

China Research Seminar Series

Korea's Great Ming
**Chosŏn and the Imperial Tradition
in East Asia**



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(UCLA)

2 December (Thursday), 2021
2pm (London time) seminar via Zoom

Please register in advance: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMrduqrrz0jHtUukLjpGaNfUeml3iVGST-6>)

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Abstract

The Chosŏn dynasty of Korea (1392–1910) enjoyed two centuries of unbroken peace with the Ming empire in China (1368–1644). These relations have usually been understood as resulting from a Ming-centered Chinese World Order supported by the institutions of the tributary system. But this view obscures how the Chosŏn court and its envoys exercised enormous agency in shaping the terms and rationales of this relationship. This talk explores the rhetorical strategies of Korean diplomacy, in particular in its envoy poetry, to argue that Chosŏn Korea crafted with Ming envoys central aspects of Ming imperial ideology. As part of this co-construction, Chosŏn's envoys insisted upon Korea's inclusion in a civilized ecumene, asserted claims of Korean cultural authority, and warded off the specter of imperial irredentism. The ideological underpinnings of Chosŏn-Ming tributary relations, far from a ready-made system derived from timeless Confucian principles or a coherent Ming vision of world order, emerged in part from these negotiations over the meaning of the classical past and the logic of universal rule.

Speaker

Dr Sixiang Wang is Assistant Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA. He received his PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures from Columbia University. He is a historian of Chosŏn Korea and early modern East Asia and his research interests also include comparative perspectives on early modern empire, the history of science and knowledge, and issues of language and writing in Korea's cultural and political history. His current book project, *Eternal Empire, Eternal Korea: Rhymes, Rituals, and the Repertoires of Chosŏn Diplomacy* reconstructs the cultural strategies the Korean court deployed in its interactions with the Ming. Its examination of poetry-writing, diplomatic ceremony, and historiography underscores the centrality of ritual and literary practices in producing diplomatic norms, political concepts, and ideals of sovereignty in the construction of a shared, regional interstate order.