Culling Archival Collections in the Koryŏ-Chosŏn Transition

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This article examines the inheritance and culling of government archival collections in the first few decades of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910). After describing some features of Chosŏn archival practice, it provides an overview of Koryŏ (918–1392) archival institutions that the Chosŏn inherited before analyzing the various acts of culling focusing on a variety of different archival collections. By updating poorly maintained and damaged household, military, and slave registers, compiling old records for both practical (legal, military or geomantic) and historical purposes as well as by eliminating problematic materials, the early Chosŏn court symbolically proclaimed its rule, created new monuments of memory through the emphasis of certain records over others, and broke with the past through the destruction of documents that supported the old system. A related change in archival practice took place, as new a precedent in compiling the Veritable Records soon after the death of a king allowed for greater control over archival procedures and memory-making.

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