

**Cultural Exchanges Between Korea and the West:  
Artifacts and Intangible Heritage**

edited by Jong-Chol An and Ariane Perrin

# Introduction

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This publication presents nine selected papers from the First International Conference of the East and West in Korean Studies Project (AKS-2020-INC-2230010), *Cultural Exchanges between Korea and the West: Artifacts and Intangible Heritage*, which was held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in May 2021. From an interdisciplinary approach and transnational perspectives, scholars from various fields, such as history, heritage studies, history of art, religious studies, and museum studies, focused on cultural exchanges and historical encounters between Korea and the West from premodern times up to the present, in terms of cultural artifacts and intangible heritage. Three papers, in particular, examine the earliest photographic records of Korea by Western travelers and diplomats in the late Chosŏn period.

The exchange between East and West is a clichéd topic to some readers because human history is full of international relationships, particularly between Asia and Europe, a phenomenon that has been more conspicuous since the late nineteenth century. However, in Korean Studies, the relationship between East and West has been understood more from the perspective of the cultural exchanges between the US and Korea, sometimes via Japan. Thus, we are pleased to provide the readers with this volume of cultural exchanges between East and West because most papers deal with diverse aspects of the artistic relationship between Europe and Korea.

Historically, Venice is a unique place where the cultural and commercial relationship between Europe and Asia was conducted. There-

fore, it is natural to publish this volume of cultural exchange in history with a Venetian publisher. The Editors selected the papers best representing the main themes of the conference, all with anonymous peer reviews being conducted in advance. In some cases, it is necessary to develop further research. We believe all these papers will contribute to a better understanding of the cultural aspects of Korean Studies vis-à-vis international society, particularly with Europe, from the late nineteenth century to the present. Thus, the Editors believe that future research on Korean and European relationships from the cultural aspect will develop further from this edited volume.

In Chapter 1 of Burglind Jungmann's "Chosŏn Entering the International Arena: Three Witnesses", she traced three important Western travelers, Isabella Bird, Burton Holmes, and Jack London, who went to Korea during the 1880s to 1905, a turbulent era for the last phase of the Chosŏn dynasty. Jungmann did not just trace their different views but also introduced their photographs so that it is possible to compare their publications and their photographs, which were in color, even at that time.

In Chapter 2 by Adrien Carbonnet, "The Belgium-Korea Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation of 1901", the author traced the diplomatic ties between the Empire of Korea and the Kingdom of Belgium, which had not been analyzed thoroughly. This diplomatic relationship occurred a little later than other major European powers. The treaty shows two similar but slightly different motives between the two countries because Korea was interested in international neutrality. At the same time, Belgium had developed an economic interest in the Far East. Carbonnet also analyzed the treaty's contents and its place in history.

In Chapter 3, "Spanish Writers in Korea Under Occupation: The Contrasting Views of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Gaspar Tato Cumming", Alvaro Trigo Maldonado traced two interesting visitors who went to Korea during the late Chosŏn period and in the early twentieth century. This analysis is very scanty because there were few visitors to the Korean peninsula from Spain. What is interesting from Trigo Maldonado's point of view is that the two visitors were very different in political views: one was anti-fascist and the other fascist. Their ideas or opinions about the Korean peninsula reflected their political stances rather than the reality of the Korean peninsula.

Elena Khokhlova (Chapter 4), presents an eight-panel screen painted on silk and kept at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera) in Saint-Petersburg in her paper, "Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn Screen from the Kunstkamera Collection: Question of Attribution". Named by the museum as a *Screen with Views of the Kŭmgangsan Mountains Ranges*, it supposedly represents the Diamond Mountains. The screen was donated to the museum by Dmitry Dobrotin, who received it as a gift

in the early 1950s while working in Pyongyang. Attributed to the late Chosŏn period painter, Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759), famed for his so-called 'true-view' landscape paintings, this folded screen raises questions as to its authenticity. According to Elena Khokhlova, it is a forgery based on the style, the painting techniques that differ from the painter's usual use of strokes and dots, and the confusion in the themes of the landscapes. Forgeries of the works of this painter were known as early as the eighteenth century.

