



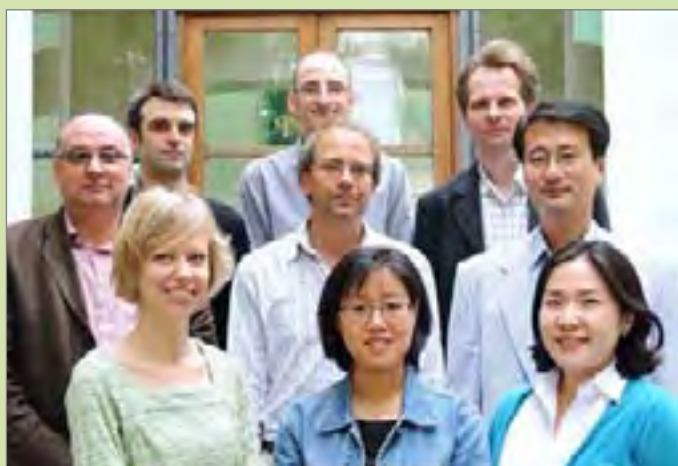
KOREA AT SOAS

Centre of Korean Studies, SOAS Annual Review

Issue 1 ~ August 2008



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Visiting Scholars:

Professor Hyo-Hyun CHANG (Korea University)

Professor Dong-Ju CHOI (Sookmyung Women's University)

Professor Kang-iae LEE (Chonnam University)

Professor Young KIM (Inha University)

Research Associate:

Dr Youngsook PAK

Professorial Research Associate:

Professor Martina DEUCHLER

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to the first issue of the Centre of Korean Studies Newsletter. Created in 1987 with the kind support of the Korea Research Foundation, and subsequently the Korea Foundation, the Centre of Korean Studies co-ordinates work done on Korea in various departments of SOAS, and offers expert knowledge and advice on Korea to interested outside parties.

The CKS is home to all those interested in researching into Korea, whether at MA, MPhil, PhD or academic staff level, whatever Department they are affiliated with. Each year, the Centre also acts as host to Visiting Scholars of Korean Studies from Korea and other countries. While pursuing their own research work, visiting scholars are invited to participate in the Seminar Series and other events sponsored by the Centre and SOAS.

In 2006, the SOAS Centre of Korean Studies was selected as the first European beneficiary of the AKS Korean Studies Institution Grant programme.

This generous support from the Academy of Korean Studies has enabled the Centre to significantly expand its manpower and infrastructure, its research programme and its event calendar.

During the academic year 2007-08 the Centre organised a number of conferences and workshops in addition to the regular seminar series, and we have an interesting programme to look forward to for the new academic year as well.

The school has received a generous donation from Mme Park Young Hi of the Sochon Foundation. The £100,000 gift will be used to create an endowment fund that will generate post-graduate scholarships for students undertaking a Korean Studies programme. The Centre manages this scholarship and its scholarship panel has selected the first recipient of the Sochon Foundation scholarship among the new graduate students for the upcoming academic year.

Anders Karlsson
Chair of the SOAS Centre of Korean Studies



SOAS - AKS

Korean Studies Institution Grant Project

Dr Jaehoon Yeon

Project Leader, and

Incoming Chair, Centre of Korean Studies (Sept 2008 - Aug 2011)

As project leader and on behalf of SOAS, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Academy of Korean Studies, who has provided SOAS with a five year Korean Studies Institution Grant, from 2006 to 2011.

With the institutional grant awarded by the Academy of Korean Studies, SOAS Centre of Korean Studies (CKS) aims to create the research manpower, infrastructure, and programmes needed to ensure an ongoing flow of research expertise on Korea with which to meet the challenges of Korea's increasing prominence in a rapidly changing global environment.

The Centre aims to be the hub of joint research with other institutions in Korea and Europe with the following key objectives:

- * Creating a strong infrastructure at postgraduate, postdoctoral and advanced research levels that will facilitate a continued flow of outstanding researchers and lecturers on Korea in the UK and Europe.
- * Developing and cultivating the academic expertise essential to become the leading centre for the interdisciplinary study of Korea in the UK and Europe, in terms of the quality of training and research, the breadth and depth of disciplinary coverage, the extent of collaboration between disciplines, and the impact on both academic and non-academic user communities.
- * Acquiring a strong international reputation that will put SOAS CKS on par with other main centres for Korean studies, especially those in North America, Australasia and East Asia.

The original plan covered seven key points, all of which have been actioned and some have already been accomplished:

- 1) A new lecturership as well as one full-time and one half-time research fellowship have been established with the appointments of Dr Charlotte Horlyck (Lecturer in Korean Art History), Dr Owen Miller (full-time research fellow) and Dr Stefan Knoob (part-time research fellow).
- 2) A series of seminars by European scholars have been developed and are running successfully.
- 3) A post-graduate training programme has been implemented through offering scholarships to promising students.
- 4) Curriculum materials are being developed.
- 5) The publication of SOAS-AKS European Series on Korean Studies is currently in progress.
- 6) One SOAS-AKS workshop took place in spring 2007, and other workshops and conferences organised jointly with Korean institutions have been planned for the future.
- 7) International workshops and conferences on Korean Studies have taken place over the last two years, and more will be taking place in the future.

‘In the first two years of the institutional grant, the Centre of Korean Studies has laid the groundwork to achieve the above plans and I hope we can continue to work to achieve our goals’





AKS Postgraduate Bursary - Korean Studies

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/koreanstudies/soas-aks/the-soasaks-institution-grant-project.html>

The Academy of Korean Studies has generously provided SOAS a bursary for students undertaking a postgraduate Korean Studies programme. The bursary, valued at £4,090, may only be used to cover the cost of tuition fees. Living costs are not available as part of the award. The bursary is not renewable.

Eligible Programmes

- * MA Korean Studies
- * MA Korean Literature
- * MA Linguistics (Korean pathway only)
- * MA Applied Linguistics (Korean pathway only)
- * Any other postgraduate Korean Language degree programme (Please define your pathway)

Full-time programmes only, part-time programmes are not eligible.

If you have any questions about the bursary application or Korean Studies at SOAS, please contact:

Dr Jaehoon Yeon, Centre of Korean Studies on:
jy1@soas.ac.uk or tel +44 (0)20 7898 4232

Application deadline is yet to be announced

How to apply

An application form and guidance notes for applying can be obtained from the link above. Alternatively you can contact some at the SOAS Scholarship Office:

The Scholarships Officer

**Registry
SOAS
Thornhaugh Stree
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG
UK**

Email: **as100@soas.ac.uk**
Telephone: **+44 (0)20 7074 5105**
+44 (0)20 7074 5091
Fax: **+44 (0)20 7074 5089**

Sochon Foundation Scholarship

The Sochon Foundation has generously provided SOAS with a scholarship for students undertaking a post-graduate programme in Korean Studies. **The scholarship, valued at £7,000**, will be used to offset the cost of tuition fees and/or provide some support for living expenses. The scholarship is applied to tuition fees in the first instance, any remainder may be considered for living costs.

The Sochon Foundation Scholarship may be held in conjunction with other scholarships. However, please be aware that all financial support secured before 30 May 2008 must be declared to the Advisory Panel in your application. Any awards held will be taken into consideration on assessment of financial need.

The scholarship is for one year only. For candidates undertaking an MPhil/PhD programme, the scholarship is not renewable.

Eligible Programmes

- * MA Korean Studies
- * MA Korean Literature
- * MPhil/PhD (Korean Studies research, new admissions only)
- * Any other post-graduate degree related to Korean Studies (please define your pathway)

Full-time programmes only, part-time programmes are not eligible. Priority will be given to scholarship applicants who can demonstrate financial need.

Candidates will be assessed based on a combination of financial need and academic merit

Application deadline is yet to be announced.

An application form and guidance notes for applying can be obtained from the SOAS Scholarship Office (see p.6).



MEMBERS NEWS: RESEARCH/TALKS/TRAVEL



Dr Charlotte HORLYCK Lecturer in the History of Korean Art Department of Art and Archaeology

Charlotte Horlyck took up her post as Lecturer in Korean Art History in the Department of Art and Archaeology in September 2007. During the academic year 2007-8, she has given seven talks.

Talks

At The 8th ISKS International Conference of Korean Studies she gave a paper titled 'Meaningful Commodities – Mirrors, merchandise and market policies in the Koryŏ period'.

In September 2007, Dr Horlyck presented a paper titled 'Relations between the dead and the living in pre-modern Korea' at The Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal 8th International Conference in Bath, UK.

In November 2007, she was invited to give a lecture at the Korea Society in New York, titled "Happy Souls and Anxious Mourners – A discussion of Korean funeral figurines".

