

2 Korean documentary heritage holdings inscribed in UNESCO's Memory of the World



Handwritten posters with the names and descriptions of lost siblings, parents and family members made during the 1980 reunion of war-dispersed families.

Photo: Cultural Heritage Administration

Two old and modern archive holdings of Korea were recognised as valuable documentary heritage by UNESCO on Saturday.

The two Korean additions to the UNESCO Memory of the World are Confucian printing woodblocks of the Joseon era and the archives of the 1983 KBS special live broadcast "Finding Dispersed Families."

The decision was made at the three-day meeting of UNESCO's International Advisory Committee that considered 87 nominations from 61 countries in Abu Dhabi from Oct. 4-6.

The Confucian printing woodblocks comprises 64,226 hand-carved blocks produced between 1460 and 1956 for the printing of 718 books. They were used to print various books based on Confucian values and to pass down teachings of scholars to descendants during the Joseon era (1392-1910).

Writing carved on the blocks varies from genealogies to textbooks for children, with the vast majority, 583 titles out of a total 718, being literary writings of scholars. They cover diverse genres such as letters, daily

journals, poems and academic papers.

The Joseon era woodblocks hold an exceptional value in that they were produced not just for book printing, but as "an act of practicing the ruling ideology of the era and passing the sages' enlightenment down to the descendants," explained Park Soon, a senior researcher at the Advanced Center for the Korean Studies, which holds the collection at its special archive called Jangpangak.

The archive of the 1983 live broadcast of the KBS is one of the most recent records included in the UNESCO listing of documentary heritage. It's a record of 138 days of an epic reunion of war-dispersed families broadcast live on the channel from June 30 through Nov. 14, 1983.

The archive consists of 20,522 records of live broadcasts: 463 videotapes of 453 hours and 45 minutes of broadcasts, producers' journals, applications to participate, broadcast ephemera, audiotapes and photographs.

The two records join the ranks of UNESCO-recognised Korean historical documents, including "Nanjung Ilgi: War Diary of Admiral Yi Sun-sin" and archives of the Saemaul Undong.