

Note from the Editor

With this edition serving as the first of the journal to appear with me as editor, I want to thank Prof. Sem Vermeersch of SNU for his extensive help as I have encountered, and continue to have, many questions throughout the process. Previously an Associate Editor at the journal, and teaching at the Department of Korean History at SNU since 2018, I had little idea of how much additional work goes on “behind the scenes” into transforming a diverse collection of submissions and book reviews into a journal, yielding if not a single overarching theme, then certainly a set of related concerns and questions. Along with Prof. Vermeersch, I also want to thank Kyujanggak, and its entire staff, for undertaking the bulk of the work involved, for which I am extremely grateful.

This volume includes four research articles, accompanied by two book reviews, continuing the journal’s approach of engaging with the most recent scholarship possible in the field of Korean Studies, with that category meant as broadly construed, and one very much in progress.

The first research article, by Ilsoo Cho, examines the “limits of Sino-centrism,” looking specifically at the legacy of nativist discourse in Joseon, here meaning language tied to, and constitutive of forms of Korean identity over the long term. Tracking the transition to the Ming in the fourteenth century, Cho argues that Joseon Korea’s positioning within the imperial system did not necessarily mean a complete submission, as evidenced by these earlier and persisting forms of language. The implications of this line of argument not only hold significance for the period, and Joseon’s relations with its foreign partners, but also presumably for observations to be made about Sino-Korean relations in other contexts, spanning diverse periods and state formations.

Lee Min Young contributes the second article, concerning the March First Movement and its function in Korean memory, especially as it appeared in the literature and frequent debates surrounding the period of liberation following August 1945. In referring to this act as “failed,” Lee recognizes the challenge of controlling memory in terms of shaping the incoming state’s mandate and the

corresponding plurality of possible uses for the colonial past. Rather than reading the event strictly as a failure, this conclusion opens the possibility for a dialogue concerning the Korea to follow after August 1945.

The third research article, contributed by Jinyoung Park, examines the formation and dissemination of crime fiction, more specifically, the detective novel, within the East Asian context, here referring to China and Korea. In both cases analyzed, Park notes the presence of female detectives as protagonists and considers the possibilities for a gendered reading of the genre and its reception within an audience. If the detective novel in English, and perhaps more globally, is often considered the mid-nineteenth-century work of Poe, this understanding is often framed in terms of the prevalence of a certain view of rationality. Along with this comes urban crime, migration, and nativist fears of changing demographics within certain spaces (e.g., London, Paris). While noting these tropes of origin, Park considers the case anew for East Asia, building on a recent trend in which Korean literature receives greater attention.

The final article, taking up the authorship of *sijo* songs, comes from Jaemin Park and tracks the lengthy and complicated process of unpacking the layering of meaning contained within these works. In Park's argument, the songs have a later point of origin than some of their attributions, meaning that there has been a historical process of transforming and winnowing the meaning over time. In making this case, Park works through specific passages and tropes, arguing for acts of consolidation and dissemination taking place in mid- to late Joseon.

For the two book reviews, Yoonjung Seo considers Maya Stiller's *Carving Status at Kŭmgangsŏn*, in which the significance of various inscriptions and markings in northern Korea invites inquiry not only to the sites in question, but also potentially addresses the growing body of scholarship on various forms of writing practice in Joseon. In turn, Sungoh Yoon looks at David Robinson's *Korea and the Fall of the Mongol Empire* and emphasizes the factor of China-centered traditions often holding a foundational relationship linked with the Yuan, certainly for the Korean peninsula and many of its institutional practices.

In these collected articles and reviews, the theme of temporality emerges repeatedly, especially as the Korean past continues to impinge upon the present, whether in memory, material form, or when deployed as a tool for specific purposes.

John P. DiMoia
Editor-in-chief