**SNU ASIA CENTER WEBINAR SERIES (Oct. 14, 2021)**

**TITLE**

Women’s Violence, Family, and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Korea: Reading Women’s True Stories in Inquest Records

## PRESENTER

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**ABSTRACT**

Due to the scanty written sources on women’s lives before the modern period, an increasing number of Korean women’s historians have been drawn to the legal archive wherein they could find women’s true stories voiced and heard in many case records. Particular attention has been paid to more than 500 inquest records (*kǒman*) preserved in the Kyujanggak Archive in that the testimonies given by various people, including women, are contained in them. Inquest records are legal drafts reporting the results of inquest investigations of unnatural death cases. The oral testimonies transcribed in the inquest records make common people’s voices, including women’s, sound more authentic and persuasive. On the other hand, however, what appears to be a transcription of testimony is in fact a narrative construction of what is told. For this reason, the narrative strategies and legal rhetoric used for legal testimony need careful examination in reading case records. Through a close reading of a few inquest records investigating commoner women’s violent deaths, we will learn more about the dynamics of challenges and negotiations attempted by the oppressed people than about their unquestioned subordination to the dominant ideology. Furthermore, we will think more about how to interpret what legal truth(s) is and how to reconstruct the *true* narrative from women’s perspectives.