

New Scholarship on North Korean Cultural Climate

Song Chi-Man
Editor-in-Chief

The feature articles in the March 2024 (Vol. 10, No. 1) issue of *S/N Korean Humanities* add a new complement to the discussion on North Korean cultural climate as seen through its literary history and defectors' consumer perceptions.

The first article by Feng Yingdun (Pingdingshan University) examines North Korean narratives of ancient fictions in the 1950s. In the mid-1950s, North Korea's socialist construction efforts were carried out across the entire society. Even in the field of classical literature, the history of classical novels was written from a Marxist-Leninist perspective to educate the masses. Yi Ŭng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng made the first attempt to write the North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s using a Marxist-Leninist methodology, which was based on their research on the history of ancient novels in the pre division period. In 1959, under the influence of the Chollima Movement, the first collectively written book of literary history, *Chosŏn munhak t'ongsa* [The complete history of Korean literature], was published by the Literature Research Center of the Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore, the North Korean narrative about classical novels in the 1950s took two forms. Compared to what had been written by Yi Ŭng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng in the mid-1950s, the part of *The Complete History of Korean Literature* devoted to classic literary history was more detailed and added more critical logic, such as humanitarianism. The North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s is different from the South Korean version of the same period, and it is also different from the North Korean history of ancient novels after the establishment of the Juche Literary Theory. In other words, the North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s can be seen as having a unique transitional character amid a period in which the North Korean system was being established.

The second article by Kim Young Ji (Kangwon National University) and Jung Marianne (Comenius University Bratislava) unveils consumer perceptions regarding goods and services offered by North Korean defectors in South

Korea's market. A comprehensive online survey involving 42 respondents showed insights on consumer behaviours, satisfaction levels, and preferences concerning the defectors' goods and services, shedding light on areas for improvement. While respondents highly valued the fundamental quality and prices of the goods and services, a significant number of respondents purchased North Korean food for its specific "taste" and also out of the desire to support their North Korean peers, revealing their consumer backgrounds. Personal interest is identified as a significant motivation, which suggests the cautious but intentional use of personal interest to fulfill consumer demands. Meanwhile, respondents report lower satisfaction levels with regard to such aspects as packaging, design, and advertising. Therefore, continual efforts in quality enhancement and strategic marketing are vital for North Korean defector businesses to fortify their market presence and broaden their customer base, ultimately driving profitability and entrepreneurial success.

The feature articles are followed by Nam Gyeong-woo (Eulji University)'s book review of *Naengjön-üi manyödül: han'guk chönjaeng-gwa yösöngjuüi p'yöngghwaundong* [Witches of the Cold War: The Korean War and Feminist Peace Movement]. The March 2024 issue is concluded by an interview with Du-yul Song, a professor at the University of Münster in Germany and a political exile from South Korea for over 40 years due to his ties with North Korea, by Professor Young-Kyun Park (Konkuk University).

Since its establishment in 2009, the IHU has pioneered the concept of "Humanities for Unification" as a unique framework for thinking about unification as a process of communication, healing, and integration of all Koreans in South Korea, North Korea, and diasporic communities. As the IHU's English-language Korean studies journal, *S/N Korean Humanities* has played a unique bridge-building role between the worlds of *Han'gukhak* and *Chosönhak* in the promotion of "Integrated Korean Studies." *S/N Korean Humanities* will continue to reinvent itself as a forum of debate for a

humanities-based approach to unification and Korean studies.

Editor-in-Chief
Song Chi-Man
S/N Korean Humanities