

2025

SNU International Conference  
for Contemporary Korean Studies

# Korea as Symptom

## Perspectives on the Future

August 22–23, 2025 (Fri–Sat)

Asia Center (Building 101) 2F, Seoul National University

The 2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies (ICCKS) explores the diverse phenomena of contemporary South Korea under the theme **Korea as Symptom: Perspectives on the Future**.

By reading South Korea's current issues—from democratic crisis to cultural innovation—as interconnected symptoms of broader historical and global processes, the conference invites critical reflection and seeks to develop new perspectives on Korea's past, present, and future.

2025  
SNU International Conference  
for Contemporary Korean Studies

# Korea as Symptom

## Perspectives on the Future

## Welcome Address

**Honglim YU**

*The President of Seoul National University*

Good Morning, Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Scholars, and Dedicated Researchers,

I am Honglim Yu, the president of Seoul National University. It is my great honor to welcome you to the 2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies. Building on the remarkable success of last year's inaugural event, we are proud to host this second conference. On behalf of Seoul National University, I extend my sincere gratitude to the international researchers who have traveled from around the world to join us today. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Professor Hyeong-ki Kwon, the director of the SNU Contemporary Korean Studies Project, and the entire project team for their unwavering commitment to this scholarly endeavor.

Global interest in contemporary Korea is currently higher than ever before. Korean culture, including K-dramas, K-pop, Korean cuisine, and fashion, continues to captivate audiences worldwide. Korea's remarkable economic growth, dynamic democratic development, and institutional resilience have also drawn significant scholarly attention to its unique trajectory of modernization and social transformation. Universities across the globe are experiencing record enrollment in Korean Studies programs, and there is an increasing demand for Korean language education and cultural understanding.

This growing global interest in Korea presents us with both an opportunity and a responsibility. We must move beyond fascination with cultural trends or admiration for a remarkable development story to pursue rigorous and comprehensive academic inquiry that advances our understanding of Korean society.

Seoul National University has a distinguished history of dedicating tremendous effort and intellectual resources to the study of Korean history and literature, particularly through our renowned institution, Gyujanggak. Now, expanding on this foundation, our university aims to take a leading role in addressing the new global demand for contemporary Korean Studies and establishing it as a distinct academic field. Contemporary Korean Studies at Seoul National University should encompass a broad range of interests, from politics, economy, society, culture, and religion to engineering and technology.

With this second conference, we are solidifying our commitment to making the SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies an annual tradition that brings together the world's leading minds in this field. Contemporary Korean studies should not merely treat Korean cases as unique, isolated research subjects but should also enrich our understanding of universal human experiences. As we gather under this year's theme, "Korea as Symptom: Perspectives on the Future," we explore how Korea's contemporary experiences can illuminate

broader global processes. I am confident that the scholarly discussions over the next two days will advance our understanding of Korea while contributing to the broader academic discourse on democracy, development, and cultural transformation in our interconnected world.

I sincerely hope that this conference will contribute to the advancement of contemporary Korean studies, and I pledge my continued support for this important endeavor. Thank you all for joining us in this vital scholarly mission and I look forward to the rich discussions ahead.

Thank you.



DAY 1 August 22, 2025 (Fri)

9:00-9:20 Opening Ceremony | Rm.220 Samik Hall

9:30-11:30

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

### Korean Political Economy

Chair

Yong-Chool HA (University of Washington)

Presentations

Soohyun Christine LEE (King's College London)

- Gendered Polarization among Young Koreans: Young Men's Conservative Turn in the 2022 Presidential Election

Myung-Joon PARK (Korea Labor Institute)

- Tripartism and the Politics of Social Pacts in South Korea: Institutional Evolution and Strategic Dilemmas

Jitendra UTTAM (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

- Capitalism Vs. Capitalism - India and Korean Experiences in the Comparative Perspective

Kyung Mi KIM (Sapienza University of Rome)

- Digitalization in Japan and Korea

Discussants

Kwang-Yeong SHIN (Chung-Ang University)

Hyeon Seok PARK (National Assembly Future Institute)

Track 2

Rm.230

### Walking as Object-Method in Korean Studies: Modeling Future Trends for Conducting Fieldwork in the Social Sciences

Chair/Discussant

Astric LAC (Yonsei University)

Presentations

Valérie GELÉZEAU (EHESS, France)

- Walking along the DMZ Peace Trail as Object-Method to Reconsider Post-Traumatic Space in the South Korean Border Zone

Youna SON (EHESS, France)

- Walking Empowerment: Civil Society and the Making of Paths

Minji JO (The Catholic University of Korea)

- Summoning Pre-Technological Technologies: The Politics of Walking in South Korea, 1960s and 1970s

Daeun LEE (National University of Singapore)

- Walking with the Moving Fieldsite: Doing Mobile Ethnography in Digital Nomad Research

Margot KUNZ (French Institute of Geopolitics)

- Virtual Walking as an Experience of Contemporary Hybrid Urban Space: The Case of "Walk in Seoul" YouTube Videos

Track 3

Rm.240

### Foreign Policy Narratives toward South Korea: From the Outside In

Chair/Discussant

Jeffrey ROBERTSON (Yonsei University)

Presentations

Shin-ae LEE (Sasakawa Peace Foundation)

- Japan's Strategic Narrative towards South Korea: The Case of the Indo-Pacific

Jaewoo CHOO (Kyung Hee University)

- China's Korean Diplomacy Narratives in the Xi Jinping Era

Kuyoun CHUNG (Kangwon National University)

- US Strategic Narratives on East Asian Allies under Retrenchment: A Case of Sino-US Rapprochement under the Nixon Administration

Claudia Jungghyun KIM (City University of Hong Kong)

- Elite Victim or Elite Power? Korea's Victimhood Narratives and Status-Seeking in the World

13:00-14:30 Lunch | Rm.220 Samik Hall

13:00-14:30

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

### Queer Representation in Contemporary Korean Fiction

Chair

Youkyung SON (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Sung Un GANG (Technische University Berlin)

- The Utopia of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Korean Fictions

Hyejin OH (Sungkyunkwan University)

- Geopolitical Configurations of Korean Queer Narratives and the Stalemate of Global Queer Discourse: An Analysis of Media Mix Practices in Love in the Big City

Discussants

Youkyung SON (Seoul National University)

Kyung Hee YOUN (Seoul National University)

Track 2

Rm.230

### Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea I

Chair

Sem VERMEERSCH (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Donald BAKER (The University of British Columbia)

- Sacralizing the Nation: New Religions and Korea's Place in the World

Liora SARFATI (Tel Aviv University)

- The Evolving Representation of Mudang in Korean Television

Juhn AHN (University of Michigan)

- A Short Critique of Korea's Political Mythology in the Post-Park Chung Hee Era

Discussants

Hae-young SEONG (Seoul National University)

Track 3

Rm.240

### Telling the Stories of Other Korea: Critical Approaches to Historical Narrative

Chair

Olivia U. RUTAZIBWA (London School of Economics)

Presentations

Inho CHOI (Seoul National University)

- Strange Politics in Early Modern East Asia: The Objective Value of Fictionalized History

Jaeyoung KIM (San Diego State University)

- Revisiting Historical East Asia: A Reflection on and from Ancient Korea

Yeonhee Sophie KIM (Sogang University)

- Trust in the Digital Age? Digital CBMs, Track II Diplomacy, and North Korea's Cyber Challenge

Discussants

Jeeye SONG (Korea University)

14:30-14:50 Break

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14:50-16:20

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Roundtable : Kpop and Activism

Chair

Haekyung UM (Liverpool University)

Presentations

John STREET (University of East Anglia)

Suk Young KIM (University of California, Los Angeles)

Lisa Yuk-ming LEUNG (Lingnan University)

Sungmin KIM (Hokkaido University)

Benjamin M. HAN (University of Georgia)

Giyeon KOO (Seoul National University)

HaeRan SHIN (Seoul National University)

Discussants

Dalyong JIN (Simon Fraser University)

Ju Oak KIM (Texas A&M International University)

Seok-kyeong HONG (Seoul National University)

Track 2

Rm.230

Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea II

Chair

Hyunjoo JUNG (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Dong-kyu KIM (Sogang University)

• Korean Political Scandals and Shamanism Rhetoric: The Shadow of the 20th Century 'Musok'

Soongky BAEK (Sahmyook University)

• Stigma and Charisma: The Political Theology of Shincheonji Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

Minah KIM (Incheon National University)

• Fear, Hatred, and Anger: The Affective Politics of Far-Right Protestantism in South Korea

Discussants

Soo-Ah KIM (Seoul National University)

Track 3

Rm.240

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Korean Narrative Today I: Inventing a Way of Living in Margin

Chair

Kyung Hee YOUN (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Charlotte HAMMOND (University of Edinburgh)

• Trauma and the Monstrous-Feminine in Korean On-Screen Media

Sungwon HEO (University of California, Davis)

• Queer Future in Worn-Out Stories: A Queer Reading of Love in the Big City

Yun-Jong LEE (Korea University)

• Toward Care of the Self and Others: A Cinematic Critique of South Korean Self-Developmentalism in Microhabitat

Discussants

Keonhyung KIM (Seoul National University)

16:20-16:40 Break

16:40-18:10

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Roundtable : Kpop and Activism (continued)

Track 2

Rm.230

Reading Cultural Symptoms of Korea

Chair

Dongshin YI (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Steve CHOE (San Francisco State University)

• Sympathy as Symptom: K-Drama Mediation and Communal Affect

Tzung-wen CHEN (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

• Behind and Beyond the Logic of Imitation: From Assemblage of Chips to the K in Action

Nathalie LUCA (EHESS, France)

• The Rise of Neoliberalism in South Korea: Success or Failure, Dream or Nightmare?

Discussants

Jaeho KANG (Seoul National University)

Hong Jung KIM (Seoul National University)

Munyoung CHO (Yonsei University)

Track 3

Rm.240

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Korean Narrative Today II: Gleaning the Shards of History

Chair

Hyeongguk SONG (Korean Broadcasting System)

Presentations

Jeremiah Estela MAGONCIA (Ateneo de Manila University)

• Korea as a Narrative: Digital Mediation Through True Crime

Julin LEE (University of Music and Theatre Munich)

• In Perfect Harmony? Constructing Complex Female Characters and Their Relationships Through Music in K-Dramas

Discussants

A-young IN (Seoul National University)

DAY 2 August 23, 2025 (Sat)

9:30-11:30

Track 1 Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Perspectives on the Statehood of Modern and Contemporary Korea

Chair Jonghak KIM (Seoul National University)  
Presentations Inhwon OH (East Asia Institute)  
• The Protestant Work Ethic and the Origin of Korean Enlightenment Nationalism, 1896-1900  
Joonyoung JUNG (Seoul National University)  
• Education as an Instrument of Colonial Rule?: Hegemonic Competition and the Educational System in Colonial Korea  
Jongwook HONG (Seoul National University)  
• Decolonization and Dependent Development in Korea  
Todd A. HENRY (University of California, San Diego)  
• 'Hetero-Authoritarianism': Toward Embodied Histories of State and Society in 'Hot War' South Korea  
Discussants Jaeyoung KIM (San Diego State University)  
Jeanhyoung SOH (Seoul National University)  
Choongyeol KIM (Seoul National University)  
Yong-Chool HA (University of Washington)

Track 2 Rm.230

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

The Political and Social Landscape of Korea: Legacies and Realities

Chair Changkeun LEE (KDI School of Public Policy and Management)  
Presentations Muntaha ABED (Birzeit University)  
• Cultural Productions of Resistance: The Gwangju Uprising and Its Legacy in South Korean Protest Culture  
Torunika ROY (Jawaharlal Nehru University)  
• The Legacy of Population Control: How Cold War Politics Shaped South Korea's Fertility Crisis  
Yashendra SINGH (Jawaharlal Nehru University)  
• The Impact of Neoliberal Reforms on South Korea's Welfare State  
Discussants Kyung Mi KIM (Sapienza University of Rome)  
Bongseok HAN (Pukyong National University)  
Sooyeon KANG (Seoul National University)

Track 3 Rm.240

Hallyu in Global Context

Chair Benjamin M. Han (University of Georgia)  
Presentations Dal Yong JIN (Simon Fraser University)  
• A Full-Package Production Model: The Development of New Runaway Production in the Netflix Era  
Daniela MAZUR (Fluminense Federal University)  
• South Korea and Hallyu: An Alternative Globalization in the Multipolar World  
Ziwen CUI & Chang LIU (University College London)  
• Imagining "Han Nü": Discursive Construction of Contemporary Korean Womanhood on a Chinese Digital Platform  
Ringngheti KHENGLAWT (Christ University)  
• Glocalising Masculinities: When Traditional Mizo Pasaṭha(War Heroes) Meets South Korea's Soft Masculinity  
Discussants Ju Oak KIM (Texas A&M International University)  
Jiyoung SUH (Seoul National University)

13:00-14:30

Lunch | Rm.220 Samik Hall

13:00-14:30

Track 1 Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Korean Democracy at a Crossroads: Historical and Comparative Perspectives

