On 23 July 1996, the Donga ilbo (East Asia Daily) reported that the Angibu (Agency for National Security Planning) had arrested Muhammad Kkansu, a 62-year-old distinguished foreign professor of Arabic history and culture at Dankook University, on charges of espionage and use of a false identity as an Arab of Filipino-Lebanese descent to enter South Korea and would be sentenced to twelve-years in prison. Kkansu was a prolific scholar and, at one time, the only expert in Arabic Studies in South Korea, conversant in twelve languages, and the author of half a dozen books and articles on the Silk Road. He was also a household name, frequently contributing columns as a guest writer for various local newspapers and magazines, and he delivered many lectures on Arabic culture and history at different universities in South Korea. Motivated by cold-war logics and reinforced by extensive coverage of other high-profile spy cases, the furor over Kkansu’s elaborate scheme generated public fear. The public expressed little interest in understanding the complex circumstances that gave rise to his life choices, in particular, the pressures that diasporic Koreans living in China like Kkansu were forced to experience in the post-liberation era with the onset of the Cold War and national division. Drawing on Kkansu’s fascinating life story, this talk will examine South Korea’s blind and willful ignorance of the North due to its entrenched Cold War ideology which ironically enabled a diasporic Korean from China to pose as a Lebanese-Filipino Muslim scholar right under its nose. Not only did Kkansu become one of the most accomplished scholars of Arabic Studies but also worked as spy for North Korean intelligence until his arrest in 1996. In contrast to other accounts of North Korean spies, it seeks to humanize the experiences of Kkansu to illustrate how a diasporic Korean employed survival strategies that he learned during his early life in China to navigate the social and political realities of national division and anxieties caused by global and internecine hostilities during the Cold War. To add yet another twist to this fascinating story, Kkansu’s arrest and imprisonment did not foreclose the possibility of becoming an academic again; in fact, as he would re-emerge with renewed enthusiasm after a special presidential amnesty by President Kim Dae-jung on April 30, 2003 and subsequent naturalization as a South Korean citizen on May 14. He would author more than a dozen important monographs and encyclopedias on the Silk Road, as well as serve as the director of the Korean Institute of Civilizational Exchanges, the first privately run research institute solely dedicated to the serious study of the Silk Road.