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Will of Fidelity: Yi Byeok

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Patrick Kilkelly received his PhD in Korean Studies from London School of Oriental and African Studies in March 2019. His research focuses on the early history of the Catholic Church in Korea, from 1784-1886, and seeks to explore the ways in which Korea’s mainstream culture, including Neo-Confucianism, shaped the practice and understanding of Catholicism on the peninsula. As Korean Catholicism developed almost entirely in isolation between 1784, when the first Korean was baptised, and 1836, when the first French missionaries arrived clandestinely, the period provides a fascinating opportunity to evaluate a process of indigenous inculturation.

Abstract

This examination of the Catholic poetry of the late Joseon scholar Yi Byeok demonstrates that early Korean Catholics were fundamentally influenced by their cultural milieu – one which revered Confucian and neo-Confucian thought – and also attempted to present Catholicism as a belief system which could be considered acceptable within orthodox Confucian tradition. The tensions between foundational tenets of East Asian philosophical orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism would ultimately doom this effort to failure. This paper translates selected excerpts of Yi’s works, which have not yet before been available in English. By analysing these selections of Yi’s main work, Seonggyo yoji ("Hymn of the Adoration of God"), the aim is to contribute to our understanding of the syncretic, adaptive processes inherent in any introduction of a new belief system to a host culture, however, it is ostensibly explained at the time.

Key Words: Confucian, Catholicism, Korea, China, late Joseon, influence, Yi Byeok, Seonggyo yoji, Dasan
1. Introduction

The writer Yi Byeok (1754-1786) made a significant contribution to the corpus of native Korean Catholic literature. Yi Byeok and his early Korean Catholic peers produced writings which presented Western Catholic ideas through the language and aesthetics of Eastern classicism: “they received and understood Catholicism on the basis of old Korean ideas or traditional Confucian thoughts.” Yi Byeok’s work has been described by a Catholic thinker as an attempt at creating “a supplement to Confucianism.” Catholicism took root in Korea during a series of ganghakhoe, “study meetings”, which Yi attended along with other members of his Southerner faction (Namin sip’a南人時派) between 1777-1779. The collection of individuals who met to discuss Catholicism is referred to as the Ch’ŏnjinam group, after one of the locations where they met. Many of the men who made up the Ch’ŏnjinam group went on to play significant roles in the very early history of Korean Catholicism, not least Byeok, who holds a special prominence for church historians and members of the modern Korean Catholic church. His work Seonggyo yoji (‘Hymn of the Adoration of God’), written some time between 1779 and 1784 “is considered the premier text for Christian inspiration in the Korean tradition.” His significance does not just rest on his extant works; church writings from his era through to the present day rhapsodise on the significance and quality of his work, while also mythologising his attributes. Many years after his death his compatriot, the seminal thinker Cheong Dasan丁茶山 (1762-1836), wrote:

If he were alive, his virtue and knowledge could not be compared with mine or anyone else’s in the world. But now I am alive and he is gone. Then deep sorrow comes into my mind and therefore I shed tears for him with his book in my arms.

1) Yi, Weon-sun, “The Sirhak Scholars’ Perspective of Seohak in the Late Joseon Society”. In The Founding of Catholic Tradition in Korea, Yu, Chai-shin (Ed.), USA: Asian Humanities Press, 2004. 82
3) Fauconnet-Buzelin, 1996. 125
Yi Byeok’s extant corpus is comprised of the poems *Ch’eonjugonggyeongga* ("Hymn of Adoration of the Lord of Heaven") and the much longer *Seonggyo yoji* ("Essence of the Sacred Doctrine"). The works are important because they provide extensive evidence of innovative syncretism between Christian message and Confucian form and method, what has been called “an authentically Christian reflection with the sole resources of his Korean culture” by Jean Sangbae Ri, a French-educated Korean priest whose 1989 study of Yi’s works is closely referenced in this chapter. The work is what Ri calls an “acceptance” of Confucian truths in Christianity. Ri’s term – *une reconnaissance* – is telling, unsurprising for a priest to use: for Ri, Yi Byeok did not “negotiate” or “convert” Western thought into Korean ideas. Instead he accepted a universal truth. This type of process has a strong pedigree in Korean intellectual history: innovations were often presented as rediscoveries of truth (see Conclusion, below), and Ri’s viewpoint actually occurs regularly throughout Christian writing about Christianity in Korea – that Confucianism was *already* Christian. However, while there are certainly some striking similarities between the thought systems, it’s not a proposition which bears serious scrutiny, as discussed below.

