

Of Memories Lost and Found: The May 18  
Kwangju Democracy Movement Forty Years Later

**Kim Sung-Min**  
Editor-in-Chief



The March 2020 issue (Vol. 6, No. 1) of *S/N Korean Humanities* presents the latest cutting-edge analysis of the May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement (1980), as our tribute to the victims and in honor of its enduring legacy for democracy and human rights. The articles under the special theme “Of Memories Lost and Found: The May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement Forty Years Later” explore questions about how, what, and who to remember from new perspectives and approaches. The following research articles highlight previously under-specified elements of Kwangju and expand its comparative range of analysis.

The first article by Mikyung Kim (independent researcher) compares two sites of state violence in Asia, Japan’s Hiroshima and Korea’s Kwangju, in order to analyze commemoration of state-initiated civilian sufferings. Despite common symptoms of traumatic experiences at individual level, commemorative practices exhibit striking differences at societal level. Hiroshima is still in mourning over its own victimhood, while remaining relatively ambivalent about Japan’s role as the perpetrator of other countries. The controversies surrounding the renovation project of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum from 1985 until 1994 show the city’s willingness to promote its moral authority as the anti-nuclear pacifist leader, whereas the municipal leadership conceded to make political compromises. Kwangju, the place of civilian massacre in May 1980, on the other hand, has undergone dramatic transformation from the site of anti-government protests to the mecca of Korea’s democratization movement. The trajectory of the May 18 Democracy Cemetery shows Kwangju’s ideational transformation from a victim to the hero of Korean democracy. A cross-cultural comparison of the two commemorative sites of state violence shows the way in which Japanese cultural modes of ambivalence and situational logic permit ambivalence, whereas Korean cultural modes of self-victimization and resistance negate a post-hoc aggrandizement of the tragic past.

The second article by Hannes Mosler (University of Duisburg-Essen) analyzes commemorative speeches on the May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement by South Korean presidents to investigate how the historical events have been interpreted across alternating political camps in power. Among various other issues regarding the interpretation and evaluation of the country's political history, the May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement is still not fully accounted for its causes and consequences, and remains contested by conservative forces forty years after the events occurred. While there is a rich body of research on the May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement including the topic of memory politics, presidential commemorative speeches so far have been neglected despite the fact that they represent an important mode of political communication in modern societies regarding the production of authoritative remembrance narratives. This article contributes to filling this void by examining all past May 18 Memorial Day addresses by presidents between 1993 and 2019, that is a total of 11 speeches. The study finds a clear tendency in conservative presidents' speeches toward rhetorical tactics that aim to depoliticize still-contested issues surrounding the May 18 Kwangju Democracy Movement with the effect of potentially forestalling critical engagement with its causes and consequences, and thus frustrating reconciliation.

Gooyong Kim (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania)'s article reconsiders the status of academic and cultural recognitions of the bereaved mothers' activism in the post-Kwangju Uprising. Treating film as a political discourse, he analyzes the implications of the cinematic representations of the mothers, which is structured by and structure social conditions of their existence. Investigating how films represent mothers who became activists after having lost a child during the Uprising, he contends that they have not received due recognition for their socio-political contributions, due to the epistemological hegemony of Confucian patriarchy. Examining female characters in *26 Years* and *1987: When the Day Comes*, Kim reveals how the films rely on the gendered

nature of representation, or un-representation of female activists. Hoping to help redress this negligence, Kim's article calls for a more just acknowledgement of women's struggles, or representational egalitarianism, as a necessary step to re-learning the hidden lessons of Kwangju.

In addition to the special feature on Kwangju, the March 2020 issue of *S/N Korean Humanities* also presents two articles by scholars of North Korea's *Chosŏnhak*. Chong Yongsu, a *Zainichi* scholar at Korea University of Japan (affiliated with the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan) examines the psychological aftermath of the Kantō Massacre of 1926 among the survivors' and bereaved families' experiences. The article seeks to draw a connection between said experiences and their movements after the tragedy, focusing on the fear planted in the ethnic Koreans as psychological damage caused by the massacre. This fear manifested itself in various physical behaviors such as fleeing, hiding, or pretending to be Japanese, which defined the lives of the traumatized ethnic Koreans long after the massacre. Although the facts of the massacre had been disseminated throughout the Korean community by students and workers, what was significant in the memory of the massacre was the repeated issue of rumors about and persecution of Koreans in Japan even after the Great Kantō Earthquake. The situation worsened after Japan's final defeat in the war and led to the rise of fears among the ethnic Koreans of being massacred, which led to the resurgence of ethnic Koreans fleeing as they had during and immediately following the Kantō Earthquake.

