

## **Cases and Values of Vernacular Use by the Middle and Lower Classes in the Joseon Dynasty**

**Jeong A Jo**

This lecture will be a time to introduce Korean historical manuscripts written in Hangeul that can attest to the vernacular of the middle class or lower class, not the upper class in the Joseon Dynasty, and to think about the meaning they imply. It will talk about the characteristics of the vernaculars used by these classes, different from those of the nobility class, and what they mean.

Through several Korean historical manuscripts written in Hangeul that will be introduced in this lecture, we will be able to guess the perception and attitude of the subordinate class towards vernacular at the time and confirm the function and influence of vernacular in the late Joseon Dynasty. Although the amount of Korean historical manuscripts left by the middle and lower classes cannot be said to be very large, the inner meaning contained in the individual documents can be said to be much deeper, from a different point of view, than the vernacular of the ruling class. In particular, through the Sanggye (喪契, organization formed to hold a funeral) document left by slaves, the lower class, it is possible to grasp the extent of popularization and the spread of Hangeul through the vernacular naturally used in daily life. And through the Soji (所志, petitions) appealing for resentment, we can get a glimpse of their lives at the time. In addition, through Gomok (告目, writing to the master) pursuing practical benefits with a clear purpose, we will be able to examine the power of vernacular.

As a result, it can be said that the not-ruling class in the Joseon Dynasty expressed what they wanted, according to their own needs, with the vernacular. In other words, it means that there was at least a means and method of expressing their will and a social consensus that accepted them to some extent. This was exactly the reason why King Sejong intended to create Hangeul, and this phenomenon is the result of his dream being realized. In addition, it is not an exaggeration to say that the vernacular and linguistic habits of these subordinate classes eventually became the basis for leading the Korean language today. In this way, the power and ripple effect of Hangeul is surprisingly great, and it can be confirmed that the spread and popularization of vernacular had a great influence on modernization.