Franklin Rausch's paper (Chapter 5), "Crossroads: The Meetings of Korea and the World Through Pilgrimage Routes", deals with the fascinating aspect of Korean Catholicism by looking at the three holy pilgrimage routes. As the author indicates, the Catholic belief was traditionally interpreted as imperial aggression in the Korean peninsula or symptoms of modernity challenging feudal or pre-modern Korean oppression. Thus, beyond this dichotomy, Rausch deals with the Korean and the Vatican's recognition of the Catholic heritage in Korea by showing the geographical locality. In this sense, we believe that the material culture of Korean heritage should be approached more through Korean and international perspectives.

Codruta Sintionean's research paper (Chapter 6), "South Korean Heritage Diplomacy. Sharing Expertise on Conservation with the World", focuses on Korean policy towards heritage, which genuinely started in the mid-1990s when Korean heritage was first nominated in the prestigious World Heritage list of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Sintionean argues that since then, the South Korean government ardently deals with UNESCO and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites, the advisory body of UNESCO) to enlist Korean heritage and sets the global standard. Thus, the South Korean government actively engaged with the UNESCO forum for its voice, so several international events adopted globally recognized declarations and recommendations by citing "Seoul Declarations". This paper contributes to understanding South Korean engagement in cultural diplomacy and heritage.

Chikako Shigemori Bučar (Chapter 7) presents in her paper "Maritime, Christianity, and Adventure: Slovenian Discovery of Korea" the earliest encounters between Koreans and Slovenian travelers from the late Chosŏn period based on the study of picture postcards, photographs, and artifacts from East Asia, which are currently held in museum and library collections in Slovenia. The Jesuit scholar Ferdinand Hallerstein (1703-1774), an official at the Chinese court in Beijing in the eighteenth century, initiated the first direct contact between persons from Slovenia and Korea. He held an important position at the Qing imperial court where he served as the head of the Imperial Board of Astronomy from 1746 until he died in 1774. Among three other groups of people from central Europe who had traveled

to Korea between the 1890s and 1930s were members of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, Christian missionaries of the Benedictine order stationed in Wonsan, and the female adventurer Alma M. Karlin (1889-1950) who traveled through Korea in 1923.

In her paper, Yizhou Wang (Chapter 8), “When Camera Encountered ‘Chosŏn Beauties’”. Photographs of *Kisaengs*, Postcards, and Tourism from the 1880s to Colonial-Period Korea”, focuses on two categories of photographs of female entertainers known as *kisaeng* dating from 1880 to 1910, also in the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945). American travelers and diplomats did the earliest photographic and movie records of *kisaeng* in the late Chosŏn period when they epitomized and idealized Korean traditional culture using these female beauties. Burton Holmes (1870-1958), in particular, was able to film the only known footage of imperial *kisaeng* during the short-lived Korean Empire (1897-1910). His photographs offer a rare testimony to their daily life as professional entertainers at the palace. This contrasts the later staged photographs of *kisaeng* posing in official studios or outdoor settings. Precisely, with the development of tourism during the Japanese rule of Korea, the images of these ‘Chosŏn Beauties’ would be widely used as popular picture postcards for Japanese and foreign tourists, where they would also serve politically to promote the idea of a ‘feminized’ and civilized Korea in the Japanese empire-building context of the early twentieth century, and as such, of a ‘colonial modernity’. This modernity was also associated with the ‘Westernization’ of the *kisaeng* figures who adopted Western-style clothing and accessories as early as 1900.

In her paper, “Mapping the Earth and Ordering the Heavens. The Circulation and Transformation of Jesuit World Maps and Start Charts in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty”, Yoonjung Seo (Chapter 9) investigates the exchange of cartographic and astronomical knowledge between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea which would have an impact on Chosŏn’s traditional worldview. She explores Sino-European style world maps and astronomical charts produced at the royal court of Chosŏn during the eighteenth century. Their folded screen format was a novel form, previously unseen in the history of cartography in East Asia, where albums, hanging scrolls, and folded maps were preferred. Before direct contact with Jesuit missionaries in Korea in the nineteenth century, Jesuit cartographic works and celestial charts were brought back from China to Korea by the Chosŏn envoys sent to China. These maps would be reproduced under royal patronage, adapting the Western model to the standard format of documentary painting in practice at the Chosŏn court, which included the list of participants with their official titles. The author does a socio-cultural analysis of the historical and political function of the folded screen maps and their significance to the Chosŏn king. The heaven and earth maps were viewed as agents of royal authority over the ‘order’ of time and space.

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