

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group

Public Lecture



January 30, 2019, 18:30h

Inscribing Edible Otherness: Intersections of Food, Gender, and Ethnicity in Contemporary *Zainichi* Poetry

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This presentation explores the intersections of food, gender, and ethnicity in contemporary *zainichi* Korean poetry. Far more than simply a biological necessity, “food serves as an indicator of social identity, from region to ethnicity, from class to age or gender” (Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz 1993: 90). In *zainichi* Korean literature, representations of food, cooking, and eating often do not primarily serve to add realism to the work. Rather, food is used as shorthand for the ties that persist between Korean immigrants and their pasts, and to indicate the degree of their assimilation in Japan. This function is particularly clear in poetry, which, due to its brevity, must forego world building and instead invest meaning in every single word. With a focus on the representation of what is probably the most iconic Korean food, kimchi, I examine how ethnic food is celebrated, and simultaneously resisted, as (gendered) cultural heritage. I show how food is used to highlight cultural anxieties and desires, mark processes of inclusion and exclusion, and express a wavering sense of connectedness between Korea, the imagined country of the poets’ descent, and Japan, the country of their own birth.

Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt received her PhD from Trier University, Germany, with a thesis on the contemporary writer Yū Miri. She was a senior research fellow at the DIJ from 2008 to 2013 and has been teaching modern Japanese literature at Nagoya University since. She is currently on research leave and a fellow at Trier University’s DFG Research Center for Advanced Studies FOR 2603 on “Poetry in Transition”.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan. Meetings are held once a month and are open to speakers from all disciplines of history and humanities. The event is open to all. Registration is not necessary but appreciated, online at www.dijtokyo.org or via geilhorn@dijtokyo.org.

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