The Historical Research of the Seonjamdan Altar in Seoul and the Aspects of its Conservation

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Abstract

The Seonjamdan altar of the Joseon Dynasty is the only remaining medium sacrifice-grade altar in Seoul. This study investigates the characteristics of the original altar, and explores changes in the Seonjamdan area in addition to historical conservation efforts. The construction of Seonjamdan in a northeastern region outside the capital city was an attempt by Joseon to fully comply with an exemplary Chinese tradition. The Seonjamdan altar was erected twice during the Joseon Dynasty: the first was built during the founding of the dynasty and its historical remains have recently been unearthed, and its second incarnation was in the 18th century and remained active until the country was liberated from Japanese rule. After the liberation, however, Seonjamdan served different purposes and was damaged through urban development and the invasion of urban infrastructure. As a result, the historical remains of the latter Seonjamdan, which was retained until the colonial era, completely lost their integrity and authenticity. In spite of its physical destruction and regardless of its authenticity, various measures have been taken in the Seonjamdan area for the protection and preservation of its intangible value.

Keywords: Seonjamdan altar; conservation; authenticity; Joseon; the capital city

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

In the East Asian cultural sphere, ancestral rites are religious practices that originated as acts of worshipping the dead, but were gradually integrated with political ideology for the protection and control of state power, thereby becoming rituals led by the state. Because of this close relationship between ancestral rites and the state, an altar where the rite was performed came to be regarded as an essential national facility. The Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), a centralized state, viewed this altar as an important installment that not only symbolized the power of the king, but also represented the status of the capital city.

This study focuses on Seonjamdan (先蠶壇), an altar used for medium sacrifices during the Joseon era. Seoneungsi (西陵氏), the God of the Silkworm who was believed to have taught humans how to breed the insect, was enshrined here. This altar served as a place of national ancestral rituals during the Joseon Dynasty and the Korean Empire (1897-1910), before officially losing its national significance on July 28, 1908. At this time, Korea forfeited its diplomatic sovereignty to Japan; then, the ancestral tablets on the Seonjamdan altar were moved and enshrined at the Sajikdan altar (社稷壇), and the site for the altar then became vested in the state (Hwangseongsinmun, 1908: 1, 3rd column).

The periphery of Seonjamdan was quickly ruined once the altar had lost its function. The damage was accelerated by urban development, and the rebuilding of Seonjamdan has been carried out on ambiguous grounds. Furthermore, because research on Seonjamdan from the Joseon period has been centered on historical records, understanding the practice of the system has been limited.

This study will identify the characteristics of Seonjamdan from the Joseon period through a historical investigation of its original form, and attempt to understand the aspects of its conservation through an examination of the damage and the process of rebuilding the Seonjamdan area.

1.2 Research Method

This article is structured as follows. First, it examines the historical evidence regarding the location and size of Seonjamdan. Based on documents from the Joseon Dynasty and the records of field inspections performed during the colonial era, it pieces together the characteristics of the location and diachronically explores the shape of Seonjamdan by verifying that the remains recently excavated at the Seonjamdan site and the Seonjamdan that was inspected in the colonial era were built at different times.
Next, it analyzes the damage to Seonjamdan over time and the changes that have affected the surrounding environment. More specifically, it identifies relevant records from the Japanese Government-General of Korea and official documents of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and the Seoul city government.

Finally, the study surveys previous efforts to protect the Seonjamdan site, as outlined in relevant national documents, with attention to preventative measures rather than damage sustained in order to identify the direction and goals of the protective efforts for the site.

2. Location and Form of Seonjamdan
2.1 The Environmental Setting of Seonjamdan: Embracing Confucian Ideology

It was during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) that the first Seonjamdan altar was built in Korea. Goryeo enacted the institution of Seonjamdan by referring to rituals of China's Song Dynasty, and the Joseon Dynasty revised it according to Confucian ideology while succeeding part of Goryeo's code of sacrificial ceremony (Ikchul, S. 2001: 529).

Indeed, the location of the Seonjamdan altar demonstrates the Joseon Dynasty's attitude toward Confucianism. Its decision was generally based on Liji (禮記) of China's Zhou (周) Dynasty.

The emperor shall help preparing food for the rite by performing the ceremony of farming in a southern suburb while the queen shall help preparing ritual costumes by performing the ceremony of silkworm-breeding in a northern suburb. The feudal lord shall do the ceremony of farming in an eastern suburb to help prepare the food, too, and his wife shall do the silkworm-breeding ceremony in a 'northern suburb' to contribute to preparing the ritual costumes, Liji, Jitong (祭統) Dynasty.

