

## Editor's Note

---

### *The Current Issue*

We are pleased to present the June 2020 issue of *Acta Koreana*. This issue features research articles by Jongbok Kim, Hansang A. Kim, and Sarah Yoon, a special collection of translations of Chosŏn documents (古文書) by Sun Joo Kim, and finally, book reviews by Janet Yoon-sun Lee and Sandra Fahy. In his article entitled, “Diplomatic Priorities: Changes in the Tang Bestowal of Titles on Silla and Parhae,” Jongbok Kim has carried out a study of the titles the Tang court bestowed upon the courts of Parhae and Silla to question the centrality of Tang agency its relationships with Northeast Asian states. Kim notes that changes in Tang titles reflect the degree to which the Parhae and Silla courts adhered to Tang policy objectives in the region; a submission to Tang objectives resulted in loftier titles while independent policies resulted in demotion of titles. Through his analysis Kim has been able to show a certain dynamism in the relations of Northeast Asian states of the period.

Hansang A. Kim has written an engaging comparative analysis of the critiques Matteo Ricci and Chŏng Yagyong launched against some of the Key concepts of Zhu Xi in his article entitled, “Critique of the Theory of Nature (*xing*) and Principle (*li*) in the Philosophy of Zhu Xi: Matteo Ricci and Chŏng Yagyong.” Kim shows the ways in which Ricci’s and Chŏng’s critiques travel in parallel and the point at which Chŏng departs from Ricci to not only appropriate a Mencian stance on human nature but to also move beyond received understandings of human nature as innately good to a novel and more nuanced formulation resulting a more dynamic understanding of human nature as a propensity for good.

In her critical engagement with the fiction of Cho Namju entitled, “Between Patriarchy and Neoliberalism: Cho Namju’s 82-nyŏnsaeng Kim Chiyŏng,” Sarah Yoon explores how women, and young mothers in particular, navigate the contending demands of patriarchy and neo-liberalism. Yoon illustrated clearly the grim bind in which young mother find themselves; should they give up a career to tend to family they run the risk appearing as a kind of a parasite, a *mamch’ung* 맘충, living off their husbands’

incomes in a role unrecognized and unvalued in the neo-liberal imperative but if they forsake family in the interest of career they are subject to the disapproval of a patriarchal society that cannot allow space for a woman outside the roles of mother and wife.

Our translation section for this issue features the work of Sun Joo Kim. Kim has translated a selection of Chosŏn era documents from several generations of the Kigye Yu, a yangban family of Puyŏ. As Kim mentions in her extensive introductory essay, these documents provide a comparatively intimate look at Chosŏn family life, including such issues as family structure, marriage, gender relations, demographic changes, property division and ownership, land and slave sales, slavery, and litigation. The Kigye Yu documents reveal not only details of their own family life but also the lives the families they enslaved. Kim's research and translation provide us with a perspective on individual lives often elided in the documents of the state that are so often the empirical foundation of studies on the Chosŏn period. Moreover, Kim has provided a rich array of annotations as well the original texts. These documents can be notoriously difficult to read but Kim's introductions, translations, annotations, and provision of the original texts serve as a primer for anyone interested in research in Chosŏn social history. Her work is a great service to the field and we are delighted to have the opportunity to present it here.

This issue concludes with book reviews by Janet Yoon-sun Lee and Sandra Fahy. Lee's insightful critique of Sookja Cho's translation of *Cho Ung chŏn* 趙雄傳 provides a thorough summary of the tales as well as a thoughtful engagement with the choices Cho made in her translation. Her review is an excellent starting point from which to approach the translation. In her review of Jinna Park's translation of Ra Jong-yil's *Inside North Korea's Theocracy: The Rise and Sudden Fall of Jang Song-Thaek*, Fahy outlines the trajectory of Jang's life and career and the dangers of his close association with Kim Il-sŏng. While Fahy deems the work worthwhile in its depiction of the precarious nature of North Korean political life, she ultimately finds the book to be of interest only to a limited audience.

With pieces on Parhae and Silla diplomatic history, Chosŏn social and intellectual history, Chosŏn literature, contemporary South Korean literature, and North Korean politics, the June 2020 issue of *Acta Koreana* has a great deal to offer scholars from across the various disciplines of Korean Studies and we hope that our readers will derive as much edification and enjoyment in reading it as we did in editing it.

