

**Royal Seal and Investiture Book Collection of the Joseon Dynasty
Nomination for the Memory of the World Register**



NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM OF KOREA

Nomination form International Memory of the World Register

1.0 Checklist

Nominees may find the following checklist useful before sending the nomination form to the International Memory of the World Secretariat. The information provided in italics on the form is there for guidance only and should be deleted once the sections have been completed.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary completed (section 1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nomination and contact details completed (section 2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Declaration of Authority signed and dated (section 2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | If this is a joint nomination, section 2 appropriately modified, and all Declarations of Authority obtained |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Documentary heritage identified (sections 3.1 – 3.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | History/provenance completed (section 3.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bibliography completed (section 3.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations recorded (section 3.6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of owner completed (section 4.1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of custodian – if different from owner – completed (section 4.2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of legal status completed (section 4.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of accessibility completed (section 4.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of copyright status completed (section 4.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented to support fulfilment of the criteria? (section 5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional information provided (section 6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of consultation with stakeholders completed (section 7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Assessment of risk completed (section 8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary of Preservation and Access Management Plan completed. If there is no formal Plan attach details about current and/or planned access, storage and custody arrangements (section 9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other information provided – if applicable (section 10) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Suitable reproduction quality photographs identified to illustrate the documentary heritage. (300dpi, jpg format, full-colour preferred). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Copyright permissions forms signed and attached. Agreement to propose item(s) for inclusion on the World Digital Library if inscribed |

**Nomination form
International Memory of the World Register**

Royal Seal and Investiture Book Collection of the Joseon Dynasty

1.0 Summary

The nominated heritage is a collection of royal seals and investiture books created for the royal sovereigns of Joseon. The seals and books were bestowed to the kings and queens, commemorating their important lifetime occasions and ceremonies such as investitures and inauguration of official titles. The different names and titles invested to the king and queen were engraved into the seals, starting from the commencement as crown heir and even after the deaths of the bearer, composing an archive for both the individual and for the royal lineage as a whole. The investiture books and royal edicts are accompaniments to the seals providing description and justification of the names and ceremonial occasions.

The royal seals are symbolic and ceremonial, signifying sacredness of the royal authority. Such practice of creating ceremonial seals is distinct from other cultures, which produce seals for the practical use in daily life for certification.

These objects symbolize the eternal perpetuity of the royal dynasty. They ensure the legitimacy of the king's reign during his lifetime, and assure his timeless authority after death being kept in the royal ancestral shrine, thus contributing to the stability of the state. They demonstrate a unique political function and uphold sacredness of the royal family by connecting the living and the dead, displaying the cultural tradition and philosophy which prevailed in East Asia.

The seals and books were produced from the beginning of Joseon until the very end, coming down to the modern era for approximately 570 years. It is the only extant case of continuously producing and enshrining seals and books for such a long period. The preservation of the seals and books as a full collection adds to the documentary value of these items as an archive.

2.0 Nominator

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

National Palace Museum of Korea (Affiliated to the Cultural Heritage Administration)

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

A specialized museum for collecting, conserving and exhibiting Joseon royal and Korean imperial court artifacts

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Seo Joon, Curator
Collection Management Division
National Palace Museum

2.4 Contact details

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>
Seo Joon	Hyojaro 12, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea

<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Facsimile</i>	<i>Email</i>
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3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Royal Seal and Investiture Book Collection of the Joseon Dynasty, 5 Types 669 Articles

Royal Seals are stamps which bear the official titles of kings, queens, crown princes and their royal spouses. The seals were created upon occasions of investiture, or when respectful titles or posthumous titles were bestowed to the royal members.

The king of Joseon had many different titles bestowed upon him at different occasions. *Jonho* (尊號) is a respectful title endowed by his officials in praise of an excellent achievement; *siho* (諡號) is a title bestowed to him after death in evaluation of his accomplishments as king; and *myoho* (廟號) is a temple name given when the three-year mourning period was finished and the spirit tablet was enshrined at Jongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine. It was similar for the queen except she received a *hwiho* (徽號) as her spirit tablet entered the royal ancestral shrine. Such diverse, beautiful names and titles were symbolic of the achievements and accomplishments of the kings and queens.

