

The Korean Studies Lecture Series Presents  
“Japanophone Literature from Colonial Korea:  
Yi Kwang-Su’s and Kim Sa-Ryang’s Work”

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The phrase, “Japanophone literature in Colonial Korea,” reminds us of the imperialization policy and the compulsory use of Japanese as “national language” during the Asia-Pacific War era. If this language policy were a matter of simple coercion, we would then be able to assert that Korean writers in the post-1945 era were emancipated from such a policy and that they were given the freedom to enjoy writing in their own national language. Focusing on the literary works of Kim Sa-ryang and Yi Kwang-su, this paper will argue, however, that the form that colonial Korean literature of this period was forced to take, i.e., Japanese language, did not necessarily shape the contents of their thought. It will trace the ways in which Korean writers articulated their marginalized subjectivity in the language that was imposed upon them. It will analyze how Kim Sa-ryang’s and Yi Kwang-su’s Japanese language literary texts perform this dual act of conforming to the policy and leaving room for resistance.

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