



THE CENTRE FOR KOREAN RESEARCH PROUDLY PRESENTS

# THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE SOUNDS OF FICTION READING IN LATE CHOSŎN KOREA



By Dr. Si Nae Park  
Harvard University

Friday January 10, 2020  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Room 604, Asian Centre  
1871 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2





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## ABSTRACT

This lecture examines late Chosŏn literary experience from the standpoint of aural literacy, or the (over)hearing and listening to of vocalized books. Throughout the Chosŏn period, to be literate generally meant one's ability to decipher texts written in Literary Sinitic: this was accomplished using the Korean language along with rigorous rote learning via internalization of the Confucian Classics in the vernacular through the state-prescribed method of vocalization (*ŏnhae*). This sound of learning the Confucian Classics permeated the soundscape of Chosŏn as a privileged register of the vernacular language because of its Sinitic-sounding nature. In late Chosŏn, fictional narratives written exclusively in the vernacular script (*ŏnmun sosŏl*) emerged as vocalized books that were ubiquitous in casual gatherings, private homes, and urban marketplaces as a form of entertainment. How did people experience, make sense of, and pass judgments on the sounds of vocalized fictional narratives? How can we chart the relationship between the sound of learning and the sounds of fiction reading? Using diverse records, reflections, and literary representations of the sounds of fiction reading, this lecture unveils the sociocultural and literary significance of the sounds of fiction reading in late Chosŏn cultural life and proposes to consider the importance of the register of the vernacular language that spread as part of vocalized fiction reading aural literacy.

## BIO

Si Nae Park is an associate professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. Her research interests include the interplay between Literary Sinitic and the written vernacular, ideologies of language and writing, the social production of Seoul in late Chosŏn literature, and history of the book and of reading. Her monograph *The Korean Vernacular Story: Telling Tales of Contemporary Chosŏn* (Columbia University Press, forthcoming) traces the rise of the vernacular story genre (*yadam*) in the cultural scene of late Chosŏn Seoul. Currently she is preparing a second monograph on the topic of alternative literacies in late Chosŏn social life.



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