A seal would be created at the time of endowing the king of a ceremonial title and an investiture book accompanied such occasions providing annotations to the title. Following regular practice, each king would have at least three sets of seals and books endowed upon him. He would receive a set upon his investiture as the crown prince, and another set would be given after he died and received his posthumous title. The final one would be created when he was being endowed with a temple name, which was given three years after the death commemorating his enshrinement at the royal ancestral shrine. However, kings with outstanding achievements and accomplishments were numerously bestowed with respectful titles during their lifetime, and sometimes even after death which prompted the creation of more seals and books. The actual process of creating such royal seals and recording the details in ceremonial books can be seen as a parallel practice of documenting royal events into the protocols of Joseon.

The titles of the seals offer a unique system of following the lifetime occasions and events of the king and queen. As a full collection, it also provides information on the full royal lineage of the throne of Joseon. The different materials used for the seals provide insight into the hierarchical system which distinguished the social importance and ranks of the seal bearers. Kings and queens were awarded importance in comparison to the crown prince and his spouse, and the ancestral kings and queens who passed away were upheld with greater distinction than the living, displayed by the use of different materials. The seals made for the crown prince and his spouse were called *in* (印), whilst those made for the king and queen were called *bo* (寶). Jade and silver were mostly used during the lifetime of the bearer, whilst gold seals were created posthumously. Seals produced during the Korean Empire (1897-1910) were manufactured with gold even for the living members, in order to display the imperial status.

Royal investiture books are documents describing the reason and meaning of the ceremony or lifetime occasions when a royal seal was bestowed. They can be categorized into royal edicts written on silk and investiture books made of either bamboo, jade or gold. Royal edicts and bamboo books were given to the crown prince and his spouse, whilst the king and queen received royal edicts with jade books, again displaying the hierarchy with the use of different materials.

Royal edicts contain cautious counsel and advice spelled out on five colored silk material, given to the queen, crown prince and his spouse upon their investiture of the royal post. The contents emphasize the dignity and prestige of such status, enlightening and advising the recipient on their duties and responsibilities.

Jade books are documents containing records written at the time of investiture of the king and queen or when they were bestowed with a respectful title or a posthumous title. When given to the queen at her investiture, the jade book would contain texts relating to the reasons of inauguration with praises on the

newly invested queen of her benevolent and excellent nature follows. The text emphasizes the importance of the prestigious position, providing advice to the queen on observance of filial piety, following proprieties and courteous manners, maintaining amiable and respectful relations, pursuing familial affection and reverence, and to nurture a prosperous family. On books given at occasions of bestowing titles, explanations to the reasons and background of endowment were written, together with the significance and actual meaning of the scriptural characters composing the title. Bamboo books were produced on occasions of inaugurating the crown prince and his spouse, or when they were granted respectful or posthumous titles. The contents of the books were almost similar as those recorded in jade or gold. Gold books were produced on the occasions of inaugurating the empress, imperial prince and princess after the establishment of the Korean Empire (1897), where the text was engraved on gilt bronze plates.

The seals and books endowed upon the king and queen were afterwards stored in Jongmyo, the royal ancestral shrine. As the throne of Joseon was hereditary, it was important to invest the entire royal family with respect and legitimacy. Jongmyo was constructed immediately after the establishment of the dynasty, placed to the left side of the main palace, a representative space symbolizing the authority and legitimacy of the Joseon royal household by enshrining the spiritual tablets, seals and investiture books of the royal ancestors. In the middle of the spirit chamber of each king and queen, a cabinet for storing the spirit tablet is placed. To the left, a cabinet is reserved for the royal seals, whilst there is a cabinet to the right for royal investiture books. All royal seals, investiture books, and royal edicts bestowed to the king and queen were accumulated in these cabinets. These ceremonial assets became the objects of veneration.

3.4 History/provenance

During the Joseon Dynasty the royal seals and books were managed by the Management Office of Jongmyo. However during the Japanese Occupation Period (1910-1945), the Office for the Royal Yi Household took over its management and after liberation in 1945, the Former Imperial Household Administrative Office was named responsible. In between 1955-1961 the Former Imperial Household Properties Management Office became the agency in charge. After 1962, the Office of Cultural Properties was set up as the government department responsible for the conservation and management of these artifacts as an external bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Education. The Office of Cultural Properties was later restructured to the Cultural Heritage Administration (hereafter CHA). In 1992, a special exhibition hall dedicated to royal objects was opened inside Deoksugung Palace, and all the artifacts housed in various locations and numerous different royal tombs were gathered together. In 2005, the Royal Exhibition Hall was relocated to its current building inside Gyeongbokgung Palace and was reformed into the National Palace Museum.

The practice of creating seals and investiture books to commemorate important events are traditions which can be traced back to even before the Common Era in China. There are entries in the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*, 周禮) noting that investiture books and seals were made and enshrined in the Imperial Ancestral Temple (Taimiao, 太廟) during the Zhou Dynasty of China (1046-256 BCE). Although there are other historic records attesting that royal seals and books were produced and enshrined in countries such as China or Vietnam, nowhere was the practice so widely executed for the entire generation of kings and queens as the Joseon Dynasty.

The practice of creating such seals and books were prevalent in Korea for a long time even before Joseon. Out of all the royal kingdoms and dynasties which existed in the Korean peninsula, historians believe that already in the ancient Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE – 668 CE), a number of states carefully made royal seals and books and enshrined them. In the case of Silla, there is a record which testifies that King Beopheung bestowed a posthumous title of Jijeung (智證) to his late father during the first year of his reign in 514. From the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), the text of the posthumous investiture book written for the queen of the first king Taejo in 983 still remains. There are also entries recording the creation of several jade investiture books in *Goryeosa* (History of Goryeo). The royal book commemorating the posthumous title of Injong made in 1146 is currently housed in the National Museum of Korea.

Royal seals and investiture books which commemorate all the kings of Joseon from the 4th generation

grandfather of the first king Taejo, down to the 27th king Sunjong remain intact to this day. This includes those made for the kings, queens, crown princes and spouses, five kings and queens invested posthumously, and the royal concubines. Chronologically the royal books and seals were manufactured for 574 years in total, starting from the beginning of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, until the death of the last queen of Joseon in 1966, Empress Sunjeonghyo.

The oldest remaining seal is the gold seal made for Crown Princess Hyeondeok, manufactured in 1437, and the latest addition to the collection is the jade seal made for Empress Sunmyeonghyo in 1928. The oldest remaining jade book was made in 1545 for King Injong, and the most recent addition is the jade book made for Empress Sunjeonghyo in 1966.

The royal seals and books were manufactured wishing for the perpetuity and prosperity of the Joseon Dynasty. The seals and books preserved intact up to this day are symbolic and venerated as they are considered to represent the authority of the state. The practice of using an official national seal bearing the name "Republic of Korea" is a continuation of such a tradition.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name	Address	
Choi Jongdeok	Director, National Palace Museum Hyojaro 12, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+82 2 3701 7600	+82 2 732 0775	

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name	Address	
Kim Seongbae	Director of Collection Management Division, National Palace Museum Hyojaro 12, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+82 2 3701 7660	+82 2 736 0775	

4.3 Legal status

All legal and administrative responsibilities regarding the conservation of the royal seals and investiture books of the Joseon Dynasty lies with the National Palace Museum. The majority of the artifacts are housed at and managed by the National Palace Museum. The Museum is a national institution of the Republic of Korea which collects, manages, protects and exhibits cultural heritage regarding the royal household of Joseon.

Out of the total of 669 articles included in this nomination, 11 are housed at the National Museum of Korea, 2 are housed at the Jangseokgak Archives of the Academy of Korean Studies, 4 at the Korea University Museum, and 3 at the Seoul Museum of History. The 20 articles housed in 4 different institutes are all included in the nominated collection, and the five institutes including the National Palace Museum have mutually agreed to cooperate for the Memory of the World nomination.

4.4 Accessibility

The royal seals and investiture books are stored in the museum storage of the National Palace Museum (NPM) and in the storage of the respective institutes housing them, with the exception of a few representative articles on display in the permanent exhibition of the NPM, easily accessible by the general public. Information on the artifacts can be retrieved from a search engine database provided through the website of the NPM (<http://www.gogung.go.kr>) and photographs are provided free of charge upon request.

A catalogue book on the royal seals has been published in 2010, and a catalogue for the royal investiture books is under preparation, aiming to be published in 2016. Contents of such publications are easily accessible by the general public. Digital resources are also planned for preparation which will be provided to the public.

