It’s the People Who Decide Their Own Fate – Lessons from Digital History

Global Public HR Conference

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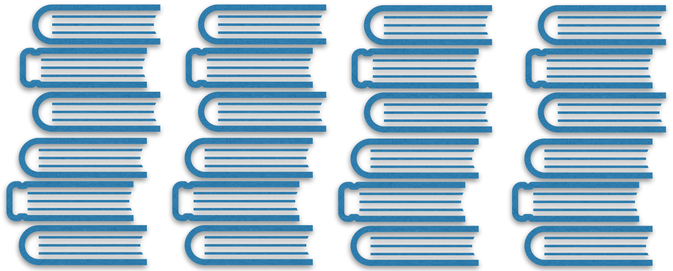
Promises of Digital Humanities

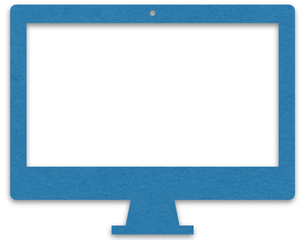
"Close Reading"



!

"Distant Reading"





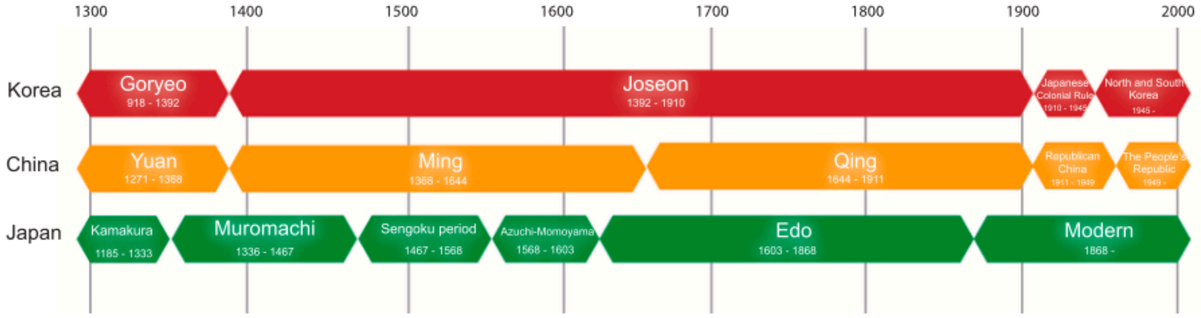
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Veritable Records of The Joseon Dynasty