1a. Translations, versions and authenticity

Yi Byeok’s work was originally written in classical Chinese, a decision which has obvious significance: unlike the *han’geul Chugyo yoji*, these works could only be read by people who had mastered classical Chinese, a tiny proportion of the Korean population at the time. Yi’s political affiliations and family background also give some clue as to his motivation for engaging with his elite compatriots on their own terms. As a member of a prominent aristocratic family, he wanted to propagate his beliefs amongst fellow elites: unlike Cheong he was not seeking to bring Christ’s

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5) Ri, 1989, 90.
message to the masses.

This chapter primarily references Yi’s original classical Chinese text, with occasional discussion of Ri’s French versions (1989) and the modern Korean translations found in the 1986 Hwangseokduruga publishing house version, along with the modern Korean translations of sections 18 and 19 found in Gim Dongwon’s 2014 monograph. In their original form none of the individual sections of the Seonggyoyoji have titles – Ri (1989) gave them titles of his own devising, but I have chosen not to replicate them here. The Ri and the Hwangseokduruga versions also differ somewhat as to the start and finish points of several of the sections, although both versions maintain thematic consistency.

Classical Chinese is a system which presents unique challenges to the scholar. To create full clauses in English the translator must engage in extensive amounts of interpretation and negotiation, adding in words where necessary. Additionally, each of the many thousands of characters within classic Chinese have different meanings according to the context they are used in. Taken together, these attributes mean there is significant scope for the translator to willingly or unwillingly change the meaning of the text according to their assumptions. Therefore the translation of texts written in Chinese characters requires a holistic awareness of the historic context of the piece, the mentality of the author and the different possible meanings of the words. Xie (2015) discusses how the unfixed nature of the translation process from classical Chinese into English allowed scholars to leave ineradicable traces of themselves on their translated versions. Xie quotes the American poet, Amy Lowell (1874-1925), who encapsulated the issue: “you get one of two extremes. You get a scholarly translation which is punk as poetry, or you get a splendid poem which no Chinese ever wrote.”

The intractability of Chinese as a language for the expression of Western concepts

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6) Ri is a native speaker of Korean who had a thorough grounding in classical Chinese during his education before living and working as a clergyman in France, where he also completed advanced studies. He is therefore qualified to apply his own understanding and flourishes to Yi’s text, though we must be aware of the extra meaning he applied to the starkness of the original.

is a recurrent theme; even the polymath Catholic scholar Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) struggled to express certain Western theological concepts through Chinese characters.

Some modern scholars doubt the authenticity of Yi’s purported works, as mentioned in the introduction. In a detailed and clinical examination of the specific characters used in the work, Yun Mingu (2014) argues that Seonggyo yoji is a forgery completed in the 1920s or 1930s. Yun argues that the poem uses words and terms which were not used by Catholics of Yi Byeok’s era – for example, the word seongsa 聖書 (“the Bible”) and the phrase Cheonju gangrim 天主降臨 (“Ascension of the Lord”).

While Yun’s work is potentially convincing, he does not advance any motivation for such a forgery, instead highlighting technical inconsistencies between versions, and a recent review of his monograph by Seo Jongtae (2015) rebuts some of the technical points Yun makes regarding the usage of certain hanja. Seo argues that some of Yun’s assertions are incorrect – such as Yun’s example of am庵/庵 (“temple, shrine”) as anachronistic; Seo contends that these characters were in common usage during Yi Byeok’s era. Seo’s final conclusion is that Yun has reached his judgement overly hastily, with more work being needed before a conclusion can be reached:

“[Seonggyo yoji] contains very difficult sentences and a lot of scriptural and doctrinal content. Accordingly, an accurate translation is difficult unless one is an expert who is familiar with classical Chinese texts and is also well-versed in Korean Catholicism and the Bible and [Catholic] doctrine. But it is impossible to say that there has been a translation of Seonggyo yoji published to date [by a translator] which fulfils all three of these conditions.”

