MANAGING KOREA’S PEOPLE: REGISTRATION, CLASSIFICATION, AND THE REMAKING OF SOCIETY BY THE EARLY MODERN STATE

Thursday, March 8, 2018 | 3:00 p.m.
Rubenstein Library Carpenter Room (249)
Duke University, West Campus

The methods of surveying, counting, and categorizing the population, particularly through the household registration system, reflected core functions of the emerging modern state in Korea from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. In particular, the ongoing attempts to standardize and register surnames, which furthered the statist goals of homogenizing and increasing the visibility of the population, demonstrated the extensive conflict, and colonialist contradiction, between the rationalities of administrative efficiency and those of state efficacy, or legitimacy.

Kyung Moon Hwang’s research traces the transformation, especially into the modern era, of long-term historical patterns in Korea. He is particularly interested in questions of modernity, comparative history, and historical memory. His newest book, Rationalizing Korea (University of California Press, 2015) studies the origins, meaning, and concept of the modern state in Korea from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

He is the author of A History of Korea: An Episodic Narrative which has been translated into Korean. Professor Hwang writes a bi-weekly column on Korean history for the Korea Times.