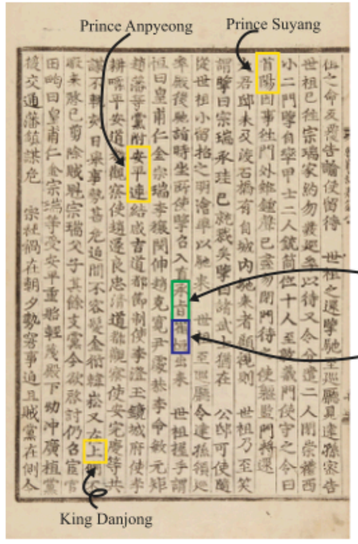
朝鮮王朝實錄

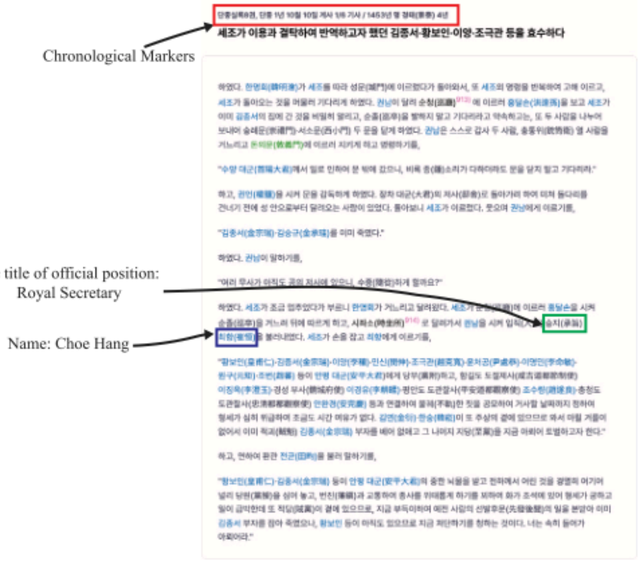


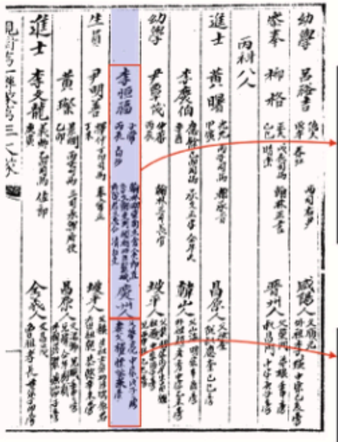
- Joseon (Chosun, Choson): 1392–1910 / 27 monarchs from a single Yi family.
- VRJD: 472 years' collection of daily articles on the monarchs' words, deeds, and interactions with *bureaucrats..*
  - .. who had to pass a highly-competitive exam (*gwageo*) on one's understanding of the Confucian classics
    - "A nation of philosophers"











Personal information
1. Name: Yi Hangbok
2. Courtesy name: Jasang
3. Birth year: Byeongjin (1556)
4. Pen name: Baeksa
5. Place of origin: Gyeongju
6. Career record:
   …

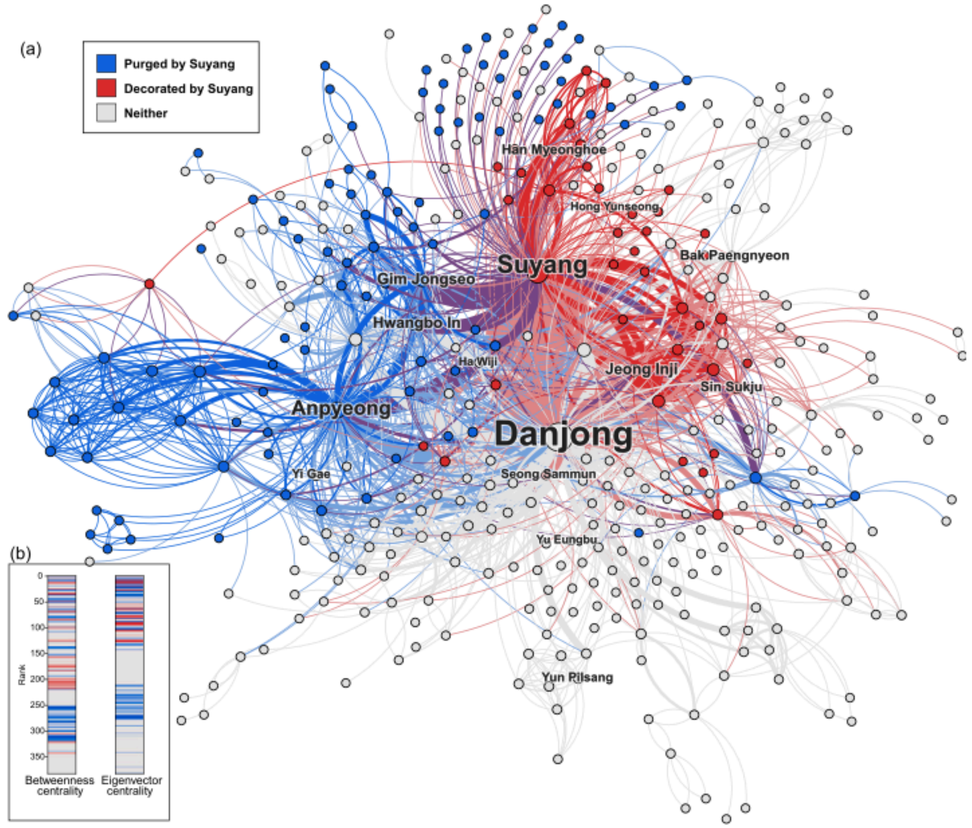
Family information
1. Father: Mongyang
   - Exam degree holder (1528)
2. Father-in-law: Gwon Yul

Exam information
1. Exam track: Literary
2. Exam type: Special (Alseongsi)
3. Exam year: 1580
4. Rank: 8
5. No. of passers: 12

