

## A Quiet Revolt: Gender, Conversion and Emotional Communities in Modern Korea

Hyaeweol Choi

Koreans' first encounters with Western Protestant missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century were full of emotion—fear, awe, disgust, admiration, anxiety. Such encounters created a dynamic site in which the western-centered vision and practices clashed with, competed against or adjusted to the local perspectives and conventions. From a gendered point of view, conversion to Christianity involved more than spirituality. It also brought about new material, secular and bodily experiences, which in turn helped women defy prescribed gender roles, gain access to education and paid jobs and even claim their place in the public domain. In this paper, I explore the vital role of emotion in religious and cultural encounters with a primary focus on the closely knit Protestant community in P'yŏngyang, which was called the "Jerusalem of the East" because of the exceptional success missionaries had in evangelizing there. I use two rare primary sources to investigate the narratives and experiences of Korean converts and American Protestant missionaries in the "contact zone." One is the private diary (1892-1934) kept by Mattie Noble, a prominent Methodist missionary in P'yŏngyang, and the other is *Sŏngni ūi saenghwal* (*Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*), the first book of biographies and autobiographies of the early Christians in the Protestant Church in Korea, compiled by Noble and published in 1927. I use these two sources as primary data to understand not only their public engagement but also their inner thoughts and emotions that reshaped their gendered identity and everyday practices.

### Bio:

Hyaeweol Choi is C. Maxwell and Elizabeth M. Stanley Family and Korea Foundation Chair Professor in Korean Studies at the University of Iowa. Her research interests are in the areas of gender, religion, modernity, colonialism and transnational history. She is the author of *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (2009) and *New Women in Colonial Korea* (2013). She also co-edited the book, *Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific* (2014) and co-authored the book, *Gender in Modern East Asia* (2016), among others. She is completing a book manuscript that examines the formation of modern gender relations in Korea under Japanese colonial rule from a transnational perspective with particular focus on the role of the global Christian network in shaping modern gender norms, reforming domestic practices, and claiming new space for women in the public sphere.