

## “On the Characteristics and Values of the Korean Old Vernacular Letters in the Joseon Dynasty”

### <Abstract>

In the Joseon Dynasty, *eon'gan* 諺簡, or Korean old vernacular letters, were the most commonly used means to express private feelings of everyday life. Since *eon'gan* were widely used from the king upward to people of the lower classes, they have been precious soil where Korean language was protected and cultivated. *Eon'gan* were totally free of the characteristics possessed by translated materials, and they reflect a natural word order and contain rich everyday vocabularies of Korean language of the time. Also, *eon'gan* were so colloquial that reflect more precisely the honorification system, dialect and spoken forms of the contemporary language than any other materials. In addition, *eon'gan* open the possibility of sociolinguistic approaches to the study of the Korean language history due to their characteristics that enable precise observation of individual differences. Therefore, if the characteristics of *eon'gan* are well utilized, *eon'gan* will complement the printed materials that were centered on vernacular translation, and contribute greatly to adding the depth and breadth of researches done on the Korean language history.

On the other hand, the contents of *eon'gan* display the actual life of the time, so they are also lively materials for researches of Korean living history, Korean folklore history, Korean education history and so on. In addition, *eon'gan* are well-suited as materials for calligraphy history that will investigate the change of handwritten style of Hangeul by best reflecting individual's diverse and unique styles among the manuscript materials. That is to say, *eon'gan* are not only valuable for researches of Korean language, but also can be used for researches of various fields. In the future, we should promote positively introductions of new *eon'gan* and activate further interdisciplinary studies on *eon'gan*.

