

A Snapshot of the State of Korean Studies: Insights from AAS Presentations, 2017 to 2024

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In this presentation, I analyze the contents of individual presentations on Korean Studies delivered at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Conference over the past seven years, namely 2017 to 2024. The term “Korean studies” here refers to the content of papers submitted to the AAS. Although some presenters are of Korean nationality and affiliation, the majority of presentations are made by researchers from outside Korea. This presentation aims to understand the current state of Korean studies, compare it with previous achievements in the field, and examine the direction in which Korean studies is heading.

To date, analyses of trends in overseas Korean studies have primarily focused on detailed analyses of a relatively small number of individual case studies, often concentrating on the life work of specific researchers or the collective output of multiple researchers. However, analyzing a large body of work is challenging, not only due to the sheer volume but also because of the difficulty in accessing such materials. This presentation, through its analysis of recent AAS presentations, seeks to overcome these limitations. There are three main reasons for focusing on AAS presentations to outline the trends in overseas Korean studies. First, the timeliness offered by panel organization and conference presentations allows for quicker identification of recent research outcomes compared to publication in academic journals or books. Also, the review process for panel organization ensures a certain level of quality in presentations. According to AAS’s official information, 68% of applicants for collaborative sessions (panels, round tables, workshops) are accepted, while only 10% of individual applicants are accepted. AAS’s official website has made accessible the abstracts of all presentations from 1995 to the present, facilitating data collection. Detailed information on panels from each conference can be found at the AAS website, making research materials relatively easy to collect. Lastly, the availability of a large quantity of data enables quantitative analysis, which is significant because more than 400 individual presentations from five academic conferences were analyzed. This allows for a broader analysis beyond individual research or qualitative studies. Moreover, analyzing the achievements in overseas K

orean studies within the larger framework of the AAS allows for a comparative analysis with other area studies – such as Chinese and Japanese Studies, albeit with some limitations.

The analysis of the presentation content seeks to address two main questions. Firstly, has the widespread mention and popularity of Korean culture, often referred to as the “Korean Wave,” had any impact on its status within internationally recognized expert academic societies? Secondly, what are the recent trends in Korean studies as revealed through quantitative research? Through this analysis, I aim to modestly examine the trend of Korean studies and hope to offer insight on the present and future of Korean studies through this examination.