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Mourning in Your Heart (*Simsang*): Performing Ritual and Emotion in Chosŏn Korea

Abstract

Because of the centrality of ritual to upholding institutional structures and maintaining socio-familial order as prescribed by Neo-Confucian norms, scholars have examined the interaction between ritual and power in various facets of Chosŏn society, including the realms of politics and intellectual debate. Among ritual practices, mourning or funerary rites, in particular, stipulated a set of practices, speech, and attire that extended even to the specifics of a mourner's weeping and facial expression in public. A mourner's grief was to be "properly" managed, displaying neither excessive emotion nor impassive sorrow. This Confucian emphasis on the regulation of emotion during rites has meant that the place of emotion in the relationship between ritual and power has hardly been explored.

Taking emotions as its analytical tool, this paper examines the practice of *simsang* (mourning in the heart) in Chosŏn society. *Simsang* was one of the mourning forms kept within a mourner's heart, when circumstances such as the closeness of one's relation to the deceased person were not adequate for performing years of a normative mourning rite. By allowing a mourner to grieve while avoiding formal ritual activities, *simsang* offered an eclectic space in which to negotiate among emotion, ritual, and power. For example, though *simsang* was not officially codified, Confucian scholars increasingly engaged in *simsang* for their deceased masters in the latter part of the dynasty, trespassing upon the orthodox mourning boundary defined under the kinship structure. Examining the practice of *simsang* in various cultural and historical contexts of Chosŏn Korea, this paper shows both how emotions were interwoven into ritual practices and how *simsang* functioned as a nexus of emotion, ritual, and power dynamics in Chosŏn society.

Bio

Jungwon Kim is King Sejong Assistant Professor of Korean Studies in the Humanities in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures. She specializes in gender, family, and legal history of Chosŏn Korea. Her broad research interests include women's writings, ritual and expression of emotion, crime and punishment, and the use of legal archives. Her first book manuscript, *Virtue That Matters: Chastity Culture and Social Power in Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910)* expands the subject of female chastity to encompass the larger functions of state indoctrination, socio-political changes, and gender relations. She is the co-author of *Wrongful Death: Selected Inquest Records from Nineteenth Century Korea* and the co-editor of *Beyond Death: The Politics of Suicide and Martyrdom in Korea*. She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University, taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and was a member of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ.