

Note from the Editor

The scope and content of Korean studies as a field of inquiry has changed rapidly in recent years, especially when considering the variety of topics a journal receives over the span of several issues. If the field began as one possessing a fair degree of homogeneity in its core identity, centered almost exclusively on the geography and history of the Korean Peninsula, these constraints have loosened considerably in recent years. At the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, where we continue to solicit contributions from diverse perspectives, contributors increasingly come from subfields once viewed as external to Korean studies, including comparative literature, the history of medicine, and the history of technology. It is more than likely that these trends will continue, following the increasingly diverse demographics of the field, and especially as Korean studies becomes an object “owned” by many interested parties, with new programs growing rapidly in many parts of the world.

The current issue of the *SJKS* (June 2025), with a total of three articles, one annotated translation, and four book notes, embodies these broad themes of dramatic change, especially for a series of new takes on established topics. In particular, the translation offers insight into the bombing of Hiroshima, with a text located (and translated) by Professor Derek Kramer of Sheffield University. The text holds a surprise, though, in deriving from a Korean subject who experienced the bombing and its aftermath. In this sense, the colonial period and the Japanese Empire continue to hold many new stories, as scholars augment colonial resources with new materials spanning a range of languages. In this case, it is not just the bombing that is of interest, although that does represent the central focus. The circumstances of publication in the confusing period after 1945 hold interest here as well, and we have Dr. Kramer to thank for tracking down this elusive kind of material.

Along with Kramer’s translation, the three content articles cover a wide range of topics and embrace some of the new subthemes previously referenced. The first article, Han Sung Kim’s “The Banished Jupiter,” concerns Kim Kirim,

Korean literary modernism, and Kim's efforts to mourn a deceased colleague, Yi Sang, through verse. The title references an analogy established between the friend and the wandering planet, now at a remove from their previous relationship of proximity. Placing the poem in context, the author wants to situate the relationship, while also taking into account the surrounding period, within the context of Korean literary modernism developing its techniques amidst the mid-to late colonial period. In this specific case, a personal dyad holds implications beyond the immediate set of actors, with the relationship taking on metaphoric possibilities.

Park Yunjae of Kyung Hee University writes about Korean public health nursing, addressing this new field as a problem of professionalization and knowledge-building within the history of medicine. Korean nursing holds a lengthy history on its own, and here Park touches upon a research area with a good deal of prior scholarship, including the work of Sonja Kim, of Binghamton University, and Professor Yi Kkonme. In late Joseon and the colonial period, this emerging category provided new opportunities for female labor, even prior to the development of a larger biomedical community, as women assumed new roles in midwifery and the care of female patients. Park's take is one covering the post-liberation period, during which the new category of "public health," or *bogeon*, came to prominence, with the language reflecting interactions between German-Japanese and American models of practice. For Park, the development of this specific category of nursing provides an opportunity to expand upon professionalization, as well as to make claims about the post-*haebang* development of new approaches to health.

Kyeong-sang Kwak's take on Line 2 of the Seoul subway system appears to be motivated initially by the history of technology, although in its coverage the author touches upon urban history, the history of Seoul as a space, and business history. With this appeal to infrastructure, Kwak opens the subway system to larger questions of the Chun period (early 1980s) and the desire to take Seoul in new directions as a capital. With the system recently celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2024, and the reconfiguration of the map as an image, it sometimes becomes difficult to recall how recently the city lacked this convenient alternative. As with other major cities, the spread of the system figures into related questions of real estate speculation and the shifting of large sums of money, as any new station holds the potential to change the value of its surrounding area. If Seoul continues to lag behind in international surveys because of crowding and air quality measures, it has nonetheless become a very different space from that of the early 1970s.

The four book notes represent a range of institutions and topics, with

reviews from Hyung Wook Park (Nanyang Technological University), Laura Nelson (UC Berkeley), Tanner Rogers (University of Minnesota), and Ksenia Chizhova (Princeton University). Park reviews the first offering from Jung Lee of Ewha University, an examination of animals and natural history during the colonial period, as many categories shifted with new forms of knowledge. Nelson reviews Seungsook Moon's latest, a work devoted to Korean civil society and its implications for activism. Rogers, a graduate student of Travis Workman, looks at Korean literature/film through a review of Chris Hanscom's most recent book. Finally, Chizhova considers the *Three Kingdoms* as it became a popular narrative within the Korean context.

The following two issues will possess special issue content, as a group looking at the history of religion, and specifically Korean Christianity, augments our regular content. As with book reviews, we invite inquiries concerning special issue proposals, as the journal continues to grow and take into account new subject areas within the umbrella of Korean studies.

John P. DiMoia
Editor-in-chief

