

Note from the Editor

As Korean Studies develops a broader scope, the areas in which it pursues new subfields flourish in a corresponding fashion, with dissertations and research often outstripping the pace of scholarly publication, which often takes longer and requires a lengthy peer review process. Nonetheless, it is our hope here at *SJKS* to anticipate these gaps between existing areas of study and some of the newer pursuits, whether in the form of research articles, review articles, or book reviews. In this issue, which comprises three articles and four book reviews, the former category centers around questions of translation, publication, and migration, with a temporal focus primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Looking at a variety of objects, these three articles explore Korean identity at different moments through the lens of language and pedagogy.

In the first case, Runze Liu examines “The Identity of Joseon Interpreters in the Qing Empire,” taking up the question of these individuals and their work as mediators in the context of empires in dialogue. In recent years, increasingly sophisticated models of semiotics have been brought to bear upon translation theory, with a recognition that the act of translation is generative, productive, and the type of work that does not seek equivalence so much as a means of rendering a comparable meaning in another cultural context. The translator is in some sense a creator alongside the author of the original text, and in this sense, intervenes in the act of constructing meaning. For Liu, Joseon translators were especially important in terms of maintaining the delicate relationship with the Qing, whether in textual form, or via personal encounter. His account renders them as highly contingent, political actors: ethnic Koreans, and yet equally, “Manchurized” in the process of furthering the relationship.

The second article featured here, Sangbaek Lee’s “Anthology Publication at the Gyoseogwan in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the *Guamjip*,” examines the culture of nineteenth-century publishing, focusing on anthology publication. Looking in detail at this work, Lee brings together a diverse range of threads including the bureaucratic, institutional, and literary in assembling,

publishing, disseminating, and ultimately archiving the works of great scholars. For Lee, the emphasis rests with the labor, and by extension, dedication of disciples in seeing this task through to completion. By implication, the emphasis here rests with tropes of stability and preservation, although the sheer weight of emphasis also calls attention to contrasting sets of forces. Texts require careful reading, and the culture of print does not always provide a uniform set of characters nor preclude the possibility of error.

Providing a temporal contrast with the previous two articles, Seongwon Yang and Hyunjoo Jung offer their take on education migration in the early part of the twentieth century. Rather than restrict the implications of their story, the authors begin with an analogy: a present-day tale of elite institutions and attempts to regulate their impact. This more recent case refers to Gangnam and its tendency to perpetuate a certain class of Korean citizens, with contemporary discourses often pushing back against this style of homogeneity. For Yang and Jung, the example of Bukchon thus offers a comparable case study dating to the end of the Joseon period and into the colonial period. The presence of education and similar opportunities drew not only elites but also a number of aspirants, those seeking to penetrate this space. Spanning the time gap, the story offers a vision of potential class jumping but also a cautionary tale of how class may reproduce itself under certain kinds of economic and geo-spatial conditions.

The four book reviews are varied, spanning Joseon, environmental history, and the present, with this last case involving K-pop. I want to call attention here to the environmental history field in particular, as these two works embody a growing trend, not just for Korea, but also for Northeast Asia more broadly. With the transition in economy and material infrastructure taking place throughout the region, and the corresponding growth of interest in China Studies, the number of works has increased rapidly, with Korea joining the trend more recently. *Forces of Nature*, edited by David Fedman, Eleana Kim, and Albert Park, represents an important development for Korea, and Park now edits a series for Cornell University Press, linking East Asia and the environment. Additional titles in the series are forthcoming, and this development represents a means of addressing nation-specific and broader, regional questions through the environment.

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John P. DiMoia
Editor-in-chief