4.5 Copyright status

The royal seals and investiture books are not legally bound by Article 39 of the Copyright Act where the copyright protection period is set at 70 years. In accordance with the Collection Management Regulations of the National Palace Museum, drawing out of artifacts for utilization as research materials and photography are permitted following prescribed procedure.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity

The royal seals and investiture books were produced as objects exceptionally made for a particular member of the royal family of the Joseon Dynasty such as the king, queen, crown prince or princess. They are irreplaceable and the process of creation did not allow for any duplicates. Only in the cases of jade books, bamboo books, and gold books, paper rubbings of the engraved text were also kept bound in the form of a book. However the actual seals and investiture books were only produced as a singular item, being irrevocable.

The management of these seals and books were also meticulously upheld. As these items were enshrined in the spirit chambers of Jongmyo, the responsibility of managing the seals and investiture books were taken up by the Management Office of Jongmyo. In *Gyeongguk Daejeon (Code of Law)* an entry states that “the superintendent of Jongmyo checks and examines the jade books, bamboo books and royal edicts of Jongmyo once every year.” There are also entries in the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* indicating that the Bureau of Royal Attire was responsible for the custody of the objects to prevent any loss. Documentation which organizes such notes and minutes on the seals and books are compiled into the *Royal Protocol for Jongmyo Ancestral Rites*, *Records of Jongmyo*, and *Record of Royal Books and Seals at Jongmyo*. The seals and books of the past kings and queens were stored inside the 19 chambers of Jeongjeon Hall and 16 chambers of Yeongnyeongjeon Hall together with their spirit tablets. Issues of maintaining the temperature and humidity inside the spirit chambers in Jongmyo together with security issues preventing loss or fire, prompted the seals and books to be relocated to the museum storage of the Royal Exhibition Hall in 1992. Since 2005, the objects have been kept in the museum storage of the National Palace Museum.

5.2 World significance

In comparison to the seals produced in other countries and cultures, this collection of seals and books bear significance due to its sacred nature. As items produced as a singular, exclusive object for each royal ceremony, these items became the symbol of royal legitimacy and ensured the authority of the rulers of Joseon. Being created even after the death of the king, it ensured the eternal perpetuity of the royal dynasty. The items invested the living king with legitimacy, and the sacredness assured his timeless authority even after death. In this regard the seals and books greatly contributed in maintaining the stability of the dynasty.

Although the tradition of creating a ceremonial seal and investiture book was a widely accepted concept in East Asia, the actual practice of such a tradition was only kept intact in Joseon. Therefore the collection has an important significance in representing the concept and culture of East Asia in its tangible form. The seals and investiture books served as important objects upholding the political stability of the dynasty, and also provide an insight into the philosophical structure of East Asia, demonstrating the connection between the living world and the afterworld.

There are cases in China and Vietnam where royal seals and investiture books were produced, but such a wide collection which illustrates the lifelong ceremonies and rites of all the kings and queens passing through the milestones of crown prince, crown princess, king, queen, and queen dowager is unparalleled. The few items of royal seals and investiture books in China and Vietnam are limited in

representing the full chronology and value in the information and significance as a collection. The seals and books of the Joseon Dynasty should be understood in the global stance as a comprehensive set of documentary heritage providing insight on the politics, economy, society, and culture of a whole state.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1 Time

The production period of the royal seals and investiture books spans 570 years, starting from 1392 to 1966 when the investiture book for the last empress of Joseon was made. The production of these seals and investiture books were continuous and were maintained with utmost care and attention. This shows the continuity of the royal dynasty throughout its entire history. Within the world there are only a handful of historic states boasting such long history of over 500 years and the value of the royal seals and investiture books can be accounted for their longevity.

The first seal was created in 1411, and the last one was made in 1928. During such period the seal inscription followed a set format whilst the shape of the handle changed from a turtle to a dragon. In the case of jade books the number of jade strips changed from five or six to seven strips, and the change was made after the establishment of the Korean Empire in 1897. As such there are a few visible changes in the format, but the essence of the tradition was kept in the contents all throughout the years. Changes in format are variations keeping with the changing times within the boundaries of respecting the traditional style.

