

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.

Building on long-standing scholarly interests in shamanic experiences and spirituality, as well as in the historical entanglements of shamanism with colonialism and modernity, ISARS 2026 expands its thematic focus to address the contemporary relevance of shamanism in a rapidly changing global context. The conference continues to examine how shamans experience, cultivate, and transmit spiritual power, and how these practices have been shaped, reconfigured, or contested through processes of colonial domination, modernization, and nation-state formation.

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.

ISARS 2026 explicitly extends these discussions to engage with pressing global concerns such as climate crisis, ecological sustainability, and ethical governance. In particular, the conference welcomes contributions that engage with ESG frameworks, examining how shamanic knowledge, practice, and cosmology intersect with contemporary debates on sustainability, environmental responsibility, social accountability, and alternative models of governance. Through this expanded lens, shamanism is approached not only as a spiritual and religious tradition, but also as a dynamic field of practice that speaks to urgent ecological, social, and political challenges of the present.

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 formats are integrated into the academic program in order to foster dialogue across scholarly, artistic, and practice-based approaches to shamanism.

- Details on booth exhibition applications will be announced later.

Proposal Submission (Extended Deadline)

We welcome proposals for:

- Individual papers (20 minutes)
 - ♦ Abstract (max. 300 words)
 - ♦ Short biographical note (max. 150 words)

- 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. Beside the description of the topic the following are required:

- ♦ Abstract of all the papers (max. 300 words each)
- ♦ Authors' short biographical note (max. 150 words each)

– Roundtable discussions

– Multimedia presentations (film, performance-related sessions)

– Booth Exhibitions

*** Submissions must be made via www.isars2026.com**

* The official language of the conference is English. Please ensure that your abstract (max. 300 words) and short biographical note (max. 150 words) are submitted by the (extended) deadline of **31 January 2026**.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent by late February 2026.

* Please note that ISARS 2026 will be held as an **in-person conference only**. Online or remote presentations will not be accommodated.

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 1 March 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.

Registration fee reductions are as follows:

- ♦ Partner institutions: 30% reduction upon request through partner institutions
- ♦ Students: Up to 50% reduction on the registration fee

– The conference fee includes: access to all sessions, conference materials, coffee and tea breaks, lunches, a welcome cocktail, one banquet, and the conference excursion.

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

ISARS Membership

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

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

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