Two papers were presented in April 2008, one at the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) conference in Atlanta, USA, titled 'Confucian burial practices in the late Koryŏ period', one for Bristol University titled 'Problems in analysing medieval Korean burials'.

She presented two further papers in June 2008, one for the EPEL programme at Paris 7 University on "Questioning methods of interment in the Koryŏ period" and a second on publishing Korea-related art history material for the Centre of Korean Studies workshop 'Korean Studies Publishing in Europe'.

Publications

During the academic year of 2007-8, Charlotte Horlyck has published an article in a refereed journal

and two chapters in exhibition catalogues.

'Kkoktu – Guides, Guardians and Keepers of the Soul' in Kim Ong-nang et al. Korean Funerary Figures. Companions for the journey to the other world. New York: The Korea Society, 2007: 227-229.

'Confucian Burial Practices in the Late Goryeo and Early Joseon Periods', Review of Korean Studies, vol. 11, no. 2, June, 2008: 33-58.

'Looking at the Overlooked – Art for Women and By Women in Pre-modern Korea' in Linda Choi et al. The Offering Table. Mills College, 2008.

Professor Keith D HOWARD Professor of Music Department of Music

Keith Howard was promoted to full professor in September 2007.

Talks

He has continued with his activities, this year teaching a year-long course called 'Music of Korea' in addition to 'Music of East Asia' to SOAS students. He has given conference presentations and seminars at Surrey, Sheffield and Brunel universities in Britain, and at universities in Dublin, Vancouver, Seattle, New York, Seoul, and Columbus Ohio. In addition to contributing chapters to several books, including the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts' overview of Korean music, he has published his co-written book on Korean kayagum sanjo (packaged with two audio CDs).

In June, his Preserving Korean Music and Creating Korean Music monographs were reprinted, some 18 months after first publication.

Beyond Korean Studies, he has completed his



directorship of the AHRC Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance with the publication of thirteen CDs and DVDs (as producer), including his co-authored double DVD of music, dance and ritual in Yakutia and Buryatia, Siberia. He also organised and managed a new research project with Professor Janet Lansdale on 'The Real, Virtual and Metaphorical Body'. In addition, he was director of the SOAS EU-funded DISMARC archiving project and, until January 2008, was the licensee and director of OpenAir Radio.

Publications

2008. Chapter in book: 'Practice-led research: putting Asian music performers centre-stage', in Essays for Dr Lee Hye-ku, in celebration of his 100th birthday. Seoul: Korean Musicological Society.

2008. Two DVDs: 'Siberia at the Centre of the World: Yakutia' (SOASIS DVD06) and 'Siberia at the Centre of the World: Buryatia' (SOASIS DVD07). Written, filmed, edited and produced with Misha Maltsev. London: SOAS.

2007. Book: Zimbabwean Mbira Music on an International Stage: Chartwell Dutiro's Life in Music. Editor, with Chartwell Dutiro. Producer of audio CD. Aldershot: Ashgate.

2008. Book: Korean Kayagum Sanjo. Co-written with Lee Chaesuk and Nicholas Casswell. Published together with two audio CDs (KH as producer). Aldershot: Ashgate.

2007. Chapter in book: 'Sounding the SOAS Difference', in SOAS: A Celebration in Many Voices. London: SOAS. ISBN: 978-1-903942-58-1.

2007. Chapter in book: 'Performing Ethnomusicology: exploring how teaching performance undermines the ethnomusicologist

within university music training'. In Ninja Kors, editor, Networks and Islands/Muziké 3: 25-32. Den Haag: Semar Publishers. ISBN 978-88-7778-095-9.

2007. Chapter in book: 'Professional Music: Instrumental', in Byong Won Lee and Yong-shik Lee, editors, Music of Korea: 127-44. Seoul: National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts.

Dr Anders KARLSSON

Lecturer in Korean Studies

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korean

Anders Karlsson has continued to act as the chair of the Centre of Korean Studies during the academic year 2007-08 after which he will hand over to Dr Jaehoon Yeon. During this year he has given four talks.

Talks

He gave a paper titled "Parhae in Late Chosŏn Historiography" at the 8th ISKS (International Society of Korean Studies) International Conference on Korean Studies, held at SOAS 16-17 August 2007.

In September he participated in the First International Translators' Conference organised by the Korea Literature Translation Institute in Seoul and gave a talk on the topic "Romanisation and the Translation of Korean Literature into Western Languages".

Later the same month he gave a paper titled "Another Ritual of Death: Forensic Medicine and the Performance of Confucian Statecraft in Chosŏn Korea", at the conference "Ritual and Punishment in East Asia" held at Tongguk University, Seoul.

In June 2008 he gave a talk on publishing translated Korean literature in Sweden at the Centre of Korean

MEMBERS NEWS: TRAVEL/RESEARCH/TALKS



Studies workshop 'Korean Studies Publishing in Europe'.

Publications

"Royal Compassion and Disaster Relief in Chosŏn Korea", *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* vol. 20, no. 1 (June 2007).

"Famine Relief, Social Order and State Performance in Late Chosŏn Korea", *Journal of Korean Studies* vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 2007).

Book review. Pang Kie-chung and Michael D. Shin eds., *Landlords, Peasants and Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* vol. 70, no. 3 (Oct. 2007).

"'Scions of Wealthy Families do not Die at the Market Place': Death Penalty and Hyosu Punishment in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Chosŏn Korea", in Tomiya Itaru ed., *Higashi ajia no shikei [The Death Penalty in East Asia]*, Kyoto University Press (Feb. 2008).

Dr Owen MILLER
Research Fellow
Centre of Korean Studies

Talks

June 2008 - Naksungdae Institute of Economic Research, Seoul. Invited lecture: "Guild- government trade in late Chosŏn Korea and the crisis of the 1880s."

May 2008 - Centre de Recherches sur la Corée, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Invited lecture: "Angry Merchants and Impecunious Government: Understanding commerce in nineteenth century Korea."

May 2008 - East Asia Institute, University of

Cambridge. Invited lecture: "Angry Merchants and Impecunious Government: Understanding commerce in nineteenth century Korea."

April 2008 - Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Atlanta, USA. Presented the following paper: "Guild-government trade in late Chosŏn Korea and the crisis of the 1880s."

December 2007 - British Academy Conference: Social and Cultural Change in Late Premodern Korea. Presented a paper entitled: "The crisis of Seoul's traditional commercial system, 1876-1895."

November 2007 - Historical Materialism Annual Conference, University of London. Presented a paper entitled "Commerce and the tributary mode of production: some observations from nineteenth century Korea."

October 2007 - University of Michigan Korean Studies Symposium, invited lecture: "Understanding commerce in nineteenth century Korea."

September 2007 - Early Career Researchers' Conference on East Asia at Edinburgh University. Presented paper entitled "The mechanisms of commerce in the tributary state: some observations from nineteenth century Korea."

Publications

Selected Writings of Han Yongun: From Social Darwinism to 'Socialism with a Buddhist Face'. (London: Global Oriental, 2008). (Translated with Prof. Vladimir Tikhonov).

"The Myŏnjuhŏn documents: accounting methods and merchants' organisations in nineteenth century Korea." *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, 7:1 (April 2007).

"Ties of Labour and Ties of Commerce: Corvée labour



among Seoul merchants in the nineteenth century.”
Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 50:1 (March 2007).

Dr Jaehoon YEON
Reader in Korean Language and Literature
Department of the Languages and Cultures of
Japan and Korea

Jaehoon Yeon has served as Head of the Department of Japan and Korea at SOAS for three years since August 2005. He has been acting also as the chair of SOAS-AKS institutional research project for two years starting from 1st of October 2006. Dr Yeon has organised a couple of seminars and workshops at SOAS, thanks to the grant provided by Academy of Korean Studies. Dr. Yeon was elected as Secretary-General at the inaugural meeting of European Association of Korean Language Education, held at Warsaw University in September 2007. The EAKLE (European Association of Korean Language Education) has held a second workshop at Ankara University, Turkey in June 2008.

Talks

Dr Yeon was invited as a key-note speaker at ‘the 1st workshop of Russian Association of Korean Language Teachers’ held in Moscow in January 2008. He also gave two lectures as part of EPEL programme at Paris 7 University in March, and La Sapienza University, Rome in May. He also gave a special lecture at the 2nd EAKLE workshop in Turkey. He is organising the 2nd European Conference on Korean Linguistics, which will be held at SOAS in August 2008.

During the academic year of 2007-8, Jaehoon Yeon has published one article and two review articles in refereed journals and edited a phrasebook with Lucien Brown.

