



Special Review

Korean Studies Pioneers
in U.S. and Europe

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The Review of Korean Studies



Editor's Note

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For the Special Review of the December 2025 issue, the *Review of Korean Studies* (hereafter, *RKS*) chose to turn its attention to expert studies which searched for traces of certain Koreanology pioneers, who have blazed the trails of Korean studies in foreign countries during the last century. And for the occasion, we have found several presentations made in academic conferences titled “Korea University and the Pioneers of Korean Studies Worldwide” recently held in Korea (August 11–12, 2025) and contacted the presenters if they could share what they had to say regarding those pioneers’ accomplishments and how they evaluated their activities.

Two scholars have graciously agreed to submit reviews on their findings, so here we are able to publish two recollections in the form of Special Review: one piece on one of the most renowned scholars in the U.S., and also another on an ironically unsung, talented mind who was instrumental in spreading Korean studies throughout a region which was still to be made aware of the Korean culture at the time. According to the reviewers, these two scholars have been engaged in an impressive array of Korean studies and performed various academic functions, which not only let the people in their own countries be aware of the Korean culture but spread impressive insights on Korea’s cultural traits all around the world.

First, Janet Yoon-sun Lee of the Keimyung University provided us with a review entitled “Standing on Shoulders, Becoming a Giant: Peter H. Lee’s Legacy in Korean Literary Studies.” As well known, Peter H. Lee is both a renowned scholar and translator, with a lifelong dedication to Korean literature studies in North America. From the 1960s to the 2000s, Lee’s scholarly contributions put Korean traditional song-poems 詩歌 literally on the map, especially in the area of comparative studies, doing what could only be described as “significantly expanding Korean literature’s visibility, and articulating its aesthetic distinctiveness,” according to the author. After examining Lee’s major

publications and countless other research, as well as two significant interviews made with him, the reviewer concludes that Lee forged a foundation—upon which a later generation of scholars and educators now stands—through his own translations, critical reading, and lifelong dedication to premodern Korean poetry.

Barbara Wall of the University of Copenhagen, along with Dorrit Wagner and Hyun Joo Choi, submitted a review entitled “The Pioneer of Korean Studies in Denmark: Huy Dong Shin (1935–1985).” The reviewers point out that, although Korean studies in Northern Europe “have yet to fully spread their wings,” several universities managed to “successfully combine rigorous Korean-language instruction with research-based training in Korean Studies,” and considering the current situation of Korean studies and education in Northern Europe (“still fragile”), the enthusiasm and dedication of early pioneers including Huy Dong Shin, who promoted deeper understanding of Korea in the late 1960s and 1970s, was all the more striking. The reviewers, while admitting Huy Dong Shin is not widely remembered at the University of Copenhagen, are more than certain in pointing out that he played a distinctive role in shaping the development of Korean studies in Denmark, in the Nordic countries, and even in Europe and around the world. Prof. Wall even laments that his work should have been acknowledged at the 2023 AKSE conference in Copenhagen, which would have marked the 40th anniversary of his organizing of the 1983 conference.

The *RKS* expresses our sincere gratitude to the reviewers and scholars who agreed to share their insights on these two giants. We at the *RKS* will continue our efforts to highlight the accomplishments of Koreanology scholars who endeavored tirelessly to spread understanding of Korea all around the world. Maybe such reviews in the future would have to proceed on several occasions, as exploring all the trailblazers in each of every country, continent, and academic area would undoubtedly take time. Please stay tuned for future Special Reviews.