2 Place

King Taejo (first king of Joseon) followed the practice of placing a shrine to the left and altar to the right as prescribed in the *Rites of Zhou* when he designed the capital city, and placed Jongmyo Ancestral Shrine and Sajikdan Altar (Altar for the Deities of Earth and Grain) to the left and right of Gyeongbokgung Palace. These were the sacred places of veneration where state rituals were to be held. Jongmyo Shrine signified the authority and legitimacy of the royal family and the state, holding political and emblematic significance. A cabinet for holding the spirit tablet was placed at the center of the spirit chamber enshrining the spirit and soul of the ancestors. In the left and right side of the chamber, separate cabinets were made for holding the royal seals and investiture books. Jongmyo was the shrine where ancestral rituals accompanied with dance and music were performed regularly twice a year in spring and autumn, which still continue to be observed.

The royal shrine commemorates the past kings and queens of the Joseon Dynasty by enshrining their spirit tablets. It consists of two halls, Jeongjeon and Yeongnyeongjeon. In the 19 spirit chambers of Jeongjeon, spirit tablets, royal seals and investiture books for 19 kings and 30 queens are kept. In the 16 chambers of Yeongnyeongjeon, spirit tablets, seals and books for 15 kings, 17 queens and those for the Imperial Prince Uimin are kept.

Jongmyo is enlisted on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a cultural heritage. The unique and exceptional ritual performed twice a year in reverence of the ancestral spirits is included on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The royal seals and investiture books enshrined in such a sacred location are important documentary heritage holding important sacred values.

3 People

The people being endowed with the royal seals and investiture books were the king and his immediate family such as the queen, dowager queen, crown prince and his spouse, and royal concubines. These members were representative figures of not only the royal family but of the state, exercising tremendous influence to the general public. The seals and books served as significant symbols which attested their legitimacy and authority. In many cases there were numerous princes who were born between the king and queen, or between the king and his concubine, therefore it was important to be distinguished as the crown prince being named as next in the line of succession, which was manifested by the bestowal of the royal seal and investiture book. The seal and book granted the prince his new status and authority as the official heir, and became the symbol in performing his new role.

The royal seals and investiture books were used to assert the authority of the royals. For instance, King

Sukjong devoted his energy into arranging the details of the past royal lineage to establish the order of the state. During the process he posthumously invested Queen Sindeok (first queen of King Taejo), King Danjong, and Queen Jeongsun who were previously neglected from the official attention due to political strife, and reinstated the authority of the royal family.

King Yeongjo succeeded the throne as a prince who was born from a concubine, and he intended to gain his political base and authority by investing his biological mother Lady Sukbin Choi with a respectful and posthumous title. There were prior instances where the biological parents of the king were posthumously invested, but after the initiations of King Yeongjo, such posthumous investiture of the biological parents became standard practice.

Bestowing the king with a respectful title during his lifetime was exceptional and was largely practiced especially during the reigns of King Sukjong and Yeongjo. Both kings boast a long reigning period, 46 years and 52 years respectfully, exerting enormous influence to the development in politics, society and economics. The leadership was ceremoniously celebrated by being endowed with a respectful title in the shape of a royal seal and investiture book. Therefore the inscriptions are important documents through which we can understand the political situation of the times.

The comprehensive set of seals and books, displays the entire family lineage of the Joseon royal household of the 27 kings and queens as a collection. It starts from the 4th generation grandparents of the first king Taejo, who were posthumously invested after the establishment of Joseon. It also includes posthumously invested kings, queens who were biological parents of a later king. Even royal concubines were granted respectful and posthumous titles, thus keeping a full record of the royal family.

4 Subject and theme

Yi Seonggye who became the first king of Joseon and his political constituency wished to build a state where individuals could live as respected human beings by practicing values acquired through the understanding of human nature and the universe based on Neo-Confucianism. Efforts were made to build a society which observed rules and regulations set out for individuals, neighbours, society and the state. The royal seals and books were also a product of these rules which were made and practiced by the state, based on such ideology and philosophy placing importance on social ceremonies. The continuous production of the royal seals and books throughout the 600 year history of the Joseon Dynasty demonstrates such manifestation of Joseon culture.

The royal edicts and investiture books contained cautious counsel and advice. The contents emphasized the dignity and prestige of the royal status, enlightening and advising the recipient on their duties and responsibilities. Explanations to the reasons and background of endowing respectful titles were written, together with the significance and actual meaning of the scriptural characters composing the title.