Chair Hyeong-Ki KWON (Seoul National University)  
Presentations Chulki HONG (Korea Institute for National Unification)  
• How Liberal Democracy Became the "Founding Doctrine" of South Korea: A Conceptual History of Chayuminjujuŭi from 1945 to 1963  
Taiyoung HONG (Korea National Defense University)  
• Liberal Transition of Korean Democracy after 1987  
Hannes MOSLER (University of Duisburg-Essen)  
• Democratic Backsliding by Invitation: The People Power Party and South Korea's Constitutional Crisis  
Joohyung KIM (Seoul National University)  
• Dissensual Citizenship in Korean Politics  
Discussants Jin-Wook SHIN (Chung-Ang University)  
Hyun KIM (Yonsei University)

Track 2 Rm.230

South Korea and Post-Cold War Geopolitics

Chair Jeeye SONG (Korea University)  
Presentations Miriam BARTOLOZZI (University of Macerata)  
• Promoting Human Rights and Democracy in Today's World: Digital Activism, Popular Culture and Environmental Advocacy Among South Korean Youth  
Cristina PREUTU (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)  
• Korean Peninsula and Romania in the Context of Collapse of Communist Bloc and the Reshaping of New Geopolitical Order  
Trung Hiep NGUYEN (Seoul National University)  
• From War to Cultural Exchange: The Evolution of Korea-Vietnam Relations as Symptom of Geopolitical Transformation  
Discussants Seonhee KIM (Seoul National University)  
Ki Eun RYU (Seoul National University)

Track 3 Rm.240

Kpop, Fandom and Cultural Practices

Chair Younghan CHO (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)  
Presentations Hyemi LIM (Universite Paris Cite)  
• Performing Korea: K-Pop Cover Dance and the Transformation of Public Space in France  
William DUNKEL (University of California, Irvine)  
• "Anything to Say to Your Fans?": Gendered Fandom and Labor in Korean Esports  
Meicheng SUN (Beijing Language and Culture University)  
• K-Poppers and Hip Hoppers in Beijing: Dance, Professions, and Mobilities  
Tabitha ADLER (Goethe University Frankfurt)  
• Self-Made K-Pop Photocards in South Africa: Local Fan Practices as a Way of Dealing with South Korean Popular Culture  
Discussants Suk Young KIM (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Lisa Yuk-ming LEUNG (Lingnan University)

14:30-14:50

Break



15:20-16:50

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Migration Issues and Gender Inequality in Korea

Chair

Dongwon LEE (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Eun Kyung KIM (Hansung University)

• [Disability, Migration, and \(Non\) Labor: The Oral Life History of a Returning Woman Adoptee](#)

You Jae LEE (University of Tübingen)

• [“You Have to Be Better Than the Germans”: Discrimination Experiences of Korean Labor Migrants in Germany](#)

Jongwook LEE (Seoul National University)

• [Global Labor Mobility: The Lives of Migrant Workers in South Korea and Their Families in Origin Countries](#)

Discussants

Jung Eun LEE (Suncheon National University)

Minji JO (The Catholic University of Korea)

Track 2

Rm.230

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Narrative Alternatives Imagining the Post-1987 System

Chair

Hyoung Cheol SHIN (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Mi Jung KIM (Sungkyunkwan University)

• [The Square Changes Words; Words Change the Square](#)

Jin Seok CHOI (Seoul National University of Science and Technology)

• [Justice and Community Beyond the Law: Questions and Responses in Korean Literature and Film after 1987](#)

Discussants

Hyoung Cheol SHIN (Seoul National University)

Yun Eui YANG (Korea University)

Track 3

Rm.240

Reimagining Koreanness: Transnationality, Miracles, and Boundaries

Chair

Jung-ha KIM (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Irina LYAN (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

• [ImagiNation: South Korea and Its Modern Miracles](#)

Priyanka YADAV (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

• [The Idea of ‘Cultural Other’: The Study of North Korean Defectors in South Korea](#)

Discussants

Jung Hwan KIM (Hallym University)

Byung Hun YOON (Seoul National University)

16:50-17:10 Break

17:10-18:10

Track 1

Rm.210 Youngwon Hall

Simultaneous Interpretation Available

Korea as Symptom: Why Symptomatology in Korean Studies?

Chair

Jaeho KANG (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Hong Jung KIM (Seoul National University)

Woosung KANG (Seoul National University)

Discussants

TBA

18:10-

Closing Reception | Rm.220 Samik Hall



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2025 SNU ICCKS

## Korea as Symptom

Perspectives on the Future

# DAY 1

*August 22, 2025 (Fri)*

Korean Political Economy

Chair

Yong-Chool HA (University of Washington)

Presentations

Soohyun Christine LEE (King's College London)

Myung-Joon PARK (Korea Labor Institute)

Jitendra UTTAM (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Kyung Mi KIM (Sapienza University of Rome)

Discussants

Kwang-Yeong SHIN (Chung-Ang University)

Hyeon Seok PARK (National Assembly Future Institute)

Gendered Polarization among Young Koreans: Young Men's Conservative Turn in the 2022 Presidential Election

Soohyun Christine LEE  
King's College London

This paper examines gendered generational shifts in political attitudes and vote choice in South Korea, with a focus on the 2022 presidential election. Using nationally representative survey data from 2017 and 2022, we trace changes in ideological self-placement, policy preferences, and attitudes toward gender-related issues. A logistic regression model reveals that men aged 18–29 in 2022 were significantly more likely to vote for the conservative candidate, Yoon Seok-yeol, compared to other demographic groups across both years. To better understand this shift, we conduct a nested analysis of the 2022 data, showing that young men's support for Yoon is closely associated with conservative attitudes toward the welfare state and gender equality. This case represents one of the earliest and clearest instances of a conservative turn among young men in a recent election within advanced democracies, alongside emerging signs in countries such as Germany, France, and the United States. By highlighting gendered polarization within younger cohorts—often overlooked in existing research due to the dominance of aggregate-level approaches in both polarization and gender gap literatures — this study contributes to the growing literature on the evolving role of gender and generation in shaping electoral dynamics.



## **Tripartism and the Politics of Social Pacts in South Korea: Institutional Evolution and Strategic Dilemmas**

**Myung-Joon PARK**  
*Korea Labor Institute*

This paper examines the evolution and strategic dilemmas of tripartism in South Korea, focusing on the politics of social pacts in a context of fragmented labor relations, state-led corporatism, and shifting economic governance. Tracing the institutional trajectory from the post-democratization period to the present, the study analyzes key episodes of national-level social dialogue—including the Tripartite Commission (1998), the Economic, Social and Labor Council (2018), and recent efforts under progressive administrations to revitalize inclusive negotiation frameworks. The paper argues that South Korea's tripartite institutions reflect an ambivalent blend of formal incorporation and limited substantive influence, shaped by both internal actor dynamics (e.g., union rivalry, state agenda-setting, employer ambivalence) and external pressures (e.g., financial crises, industrial transformation, and global labor standards). Drawing on theories of neo-corporatism and comparative political economy, the paper situates Korea's experience within broader debates on the adaptability of social pacting in liberalizing economies. It further identifies three strategic dilemmas facing Korean tripartism today: the tension between procedural inclusion and policy efficacy, the challenge of sustaining social dialogue amid weak associational power and precarious employment, and the risks of instrumentalization under a state-centric governance mode. Through this analysis, the paper contributes to understanding how institutional forms of tripartism persist, mutate, or unravel under the pressure of economic and political restructuring.

## **Capitalism vs. Capitalism - India and Korean Experiences in the Comparative Perspective**

**Jitendra UTTAM**  
*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

This paper aims to analyze the structural distinctiveness that causes sharp variation in the dynamism of the capitalist system that has evolved in Asia's two large economies, India and Korea. At the macro-level, based on the varieties of capitalism literature, it is evident that the state played a key role in 'organizing capitalism from the top.' The Indian state acted as the owner, manager and financier to promote 'state capitalism' activated through publicly-owned enterprises; whereas, the Korean state nurtured family-owned, privately managed businesses that, within a generation, grew into giant conglomerates. In both cases, the guiding force that has empowered capitalism has been the 'interventionist' or 'developmental state,' which helped organize capitalism from the top.

However, things have been different at the micro-level, where capitalist systems witnessed sharp structural variations, amounting to creating a situation resembling what some say, 'capitalism vs. capitalism.' We have identified six structural features that led to the emergence of two different varieties of capitalist systems. Among the distinct structural features, the first is sharply varied socioeconomic realities, which exhibit continuity in socio-economic polarization, promoting embedded elitism as in the case of India, vs. discontinuity in the distribution of age-old socio-economic dichotomies re-embedding egalitarianism as demonstrated by Korea. Second, variance in the capacity of state systems. The Indian state shows its inability to reset state-society relations, whereas the Korean state proved its ability to recast state-society relations. Third, differences in the nature, ownership, and structure of the corporate system. India created large publicly-owned enterprises, but Korea nurtured privately-owned family-run enterprises. Fourth, differentiation in orientation in industrial policies. India's industrial policy focused on a capital-technology-intensive import-substitution strategy, whereas Korea's strategic industrial policy single-mindedly concentrated on export promotion and mass production. Fifth, variation in the nature and direction of bureaucracy. Indian bureaucracy continued with the colonial legacy of maintaining law & order, rather than concentrating on economic development; whereas Korea created an efficient economic bureaucracy tasked to exclusively promote economic development. Sixth, differences in the approaches to international politics. India sided with socialist ideas and had involvement in the formation and expansion of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); whereas Korea was firmly tied with the capitalist bloc with access to a vast market, a deep pool of capital and cutting-edge technology.

Based on the micro-level variations, we argue that outward orientation and mass production helped Korean capitalism to create mass employment, leading to mass prosperity. Mass-participation ensured social embeddedness of Korean capitalism. On the other hand, inward

orientation and capital-technology-intensive, heavy-industry-led limited production gave rise to a capitalist system that created employment for a few, leading to mass poverty. Limited social participation ensured a socially de-embedded form of capitalism in India. Socially embedded and de-embedded capitalist systems that emerged in India and Korea sharply differ in their nature, structure and approach and thus demonstrate wide-ranging variation in the efficiency, sustainability and systemic dynamism.

Literature that deals with the issue tends to focus on the state and market behind the capitalist production system; however, it ignores the role of wider society in making capitalism stable, sustainable, and dynamic. Theoretically, while the Adam Smith's thesis promoted the idea that the marketplace would weed out wasteful resource allocations by following the dictates of 'invisible hand', the Keynesian perspective brought back the role of the state in the management of demand and supply aggregates and Joseph Schumpeter arrived with a new perspective assigning key role to entrepreneur responsible for innovation. There have been attempts to strike a balance between state and market, but the role of the larger society has yet to be fully recognized. This paper tries to highlight socioeconomic determinants shaping the nature and orientation of a capitalist system.

Empirically, India's failed attempts at the redistribution of socioeconomic resources are compared with Korea's successful land and education reforms that help to create a level playing field essential to the stability, sustainability and efficiency of a capitalist system. On the policy level, this paper suggests policies aimed at the redistribution of resources, possibly through taxation, direct transfer, and by subsidizing the cost of quality education.

## | Digitalization in Japan and Korea

**Kyung Mi KIM**

*Sapienza University of Rome*

This paper explores the divergent functioning of statist coordination capitalism in Japan and Korea by analyzing the processes and outcomes of digitalization. While both Japan and Korea developed a form of statist coordination developmentalism that differs from the free-market model of the United States and the social coordination model of Germany, their patterns of economic development have diverged significantly since the 1990s. Japan has fallen into the so-called "lost two decades" and institutional inertia, whereas Korea has demonstrated flexible adaptation to the digital economy. By focusing on the patterns of policy-making processes, this paper analyzes the causes of the two countries' divergent paths of digitalization and seeks to show that, despite similar institutional frameworks, the statist models of the two countries function differently in practice.

**Walking as Object-Method  
in Korean Studies:**

Modeling Future Trends  
for Conducting Fieldwork in the Social Sciences

**Chair/Discussant**

Astric LAC (*Yonsei University*)

**Presentations**

Valérie GELÉZEAU (*EHESS, France*)

Youna SON (*EHESS, France*)

Minji JO (*The Catholic University of Korea*)

Daeun LEE (*National University of Singapore*)

Margot KUNZ (*French Institute of Geopolitics*)

**Walking along the DMZ Peace Trail as Object-Method  
to Reconsider Post-Traumatic Space in the South Korean  
Border Zone**

Valérie GELÉZEAU

*EHESS, France*

Since 1953, the inter-Korean border, the current frontier of an unfinished war (Cumings 2010), can be analyzed as a “meta-border” (Gelézeau 2020) that exists beyond the time of its creation and beyond its physical location along the 38th parallel. Still active like a terrestrial fault line, this “meta-border” created discontinuities at all levels of both Korean societies (divided families, the issue of former North Koreans settled in the South, or diasporic communities). Along the DMZ, in the so-called *chōpkyōng chiyōk* (Korean border zone), which includes many rural counties, towns, and cities in Gyeonggi and Gangweon provinces, apparent discontinuities stem from the post-traumatic history of the war and are linked to both spatial constraints (border security) and tourism development (memory of war & division), mixing challenges and opportunities for residents.

This paper builds on recent research protocols established to document social life in such post-traumatic spaces (Sophie Houdart on post-Fukushima studies, Houdart 2020). It presents the first results of my new research, which uses walking along the entire 34 courses of the DMZ Peace Trail, recently opened in 2024, as a means of reintroducing continuity into the analysis of a discontinuous space such as the South Korean *chōpkyōng chiyōk*.