"Locating *Kūmo sinhwa* within the History of World Literature" is an article by Kang Pokshil who is a faculty member at Kim Il Sung University. The article was originally presented at the Tumen River Forum on October 13, 2018, during its Literature Session entitled "Dialogue between East and West: Literature Communication and Interaction." We were pleased to engage with North Korean scholars on this occasion and share a fruitful discussion on Korean literature. Dr. Kang's article explores *Kūmo sinhwa*, the collection of stories by the fifteenth-century Chosŏn philosopher and

writer Kim Sisŭp (1435–1493) within the history of world literature by focusing on its unique contribution as one of the earliest forms of prose fiction and wider impact on the literary tradition of other countries. Kim's *Kŭmo sinhwa* was a work of prose fiction that appeared at a relatively early period in history and an important work that reflects the principles and development of the literary tradition in Chosŏn. The stories in *Kŭmo sinhwa*, descriptive of the tendencies and aims of its people and filled with trenchant criticisms of social problems, hold their rightful place in the canon of fifteenth-century world literature. *Kŭmo sinhwa* is also notable in the influence that it has exercised on foreign literary traditions. Kim's stories attracted a devoted readership in Japan, and they played a pivotal role in the emergence of the Japanese story collection *Otogibōko*.

These research articles are followed by a book review of Anna Fifield's *The Great Successor: The Divinely Perfect Destiny of Brilliant Comrade Kim Jong Un*. In this largely positive book review, reviewer John Cussen (Edinboro University) credits author Anna Fifield with having put together an at once credible and intriguing profile of North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un. In doing so, she has met the considerable challenges of the task, chief among them, perhaps, the young dictator's Janus-like personality, a trait of person that allows him on one day to commit the most barbaric of anti-civilizational acts and on the next to engage civilly with foreign heads of state. He credits her too for her industry in searching out, in places distant and close, those few people who have actually known Kim Jong Un. Their testimonies bear the freight of their biases and fears, for at any moment, the Supreme Leader might seek revenge against them. And, yet still, their recollections are helpful. Fifield also talks to a good number of North Korean refugees, whose testimonies in their sum make for a nuanced picture of the evolving North Korean social scape. As regards Kim Jong Un's formative childhood experiences, yes, says Cussen, Fifield is probably right in assigning more agency in that matter to KJU's Zainichi-originated mother, Ko Yong hui, than have other North Korean observers. The single limitation that

Cussen discovers in Fifield's work is the little attention it pays to Japan's role in the ever shifting North Korean/larger world dynamic.

The issue is concluded by an interview section, a new addition to *S/N Korean Humanities*. Since 2016, a series of interviews has been conducted by the members of the Institute of Humanities for Unification (IHU) with the most prominent thinkers, researchers, and policy-makers whose thought, research, or professional achievements in dealing with the issues of inter-Korean division and reconciliation have a special connection to the conceptual and methodological advancement of Humanities for Unification. The IHU published these interviews in *Han'gung chisōnggwaŭi t'ongiltaedam* [Unification Dialogue with Korean Intellectuals] in 2018. From March 2020, their translations in English will appear in *S/N Korean Humanities*. By making their insights available in English, the IHU hopes to engage with a wider international readership in future discussions on inter-Korean division and unification based on the humanities perspective. Relying on the humanities will allow us to contemplate the past, present, and future of unification as a *process* led by *all* Korean people, a shift from focusing on political elites, systems, and institutions. To mark the launch of the new section, we begin with an interview with Dr. Kang Man-gil, the renowned author of *Pundanshidaeŭi yōksainshik* [The Historical Perception of the Era of Division] and historian (formerly of Korea University) whose research has been centered on the national unification united front.

The 7-year second phase research project of the IHU supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) began in September 2019, after the successful completion of the first phase from 2009–2019. The March 2020 issue is the first to be published following the launch of the second phase. With a great sense of excitement and anticipation for the future of *S/N Korean Humanities* in integrated Korean studies of *Hankukhak* from South Korea and *Chosōnhak* from North Korea, the editorial committee is pleased to announce a complete make-over of the journal, including new designs for

the cover and layout as well as a new website at <https://www.snkh.org/>. Bridging the study of *Hankukhak* and *Chosŏnhak* began with the inaugural publication of *S/N Korean Humanities* in 2015, after which we have consistently tried to feature research articles of Korean studies in the broadest sense possible. IHU looks forward to further advancing this unique role of academic integration and communication throughout the second phase of our research project.

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Editor-in-Chief  
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