Nonetheless it is important to recognise that a significant body of modern scholars, not just Yun, retain serious doubts around the authenticity of Seonggyo yoji. By creating a piece of work which so deeply reflects and magnifies classical Korean culture through a Catholic prism, purported twentieth century forgers hoped to further

deepen Korean Catholicism’s identity as influenced by the peninsula’s cultural milieu.

One argument in favour of the work’s authenticity is the inglorious end to Yi Byeok’s Catholic faith: he publically recanted his beliefs under pressure from his family. Despite all of the astounding stories surrounding him, ultimately he is not an ideal figure to base a corpus of forged work around – why not choose someone like Cheong Yakchong or Gim Peomu, men who maintained their beliefs up until martyrdom? To add to the controversy, the scholars are not split on neat theological versus historical lines; Yun is an ordained Catholic priest while Seo (who has expressed general concerns over the historical validity of research undertaken by Korean theologians) is a historian.

Regardless, if the works attributed to Yi were not authored by him, they are still valuable as they provide a picture of the type of cultural heritage Korean Catholics wished to build for their creed. If his ouevre is a forgery, we can deduce that it was important for those who committed the forgery to convince Koreans, Catholic and non-Catholic, of the intellectual connection between the new belief and the culture it now found itself in. And if such a connection was made retrospectively, by falsely attributing documents to allegedly exemplar Confucian-Christians like Yi, it still demonstrates that the falsifiers felt a need to connect their worship to their homeland, and does not change Korean Catholicism’s status as a unique syncretic cultural element.

1b. Yi Byeok: Man and Myth

Yi’s life story is fascinating, and almost certainly embellished in part. Descriptions of him – contemporaneous or written later – report that he was a man possessing unusual physical and mental talents. These reports must be examined carefully with an awareness of their biases. Yi also apparently possessed a stubborn and defiant nature; his grandfather Yi Geun “occupied high positions in the armed forces… Yi Byeok should have opted for a military career as well. But he refused such a career, well suited though it would have been to his skills.” As a result of his refusal to
follow in his father’s footsteps Yi Byeok “lost, at least in part, his [father’s] affection”.10)

Charles Dallet’s monumental History of the Church of Korea. Like Ri, Dallet (1829-1878) was also a Catholic clergyman, and his work is also clearly that of a believer. Dallet’s description of him shows how Catholics of the 19th century wished to portray him:

He was said by Korean relations to be eight feet tall and capable of lifting a hundred pounds with a single hand—his speech could easily be compared to a majestic river. Furthermore, he applied himself to understanding all manner of things, and the study of the sacred books of the country which he had made in his youth had given him the habit of always digging for the hidden meaning underneath the text.11)

This is clearly not an accurate description, at least not in the physical aspect. Ri concedes that Dallet may have exaggerated Yi’s valour “un peu”,12) but says we must still take note of his vigour and his intelligence; and here we can see that Ri, too, has an interest in portraying Yi as impressive. Yi’s propensity towards “digging for the hidden meaning” was the have a foundational influence on his expression of Christianity. As examples will show he did not simply repeat the Western Bible stories he learnt; as well as seeking to adapt them to his milieu by employing Eastern classical devices and cultural artefacts, he also engaged in a critical attempt to understand the stories further by discussing their meaning and implications. In other words, he approached his new religion as an Eastern scholar. Also a church hagiography, Byun (1984), depicts Yi Pyŏk in similarly hyperbolic terms:

He stood out from the other children for he was clever, calm and prudent from his early childhood. Yi Ik, who was an elder scholar of the time and knew the young child, foretold that he would become a great man— at seven, he had already

