



**Special Feature**

# Korean Religion and Philosophy

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## Editor's Note

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In the Special Studies section of the December 2019 issue of the *Review of Korean Studies (RKS)*, four outstanding articles from foreign scholars were featured under the theme of “Korean History and Literature.” In hope of continuing with this project, the *RKS* asked renowned foreign scholars to present their works under the theme of “Korean Religion and Philosophy” in the Special Studies section of the Summer 2020 issue. Four esteemed scholars who are also experts of Korean Confucianism and Buddhism graciously agreed to contribute their works to this special occasion. So here we are, proudly presenting you a collection of works on Korean religious and philosophical minds ranging from the ancient 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries through the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Professor Martina Deuchler outlines in her contribution the transmission of the Confucian Way (*dotong*) from late Goryeo and connects it to the socio-political developments in Jeoson. She illustrates it with the contested history of enshrinements of Korean worthies in the Shrine of Confucius (Munmyo), throwing light on the shifting understanding of “orthodox” thought. The pursuit of the Way did not, however, remain uncontested. By the end of the seventeenth century a number of scholars who questioned the unalterable interpretation of the Way emerged and came up with their own understandings. Professor Deuchler contends that the close connection between social status and political participation made this process more political in Korea than in China.

Professor Jörg Plassen examines *Huayan fajie guanmen* 華嚴法界觀門, a text that has been doubted as spurious, but commonly is still attributed to the tradition's legendary “first patriarch” Du Shun 杜順. Drawing attention to some meta remarks in one of its extant editions and the forceful negotiation of a threefold formula with the scheme of four *dharmas* spheres, the author argues that the text is actually an elaborate extrapolation of the terse formula, designed to justify doctrinal innovation. According to the author, while the wording of the four *dharmas* spheres is modeled upon Huiyuan's 慧苑 scheme,

basic structure of the [one] *dharma* sphere to be analyzed in terms of four different spheres is indebted to Wonhyo 元曉, revealing a rather direct impact of Shilla Buddhism not only on a core concept of Huayan, but also on the very formation of a Tang Chinese Huayan lineage.

Professor Isabelle Sancho examines the way in which the making of the Collected Works of Hwadam contributed to shaping the image of Hwadam 花潭 Seo Gyeongdeok 徐敬德 (1489-1546) as a key figure of the Korean intellectual tradition that is commonly shared nowadays. She argues that positive assessments about Seo were not self-evident in the mid-Joseon period, and the status he enjoys today was painstakingly built by generations of followers who undertook deliberate efforts in the process of compiling *Hwadam jip* 花潭集 (especially the last and most complete edition, printed in Gaeseong in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century), which was meant to respond to the reservations expressed by prominent Neo-Confucian scholars. She examines what kind of status his admirers wanted to secure for their master, concluding they portrayed Seo as a faithful follower of the original Confucian teachings.

Professor Vladimir Glomb examines what Toegye 退溪 Yi Hwang 李滉 thought of Daoism, and how he approached it publicly and privately. As the author put it, Toegye may be the last person for us to identify with extensive knowledge of the Daoist teaching which was generally considered by the Confucian society as false learning, but he did have clear control of the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi. According to the author, Toegye even appreciated some motifs and elements Daoism shared with Confucianism, but at the same time was very reserved in exposing such qualities to early learners of Confucian teaching. Even while he was aware of the Song scholars' appreciation of Daoist masters' insight, Toegye remained cautious in publicly discussing it, or in making policy suggestions concerning certain Daoist institutions.

All these articles excellently capture various aspects of Korean intellectual minds. Be it Confucian scholars or Buddhist priests, their academism and professionalism greatly enrich the vast canvas of Korean philosophy and religion. But before anything, we would like to acknowledge the authors, who deeply explored these intellectuals and assessed their significance. We express our heartfelt gratitude for all the authors who agreed to share their expertise and insights with us in spite of their busy schedules, not to mention amidst a global pandemic. We sincerely hope this project will go on to serve as a platform inspiring further discussions between Korean and foreign scholars.