataloging, the Library of Congress consistently treats them as Korean materials. Even though the works are written in pure classical Chinese, all descriptive information is romanized according to the McCune-Reischauer romanization system for Korean (rather than the Chinese Wade-Giles system) and rightly so, I believe. In machine-readable cataloging, the language is coded as Korean in fixed fields rather than as Chinese.

The subject cataloging of these materials has not been as straightforward. The purpose of this talk is to examine LC’s past and present practices and to point out some inconsistencies and problems associated with these practices. Before I go on to do that, however, I would like to examine some basic guidelines and comparable subject headings to illustrate certain “standard” practices. Please bear in mind that the word “literature” is used throughout this presentation comprehensively to include all major genres of literature such as fiction, poetry, drama, etc.
II. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LITERATURE HEADINGS

I quote instructions from the Subject Cataloging Manual: Subject Headings, instruction sheet H 1156.¹ I have rearranged the order according to the particular logical development of my presentation:

The literature of . . . independent nations . . . must be established with the national or regional group as an independent literature (using a parenthetical language qualifier if necessary). Use the . . . free-floating [author group] subdivisions under any literature or major genre of a literature for [internal] author groups [i.e. those living inside the country] that identify subordinate bodies of that literature. . . . For external author groups, i.e. those living outside the country normally associated with the literature to which they are contributing, use simple geographical subdivision, e.g., German literature – Rumania.

I would like to review applications of these instructions, using some actual LC headings.

III. PATTERN HEADINGS

1. National Literatures

   American literature (English language literature by U.S. authors living in the U.S.)  
   Mexican literature (Spanish language literature by Mexican authors living in Mexico)  
   Brazilian literature (Portuguese language literature by Brazilian authors living in Brazil)

2. National Literatures With Language Qualifiers

   African literature (French) (French language literature of independent African nations)  
   Philippine literature (English) (Philippine literature in the English language)  
   Philippine literature (Spanish) (Philippine literature in the Spanish language)

3. National Literatures with Author Group Subdivisions

   American literature – German [or French, etc.] authors (English language literature by a group of Germans [or French, etc.] living in the U.S.)

4. National Literature with Geographical Subdivisions

   Swedish literature – Canada (Swedish language literature by a group of Swedish speakers living in Canada)

German literature—France (German language literature by a group of German speakers living in France)

The headings in the first group represent National literatures, which refers to works of an independent nation. Note that in these examples, terms denoting nationality do not necessarily agree with terms associated with languages. Therefore, the literature of Brazil is not called Portuguese literature even though it is written in Portuguese, but Brazilian literature.

The headings in the second group represent national literatures qualified by a language. Language qualifications may be used when the language is not implied or when more than one language is used (or was used) within the literature.

The headings in the third group represent literature by a particular author group who are living inside the country to which they are contributing in the same language. This type of subdivision is used for author groups that identify subordinate bodies of that literature.

The headings in the fourth group represent literatures by a particular author group who are living outside the country normally associated with the literature to which they are contributing in that country's language.

Having examined these, I would like to go back to our original subject, Korean literature. Please remember that most of the discussion in this presentation applies also to Japanese literature which shares a similar historical situation with Korean.

IV. PROBLEMS IN KOREAN LITERATURE CATALOGING

Let's consider the following two headings for Korean literature. Both headings have been used by the Library of Congress to represent the Korean classical literature written in Chinese in early centuries, as I described in my introductory remarks.

1. Chinese literature—Korean authors

2. Chinese literature—Korea

According to the instructions in the Subject Cataloging Manual and the pattern headings we examined earlier, these two headings represent two different concepts; one concept cannot replace the other. The heading, Chinese literature—Korean authors should refer to Chinese-language literature written by Koreans living in China as a subordinate body of Chinese literature. The second heading, Chinese literature—Korea, should refer to Chinese-language literature written by a group of Chinese living in Korea. At the end of 1989, the second heading replaced the first, making it impossible to use the first heading at all. The Library of Congress had been using the first heading to refer to Korean works written in Chinese during the early period. Due to this practice, the Library of Congress may have thought that the two headings represented more or less the same concept and that, therefore, one might replace the other. However, this change makes it impossible to bring out the Korean author group within Chinese literature, i.e., Chinese-language works written by Koreans living in China.

The most obvious interpretation of this practice would be that the Library of Congress regards Korean literature as a subordinate body of or a provincial variant
of Chinese literature. An examination of some classification numbers would seem to confirm this interpretation. For example, in the LC Chinese literature classification schedule, under the heading, Provincial, local, colonial etc., Chinese literature outside China, Japan and Korea are listed, along with other Asian nations, with specific ranges of numbers for each. (Please see Addendum A for this section from the LC classification schedule.) It would be proper to use these numbers for Chinese-language works written by Chinese people living outside of China but not for works by Koreans, Japanese, and other people of independent nations who borrowed the Chinese language at some point in the past. However, I have seen numerous examples in which the Library of Congress used these numbers for works by Korean authors.