The walking and mobile survey carried out along the way, which allowed for many encounters with different actors and inhabitants, opens up new ways of questioning the geographical dynamics and life along the lines in border areas (rural/urban gap, border security, development of memorial tourism, etc.) and could be applied to the study of numerous other discontinuous contexts.



## **Walking Empowerment:** Civil Society and the Making of Paths

Youna SON  
EHESS, France

In South Korea, where mountains cover 64% of the national territory, recreational hiking is a popular activity, with many enthusiasts organized into associations or hiking clubs.

Our case studies - two hiking associations - questions this enthusiasm and its civic engagement. The first, *Step by Step Around Daejeon* (*Daejeondullesangiritgi*), founded in 2004 and born from the citizens' movement (simin undong, Koo Hagen 2002), positions itself as a civic organization that pursues environmental and cultural objectives related to hiking. The second association, *The Gyeryong Trails* (*Gyeryongsandullegil*), founded in 2019 by an experienced hiker, initiated the development of a hiking circuit around Mount Gyeryong by restoring old local trails.

This presentation examines how the engagement of these two associations contribute to the production of space (Lefebvre 1968) by creating paths in the region of Daejeon metropolitan city. It places the creative actions (Michel de Certeau 1990) of hikers at the center, which involve walking alongside others and along the paths. Rooted in the field of cultural geography and based on extensive fieldwork (several months of research conducted in 2019 and 2021) in South Korea, this presentation aims to deepen the analysis of contemporary walking practices by engaging with the haptic regime of knowledge both as a method and object of study.

## **Summoning Pre-Technological Technologies:** The Politics of Walking in South Korea, 1960s and 1970s

Minji JO  
The Catholic University of Korea

This presentation analyzes how *walking* was mobilized, governed, and at times reappropriated as a tactic of resistance during the urbanization of South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. While modern mobility systems—symbolized by trains, buses, and highways—relied on complex and labor-intensive infrastructures, they frequently suffered systemic breakdowns. In such moments, the state turned to what it regarded as the most *natural* form of movement: walking. Treated as an inexhaustible reserve of physical labor, walking was redefined as a national duty and promoted through campaigns such as the *National Walking Movement*, cloaked in the language of energy conservation, frugality, and self-discipline. Yet walking also functioned as a technology of refusal. Collective walking—such as rallies by striking bus attendants—exposed the hidden inequalities of the mobility system and temporarily disrupted the privileges of those exempt from walking. Rather than interpreting walking merely as a survival tactic or nostalgic practice, this study approaches it as a political resource, embodied in individual bodies—one that could be summoned by the state in times of crisis, but also one capable of resisting that very summons.

## **Walking with the Moving Fieldsite: Doing Mobile Ethnography in Digital Nomad Research**

**Daeun LEE**

*National University of Singapore*

This paper explores different ethnographic approaches to studying digital nomads, who are constantly in motion. It examines the moving fieldsite through mobile ethnography, drawing on a year of ethnographic fieldwork on digital nomads in Korea. This study engages with an ongoing methodological question: what does it mean to conduct research in a moving fieldsite?

By walking with digital nomads across different landscapes of mobility and space, I have experienced various forms of movement alongside them—walking, taking buses, trains, flights, and ferries—while transitioning between different locations from Seoul to Busan and Jeju. I have lived with them in co-living spaces and worked alongside them in co-working spaces, not merely observing mobility but actively experiencing it myself.

Building on this empirical experience, this paper highlights two dimensions of mobile ethnography in a moving fieldsite, framed through walking as an object-method. First, digital nomads themselves are moving research objects, as frequent mobility becomes central to their lifestyles. Second, the researcher's body functions as a moving fieldnote, where the act of walking, traveling, and navigating research spaces actively shapes the production of knowledge. This study reflects on what it means to research mobility while being a mobile researcher oneself.

## **Virtual Walking as an Experience of Contemporary Hybrid Urban Space: The Case of “Walk in Seoul” YouTube Videos**

**Margot KUNZ**

*French Institute of Geopolitics*

This paper aims to explore the digital mediation of Korean urban spaces and its exponential development since the COVID pandemic in South Korea. Since 2019, the “Walk in Seoul” YouTube videos have gained hundreds of millions of views. In these videos, silent walkers film Seoul's urban landscapes from the spectator point of view across different times of day, seasons, and weather conditions. This research investigates how virtual tourism is presented on YouTube, offering spectators aesthetic experiences of the most attractive districts and areas of the city. Furthermore, it illustrates the power of representation of urban landscapes through social media. “Walk in” videos are symptoms of contemporary experiences of “geocyberspace” (H. Bakis), which are shaped by the constant interplay of physical and digital spaces (M. Lussault). They initiate a reflection on the post-COVID Korean society, referred as “Untact Korea”, where virtual experiences gained prominence due to social distancing practices and “smart city” development policies. Virtual walking serves as an “object- method” to analyze “cyber-flâneurs” (J. Urry, S. Goldate) by participating both as a YouTube creator and a consumer. The researcher's body engages in a haptic approach to carry out a sensitive reading of the “virtual Seoul”.

**Foreign Policy Narratives  
toward South Korea**  
**: From the Outside In**

**Chair/Discussant**

Jeffrey ROBERTSON *(Yonsei University)*

**Presentations**

Shin-ae LEE *(Sasakawa Peace Foundation)*

Jaewoo CHOO *(Kyung Hee University)*

Kuyoun CHUNG *(Kangwon National University)*

Claudia Junghyun KIM *(City University of Hong Kong)*

**Japan’s Strategic Narrative towards South Korea: The  
Case of the Indo-Pacific**

**Shin-ae LEE**  
*Sasakawa Peace Foundation*

In pursuit of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), Japan has increasingly sought to foster partnerships with like-minded countries that share values and interests. Although the two countries are neighboring democracies and US allies, Japan’s cooperation with South Korea in the Indo-Pacific has been limited. This dynamic has recently shifted, with both countries now recognizing each other as key Indo-Pacific partners. How have Japan’s stance and perception of South Korea as an Indo-Pacific partner evolved, and what is the rationale behind this shift?

This study explores Japan’s strategic narratives regarding South Korea in relation to FOIP from 2017 to 2024. It also examines key policy developments that both reflect and reinforce this transformation. Through this analysis, the study aims to elucidate Japan’s deepening engagement with South Korea as an Indo-Pacific partner, as well as the key factors that have shaped this shift. Ultimately, it provides insights into the future trajectory of South Korea-Japan relations amid ongoing uncertainties.



## China's Korean Diplomacy Narratives in the Xi Jinping Era

Jaewoo CHOO

*Kyung Hee University*

China's narratives on Korean diplomacy have exhibited two primary characteristics under the leadership of Chinese president Xi Jinping. One is constructing them on Cold War-style rhetoric, while the other is engaging in "unsportsmanlike conduct" in relation to Korea's sovereignty rights. The former is evident in the fact that Xi's China frequently insists that Korea be independent and autonomous in its foreign policy decisions and that it be free from "foreign influence." Additionally, China views Korea's relations with the United States as a zero-sum game. One of the most notable examples is its emphasis on safeguarding its national interests in advancing Korea's strategic objectives. The latter is renowned for its diplomatic behavior, particularly during its in-person meetings with the Korean counterparts. The Koreans, including presidents, have been subjected to severe and direct warnings. This has been extensively documented. Within this framework, the article will initially introduce these features and endeavor to investigate the motivations, causes, and objectives that underlie China's construction of narratives in this manner. The article will then proceed to analyze the influence it has had on the bilateral relationship between Korea and China. This will be followed by an examination of the manner in which China implements these narratives in its management of Korean Peninsula affairs.

## US Strategic Narratives on East Asian Allies under Retrenchment: A Case of Sino-US Rapprochement under the Nixon Administration

Kuyoun CHUNG

*Kangwon National University*

This study examines how the United States justified its foreign policy during the period of retrenchment in the Cold War through strategic narratives. In particular, the study focuses on the late 1960s Nixon administration's efforts to pursue rapprochement with China and its détente diplomacy, which ultimately led to the U.S.-China summit and the issuance of the Shanghai Communiqué. This compromise between great powers ultimately resulted in a weakening of U.S. security commitments to its allies, with a notable example being the Nixon administration's attempt to withdraw U.S. troops from South Korea. While the U.S. narrative suggested that improved relations with China would contribute to international stability and peace, there is much debate over whether such rapprochement was necessary, and whether it was effective in facilitating the end of the Vietnam War, pursuing détente with the Soviet Union, and stabilizing the Korean Peninsula. This study aims to analyze and compare the strategic communications employed by the United States throughout the negotiation process between the U.S. and China from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s.

## **Elite Victim or Elite Power? Korea's Victimhood Narratives and Status-Seeking in the World**

**Claudia Junghyun KIM**  
*City University of Hong Kong*

How do states seek greater status in the world? The conventional understanding of status in world politics equates it with states' possession of desirable attributes, such as material power and membership in elite organizations. International Relations scholars, however, are increasingly viewing victimhood – despite its implied powerlessness and vulnerability – as a source of status in international politics. While victimhood as a means of status seeking can empower the Davids of the world vis-à-vis the Goliaths of the world, it has also fueled what critics call the “suffering Olympics.” In this presentation, I examine Korea's status-seeking in world politics, which remains deeply intertwined with its narratives of victimhood associated with Japanese imperialism and colonialism. However, Korea's identity as a newly vocal victim state has accompanied unintended consequences: its efforts to maintain its superior victim status has inadvertently deterred its status seeking in at least some other areas associated with the US-led order in the Indo-Pacific.

**Day 1 13:00-14:30**

**Track 1 Rm.210 Youngwon Hall**

## **Queer Representation in Contemporary Korean Fiction**

### **Chair**

**Youkyung SON** (*Seoul National University*)

### **Presentations**

**Sung Un GANG** (*Technische University Berlin*)

**Hyejin OH** (*Sungkyunkwan University*)

### **Discussants**

**Youkyung SON** (*Seoul National University*)

**Kyung Hee YOUN** (*Seoul National University*)

## **The Utopia of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Korean Fictions**

Sung Un GANG  
*Technische University Berlin*

This study explores how queer pain and queer placelessness are represented in contemporary Korean fictions focusing on male homosexuality. It analyzes the tensions between fantasy and reality embedded in Korean Boys' Love (BL) genre and examines its divergence from Muñoz's (2009) theory of queer utopia. In many BL fictions, characters appear curiously insulated from societal discrimination based on their sexual orientation, despite implicit references to such oppression, while serendipitously encountering the love of their life and indulging in male same sex intimacy. The unspoken taboo of homosexuality within BL reveals a rupture between idealized queer romance and a social reality that silences queer voices and stigmatizes non-normative sexuality. By focusing on BL consumers' efforts to distinguish the genre from so-called "queer fiction," understood as grounded in lived LGBTQ+ experiences, as well as from real-world male homosexuality, this paper proposes "queer pain" as a relevant category for examining the limits of male homosexuality's representation in the BL genre and the potential of gay literature in the broader field of Korean literature.

## **Geopolitical Configurations of Korean Queer Narratives and the Stalemate of Global Queer Discourse: An Analysis of Media Mix Practices in *Love in the Big City***

Hyejin OH  
*Sungkyunkwan University*

Since 2015, the Korean literary field has undergone significant transformation in both its material foundations and discursive content, to the extent that it is now described as having experienced a "feminist turn" or a "queer turn." In particular, Korean literature, newly branded as "K-literature," has been adopted as a prominent mode of expression for women and sexual minorities, actively engaging in contemporary minority politics. The genre-based renewal of Korean women's literature and queer literature since 2015, along with the expansion of their readerships, clearly reflects these changes. Park Sang-young's linked short story collection *Love in the Big City* is widely regarded as a representative work leading the new wave of Korean queer literature. The fact that this work has been adapted into a commercial film and an OTT drama indicates that the queer representations and discourses raised within the Korean literary field have entered a new space governed by different genre conventions, opening up new horizons of interpretation. Moreover, these narratives, newly adapted for film and OTT drama, have reached audiences with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds through platforms such as Netflix and TVING. This presentation analyzes how the values and modes of representation that circulated as "the queer" within the Korean literary field are transformed, appropriated, and received through the genres/media of commercial film and paid OTT dramas. Through this, it aims to investigate how Korean queer politics and aesthetics interact antagonistically with the global media system.

# Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea I

Chair

Sem VERMEERSCH *(Seoul National University)*

Presentations

Donald BAKER *(The University of British Columbia)*

Liora SARFATI *(Tel Aviv University)*

Juhn AHN *(University of Michigan)*

Discussants

Hae-young SEONG *(Seoul Nations Universty)*

## Sacralizing the Nation: New Religions and Korea’s Place in the World

Donald BAKER

*The University of British Columbia*

Korea’s many new religions are not usually given as much scholarly attention as the older religions on the peninsula because new religions have a much smaller membership than the established religions and therefore, with the exception of Tonghak, are not seen as having much impact on the course of modern Korean history. However, that ignores another important feature of new religions which merits scholarly attention: they often represent a fusion of modern nationalism with a desire to preserve and even globalize traditional Korean beliefs and values. That combination, especially when strengthened with the sanctity of religion, can reveal much about how some Koreans have responded to the hurricane-force winds of modernization over the last century and a half. Tonghak/Chöndogyo, the Revised Book of Changes religion, Taejonggyo, Won Buddhism, Jeungsando, the Unification Church, and Dahn World are genuine religions which can be viewed as expressions of religious nationalism. As such, they try to promote Korea as the spiritual center of the entire world, as a sacred land to which all humanity should turn for guidance in matters religious and ethical.