9) Ri, 1989. 22
10) Ri, 1989. 22
12) Ri, 1989. 22
mastered the Chinese Classics. One day, when he was young, he spoke to scholars about the Christian doctrine he had learned from the Chinese Catholic doctrine books brought from China by his great-grandfather. They were amazed at his clear and reasonable explanation which none of them could refute.13)

The parallels with Jesus – teaching the elders as a child, an auspicious birth – are clear. Ri’s Yi Pyŏk is also intellectually exceptional:

He tried to find out the truth by reading every book he could get his hands on. Despite his knowledge, he stayed as a simple scholar, refusing to sit for the state examinations and, by doing so, precluded himself from the possibility of taking on high public office; he gained a very high reputation amongst other scholars.14)

Yi’s propensity towards “digging for the hidden meaning”, as claimed by Dallet, was to have a foundational influence on his expression of Christianity. As examples will show he did not simply repeat the Western Bible stories he learnt; as well as seeking to adapt them to his milieu by employing Eastern classical devices and cultural artefacts, he also engaged in a critical attempt to understand the stories further by discussing their meaning and implications. In other words, he approached his new religion as an Eastern scholar. Another church hagiography, Byun (1984), depicts Yi Byeok in similarly hyperbolic terms:

He stood out from the other children for he was clever, calm and prudent from his early childhood. Yi Ik, who was an elder scholar of the time and knew the young child, foretold that he would become a great man; at seven, he had already mastered the Chinese Classics. One day, when he was young, he spoke to scholars about the Christian doctrine he had learned from the Chinese Catholic doctrine books brought from China by his great-grandfather. They were amazed at his clear and reasonable explanation which none of them could refute.15)

14) Ri, 1989. 22
The parallels with Jesus – teaching the elders as a child, an auspicious birth – are clear.

Of course, historical rigour is not of primary importance in the building of a belief system, though it is crucial in its dissection. Whether we look at Yi Byeok as portrayed by his fellow Christians, or his own presentation of Jesus, we can see consistent reflections of the kind of construction of key figures which has occurred since at least the founding of the Yi Joseon dynasty (Haboush, 2001). Despite his physical and mental strength, Yi’s end was ignoble. Having continually ignored increasingly desperate pleas from his father to abandon the Western thought (here we have another direct example of Confucian-Christian conflict) Yi was finally moved to apostasise when his father threatened to kill himself. Byun’s (1984) church history viewpoint is that Yi only succumbed to the pressure to apostasise because “if Catholicism became known as a religion which would allow a believer to watch his father hang himself, nobody would ever believe in it”, but this opinion completely disregards both any personal affection Yi would have had for his father and the powerful influence of the cultural milieu of the time (while reinforcing the depiction of Yi Pyŏk’s supremely strong Christian faith). As a Confucian, being responsible for the death of one’s father would be the worst crime imaginable. As a Christian, not saving one’s father from eternal damnation would be an unimaginably heavy burden. After finally relenting and recanting his Christianity in 1784, Yi withdrew from public life altogether, dying a year later. It is useless (though intriguing) to speculate on the proportion of Confucian filial piety versus Christian concern for the soul of his father which led Yi to finally renounce his faith; but that both competing priorities were present at all should serve as ample illustration of the complex nature of the topic. Western missionaries who arrived in Korea after 1836 had to be carefully schooled in the difficulties of such a predicament – to them, Yi had abandoned his faith without sufficient justification: “It was also difficult
to appraise missionaries sufficiently of the nuances of the Korean language to correctly interpret a family issue of this type.” 17) (For more examples of the Western missionaries’ struggle with the unique style of Korean cultural characteristics see the chapter Letters to Rome, Letters to Paris.) Yi “could not conceive that God would want a son to kill his father” 18) and found himself placed in an unbearable moral double-bind.

