



CEACOP seminar

Reconstructing Historical Memory through the Circulation, Citation, and Referencing of Hwang Sayeong's Silk Letter in Korean Catholicism

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Venue: Online (This talk will be delivered in Korean via ZOOM)

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Abstract

This study aims to comprehend the historical memory that is recalled, excavated, and reconstructed through the examination of the diffusion and citation of Hwang Sayeong's Silk Letter. The controversial Silk Letter, authored by Hwang Sayeong in 1801, recommended summoning foreign warships to secure religious freedom for Catholics in Joseon, which was interpreted as treason. Consequently, the clash between ideas on national history and attitudes on human rights and religious liberty has dominated assessments and discussions of the Silk Letter. Nonetheless, researching how the Silk Letter was disseminated and referenced provides new insight into how historical memories are created. This talk illustrates that individuals who recalled the Silk Letter prior to the 1860s were anti-Catholics. In the 1860s, either Catholics had forgotten about it or were unable to investigate it. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the Silk Letter was incorporated into Korean national history by Japanese colonial historians who viewed Hwang Sayeong and the Catholics as significant critics of Joseon's social and political order, and labeled them as anti-national actors who contradicted their view of national history.

Short Biography

Jeanhyoung Soh is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Humanities, Seoul National University. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Seoul National University, with her dissertation titled "The Relation between Power and Authority of Kings in Late Chosŏn Dynasty: Interpretations of the concept of *Hwangkuk* (皇極)." In 2018, she was a Henry Luce Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco. She has taught courses on premodern East Asian history, Joseon intellectual history, and East Asian political thought. Her current research focus is on political language and rhetoric in the 18th and 19th centuries. Her research interests include the Jesuit translations of the Coimbra texts in China, the translation of Western political texts in Asia, and the reception of such translations. Recently, she has begun to investigate the translation and reception of European ideas and thoughts in East Asia, including maps.