



Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

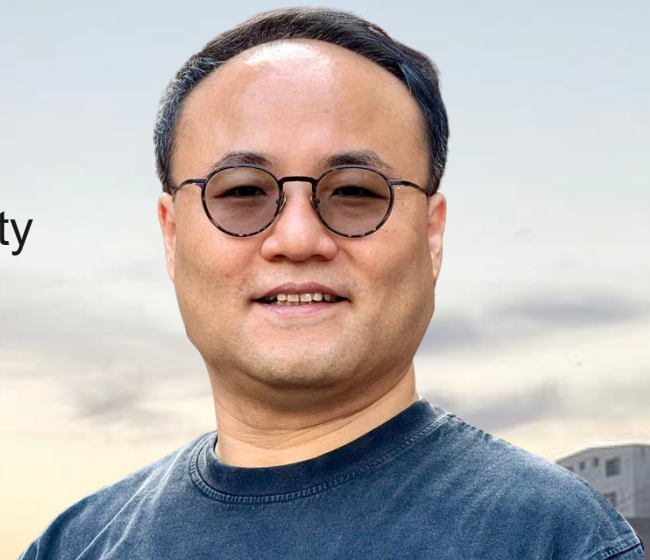
Summer Semester 2026, Wednesdays 18:00 c.t., Wilhelmstraße 133, R. 30

Is *Gongron* (公論) Really “Public Opinion”?: South Korea’s Democratization and the Discourse on Joseon’s *Gongron* Politics

Kyungrae Kim

Jeonbuk National University

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Biography: Kyungrae Kim earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the Department of Korean History at Seoul National University. He specializes in the political and intellectual history of the Choseon Dynasty, with a particular emphasis on the 16th century. His research explores the lives and ideas of reformers, the dynamic interaction between royal authority and the bureaucracy, and the circulation of media and the formation of public discourse. In the long term, he aims to develop a new narrative of Choseon history that transcends the conventional frameworks of "development" and "autonomy". He is also a co-author of a middle school history textbook currently used in South Korea.

Abstract: The Choseon Dynasty (1392–1910) is the era in which most of the tangible and intangible elements defining modern Korean "tradition" were established. Despite the historical rupture caused by Japanese colonial rule, the legacy of Choseon has continued to profoundly shape the daily lives and mindsets of contemporary Koreans. However, since the early 2000s—and particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic—traditional cultures rooted in the Choseon era have been rapidly vanishing from everyday life. Simultaneously, a trend of mocking and criticizing Choseon history has spread widely within South Korea, notably among the younger "MZ generation" and far-right political groups such as the "New Right." This phenomenon demonstrates that the interpretations and narratives of Choseon history constructed by the Korean academic community since liberation are losing their persuasive power, signaling an urgent need for a fresh perspective. Centering on the key concept of "Gong-rön" (Public Discourse), this lecture examines how Choseon history has been interpreted and explained since the advent of modern historiography, and seeks to explore new possibilities for the future.