Special Issue

Religious Wonder in Pre-Modern Korea: Its Social, Cultural, Political Aspects

Message from the Guest Editor

Just as in China and Japan, there were phenomena of wonder that took place beyond the purview of people's knowledge of nature in pre-modern times in Korea, often described using the term "yŏnghŏm" (Ch. lingyan, lit. numinous verification). These were religious and spiritual phenomena or events in which the power of the sacred, including buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, immortals, and scriptures, was (perceived to be) revealed in an incomprehensible way, often as a response to wholesome or unwholesome human actions.

Although there are many records in Korea of yŏnghŏm, associated with Buddhism, Confucianism, folk beliefs, and even Catholicism, few academic studies have been conducted on these events or phenomena, unlike their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, especially beyond the personal realm.

We invite papers that explore yonghom in pre-modern Korea in regard to its communal, social, or national meaning, implication, or influence, examining, for example, how these phenomena of wonder were made (fabricated), used, or emphasized in order to maintain and justify or challenge the established social, religious, and/or political order.

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Fresh developments in the disciplines that consistently make significant contributions to our understanding of religious personality, authority, devotion, and community - disciplines ranging from psychology, sociology, and anthropology to history, art history, philosophy, literary criticism, and political science – fuel general, as well as scholarly, interest in the world's religions.

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