Editor's Introduction

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Korean Histories is back, after an almost decade-long absence, and we are delighted to present issue 5.1. The journal has its roots in the "History as Social Practice" project at Leiden University's Centre for Korean Studies, which set out from a conviction that has only become more pressing in the years since, that academic historians are not the only ones who legitimately engage with history. They are players in an uneven social field of meaning-making where diverse actors engage the past in different ways for different purposes. Public debate in Korea is rife with references to historical antecedents. Representations of history abound in popular culture, in political discourse, in school textbooks and exile literature, in monuments and internet forums. It is probably as difficult to imagine a society that does not in some way represent its past as it is to imagine one without any form of religion, even if one may doubt the empirical reality of what is represented. *Korean Histories* was founded to acknowledge this broader landscape, taking seriously all kinds of representations of history irrespective of their producer, and paying particular attention to the unconventional historiographies of Korea produced either outside the realm of traditionally recognized authoritative sources, or by a rereading of those sources. Amateur and other non-professional representations of history should be taken seriously, but it should not pass unnoticed that this journal is a journal edited and filled by professional historians. Methodological rigour, a rootedness in the sources and the critical approaches to them, and the clear distinctions we see between empirically verifiable fact, reasonable supposition, justifiable and enlightening speculation, and hard to prove assumption are part and parcel of this journal. As we relaunch the journal, we are proud to present five articles that show why this approach continues to matter.

Boudewijn Walraven opens with a speculative exercise that flips the usual approach to Pan'gye Yu Hyŏngwŏn's "modernity." Rather than judging Pan'gye through a nineteenth- or twentieth-century lens, Walraven asks what might have happened if seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European intellectuals had actually encountered his ideas. Could they have talked? Would they have found enough common ground for a meaningful exchange? The reversal frees the discussion from familiar teleologies and allows us to consider Pan'gye's thought on its own temporal terms, in the company of contemporaries who might genuinely have had something to say to him.

Vladimír Glomb introduces two rare North Korean history atlases from 1956 and 1961, acquired by a Czechoslovakian diplomat, that provide a window into DPRK history education at the middle school level. Covering Korean history from prehistoric times to liberation in 1945, these materials are all the more valuable because their content has since been officially revised, making it likely that they are no longer preserved in North Korea itself. Glomb's careful reading reveals how the young state went about shaping historical consciousness, producing representations of the Korean past that served specific social and political purposes.

Marion Eggert and Yu Myoungin present a translation and commentary of Kim Chŏng's "Manners and Nature of Cheju Island," one of the earliest detailed accounts of the island written during the Chosŏn period. Kim Chŏng (1486–1521), exiled to Cheju in 1519, spent his final years there, and his observations on climate, architecture, local customs, and shamanism offer a portrait of a place that mainland elites regarded as harsh and impossibly remote. By making this source available with careful commentary, Eggert and Yu fulfill one of the journal's founding ambitions, bringing into wider circulation sources that are in the public domain but not easily accessible otherwise.

Andrew Logie examines the Pan-East Sea Culture Area (PESCA) discourse, an archaeological and proto-historical framework that traces material connectivity between eastern Korea and regions to the north and northeast from the mid-Neolithic period (around 4500 BCE) through the early centuries of the Common Era. What makes this discourse particularly interesting is the way it restores agency to historically marginalized eastern peoples, among them the Okchŏ, Ye, Yilou, and Mohe, groups that have long been treated as peripheral "others" within west-centered Korean historical narratives. The geography of the past looks very different depending on where you choose to stand.

The issue closes with Remco E. Breuker and Wonkyung Choi's documentation of a brush conversation, or *p'iltam*, between the Dutch Sinologist-diplomat Robert van Gulik and the Korean intellectual Chŏng Inbo during van Gulik's 1949 visit to Seoul. Conducted in Literary Sinitic, this exchange is a fine example of a transnational communication genre that enabled East Asian intellectuals who did not share a spoken language to converse through the written word. It also reminds us that "Korea" as a unit of analysis has always been embedded in wider networks of knowledge and conversation.

Taken together, these five articles ask us to reconsider how we draw the boundaries of Korean history and who gets to represent it. They reflect the journal's conviction that historiography is a social fact, shaped by the positions and purposes of those who practice it, and that the best scholarship remains alert to this condition. We hope this issue provokes the kind of curiosity and conversation that *Korean Histories* has always aspired to foster.

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