### *Moving Forward*

In the last few years *Acta Koreana* has gone through significant editorial and structural changes that have given us pause to reflect on the more than twenty-year history of our journal. While our service to the journal involves a commitment to honor the precedent past editors have set with their dedication and labor, we would also like to establish our own signature and forge our own vision. We are, as always interested in empirically rigorous and theoretically informed research that advances positions in established fields of Korean humanities scholarship, but we are particularly interested in transgressive work that seeks to redefine or challenge what Korean Studies is and can be. This necessarily involves a critical awareness of the field and its development as well as of the positions our scholarship establishes within and beyond the work that has come before.

Moreover, as an English-language journal housed in a Korean university, we aim to be a space and conduit for dialogue, to publish novel research that is original not only within English-language scholarship, but within all scholarship. We are thus especially interested in research articles that actively engage existing literatures in at least English and Korean, in addition to other potentially relevant languages such as Japanese, Chinese, and Russian, among others. We are also keenly interested in research based upon primary sources; this normally includes material in Korean, Literary Sinitic, and Japanese, but could also include a variety of other Asian and European languages as appropriate.

Finally, *Acta Koreana* has long published translations of literature, essays, and historical documents and we continue that practice with enthusiasm. We welcome scholarly translations with critical introductions that make a contribution to the field of Korean Studies and provide our readership with an understanding of the work in context.

To these ends, we have revised our submission policy and manuscript review procedure, increasing the responsibility of our editors to perform in-house assessments before deciding whether to submit papers to external peer-review. This expanded role is more labor intensive but it also gives the editorial committee greater ability to tailor and curate each issue to provide a diverse range of articles that give voice to a variety scholarly positions and topics. It is our hope that these changes will not only enhance the quality of our published articles but will also help set the course for *Acta Koreana* into the future.

*A Tripartite Announcement*

First, over the last year and a half we have undertaken the process of migrating to one of these platforms and we are now happy to announce that Project MUSE has begun to host our content. Currently, the last three years are now available on that platform. Eventually the entirety of our archived articles will be available with Project MUSE as well. We look forward to seeing this relationship will unfold and are excited to expand our readership and visibility through their service. Second, we wish to welcome Dr. Jimin Lee, assistant professor of translation studies at Keimyung University as our newest assistant editor. We look forward to her contribution of her unique scholarly expertise in our enterprise. Third, we also wish to welcome Ms. Jisun Jung as our new editorial assistant. Ms. Jung is a doctoral candidate in English at Kyungpook National University.

*A Call for Papers*

*Acta Koreana* is planning a thematic issue on translation for December 2021 entitled, "Translation: Mapping the Field Korean Studies." Translation is a foundational practice in Anglophone Korea Studies, however broadly one may define the field. Translation can be a goal unto itself or it can be in service to research. Indeed, we might consider translation integral to the research methodologies of Korea Studies; research itself is translation. Korea Studies scholars translate not only Korean and English but also Literary Sinitic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Manchu as well as other European and East Asian languages, both living and dead. They translate for broad audiences, for other scholars, or as part of their own research processes. There is no part of Korea Studies that is not touched by translational practice. We may also speak of translation as a cultural and political mode, as something that takes place both within and without language. We thus invite scholars to interpret the theme of translation not only as action, but also as a form of cartography – mapping routes, setting borders, and creating signs – that allows scholars, students, and general readers to navigate the field. Before the cartographer's map, however, there are the political and ideological interests and forces which govern the cartographer's hand; it is inevitably the work of scholars to investigate the porosity and liminality of these borders inscribed upon the space of translation and lay bare their real-world effects.

The submission deadline for this issue is January 1, 2021.

We thank you for taking the time to read our work and we hope that you may find it of use.

*Acta Koreana* Editorial Committee

Tschung-sun Kim, Editor-in-Chief  
Joshua Van Lieu, Associate Editor  
Janet Yoon-sun Lee, Managing Editor  
Jake Levine, Assistant Editor  
Jimin Lee, Assistant Editor  
Jisun Jung, Editorial Assistant