Here we arrive at another small controversy. Ri (1989) and Jou (1970, cited in Ri, 1989) both hope that Yi’s recantation was false:

Yi Pyŏk never [again] justified his actions and his beliefs, nor did he evangelise others⋯ his father and other members of the family, moreover, knew that Yi Pyŏk had not really apostatised, because they locked him in the house, cutting off all relationships with other Christians. Yi Pyŏk suffered, not because of his apostatisisation, because he never renounced his Christianity⋯ unfortunately there doesn’t exist any evidence in support of this interpretation, apart from some contradictory rumours from some faithful confused by Yi Pyŏk’s silence. 19)

If we consider Korean filial piety, we can affirm in all certainty that Yi Pyŏk was not an apostatist. But it is a shame not to have documents to prove this. 20)

Yi Pyŏk’s recantation has been lost, leading Ri to wonder if he “could have employed words with a double meaning, as Koreans often do in delicate situations”. 21) Once he had recanted he withdrew from public life and lived in very basic circumstances in a rural retreat, reportedly paying little attention to his health, before dying on the 14th of June 1785 (Iraola, 2007). Leaving aside the question of whether a purported superhuman like Yi Pyŏk could ever have been imprisoned against his

17) Ri, 1989. 30-31
18) Ibid. 31
19) Ibid.
21) Ibid.
will, the tragic circumstances of his death are another compelling demonstration of the depth to which Confucian orthodoxy had cut into his life and thinking.

1c. Confucianism as Pre-Christian Christianity

Matteo Ricci believed that Asians had always worshipped God — and so had initially adopted the term 主天, “Lord of heaven” (cheonje in Korean, tiānzhu in Chinese), in his writing; his 1603 work Tianzhu shiyi 天主實義 (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven) Riccia argued that when Chinese Confucians had contemplated 上帝 (sangje in Korean, shàngdì in Chinese), “Lord-on-High”, in the foundational texts of Confucius Mencius, it was the same entity as the Christian Lord of Heaven 主天 “Lord of heaven.” Ricci was satisfied that the original meanings were close enough to the Western Christian understanding to be re-deployed in a Christian context — particularly when the goal was to draw traditional Chinese elites into Christianity (Cawley, 2014). Pope Clement XI banned the usage of these terms by Catholic writers in 1701 (Mungello, 1989), arguing that the terms did not encapsulate a strictly Christian meaning, having unacceptable atheistic connotations; essentially, as they could and had been used to define an atheistic Confucianism they could not be used by Christians. But for Ri, Confucianism is not atheist, despite the reputation it has been given “more than once” for the same. One of Ri’s key assertions, central to his understanding of Yi’s work, is that pre-Christian belief in Korea (and presumably China) was actually Christianity, or at least worship of the God of Christianity. References in classical Eastern texts led to the discovery of God many centuries before Westerners turned up.

One obvious challenge to Ri’s assertion is that a Christ-less Christianity could not be Christianity, and that addition of Christ to the same turns something not Christian into Christianity. Most scholars’ reading of Confucianism, or classical Eastern orthodoxy, would hold that the references to the sky and heaven are aimed at the Great Ultimate, understood as a persistent process from which all things spring —

22) Ri, 1989. 17
not a discrete, sentient intelligence such as the God of Christianity. “A fundamentally atheist cultural mainstream could not have put a Yi Byeok on the road to discovery to Christianity” argues Ri, but this is debatable: Christianity has persisted in other atheist/“atheist” societies. Theism, in the specific meaning of a sentient intelligence, is not a necessary pre-condition for acceptance of a given religion, only a desire to understand and discuss principles and ideas not immediately obvious from direct human experience, and such a desire is utterly characteristic of late Joseon Korea. Indeed some of Ri’s theorising tends to the crankish: “the story of the origins of Christianity in Korea gives one to think that the people of the Far East have perhaps lived for thousands of years serving the true God – until the day when they come to recognise God in Jesus Christ… the point to clarify above all is for the vocation of Confucianism to be recognised one day in the Church as a step to Christianity.”

