

## Call for Proposals

ISARS Conference 2026  
*Shamanism and Power: Dialogues Across Knowledge, Art, and Society*  
Sogang University, Seoul, Korea  
24–27 June 2026

The International Society for Academic Research on Shamanism (ISARS) invites proposals for its 2026 conference, to be held at Sogang University in Seoul under the theme *Shamanism and Power: Dialogues Across Knowledge, Art, and Society*. This conference welcomes researchers across disciplines together with artists, curators, and practitioners, fostering a dialogue that integrates creative, cultural, and community-based perspectives on shamanism.

In shamanic traditions, power is understood as both an invisible force and a powerful agent—at once a source of vitality and a form of spiritual energy. By entering into a relationship with power, shamans provide guidance for their communities as well as themselves. At the same time, power categorizes and regulates shamanism within political and national contexts, producing it as a social reality. Shamanism has unfolded in diverse ways across the world, reflecting the distinctive experiences of different regions shaped by varying historical and cultural dynamics. In several Asian countries, traditional forms of shamanism have been reshaped through the historical experiences of colonialism and modernization, as shamans incorporated and reinterpreted these experiences into their practice.

The theme “Shamanism and Power” aims to address not only classical understandings of shamanism in the categories of spirituality and religion, but also the ways in which neo-shamanism and urban shamanism are being reconstructed across diverse cultural domains of the contemporary world. Concepts of shamanism rooted in small-scale societies are no longer sufficient for grasping the multiple forms of “shamanisms” observable today. Some scholars even question the utility of “shamanism” as a general category.

From this perspective, power may be seen both as the spiritual and material force pursued by shamans, and as the mediating condition that enables specific forms of shamanism to take shape within broader political, economic, social, cultural, and religious contexts. Shamanism, then, can be understood as the outcome of interactions among diverse actants: the activities of shamans in pursuit of power, the overarching structures that frame shamanism, and the public evaluations of shamanic practice.

Against this backdrop, the conference invites participants to reflect on questions such as:

- How does power function as a mediating condition that enables or constrains the realization of shamanism in contemporary contexts?
- In what ways do shamans reinterpret the historical experiences of colonialism and modernization through their pursuit of power?
- What new forms of “shamanism” emerge when power is understood not only as spiritual force but also as socio-political condition?
- What role does public discourse play in legitimizing or delegitimizing particular forms of shamanism as authentic or powerful?

## **Program Highlights**

In addition to paper presentations, the ISARS 2026 conference will feature a range of cultural and artistic events, including:

- Film screenings that explore shamanism in its diverse contexts.
- Musical performances inspired by shamanic traditions and their contemporary reinterpretations.
- Booth Exhibitions showcasing books, visual and material expressions of shamanic practice.

These events are intended to create a dynamic forum where scholarly research can engage with creative and performative dimensions of shamanism, offering participants a richer understanding of its multifaceted presence in the modern world.

## **Proposal Submission**

We welcome proposals for:

- Individual papers (20 minutes)
- Panel sessions

Panel proposals should state the session title, a short description of the topic (max. 300 words), and the names and affiliations of 4–6 participants.

- Roundtable discussions
- Multimedia presentations (film, performance-related sessions)
- Booth Exhibitions

\* The official language of the conference is English. Translation through subtitles is being considered for certain sessions of the conference. Please ensure that your abstract (max. 300 words) and short biographical note (max. 150 words) are submitted by the deadline of 15 December 2025. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 15 February 2026.

\* Submissions will open on 1 October 2025, and will be processed through the official ISARS Conference 2026 website. The website address will be announced later.

## **Visa and Letter of Invitation**

Please inform us if you need a formal letter of invitation for visa or for other purposes, such as travel grant applications. For visa applications, the invitation letter will be issued by the Local Organizing Committee. Applications for the invitation letter will also be accepted through the official ISARS Conference 2026 website starting 1 October 2025.

## **Conference Registration**

- From 15 February to 31 March 2026, the early-bird registration fee will be USD 170.
- From 1 April to 31 May 2026, the regular registration fee will be USD 190.
- On-site registration will also be available at the same rate (USD 190).
- The fee for accompanying family members will follow the same rates as the corresponding registration periods.
- The conference fee includes: access to all sessions, conference pack, coffee and tea breaks, lunches, welcome cocktail, one banquet, excursion.

\* Details regarding payment modalities will be announced in February 2026.

– All regular delegates of the 2026 conference are required to pay the annual ISARS membership fee (Family members excluded). Regular members: €60; Student/Unemployed members: €35. The membership fee includes a printed copy of the journal *SHAMAN*. Please make the payment directly through the ISARS website:

[www.isars.org/membership](http://www.isars.org/membership)

## **Accommodation**

Participants are responsible for making their own accommodation arrangements during the conference. The

Organizing Committee will provide information on partner hotels affiliated with the conference, where discounted rates for conference participants will be available. Further details will be announced later.

### **Contact**

For further inquiries, please contact:

[isarsconference2026@gmail.com](mailto:isarsconference2026@gmail.com)

We look forward to welcoming you to Seoul for ISARS 2026 and to engaging in vibrant scholarly and artistic conversations on *Shamanism and Power: Dialogues Across Knowledge, Art, and Society*.

### **ISARS Seoul Local Organizing Committee**

The ISARS Conference 2026 is organized and managed by Academic Center for K-Religions(ACKR) at Sogang University. The members participating in the Conference Secretariat are as follows:

- Dong-kyu Kim (Executive Director)
- Taeun Goo (Conference Manager)
- Hyung Chan Koo (Academic Center for K-Religions)
- Yuri Kim (Academic Center for K-Religions)
- Hoyoung Lee (Academic Center for K-Religions)

The Local Committees participating in the Local Organizing Committee Consortium are as follows:

- Sogang University, Academic Center for K-Religions (Director: So-Yi Chung)
- Seoul National University, Center for Folkculture Studies (Director: Hyun-Soul Cho)
- The Korean Folklore Society (President: Yong-Ho Heo)
- Association for Korean Shamanistic Studies (President: Dong-Hwan Yoon)

### **ISARS Organizing Committee**

- Davide Torri, ISARS President, La Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
- Diana Riboli, ISARS Vice-President, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece

### **ISARS Scientific Committee**

- Marjorie M. Balzer, Georgetown University, USA
- Stefano Beggiora, Ca' Foscari University, Italy
- Naran Bilik, Inner Mongolia University, China
- Dong-kyu Kim, Sogang University, Korea
- Lidia Guzy, University College Cork, Ireland
- Laurel Kendall, Museum of Natural History, Ethnographic Collection, New York, USA
- Pi Chen Liu, Academia Sinica, Taiwan
- Evgenia Roussou, CRIA, Lisbon, Portugal
- Alban von Stockhausen, Völkerkundemuseum vPST, Heidelberg, Germany