

International Postgraduate Workshop on Korean Studies

February 28th, 2025

Organizer

Center for Korean Studies and Research “Yun Dong-ju”
University for Foreigners of Siena

Collaboration

University of Malaga, Spain - Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany

This workshop is designed to invite PhD students and scholars researching Korea-related topics. In the course of this workshop, participants will gain a greater awareness of the value of their own research design. This type of training will provide a valuable opportunity for the next generation of Korean Studies scholars to strengthen their research skills and, at the same time, enable them to build a network. It will also enhance participants' research by receiving feedback and mentoring from established international scholars in the field of Korean Studies. The workshop is designed to facilitate discussion and cooperation among participants, allowing them to exchange views on their research and share their experiences.

Workshop process:

- (1) Each participant will be required to make a presentation (15 min.) of their current research.
- (2) Each presentation will be followed by a round of comments and discussion with the possibility to focus in depth on the key issues of the participants' research.
- (3) The workshop will be held in morning and afternoon shifts. A coffee break and lunch are included in the program.
- (4) Although it is indicated in the program that two professors will lead the comments and discussion, it is expected that the rest of the attendees will also participate.

Participating Professors:

- Prof. Yonson Ahn, Goethe University (Germany)
- Prof. Imsuk Jung, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Prof. Kukjin Kim, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Prof. Luis Botella, University of Malaga (Spain)

Participating Speakers:

- Alexandra Fuchs, Goethe University (Germany)
- Sara Bochicchio, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Hilary Cannarella, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Ilaria Lanè, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Fabrizio Marcucci, University for Foreigners of Siena (Italy)
- Maria del Mar Blanco, University of Malaga (Spain)
- Alejandro Soto, University of Malaga (Spain)

Workshop Program

Friday, February 28th 2025 - Room **323**

University for Foreigners of Siena

11:45-12:00 Inauguration of the Workshop

Welcoming Prof. Imsuk Jung, University for Foreigners of Siena

12:00-13:30 Morning Session: Presentations of Postgraduate Students

12:00-12:15 The Interplay of Body and Language in the Works of Kim Hyesoon, Ch'oe Sŭngja, and Han Kang *Sara Bochicchio* (University for Foreigners of Siena)

12:15-12:30 Gender studies through adapted literature. Comparison between women's stories in *Cheonggu Yadam* and *Wolgan Yadam*
Alejandro Soto (University of Malaga)

12:30-12:45 Translating Han Kang across languages: observing the subjectivity of the translator and the process of literary translation
Ilaria Lanè (University for Foreigners of Siena)

12:45-13:30 Notes and Feedback: Prof. Yonson Ahn, Prof. Imsuk Jung; Discussion

13:30-15:00 LUNCH BREAK

15:00-17:00 Afternoon Session: Presentations of Postgraduate Students

15:00-15:15 Analysis of Labor Movements of Female Factory Workers Through the Diaries of Worker Kim Gyeong Sook *Maria del Mar Bianco* (University of Malaga)

15:15-15:30 Film censorship in South Korea under the Japanese regime: a case study of the silent film 'Arirang' *Hilary Cannarella* (University for Foreigners of Siena)

15:30-15:45 The Making of Glocal Universities in South Korea: A Quantitative Content Analysis of University Development Strategies
Alexandra Fuchs (Goethe University of Frankfurt)

15:45-16:00 New Korean approach to the *Talmud*: Jewish tradition in dialogue with Korean modernity
Fabrizio Marcucci (University for Foreigners of Siena)

16:00-16:15 Coffee Break

16:15-17:15 Notes and Feedback: Luis Botella, Prof. Kukjin Kim; Discussion

17:15-17:30 Final Remarks and Closing

Book of Abstracts

Sara Bochicchio (University for Foreigners of Siena)

The Interplay of Body and Language in the Works of Kim Hyesoon, Ch'oe Sŭngja, and Han Kang

In 2024, South Korea received its first Nobel Prize in Literature, awarded to novelist and poet Han Kang. That same year, poet Kim Hyesoon was honored with the National Book Critics Circle Award for Best Poetry Collection for *Phantom Pain Wings*. As global attention turns to Korea, women's literature is gaining recognition for its critical examination of a deeply patriarchal society still grappling with unresolved historical traumas.

