

Se-Mi Oh (University of Michigan)

From Ritual to History: Kojong's Funerary Procession in *Ŭigwe* and Photography

Abstract:

This presentation compares the visual records of the funerary procession of the late king Kojong in *Ŭigwe* and photography. The funeral of Kojong, the last king of the Chosŏn dynasty, was held according to the royal custom but not without modifications made by Japanese colonial government. Given the fact that the funeral took place at the backdrop of a landmark mass protest for Korean independence on March 1, 1919, this presentation inquires into how an age-old ritual was re-staged as a modern spectacle under the colonial government, and how photography reframed it as an event in the modern historical narrative. Therefore, this presentation will discuss how the depiction of ritual -- repetitive and ephemeral -- gave a way to the singularity of event in the freeze frame of photography and the linear narrative of panoramic cinema in modern times. Through this comparative analysis, it hopes to show how *Ŭigwe* depicted the dead's journey to a holy place, making the place of the dead relevant in history through the sacralization by ritual, and how the eternity of the past in *Ŭigwe* was turned into the virtual, memory, and nostalgia by photography.