## The Evolving Representation of *Mudang* in Korean Television

Liora SARFATI  
*Tel Aviv University*

Many Koreans perceive the work of mudang (Korean shamans) as occult, outlandish, distant, and impossible to understand. The stigma on the practitioners of spiritual mediation in Korea has historically pushed them geographically to the peripheries of villages, while simultaneously relegating them to the fringes of societal acceptance within low-status groups. Nevertheless, since the year 2000, the representations of mudang in Korean television shows and dramas have evolved from marginal ridiculed or scary figures, into recurring protagonists in mainstream media productions. Mudang have been increasingly depicted as honest practitioners of a useful tradition. Some have been protagonists of romantic dramas, others as advisers in variety shows or problem-solving figures in crime series. Recently, they have also starred in reality shows such as *Shindürin Yönae*, offering the public a detailed account of their lives and personal preferences. The broad dissemination of musok (Korean shamanism) in high-rating shows, including those distributed globally, has created a new image for this ancient creed, contributing to the acknowledgment of its merit and the practitioners' unique abilities in Korea and globally. This is a significant change from the perception of mudang as old-fashioned remnants of a damaging premodern superstitious culture.

## A Short Critique of Korea's Political Mythology in the Post-Park Chung Hee Era

Juhn AHN  
*University of Michigan*

In this short presentation I hope to use the notion of “the king's two bodies” found in the work of the medieval historian Ernst Kantorowicz to make sense of the declaration of martial law on Dec 3, 2024, and the storming of the Seoul Western District Court in Seoul on Jan 19, 2025. My interpretation of these events will be set against the backdrop of the crisis of political mythology (a term that I borrow from the work of Isaac Ariail Reed) that was sparked by the demise of Park Chung Hee and his Third Republic. I will focus specifically on the way this crisis continues to find expression in the tendency among Korean politicians to “collude with” religion and so-called superstition.

# Telling the Stories of Other Korea:

## Critical Approaches to Historical Narrative

Chair

Olivia U. RUTAZIBWA (*London School of Economics*)

Presentations

Inho CHOI (*Seoul National University*)

Jaeyoung KIM (*San Diego State University*)

Yeonhee Sophie KIM (*Sogang University*)

Discussants

Jeeye SONG (*Korea University*)

# Strange Politics in Early Modern East Asia: The Objective Value of Fictionalized History

Inho CHOI  
*Seoul National University*

Premodern history presents forms of politics that look strange to modern readers. Even with innovative conceptualization, their very strangeness makes it difficult for them to have a lasting impact on modern historical scholarship, possibly reducing them to interesting but marginal historical concerns. I argue that the inadequate reception of strange, non-modern politics is due to the strict separation between fact and fiction, and that fictionalized history can increase the objective values of historical scholarship by allowing the reader to experience what it feels like to participate in strange politics. Despite the recognition of its value, it has not been adequately explored how fictional history can expand the accessible objective realities by recovering the experienced world beyond recorded history. Drawing on Hayden White’s study of narratives and Markus Gabriel’s ontological pluralism, I explain why fictions expand accessible historical realities and substantiate their objective value through the example of early modern politics between Ming China and Chosŏn Korea. I will show that fictional narratives allow modern readers to experience how Koreans surprisingly asserted their moral agency by submitting to Ming China. These fictional narratives enrich historical scholarship with normative and analytical innovations drawn from the experience of strange forms of politics.

## **Revisiting Historical East Asia: A Reflection on and from Ancient Korea**

**Jaeyoung KIM**  
*San Diego State University*

International Relations (IR) is undergoing another wave of the historical turn. The rise of non-Western great powers and the decline of Western dominance are prompting IR scholars to examine the emergence, transformation, and interactions of various regional orders and political entities. Against this backdrop, East Asia is gaining prominence among historical IR scholars. While a new generation of scholarship is uncovering the diversity and complexity of the regional order in historical East Asia, the study of Korea has reinforced—and has been treated as reinforcing—a particular image of the region, characterized by Chinese hegemony, a Confucian zone of peace, and distinctive modes of state formation diverging from those of Western Europe. In this paper, I argue that such characterizations require further scrutiny and historicization, as extending the scope of analysis to the Three Kingdoms of ancient Korea (57 BCE–676 CE)—Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla—reveals a different, more variegated story of historical East Asia. The study of ancient Korea contributes to emerging scholarship on historical East Asia by offering a more nuanced understanding of the region and establishing avenues for comparison with other regions.

## **Trust in the Digital Age? Digital CBMs, Track II Diplomacy, and North Korea's Cyber Challenge**

**Yeonhee Sophie KIM**  
*Sogang University*

As geopolitical tensions manifest in the digital domain, traditional Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) remain inadequate for addressing the fluid, decentralized, and asymmetric cyber warfare. North Korea's cyber operations—ranging from state-sponsored hacking to digital financial crimes and espionage—expose the limitations of conventional arms control paradigms that assume a state-centric security architecture. This paper argues for a theoretical reconceptualization of CBMs that moves beyond militarized frameworks, situating cyber conflicts within the broader epistemic conditions of “information interdependence.” Rather than treating cyber engagements as extensions of kinetic deterrence, I critically examine how digital CBMs must be understood as speculative instruments of anticipatory governance, operating in a space where security, sovereignty, and information infrastructures are co-constitutive. Engaging with critical security studies, post-territorial geopolitics, and emerging scholarship on digital international relations, I interrogate the epistemic limits of geopolitical reasoning and explore the Track II diplomatic interventions as an alternative modality of engagement. Given North Korea's strategic opacity and the challenges of cyber attribution, multi-stakeholder diplomatic engagements—incorporating non-state actors, cybersecurity epistemic communities, and algorithmic governance frameworks—are crucial sites of intervention. Digital CBMs must be theorized not as state-driven risk-mitigation strategies, but as dynamic, processual security assemblages that preemptively structure the technopolitical landscapes in which geopolitical tensions unfold.

# Roundtable: Kpop and Activism

Chair

Haekyung UM *(Liverpool University)*

Presentations

John STREET *(University of East Anglia)*

Suk Young KIM *(University of California, Los Angeles)*

Lisa Yuk-ming LEUNG *(Lingnan University)*

Sungmin KIM *(Hokkaido University)*

Benjamin M. HAN *(University of Georgia)*

Giyeon KOO *(Seoul National University)*

HaeRan SHIN *(Seoul National University)*

Discussants

Dalyong JIN *(Simon Fraser University)*

Ju Oak KIM *(Texas A&M International University)*

Seok-kyeong HONG *(Seoul National University)*

## K-pop and Activism

This roundtable explores the evolving role of contemporary K-pop fandoms as emerging socio-political actors within the digital public sphere. Since its inception in the 1990s in South Korea, K-pop has evolved into a global cultural phenomenon, distinguished by its highly structured idol system, hybridized musical aesthetics, and participatory fan practices. While fandom engagement has historically been vital to K-pop’s transnational expansion, recent developments indicate a shift in fan activities from promotional support to forms of digital mobilization, collective advocacy, and transnational solidarity.

Social media platforms have become key instruments in this transformation, facilitating the organization of online campaigns, the dissemination of information, and the production of creative media. Predominantly led by young women, these fan-based actions foster networks of affective solidarity and civic competence, underscoring the participatory nature of fandom as both a cultural and political practice.

As K-pop continues to expand globally, fan-driven activism is increasingly shaped by local socio-political conditions. This was exemplified in the South Korean presidential impeachment protests of 2024–2025, during which fan communities demonstrated their capacity for civic intervention and political expression. By situating K-pop activism within both global and national contexts, this roundtable considers how popular culture serves as a vehicle for grassroots political engagement and cultural agency.

# Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea II

Chair

Hyunjoo JUNG (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Dong-kyu KIM (Sogang University)

Soongky BAEK (Sahmyook University)

Minah KIM (Incheon National University)

Discussants

Soo-Ah KIM (Seoul National University)

## Korean Political Scandals and Shamanism Rhetoric: The Shadow of the 20th Century ‘Musok’

Dongkyu KIM

Sogang University

The impeachments of two Korean presidents in the last decade is the biggest scandal in the 21th century Korean political history. Although the legal reasons for the impeachment of the two presidents were different, the common political rhetoric that guided the tone of the impeachment was that public political activity, which should be based on rational decision-making by political actors elected by the people and transparent disclosure of the decision-making process, was tainted by shamanism. This rhetoric was in line with modernity’s ideology of restricting religion to the private sphere, but it was also effective in that it actively capitalized on the stigmatized image of shamanism as pre-modern superstition. In the meantime, in this political rhetoric, which was widely reproduced through mass media, I can also read a religious bias inherent in Korean society. In this presentation, I will how shamanism is being consumed by Koreans, the public and the private, in the 21st century and examine how “Korean shamanism,” as a construct of the 20th century, functions within it.



## **Stigma and Charisma:** The Political Theology of *Shincheonji* Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

Soongky BAEK  
*Sahmyook University*

This study examines the processes of public stigmatization and strategic response involving the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (commonly known as Shincheonji), a new religious movement in South Korea, during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. Following the revelation that South Korea's 31st confirmed COVID-19 case was a Shincheonji member, the Korean media portrayed the group as a non-cooperative, secretive, and socially dangerous entity, labeling it a "social virus." Drawing on Erving Goffman's theory of stigma, this paper analyzes how media discourse constructed Shincheonji as a public threat, and how Shincheonji countered this stigmatization through a series of religious and political strategies. Focusing on Shincheonji's internal newspaper *Cheonji Ilbo*, the study explores the group's narrative framing, which depicted itself as a victim of irrational persecution, emphasized divine providence in the face of adversity, and reinterpreted rising membership as eschatological evidence. Shincheonji also adopted conformist tactics such as cooperating with public health authorities and organizing large-scale plasma donations, while simultaneously reframing rival Protestant groups as socially deviant. This case study illustrates how stigmatized new religious movements deploy complex religious mechanisms to maintain legitimacy and cohesion in hostile social environments.

## **Fear, Hatred, and Anger:** The Affective Politics of Far-Right Protestantism in South Korea

Minah KIM  
*Incheon National University*

The rise of far-right Protestantism in Korean society has become a socio-political phenomenon that can no longer be dismissed as marginal. Following President Yoon Seok-yul's declaration of martial law on December 3, 2024, and the ensuing impeachment crisis, far-right forces have occupied public squares and streets, establishing themselves as significant political actors. At the center of this mobilization, Protestant institutions have provided essential organizational infrastructure, resources, and narratives that sustain these movements. Far-right Protestantism operates not merely as a religious group engaged in politics, but as a pivotal actor that exposes, reinforces, and reconfigures Korean society's conflict terrain through the strategic deployment of specific affects. This study analyzes how far-right Protestantism in Korea politicizes affects to mobilize supporters and expand its socio-political influence. Through organizational networks and ideological frameworks, far-right Protestantism activates three key affective mechanisms: fear as foundational nourishment for group formation, hatred to construct rigid in-group/out-group distinctions, and anger amplified through public square politics including prayer meetings, worship services, and rallies. This research demonstrates how far-right Protestant movements, through the politicization of collective affects, simultaneously consolidate their internal group identity while externally undermining fundamental democratic values and institutional legitimacy in contemporary South Korea.

# Korean Narrative Today I: Inventing a Way of Living in Margin

Chair

Kyung Hee YOUN (*Seoul National University*)

Presentations

Charlotte HAMMOND (*University of Edinburgh*)

Sungwon HEO (*University of California, Davis*)

Yun-Jong LEE (*Korea University*)

Discussants

Keonhyung KIM (*Seoul National University*)

# Trauma and the Monstrous-Feminine in Korean On-Screen Media

Charlotte HAMMOND

*University of Edinburgh*

The legacy of the Japanese occupation of Korea continues to haunt South Korea’s collective memory. Historical memories and traumas have the potential to not only transcend individual experience to impact the collective consciousness but also to be transmitted through multiple generations and across time. On-screen media forms have the potential to act as lieux de memoire and mediators in the transmission of trauma and memory. The presence of colonial traumas in contemporary Korean society is perpetuated by how they resonate with modern-day issues, including the systemic problem of gendered violence.

Through literary textual analysis of the film ‘The Silenced’ (2015) and the Netflix drama ‘Gyeongseong Creature’ (2023-2024), I will establish how the trauma and memories of the colonial past are represented through the textual narratives and the genres of supernatural fantasy and horror. The weaponization and monsterization of the female body in the war mobilization era demonstrates how the female body is presented as a site of colonial trauma in on-screen texts. Utilizing concept of Barbara Creed’s monstrous-feminine the key focus will be on: to what extent does the female body act as a site of colonial and contemporary trauma and suffering within these texts?

