

Note from the Editor

This issue of the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* opens with a theme issue on “Hallyu Storytelling in the Americas.” It is the outcome of a panel organized by Wonjung MIN for the fourteenth Kyujanggak International Symposium on Korean Studies (Nov. 4–6, 2021). Together with Dal Yong JIN, Professor Min introduces the fruits of this panel in a guest editors’ introduction, so I do not need to add anything here on the contents of the four articles from the panel that made it to publication. It is exciting to see the development of critical Hallyu studies as a distinct field within Korean Studies, and I look forward to the future results of Symposium panels in these pages.

This issue also includes four other articles. The first of these is by Maurizio RIOTTO, who has carved out his own niche in Korean Studies: Namely, the exploration of ancient connections between Korea and the West. Earlier, in Volume 33, no. 1 (2020) he explored the similarities between the legend of King Gyeongmun’s donkey ears and the famous King Midas. Here he turns his attention to the legend of Aryeong, the consort of Pak Hyeokgeose, one of the progenitors of Silla. According to the *Samguk yusa* version of her legend, she was born from the left side of a dragon and had the beak of a hen rather than a mouth—hence the term “hen-dragon” (*gyeryong*). However, the author shows that this element of the legend may have derived from stories about the basilisk, a mythical animal already found in Greco-Roman sources with possible earlier antecedents, that somehow made their way to Silla.

The second article, by Dylan MOTIN, questions traditional explanations of Korea’s loss of sovereignty in the early twentieth century. Rather than blaming this on the failure to modernize, the author uses international relations theory to explain how a weak state such as Joseon Korea sought to shift the burden of its protection to a foreign ally. This strategy, which the author refers to as “buck passing,” was successful for much of the initial period of the forced opening of Korea in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, after the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, there was no one left to pass the buck to. The

author points to the shifting geopolitical situation of early twentieth-century Europe, where the rise of Germany preoccupied all the other Western powers, as a reason for the eventual failure of this strategy.

The third article also seeks new methodologies to explain a long-standing point of debate, namely, how was it possible that Hahoe alone managed to preserve its traditional buildings and environment where the rest of Korea's traditional villages were erased? The authors, Chong Min KIM, Tae Gyun PARK, and Ju YIM, turn to game theory to explain how and why the actors involved make decisions in the debate over whether or not to preserve the village. The authors divide the people concerned into market-oriented and tradition-oriented agents, and postulate a theoretical framework that explains the crucial tipping points in favor of preservation during the transition period from traditional to modern society.

Finally, Eunhee PARK looks at the way the Vietnam War impacted the "home front." While the horrors and trauma of the war were not openly discussed in media or literature, the underlying tensions were projected onto the women who stayed behind. While the men who return from the war reveal little of the psychological impact of the war, they return to find their partners had not been faithful. This stereotypical image of the unfaithful wife offers them a chance at redemption, yet it obliterates the agency and subjectivity of women in their media and literary representations.

This will be the last "Note from the Editor" I write. From the next issue, Professor John DiMoia (History Department, Seoul National University) will take over as editor-in-chief. I started writing these notes when assuming editorship for Volume 30 (2017). I am not certain why, but, perhaps inspired by the example of the *Journal of Asian Studies*, it felt like a good way to initiate a conversation about the research we curate. As a field Korean Studies is constantly evolving and expanding, to the point that we should wonder what exactly it is that still holds it together as a field. I do not have an answer to that question, but at least reflecting on the things that connect the articles in each issue seemed like a good starting point for such an endeavor.

As an editor, I am involved in the whole process of bringing the research to publication, and after bearing witness to the transformative process—a process that is often far from smooth—that turns the original paper into a published work, I have become familiar with the authors' voices and try to express what impressed me in their work in these introductory notes. It is also an act of closure, bringing the long review and editing process to a close while sending the articles out into the world. It is a surprisingly labor-intensive process, but it is made worthwhile by the feeling of being a participant in the process rather

than a mere bystander. As indicated in some of my previous notes, the academic publishing process is continuously evolving, so that a journal such as this one continuously needs to revise and update its practices. I am sure that Professor DiMoia is the right person to continue that process and wish him all the best in his stewardship of the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*.

Sem Vermeersch
Editor-in-chief