However, some geographical features made it difficult to strictly apply the ritual standards in Joseon's capital city. Unlike the Chinese ancient capital city that occupied a flat terrain, Joseon's capital city of Hanyang was surrounded by mountains. With Mt. Baeaksan and Mt. Bukansan overlapping each other to the north of Hanyang, it was difficult to secure level ground for the practice of ancestral rituals. Subsequently, the Seonjamdan altar was located in the northeastern suburbs of the capital city, up the Anam River, which descended easterly from Mt. Baeaksan (west) to Mt. Eungbong (east) (Fig.1.).

One may argue that the Chinese standard was not followed here since the altar was situated too far east to be seen as lying in a northern suburb; however, several records show that this was the result of the Joseon's effort to situate Seonjamdan north of Hanyang. First, people called the area of Seonjamdan "Seongbuk-dong," a town north of the capital city, which implies that the region was perceived as a northern suburb. Second, they established Seonnongdan, which was paired with Seonjamdan, due east of the eastern suburb, thereby conferring a relative directionality on the two altars and fulfilling the Confucian rule regarding rite (Fig.2.).

Third, it is clear that the issue regarding the size and location of Seonjamdan had been repeatedly raised from the early days of the Joseon Dynasty, but King Seongjong stressed that the rules for rituals took priority over everything else (Annals of King Seongjong, Book 40, March 28, 1473). The idea of moving the altar was proposed since the narrow space made it inconvenient to practice ancestral rituals and manage the site, but ultimately the altar remained in its original location. This suggests that the royal court of Joseon ardently embraced Confucian ideology and symbolism to the extent that it was willing to endure the site's inconveniences.

Instead, the royal court took a different approach to resolve these issues. King Seongjong, who strictly followed the Chinese rules for rituals, had the Chinjamdan (親蠶壇) and Chaesangdan (採桑壇) altars constructed in the forbidden garden of the palace in addition to Seonjamdan so that the queen could perform the silkworm breeding ceremony there (Annals of King Seongjong, Book 78, March 3, 1477; Annals of King Yeongjo, Book 108, March 10, 1767; Chunkwantonggo (春官通考), 1788). In other words, the king found a convenient solution that allowed him
to still observe the Chinese principles by having a bureaucratic figure acting as king (祭祀) take care of Seonjamdan, while the queen performed the ceremony within the palace.

Because a separate place for Chinjamrye (親蠶禮) was established inside the palace, the Seonjamdan altar located outside of the capital city became a symbolic place without ritual function. The contradictory situation in which rituals were not held at the altar exhibits the operating characteristics of the capital city during the Joseon era. The Joseon Dynasty determined a spatial hierarchy while considering Confucian courtesy and the hilly topographic features of Seoul, and found a reasonable compromise between practical rituals and an ideal norm. As a result, the unique appearance and operating method of the Seonjamdan altar was created and was vastly different from that of China.

2.2 Changes in the Size of the Seonjamdan Altar and the Characteristics of its Construction

One of the most important empirical records detailing the shape and size of Seonjamdan is a floor plan drawn by Japanese civil engineer Matsumuro Sigesawa (松室重正) in 1930 (Fig.3.b). It is noteworthy that the size of the altar in the drawing differs from the standard altar size in the early Joseon period as well as the size indicated in the national ritual book written in the 14th century when the dynasty was enjoying national stability. Regarding the difference, historians have explained, "Joseon revised ritual rules in its own way, but could not follow the changed rules properly due to a number of realistic problems, and the ritual rules functioned as idealistic and symbolic norms" (Jiyeon, J. 2012: 82; Hyeryun, L. 2015: 185).

In November 2016, large-scale remains were discovered during the Seonjamdan site restoration project. The ruins did not correspond to any of the existing records, let alone those of Sigesawa; this indicated a need for further study. As this was an important discovery, an in-depth discussion on this matter is necessary.