This research aims to trace the evolution of feminist literature in South Korea, focusing on how female writers assert agency through innovative linguistic strategies and evocative imagery. Feminist literature in Korea can be traced back to colonial-era authors such as Kim Iryŏp, Na Hyesŏk, and Kim Myŏngsun. However, it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s that a new wave of female writers emerged, experimenting with language to develop a distinct *écriture féminine*. Pioneering figures such as Kim Hyesoon, Ch'oe Sŭngja, Yi Yŏnju, and Kim Sŭnghŭi challenged the traditional framework of *yŏryu siin* to create a provocative new language for women's writing. Han Kang inherited this legacy, crafting prose that often blurs the boundaries between fiction and poetry.

This project will focus on the works of Kim Hyesoon, Ch'oe Sŭngja, and Han Kang, analyzing their depictions of grotesque and subversive bodies—frequently suffering, decaying, or dead—and the ways these bodies articulate the unspeakable through surreal and evocative language. While drawing inspiration from the surrealist legacy of Yi Sang, their works are also deeply rooted in Korean traditions, such as *muga* and *naebang kasa*. Central themes include mental and physical illness, transgressive bodies, and the relationship between humans and the natural world. These will be examined through the critical frameworks of feminist theory, post-structuralism, and ecofeminism.

Alejandro Soto (University of Malaga)

Gender studies through adapted literature. Comparison between women's stories in *Cheonggu Yadam* and *Wolgan Yadam*

The present research focuses on a comparative study of two different literary forms of the *yadam* genre that attempt to convey the same information through the adaptation of tales. It's important to emphasize the significance of comparing the stories of women between *Wolgan Yadam* and *Cheonggu Yadam*, focusing on the portrayal of women and their evolving identities over time. This comparative analysis sheds light on how the depiction of women in literature evolved and reflects broader societal changes during the period.

Originally, *Yadam* circulated as manuscripts written in Chinese characters, serving as significant sources for studies on Joseon society due to their reflection of the era's reality

amidst drastic social and economic changes. Derived from the *pilgijaprok* tradition, it involves the transcription of orally transmitted popular stories, reflecting the specific historical conditions of the late Joseon era and often intertwining with historical events. *Cheonggu yadam* is a collection from the end of the Joseon dynasty that deals with a variety of themes. However, there is a great interest in showing the conditions of the lower society. To date, about 15 different versions of what is believed to have been compiled for the first time in the mid-19th century are known.

During the Japanese colonial period, starting in the early 20th century, *Yadam* gained popularity, fostering a broad network of writers and readers previously unfamiliar with these stories. This popularity led to significant evolution in *Yadam* narratives, reflecting the adverse conditions faced by the Korean people under colonial rule and fueling a resurgence in the study of Joseon history and language in the 1920s as a nationalist endeavor. Out of this context emerged the "Yadam Movement" spearheaded by Kim Jingu with the establishment of the Joseon Yadamsa company in 1927. Despite challenges in disseminating historical narratives due to high levels of illiteracy under colonial rule, the movement employed oral storytelling as a more accessible method of historical education and entertainment. Those significant efforts culminated in the founding of *Wolgan Yadam* magazine by author Baeknam Yoon in 1934, serving as a primary source for this research. The magazine spanned six years, comprising 56 volumes collected in six books, with its last publication in 1939. It aimed to select historically interesting stories for the general public, embellishing them to enhance historical and moral understanding without altering the original intent. This period marked a crucial juncture in Korean history, with efforts to reclaim and preserve cultural and historical identity amidst colonial oppression.

The study aims to delve deeply into one of the magazines published during the 1930s, *Wolgan Yadam*, and one of the most famous *yadam* recompiled around 1864, examining its content and focusing on the image of women in *yadam* literature within the socio-cultural context of the time in both cases. Research objectives include analyzing the significance of a Korean Language magazine during the highly censored Japanese colonial period, categorizing the themes of included women's tales, examining their moral teachings and societal reflections, and exploring the impact on Korean identity and cultural resistance. The study seeks to evaluate the importance of women in *yadam* and its societal impact during the colonial period, considering their role in disseminating cultural, and historical heritage and restricted education, compared to Joseon's literature.

This last preview is specifically about the translation of the first two stories, the original and the adaptation of the respective work. Thanks to this first contact, we have been able to observe how the theme classified as "virtuous woman" is the one that stands out among the different themes and how the phenomenon of the *gisaeng* also appears quite frequently in these stories. These were women educated in different modalities for the purpose of entertaining the men of the higher classes. In the translation process of these stories, we can see how "marriage", "filial piety" and "purity" appear as the ideals for women, while those referring to "goodness" or "loyalty" are mostly male ideals.

After this translation process, the main difference we have identified is the difference between a pure, innocent, heroic image of the original stories with an image of guilt and a pessimistic reflection of humanity shown in the adaptations. We can say that the main characteristic to differentiate between the original and the adapted version is portrayed in the very evolution of

this literary genre. Through the study of other *yadam*, the reading of their stories conveys a sense of fiction and fantasy of a folktale, guided by Confucian thought and filial to the extreme. However, reading the adaptation in *Wolgan Yadam*, one can sense a world much more realistic and far removed from the fiction. The story is reinterpreted and censored on many occasions. However, it is important to note that the historical representation and the moral are maintained.

Ilaria Lanè (University for Foreigners of Siena)

Translating Han Kang across languages: observing the subjectivity of the translator and the process of literary translation.

The research gravitates around the question whether it is possible to create a rule for translating Korean texts of literature, focusing on the works of Han Kang and poetry translation. Firstly, the main points will be briefly discussed to explain the reason and purpose they are being taken into consideration, for the direction of the research. This will be followed by the addressing of each of the points. The initial reflections will go over the Korean writer Han Kang, giving seeds of thought to prepare the ground for the following. The works from which examples will be taken from are *The White Book* (2016), *Human Acts* (2014) and *The Vegetarian* (2007). The topic of translation from Korean will be developed from two points of view: one, from the experiences of current translators of Han Kang's works, namely the English translator Deborah Smith; another, from the general theoretical aspects and risks that translating a Korean work of literature can present. New items or a review of past items will be introduced, around translating from Korean to other languages, forged by the experience of translating from Korean to Italian. The absence of certain answers to the main question feeds into the aims of this academic research, giving the chance to explore countless fields to enrich the terms of translation from Korean. In conclusion, by joining practical examples and theoretical notions, it will be shown how much the study of Han Kang's works comes to be endlessly useful for the study of translation.

María del Mar Blanco (University of Malaga)

Analysis of Labor Movements of Female Factory Workers Through the Diaries of Worker Kim Gyeong Sook

This study explores the experience of factory workers in South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s, a period characterized by rapid economic development under the government of Park Chung Hee. From a gender and labor history perspective, it analyzes the crucial role of these women, predominantly young rural migrants, in the labor movement and emerging autobiographical literature. Adverse working conditions and social disdain fueled their resistance, leading to the formation of unions within manufacturing factories and marking the beginning of the democratic labor movement (*minju nojo undong*).

The case of Kim Gyeong Sook, a worker and union leader at YH Trading Company, is used as an example to illustrate these dynamics. Through her personal diary, available in the archives of the Korea Democracy Foundation, the motivations behind her participation in labor activism are examined. The abrupt closure of the company and the violent suppression of protests that resulted in her death underscore the intersection of labor struggles with state oppression.

