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Urinara, Urimal: The Creation, Preservation, and Expression of Korean

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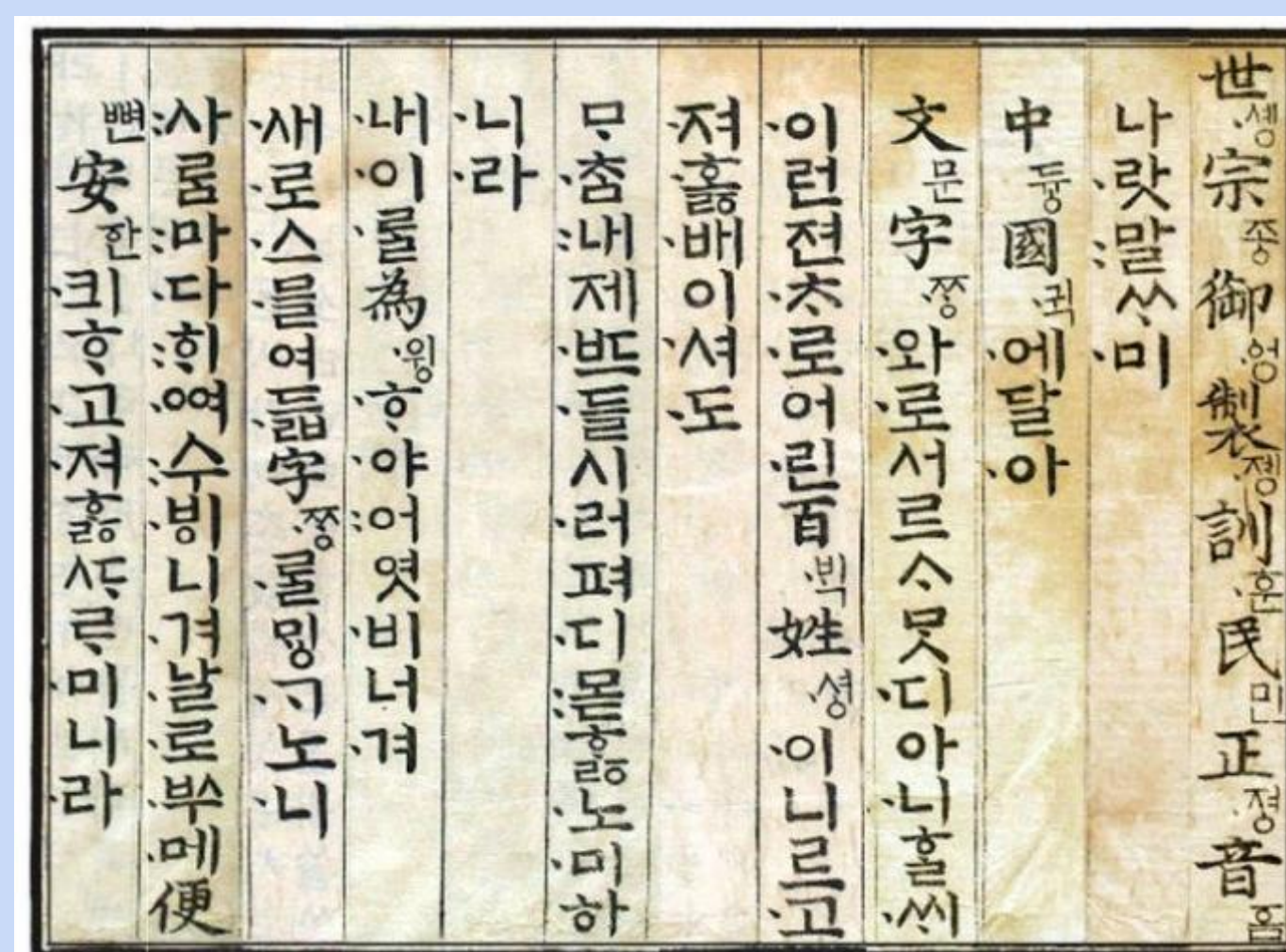
Abstract

Language is influenced by culture, a development that is unique to humankind. It is specific to a group of people and changes with time. And with all of this, identity is formed, including but not limited to national, cultural, and ethnic. But this system simultaneously is weaponized to divide and oppress groups, stripping them of their sense of identity to conform them into another. This project explores the significance of language on humanity by looking into the close-knit relationship between Korea and its language. Hangul was formed with the people in mind, and this system has survived through years of colonization and is now spreading into the global sphere. A close examination of the philosophies behind Hangul's creation, preservation through Korea's history of colonization, and its present-day uses can explain the relationship between humanity and language. What significance, or worth, did Koreans find in Hangul that enabled this motivation to protect, and what does this say about humanity? **Why is language an essential part of humanity?**

Methodology

My digital humanities methodology creates a digital exhibition with archival sources of different forms. Through this, I wish to accomplish a bigger goal to celebrate unheard stories by allowing others to learn about them. Specifically in my project, by utilizing Hangul, I spotlight that studying language also offers many insights to a culture, and humanity. I record archival methods of linguistic preservation and preserve them in the digital sphere, effectively compiling and presenting my sources into one, as I will examine more, whether it be visual, literary, or auditory. I utilize digital methods and its communicability to make learning and archiving more accessible.