Table 1. Changes in the Size of Seonjamdan and Characteristics of its Construction

| Time | Size of the altar | Size of both walls | Ground | Characteristics | Executed | Historic remains |
|------|------------------|--------------------|--------|----------------|----------|-----------------|
| Before 1414 (a) | Remaining width 2900 mm | North wall: Remaining width 7300 mm Remaining length 12100 mm Breadth around 900-1000 mm | The altar and the walls were filled in reddish brown sandy clay and then finished in rectangular stone, and the back side was filled in crushed stone (refer to the records from November 13, 20th year in the reign of King Sejong) | The altar and the walls were filled in reddish brown sandy clay and then finished in rectangular stone, and the back side was filled in crushed stone (refer to the records from November 13, 20th year in the reign of King Sejong) | × | Remains excavated in November, 2016 |
| 1414 (b) | W, D: 13 Cheok (4187 mm) H: 3 Cheok (966 mm) Stairs running down in all directions 25 steps each (48315 mm) | North to South a total of 67 Cheok: Upper wall (inner wall) 31 Cheok Lower wall (outer wall) 36 Cheok East to West a total of 35 Cheok (10927 mm) | Modifications to the altar and wall system suggested to fit the standards set forth in Hongmu reign's ritual protocols | Modifications to the altar and wall system suggested to fit the standards set forth in Hongmu reign's ritual protocols | × | - |
| 1430 (c) | W, D: 23 Cheok (7180 mm) H: 2.7 Cheok (843 mm) Stairs running down in all directions 25 steps each (46830 mm) | North to South a total of 67 Cheok: Upper wall (inner wall) 31 Cheok Lower wall (outer wall) 36 Cheok East to West a total of 35 Cheok (10927 mm) | Expansion and relocation of the altar suggested to make performing ancestral rites and maintaining the altar easier and more convenient | Expansion and relocation of the altar suggested to make performing ancestral rites and maintaining the altar easier and more convenient | × | - |
| 1474 (d) | Same as the above from 1430 | North to South a total of 67 Cheok: Upper wall (inner wall) 31 Cheok Lower wall (outer wall) 36 Cheok East to West a total of 35 Cheok (10927 mm) | Kukjo-oryeui | Kukjo-oryeui | × | - |
| 1749 (e) | W, D: 14 Cheok (4371 mm) H: 2 Cheok (624 mm) Stairs running down in all directions (3 flights) | North to South a total of 67 Cheok: Upper wall (inner wall) 31 Cheok Lower wall (outer wall) 36 Cheok East to West a total of 35 Cheok (10927 mm) | Chinjam-eugwe | Chinjam-eugwe | • | Survey drawing of Matsumuro Sigesawa |
First of all, it is worth examining *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* with reference to the establishment of Seonjamdan, since the king made all of the decisions regarding ancestral services and the altar in the Joseon era. According to these records, Seonjamdan basically consisted of a square-shaped altar on which ancestral tablets and delicacies for the ceremony were placed; a low wall (inner wall) stood around the altar, and another wall (outer wall) existed in the south. In principal, the walls were supposed to be surrounded by red gates with spiked tops, but it is unclear whether the gate was actually erected. There were no other installations except for a hole for a sacrificial offering (burial hole) north-by-northwest of the altar (Fig. 3.a).

Additionally, there was much discussion about the need to change the size of the altar (Table 1.). Taken altogether, various sources suggest that Seonjamdan was set up only twice: once before the 13th year in the reign of King Taejong (Table 1. a) and next during the reign of King Yeongjo in the mid-18th century (Table 1. e). For the sake of convenience, we will call Table 1. (a) the first Seonjamdan and Table 1. (e) the latter Seonjamdan.

Because of a lack of concrete records, it is unknown when the first Seonjamdan altar was constructed; thus, it must be estimated using circumstantial evidence. The altar was possibly constructed along with other important national facilities such as the palace, Jongmyo shrine, and the Sajikdan altar after King Taejo, the first king of Joseon, transferred the capital city to Hanyang in 1395, or immediately thereafter when the third Joseon king transferred the capital city back to Hanyang in 1405. There is record of a letter from Yejo, Minister of Culture and Education, sent to the king on June 8 in the Lunar calendar year 1414 about the altar and walls of Seonjamdan not conforming to the prescribed rules, so it can be assumed that the first Seonjamdan was built at least prior to June of 1414.

Changes to the altar and wall system were made in the 14th year in the reign of King Taejong (1414, Table 1. b), the 12th year in the reign of King Sejong (1430, Table 1. c), and the 5th year in the reign of King Seongjong (1474, Table 1. d); however, the altar did not reflect these modifications. This can be explained in that the Seonjamdan altar received less attention and care than others located where the king physically presided; additionally, the silkworm breeding ceremony was performed in the palace since King Seongjong’s reign, leading to a relative decrease in rituals performed at Seonjamdan.