Publications

2007. Coding Conflict or Semantic Contrast?: The Grammatical Encoding of the Causee. Eoneohag (Journal of the Linguistic Society of Korea) No. 47: 33-59. [ISSN 1225-7494]

2008a. Review of The Korean Language: Structure, use, and context. By Jae Jung Song. Bulletin of SOAS. 70-1. 2008.

2008b. (with Lucien Brown) Chambers Korean Phrasebook. 192pp. [ISBN 978 0550 10352 9]

2008c. Review article on The Prototypical Transitivity. Studies in Language

DETAILS OF COMPLETED PHDs



Owen Miller completed his PhD degree in Korean history at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2007 and received his degree in November of the same year. The title of his thesis is: “The Silk Merchants of the Myŏnjuŏn: Guild and Government in Late Chosŏn Korea”.

This study explores the ways in which merchants and their institutions were embedded within the political economy of a centralised bureaucratic state, constructed on the Chinese model.

Using a combination of quantitative data from the accounts of a Seoul silk guild and information gleaned from Chosŏn government annals, it builds up a picture of the structure and functions of the guild and the nature and scale of its economic relations

Stefan Knoob was awarded his PhD in August 2007. The title of his thesis is: Animacy, agency and causality in Korean voice and diathesis: A cognitive-semiotic usage-based perspective.

Adopting a usage-based construction grammar approach, the thesis proposes a radically revised account of the Korean voice system with two main oppositions: ACTIVE ~ INACTIVE and ENDOACTIVE ~ EXOACTIVE. These are marked on the verb, but voice categories are primarily semantic and equally basic. The attendant clause structures are only weakly determined by the predicate’s voice status and instead inherited from a systemically independent diathesis system. The thesis first demonstrates the inherent Indo-European biases and asymmetries in the Standard Voice Model that underlies the traditional active-passive-causative account. It

then turns to the Korean system and its central features: inchoative-passive conflation in a single INACTIVE voice, voice-marking paradigm proliferation with equipollency and complex correspondences to voice categories, causative and passive usage of unmarked basic verbs, and animacy, agency and causality differentiation in the diathesis system. The thesis then details animacy-related effects in the oblique argument system.

The choice of Inanimate and Animate Locational patterns is conditioned not by ontological animacy but by utterance-specific situational animacy and agency. And the variety of Korean agent-phrase-like patterns reflects differentiations along the situational animacy, agency and causality dimensions that correlate with animacy and agency constraints on diathesis selection.

with the government. Because the guild sources extend over the period immediately following the Chosŏn dynasty's first international treaty and port opening (1876), they provide a unique opportunity to look at how the privileged merchants of the capital were affected by Korea's entry into the world system and where the limits of the traditional commercial system were located.

The study concludes that the guilds of Chosŏn Seoul were complex social institutions concerned both with maintaining beneficial political and economic relations with the government and with reproducing internal cohesion through hierarchical social relations. While extractions of cash and labour from the guild were numerous, they predominantly took the form of the semi-private extortion of 'gifts' by officials. At the

same time, the fixed-price guild-government trade in silk was actually profitable for the guild until to the 1880s, when inflation, corruption and government insolvency began to cause the breakdown of the traditional procurement system. Prior to the decisive reforms of 1894-5, the relationship between the Chosŏn state and the guilds had already begun to change as the government was forced to introduce more market prices and turn to a new method of payment. This demonstrates that while the centralised bureaucratic state had long continued to subordinate the merchants to its priorities of tribute extraction and redistribution, solutions combining varying weights of market and non-market economics were possible within this framework.

Finally, the thesis investigates the lexical spread and usage of 'morphological' and 'analytic passive' verbs. It shows that inchoative usage and inchoative-passive ambivalences are so widespread that they must be considered a central feature of a single INACTIVE category. And animacy and agency differentiation drives a systemic alignment of non-interpersonal actions, weakly agentive situations and inanimate causation with spontaneous situations.

In conclusion, the thesis proposes that inchoative- passive conflation may be due to the fact that the ANIMATE ~ INANIMATE and AGENTIVE ~ NON AGENTIVE dichotomies push the organisation and frequency distribution in the Korean diathesis system towards alignment of non-agentive causation with spontaneous situation-dynamics.



CKS PHD STUDENTS



Lee Yoon Jeong

PhD title: **Yi Kwangsu and the Eugenics Discourse in Colonial Korea**

Supervisor: **Anders Karlsson**

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

Andrew Jackson

PhD title: **The Ch'olla Province and the Musillan Rebellion of 1728**

Supervisor: **Anders Karlsson**

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

Song Sun Kwan

PhD title: **The Horak Debate and Intellectual Trends in Late 18th Century Korea**

Supervisor: **Anders Karlsson**

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

Lucien Brown

PhD title: **The Korean Honorifics System and Politeness in Second Language Learning**

Supervisor: **Jaehoon Yeon**

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

Spas Rangelov

PhD title: **Morpho-Syntactic study on Korean case-markers and particles**

Supervisor: **Jaehoon Yeon**

Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

Jung Taek Lee

PhD title: **Dress and Fashion in Korea 1876-1945: Hanbok, Yangbok and Colonial Modernity**

Supervisor: **Charlotte Horlyck**

Department of Art and Archaeology

Jung Rock Seo

PhD title: **The Archaeology of Dancing: A Comparison between Ch'oyongmu and Nasori**

Supervisor: **Keith Howard**

Department of Music

Sandra Fahy

PhD title: **Tales from the Bottom of the Well: Testimonies from North Korean Famine Survivors**

Supervisor: **Keith Howard**

Department of Music

Sung Hee Park

PhD title: **Patronage and Creativity in late 18th to late 19th Century Seoul: The Urban Middle Class and its Vocal Music**

Supervisor: **Keith Howard**

Department of Music

Dorota Szawarska

PhD title: **Caring from a distance: The case of Sakhalin Koreans**

Supervisor: **Keith Howard**

Department of Music

Andrea Hector-Watkins

PhD title: **Music and Gender: The Architecture of Creativity Through The Eyes of Korean Women**

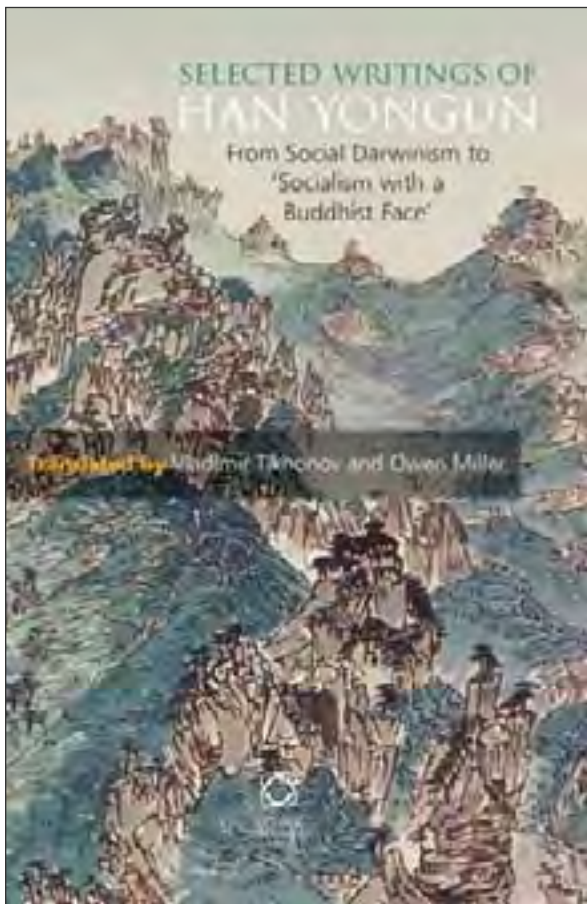
Supervisor: **Keith Howard**

Department of Music

NEW PUBLICATIONS



Selected Writings of Han Yongun has been published by Owen Miller, SOAS Centre of Korean Studies, and Vladimir Tikhonov [Pak Noja], Institute of East European and Oriental Studies, Oslo University



Selected Writings of Han Yongun: From Social Darwinism to 'Socialism with a Buddhist Face', was published in April 2008 by Global Oriental. The book was co-translated by Centre of Korean Studies research fellow Owen Miller and Professor Vladimir Tikhonov of Oslo University.

Han Yongun, otherwise known as Manhae (1879-1944), was one of Korea's most eminent Buddhists and political activists in the independence movement during the long years of Japan's colonization of his country. He was a prolific writer and outstanding poet, known especially for his poetry collection Nim ui ch'immuk ('The Silence of the Lover').