Furthermore, this study considers how these women documented their experiences in diaries, creating a literary narrative that articulated their aspirations and demands. This interdisciplinary approach not only sheds light on the role of female workers in South Korea's economic and social history but also demonstrates how their voices have shaped collective memory and contemporary debates on equity and labor rights.

Hilary Cannarella (University for Foreigners of Siena)

Film censorship in South Korea under the Japanese regime: a case study of the silent film 'Arirang'

Censorship in society plays a dual role, both protecting and oppressing it simultaneously, constraining free thought and modifying it to align with the dictates of a destructive despotic regime. This research aims to raise awareness of a seemingly forgotten past, yet still subtly exercised, almost imperceptible but omnipresent. Through the exploration of sources and attended seminars, I will delve into censorship within the historical framework of the Japanese regime in South Korea. The persuasion of the censorship phenomenon exploited as an alibi for the delegitimization of freedom of expression will be treated, highlighting its discriminatory power and the psychological effects on society.

A historical overview of Japan's colonial phases on the Korean peninsula will follow, including the introduction of the first cinematic regulations dictated by Japanese Admiral Saitō, the main phases of surveillance and screening, and the presence of the so-called *pyōnsa*, the artistic readers.

The silent film *Arirang* by Na Un'gyu, produced in 1926, also known as a lost film, will be taken as a case study, as its tracks were dispersed after 1950. Here, people are protagonists of a long battle for emancipation against the occupation, in a popular cry reflected precisely by the traditional folk song "Arirang".

From the research carried out, the idea of cinema emerges as a fundamental means of expression to spread awareness of the horrors of the Japanese occupation. The reality of a country rich in nuances and joy, artistically affirmed, is today the result of a people united, for better or for worse, by the hunger for life.

Alexandra Fuchs (Goethe University of Frankfurt)

The Making of Glocal Universities in South Korea: A Quantitative Content Analysis of University Development Strategies

Ministry of Education announced the "Glocal University 30" (GU30) project in March 2023. The aim of the project is to develop a total of 30 Korean higher education institutions into "glocal universities" by providing them with a funding of approx. 100~150 billion won each over the course of 5 years. The GU30 project is both grounded in ideas of internationalization and regionalization of higher education as well as neoliberal education policies that have continuously shaped Korean higher education development since Korea has committed to globalization efforts in the mid-1990s. This raises the question of how Korean higher education

development can be understood in the context of global trends of international higher education.

This research aims to understand which trends shape the glocalization of Korean universities and how they align with global trends. Applying a quantitative content analysis, project strategies of ten Korean universities that were chosen in the first round of selection for the GU30 project in 2023 will be analyzed to uncover recurring themes, focus areas, and innovative strategies. Findings from this research can offer insights into how Korean universities balance local and global aspirations of higher education development while highlighting disparities in thematic emphasis among institutions. Additionally, it serves as a first data-driven evaluation of the potential impacts the GU30 project has on the future of Korean higher education.

Fabrizio Marcucci (University for Foreigners of Siena)

New Korean approach to the *Talmud*: Jewish tradition in dialogue with Korean modernity

This work aims to compare newer and older Korean approaches to the Talmud, the foundational Jewish text, while putting a new approach and the issues described in it within the wider context of contemporary Korean society and culture and Korean-Jewish relations, including philosemitism and antisemitism. Books called “Talmud” have been published in Korea for several decades now, but they have little in common with the original Talmud, a vast work made up of dozens of dense books dealing with a variety of subjects and forming - among other things - the basis for halakhah, Jewish law. These short Korean-language texts are instead usually presented as self-help books, as financial advice (purporting to teach the “business secrets” of Jews), as pseudo-Christian literature or even as children’s literature, catering to the many parents in Korea who are heavily invested in their offspring’s education and often citing the famous statistic about 22.4% of Nobel prize winners being Jewish. By introducing one recent Korean Talmud book and analyzing how it compares to older books of the same category I will describe how it approaches the source material from a more authentic point of view in order to derive meaning that aims to be relevant to the lived experience of a contemporary Korean person.