This is a bold aim, and potentially an offensive one: Confucianism as an intermediary stage before the perfection of Christianity. One cannot accuse Ri of over-caution. But then what, after all, drew the Ch’onjinam group towards Christianity? They were as spellbound by its promise as a system of personal growth and self-development as they were by the supernatural and philosophical elements of the belief. Yi Byeok and his peers had been steeped in the rhetoric and practice of self-improvement and self-reflection since their earliest years, so it is unsurprising that Christianity’s characteristics would have appealed to them: both Confucianism and Christianity could be described as systems which teach discipline, piety, study and self-reflection alongside love of others and obedience to a higher power. The classics of the East provided readers with multivarious semi-historical, semi-mythic examples of virtue, and the Jesus Christ Yi Byeok discovered continues in this tradition, crystallising the character and virtues of the exemplary Confucian. It was Yi’s “will of fidelity to the purest Confucian tradition” which initially drew him towards the creed and gave him continued strength to maintain his beliefs.

23) Ibid. 17
24) Ibid. 18
25) Ibid.
2. *Seonggyoyoji* ("Essence of the Sacred Doctrine")

The *Seonggyoyoji* is a long poem written in classical Chinese, set down either in 1779, 1784 (during the Ch’onjinam group’s discussions) or in 1785, when Yi was held captive by his family. Split into forty-nine shorter sections, the work is written in the *saon hanshi* 四言漢詩 ("four syllable Han poetry") poetic style. *Saon* was not just a stylistic choice; its use fundamentally affects the way the knowledge is understood (by reader and audience) and transmitted. By providing examples and analysis below I hope to reinforce Yi’s (2004) claim that Yi Byeok “was considerably accustomed not only to Seohak but also traditional Confucianism.”

2a. Structure

The work is structured in a way which requires analysis, seeming to jump from topic to topic, even within a single section. Yi (2014) divides the work into sections 1-15, a re-telling of the main stories of the Bible, and 16-49, where Yi Byeok “represents the attitude of those who were… both Confucian scholars and Catholics who devoted themselves to the faith in the late Joseon period.” My approach here is to analyse the sections in small clusters which deal with similar themes, wherever they appear in the sequence. For reasons of space, this paper will only analyse a smaller proportion of the total number of sections which make up the entire work.

The first cluster consists only of the first section, an example of Yi Byeok’s representation of the sentient God. Immediately Yi attempts to present his beliefs as part of the continuum of Eastern traditional thought: he uses the term 上帝 shàngdì ("Lord-on-High"), exactly as found in the original texts, and explicitly credits上帝 with creation of 萬物, “the ten thousand things” (K. 만물, C. wànwù). 萬物 means “everything”, “all in creation”, and is such an elementary part of the
vocabulary of Eastern classicism that there could have been no mistaking Yi’s intention on the reader’s part: this new understanding of God was to supplant all that had come before.

2b. Cluster I: Sentient God

1.

[Before] any people had come [to be in existence]
未生民來

First, the Lord-on-High existed
前有上帝

Absolutely the only god
唯一眞神

Nothing can compare [with his] power
無理能比

[For] six days [God] created [with his] power
六日力作

Firstly [he] opened the heavens and the earth
先闢天地

Then the multitude of the ten thousand things
萬物多焉

Already rare, wondrous as well
既希且異

Finally [God] made [a man by] blending the earth…
…However, [they] craved to know good [and] evil…
然欲善惡

…[the man] listened [to the serpent’s] words [and] put his hands on [the forbidden fruit]
聞言摩拿
In this way, sin was acquired
得罪因此

2c. Cluster II: Western lore, Eastern understanding

Sections 2, 3, 5 and 6 demonstrate Yi Byeok’s Eastern understanding as applied to Western doctrine (or mythology). Section 2 recounts the story of Cain and Abel. The original Bible story of Cain and Abel does not give any motive for Cain’s murder of his brother. Yi Byeok’s interpretation is that Cain’s act – utterly unthinkable to a right-thinking Confucian, and only less serious than patricide and regicide – has indelibly stained humanity with its sin:

1) Section 2

[Through] the faith [in his] heart [Abel] offered a lamb [to God]
羊祭信心
Cain, [his] older brother
長子苦
Killed [him] – the origin [of sin]
敵殺及今
Accordingly, his ancestors…
以致彼族...
…love sensuality and indulgence
…愛身尼色
[And] flaunt their horses and wealth
列馬羅金

The split from Western Judeo-Christian orthodoxy is notable. In the typical occidential re-telling Eve is seen as the progenitor of sin, not Cain. Is this Yi’s response (conscious or unconscious) to the primacy of maleness in late Joseon Korea?
The centering of Eve might have made the doctrine impossible for Yi’s intended audience, educated *yangban*, to take seriously. Perhaps Yi himself discarded the figure from Eve, who is absent from the poem as a force of urgency, as he was himself uncomfortable with a woman playing a central role.

The third section recounts how Jesus taught in the temple as a child. Such an example would have been shocking and impressive to Yi Byeok’s audience, one conditioned to such an intensely age-hierarchical society as Joseon Korea. Yi’s Jesus not only correctly understands and interprets great works, but also engages in competent displays of orthopraxy: rites and observances. The late Joseon also observed the Confucian custom of recognising scholars as adults with a public presentation of works, a tradition referenced here:

2) Section 3

⋯in the flower of his youth [Jesus] went to the temple
華年至殿

Among [the congregation he taught] the holy books correctly
在會妥書

The scholars [in the] crowd entered into a covenant [with Jesus]
相約衆士

Surely [Jesus] knew reason [and] observances [deeply]
必知理數

Yi also further underlines Jesus’s status as learned by emphasising that “scholars [in the crowd]” “entered into a covenant” with him; he was not merely preaching to the uneducated masses.

Section 6 portrays Jesus as a dragon, a classical Eastern symbol of power and heavenly benediction28) (note that the dragon in Western classicism is typically symbol of

28) See for example *Yongbieoch'eonga* 龍飛御天歌 (“Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven”) (c.1445-1447), where various key figures from Korean history and folklore were depicted as dragons.
evil – here Yi has deliberately chosen a signifier from his own culture despite its meaning clashing with that of the incoming cultural meme):

3) Section 6

...[when] the beast\textsuperscript{29} withers, [his] leathery skin falls off

...畜老革荒

The dragon\textsuperscript{30} is born holding [his] head [up high]

龍現首擧

The dragon is an age-old symbol of luck and vigour within the Eastern tradition (Doré, 1966). Specifically to Korea, the dragon was one form of the \textit{mireuk} (Maitreya) Buddha, an embodiment of Buddha which had specific eschatological characteristics (Pak, 2013). While early Korean Catholic doctrine had a strong tradition of criticism of Buddhist ideas – another example of Christianity attempting to be as orthodox as possible whenever it could – Yi may have chosen to depict Jesus as a dragon precisely because of these similarities with a messianic returning Jesus.

2d. Cluster IV: Christianity with Confucian characteristics

The third cluster consists of sections 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 26 and 39. Yi Byeok attempts to forge a new Koreanised Christianity here by emphasising the importance of key Confucian traits within Christianity.

The pairing in section 9 of \textit{chi} 智 (“the wise”) with \textit{u} 愚 (“the foolish”), serves a clever double-purpose. It emphasises that Jesus’ message is one worthy of consideration by sincere thinkers and seekers of truth - whilst also re-affirming the Christian message of inclusivity. There is also a reference to rules and laws and a warning that Jesus was “attacking and opposing illegality and unreason”. Like the most admirable scholar Jesus “collects the good and excellent”, “rejects sumptuousness” and “reveals what is hidden”:

\textsuperscript{29} King Herod.
\textsuperscript{30} Jesus.
Section 9

Joyfully, happily riding a donkey

Commanding [and] attracting the wise [and] the foolish

Giving out doctrine one-by-one...