This volume, however, concentrates on translations of his principal non-literary works, which are published here in English for the first time. The selection includes Manhae's ideas for the revitalization of Korean Buddhism in the modern world, his writings on the nature of Buddhism as a religion, a critique of atheist movements fashionable among the communists of his time, together with memoirs of his early life and travels.

Selected Writings of Han Yongun, published in collaboration with the Academy of Korean Studies, also contains an introductory essay on Manhae's life, his relationship with socialist ideas as well as the significance of some of the ideas discussed in the translated writings.

SEMINARS, EVENTS & ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR (2007-2008)



THE 8th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF KOREAN STUDIES 16 & 17 AUGUST 2007

SOAS CKS hosted the 8th ISKS (International Society for Korean Studies) International Conference of Korean Studies on August 16th and 17th 2007.

The conference was co-organised by International Society for Korean Studies (ISKS), Centre of Korean Studies at SOAS, and ISKS European Branch. We would also like to acknowledge the grant of Academy of Korean Studies, who unwittingly supported the conference through the grant donated to Centre of Korean Studies at SOAS.

The conference offered a good opportunity to meet colleagues, share ideas, and learn of new developments in the field. More than 80 scholars gathered from all over the world to give papers on a wide range of different themes with papers exploring gender and language in literature, Koguryō wall paintings, the labour market in North Korea, shamanistic elements in the New Testament, Taoism in Korea, male violence in Korean cinema, among others. This year, the conference was also attended by a group of scholars from North Korea some of whom gave papers and who generally seemed keen to share ideas and explore new scholarship.

The conference concluded with a dinner and on the 18th many of the foreign visitors chose to join the optional sightseeing tour to Oxford, led by Dr Yeon Jaehoon.

The International Society for Korean Studies (ISKS) was formed in Osaka, Japan in 1990 and has over the last fifteen years held conferences in geographically diverse areas, for example, Beijing, Honolulu, Shenyang and Osaka.

For more information on ISKS, visit:
http://www.isks.org/jhtml/index_j.html

CKS SEMINAR SERIES

Since the academic year 2005/06, the Centre of Korean Studies has been able to hold seminars on a weekly basis due to support from the ELP programme (as major contributor in 2005/06), and the SOAS-AKS Institution Project (as major contributor from 2006/07 onwards).

Autumn Term 2007

Friday, 2 November

Akira Utsugi

University of Edinburgh

“Tone and intonation in Seoul and Gyeongsang Korean”

Friday, 16 November

Janet Poole

Centre of Korean Studies, SOAS

“Unruly Detail: Writing, Photography and Crisis in Late Colonial Korea”

Friday, 23 November

Joerg Plassen

Ruhr-Universität Bochum

“Literati Sŏn and Buddhist Neo-Confucianism: Hybrid tendencies in the intellectual life of the Early Chosŏn period, focusing on Kim Sisŭp alias Sŏlcham”

Friday, 30 November

Andrew Logie

Cinematographer and Researcher

“Contemporary Tradition: a showing of pansori and instrumental performances filmed in Korea this year”

Wednesday, 5 December

Leonid Petrov

Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies,
Australian National University

“North Korea: a Regional Troublemaker or a Land of Opportunities?”

Spring Term 2008

Friday, 18 January

Staffan Rosen

Stockholm University

“Merit and Reward - The Imperial Korean System of Decorations 1900-1910 in an International Perspective”

Friday, 25 January

Valerie Gelezeau

EHESS, Paris

“Landscapes of power in Seoul - Apartment complexes and the modernization of the South Korean city”

Thursday, 31 January

Carl Saxer

Asia Research Centre, Copenhagen Business School

“The Return of the Regions or the Rise of Seoul? Observations on the Recent Presidential Election in South Korea”

Friday, 1 February, 5pm

Paul French

Author of North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula

“Paradise Lost: From Chollima Speed to Slow Motion Famine - How North Korea Got Where it is Today”

Friday, 8 February

Gina Barnes

Professorial Research Associate, SOAS

“Cross-straits relations between Korea and Japan in the mid-4th to 5th centuries”



Gina Barnes

Friday, 22 February

Vladimir Tikhonov (Pak Noja)

Institute of East European and Oriental Studies, Oslo University

“To beat or not to beat: discussions on pedagogical ideals, corporal punishment and military training in colonial Korea”

Friday, 7 March

Kevin Gray

Sussex University

“Democracy, Neoliberalism and the Crisis of the Korean Labour Movement”

Summer Term 2008

Tuesday, 15 April

Chang Hyo-Hyun

Korea University

<구운몽의 英譯에 대하여> or “On the English Translation of the classical Korean novel Kuunmong (Nine Cloud Dream)”

With funding from the Academy of Korean Studies, the Centre of Korean Studies was also able to provide financial support to the following two Korea-related talks in the Institute of Historical Research's Comparative Histories of Asia Seminar at Senate House, University of London:

Thursday, 21 February

Vladimir Tikhonov

University of Oslo

“Sin Ch'aeho's (1880-1936) Metamorphoses: Confucian Scholar, Social-Darwinist, Nationalist and Anarchist”

Thursday, 15 May

Gina Barnes

Professorial Research Associate, SOAS

“Korean State Boundaries throughout History”

KOREAN STUDIES PUBLISHING IN EUROPE

The Centre of Korean Studies held its first workshop on Korean Studies Publishing in Europe on June 16 2008, with financial support from the Academy of Korean Studies institutional grant programme.

The event aimed to bring together UK and European publishers and academics with experience of publishing to discuss what sort of Korea-related materials are most needed and to examine the problems and difficulties that arise in the process of publishing and translating such materials.

The afternoon was divided into three sessions, the first on 'Scholarship and translation across borders', the second a publishers' roundtable discussion and the third a panel on 'Providing Korea-related materials for university students'.

In the first session Anders Karlsson discussed his experience of translating and publishing Korean literary works in Sweden. He noted how it was initially difficult to get interest from publishers, but also how Korean literature has found recognition in Sweden with some 20 literary works now in print and newly published books regularly receiving reviews in the major papers. Dr Karlsson acknowledged that this was largely due to support from Korean funding bodies, but also noted that there was often a divergence between what Korean organisations wished to promote and what Swedish audiences were most likely to read. Seminars to promote Korean literature often focused on the question of 'Koreanness' and the need to promote Korean literature, but in fact the Swedish reading public generally have no interest in Korean literature as such, but rather in particular authors and in good translated literature in general.

In the same session Keith Howard, SOAS Professor of Music, spoke on the subject of 'Korean and Western Scholarship: Divergence or Convergence', outlining his concerns about the divergence in methodology between Korean and non-Korean scholars. Unfortunately this has led to a situation where the work of Korean scholars struggles to find acceptance outside of Korea and likewise Korean scholars feel little need to pay attention to the scholarship of non-Korea-based academics. Professor Howard noted that while it would be good to have the work of



Publishers Roundtable discussion

many more Korean scholars published and available to English-speaking students, it has to be presented in a way that is intelligible and to some extent 'vernacularised'.

In the second session, Sajid Rizvi from Saffron Books, Paul Norbury from Global Oriental and Albert Hoffstaedt from Brill introduced their current Korean Studies lists and talked about their past experiences of publishing books on Korea as well as their future plans. After these brief introductions the floor was opened to questions and there was a lively discussion of the current status of Korean Studies publishing in the UK and Europe. The problems associated with the poor quality of some translations of academic works offered to publishers were particularly noted as well as the problem of finding specialist translators with knowledge of the specific field they are working on. It was generally agreed by the participating publishers that translations should always be led by a native speaker translator to ensure quality and to save time and money in the long run on the editing process.

In the third and final session of the afternoon Professor Vladimir Tikhonov of Oslo University and Dr Charlotte Horlyck of SOAS presented papers on Korean Studies materials and textbooks for university level teaching.

Professor Tikhonov looked at 'our own history textbook problem' by analysing in detail the advantages and drawbacks of two of the currently available English-language histories of Korea—A New History of Korea by Yi Kibaek et al. and Everlasting Flower by Keith Pratt. He concluded that despite the various merits of these books they do not manage to provide a balanced introduction to Korean history in themselves and a new textbook is needed for teaching

in an English-language environment. Such a Korean history would need to pay sufficient attention to the international context of Korea's history, while at the same time offering a careful balance between political, social, economic and cultural history and would most likely have to be jointly authored.