The schedule for individual authors reveals equally inconsistent practices. In the 1988 cumulated edition of the PL schedule, from the period of the Sung dynasty to the Ch'ing dynasty (960 A.D. -1912 A.D.), under Chinese literature, I have identified fifty-seven Korean authors. (Please see Addendum B for some examples of these names.) For approximately the same period, only twenty-nine individual authors—one-half of the number entered under Chinese literature—are listed in the Korean literature section. This two-way treatment suggests a division of opinion within the Library of Congress. I certainly would hate to think that each of the twenty-nine names under the Korean section represents an error! Even more confusing is the fact that the following four authors have class numbers in both places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Korean literature</th>
<th>Chinese literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yi, Che-hyon, 1287-1367</td>
<td>PL987.Y5</td>
<td>PL2694.Y5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho, Kyun, 1569-1618</td>
<td>PL989.27.K9</td>
<td>PL2698.H59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these four, only Ho Kyun and Chong Chol wrote in both languages. Yi Che-hyon and Yi Kyu-bo could not have written in Korean since the Korean alphabet was not in existence in their lifetime.

In the light of the evidence so far reviewed, which suggests that the Library of Congress does not recognize the existence of "Korean literature" as an independent national literature for the period in question, it is ironic that it has established period subdivisions for those very periods under the heading Korean literature.

Korean literature
- Koryo period, 935-1392
- Middle Korean, 935-1500

To be logically consistent, shouldn't these period subdivisions be placed under Chinese literature—Korea (current LC heading)?

With this kind of inconsistent treatment of classical Korean literature by the Library of Congress, we are constantly faced with the predicament of multiple possibilities as illustrated by the following table.
V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some Korean librarians have decided this situation is unacceptable and have adopted various local practices which, in turn, have created inconsistencies and lack of standardization among institutions. To address this problem, I would like to recommend that the Library of Congress make the following changes.

1. **Adopt Korean literature (Chinese)** as a valid heading to represent the early Korean classical works written in Chinese.

   The word "Korean" in this suggested heading refers to the nation of Korea—not to the language. This recommendation is patterned after other similar changes which were published in *Cataloging Service Bulletin* no. 48 (Spring 1990). For example, *French literature—Belgian authors* has changed to *Belgian literature (French)*, and *French poetry—Swiss authors* has changed to *Swiss poetry (French)*. Please see Addendum C for these and other examples.

2. **Reinstate the heading Chinese literature—Korean authors** for Chinese-language works written by Koreans living in China.

3. **Restrict the use of the heading Chinese literature—Korea** for Chinese-language works written by Chinese people living in Korea.

4. **Move the individual Korean authors from the Chinese section to the appropriate Korean section**, except those, if any, who emigrated to China and wrote in Chinese consistently.

5. **Do not use PL3060-3078 for Korean literature at all.** Instead, make it clear that this range of numbers is for Chinese literature written by Chinese people living outside of China.
### A. SCHEDULE FOR LOCAL CHINESE LITERATURE

**PL LANGUAGES OF EASTERN ASIA, AFRICA, OCEANIA**

Chinese language and literature
Chinese literature
Provincial, local, colonial, etc. - Continued
Chinese literature outside China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3033</th>
<th>3038</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3040-(3058)</td>
<td>3060-(3078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3080-(3098)</td>
<td>3100-(3118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3119</td>
<td>3120-(3136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3139</td>
<td>3148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3149</td>
<td>3150-(3168)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3170-(3186)</td>
<td>3180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3190-(3208)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. EXAMPLES OF KOREAN AUTHORS LISTED UNDER CHINESE LITERATURE
(denoted by a star "**")

Chinese language and literature
Chinese literature
Individual authors and works¹
Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644 (XXXIX, XL or XLIII, unless
otherwise specified)

Other, A-Z - Continued

2698

.L59  Liu, Tsung-chou, 1578-1645
.L62  Lo, Ch'i, d. ca. 1519
.L63  Lo, Ch'in-shun, 1465-1547
.L645 Lo, Hung-hsien, 1504-1564
.L66  Lo, Lun, 1431-1478
.L67  Lo, Mao-teng, 16th/17th cent.
.L68  Lou, Chien, 1567-1631
.L83  Lu, Nan, 16th cent.
.L85  Lu, Shen, 1477-1544
.M5   Miao-sheng, Shih, 14th cent.
*N35  Nam, Hye-on, 1454-1492
.N49  Ni, Wen-hsi
.N52  Ni, Yuan-lu, 1593-1644
.N54  Ni, Yueh, chin shih 1464
*P33  Pak, Sang, 1474-1530
*P333 Pak, Un, 1479-1504
.P34  P'an, Hsi-tseng, 1476-1532
.P52  Pi, Tzu-yen, 1569-1638
.P54  Pien, Kung, 1476-1532
.S37  Shao, Pao, 1460-1527
.S45  She, Hsiang, chu jen 1558
.S47  Shen, Ching, 1553-1610
.S477 Shen, Kuang-wen, 16127-1688
.S48  Shen, Lien, 1507-1527
.S54  Shi hu hsi chi
*S543 Sim, Su-gyong, 1516-1599
*S55  Sin, Suk-chu, 1417-1475
*S56  Sŏ, Kŏ-jŏng, 1420-1468
*S6   Song, Ik-p'il, 1534-1599
*S64  Sŏsan Taesa, 1520-1604
.S78  Sun, Chi-Kao, chin shih 1574
.S79  Sun, Fen, 1334-1389
*S795 Sun, Hsu, chin shih 1499
.S82  Sun, Tso, 14th cent.
.S84  Sung, Lien, 1310-1381
.S85  Sung, Mao-ch'eng, ch'u jen 1612
| Headings with an arrow (→) illustrate the current practice of establishing literature headings for independent nations, with a language qualifier when necessary, rather than establishing headings for the language of the works. |
| Headings with a star (*) illustrate changed headings which contradict the instruction sheet H 1165. |