



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EAST ASIAN STUDIES CENTER

Institute for Korean Studies presents

The Monkey King's Reign A Visual Approach to the *Journey to the West* as Dynamic Text

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

4:00-5:15 pm

Mendenhall Lab 100

125 S Oval Mall

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Abstract: In the academic realm, the title *The Journey to the West* is generally identified with the Shidatang edition of the 100-chapter novel allegedly written by Wu Cheng'en in the Ming Dynasty at the end of the 16th century. In popular culture, though, the title is generally associated not with the 100-chapter novel but with various shorter retellings, which tend to highlight the fantastic and adventurous facets of the story. This talk sets out to reconsider the construction of *The Journey to the West*. What is *The Journey to the West*? And why is it so popular?

I suggest perceiving *The Journey to the West* not as a stable work on which author, place and time of publication can be imposed, but rather as what Roland Barthes calls a dynamic text that lives through its many variations. The main focus of this talk will be on Korean variations of *The Journey to the West* from the 14th century to today, while we will also make a short excursus to Toriyama Akira's *Dragonball* and Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain*. I use an application based on PHP and JavaScript to visualize which elements of *The Journey to the West* can be found in each variation. These visualizations help us to understand *The Journey to the West* as dynamic text and to find out which elements of the story contribute to its popularity.

Bio: Barbara Wall is an assistant professor in Korean Studies at the University of Copenhagen. She has a BA in Japanese Studies and Classical Chinese from Heidelberg, an MA in Confucian Studies from Sungkyunkwan University and a PhD in Korean Literature from Bochum. Her main research interests are the circulation, translation and adaptation of literary narratives in Korea, Japan and China. At the moment she is working on her first book titled "Mapping *The Journey to the West* as Literary Network: A Visual Approach to the Dynamic Text in Korea from the 14th Century to Today."



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