In her talk Dr Horlyck examined publishing on Korean art history by looking at museum catalogues for exhibitions featuring Korea since the early 1980s. She pointed out that to begin with these exhibitions tended to focus on showing 'masterpieces' of Korean art, mainly fine art and religious art, while essays in the catalogues attempted to set Korean art apart from other East Asian art, but lacked any new information or scholarship. More recently, exhibitions of Korean art have become more diverse and the writing in their catalogues has improved. However, unlike the fields of Chinese or Japanese art where it is possible for students to find a variety of English-language scholarship expressing diverse opinions and write an entire paper on this basis, such is not yet the case for Korean art history. Dr Horlyck concluded that what is needed above all in publishing on Korean art is a greater variety of opinions and subject matter.

The workshop was well attended and all sessions provoked lively and fruitful discussions with a number of practical suggestions coming from both the speakers and the floor. The afternoon also provided a rare opportunity for academics and publishers to meet and discuss future projects, something that was particularly useful for younger scholars planning their first publications. A report on the workshop and the recommendations arising from it is in preparation and will be circulated to interested institutions and publishers in Europe and Korea.

After the publishing workshop a book launch event was held to celebrate the publication of *Selected Writings of Han Yongun*, which was co-translated by Vladimir Tikhonov and Owen Miller (for more details see p.15).

After a brief book talk from Professor Tikhonov, the audience was treated to a performance of the traditional Korean dance *salp'uri*, by Lee Chul-jin, currently a visiting scholar at SOAS (see *right*).



Vladimir Tikhonov (Oslo University)



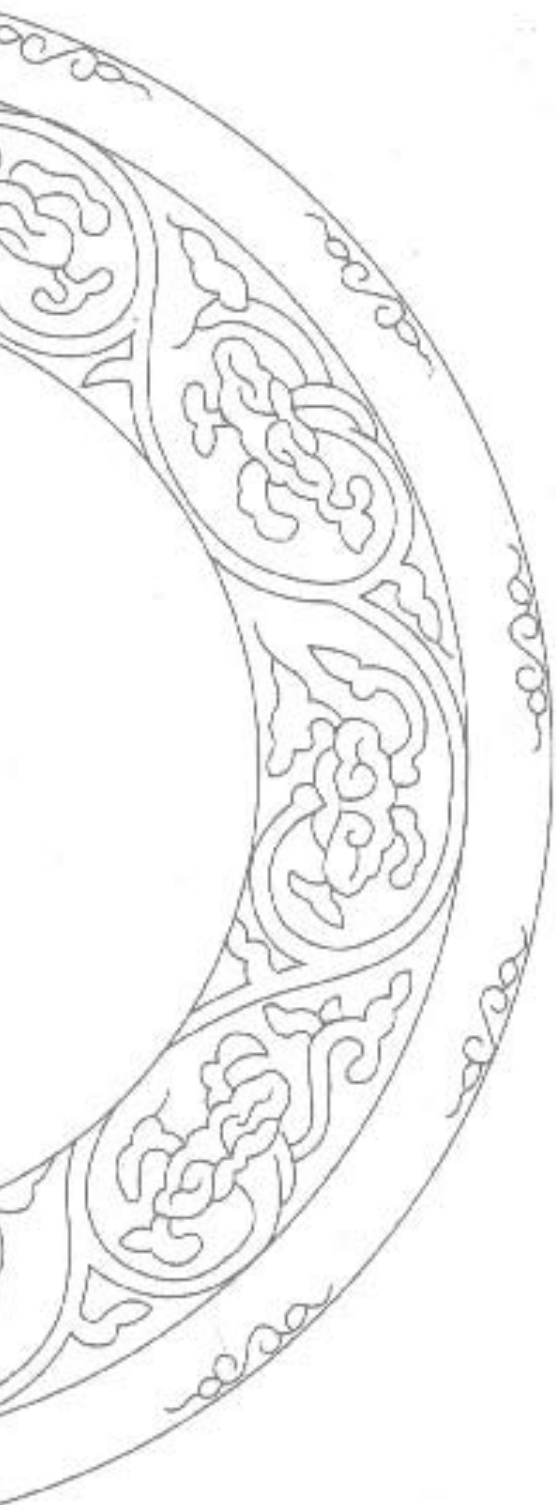
Sajid Rizvi (forefront) & workshop attendees



Lee Chul-jin (Visiting Scholar at SOAS)

A YEAR IN KOREA





YEAR ABROAD VISIT TO KOREA

Korean Section

Department of Japan and Korea

March 2008

The Language Year Abroad forms part of the BA Korean curriculum at SOAS, and students are required to spend a year studying at Korea University in Seoul in Year 2.

With support from the Faculty of Languages and Cultures, the Korean Language Year Abroad Coordinator (Grace Koh) visited Korea University in March 2008.

The visit primarily served to follow up on administrative matters related to the exchange scheme but also provided an opportunity for the Year Abroad Coordinator to meet up with BA Korean students currently in Korea. After a meeting, the Year Abroad Co-ordinator and students were joined by SOAS BA Korean alumni living in Seoul for dinner in a local restaurant. There were nine students participating in the Language Year Abroad in the academic session 2007-08.

The Year Abroad Coordinator also had the occasion to visit Keimyung University in Daegu (Taegu) and Pai Chai University in Daejeon (Taejŏn) to discuss possible exchange schemes that would give students the opportunity to spend time in different regions in Korea during the Year Abroad in the future.

KOREAN LANGUAGE TEACHING CONFERENCE



The 2nd biannual workshop for Korean language educators in Europe was held in Colakli, Turkey from June 11th to 15th. This was the first workshop to be organized independently by the recently formed EAKLE (European Association for Korean Language Education) and was co-hosted by SOAS and Ankara University and sponsored by the Korea Foundation.

Out of a total of forty-three participants from twenty-nine institutions in seventeen countries, SOAS was represented by five Korean language educators (Jaehoon Yeon, Kyung-Eun Lee, Jaehee Cho, Sinae Lew and Lucien Brown). Jaehoon Yeon currently serves as Secretary General of the association and Lucien Brown has now also been appointed to the board in the role of Treasurer.

The workshop provided a forum for Korean teachers in Europe to develop and share teaching techniques, exchange information regarding Korean education at different universities and propose joint projects for

the development of teaching materials. The workshop focussed around a series of individual papers and panel sessions during which teachers presented effective teaching techniques and discussed common problem areas in Korean language education. In addition, during a special colloquium session entitled “Korean language education in Europe”, representatives from each of the 17 institutions summarized the current state of Korean education at their host universities. Finally, at the end of the workshop, proposals were made for joint projects, the most popular of which was to develop a book of classroom activities for Korean grammar.

The SOAS delegation was actively involved in the series of lectures and discussions. Jaehoon Yeon gave a talk entitled “Some Issues Regarding Korean Language Education at European Universities” in which he succinctly summarized the practical challenges faced by Korean language teachers as they go about their ongoing task of improving the standard of Korean language education. In a paper entitled



“Pragmatics and Korean Language Education”, Lucien Brown stressed the importance of contextual, social and cultural factors in the teaching of Korean. The job of summarizing the current state of Korean teaching at SOAS was given to Kyung-Eun Lee, who packed descriptions of language centre as well as departmental courses into her presentation. Finally, Jaehee Cho chaired a session on “Interlanguage Research”, during which teachers presented their own research results regarding the common pronunciation and grammar errors of Korean learners.

The success of the workshop, however, was not limited to the lecture theatre. All present were unanimous in agreeing that the Turkish coast in June was simply the best time and place to hold a successful workshop. The coastal breeze and warm Mediterranean were the perfect tonic for minds numbed by academic debate. Moreover, evening feasts of barbecued goat meat and a drop of two of the local raki played no small part in fostering excellent relationships between Korean departments across Europe.

Big thanks go to Ertan Gokmen at Ankara University, as well as the Korea Foundation for their support.

Finally, a word of appreciation is in order to our president Romuald Huszcza and vice-president Martine Prost.



APRIL AAS CONFERENCE REPORT

Report from the Association of Asian Studies Conference 3-6 April 2008


The annual Association of Asian Studies (AAS) Conference was held in April in Atlanta, USA, and with more than 2000 people attending, the Hyatt Regency was soon flooded with people wearing large name badges and carrying complimentary AAS bags – this year offered tastefully in black.

The conference proved to be highly stimulating not least due to the many interesting Korean panels and the strong presence of Koreanists from all over the world. Of the 223 panels that were accepted, 15 centred on Korea, signifying the increasing

interest in and rise of Korean Studies in the West. In the panels a staggering 33 disciplines were represented, in particular history but also literature, archaeology, politics, cinema and gender studies among others, reflecting how fascination with Korea clearly extends beyond hallyu and North Korean politics.

