

Burglind Jungmann (UCLA)

Some characteristics and peculiarities of commemorative paintings of the Chosŏn dynasty

Abstract:

Documentary paintings form a distinctive genre of the Chosŏn dynasty for which no direct parallels can be found in any other visual culture. Produced for the purpose of commemoration they come in a variety of formats, iconographies, and styles, yet there are common characteristics, most importantly the relationship between images and texts. Paintings produced for gatherings of high officials (*kyehoedo*, 契會圖) and screens and scrolls related to important court ceremonies (*ũigwedo*, 儀軌圖) stand out as the two main types, but lesser court events were also commemorated in visual form. While some paintings depict the real event, others present ideal worlds employing elements of Chinese literary and iconographic traditions. In spite of such a great variety there are characteristics common to most commemorative paintings which are quite peculiar, such as the uneven composition of screens, the diagrammatic layout of ceremonies, and the aniconic representation of certain participants. In addition to outlining the special characteristics of Chosŏn commemorative paintings this paper will discuss these peculiarities, trace some possible visual sources of inspiration of both, Chosŏn and European-Chinese, origin, and discuss their patronage, production, and display in context of the framework of Confucian ideas that governed Chosŏn society.