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### **Emotions of empire: affective discourse in early modern Korean diplomacy**

During the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, Korea's dynastic rulers exchanged numerous diplomatic missives with imperial China. Any cursory reading of these documents will note the extent and abundance of emotive hyperbole in their language: "tears that melt lapels and sleeves," "sincerity that moves the heavens," "ecstatic joy that thunders the earth," and "grace of a second-creation that can never be recompensed." Though conspicuous, their presence has largely been left unexplained or relegated to artifacts of rhetorical flourish. The difficulty of explanation owes to two related, though antipodal methodological pressures. On the one hand, neo-realist assumptions in social science approaches to international relations relegate emotion as peripheral or antithetical to "rational-choice" calculation. On the other, a long-standing and general modernist tendency to treat affect as a window to personal "interiority" obfuscates the affective presence in Sino-Korean diplomacy by a preoccupation with the "authenticity" of Korean sentiment toward imperial China. Instead, as this paper argues, affective language in this context is better historicized as an element in an emotional "regime of sincerity," where emotive discourse served as a heuristic basis for political commitment. Besides the starkly performative (rather than expressive) role implied by such a "regime of sincerity," as an emotional regime it also recognized and elevated specific emotional articulations as valid and therefore charged with the potential for use in political negotiation. For instance, the hierarchical dynamics of imperial sovereign and the Korean monarch as his vassal precluded direct expression of indignation, anger, and refusal by the Korean court, but as this discussion will show, this "regime of sincerity" enabled alternative, but legitimate, articulations of dissent that could nevertheless effectively modulate and challenge imperial policy and ideology.

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