20TH ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE ON EAST ASIA AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

From 1991 to this year, the Graduate Student Conference on East Asia at Columbia University has grown with the field of East Asian Studies. This February’s 20th installment of the conference was a great success due to the generosity of sponsors, faculty participants, volunteers, as well as the lively engagement by presenters from all over Asia, Europe, and North America.

This year, the Graduate Student Conference had a record-breaking 280 abstract submissions, 92 of which were chosen to form 30 panels presented over the period of two days. More than 10% of the participants came from overseas institutions, while U.S. participants traveled from 15 states across the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast. Of the Columbia presenters and discussants, both PhD and MA students were well represented among departments of East Asian Lan-

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SHARING FRAGRANCE: PRINCE YI HAEUNG (1820-1898)’S ORCHID PAINTINGS BY DR. JIYEON KIM, POST-DOCTORAL VISITING SCHOLAR

Prince Yi Haeung, the father of King Gojong and one of the most important political figures at the end of the Joseon Dynasty in Korea, is also known as a prolific orchid painter. Currently, works by Yi Haeung number over 100 pieces and exclusively consist of orchid paintings. It is extremely unusual in the history of Joseon painting that a person of such a high status produced so many paintings. Moreover, many of them are large scale screens with compositions that are highly schematic and repetitive.

An investigation of Yi Haeung’s works suggests that most of his remaining works, at least the large scale paintings produced after 1874, were intended for certain recipients. Furthermore, an analysis of the recipients of the painting reveals that these paintings had specific social and political functions. While Yi Haeung’s orchid paintings have been regarded as a reflection of the “soft” face of the determined ruler and shrewd politician, I find that these paintings were also closely related to his agenda as a politician.

Yi Haeung’s paintings, produced in two different time periods of his long

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The Spring Semester of 2011 has been an eventful one for the CKR. We hosted a wide-ranging and well-attended set of colloquium talks, including Joel Wit of our own Weatherhead East Asian Institute, who spoke on U.S.-North Korea relations, Professor Mark Caprio of Rikkyo University on Japanese assimilation policies in colonial Korea, and Jose Fernandez, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, who discussed the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. On April 19th, CKR and Weatherhead co-sponsored a brown-bag talk by CKR post-doctoral fellow Tae-Ho Kim dealing with the development of the mechanical typewriter in South Korea. Dr. Kim’s talk was part of the Weatherhead series “Material Objects and Bodies in Industrializing East Asia.”

In late April, I attended the Association for Asian Studies annual conference, held this year in Honolulu and organized jointly with the Europe-based International Convention of Asia Scholars. The Honolulu conference was the largest in the history of AAS, with some 7,000 attendees (contrary to rumor, not all of them spent the entire conference on the beach!) and Korea was particularly well-represented. There were about eighteen panels exclusively on Korea, and many others that included one or more papers on Korea. Looking ahead to the summer, in early July I will attend the first-ever Korea Foundation Assembly in Seoul. The Korean Foundation, which has been a generous supporter of Korean Studies at Columbia since the early 1990s, is organizing this event to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Foundation and has invited supported scholars around the world. Also in attendance will be my Columbia colleague Theodore Hughes, Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Korean Studies in the Humanities in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures.

On a much more somber note, it is with great sadness that I must acknowledge the loss of former CKR Director JaHyun Kim Haboush, King Sejong Professor of Korean Studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures. She passed away on January 30, 2011 after a long struggle with cancer. Professor Haboush, who received her Ph.D. from Columbia and joined the Columbia faculty eleven years ago after a distinguished career at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was a leading figure in Korean cultural and intellectual history. One of the world’s foremost scholars of the Choson Dynasty, Professor Haboush was the author of many important books, articles, and translations on Korean history and culture.

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Jiyeon Kim, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

political career, require attention in this sense. The first group consists of the paintings produced between 1874 and 1876 during his retreat to a mountain villa in Yangju after he stepped down from his ten years of regency.

This is when he started to paint a number of screens, especially the particular form of orchid painting called “uprooted orchids.” The old, withered orchids with long roots exposed are instantly associated with the image of the artist, who abruptly lost his political power.

No work of Yi Haeung dated before 1874 indicates a name of the painting’s recipient. Quite contrasting, most of the works produced during the Yangju years bear the names of the recipients. Many of the recipients appear to be Yi Haeung’s relatives. Yi Haeung had resorted to the royal family members to consolidate his own political ground, which he lacked at the beginning of his rule. At least until that time, Yi Haeung still depended upon the rural Confucian elite, especially to those of royal lineage for getting political support, and the sudden increase of Yi Haeung screen paintings given to his supporters can be seen as part of his effort to maintain his private relation-

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languages and Cultures, History, Religion, Anthropology, Art History, Political Science, and the School of International and Public Affairs. The studies variously focused on region, time period, methodology, and often with comparative and interdisciplinary orientations. The studies were impressive, exuding creativity and breadth of inquiry.

