

Panel: Shadow Capital Cities in the Korean World

Organizer: Valérie Gelézeau (EHESS)

Based on a transdisciplinary and comparative approach of the social sciences, this panel seeks to go beyond classical analysis of capital cities in the Korean World (the two Koreas and the diaspora) that usually focus on the capitals situated at the center of the State or national territory, such as “hyper-capital cities” (Seoul and Pyongyang) that cumulate core functions (historical, political, economical) in the nation and are part of a larger international order; and former capital cities that legitimate the present States’ meta-narratives (Kyŏngju and Kaesŏng).

Whereas previous research on Korean cities has largely focused on topics of the relationship between political power and capital cities, major planning and building projects involving capital cities, hyper-capital cities and social elites, and heritage and conservation in historical capital cities, this panel intends to add to that conversation by examining so-called “shadow capital cities”. Defined as subaltern or marginal capitals, they are numerous in Korea: historical capital cities of States that were marginalized in the unification discourse (Kongju or Puyŏ), once forgotten capital cities (such as Suwŏn), fantasized capital cities (of the future reunified Korea), near-capital cities in the making (Sejong-si), appendix-capital cities in the making (Songdo), diasporic capital cities (Los Angeles or Almaty), and others.

How does one explain the plurality of these shadow capital cities in the Korean World? Could those cities be envisioned as coherent socio-spatial objects, and what peculiarities do they share (or not) in terms of status, forms, functions and social fabric?

The panel will focus on four case studies and four disciplines (archaeology, history, geography and anthropology).

Keywords: Korea, Capital cities, subaltern capitals, marginal capitals, comparative, pluridisciplinary, Kyŏngsŏng, Kongju, Songdo, Almaty.

Elisabeth Chabanol (EFEO)

Archaeology of the Shadow: Splendors and Deeds of Kongju, the Abandoned Capital

Kongju is much less studied by archaeologists and known by the greater public than Kyōngju. But this city, the second capital of the Paekche Kingdom until being abandoned in 538 by King Sōng, became the most important city of the Ch'ungch'ōng region during the late Chosŏn period. It is only following the construction of the railroad between Seoul and Pusan in 1905 that the city lost again its position of regional importance, this time to Taejŏn.

On July 4th, 1971, a curator of Kongju municipal museum accidentally discovered the tomb of King Muryōng. This turned out to be a major discovery for advancing the knowledge of the history of the Paekche Kingdom, historical materials of which were rare compared to those of Koguryŏ and Silla. The area had also been neglected by the South Korean historians and the administration of the time who glorified Kyōngju, the capital of Silla.

The discovery of the tomb of King Muryōng woke up the little provincial town. It was followed by the restoration of the fortress, then by archaeological excavations around it, and a new museum was built to shelter the excavated archaeological materials from the tomb. At the end of the 1970s, Pak Chōng-hŭi even wanted to move the South-Korean capital from Seoul to Kongju to protect it from a possible North Korean attack.

In this paper, using archaeological reports on various sites in Kongju and direct personal fieldwork with museums and institutions, I shall examine the management of archaeological and historical heritage in Kongju, and the engagements linking state planners with local civic organizations.

Alain Delissen (EHESS)

Shadows in the Showcase: Kyōngsōng and the Fabric of Coloniality

Because the typical colonial situation draws on territorial shifts of multiple scales, because it relocates agents, functions and places of command, and because it has

powerful impact on symbols and cultures, shadow capital cities are obvious and ubiquitous markers of coloniality.

This is true of Korea between 1905 and 1945, when Shanghai, Tokyo, Kyōngju, and even Onyang –to name but a few– could be deemed alternative head cities in the Korean World. In the meantime, Seoul was shrunken and shaken, dismembered and redesigned to become *the* showcase of Japanese colonization and the target of large-scale immigration.

While recent studies have explored the politics and symbolics of colonial life—monuments and projects, texts or cityscapes—in the brighter light of public spaces, they have left Kyōngsōng-bu (or Keijō-fu) as a *municipality* in relative disregard. This is why this presentation will focus on the actors—institutions and people—at work in the darker shadow of local power in the 1920s. How does one define the official authority of and exercise of discretion by an influential yet obscure figure like Umamo Seiichi, a Seoul City mayor between 1925 and 1929? What was his role in a lasting scandal of this period, which enlisted a cemetery and pleasure quarters, Osaka tycoons and righteous councilors, secret memos and outraged journalists, big money and petty losers in a story that says much about command and influence in the fabric of coloniality?

Valérie GELÉZEAU (EHESS)

Emergence of a Shadow: Songdo, a Globalized Mega-Project in the Shade of Seoul

In 2010, a fieldtrip to Songdo would reveal the emerging skyline of a city in the making between land and sea: the cityscape was not just that of any city, but that of a major central business district, with its cluster of skyscrapers ready to host sophisticated functions for this city labelled as a “technoville” centered on research and high education.

Since 2003, the building of Songdo-*si* has been one of the outcomes of the development policy of South Korean Capital Region, alongside the promotion of Inch'ōn's free economic zone. In the globalized competition of core cities, public policies try to enhance the dynamics that make Seoul a major hub in North East Asia through redistribution of global functions (finance, research and logistics) in satellites

new or older such as Inch'ŏn, Songdo and Chŏngna. The capital city is meant to be a multi-headed cluster if it has not become one already.

How does such a globalized mega-project take shape? How do local, regional and national public policies coordinate with international planning agencies involved in the development of such a globalized mega-project? What does it mean to live in a shadow capital city in the making?

To answer those questions, the paper will particularly focus on the analysis of the development of residential neighborhoods where the planning of housing and public spaces meets the actual practices and daily use of the pioneering residents of the new city.

Eunsil YIM (Paris Diderot University)

Revival of a Shadow: the Korean Ethnic Elites of Almaty (Kazakhstan) and the Building of the Korean House in a Diasporic Capital

Inaugurated in November 2004 in Almaty, the Korean House (*Koreiskii Dom*) is a space entirely devoted to the associations and cultural activities of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan. It originally brought together the most representative Korean organizations, such as the powerful Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan (*Associaciã Koreicev Kazakhstana: AKK*)—who is the owner institution of the Korean House—and the editorial team of *Koryŏ Ilbo*, a newspaper that was regarded as the cultural “haut lieu” of Koreans during the Soviet period. Due to this opening, Almaty regained some its prestige as the “diasporic capital” of Koreans in Kazakhstan – prestige that this city had gradually lost after the transfer of the capital of Kazakhstani State to Astana in 1997. The reinforcement of Almaty’s representation was made possible by the financial mobilization of leaders of the AKK whose network is firmly rooted in the Kazakhstani economic sphere. It also reflects a strategy of autonomization against South Korean élites who became more and more present in Almaty since the 1990s.

Grounded in an anthropological approach and an ethnographic account of the building of the Korean House by its actors, this paper will analyze various forms of mobilization deployed by the leaders of the AKK, and examine their consequences on their relations with different categories of South Korean actors. It will ultimately answer the question: How did the Korean House contribute to the strengthening of

the social position of the AKK *élites* and to the re-shaping of the image of Almaty as the "diasporic capital" of Koreans in Kazakhstan?