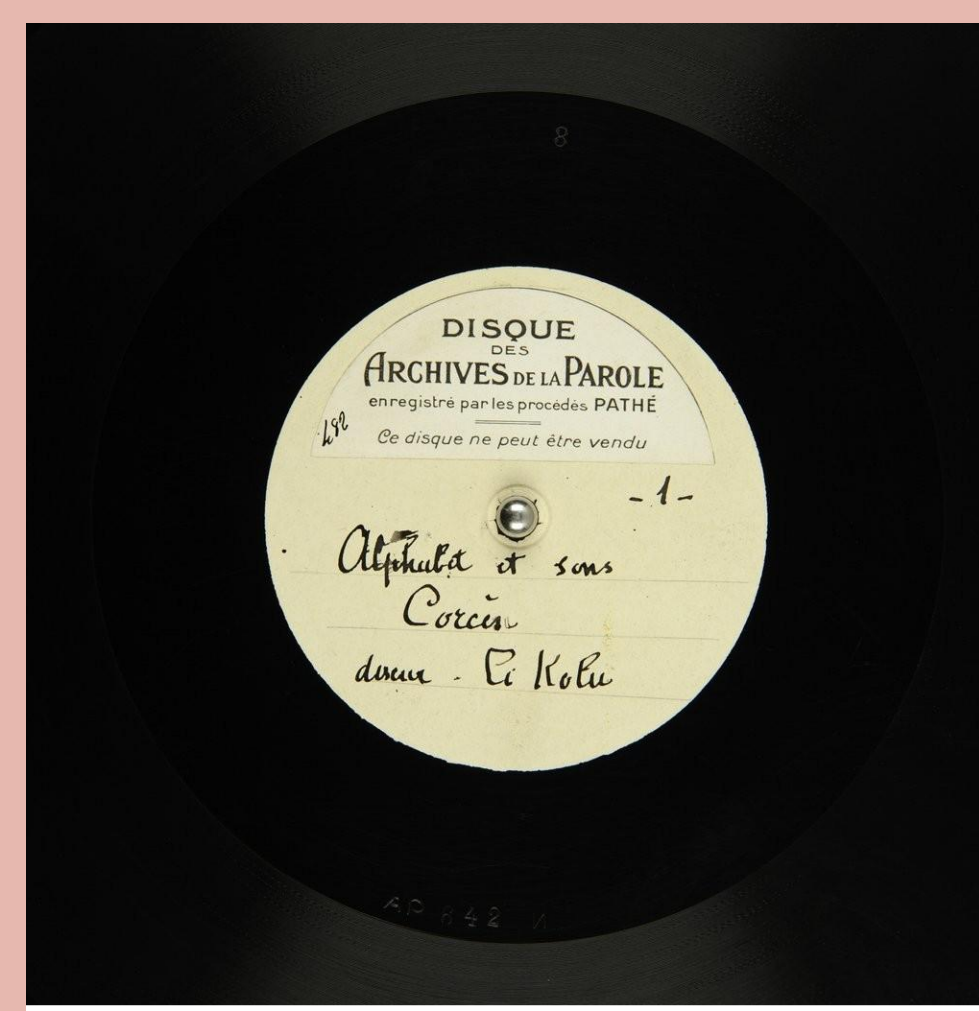
Creation



Hunminjeongeum, King Sejong (1446)

King Sejong ruled over Joseon from 1418 to 1450, and motivated by his interests in language and phonology, along with his benevolence for the people, he created Hangul, with the goal of setting up a system that would differentiate Korean from the Chinese characters they were using at the time. This goal to be different is a representation of King Sejong's wishes of unification through communication. Despite opposition from his royal retainers, he created 28 letters and published them in 1446, in a manuscript titled "Hunminjeongeum," translating to "The Correct/Proper Sounds for the Instruction of the People." Language becomes a source of national identity through its ability to bring people together.

Preservation



Archives de la parole: Alphabet et sons [du] coréen (1915)



Hangul Day Song, Choi Hyun-bae (1954)

Hangul was created with the goal to unite the Korean people under a common language and differentiate themselves as a nation from others. By taking away this representation of sovereignty, the Japanese exercised linguistic imperialism to exert dominance over the peninsula. Removing methods of communication also takes away the freedom of expression, breaking King Sejong's intention. Independence activist and Korean linguist Lee Guk-ro's archival recording and the history of Hangul Day show the human will to protect what is precious to them. These two sources show how remembrance is translated into preservation. Hangul Day serves as a reminder of the purpose of creation and the struggles of perseverance that Lee Guk-ro's recording represents.

Expression

요--리 조리 베면 저고리 되고,
이--러케 베면 큰총되지.
누나하구 나하구
가위로 종이 쓸아더니,
어머니가 비^ㅅ자루 들고

Typeface Ahn Sang-soo (2012)



날개 (Wings) (2025)

Korea had officially been liberated from Japanese rule in 1945. Since then, Korea has gone through many changes in its culture, reflected in how Hangul is now also used as a visual methods of expression. Artists take apart, dissect, and reform Hangul, reflecting the philosophies it was built upon. Ahn Sang Soo's work reimagines the purpose of Hangul as not just a communication device, but a visual form with endless possibilities and combinations that can be made. Every stroke, every angle, every line—they carry meaning and intention in their creation. The interactions of the lines and the dots, the ability to piece them together and take them apart, adding or deleting a stroke to create something new. Hangul becomes an image of how humans interact with the world.

Conclusion

Hangul, to Koreans, has evolved into something more than a source of communication. It is a symbol that represents Korean history and the perseverance of the Korean people. It is a source of national pride and creative expression. The lifespan of Hangul is a direct reflection of the historical timeline of Korea. Korean was created for the people, protected by the people, and the philosophies of creation are directly reflected through the different facets of use in the present day. Koreans put into fruition the hopes of King Sejong. To express thoughts and ideas. Hangul's endless possibility to evolve and develop is tied to the strong connections between humanity and language. We wonder just how much more Hangul can evolve in the coming generations. Language and culture have a bidirectional relationship, and humans are central in this. Language is molded by the people and the culture that it spawns, and humans are the carriers that take in these structures, keep them, and pass them along to the next generations.

Sources/Further Reading

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Digital Exhibition

