



Special Review

Jikji

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Editor's Note

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Commonly known as the *Jikji*, the *Baegun hwasang chorok jikji simche yojeol* is the world's earliest extant book printed with movable metal type. It occupies a significant place not only in Korean Studies but also in the global history of printing and bibliography. A substantial body of scholarship has accumulated over the decades, and in this issue two contributors provide excellent overviews of the research history.

Professor Ok Young Jung is a leading scholar in the fields of philology and bibliography. In his review, he summarizes the current state of the field and introduces recent advances in *Jikji* scholarship. Furthermore, he identifies important unresolved issues that continue to demand scholarly attention. Professor Jamie Jungmin Yoo is likewise a distinguished scholar of textual studies and an active researcher in the field of digital humanities. In her review, she examines recent developments surrounding the text, focusing on its inscription on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register and on new methodologies emerging from digital humanities.

One point that deserves further consideration, however, is that while discussions of the text itself have been vigorous, relatively less attention has been devoted to a broader historical question: why did Korea not experience a printing revolution comparable to the one that transformed Europe after Gutenberg? It is important for Korean Studies to highlight Korea's remarkable achievements, but it is equally necessary to pursue critical and reflective scholarship that also examines the structural limitations of premodern society. In this context, the review of *Jikji* is timely and meaningful alongside the special feature of this June 2026 issue on digital humanities. Although premodern Korea did not develop a printing revolution comparable to the European model, contemporary Korean scholarship has achieved remarkable advances in the field of digital humanities, a new media environment that is reshaping the production, preservation, and organization of knowledge. In

this sense, the special feature and special review of this issue complement one another, inviting readers to reflect simultaneously on historical matters and contemporary transformations of textual culture.