“The Transpacific Matter of Sound; or, The Religious Media of Korean War Debris”

A broken oxygen tank. A punctured military tent. A runway. Mountains. Throats. These are some of the sound-making media of Protestant Christianity in South Korea after the Korean War. This paper considers some transpacific trajectories of sound through some of sound’s historically mediating matter. I do so by focusing on the creative incorporation of Korean war debris into the aural aesthetics of postwar Protestantism. I situate these phonosonic practices within the broader context of such mediating matter’s historical presence on the Korean peninsula, and I offer some examples of memorialization and erasure over the seven decades since the signing of the armistice agreement and the ROK-US mutual defense treaty in 1953.