A respectful title was bestowed to the king or queen either during their lifetime or after their death, to commend their virtue. In the case of the latter, the title would be bestowed after the three-year mourning period or when the spirit tablet was enshrined in Jongmyo. When kings or queens enjoyed longevity, they were endowed with several respectful titles. A special directorate would be set up for the bestowal of these titles such as the Directorate for the Bestowal of Respectful Title, Directorate for the Bestowal of Additional Respectful Title, or Directorate for the Posthumous Bestowal of Respectful Title etc. Various officials and workers of the government undertook the work of composing the text, writing the calligraphy, engraving the titles, and producing ceremonial regalia and equipment. Ordinarily a prime ministerial level official would serve as the Chief Superintendent, flanked by numerous officers assisting him.

When deciding upon an appropriate title, the principle was to consider three candidates. The meanings and significance of each character were carefully considered before the current king making the final decision. The specific characters which could be used in composing a respectful title were also determined and set out beforehand. In accordance with the *Rites of Zhou*, a total of 28 characters could be used, whereas in accordance with *Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian)*, 194 characters were allowed. A total of 194 characters were used at the Office of Sacrificial Rites in Joseon in 1438. However the Office informed the king that the insufficient amount of characters limited the chances of dedicating the appropriate significant character befitting the facts, and asked for an expansion. Officers of the Hall of Worthies added 107 more characters by referring to the texts of *Yili (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial)*, *Addition to the Complete Explanation of the classic and commentaries of the Book of*

Etiquette and Ceremonial, and *Wenxian Tongkao* (Comprehensive investigations based on literary and documentary sources). Through this process, a total of 301 characters were designated for the use of titles. Such propriety greatly influenced the selection of character for the title, and the text composition of the royal seal and investiture books.

5 Form and style

The royal seals and investiture books of the Joseon Dynasty have texts written or engraved on various materials such as gold, silver, jade, bamboo and silk, showing the immense variety of the form and style of documentary heritage. Hierarchical distinction determined the use of different materials as kings and queens received gold or jade seals whilst the crown prince and princess received silver or jade seals. The hierarchy also affected investiture books, as kings and queens were endowed with jade books whilst crown princes and princesses received bamboo books. A distinction was also made for the living and the dead, as the past ancestors were invested with sacred authority protecting the living descendants and therefore endowed with gold seals and gold books. During the lifetime of the bearers these objects signified their ruling authority, and after their deaths they ensured the legitimacy of their status and were added with sacred reverence becoming objects of veneration.

The various forms range from royal seals having handles shaped like dragons or turtles; jade books or bamboo books made from narrow strips of jade or bamboo stringed together; and royal edicts written on rolls of silk material. Such variety in form shows the diversity of documentary heritage, and the unique type of documents which existed in Korea. When a seal was made every time a new respectful title was bestowed, it would include all the previously endowed titles together with the new title. The method of engraving all the letters consecutively without space was the unique style of Joseon seals. The jade seal of King Munjong which was manufactured in 1902 on the occasion of bestowing a respectful title has a total of 116 characters engraved, distinctly demonstrating such style and traits.

The texts engraved on seals are mostly in seal script. The script was a popular style widely used by the royal court and upper class nobility in the Joseon Dynasty, and the court ordered civil officials to submit seal script writings twice a month to the king, to train the calligraphy skills at the state level. Official inscription calligraphers were selected on the basis of these specimens, and they were responsible for writing the calligraphy of the seals. The advantages of using the seal script lies with the high legibility and aesthetic qualities when being engraved in a set format. The style of the script was selected to enhance the spiritual qualities of the seals.

Royal edicts, jade books, bamboo books and gold books have distinguished formats which add significance and value to the text. The first line called *geukhang* (極行) contains 12 characters, and the separation of the first line indicates utmost respect towards the title of the king. Such a format shows how the ideology of the state is displayed in literary format demonstrating the legitimacy and hierarchical authority. The format of composing the middle line with 11 characters and having even heighted lines of 10 characters are diverse formats adhered to when producing royal seals. Such literary style only exists in the remaining seals and investiture books, and is very hard to replicate.

