

Note from the Editor

This issue includes six research articles, four on the history of pre-modern Korea, one on post-liberation south Korea, and one on transnational Korea. There is also one article that translates and contextualizes a source text, and three book notes.

The first article, by King Kwong Wong, attempts to propose a solution to a problem that has long plagued scholars of the Mongol period in Korean history: What exactly was the status of the Goryeo kingdom within the Mongol Empire? The author focuses on the operation of the Branch Secretariat for the Eastern Campaign to show how the issue of sovereignty was fluid and contested: Though nominally an instrument of Mongol control over Goryeo, the Branch Secretariat also provided an avenue for Goryeo officials to enter the Yuan civil service administration. This gave Goryeo officials a voice at the Yuan court, and they could and did use this platform to defend Goryeo's autonomy.

The next article, by Michael C. E. Finch, takes us to the Imjin War. Thanks to the *Swaemirok*, a diary kept by O Huimun, we can discover how an ordinary scholar managed to keep his family together during this period of turmoil. The article focuses on O's recourse to divination and his interactions with a divination official. This reveals O Huimun's anxieties over family matters, notably the health of his daughter. It also sheds light on an elite scholar's layered attitude towards divination and diviners.

The third article also deals with the Joseon period. In it, Hyun Soon Park seeks to answer the question why the so-called state celebration examination (*gyeonggwa*) became so popular in late Joseon Korea. Besides the regular triennial examination, additional examinations were sometimes held to mark special occasions; usually they were tied to important court celebrations and rituals, the legitimacy of which was enhanced by the presence of many scholars. Examinations held after these ritual celebrations were an incentive to secure the scholars' goodwill towards the court. Given their focus on literary composition, an interesting bifurcation developed, in which provincial scholars preferred the

triennial celebration (which focused on rote memorization), while capital scholars predominantly participated in the state celebration examinations.

In the third and final article on Joseon history, Kyusik Sim looks at a type of source that has received almost no exposure in Korean Studies: stone monuments that commemorate the construction of bridges. One of the reasons for their neglect is that they do not fit into any of the traditional categories of literary composition. However, as the author shows, this also gave the authors of such inscriptions leeway for experimentation. The author has unearthed a fascinating text by the exiled scholar Sim Yeolji for a bridge in Gijang County, near Busan. Although the text was never carved on stone, the author shows how it still left its mark on the community, and thus allows us to gauge how exiles contributed to and interacted with the local community.

In “The ‘Bunce Plan’ and the Aborted Land Reform of 1946” Il-Young Jung presents his findings on an important precursor to land reform in post-liberation South Korea. Although the Bunce Plan, named after the State Department official Arthur C. Bunce who was dispatched to Korea in 1946, was never implemented, it nevertheless constituted an important blueprint for the reforms eventually implemented in 1948. The article reveals that it was not only opposition by Koreans that doomed the plan, but also opposition on the part of the USAMGIK military who were governing the southern part of the peninsula until 1948.

In the final research article of this issue, Wonjung Min investigates how Chilean K-pop fans perceive their idols. Specifically, her research ascertains what ideal of masculinity the fans identify with. In contrast to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity dominant in mainstream Chilean culture, K-pop offers flexible, hybrid models of masculinity that fans like to identify with.

Besides the regular articles this issue also contains a section on “materials in translation.” Hui Zou and Myengsoo Seo introduce and translate Seo Yugu’s *Jangchwiwon*, an essay about an imaginary garden. Famous as the author of the *Imwon gyeongje ji* (Treatises on rural living), Seo appears to have included this essay to satisfy the scholar’s mind more than his eyes. Seo’s essay, written in the first half of the nineteenth century, is in fact part of a long-standing tradition of writing about the ideal garden in East Asia, and the authors comprehensively explore the intellectual context and pedigree of Seo’s essay.

I would like to conclude this introduction by alerting our future contributors to a gradual shift in our preferred style. So far we allowed submissions to follow either the author-date or humanities (full citation at first mention) format. However, employing two formats in the same issue sometimes confounds the reader, so henceforth all new submissions should use the author-date system.

And, as announced in the previous issue, I would also like to remind future contributors that all submissions should use the Revised Romanization System. Finally, it is my pleasure to acknowledge not only the contributors, reviewers, and editors, but also all the other people whose help is vital in seeing an academic journal through to publication.

Sem Vermeersch
Editor-in-chief

