



Rethinking the Rise of Confucianism in Medieval Korea

This talk examines the birth and growth of Korean Confucianism as an independent tradition outside of China as an unusual development. Historically, only a handful of societies and cultures managed to abstract the Confucian tradition from its sacred connection with "China" and "Chineseness". How did the Koreans adopt an intellectual tradition that was not designed to be exported? The rise of Confucianism in medieval Korea took place in three stages:

- (1) initial experimentation despite protests against its foreign origins;
- (2) gradual localization alongside other competing traditions; and
- (3) emergence of a hybrid Sino-Korean Confucian nativism as an exclusive ideology.

Javier Cha, a post-doctoral fellow in Korean Studies at SMLC, specializes in the history of medieval and early modern Korea. His research interests include Confucianism, state building, ingroup/outgroup dynamics, premodern literature, historiography and periodization, and the digital humanities. His PhD dissertation reframes the adoption and maturing of Confucianism in medieval Korea as the culmination of a centuries-long effort to build a stable and centralizing aristocratic order. He is currently finishing up an article on the post-IMF South Korean government's massive investments into the digitization of cultural heritage.



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