## **Queer Future in Worn-Out Stories:** A Queer Reading of *Love in the Big City*

Sungwon HEO  
*University of California, Davis*

Recent developments in queer studies—particularly queer of color critique and transnational queer studies—have emphasized local space and temporality as critical sites of theorization. This paper examines the queer temporality of South Korea from a transnational queer perspective by analyzing *Love in the Big City* (2019) by Park Sang Young and its reception, along with its visual adaptations in 2024.

The protagonist, Yǒng, repeatedly fails to imagine a viable future. Situating Yǒng's affective impasse before “good life” amid pervading anxieties about reproductive futurity in South Korea—the N-p'osedae (Give-Up Generation), Hell Chosŏn, and declining birth rates—this study argues that the inability to envision good life conditions, rather than forecloses, alternative forms of affective queer kinship, shaped by tensions with heteronormative family governmentality and neoliberal social norms in South Korea.

Engaging with postcritical theories of reading—Heather Love's feeling backward in particular—this paper considers how queer reading methods might be extended to account for South Korea's local and transnational histories and affective arrangements. In doing so, this study not only unfolds transnational queer temporality in relation to local imageries of the future but also complicates reproductive futurism entangled with South Korea's neoliberal and heteronormative social formation.

## **Toward Care of the Self and Others:** A Cinematic Critique of South Korean Self-Developmentalism in *Microhabitat*

Yun-Jong LEE  
*Korea University*

The 2017 film, *Microhabitat* (*Sogongnyeo*, dir. Jeon Gwoon) portrays the diverse physical and mental lifestyles of middle-class South Koreans in their thirties. This study pays attention to how these lifestyles are shaped by the neoliberal survival culture of self-development (*jagi gyebal*) and how this culture alienates young individuals from genuine care, both for others and themselves. As an independent women's film and a road movie, *Microhabitat* follows a homeless domestic worker who, in search of temporary shelter, visits and reconnects with her former college friends. Paradoxically, she emerges as the only character capable of offering sincere care to her friends, her clients, and herself in a broader sense. While existing scholarship has largely analyzed the protagonist's enjoyment of cigarettes and whisky in the context of Bourdieu's theory of taste as class distinction and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, this study draws instead on Foucault's critique of neoliberal subjectivity and his alternative model of subjectivation centered on the care of the self. In doing so, it not only expands the discourse on care and care work but also explores how the protagonist of *Microhabitat* embodies an ethical subjectivity constituted by Foucauldian concepts of the care, the culture, and the practice of the self.

# Reading Cultural Symptoms of Korea

Chair

Dongshin YI (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Steve CHOE (San Francisco State University)

Tzung-wen CHEN (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

Nathalie LUCA (EHESS, France)

Discussants

Jaeho KANG (Seoul National University)

Hong Jung KIM (Seoul National University)

Munyoung CHO (Yonsei University)

# Sympathy as Symptom: K-Drama Mediation and Communal Affect

Steve CHOE  
San Francisco State University

The word “sympathy” is derived from the Greek σύν, or “syn,” meaning “together” or “with.” This presentation will examine the technological togetherness that is produced through the K-drama in the age of global streaming platforms.

It begins by addressing one of the most discussed but under-theorized issues regarding Korean television drama (K-drama): “feeling.” Feeling is intimately linked to the experience of sincere moral sentiment and is emphasized in what I am calling the “affective interlude.” The interlude is a sequence that typically occurs between moments of dialogue and action in the K-drama narrative. It makes a spectacle of sincere emotion while soliciting viewers to respond in kind, to feel sympathy or outrage, to cry or cringe, and typically in ways that inspire the critical consideration of morality and virtue within the Korean cultural context. In turn, the affective interlude sheds light on the ontological conditions that mediate the phenomenon of affect by reflexively revealing the K-drama itself in its medial function. It will draw from key moments from some well-known dramas, such as *When the Camellia Blooms* (동백꽃 필 무렵, 2019), *The Good Bad Mother* (나쁜엄마, 2023) and *Queen of Tears* (눈물의 여왕, 2024), to illustrate these arguments.

On platforms such as Netflix and Disney+, K-dramas solicit audiences to think and feel within this particular context, indeed by appealing to an always already global structure of feeling closely linked to melodramatic mode. The presentation will characterize this structure as symptomatic (whose prefix “symp-” is of course also derived from the Greek σύν) of a shared sense of sympathetic affect that constitutes a community of K-drama lovers. This community is compared to the Kantian *sensus communis* constituted through the public intimacy of K-drama feeling. Viewers are drawn together through the K-drama’s depiction of the experience of compressed modernization in the reductive terms offered by melodrama and its imagination of technological connection.



## **Behind and Beyond the Logic of Imitation: From Assemblage of Chips to the K in Action**

**Tzung-wen CHEN**

*National Chengchi University, Taiwan*

The initiative for electronic and semiconductor industrial activities in South Korea began in the 1970s with the establishment of assembly sites for U.S. electronics companies. Samsung, for example, is now one of the leaders in the most advanced technologies within the global electronics industry. A traditional explanation for the rapid advancement of technology is the model known as ‘imitation to innovation,’ proposed by Linsu Kim in 1997. However, from the perspective of ‘assemblage’ or ‘instauration,’ this model may not hold true. From the very beginning of chip assembly, technological innovations have been continuous processes in which heterogeneous assemblages at multiple levels—such as form, concept, and value—contribute to the advancement of new semiconductor device structures, manufacturing principles, problem-solving models, human-machine interactions, and organizational frameworks. Furthermore, rather than being a matter of fact, Moore’s Law is a realizable concern. This is particularly true for East Asian engineers, who ‘prepare their minds to engage’ in assembling various elements and create their ‘anaphoric experiences’ along the trajectory of Moore’s Law. This approach to assemblage ensures that innovative outcomes are compatible with mainstream products or practices while reflecting Korean characteristics. As we can observe in the successful K-pop and Korean food industries, they exhibit a similar phenomenon.

## **The Rise of Neoliberalism in South Korea: Success or Failure, Dream or Nightmare?**

**Nathalie LUCA**

*EHESS, France*

Why did both the Full Gospel Church of Cho Yonggi and the Unification Church of Moon Sun-Myong appeal to some Westerners in the 1980s? What did Koreans expect when they converted to Protestantism? How did the rhetoric of these two churches resonate with their followers who belonged to contrasting social classes? How did their religious beliefs change their behavioral patterns and eventually lead them to embrace the ideology of neoliberalism? They developed a very entrepreneurial spirit, accepted to be held accountable for their own and collective performances, and began to dream of what they would afford if they committed themselves to hard work. First, the end of Cold War and then the Asian economic crisis of 1997 invalidated the theology of both Korean Pentecostal and Messianic churches. Nevertheless, neoliberalism has continued its development to this day but the rhetoric mobilized revolves around K-culture instead of religion. Although South Korea hasn’t stopped appealing to Westerners. In France, a word has appeared with no translation provided: *nunchi* and it is used to explain the ability of Koreans to achieve their goals. Books are published that teach how to adopt the *nunchi* attitude, using the vocabulary of personal development. But in South Korea, the behaviors expected in schools and businesses can also lead students, employees and even entrepreneurs to depression, burnout, and sometimes suicide. They have lost their ability to dream and imagine their future; they suffer from being blamed for their failures and weaknesses. They don’t trust anyone anymore. Some of these people seek an alternative lifestyle. May it allow them to open their minds to a different thinking of optimism? The purpose of this paper is to show that neoliberalism cannot but always rely on beliefs in order to enforce the entrepreneurial behaviors on which it is based. Beliefs may change as the context involves, but behaviors remain unchanged.

# Korean Narrative Today II:

## Gleaning the Shards of History

Chair

Hyeongguk SONG (*Korean Broadcasting System*)

Presentations

Jeremiah Estela MAGONCIA (*Ateneo de Manila University*)

Julin LEE (*University of Music and Theatre Munich*)

Discussants

A-young IN (*Seoul National University*)

# Korea as a Narrative: Digital Mediation Through True Crime

Jeremiah Estela MAGONCIA  
*Ateneo de Manila University*

This paper examines how true crime storytelling becomes a form of digital cultural mediation that frames South Korea as a symptomatic space of global anxiety. Through narrative analysis, audience engagement metrics, and qualitative comment analysis of six high-engagement case studies, the study explores how the Korean-American YouTuber Stephanie Soo translates local Korean traumas, ranging from celebrity scandals to systemic school violence, into emotionally resonant, globally accessible narratives.

Grounded in the frameworks of Korea as a Symptom, Cultural Intermediation, and Digital Affect, the study shows how Soo’s diasporic voice bridges Western and Korean sensibilities, constructing Korea as both a national and symbolic site of trauma, critique, and moral reflection. The findings highlight how her YouTube channel functions as a space of participatory spectatorship, where comment sections become civic forums for mourning, critique, and transnational solidarity.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates how true crime content on digital platforms shapes global perceptions of Korea, where cultural anxieties, modernity, and speculative futures are negotiated and imagined on a global scale.

## **In Perfect Harmony? Constructing Complex Female Characters and Their Relationships Through Music in K-Dramas**

**Julin LEE**

*University of Music and Theatre Munich*

K-drama's increasingly global (i.e. more Western) audience has engendered palpable shifts in storytelling agendas. Even K-romance, the most enduring (and conservative) of K-drama genres has carefully evolved to align with its modern, global (predominantly female) audience's values. However, despite the immense popularity of K-dramas, little has been written about how exactly these dramas work as cultural texts (An 2022). A handful of recent studies have made important headway into interrogating visual storytelling techniques and the negotiation of tropes, but what eludes systematic investigation is music's contribution to the narrative.

Synthesizing analytical approaches from (K-)popular music studies, screen music studies, and mobilizing (post-)feminist sensibilities, I interrogate the musical construction of complex female characters as individuals and their interpersonal relationships in K-dramas from 2019 onwards. Drawing on case studies including *Hotel del Luna* (2019), *Crash Landing on You* (2019–2020), *Start-Up* (2020) and *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* (2022), I chart what I call the “post-feminist musical poetics of the swoon” (reworking Booth 2021), which engenders a reflexive yet affective engagement with K-romance dramas. I argue that music plays critical roles in negotiating paradigm shifts in matters of consent, marriage, familial obligations, and workplace agency in appealing and accessible ways.

2025 SNU ICCKS

## **Korea as Symptom**

Perspectives on the Future

# DAY 2

*August 23, 2025 (Sat)*

# Perspectives on the Statehood of Modern and Contemporary Korea

Chair

Jonghak KIM (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Inhwan OH (East Asia Institute)

Joonyoung JUNG (Seoul National University)

Jongwook HONG (Seoul National University)

Todd A. HENRY (University of California, San Diego)

Discussants

Jaeyoung KIM (San Diego State University)

Jeanhyoung SOH (Seoul National University)

Choongyeol KIM (Seoul National University)

Yong-Chool HA (University of Washington)

# The Protestant Work Ethic and the Origin of Korean Enlightenment Nationalism, 1896-1900

Inhwan OH  
East Asia Institute

This paper examines how the Protestant Work Ethic influenced the emergence of Enlightenment nationalism in Korea between 1896 and 1900 by comparing the two newspapers: The Chosun Christian Journal and The Independent. This research demonstrates that the Christian discourse on work ethic, found in The Chosun Christian Journal, appeared as the political discourse of Korean Enlightenment Nationalism that emphasized moral reform and industriousness as essential to building a modern and civilized nation. In particular, The Independent criticized widespread social laziness through the concept of “Chosun Syndrome,” condemning reliance on noble privilege and leisure over hard work. While Enlightenment ideals existed beyond Protestant influence—evident in Yu Kil-jun’s Essays on Western Civilization—the study highlights that the unique framing of Korea’s moral crisis as “Chosun Syndrome” and its proposed cures in The Independent were strongly shaped by Protestant ethics. As such, the author suggests that Protestant Work Ethic helped shape the foundation of Korean Enlightenment nationalism—one of the two major strands of Korean nationalism in the 20th century along with Resistance nationalism—by linking ethical individual reform to the nation’s modernization.



## Education as an Instrument of Colonial Rule?: Hegemonic Competition and the Educational System in Colonial Korea

Joonyoung JUNG  
*Seoul National University*

This presentation examines how Japan attempted to govern and maintain Korea as a colony in the early twentieth century from the perspective of the “colonial state.” As many existing studies have pointed out, the Japanese colonial state is well known for having systematically pursued a powerful policy of “Japanization 日本人化” toward the indigenous population residing in the colonies. The indigenous people were forced to deny their own language, history, and culture and to become Japanese, and these “provisional” Japanese had to prove that they had become “genuine” Japanese by demonstrating sincere loyalty to the Japanese Tenno 天皇. School education was emphasized as a policy instrument for transforming the colonized into “real” Japanese. The Japanese colonial state, which lacked sufficient cultural and material resources to make the indigenous people willingly accept colonial rule, concentrated on colonial education as a means of spiritual domination alongside the police force as a coercive means of control. In this sense, it is natural that most critics of Japanese colonial rule have taken a highly critical stance toward colonial school education, which forced Koreans to become Japanese through indoctrination and brainwashing.