CKS at SOAS was represented by Owen Miller, Grace Koh and Charlotte Horlyck who gave papers in three different panels. One of the first Korea-related panels to be held at the conference was organised by James Lewis (Oxford University) titled 'Aspects of Premodern Korean Economic and Social History', in which Owen gave a paper on 'Chinbae:





Trade between Guild and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea'. Through an analysis of accounting documents left by the silk merchants of the Myonjuon guild, Owen argued that licensed guilds (sijon) were still at the centre of commerce in the Choson capital in the late 19th century. He further demonstrated how this guild-based commercial system was pulled apart when financial crisis hit in the 1880s making it difficult to maintain the stability of the traditional commercial system of the capital.

Unfortunately Anders Karlsson was unable to attend the conference and his paper on 'Power and Famine: Land Tax Exemptions in Late Eighteenth-Century Korea' which was also included in the panel was much missed.

The following morning a cross-disciplinary panel organised and chaired by Charlotte Horlyck, titled 'Continuation and Change in Koryŏ and Chosŏn' took place. It was chaired by Michael Pettid (SUNY Binghamton) and included presentations by Lee Sang-kuk (University of Pennsylvania), Son Byung-giu (Sunkyunkwan University) and Sem Vermeersch (Seoul National University) as well as by Charlotte Horlyck.

Highlighting how continuation and change can be seen reflected in various local traditions and institutions over the course of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, papers included discussions on burial customs; genealogy succession and marriage; changes in families' social position; and social changes reflected in monastic life.

Through an analysis of archaeological material, Charlotte's paper emphasised how the increasing spread and support of Zhu Xi's Family Rituals in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods influenced the ways in which people were interred at this time.

On the last day of the conference, Grace Koh acted as the chair and discussant on a panel organised by Jo Yoong-hee (Academy of Korean Studies) titled 'Mt Baekdu: Cultural Understanding of an East Asian Border'. Since ancient times Mt Baekdu has been considered a sacred mountain by Koreans and it continues to be of historical and national significance. Centred primarily on discussions of early 20th century travel records, the panellists examined how the mountain was perceived by people of different cultural backgrounds, including Qing government officials, Western travellers and Korean intellectuals.

In addition to the pursuit of academic stimuli, the conference also offered plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances. As usual, the Korea Foundation reception was well attended, and it offered a welcome opportunity to officially congratulate Robert Buswell on his new post as president of AAS.

Though establishments near the hotel did not offer much in terms of culinary delights, resulting in a sojourn to Atlanta's 'Koreatown', we did manage to sample the local beer which was rather good.

KOREAN LITERATURE ESSAY CONTEST

2007 Korean Literature Essay Contest (UK)

LTI KOREA (Korea Literature Translation Institute) held its first Korean Literature Essay Contest in the United Kingdom in conjunction with the Centre of Korean Studies, SOAS.

LTI Korea is an organisation affiliated with the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism and committed to the promotion and appreciation of Korean literature abroad. The Korean Literature Essay Contest is one of their key programmes aimed at the introduction and dissemination of Korean literature among overseas readers, with a view to enable participants to acquire and develop a broader view of Korean literature. LTI Korea has administered the contest since 2005 with participation from over 10 countries from all over the world. This was the first time that it was held in the United Kingdom.

The subject text assigned for the UK competition in 2007 was *The Guest* (Seven Stories Press, 2006) by Hwang Sok-yong. The contest was open to all applicants enrolled as a full-time or part-time student working towards an undergraduate or postgraduate degree or other formal certificate to be conferred by a UK institution of higher education. Applications were welcome from not only students majoring in Korean studies but also those who wished to know more about Korea and its culture through literature.

The winners of the 2007 UK contest were:

1st Place: Ben Jackson

(MA Korean Literature candidate, SOAS)

Essay: "FOREIGN GUESTS; DIVIDED HOSTS:

Conceptions of culpability in Hwang Sok-yong's *The Guest*"

2nd Place: Sophie Bowman

(BA Social Anthropology [Year 1], SOAS)

Essay: "What can an intercultural study of

The Guest tell us about the nature of history?"

3rd Place: Alexej Ulbricht

(BA Korean and Politics [Year 4], SOAS)

Essay: "Examining the course of revolutions on hand of Hwang Sok-Yong's *The Guest*"

The prizes were:

1st Place: Laptop (Samsung)

2nd Place: Digital Camera (Samsung)

3rd Place: MP3 Player (Apple iPod)

The first place winner was automatically entered into the world-wide competition organized by LTI Korea.

The award ceremony took place on 28 February 2008 at the recently opened Korean Cultural Centre UK in London.



(from left to right)
Jaehoon Yeon (SOAS CKS), Grace Koh (SOAS CKS; Essay Contest UK organiser), Sophie Bowman (2nd place winner), Ben Jackson (1st place winner), Alexej Ulbricht (3rd place winner), Kyu-hak Choi (Director, Korean Cultural Centre UK)



Winner of the 2007 UK contest

Ben Jackson

MA Korean Literature candidate, SOAS

Essay: "FOREIGN GUESTS; DIVIDED HOSTS:
Conceptions of culpability in Hwang Sok-yong's
The Guest"

Ben Jackson did his BA in Korean Studies with Japanese at the University of Sheffield from 2000 to 2004.

He then worked for VeryMuchSo productions [sic] (www.verymuchso.co.uk) in Sheffield, translating video footage for two documentaries about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: *A State of Mind* and *Crossing the Line*. When the notorious North Korea documentary industry recession reached South Yorkshire, he found himself redundant and went to work in the Republic of Korea. He made English subtitles for a political chat show, before joining a publicity company.

He is now at the end of an MA in Korean Literature at SOAS, on a Korean Literature Translation Fellowship kindly provided by the International Communication Foundation in Seoul.





KOREAN LITERATURE ESSAY CONTEST: WINNING ESSAY

FOREIGN GUESTS; DIVIDED HOSTS

Conceptions of culpability in Hwang Sok-yong's *The Guest*

Ben Jackson
31 December 2007

Hwang Sok-yong's novel of 2001, *The Guest*, deals with the legacy of the Korean War, particularly a period of concentrated bloodshed in Hwanghae Province, in the present day Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) (Hwang 2001: 8).

The term "guest", or *sonnim*, has multiple meanings: having been assigned to smallpox upon its identification as a foreign epidemic in Korea (7), it is taken by Hwang and applied to the foreign ideologies of Christianity and Marxism in Korea, "where both were originally as foreign as smallpox" (7). Lastly, the most literal meaning of *sonnim* applies to the novel's main living protagonist, the Reverend Ryu Yosöp, as he visits his childhood homeland in the present day DPRK, having lived for the past two decades in the United States (12).

The novel is divided into twelve chapters, each corresponding to a stage of a shamanistic "guest exorcism" from Hwanghae Province, where "the dead and the living simultaneously cross and recross the boundaries between past and present". As such, each chapter of *The Guest* contains passages that alternate between a third person, linear narrative, depicting Yosöp's journey from Brooklyn to the DPRK, and first person, retrospective accounts, from a variety of major and minor characters, of events that took place in the period in question in the Korean War. In this way, boundaries are blurred between present and past, living and dead.

In this essay, my aim is to examine the concept of culpability in *The Guest*. I will concentrate on the relationship between the cerebral, foreign belief systems of Christianity and Marxism and the visceral, immediate action that took place in the period of bloodshed in Hwanghae Province, mentioned above. I will begin by looking at how Hwang portrays the reception of these ideas by Koreans in

Hwanghae province. Next, I will identify parts of the novel and some characters within it that reinforce the notion that conflict between these belief systems was directly and exclusively responsible for actions that took place during the conflict. Finally, I will cite evidence to the contrary, that is, suggestions within the novel that there were other factors behind the war in Hwanghae Province.

* * *

"*Sonnim*", as described above, is a useful title due to its various applicable meanings. However, its origins with the smallpox epidemic and consequent application to the belief systems of Christianity and Marxism strongly suggest that Hwang wishes to portray both belief systems as harmful, undesirable foreign invasions. We should note that Hwang is blessed with the benefit of hindsight, and avoid going so far as to call them "unwelcome" foreign systems, since they both clearly attracted many Korean adherents. How, then does Hwang portray their initial contact with the Koreans of Hwanghae Province?