Meanwhile, it is believed that the latter Seonjamdan was actually newly established, based on the following grounds. First, King Yeongjo ordered the damaged Seonjamdan to be newly constructed in 1749 (*Daily records of Seungjejongwon*, Book 57, April 23, 1749). Next, *Chinjam-euigwe* (written in 1767), which contains all records of the ceremony of Chinjamrye (states that the "Chinjamdan altar copied Seonjamdan.” Lastly, the size of Chinjamdan described in *Chinjam-euigwe* is almost identical to that of Seonjamdan as measured by the civil engineer Sigesawa (Table 2.), confirming the establishment of the latter Seonjamdan.

In summary, Seonjamdan was first established before 1414 and was rebuilt in 1749, although there had been several prior attempts to renovate it. Based on this, it seems that the remains discovered in November of 2016 were from the first Seonjamdan, dating to the 14th year in the reign of King Taejong. The latter Seonjamdan, dating to the late years of King Yeonjo’s reign in 1749, was destroyed after the liberation.

### 3. Changes in the Area and Conservation of the Seonjamdan Site

#### 3.1 Damage to Seonjamdan and Changes in the Surrounding Environment

"Seonjamdan was on an inclined plane and also the soil was barren (*Annals of King Sejong*, Book 50, February 19, 1430),” wrote the ancients. In fact, the Seonjamdan site is on a slope of an altitude of 49-56 m, which is confirmed by non-textual data from the colonial era and the site of the 2016 excavation (Figs. 4. and 5.).

![Fig.4. The Landscape of Seonjamdan Site During the Colonial Era (Source: Picture of the Glass Plate Housed in the National Museum of Korea)](image)

| Time | Size of the altar | Size of both walls | Source |
|------|------------------|--------------------|--------|
| 1749 | W, D: 14 Cheok, H: 2 Cheok | North to South a total of 67 Cheok (21,574 mm) | *Chinjam-euigwe* (Produced by the royal court of Joseon, 1767) |
|      | (4,508 mm)       | : Upper wall (inner wall) 31 Cheok (9,982 mm) |        |
|      |                  | : Lower wall (outer wall) 36 Cheok (11,592 mm) |        |
|      |                  | East to west 35 Cheok (11,270 mm) |        |
| 1930 | W, D: 16 Cheok, H: N/A | North to South a total of 52 Cheok (21,816 mm) | Survey drawing |
|      | (4,848 mm)       | : Upper wall (upper section) 32 Cheok (9,696 mm) | (Measurements by Mansumoto Sigesawa, a civil |
|      |                  | : Lower wall (lower section) 40 Cheok (12,120 mm) | engineer of the Japanese Government-General of |
|      |                  | East to west 32 Cheok (9,696 mm) | Korea) |

Table 2. Comparison of the Size of Seonjamdan in 1749, Under the Reign of King Yeongjo, and the Size of Seonjamdan Measured by Sigesawa in the Colonial Period
As it did for other altars and shrines, the court of Joseon banned planting, farming, or trespassing within 30-bo (歩) of the Seonjamdan altar area. In this sense, we can assume that Seonjamdan must have been surrounded by a natural, uncultivated environment. A coniferous forest served as a backdrop to the north and east of the Seonjamdan altar, and a small river flowed to the south and west, offering an open view in these directions (Figs. 6. and 7.).

This scenery was completely transformed as the area surrounding the Seonjamdan site became urbanized, with the most dramatic changes occurring between 1908 and 1961. Damage to the Seonjamdan site began as urban development slowly encroached on the surrounding area. Until the Japanese Government-General of Korea designated Seonjamdan as historical remains No. 117 on October 19, 1939, Seonjamdan had, in fact, been abandoned for over three decades. In this time, the site was used as a fabric drying rack for a nearby dying factory, as a children's playground, or as general public space for the town. Elements of the altar, such as the stone columns, were removed and taken to an unknown location (Figs. 6. and 7., note that the white scraps in the picture are pieces of fabric) by The Japanese Government General of Korea (Kyeongsung-bu, 1934a: 348; 1941b: 939), directly damaging the remains of Seonjamdan. These are, however, the direct consequences of the abandonment of Seonjamdan, rather than the result of changes in land use.
On November 27, 1913, the Temporary Land Inspection Bureau of the Japanese Government-General of Korea categorized the Seonjamdan region as woodland. The Original Cadastral Map of 1924, as well as the detailed map of 1936, mark the Seonjamdan site and surrounding lots as woodland, farmland, and vacant land (Figs. 8. and 9.). This indicates the Seonjamdan region, according to official maps at least, changed very little until the mid-1930s.