This presentation also fundamentally stands in a highly critical position toward Japan’s colonial educational policies, which were consistently undemocratic and oppressive, similar to existing critical studies. However, I have doubts about whether such oppressive and unilateral educational policies were actually effective in maintaining and reproducing stable colonial rule. In this presentation, I propose to treat the issue of colonial education as a problem of the school system that forms one axis of the colonial state’s governing system. In other words, while not ignoring the intent of colonial rule that advocated the “invention 鍊成” of genuine Japanese, we need to ask new questions about what policy incentives the policymakers used to make “rebellious” indigenous people accept colonial school education “even reluctantly,” and what other dreams the indigenous people harbored through modern education while outwardly accepting school education with a submissive attitude.

This presentation will examine the various forms of coercion and resistance, compromise and complicity unfolded by agencies in the field of colonial education—in the Bourdieusian sense—from the perspective of hegemonic competition, and through this, aims to propose a new perspective on how the Japanese colonial state was operated.

## Decolonization and Dependent Development in Korea

Jongwook HONG  
*Seoul National University*

This article provides an overview of the attempts by historians and social scientists to critically explain the colonization and decolonization of Korea. The colonization of Korea began and progressed amidst the global trend of decolonization in the 20th century. The Korean intellectuals’ critique of colonialism was a debate over the neo-colonialist aspects of Japan’s rule over Korea. After Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the possibility of a dependent development opened up, and the critique of neocolonialism took on a new facet.

The expected table of contents of this article is as follows. (1)The Age of Decolonization, (2) Kim Myeong-sik’s decolonization theory as a critique of neocolonialism, (3)In Jeong-sik’s semi-feudalism and Park Moon-byeong’s colony, (4)East Asian New Order/Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the subject of Korea, (5)In Jeong-sik’s another conversion after liberation, (6)Kajimura Hideki’s NICs-type dependent development theory, (7)An Byeong-jik’s conversion from neocolonial semi-feudalism to middle-class capitalism, (8)Dependent development and the Juche idea in two Koreas.

## **‘Hetero-Authoritarianism’:** Toward Embodied Histories of State and Society in ‘Hot War’ South Korea

**Todd A. HENRY**

*University of California, San Diego*

This presentation deploys “hetero-authoritarianism” to transcend disembodied approaches to illiberal development. In addition to sexual relations between men and women, this concept includes the roles of gender conformity, anatomical coherence, and related ideologies of normative compliance. Such conventions, I argue, served as unnamed structures and intangible scripts guiding South Korea’s path of militarized development. Hetero-authoritarianism reveals how materialist and gendered structures worked through bodies and minds, whose “(im) proper” development as individual citizens were judged as advancing (or derailing) the collective fate of their industrializing nation. An ideology of biopolitical authority, it did so by extracting (re) productive value from the psychosomatic parts of South Koreans, all of whom were expected to promote capitalist development, military defense, and heteropatriarchal familism. As such, even such seemingly natural words as “man” and “woman,” “solider” and “mother,” and “able-bodied” and “disabled” must be studied in relation to state-led industrialization, political illiberalism, and androcentric kinship. In addition to its top-down nature, I also analyze hetero-authoritarianism as an everyday target of censure and negotiation by stigmatized actors. A re-embodied analytic and a critical metric of capitalist development, this concept ultimately aims to enable reassessments of historical and ongoing experiments of corporeal control and mental compliance.

**Day 2** 9:30-11:30

**Track 2** Rm.230

## **The Political and Social Landscape of Korea:** Legacies and Realities

**Chair**

**Changkeun LEE** (*KDI School of Public Policy and Management*)

**Presentations**

**Muntaha ABED** (*Birzeit University*)

**Torunika ROY** (*Jawaharlal Nehru University*)

**Yashendra SINGH** (*Jawaharlal Nehru University*)

**Discussants**

**Kyung Mi KIM** (*Sapienza University of Rome*)

**Bongseok HAN** (*Pukyong National University*)

**Sooyeon KANG** (*Seoul National University*)

## **Cultural Productions of Resistance:** The Gwangju Uprising and Its Legacy in South Korean Protest Culture

**Muntaha ABED**

*Birzeit University*

This paper investigates the pivotal role of protest cultural productions in shaping and reflecting resistance movements in South Korea, with a focus on the 1980 Gwangju Uprising and its lasting cultural legacy. Cultural artifacts produced during and after this period served as powerful tools for documenting the collective defiance of an oppressed populace, critiquing state violence, and fostering solidarity across social classes. From subversive literature to evocative films and visual art, these works provided a voice to those silenced, and marginalized by the regime, preserving memories of resistance for future generations, ensuring the past remains a force in the present.

This study also examines how the legacy of Gwangju has been reinterpreted in contemporary South Korea, particularly in light of recent political crises such as now-impeached President Yoon's controversial martial law declaration. This modern political climate has ignited a wave of creative resistance, blending traditional protest methods with contemporary cultural forms. Symbols such as K-pop light sticks, trending K-pop songs, and meme-based protest banners, have emerged as tools of dissent, reflecting the evolution of cultural productions in amplifying the voices of protestors. The use of K-pop; a global cultural phenomenon, underscores the transnational reach of modern resistance movements and their ability to draw attention to domestic struggles.

By comparing the cultural artifacts of the 1980s with contemporary resistance, this study explores evolving tools of dissent while emphasizing their enduring purpose: to challenge oppression, reclaim memory, and foster collective identity. It offers insight into how comprehending the past strengthens contemporary resistance, shaping Korea's sociopolitical landscape amid future uncertainties.

## **The Legacy of Population Control:** How Cold War Politics Shaped South Korea's Fertility Crisis

**Torunika ROY**

*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

South Korea's ultra-low fertility rate is often framed as a contemporary crisis driven by economic precarity, gender inequality, and shifting social values. However, this paper argues that the roots of Korea's demographic can be traced to Cold War-era population control policies and post-colonial economic restructuring. After World War II (1939-45), contraception and family planning became the new vehicles of modern public health programmes that were run with the help of local collaborators and transnational (particularly American) actors interested in East Asian population programmes. The Korean government agencies were instrumental in implementing birth control devices such as intrauterine devices (IUD), birth control pills, induced abortion, and sterilisation. The programs were successful in decreasing the population growth. However, it led to outcomes such as the abusive use of amniocentesis, the objectification of women, the undermining of women's reproductive autonomy, discomfort from the Lippes Loop, and other health issues for women.

The paper intends to highlight neglected historical contexts and overlooked socio-political implications of population policies in South Korea. The paper will look at the dialogue between public health experts in America with their counterparts in South Korea, against the backdrop of the Cold War. Using international relations concepts like Foucault's Biopower, the author will analyse how American contraceptive technology intervened in the demographics of South Korea, which led to negative physical and socio-economic outcomes for women.

## **The Impact of Neoliberal Reforms on South Korea's Welfare State**

**Yashendra SINGH**  
*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

This paper examines the impact of neoliberal reforms on South Korea's welfare state, focusing on the period from the 1980s to the present. It analyzes how neoliberal economic policies, including deregulation, privatization, and labor market flexibility, have influenced the development of South Korea's social welfare programs. The study evaluates changes in social security, healthcare, education, and labor protections, considering both the expansion and retrenchment of the welfare state. It also explores the role of international institutions, domestic political actors, and social movements in shaping welfare policies. The paper argues that while neoliberalism has increased economic growth and global competitiveness, it has also exacerbated inequality and weakened social protection mechanisms. The findings contribute to broader debates on the compatibility of neoliberalism with social welfare and the future of welfare states in East Asia.

**Day 2** 9:30-11:30

**Track 3** Rm.240

## **Hallyu in Global Context**

### **Chair**

**Benjamin M. Han** (*University of Georgia*)

### **Presentations**

**Dal Yong JIN** (*Simon Fraser University*)

**Daniela MAZUR** (*Fluminense Federal University*)

**Ziwen CUI & Chang LIU** (*University College London*)

**Ringngheti KHENGLAWT** (*Christ University*)

### **Discussants**

**Ju Oak KIM** (*Texas A&M International University*)

**Jiyoung SUH** (*Seoul National University*)



## **A Full-Package Production Model:** The Development of New Runaway Production in the Netflix Era

**Dal Yong JIN**  
*Simon Fraser University*

Over the past few decades, global cultural industries companies have developed new forms of transnational collaboration. One notable example is runaway production, as executed by Hollywood studios. Since the early 20th century, Hollywood has outsourced film work to cheaper foreign countries. Traditional Hollywood majors have continued to leverage runaway production to benefit from the division of international cultural labor. However, since Netflix's rise as one of the major players in cultural production, the traditional model of runaway production has evolved. For example, Netflix originals produced in Korea, such as *Kingdom*, *Squid Game 1*, *Squid Game 2*, and *The Glory*, have adopted a full-package production model rather than relying on the division of international cultural labor. This shift provides an instructive case study of shifting bilateral and multilateral policies shaped by funding, subsidies, and governance of cultural products. By critically utilizing critical cultural industries studies to Netflix's expanding role in the Korean cultural markets, this article delves into how Netflix has transformed runaway production in the digital platform era. In other words, using Netflix's growing influence in the Korean Wave tradition as a case study, this research examines the differences between traditional Hollywood production models and Netflix's business strategies to identify key characteristics of contemporary runaway production. Finally, it discusses whether Netflix's approach to international collaboration has established an innovative global business norm in the screen industries or reinforced the American platform-oriented global cultural order in the Korean cultural market.

## **South Korea and Hallyu:** An Alternative Globalization in the Multipolar World

**Daniela MAZUR**  
*Fluminense Federal University*

This paper examines South Korea's rise and the consolidation of Hallyu as a case of national pop culture from the Majority World achieving global relevance. The analysis focuses on the structural conditions enabling this process and its broader implications for the global cultural order, historically dominated by Western powers. By framing Hallyu as a case of alternative globalization, we highlight how pop culture functions as a transnational media agent and a mechanism for the ascent of peripheral cultural industries within global flows. This perspective seeks to decenter media theories, shifting from Eurocentric frameworks toward a global lens attuned to a multipolar cultural order. The paper emphasizes the growing role of peripheral producers in shaping global pop culture, positioning South Korea's cultural industry as a catalyst for global cultural diversity. South Korea's success serves as a potential model for other Majority World countries—such as Brazil, Turkey, and Nigeria—demonstrating a cultural strategy capable of both challenging historical dependence on Western validation and enhancing cultural sovereignty. In this sense, Hallyu's global diffusion underscores the relevance of non-Western, non-Anglophone media flows, demonstrating how peripheral cultural trajectories are actively reshaping global pop culture and contributing to the erosion of Western cultural supremacy.

## Imagining “Han Nü”: Discursive Construction of Contemporary Korean Womanhood on a Chinese Digital Platform

Ziwen CUI & Chang LIU  
*University College London*

The new wave of Hallyu has witnessed a surge in feminist-themed content across dramas, films, reality shows, and vlogs, depicting women as powerful, hardworking, and intelligent. In the digital context of non/neo-liberal China, the influx of such content has given rise to a new digital discourse known as “Han Nü” (lit. - “Korean women”), which represents postfeminist role models for young Chinese women. Applying digital ethnography, this study explored the transnational flows of postfeminist discourses from South Korea to China by analysing the discursive construction of “Han Nü” on Redbook, China’s largest online life-sharing platform. Based on analysis of data collected through participant observations, we found that the discourses of “Han Nü” is articulated within a patriarchal ideology in Chinese social media, asserting stereotypical standards on young women’s body management and professional pursuits. Besides, the rhetoric of “Han Nü’s” spirits is capitalised by consumerism that targets on young women who possess certain resources to achieve a figure of contemporary, independent and self-disciplined woman. Our findings show that as “Han Nü” is discursively articulated in Chinese young women’s discussion and imagination of lifestyles, a postfeminist rhetoric re-designates young women into a women-targeted consumerism in contemporary digital life, reinforcing the gender stereotypes and inequalities affecting women’s personal and professional development, and well-being.

## Glocalising Masculinities: When Traditional Mizo Pasaltha(War Heros) Meets South Korea’s Soft Masculinity

Ringngheti KHENGLAWT  
*Christ University*

Mizos are an indigenous community of mongoloid race predominantly inhabiting Mizoram, a North-Eastern state in India. Korean popular culture was introduced to the masses by the local cable television in 2004 with the drama *Full House* and K-pop soon followed. The popularity of Korean popular culture introduced a new form of masculinity that is much softer than the traditional mizo ideal, focusing on global metrosexual masculinity, pretty-boy masculinity and emotional expressiveness. This paper explores the changing nature of masculinities especially among the younger generation in Mizoram, where we see the intersection of traditional mizo *pasaltha* (traditional heroes) masculine ideals and Korean popular culture’s soft masculinity. In this paper, I introduce an emerging hybrid, local masculinity called gradient masculinity to capture the evolving spectrum of masculinity in this cultural context. Applying Sun Jung’s concept of soft masculinity, Bridges and Pascoe’s hybrid masculinity and Roland Robertson’s theory of glocalization, this study examines how Mizo youth navigate, negotiate and reconcile these contrasting masculine ideals. Through interviews and observations in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, the paper highlights how this negotiation takes place within the local cultural framework, thus forming a localized hybrid masculinity. In doing this, I highlight how indigenous youth are not merely passive recipients of global media and that this reflects a broader cultural dynamic of how they adapt and redefine gender norms in their own terms meaningfully.