On his way to the DPRK, Yosöp recalls the words spoken to him by his great-grandmother in Hwanghae Province, when he was a young boy. "Great-grandma" criticizes Yosöp's father and grandfather for giving Yosöp and his brother "such hideous names" after being "possessed by the Western spirit" (40). She explicitly makes a contrast between native Korean religion and imports:

"Well, I know everything, everything from the very beginning. Those big noses just came here with their books and spread them all over the place. Our ancestor, the founding father of our race, was Tan'gun. He came down from the heavens a long, long time ago." (40)



The “hideous names” refers to those of Yosöp and his older brother, Yohan: unnatural sounding Korean approximations of the biblical names Joseph and John. “Western spirit” (“yangguisin”) is a derogatory term for Jesus Christ, and could also be translated as “Western ghost”.

Hwang then reinforces the association of new beliefs with smallpox by describing, shortly afterwards, how Great-grandma commands him to bow down before an icon of a local deity that will protect him against “the Guest” (smallpox), which she also describes as “the barbarian spirit from the faraway lands south of the sea” (40-41) and asks how any Korean that had experienced “the Guest” could welcome the “Western spirit” that came from the same land (44).

Further on, Hwang explains the background to the introduction of Protestantism in Chosön (50-53) with a third-person narrative passage. He describes how a series of Western, Protestant missionaries passed through and later settled in Yosöp’s grandfather’s hometown, Sollae, and how Yosöp’s grandfather became a Christian (54-56).

This is followed by a short recollection from Yosöp’s youth, where his grandfather tells Yosöp and Yohan of an encounter with the Western missionary, Revered Mae Kyönsi (McKenzie) in the early days of his faith:

“Also on [Reverend Mae’s] wall was a wall clock. I’d never seen a wall clock before, and every time the pendulum swung back and forth I couldn’t help swinging my head back and forth along with it... The first Jesus I saw looked like Reverend Mae in many ways – you see, both had brown hair on their heads and grew hair under the nose and chin. Jesus had his hair grown long, like a woman, but he, too, had a big nose like a Westerner...

“Do you know what I learned that day? The mission of the believer and the great love of our father in heaven...

“That was when [later on] I returned home [from a service in Pyongyang] and smashed our ancestral tablet, the false idol your great-grandmother worshipped.” (56-57)

In this short passage, Hwang deftly combines a metaphor for the young Yosöp’s impressionability, in the form of his near-mesmerization by the pendulum of the wall clock, with Yosöp’s shallow, childlike preoccupation with Jesus’ Western features and how similar they are to those of the missionary, Reverend Mae. Contrasted against such a background of naivety, Yosöp’s grandfather’s claim to have learned “the mission of the believer and the great love of our Father in Heaven” that same day makes it difficult to conclude that such a young boy could have appreciated the full implications of such grand concepts and was not simply repeating things that sounded impressive.

The smashing of an ancestral tablet is a significant gesture, and must have seemed shocking at the time, given the centuries of Korean tradition it suddenly severed.

The adoption of Marxism as a ruling ideology has more tangible, material consequences than that of Christianity (if the latter can be called an ideology). Two pivotal characters in *The Guest* that embody the plight of fledgling communists (communism being the actual embodiment of Marxism) are Ichiro (later Pak Illang) and Sunnam. During the occupation, Ichiro is “the long-standing neighborhood servant” (26-27). Yosöp recalls how “even we young ones use the casual, low form of speech to Ichiro” (27). That young children address an adult in this form of speech indicates that the adult has an extremely low status in society.

Sunnam appears as a ghost to Yosöp and explains how the Oriental Development Company, a Japanese landlord corporation for which Yosöp’s father worked, made his own family struggle to pay arbitrarily determined rent, eventually failing and losing their



KOREAN LITERATURE ESSAY CONTEST: WINNING ESSAY

home and possessions (74). Sunnam later has the opportunity to attend classes provided by an intellectual, where, in his own words:

“I learned phrases “like “the world of the proletariat,” “equality,” and “capitalists and landowners.” I’ll tell you though – I didn’t quite know what those phrases meant at the time.” (76)

After a dispute with a landowners’ union, Sunnam leaves the village and finds work in a mine. Here, his sense of class consciousness is further galvanized as he and his “comrades” receive weekly copies of a publication called the Workers’ Bulletin and have its contents explained to them by “a kid” (77).

At the news of Japan’s defeat and Korea’s independence, Illang tells one of his “comrades”: “This mine, the rice paddies, the fields – all of it belongs to us now.” (77)

However, when it came to the theory of Marxism, Sunnam explains how many ideas went over the heads of Koreans at that time, who had simply not been able to enjoy sufficient education to make sense of the concepts involved:

“At the training session, they knew there was no way any talk about Bolshevism or the writings of Marx and Lenin would ever make any sense to us. We’d all just barely finished learning han’gŭl, and the only use we ever had for books until then was to roll cigarettes or wipe our asses –” (129)

Sunnam goes on to say how revolutionary consciousness was instilled in those at the conference by explaining in simple terms the inequity of land ownership and exhorting the delegates to return to their villages and demand that “village elders and gentle, honorable landlords” give back their land (129-130).

Thus, by the time of liberation, Christianity and

Marxism – the latter in an agrarian, nationalist guise – have firmly taken in root in Yosöp’s home village and throughout Hwanghae Province and beyond. However, we have also seen how Hwang takes care to show how limited the understanding of these foreign ideas is to many Koreans that begin to follow them. Hwang almost appears to be suggesting that many Koreans almost brainwashed by having these ideas explained to them in deceptively simple terms. Let us now look at how Hwang links these belief systems to actual events that took place during the war.

The character of Ichiro appears to be Hwang’s vehicle for illustrating the execution of land reform. The ghost of Ryu Yohan recounts to Yosöp how Ichiro “suddenly became “Comrade Park Illang”” (124) and barged into the Ryu family home to execute a land reform order from the provisional People’s Committee:

“He asked father if he was willing to donate his land for fair distribution or if he’d rather subject himself to blind confiscation.” (125)

While acknowledging that Communists and Christians had been in conflict since “the generation of our grandfathers, when the people of Chosŏn got their first taste of enlightenment” (114), the ghost of Yohan maintains that it was the land reform demands in the wake of liberation that triggered actual violent action.

“People living in the same villages still couldn’t quite bring themselves to rise up against one another. ... But then, you see, something happened, ... They tried to take our land, the land that’d been handed down to us from generation to generation.” (114)

Yohan thus implies that there has been a sort of ideological “cold war” in progress in Korean society for at least two generations, which nonetheless required the catalyst of land reform to break into out-and-out war. As the conflict escalates, Yosöp’s Uncle Some, whom he meets again in the DPRK,



describes how:

“Before we knew it, the whole thing had become a kind of holy war, and everyone was ready to become a martyr – the Christians for their sacred temples and the Communists for the People and their class struggle.” (164)

There is no doubt that the worst period of bloodshed that takes place in Hwanghae Province is fought along ideological lines, between groups such as the People’s Army (Communist) and the Christian Youth in the towns of Chaeryŏng (181-184). But traces of other dynamics can be seen at several points in the novel, some of which will be examined below.

Firstly, the status of Korea as a colony of Japan from 1910 to 1945 meant that the conventional Marxist pattern of capitalists and workers within one society was replaced by that where ownership of most means of production lay with either Japan or, especially at more local levels, with Koreans that collaborated with parts of the Japanese colonial apparatus (we have already seen, above, how Yosŏp’s father was accused of working for the Japanese Oriental Development Company).

It follows that Korean nationalist and Marxist movements became closely linked; indeed the Soviet Union, for example, expressed support for “every nationalist movement for emancipation, because it is directed against imperialism” (Safarov [1922; speech], quoted in Scalapino and Lee; 1961; 152). This also means that the defeat of Japan, and Korea’s consequent liberation, would leave Korean collaborators exposed to retaliation by other Koreans in the absence of protection from colonial masters. Perhaps this sudden collapse of the colonial structure provided additional impetus necessary for revolution.

Compounding the confusion between external and internal enemies, and between victim and aggressor

is this statement from Ryu Yohan on how his family was deprived of its land by Korean communists:

“Even then, if it had been total strangers, or some foreign bastards who showed up and tried to rob us of our land at gunpoint, well, then we might have just cried out hearts out, been mortified at our own helplessness, and given in – but that wasn’t how it happened. It was our friends, the kids we grew up with...” (114)

This new element leads to perhaps the most devastating aspect of the violence perpetrated by Koreans against each other in Hwanghae Province: the fact that people whose families had lived together, in the same villages and towns, for generations seem to have been plunged into a cycle of murder that went beyond religious or political beliefs. After all, as Uncle Some points out that, after liberation and before the violence broke out:

“Even then, though, the people in our village still helped each other out, lending a hand during the busy harvest season or sharing a meal together in the fields, regardless of whether you were a Christian or a Party member – I myself had no quarrel with anyone.” (165)

It seems that, as the violence escalated, there were other motives spurring on the perpetrators. One of these must have been a purely pragmatic will to preserve themselves and their families, by wiping out their enemies before the latter had a chance to regain the upper hand. For although the violent incidents portrayed in *The Guest* are almost entirely the work of Koreans against other Koreans, these events were taking place in the context of a wider war and an international struggle between communist and capitalist states on the Korean peninsula. In other words, as the front line passed several times up and down the country, control of towns such as Chaeryŏng or Sinch’ŏn passed from one side to the other and a new cycle of revenge would begin.