It was in the late 1930s that the urban structure of the Seonjamdan area began to shift considerably. "Housing became concentrated east and south of Seonjamdan after 1937 and around 1939 the urban zone increasingly sprawled reaching right next to the eastern part the altar (Kyeongsung-bu, 1941b: 939)." Figs. 4. and 10. present well-defined plots of land around Seonjamdan. Development around the site was triggered by a plan initiated by the Japanese Government-General of Korea in February 1936 to expand the boundaries of the capital city. In the process of urban development, Seonjamdan was cordoned off in a cultural properties protection zone, thereby becoming a historical site.

Ironically, the remains of the Seonjamdan altar were damaged the most after the nation was liberated from the Japanese colonial rule due to the construction of urban infrastructure. In 1959, the Seoul Metropolitan Government created a city development plan for the region of Seongbuk-dong where the Seonjamdan altar is located, and pursued road construction in the Seonjamdan area (Seoul Education Committee, 1961). The Seoul Metropolitan Government and local residents cited frequent car accidents and a need to develop the region as main reasons for backing the plan. Thence, the Cultural Heritage Administration carefully deliberated and ultimately lifted part of the Seonjamdan plot from the protected zone in 1961. The roads were built immediately, at which point the current land area of the Seonjamdan site was officially determined (Fig. 11.).

3.2 Conservation of the Seonjamdan Site and Succession of its Value

The degradation of heritage was not only limited to the Seonjamdan site. The Korean War that erupted in 1950 devastated the capital city of Seoul, and the rapid development post-war forced numerous historical sites into the same situation. Still, what distinguishes the Seonjamdan site from other historical sites is that there were steady preservation efforts in the midst of threatening circumstances such as urban development.

In terms of conservation, several ideas were suggested when damage from the road construction project seemed inevitable. These alternatives and the measures that were actually implemented share some interesting features. First, the central and city governments sought to protect the remains in an "inertial" manner. In other words, they tried to preserve the altar at the Seonjamdan site in its current state, even though it had nothing to do with the original form of the altar.

A case in point is the Seoul Metropolitan Government’s plan of moving the altar in 1959, as it was pursuing road construction in the area. However, the idea was strongly rejected by the Cultural Heritage Administration, though it did approve a part of it. As a result, the city altered its road design so that the altar would be unaffected (Fig. 12.).

Maintaining the location of the altar, however, did not necessarily mean preserving its original form. As damage to Seonjamdan from road construction seemed inevitable, the Seoul Metropolitan Government suggested a plan to renovate the area; the Cultural Heritage Administration welcomed this without objection.
What, then, caused this paradoxical coexistence of conserving and damaging efforts? It likely dates back to 1939, when the Japanese Government-General of Korea designated Seonjamdan as a historical site. The designation was part of the historical place investigation and preservation project that the Japanese Government-General of Korea implemented throughout the colonial period. As the project was mainly about "instilling the colonial view of history linked to legitimacy of Japan's colonial rule and the heteronomy of Joseon history," (Sungha, K. 2005: 3; Soonja, L. 2007: 63) and not about preserving the integrity or authenticity of a certain relic, its focus was not primarily on the historical remains. Despite the intention, the legal protection for Seonjamdan from the colonial era was respected even after the country was liberated; consequently, central and municipal governments took the conservation of the protected area for granted without following any verification procedures for the actual remains of Seonjamdan.

Another factor is that the conservation measures for Seonjamdan were mostly focused on maintaining its intangible value, rather than its original form. Maintenance work for Seonjamdan began as the development restriction on part of the protected area was lifted for road construction, with additional efforts made later on. Various plans for the restoration and/or maintenance of Seonjamdan were suggested, including the Plan of the Seongbuk-dong Committee for Road Construction (i), the Plan of the Seoul Metropolitan Education Committee (ii), and the Seonjamdan Environmental Maintenance Plan (iii), which actually came to fruition.

Plan (i), whose main purpose was to protect the altar by making it sturdier, proposed reinforcing the altar by removing the dirt around Seonjamdan, constructing a concrete embankment, and finishing the surface using stone. This plan emphasized articulating the historical value of Seonjamdan (Seoul Education Committee, 1961: Annex No. 2) by placing a rectangular stone in the upper part of the embankment and installing a barbed-wire fence around it (Fig.13.).