# Korean Democracy at a Crossroads: Historical and Comparative Perspectives

Chair

Hyeong-Ki KWON (Seoul National University)

Presentations

Chulki HONG (Korea Institute for National Unification)

Taiyoung HONG (Korea National Defense University)

Hannes MOSLER (University of Duisburg-Essen)

Joohyung KIM (Seoul National University)

Discussants

Jin-Wook SHIN (Chung-Ang University)

Hyun KIM (Yonsei University)

# How Liberal Democracy Became the “Founding Doctrine” of South Korea: A Conceptual History of Chayuminjujuŭi from 1945 to 1963

Chulki HONG

Korea Institute for National Unification

This paper challenges the prevailing assumption that chayuminjujuŭi has served as South Korea’s founding ideology without interruption from the nation’s establishment to the present. This assumption has been accepted as historical fact by both critics and advocates of this founding ideology, who have particularly tended to equate chayuminjujuŭi with anti-communist authoritarianism. However, while chayuminjujuŭi is commonly assumed to be a transparent translation of the English “liberal democracy,” the semantic relationship between these two terms is far from clear. The study traces the early history of the concept chayuminjujuŭi from 1945 to 1963, examining the process of its semantic transformation within its political and linguistic context. The research reveals that chayuminjujuŭi initially emerged as signifying anti-communist anti-authoritarianism but gradually transformed into a catchphrase for anti-communist dictatorship. Through this conceptual historical analysis, the author demonstrates how a political concept was eventually turned to legitimize what it was meant to resist. This semantic transformation challenges conventional narratives about ideological continuity in South Korean political and constitutional discourse. The findings suggest that the perceived factual or normative continuity of chayuminjujuŭi requires fundamental reexamination. By uncovering this conceptual shift, the research not only contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of how political concepts evolve but also enables a different angle of engagement with contemporary political debates about the meanings and implications of democratic governance.

## **Liberal Transition of Korean Democracy after 1987**

**Taiyoung HONG**

*Korea National Defense University*

Since the transition to democracy in 1987, liberalism has been the dominant ideology driving the deepening and consolidation of democracy in South Korea. At the same time, it also served as a means to address the deficiencies of Korean liberalism that had emerged from the history of compressed modernization. However, Korean liberalism ultimately failed to establish its own governmentality. While the neoliberal turn in 1997 may be cited as one cause, there are also multiple other contributing factors—such as the limited institutionalization of the labor movement, a narrow system of representation combined with conservative democratization, and an underdeveloped parliamentarism. Because South Korea failed to undergo a full-fledged liberal transition during the 1990s, clear limits to the deepening and consolidation of its democracy became apparent. One might hypothesize that current issues such as political polarization, populism, and the increasing tendency of labor movements toward worker-centered particularism stem from the fact that Korean democracy has not been “liberal” enough. This paper aims to examine the transformation of South Korean democracy in the period between the democratization of 1987 and the onset of neoliberal reforms following the 1997 economic crisis. In doing so, it seeks to explore the failure of Korean liberalism, the reasons behind it, and its particular characteristics.

## **Democratic Backsliding by Invitation: The People Power Party and South Korea’s Constitutional Crisis**

**Hannes MOSLER**

*University of Duisburg-Essen*

The present study investigates the constitutional crisis that unfolded in South Korea following President Yoon Suk-yeol’s self-coup on December 3, 2024. This crisis is situated as the culmination of a deeper process of democratic backsliding and “constitutional rot” (Balkin 2017). While South Korea has long been regarded as a stable democracy, the recent crisis has exposed the fragility of its institutional safeguards. A pivotal element in this democratic breakdown is the role of the then-ruling conservative People Power Party (PPP), which was instrumental in facilitating democratic erosion. The article draws on process-tracing and institutional analysis to examine the PPP’s behavior across three phases of the crisis. It demonstrates that the PPP failed to act as a democratic gatekeeper, guardrail, and circuit breaker. These actions are not merely isolated errors but rather a pattern shaped by partisan polarization, elite accommodation, and the prioritization of political survival over institutional integrity. The paper posits that the PPP’s transformation from a check on executive authority into an enabler of authoritarian drift exemplifies how constitutional crises can emerge gradually from within. Ultimately, the article situates South Korea’s crisis within the broader global context of democratic erosion and the third wave of autocratization, asking whether this moment represents a temporary disruption or the beginning of a more enduring decline in South Korea—and what reforms might be necessary to prevent further deterioration.



## | Dissensual Citizenship in Korean Politics

**Joohyung KIM**

*Seoul National University*

This paper conceptualizes “dissensual citizenship” as one of the several modes of democratic citizenship and uses this framework to analyze the recent subway protest movement of the Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD) in South Korea. According to the French political philosopher Jacques Rancière, democracy as dissensus refers to political practices that unfold provocatively outside institutionalized political processes in order to bring to light issues that have been excluded from or rendered invisible by the existing order. It is an act of demanding “a share for those who have no share,” or a ruptural movement that challenges the dominant “distribution of the sensible.” The actions and utterances displayed in SADD’s subway protests can be interpreted as a paradigmatic enactment of dissensus. However, the societal responses to these protests in South Korea reveal that dissensual citizenship remains highly marginalized within the country’s political landscape.

**Day 2 13:00-15:00**

**Track 2 Rm.230**

## South Korea and Post-Cold War Geopolitics

**Chair**

**Jeeye SONG** (*Korea University*)

**Presentations**

**Miriam BARTOLOZZI** (*University of Macerata*)

**Cristina PREUTU** (*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies*)

**Trung Hiep NGUYEN** (*Seoul National University*)

**Discussants**

**Seonhee KIM** (*Seoul National University*)

**Ki Eun RYU** (*Seoul National University*)

## **Promoting Human Rights and Democracy in Today's World:** Digital Activism, Popular Culture and Environmental Advocacy Among South Korean Youth

Miriam BARTOLOZZI

*University of Macerata*

Civil society has shaped and sustained South Korea's democracy over the past four decades. While the nation's citizens have shown remarkable resilience, recent challenges have put the democratic system to the test. The younger generations, historically at the forefront of democratic movements, are now influencing discussions on local and global issues in innovative ways. These shifts can be viewed from two key perspectives: first, the evolving methods of amplifying voices through digitalization and online platforms, and second, the emerging focus on new challenges, such as environmental concerns and the risks of AI-generated content. Youth and university movements have introduced innovative protest strategies, utilizing popular music, playlists, and social media to spread information and support. Beyond the demonstrations that have taken place in the second half of 2024, a recent challenge has been about climate change lawsuits filed by young people, including children, accusing the government of human rights violations, culminating in a landmark ruling by the Constitutional Court in August 2024. The study analyzes how social movements influence legal and cultural change (demosprudence), highlighting how new challenges and tools have shaped the approach of younger generations over time in addressing local and global issues on democracy and human rights.

## **Korean Peninsula and Romania in the Context of Collapse of Communist Bloc and the Reshaping of New Geopolitical Order**

Cristina PREUTU

*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies*

Romania and Korean peninsula have a similar situation since the Cold War time - same nation divided in two separate states. Regarding Romania, since 1944, a part of the country, Bessarabia, became part of USSR; and the rest of Romania became also a socialist country, but remain sovereign and independent. As a socialist country, Romania had a very good friendship with DPRK, special in the 70, when both countries were trying to make their own road on socialism.

But the collapse of the communist bloc brings some changes, since Romania and the Republic of Moldova remain two separate countries, but both of them adopted a democratic regime and develop very close inter-relationships. Meanwhile the situation of Korean peninsula remains similar as in the Cold War time.

Thereby, this paper is focus on this comparative situation of Romania and DPRK in the context of the end of the Cold War and the transition in a new geopolitical order.

Also, we want to bring some insight details about what were the challenges in the first steps of Romanian's transition towards liberal democracy.

## **From War to Cultural Exchange:** The Evolution of Korea-Vietnam Relations as Symptom of Geopolitical Transformation

**Trung Hiep NGUYEN**  
*Seoul National University*

This paper examines the transformation of Korea-Vietnam relations from military confrontation to cultural partnership as a reflection of post-Cold War geopolitical realignments. Through analysis of diplomatic archives, economic data, and cultural exchange programs, we identify three distinct phases in bilateral relations: military conflict (1960s-1975), cautious normalization (1992-2000), and strategic partnership (2001-present). This evolution exemplifies the broader transition from ideological confrontation to pragmatic cooperation in East and Southeast Asia. We argue that South Korea's substantial economic investment in Vietnam, coupled with the soft power influence of the "Korean Wave" (Hallyu), has created effective mechanisms for reconciliation and relationship-building. This case study illuminates how middle-power nations navigate changing regional dynamics while addressing historical grievances. The findings demonstrate how economic interdependence and cultural diplomacy have become essential tools for overcoming historical animosities in the post-Cold War landscape. By tracing this bilateral relationship's development, we contribute to understanding how former adversaries can transform historical trauma into constructive engagement—offering valuable insights for other nations with complex historical legacies in an increasingly multipolar world.

**Day 2** 13:00-15:00

**Track 3** Rm.240

## **Kpop, Fandom and Cultural Practices**

### **Chair**

**Younghan CHO** (*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies*)

### **Presentations**

**Hyemi LIM** (*Universite Paris Cite*)

**William DUNKEL** (*University of California, Irvine*)

**Meicheng SUN** (*Beijing Language and Culture University*)

**Tabitha ADLER** (*Goethe University Frankfurt*)

### **Discussants**

**Suk Young KIM** (*University of California, Los Angeles*)

**Lisa Yuk-ming LEUNG** (*Lingnan University*)

## **Performing Korea:** K-Pop Cover Dance and the Transformation of Public Space in France

**Hyemi LIM**  
*University of Paris Cité*

The global rise of Korean popular culture has not only reshaped entertainment consumption but also redefined how young people engage with public space. K-pop cover dance, once confined to fan communities, has evolved into a highly visible urban practice, performed in city squares, transportation hubs, and cultural landmarks worldwide. This paper explores how K-pop cover dance in France reflects the global influence of Korean pop culture, transforming urban spaces and offering new forms of social belonging and artistic expression.

Drawing on qualitative research with K-pop cover dancers in France—many of whom come from diverse migratory and social backgrounds, including law and medical students, self-taught dancers, and members of the Korean diaspora—this study examines how cover dance fosters community, visibility, and cultural participation. Rather than being confined to institutionalized dance spaces, K-pop cover dance is practiced in key urban locations such as La Défense, BNF, and Bercy, where young people negotiate their presence, artistic identities, and collective recognition in the public sphere.

By analyzing this phenomenon at the intersection of popular culture, migration, and urban life, this research highlights how K-pop's global reach extends beyond media consumption into physical spaces, shaping youth cultures and redefining public performance practices. As K-pop continues to expand transnationally, cover dance serves as a case study for understanding how Korean popular culture is not just passively consumed but actively reinterpreted and embodied in diverse global contexts.

## **“Anything to Say to Your Fans?”: Gendered Fandom and Labor in Korean Esports**

**William DUNKEL**  
*University of California, Irvine*

Korean players have dominated various outlets of esports, both through high achievement and through organizational preference (Kim and Kim 2022). As these players operate at the highest levels of achievement and skill, they in turn are products of their local communities and environments and have obligations to these communities. While it is the players on the stage that are earning the accolades and attention, it is the esports fan communities that are creating pathways for their success. This research examines the fan-player dynamic of Korean esports, focusing on how gender roles and expectations manifest within these spaces. As contemporary Korean youth society is grappling with major gender issues that are often highlighted in online and offline discourse Korean esports provides opportunities for youth to operate and cultivate their interest in the sport. In striking contrast to how esports fandom operates in western contexts, esports fandom in Korea relies greatly upon female participation. Combining interviews with esports staff, broadcasters, and fans, I highlight how gender roles are imagined and processed within Korean esports spaces, exploring how feminine attitudes, values, and behavior structure interaction between fans and players, but more gender lends organization and purpose to the contemporary esports industry.

## **K-Poppers and Hip Hoppers in Beijing:** Dance, Professions, and Mobilities

**Meicheng SUN**

*Beijing Language and Culture University*

K-pop, or South Korean popular music, has been popular among Chinese youngsters since the 1990s. In recent years, it has been common to see K-pop dance being taught in local dance studios alongside street dance in China. Due to the different traditions of K-pop dance and street dance, K-pop dance teachers construct their professional identities differently from street dance teachers. Some K-pop dance teachers are idol wannabes. Other K-pop dance teachers are social media influencers who constantly upload videos of the latest K-pop dance tutorials or cover dance. Through in-depth interviews with K-pop dance teachers and street dance teachers who are based in China's capital city Beijing, this article explores how professional dance teachers of K-pop dance and street dance position themselves in the industry and society. In so doing, it will uncover what geographical, virtual, and social mobilities mean to them.

## **Self-Made K-Pop Photocards in South Africa:** Local Fan Practices as a Way of Dealing with South Korean Popular Culture

**Tabitha ADLER**

*Goethe University Frankfurt*

When searching for symptoms of the global rise and influence of Korean popular culture in Sub-Saharan Africa, one can find them in the Korean Cultural Center in South Africa, as well as fan-organized K-pop events in the country's major cities. Both places have become a place of community and exchange for K-pop fans, since the K-pop industry is paying little to no attention to the Sub-Saharan African market. However, while the Cultural Center works as an institutionalized "little Korea", K-pop fan events are fully organized by a "productive fandom". What is exceptional is how the limited availability of physical K-pop content is met with practices of production, distribution and consumption of self-made K-pop content through fans within the local (and digital) infrastructures. This development is most prominent in fan-made photocards. As an alternative to importing the expensive original pictures in credit card format, fans start sorting through images of their Korean idols, editing the format, finding local copy shops, and sharing them through events or selling them through their own shops. Here, fans become cultural ambassadors, promoting the exchange between Korea and South Africa through practices that also make them curious to learn the Korean language or cook Korean food.