KOREAN LITERATURE ESSAY CONTEST: WINNING ESSAY

But the violence described by Hwang exceeds that which could be expected in a conventional war. The way “entire families are executed in their homes” (184) suggests a level of indiscriminate brutality on the scale of other twentieth century holocausts such as Rwanda in 1994. Several times the strength of the hatred behind these actions is mentioned, often combined with incomprehension. For example, Ryu Yohan’s former wife confides to Yosöp:

“I’ve thought about it all my life. I mean, why is it that men hate each other so much when everything in this world has been created to make us better? Even the Japanese couldn’t have had so much hate.” (142)

Added to this is the volatile nature of the perpetrators themselves, as pinpointed by Uncle Some:

“I kept thinking that the church and the Party were both being driven by youths, young boys who were just brimming over with spirit and passion.” (163)

By the later stages of the period of violence, it can be argued that key protagonists such as Ryu Yohan and Sangho have descended entirely into a different level of existence. Eventually, individuals and whole families are murdered for revenge rather than for reasons of ideology. Yohan, for example, “returned the favor” after Sangho killed his sister by gratuitously murdering everyone he could in the family of Sangho’s lover. Sangho, in turn, kills Yohan’s younger sister and her family (224).

Yohan himself admits realizing, at this late stage, that things have degenerated to the point where:

“It suddenly occurred to me that the whole notion of this side and that side, of us and them – it was all over.” (224)

In light of this, it appears that the worst of the violence took place when the conflict had broken free of its ideological moorings and descended into a chaos of gratuitous slaughter. Hwang is

certainly courting controversy with this view that Koreans were responsible for the worst atrocities of the war in 1950. His account, in particular, of the Sinch’ön massacre goes against versions that US troops were responsible (8-9), with the result that Hwang “received fierce attacks from both Northern and Southern statistes.” (9)

Given this, it is puzzling to find the following statement in a review of *The Guest*, from *Time Magazine*:

“To a foreign reader, [Hwang’s] apparent conviction that the malign influence of Westerners should absolve Korean participants of their own guilt is perplexing. This sentiment – it could be summed up as “the foreign devils made them do it” – may be comforting to Korean readers eager to overcome the burden of their tortured history.” (Ramzy; 2006; online)

Where can we find any suggestion from Hwang that “the foreign devils made them do it”? On the contrary, we have seen that Hwang took a risk by confronting Korean readers with the truth that many of the worst crimes were committed by Koreans themselves. And even if the fighting was triggered by ideological conflict between Christianity and Communism, originally foreign beliefs, these beliefs were taken up by Koreans themselves and applied to Korean problems.

In conclusion, it may be said that Hwang’s intention, in writing *The Guest*, appears to be to set the record straight with regard to the worst atrocities of the Korean War. Hwang neither denies that this war took place in the larger context of a global ideological conflict, nor attributes all crimes entirely to foreign powers.

Indeed, the fact that the conflict within Korea was one of Christians against Communists suggests that it was not from the same mould as the global cold war, which was between capitalists and/or imperialists and Communists. Rather, Hwang acknowledges both



the influence of Japanese occupation and its sudden end, and the influence of a darker, more primeval and murderous part of the human psyche once the war was in progress.

As Uncle Some, who appears very much as a benevolent voice of reason in the novel, points out:

“The fact that the poor were being given land to live on so they wouldn’t have to go hungry – that was a wonderful thing no matter what, especially when you think of the deeds of Jesus Christ. (163)

In other words, the opposition between Christianity and Communism is not an ideological inevitability. This strongly suggests that the two belief systems were taken up as banners for the legitimization of social conflict that already existed in Korea by the time of liberation: Communism for the socially deprived, and Christianity for the privileged capitalist and landowning classes. In my view, Hwang’s intention is therefore to present the roots of this conflict as lying in the age-old inequality of land distribution and economic wealth in Korea, exacerbated by collaboration and the increased rich-poor divide during the colonial period (Kim U-ch’ang; 1976; 12).

In terms of culpability, we must acknowledge the several layers we have witnessed: the guilt of foreign powers for interfering in Korea (imperial Japan, the Soviet Union, the anti-Communist allies); the guilt of Koreans for too readily allowing their society to polarize into ideological factions; and the guilt of individual war criminals such as Ryu Yohan, for allowing themselves to degenerate into a state of utter immorality and evil. Hwang therefore appears to be maintaining that there is no single source of guilt for what happened. *The Guest* is somewhat detached in its accounts of what went on. Through its variety of conflicting accounts from multiple characters, Hwang elegantly illustrates the subjectivity and absurdity of war.

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Height: approximately 45cm.**

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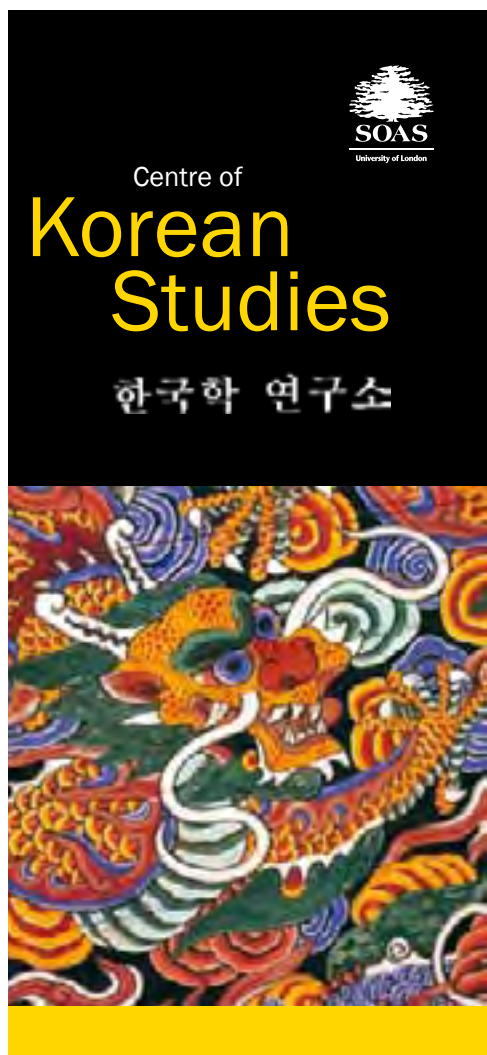




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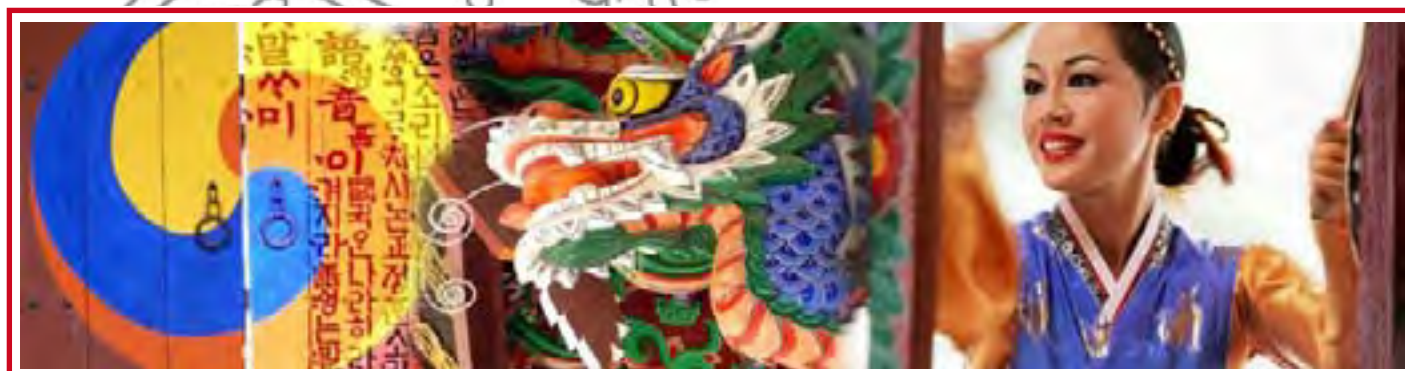
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