Meanwhile, Plan (ii) was put forth by the Seoul Office of Education to prevent the altar from being ruined by road work. The plan proposed to protect the space by incorporating the Seonjamdan area into the land of a neighboring elementary school (Fig.14.). The main purpose of the plan was to utilize historical resources in education. Finally, Plan (iii), a renovation strategy formulated after part of the Seonjamdan protected zone was released, proposed rebuilding the altar. The biggest difference between this and Plan (i) was that it aimed to commemorate the value of Seonjamdan by expanding the size of the altar and installing a stone post in front to commemorate it (Fig.15.).

The Seonjamdan area was extensively rebuilt in accordance with Plan (iii) in 1961, and mulberry trees were planted in the protection zone later in 1976; the Seonjamrye ceremony was finally revived in 1993. Moreover, new paths and other facilities required for the ceremony were built in 1994.

An examination of the details for the series of plans proposed for the Seonjamdan site reveals that none were focused on conserving the original form of the altar based on its authenticity. Rather, the plans were mostly aimed at promoting the historical significance of Seonjamdan by planting mulberry trees, which are associated with the God of the Silkworm; rebuilding the altar and adding new paths; and emphasizing its historical use as a facility for sacrificial ceremonies. This approach to historical sites differs from the global
norm that values conservation of the site itself and its authenticity; however, it is in line with the East Asian traditional belief, which derives significance from the site’s intangible spirit and historicity. Nevertheless, the method of reorganizing a historical site in a rough manner and adding relevant elements retrospectively is also related to the incomplete status of the remains. This demonstrates Korea's circumstances in having had a number of historical sites ruined during the colonial era through wars and other hardships.

4. Conclusion

The Seonjamdan altar of the Joseon period is the only remaining heritage site for medium ancestral sacrifices in Seoul. After the fall of the Joseon Dynasty, Seonjamdan was rapidly damaged; then, indiscriminate rebuilding was carried out after liberation from Japanese occupation. The Seonjamdan site has been preserved as a historical site up to date without the verification of its authenticity or the original form. The present study attempted to understand the operating characteristics of altars (壇廟) during the Joseon period through a historical investigation of the original form of the Seonjamdan altar. The investigation was based on recently excavated relics and national records, as well as the trend of heritage conservation Korean society followed after liberation from Japanese occupation.

Findings of this study can be summarized as follows. First, the Joseon Dynasty practiced one of China’s old (exemplary) traditions that stipulates, "Seonjamdan shall lie in a northern suburb" This was done by establishing the altar in a northeastern area outside the capital city. Because of the narrow, sloping terrain, a number of alternatives were discussed. Finally, Joseon set up the altar for the Seonunhsi (西陵氏) inside the palace and outside the capital city to find a compromise between practice and ideals. This is the Joseon’s unique method of operating the Seonjamdan.

Second, it is important to clarify that the Seonjamdan altar of Joseon was built twice, as this has not been indicated in the literature so far. The original Seonjamdan was established when the Joseon Dynasty was first founded, and the recently discovered remains belong to this altar. A change to the size of the altar was suggested several times, but was never implemented. It was not renovated until the 18th century.

Third, damage was inflicted to the Seonjamdan altar and the surrounding area during the Korean Emperor's loss of sovereign power. Furthermore, Seonjamdan had multiple functions over time, was affected by changes in urban structure led by housing development, and was invaded by urban infrastructure. Consequently, the ruins of the latter Seonjamdan, which survived until the colonial period, completely lost its integrity and authenticity as historical remains.

Finally, despite the physical destruction, the Seonjamdan site benefited from continuous conservation measures. They were implemented from the perspective of the inertial conservation and protection of objects of intangible value, which did not consider its authenticity of heritage. It was driven by legal restrictions enacted during the colonial era and the East Asian belief that cherishes symbols and values, as well as being connected to Korea's unique historical circumstances.

The significance of the findings of the present study is as follows. First, the findings contribute to the restoration of the authenticity of the heritage of the site, because the changes in the form of Seonjamdan were investigated in detail through historical research. Second, the characteristics of Korean heritage conservation that prioritize the conservation of value over form were empirically investigated, contributing greatly to our knowledge on this topic.

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Note

1) The target of protection was the altar alone, which means walls or other elements had been already destroyed.

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