# Migration Issues and Gender Inequality in Korea

Chair

Dongwon LEE (*Seoul National University*)

Presentations

Eun Kyung KIM (*Hansung University*)

You Jae LEE (*University of Tübingen*)

Jongwook LEE (*Seoul National University*)

Discussants

Jung Eun LEE (*Sunchon National University*)

Minji JO (*The Catholic University of Korea*)

## Disability, Migration, and (Non) Labor: The Oral Life History of a Returning Woman Adoptee

Eun Kyung KIM

*Hansung University*

This study analyzes the oral life history of a disabled woman adoptee who was adopted to the United States and later re-migrated to South Korea, through the lens of feminist disability studies. It critiques narratives that romanticize return adoptees’ lives as “happy endings” of reuniting with their homeland, and critically examines how the politics of transnational adoption, return, and belonging operate within intersecting structures of gender, race, and disability. Through her self-description as “a round peg in a square hole,” expressing her sense of never fully belonging, the study reveals that returning to Korea is not a simple homecoming, but an ongoing negotiation and struggle for survival and belonging. Focusing on the phrase “Resilient Survivor” tattooed on her forearm, the study interprets it as a reflection of the self-care practices she has carried out across borders to survive, conceptualizing this as “invisible labor.” Self-care is a survival strategy and form of resistance through which marginalized minorities nourish and sustain their exhausted bodies and minds. By making visible the hidden labor performed outside formal labor systems, this study aims to expand migration labor discourse and reframe the intersecting realities of disability, gender, and migration.

## **“You Have to Be Better Than the Germans”:** Discrimination Experiences of Korean Labor Migrants in Germany

**You Jae LEE**  
*University of Tübingen*

When the Federal Republic of Germany recognized itself as a country of immigration in the 1990s after a long period of ignoring it, and the focus was now on the integration of migrants, Asians, especially Koreans and Vietnamese, were often held up as model minorities of integration. Yet South Koreans were at a particular disadvantage during the period of guest worker recruitment in West Germany and were exposed to structural discrimination in the world of labor and everyday life. In particular, as far as their legal residence status was concerned, they had to fight hard for it through public struggles from 1977 to 1980.

Because of these experiences of discrimination, the first generation of migrant workers placed great value on the good education of the second generation. The second generation has largely followed the wishes of their parents and managed to enter the German middle class through high school diploma and university graduation. In this respect, the history of Korean migration to Germany is exceptional and exemplary. However, the second generation, in solidarity with other Asian Germans, refuses to accept this role model. On the contrary, they criticize in the last decade that the demand for good integration is a wrong approach. It is not up to the migrants if they fail in integration. Rather, it is the German majority society that must fundamentally change. This paper describes the struggles of the first generation of Korean Germans for their political interest and the activism of the second generation as part of a broader Asian German movement.

## **Global Labor Mobility:** The Lives of Migrant Workers in South Korea and Their Families in Origin Countries

**Jongwook LEE**  
*Seoul National University*

**Narrative Alternatives**  
**Imagining the Post-1987 System**

**Chair**

**Hyoung Cheol SHIN** (*Seoul National University*)

**Presentations**

**Mi Jung KIM** (*Sungkyunkwan University*)

**Jin Seok CHOI** (*Seoul National University of Science and Technology*)

**Discussants**

**Hyoung Cheol SHIN** (*Seoul National University*)

**Yun Eui YANG** (*Korea University*)

**| The Square Changes Words; Words Change the Square**

**Mi Jung KIM**

*Sungkyunkwan University*

Throughout history, the square has symbolized revolution and transformation—but today, its meaning has changed significantly. The recent political and social upheavals in Korea illustrate this shift: the square is no longer a space dominated by a single force, but rather a site where complex affects and desires intersect. Yet this complexity often resists clear visualization and is frequently reduced to simplified representations. In this presentation, I explore the intricate conditions that have shaped Korea’s political squares since the 2010s, and examine the role of fiction in bringing these unseen complexities to light. Through close readings of works by authors such as Hwang Jeong-eun, I consider how the experience of the square transforms our language—and, conversely, how language can reshape the square itself.

## **Justice and Community Beyond the Law: Questions and Responses in Korean Literature and Film after 1987**

**Jin Seok CHOI**

*Seoul National University of Science and Technology*

South Korea's democratization in 1987 marked a formal shift from authoritarianism to legal democracy. Yet, despite this transformation, the legacy of structural violence and state control remains embedded in its legal and political systems. This presentation examines how Korean literature and cinema expose the contradictions of post-democratization law by portraying the complicity of legal institutions with power. Focusing on the film *The Man Standing Next* (2020), which reenacts the final days of the Park Chung-hee regime, and Kim Un-su's novel *The Plotters* (2010), which imagines a bureaucracy of assassins operating under societal indifference, the talk analyzes how these narratives reframe justice outside the framework of law. By contrasting legality with ethical responsibility, these works highlight the limitations of institutional justice and suggest that literature and film serve as critical media for reclaiming memory, affect, and moral imagination in the aftermath of compromised legal systems. Building on these concerns, Korean literature and cinema since 1987 have sought alternative narratives that imagine new forms of community beyond the confines of modern legalism.

**Day 2 15:20-16:50**

**Track 3 Rm.240**

## **Reimagining Koreanness: Transnationality, Miracles, and Boundaries**

**Chair**

**Jung-ha KIM** (*Seoul National University*)

**Presentations**

**Irina LYAN** (*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*)

**Priyanka YADAV** (*Jawaharlal Nehru University*)

**Discussants**

**Jung Hwan KIM** (*Hallym University*)

**Byung Hun YOON** (*Seoul National University*)

## | **ImagiNation:** South Korea and its Modern Miracles

**Irina LYAN**

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

In less than a century, South Korea has remarkably transformed its image from one of the world's poorest, most isolated, and most marginalized nations to a center of global influence across political, economic, and cultural spheres. Not just one, but a series of miracles transformed it into an exceptional case of national image-making and image-shifting, making Korea a serial modern miracle maker, with miracle being a core national image. In contrast with the utilitarian focus of much existing scholarship on miracle secrets, best practices, and means of reproduction, I aim to comprehend how the idea of modern miracles catalyzes rapid national image formation and transformation. Specifically, I examine how national images are "miraculously" re-imagined: how they are constructed, resisted, reproduced, and projected. Why do we still need miracles as both national images and image-shifters? And what role do modern miracles play in the process of imagining a nation? To underline the processual nature of the social construction of nations as "imagined communities," I call this process *ImagiNation*. Rather than viewing miraculous *ImagiNation* as a one-time event, I argue that modern miracles simultaneously embrace the unsatisfactory "before" and the idyllic "happily ever after," illuminating broader themes of social change and continuity.

## | **The Idea of 'Cultural Other':** The Study of North Korean Defectors in South Korea

**Priyanka YADAV**

*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

As per the last data recorded by the Unification Ministry in 2020, thirty-four thousand North Koreans defectors reside in South Korea. Despite, the heavy restrictions in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a slight dip, the number of defectors keep rising. The Korean War led to a scenario with no sense of communication between the two divided Koreas with differences in their socio-economic and cultural practices. Scholars are of the view that Korean society believes in ethnic homogeneity, however the ontological phenomenon overrides the epistemological view of South Koreans towards North Korea due to the cultural differences. North Koreans still face discrimination in getting jobs because of their North Korean accent. The idea of cultural difference demands a study to look into the perspectives of why they have been conceived as the 'other' despite sharing decades of ethnic homogeneity. Several surveys suggest that in order to avoid discrimination and perceptions associated, North Koreans often hide their identity unlike those residing in Europe and UK.

The South Korean government-led approach is adaptive in nature but the incorporation of North Korean defectors in the South Korean society is still lacking. Culture thereby serves as an instrument of exclusion rather than their assimilation in the society. In comparative terms, though the number of North Korean defectors are not sizeable, still the alienation of the North Korean defectors demands change at the societal level. The defected North Korean women are more than seventy percent, further demanding the reconfiguration of the society. Thus, this paper aims to study the popular discourse to understand the perpetual cultural difference of North Korean defectors perceived in South Korean society and the factors associated.



**Korea as Symptom:**  
Why Symptomatology in Korean Studies?

**Chair**

**Jaeho KANG** (*Seoul National University*)

**Presentations**

**Hong Jung KIM** (*Seoul National University*)

**Woosung KANG** (*Seoul National University*)

**Discussants**

**TBA**

**| Why Symptomatology in Contemporary Korean Studies?**

**Hong Jung KIM**  
*Seoul National University*

This presentation offers a theoretical and philosophical reflection on the overall theme of our conference, “Korea as Symptom.” It is structured around three key questions.

First, what is a symptom? A symptom can be defined as a distinctive form of sign that, through interpretation, discloses an invisible yet operative structure underlying the surface of the realities. Drawing on the work of Georges Didi-Huberman and Gilles Deleuze, I characterize the specificity of symptoms in terms of four aspects: eventfulness, fragmentariness, affectivity, and a relationality grounded in care.

Second, why is a symptomatic approach(symptomatology) recommended in contemporary Korean studies? Korean society in the 21st century presents itself as a symptom-space par excellence, where unfamiliar and thought-provoking events proliferate across politics, economics, technology, psychology, and culture: political turbulence including recent martial-law controversies, newly emerging right-wing politics and religious movements, the radical feminist demands of MZ-generation women, globally acclaimed products of K-culture, extremely high suicide rates, stunningly low birth rates, and persistent shamanistic practices permeating the whole society. Researchers of Korean society are thus inevitably surrounded by symptoms of every kind.

Third, how can symptomatology be applied to the study of Korea? I argue that we must relinquish the 20th-century social sciences’ aspiration to formulate universal laws and, instead, reorient inquiry toward the collection, juxtaposition, and analysis of singular symptomatic cases. Such a reorientation would necessitate field-based research and bold experimentation with theoretical frameworks that resist established norms. Rather than reducing Korea to a single structural logic, we should cultivate an acute sensitivity to the ambiguous, fragmented, and plural symptoms that arise from within it.

By reconfiguring Korea as a symptomatic field, this presentation calls for a shift from structural explanation to symptomatological exploration—an orientation that opens new paths for knowledge, critique, and ethics within Korean studies.

## | Symptomatology and Art

Woosung KANG

Seoul National University

A classical—medical, pathological—definition of symptom is dominated by the purpose of confirming the existence of a disease and curing it: symptoms serve as index of the possibility of an illness. Insomnia as symptom is considered an outcome of psychological obstacle, that is, obsessive-compulsive disorder. Two difficulties are involved here; it presupposes a dichotomy between the underlying cause (obsession) and the surface symptom (insomnia); there is no necessary causal relationship between the two. Just as obsession can cause insomnia, so insomnia can also stimulate obsession. The priority of signified over signifier can easily be subverted into a horizontal connection between signifiers, and the removal of symptoms does not guarantee the cure of the disease. Symptoms are not exceptional deviations; normativity that defines a symptom as an aberration posits itself only by the marginalization of symptom.

Unlike pathology, the concept of symptoms in psychoanalysis is unique. First, Freud sees various symptoms as the necessary outcome of psychic repression. Symptoms are the products of compromise between representatives of drive and the ego, signaling the return of surplus representations repressed in the unconscious. Repression inevitably creates symptoms as by-product, which in turn generate anxiety: what must be eliminated is not symptom but anxiety. After adopting *Nachträglichkeit* (afterwardness) as basic principle in the formation of trauma and fantasies, Freud breaks up with the repression-symptom connection; symptoms are formed post-effectively in response to anxiety. In Lacan, however, symptom showcases the psychic structure of an individual subject: it is the “formation of the unconscious” referring to the state of neurosis, perversion, and psychosis. As a product of compromises between sexual desire and death drive, symptom expresses itself through signifying structure. Symptoms are signifiers of psychic structure which must not be eliminated; they are metaphors and messages sent by the Real; they are the promise of jouissance and sinthome given to the Symbolic as blot.

However, symptomatology, as the methodology for interpreting symptoms, is not entirely in the grip of psychoanalysis. While psychoanalysis seeks after absolute negativity behind the structure of symptoms by identifying lack, void, gap, and surplus which produces them, Deleuze’s symptomatology reverberates with Nietzsche’s critique of the will to power and Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism. Capitalism, as a symptom, retrospectively provides the key to understand pre-capitalist societies according to the notion of class struggle. Symptomatology is not an act of identifying what is hidden and unsaid as a symptom of ideological cover-up. As Deleuze writes, “symptomatology is always an issue of art.” It is akin to what the hysteric and the analyst do when they, taking their own symptoms, redirect them for disrupting master discourse and university discourse. Art is symptomatology itself: the very rhythm of return and repetition of the uncanny.

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2025  
SNU International Conference  
for Contemporary Korean Studies

# **Korea as Symptom**

## Perspectives on the Future



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# Korea as Symptom

## Perspectives on the Future