



Culture and Empathy

International Journal of
Sociology, Psychology, and Cultural Studies

ISSN: 2635-6619 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://culturempathy.org/>

Editorial Remarks

Vol. 2, No.1

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To cite this article: Ingyu Oh and Wonho Jang. 2019. “Editorial Remarks.”
Culture and Empathy 2(1): 1-2, DOI: 10.32860/26356619/2019/2.1.0001.

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.32860/26356619/2019/2.1.0001>.



Published online: 25 Mar 2019.



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Culture and Empathy: International Journal of Sociology, Psychology, and Cultural Studies is a new breed of interdisciplinary journal in social sciences and humanities. In this issue we tried to distance ourselves away from mainstream social, political, economic, and cultural discourses by presenting four distinctive research papers and essays. The world is again shocked at how the modish meetings in Hanoi between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un have unfolded leading to revamped nuclear confrontations between the two countries these two leaders represent. The world is unfathomable in its future political economic evolutions, as we await some clear answers. Once again, the world is shedding its interests in the Korean peninsula. We publish this issue hoping to satisfy some of these germane curiosities on the Korean enigma.

John Lie's seminal work on AKB48 and SNSD represents an ongoing effort by him to edify us on the topic of popular culture using his political economic conceptual tools. By shying away from the "art for art's sake" tradition rampant within the cultural studies circle in Korea and elsewhere in the world, Lie nails down political economic differences of J-pop and K-pop using two similarly looking girl bands. Whereas the Korean political economic conditions favor K-pop business that pursues a global division of labor, highly professional looks and performances, and the exports of K-pop, its counterparts in Japan esteem amateurism, domestic consumption, and localization of Western music. Lie's long standing in the study of K-pop has been his systematic and clairvoyant efforts at distinguishing K-pop from J-pop unlike the common misunderstanding that the former is a copycat of the latter.

Ingyu Oh adds a major research result to this issue by presenting his own understanding of the origin of Korean nationalism or anti-Japanese sentiments shared widely among Korans of these days even. His case is the 16th century Joseon scholar, Kang Hang, who was captured by the invading Japanese army and taken to Japan as a war prisoner. Despite his feeble status as a war prisoner from Joseon, Kang had received a relatively comfortable treatment by the Japanese hosts during his internment in various cities of Japan. He could meet Japanese Confucian scholars who wanted to learn Korean Confucianism and maintained a community of international residents in Kyoto with whom Kang could exchange views on the changing and globalizing world. After return home, Kang tried his best to influence the Joseon King toward openness with a new global outlook. However, it was in Joseon where he had to face severe isolation and internal dislocation by his Confucian colleagues who distrusted the ex-prisoner of war who they thought had collaborated with the Japanese enemy. Joseon later suffered from another major defeat in the invasion of the Manchurians.

Roxanne Tan contributes her graduate research on South Korean feminism and its portrayal on the mainstream mass media. Her breakthrough from ordinary legal research on feminism is her argument that South Korean TV drama can be used to teach people empathy with which they can understand gender inequality, misogyny, and gendered melancholia. Seemingly bold in her persuasion, Tan relies on Martin Luther King, Jr. for an inspirational lesson on empathic empowerment and the peaceful integration of social differences and confrontations. Given that female fans of the Korean TV drama are the majority in the global Hallyu fandom, Tan argues that the drama is a great source of empathic empowerment among women toward a balanced perception of gender equality even in a society where sexism and gender inequality are persisting and severe.

Finally, Ricardo Pagliuso Regatieri's short essay on Korean patrimonialism casts doubts to the dominant understanding held by Western scholars on Asia in general and South Korea in particular that the country is a Confucian and thus patrimonial nation-state, two important institutional and cultural factors of modernization, development, and state-building. By emphasizing the importance of the self-reflexivity of institutional evolutions and the dynamic underpinnings of South Korean postcolonial institutional framework, Regatieri finds it difficult to use the Weberian concept in the explanation of South Korean development within the postwar world system. The case of Park Geun-hye's ascendance as the president in the 21st century may reinforce the dynamism of patrimonialism in South Korea. However, Regatieri argues that the aftermath of the Park administration reaffirms the dynamism of institutional self-reflexivity that would explain not only her demise but also her election as the president to begin with.

C & E is proud to support both graduate and post-graduate research on sociology, psychology, and cultural studies from an empathic perspective. We welcome discussions that treat Korea and Asia differently from the Eurocentric understanding of Orientalism. We hope this issue will help scholars and students of interdisciplinary studies understand better than ever what we mean by research between different disciplines.

Ingyu Oh and Wonho Jang