

A PUBLIC LECTURE

OLD GRAVES OF THE KOREAN WAR HILL FIGHT



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ABSTRACT

The Korean War was both a civil and an international conflict. A formative episode of the early Cold War, it is an extraordinary event in that the war's old legacies continue to affect the regional order seventy years after the heavy guns went silent. This lecture looks back on the commemoration of the 1950-1953 war, while bringing to attention the sites of memory existing in the peninsula's central highlands. This is where the long, vicious Hill Fight was fought between two international forces. It is also where South Korea's MIA (Missing In Action) recovery activities have concentrated in recent years, often resulting in the discovery of the remains of fallen soldiers from diverse racial and national backgrounds. We will ask how these public actions are intertwined with changing geopolitical conditions and what forms of creative war remembrance are in store if we attend carefully to such chaotic burial places.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Heonik Kwon is a Senior Research Fellow in Social Science and Distinguished Professor of Social Anthropology, Trinity College, University of Cambridge since 2011. He is also part of the Mega-Asia research group at Seoul National University Asia Center. A Fellow of the British Academy, Kwon's prize-winning previous books include: *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (2008), *The Other Cold War* (2010), and *After the Korean War: An Intimate History* (2020). His new book is *Spirit Power: Politics and Religion in Korea's American Century* (2022, co-authored with Jun Hwan Park). Kwon grew up in the neighborhood of Camp Walker, one of the United States military bases in South Korea, which was a Japanese air base before 1945. Long interested in everyday life in socialist societies and how the Cold War affected intimate human relations, he has conducted fieldwork both in a small-scale indigenous society (among nomadic reindeer hunter-herders in Far East Siberia, during the last years of the Soviet order) and in sites of large-scale historical upheavals (such as the post-war central Vietnam). More recently, his research has concentrated on memories of the Korean War.

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Venue AAB705, Academic and Administration Building
Baptist University Road Campus, Kowloon Tong
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