Many distinguished high officials, socially renowned people and the most skilled masters of crafts participated in the production of the royal seals and investiture books marking the epitome of craft techniques. The process of deciding on a specific name or title for the seal started with evaluating the contributions and achievements of the individual. Officials would suggest a number of names and narrow it down to three final candidates and present it to the king. The king would make the final decision and an inscription calligrapher would write the text, after which the engraver would work on to produce the seal. A similar process was adopted for the investiture book where a renowned writer composed the text, and an official scribe calligrapher wrote it out for the engraver. Approximately 40 to 50 people were engaged in the process of creating the royal seal and investiture book. These people were allotted specific tasks each in their field of expertise. The best writers, calligraphers and engravers were employed in the process, ensuring the value and quality of these royal objects as works of art. Writing out the characters used for producing the royal seals and investiture books was an important and special task. The court of Joseon had a special office dedicated to the employment of official scribes who copied the official documents of the government. Out of these scribes, the seal inscription calligrapher was responsible for writing the characters on the royal seals and investiture books.

The process of making shows the segmented structure of the handicraft industry in the times of Joseon, whilst the seal and book also provides historic evidence in studying the lineage of craftsmen and their

techniques. The changing mode from operating governmental workshops to employing private craftsmen is reflected in the production of the seals and books. Important evidence demonstrating key aspects of the industrial structure can be found from the seals and books. These are important information in evaluating the value and significance of this collection.

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

The text engraved on the seals and books is abstract, expressing the life of the bearer. The character, virtuous deeds, academic achievements and their influence on the people are comprehensively evaluated and connotatively conveyed. The texts engraved on jade books, bamboo books or royal edicts mainly contain instructive contents on directing the bearer towards amiable character and manners. The contents provide us with the social responsibilities and expectations the royals had to bear as leaders of the state.

The Joseon Dynasty upheld the royal seals and investiture books as sacred objects. However with the change of times, the sacredness has diminished and the objects have become targets of both respect and criticism as the actual kings and queens are historically re-evaluated. The seals and books provide us with important information on how the rulers of the dynasty were evaluated during their times when the objects were being produced.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

Evidence and entries about the royal seals and investiture books can be found in various other documents such as the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, *Diaries of the Royal Secretariat*, *Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty*, and *Records of Daily Reflection*, all included in the Memory of the World register. In particular, the Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty records facts about who made the seals and books, when and where, and the methods of manufacture in detail. The seals and books are a genuinely original collection without duplicate having a high value of rarity.

The royal seals and books are made of the beautiful names and titles bestowed to the kings and queens utilizing various materials. The respectful titles or posthumous titles could only be adopted by the individual it was intended for. The entire collection of 5 types 669 articles are each original objects without any duplicates or copies, and would cause a great loss to the cultural world should they be damaged.

6.2 Integrity

As a whole, the seals and investiture books compose a full collection including all members of the Joseon royal family starting from the founding father Taejo to the last king Sunjong. All the kings and queens, crown princes and princesses, and even the royal concubines are included in this set. Such an extensive collection is not matched elsewhere in the world. There are cases in China and Vietnam where seals and investiture books have been made for a number of individuals, but not as a full collection which attests to the genealogy of an entire royal household.

The seals and investiture books preserve their original form and shape, maintaining the archetype of the heritage. Although there are some parts that are naturally antiquated with the passing of time, the majority of the collection remains intact in their original condition.

The seals are composed together with a set of inner metal case, outer case, inner case for the ink pad, outer case for the ink pad and a seal and ink pad carrier. There are also accessories such as wrapping cloths, tie up strings, keys and locks, and scented pouches to ward off any biological damages. The investiture book has cushion pads inserted in between the strips to prevent any damage, and a case for storage. Accessories such as wrapping cloths, tie up strings, inner case and outer case, and scented pouches are also included in the composition. The entire composition of the full set of seals and books are kept intact to this day, and the conservation methods and wrapping techniques of the Joseon era

has also been fully preserved.

The seals and books were produced as a singular, exceptional object without any duplicates for the past kings and queens. Majority of the collection keeps the original shape and form from the day of its inception. A total of 386 seals were produced during the Joseon Dynasty, but 55 seals have been lost leaving a remaining collection of 331 seals. 44 royal edicts were written, but currently there are 32 edicts left, as 12 have been lost. A total of 335 jade books were produced, 77 were lost, and currently there are 258 books kept intact. 73 bamboo books were produced, and with 32 lost there are 41 books kept intact. 12 gold books were made, and while 5 have been lost, 7 are kept intact. The collection which is nominated for the Memory of the World encompasses the entire collection which has maintained its integrity to this day.
