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## **AFTERMATH, a new database for research on the East Asian War of 1592-1598**



Rebekah Clements, an ICREA researcher in the Department of Translation and Interpretation and East Asian Studies, has coordinated the launch of the first large database on the Imjin War, the largest war of the 16th century. The archive compiles nearly 560 documents in nine different languages from both Asian and European secondary sources.

You may not know that the largest war in the world during the 16th century did not occur in Europe, despite the many famous battles fought here. The largest conflict of the 16th century happened in Asia, when the ruler of Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, invaded the Korean peninsula in 1592, and Ming China sent troops to help its loyal vassal state Korea. This "East Asian War of 1592-1598", also known as the "Imjin War", was a huge conflict. Over 6 years, it involved more than 500,000 combatants, and civilian casualties were extremely high. The war caused momentous demographic upheaval in the region and widespread destruction in Korea, but also had long-lasting cultural impact. The memory reverberates throughout East Asia today, kept alive in Korea by museums and the school curriculum, and thanks to strategic concerns that are still relevant for the modern nations of Japan, China, and Korea and which were highlighted time and again by nineteenth and twentieth century Japanese expansion, World War Two, and the Korean War of the 1950s.

But there is relatively little Western scholarship written about the Imjin War. Few studies in any language can achieve a regional perspective because of the need to use sources in Korean, Japanese, and Chinese, and most scholars are trained in only one of these languages. Our five year research project, funded by the European Research Council, is the first large investigation to combine Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and even European primary sources in Portuguese and Italian in order to understand the aftermath of the war in early modern East Asia using a team-based approach.

One of our contributions is the first online bibliographic database of modern research on the war in multiple languages: The Database of Research on the Imjin War. This free resource, which is being compiled by our Core Research Team, was launched on 23 April 2020. It currently has information on nearly 560 journal articles, books, book chapters, and dissertations written in nine languages. Each entry is tagged by subject and provided with transliterations for Asian terms. The data is entered so as to be easily downloadable by scholars using citation software. Our hope is to help scholars to search for research on the war in their own language, and also to find out what scholars in other language areas have published. We hope that this will solve some problems that have beset the study of the war, and enable future collaboration between scholars of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Western backgrounds.

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### **References**

ERC Horizon 2020 project "Aftermath of the East Asian War of 1592-1598" (758347).

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[LINK TO THE AFTERMATH PROJECT WEBSITE](#)

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