Making Modernity in East Asia Lecture Series (Dec 2): Hyungsub Choi - Before Localization: The Story of the Electric Rice Cooker in South Korea

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Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences

Making Modernity in East Asia Lecture Series [via Zoom]
Before Localization: The Story of the Electric Rice Cooker in South Korea

Dr. Hyungsub Choi
Seoul National University of Science and Technology

Date & Time: December 2, 2021, 5:00 pm (HK time) / 9:00 am (UK time)

Abstract
The commonplace way to tell the global history of the electric rice cooker is to begin with its invention in Japan, then trace its adaptation and localization as it spread through the Asian region. This talk focuses on the period before the 1990s, when rice cookers in South Korea remained inferior imitations of the Japanese models. After the introduction of the rice cooker in 1965, the South Korean engineers continued to see the Japanese rice cookers as a preferred goal that they should strive to imitate. Even the national project to overcome South Korea’s reliance on Japanese rice cookers consciously aimed to copy the Japanese rice cooker as closely as possible. This talk will show that there are interesting stories to tell about imitation and replication, which required a lot more planning and technological expertise than one might expect. Thus, conscious efforts to copy foreign technologies can serve as a useful site of historical inquiry.
About the speaker
Hyungsub Choi is an associate professor of history of science and technology at Seoul National University of Science and Technology. He is spending the 2021 - 2022 academic year as visiting scholar at the Needham Research Institute, Cambridge, UK. Trained as a historian of technology, Choi is working on a book manuscript recasting the history of technology in modern Korea from the perspective of importation and indigenization of everyday technologies.

This is an event organized by CRF “Making Modernity in East Asia: Technologies of Everyday Life, 19th - 21st Centuries” Project (RGC CRF HKU C7011-16G).

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