



# Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

Winter Semester 2024/25, Wednesdays 18:00 c.t., Wilhelmstraße 133, R. 30

## War and Society Seen Through PX and MPC (Military Payment Certificates)

**Lee Dongwon**  
Seoul National University

**January 08th, 2025**

Dongwon Lee is Assistant Professor in the Department of Korean History at Seoul National University (SNU) from 2021. He received his B.A. (2001), M.A. (2004) and Ph.D. (2019) in Korean History from SNU. The title of his dissertation is "A Study of U.S. Military Aid to Korea during the First Republic of Korea". His research interests focus on contemporary Korean history. Since his Ph.D thesis on US military aid to South Korea, he has studied East Asian Cold War history and economic history, with a focus on Korea-US relations, and has expanded his research to include the history of science and technology, medical history, and inter-Korean relations. As a current visiting professor at Freie Universität Berlin, his goal is to write a book based on his dissertation that reflects his latest research.



Korean Contemporary history has unfolded in deep connection with three major wars: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Since World War II, the U.S. military has operated the PX (Post Exchange) and MPC (Military Payment Certificate) systems at its bases, and the base towns and black markets that developed around them became a global phenomenon. In Korea, the influence of military aid, base towns, black markets, and the PX-MPC system has had a lasting impact on the economy and society, spanning the U.S. military occupation, the Korean War, postwar recovery and aid-driven economy, military rule, Vietnam War troop deployments, and the era of developmental dictatorship.

This presentation will focus on the PX, MPC, and the black market as legacies of war and military aid, and how they have impacted the economies and societies of regions where the U.S. troops were stationed, such as Korea and Vietnam.