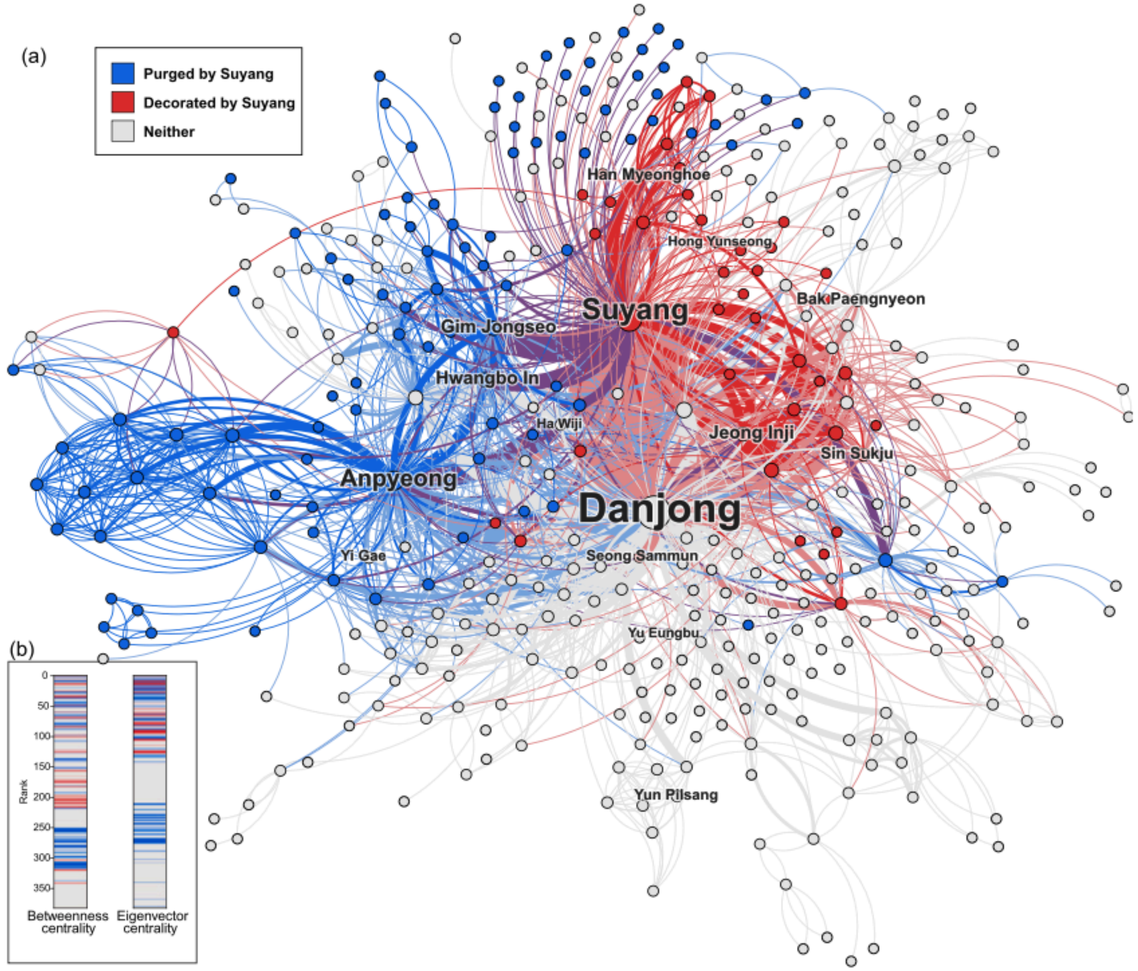
Personal information
1. Name: Yi Hangbok
2. Courtesy name: Jasang
3. Pen names: Baeksa, Pirun, Donggang
4. Posthumous name: Munchung
5. Birth year: 1556
6. Death year: 1618
7. Choronym: Gyeongju
8. Place of residence: Seoul
9. Career record:
   …

Family information
1. Father: Yi Mongyang
2. Paternal grandfather: Yi Yesin
3. Paternal great-grandfather: Yi Seongmu
4. Maternal grandfather: Choe Ryun



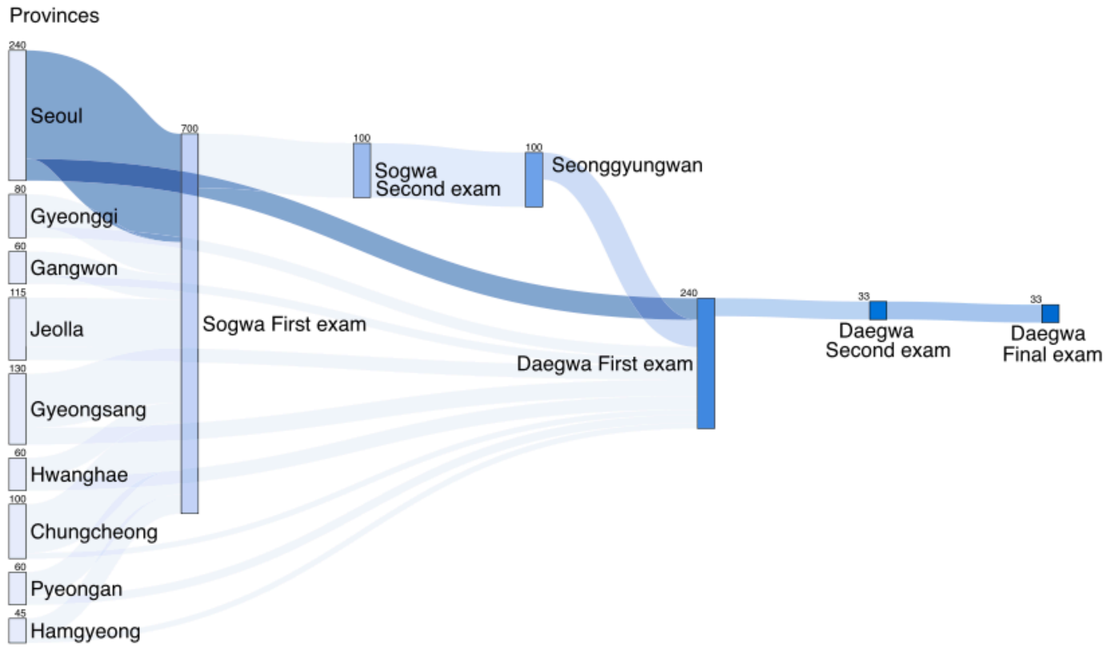

(a)
Purged by Suyang
Decorated by Suyang
Neither
Han Myeonghoe
Hong Yunseong
Suyang
Bak Paengnyeon
Gim Jongseo
Hwangbo In
Ha Wiji
Jeong Inji
Sin Sukju
Anpyeong
Danjong
Yi Gae
Seong Sammun
Yu Eungbu
Yun Risang
(b)
Rank
0
50
100
150
200
250
300
350
Betweenness centrality
Eigenvector centrality

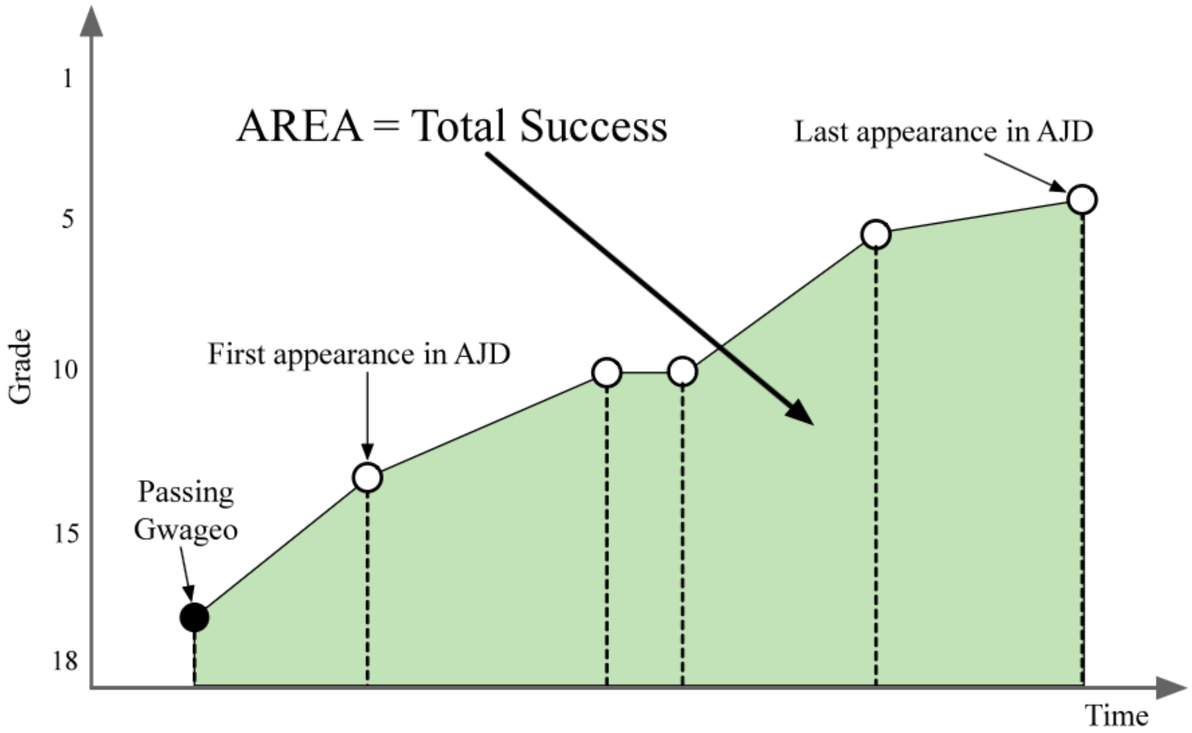
Dramatic, Fateful Night of A Royal Revolt



but such forced dethronements occurred only three times in its history

Everyday Patterns from Digital History:
How much did those bureaucrats *achieve*?

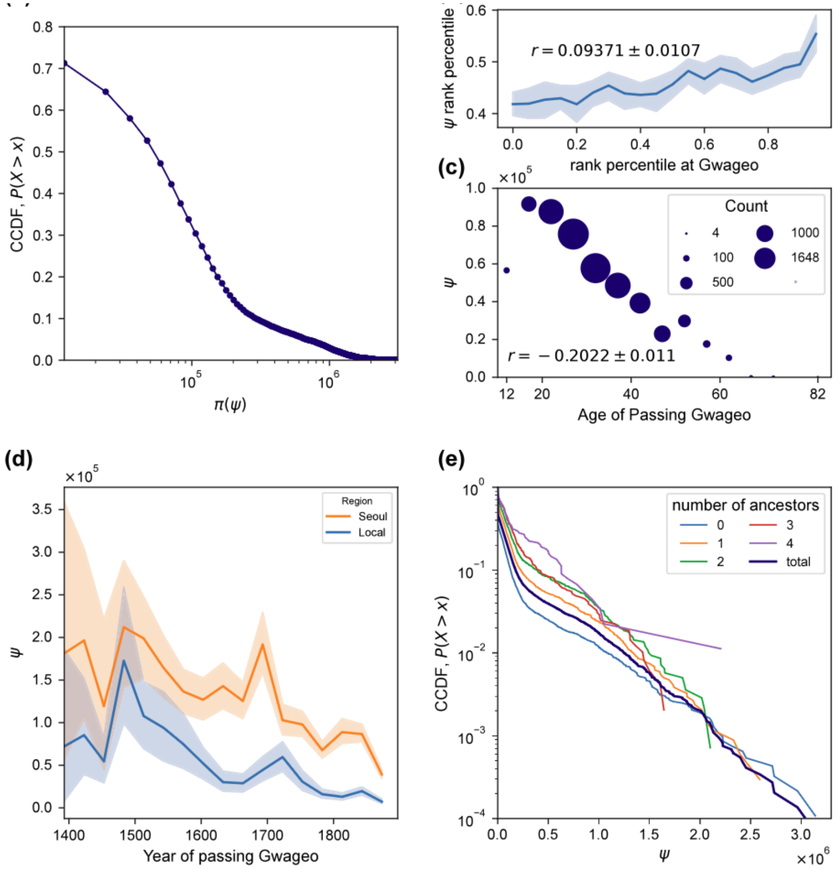


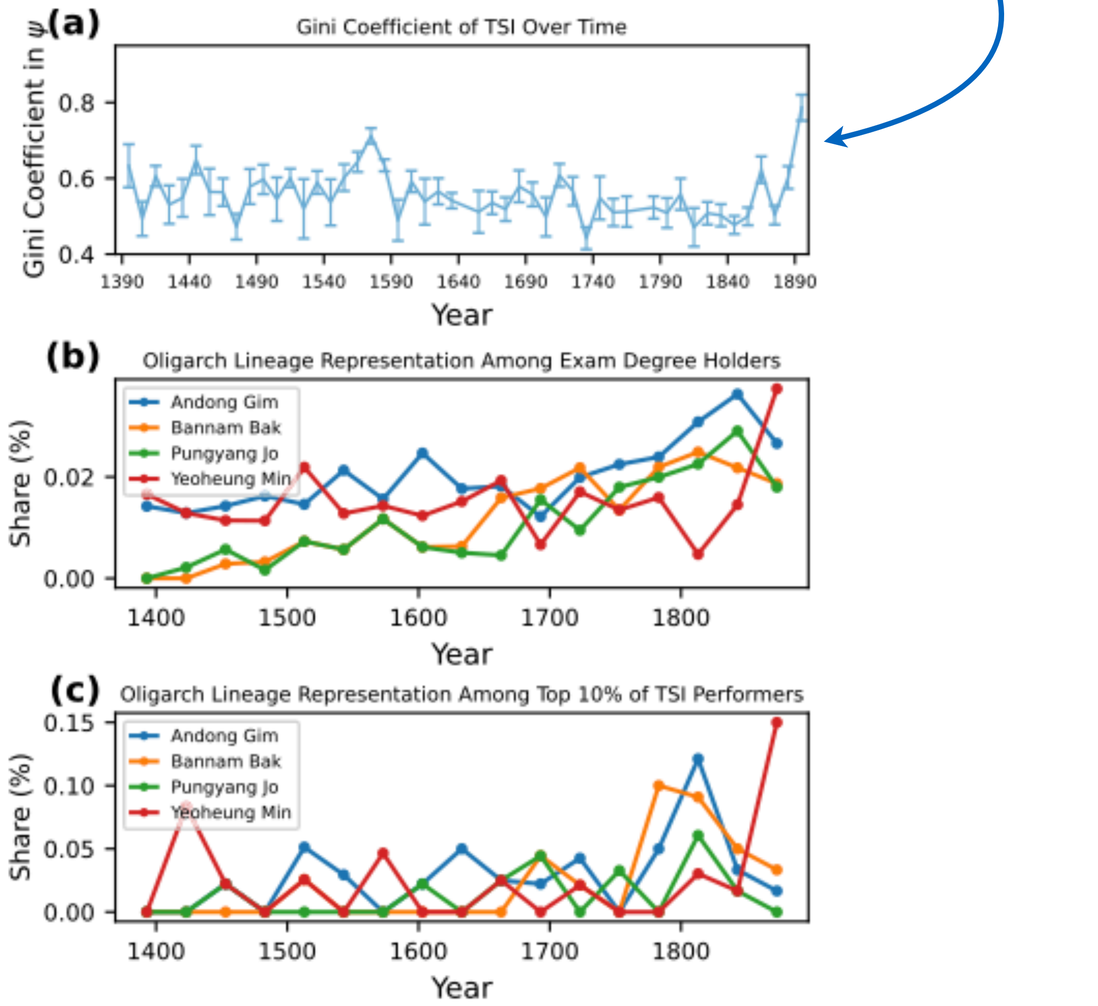


extrinsic success:
quantifiable achievements (salary attainment, ranks occupied)

More Lessons? *More Precise Lessons*

inequality





Oligarchs: powerful clans in power

- Andong 金 (Gim), Pungyang 趙 (Jo), Yeohung 閔 (Min), and Bannam 朴 (Bak).

- Historically not uncommon: the 源氏 (Minamoto) clan of Japan

- In Joseon's case, though, the system was set up so that the bureaucracy would realize meritocracy through the *gwageo* system

  - a systemic corruption took fifty years to bring down the dynasty that had lasted five centuries

So, what do we learn from Digital Humanities?

- That digital humanities are not about *Digital Humans* (sorry but not sorry, you transhumanists and singularitarians who put DIGITAL above all else)
- Most often it is the finer, more precise picture of the understandings we already have of historical societies → of our plans or hopes for the present and the future
- **Founding ideals corrupted by less able than those were intended to select → was any other outcome possible for Joseon?**

The People



War of 1592



Main storage and 2 backup sites are burnt down; the last surviving copy was collected and moved to deep in the mountains by two aristocrats at their personal expense.

They are themselves the lesson.

Gamsahamnida