In addition, the conference is also greatly indebted to faculty participants, who served as speakers and panel discussants. Per tradition, Prof. Robert Hymes, Chair of the EALAC department, gave the opening remarks to welcome presenters as well as conference attendees. This year’s keynote address, entitled “Learn to Forget,” was presented by Prof. Paul Anderer, who reflected on the history of the Graduate Student Conference at Columbia from the unique perspective of having facilitated its creation and early continuance. The conference organizers also acknowledged the numerous faculty discussants, who took time out of their busy schedules to read participants’ papers, offer extensive comments and critiques, and moderate panel discussions: Prof. Charles Armstrong (Korean and East Asian History, Columbia), Prof. Robert Barnett (Tibetan Studies, Columbia), Prof. Steven Chung (Korean Cultural Studies, Princeton University), Prof. Dorothy Ko (Chinese History, Barnard College), Prof. Eugenia Lean (Chinese History, Columbia), Prof. Gregory Pflugfelder (Japanese History, Columbia), Prof. John Rajchman (Anthropology, Columbia), Prof. Annabella Pitkin (Asian and Middles Eastern Cultures, Barnard College), and Prof. Wei Shang (Chinese Literature, Columbia). The involvement of faculty participants not only generated wide interest and attendance at various panels, but more importantly helped maintain high standards of rigor and intellectual exchange—a major objective of the conference.

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ASSIMILATION AS A COLONIAL EXPERIMENT AND ITS LEGACY IN KOREA

Mark Caprio, Professor of Korean history in the College of Intercultural Communications at Rikkyo University presented “Assimilation as a Colonial Experiment and Its Legacy in Korea” on March 23, 2011. Professor Caprio began by contextualizing Japanese colonial experimentation in Korea with assimilation cases taking place in other parts of the world at this time. He compared and contrasted Western assimilation policies with those of Japan to explain how Japan made reference to imperialist models such as those employed by France and England to legitimize its own colonial policies. He then investigated the incongruence of Japanese colonial policies with Japanese assimilation rhetoric, which championed assimilation as a means of making Koreans fully equal citizens of the Empire. Professor Caprio employed the example of segregation and inequality of schooling systems to demonstrate the incongruence of Japanese rhetoric and policy.

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On February 9, 2011, Joel Wit, Senior Research Scholar of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University, delivered the first lecture of the 2011 Center for Korean Research Colloquium Series entitled “U.S.—North Korea Relations: Where Do We Go From Here?”

Deriving from his most recent visit to North Korea where he met with senior DPRK officials and also from his extensive experience working in U.S.—North Korea relations and in the State Department’s Office of Strategic Nuclear Policy, he presented his perspective on the failures of U.S. policies towards North Korea and their implications.

He cited the U.S.’s faulty assumption that China would support its policy agenda as a significant cause of U.S. policy failure. Wit described China as the “hole” in the sanctions regime because without China’s complete cooperation with the U.S. and South Korea, economic sanctions on North Korea would not reach the full level impact that they were designed to make.

To gain complete support from China, Wit advised that a middle ground engagement of North Korea with the U.S. is necessary. Furthermore, Wit commented that forcing the North to give up complete control of its nuclear program was not possible because of the nuclear program’s significance in North Korean national interest. However, he believes there is hope for progressive denuclearization.

Wit provided four implications for the future based on recent U.S. policies toward North Korea. Firstly, he stated that if the South and North Korea talks do not succeed, the U.S., South Korea, and Japan will most likely

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At the time of her death, Professor Haboush was in the midst of a groundbreaking book project on the Imjin Wars of the late sixteenth century. She will be greatly missed by her students, colleagues, and friends at Columbia and around the world.

Finally, I would like to welcome Esther H. Kim as the new student assistant for CKR, and to thank program coordinator Hyun Mi Corin once again for applying her great energy and organizational skills to the day-to-day running of the CKR. As always, the staff at Weatherhead has been extremely supportive and helpful in keeping CKR a going concern.

Have a wonderful summer and see you again in the fall.
To conclude, Professor Caprio commented on the legacy of Japanese colonization in Korea by examining the complications that arose in the process of Korean decolonization following World War II. Here he focused on how the concept of Japanese-ness lingered in Korea after liberation.

“Orchids, one of the four gentlemen or noble plants, had long served as a pictorial subject to convey political and social meaning.”

In 1876, Yi Haeung returned to Seoul. He was briefly brought back to power by the coup of the old army in 1882 but was soon after arrested by the Chinese army that arrived to suppress the rebels. Subsequently, Yi Haeung was detained in Tianjin for three years only to return in 1885.

The second group of works that is to be investigated in the context of this study was produced within the five or six years after he returned from China. This group consists of more than twenty dated paintings, mostly of similar orchid and rock compositions. The list of the recipients of the paintings produced in this period equally hints at the social and political function of Yi Haeung’s painting production. Among the works produced in this period, the earliest and most important painting is a hanging scroll painted for Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), the Chinese general who had taken charge of the Chinese army stationed in Korea and was also deeply involved in the domestic policy of Korea. Several paintings produced in the following years are dedicated to Chinese and Japanese individuals who were mostly likely involved in diplomatic matters. Considering that Yi Haeung, quite contrastingly from his earlier isolationist attitude, was attempting to regain his political influence among the foreign power struggle over Korea, the marked change in the recipients list is meaningful.

An examination of Yi Haeung’s works produced in two different periods suggests that many of his paintings had specific social functions. Orchids, one of the four gentlemen or noble plants, had long served as a pictorial subject to convey political and social meaning. Even though Yi Haeung appropriated the meaning of orchid as a symbol of detachment, protest, and self-statement, his orchid paintings had more defined social functions within his own social and political network. The invitation to “share fragrance” of his painted orchids is part of his undying attempts to build and consolidate his social and political connections.
Finally, the conference takes great pride in having been able to provide, with the help of hard-working student volunteers, a range of accommodations such as supplying AV equipments, hosting out-of-state and overseas participants who had limited lodging options, food and refreshments (keynote reception, breakfast, lunch, dinner banquet, coffee and tea service) for the full duration of the conference. The last of these represents a major component of the conference that goes beyond demonstrating the resourcefulness of Columbia’s East Asian Studies graduate student body; it was crucial in creating opportunities for participants to interact outside the formal setting of panel discussion, to further engage with the research interests of their peers, and to foster long-lasting professional relationships with graduate student scholars in the field.

The conference is currently in the process of implementing, for the first time, a post-conference online survey to collect comments and suggestions from participants. Through such feedback, the conference organizers hope the Graduate Student Conference on East Asia will continue to improve and uphold its international reputation and serve the needs of graduate students in East Asian Studies as a forum of professional and intellectual exchange.
MEET THE KOREAN STUDIES GROUP

The Korean Studies Group (KSG) is a graduate student organization at Columbia University that gathers once a month. As an informal academic forum, it offers an opportunity for students of Korean studies to share ideas and insights.

In the past, the KSG has hosted advanced students to present their research work, held mock job talks, and provided orientation workshops for new graduate students.

With an introductory meeting to kick off the year, KSG has so far hosted a roundtable discussion with Dr. Jiyeon Kim, a Korean Foundation postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Korean Research whose work focuses on art and social networks in late-Choson Korea.

KSG has also co-hosted a graduate student roundtable with other regional student groups. Four presenters, from Korea, China, Japan and Tibet gave their insights and perspectives on using non-textual resources and interdisciplinary methodology. Zachary Hooker, an anthropology PhD student, presented his work, which examines how political and economic decisions in modern South Korean history have determined the range of media technologies available to the contemporary film and media industry. KSG also organized a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with Dr. Soyoung Lee, curator of the museum’s Korea collection.

As a student organization with a common focus on Korea, graduate students in various fields take this opportunity to reach out across disciplines, sharing their work in an informal and collegial setting.

This article was contributed by Jon Kief and Sixiang Wang, co-organizers of the Korean Studies Group.

U.S.—NORTH KOREA RELATIONS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Joel Wit, Senior Research Scholar of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute

return to the policy of strategic patience, relying on the United Nations to take action on North Korea’s nuclear program. Secondly, China will most likely continue to support its ally North Korea economically and continue to exclude itself from sanction enforcements on the North. Thirdly, the North Korean government will continue to build its nuclear program.

Lastly, he is uncertain of how the South Korean government will react to North Korea’s continued development of its nuclear program, but the danger of war in the Korean peninsula will be likely. Concluding his lecture, he provided two suggestions on avoiding these implications. He urged direct U.S.—North Korea talks, even if the South does not desire this arrangement and direct South—North talks, as urged by both the U.S. and China.

Complete audio transcripts of lectures can be found at: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/media-library.html
Fernandez stressed the need to ratify KORUS as soon as possible due to global competition for free trade agreements with South Korea.

He noted that the updated agreement has been winning bipartisan support, and that President Obama hopes to submit KORUS to Congress within the next two weeks and secure its approval within the next two months. He concluded by stating that the U.S. goals for KORUS are to establish open, free, transparent, and fair trade, and to help domestic and global economic growth.

This event was co-sponsored by the Center for Korean Research, the APEC Study Center, and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute.