



The Birth of East Asian Literary Cultures: A Small History in Five Miracles



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Synopsis

Only a small number of the thousands of languages spoken throughout human history have developed literary traditions. What do we miss when we take literatures for granted? What factors or coincidences have favored the rare emergence of literary cultures? How diverse have these cases been in world history? And how does a comparative understanding help us grasp common factors and miraculous exceptions, thus giving us a distinctive depth of vision that our current literary history textbooks lack? In this lecture, I will pinpoint five small miracles of this process that should not just illuminate the emergence of literary cultures in East Asia, but also give us new conceptual tools to overcome limiting concepts that have dominated our imagination of how literatures emerge.



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