...attacking [and] opposing illegality and unreason

always collecting the good [and] excellent

Rejecting sumptuousness, rebuking passion

Scattering darkness, revealing what is hidden

The section finishes with a mention of *in* 仁, “benevolence”, the cornerstone virtue of Confucian propriety. “The characteristic idea of Confucius appears in the idea of *benevolence* 仁. This term, homophonic with the word which designates humanity in general [Korean: *in* 人], means excellence or virtue by mutual love, by which men can live happily in society.” 31) Benevolence is expressed through *correct conduct* (Kaltenmark, 1972, cited in Ri, 1989), ye 禮. The *Lùnyǔ 論語* ("Analects") contains extended discussion on the concept of *in*. The matters discussed in the *Lùnyǔ* are rooted in contextual situation; there are no overarching meta-theories. The character in 仁 is composed from the characters for “human”, *in* 人 and “two”, *i* 二 – humanity is characterised by relations with others, and it is through relationships (father to son, king to subject, and so on) that a moral life can be lived. And the *Doctrine of*

the Mean 中庸 teaches “benevolence is humanity; [it should] lead to very great kindness”. Yi took the very concrete and contextual fixation with in of classical Confucianism and began to apply it to the supernatural and ostensibly context-independent concept of the divine Jesus. He centred the work in Christ to focus the doctrine on a man who exemplifies Confucian ideals in his concrete existence — that is, in terms his audience can relate to and respect. Jesus embodies in 仁, humanity:

…Correctly believe [in God], get protection

...該恃庇佑

Spread compensation, benefit humanity

藉謝恩仁

Section 10 continues to build the mythology of Jesus: a person of “mercy” and “charity”, who ensured that his followers engaged in “contemplation” and were given “a perfect understanding of ancient history”. This last trait is a purely Korean Confucian flourish – nowhere do the gospels mention Jesus teaching history; and for him to have taught his followers about the Shang Emperor and Tang dynasties is unlikely in the extreme. This sections carefully makes a distinction between the public trappings of worship – the sacrifices – and the work of self-improvement, fellowship and contemplation which is so important: personal prayer sayu私願 and assembled communion kongdo公禱.

2) Section 10

…His lofty will was exalted

...志揚讚美

The signs [in] the Lord’s Prayer were examined33)

默記祈文

32) Doctrine of the Mean 中庸, Chapter 20, Paragraph 5: 仁者人也, 親親為大。
Section 16 confronts self-examination. Nothing could be more Confucian. The Western Christian tradition emphasises a lineage of teachers, often who have been directly inspired by God. The impetus is external. In contrast the Eastern tradition advocates the necessity of self-improvement: through study of the great works, one can arrive at an independent conception and expression of propriety. Here again we see the difference in priority within the two meta-traditions between heterodoxy and heteropraxy. The Westerner follows the prescribed works. The Easterner arrives at correct behaviour through their own interpretation of particular works. Ri disagrees – “Yi and his compatriots were concerned above all with truth and doctrine”34) – but Yi’s work here represents a development of the typical classical obligations, of elder to younger:

34) Ri, 1989. 75. Emphasis in original.
3) Section 16

Provide [missionary work] to ascertain [your God-given] talents
量才託授

[Disciples] keep and preserve [the tradition] of help and aid
衛翼扶持

Suffused [with] the knowledge [and] teachings [of] abstention
詔戒誘誨

Studying these ideas night and day
書晚鑑茲

Children gathered round in a group reciting and chanting
兒輩謳誦

Choosing poems and picking prose readings
賦擇詩稽

Explaining clearly [to others as befits their respective] ages
齒牙申講

Choose [what is] near [and what is] far
遐邇均推

This section reflects and strengthens one of the core strands of Eastern orthodoxy, that of education and guidance. The older generation “keep and preserve” the crucial “[tradition] of help and aid” which creates a harmonious society. From pre-Confucian times the virtuous Easterner was commanded by the heavens to share knowledge and dedicate himself to unshowy self-improvement. An excerpt from the Book of Odes demonstrates:

God said to King Wen
‘I am pleased with your intelligent virtue,
Not loudly proclaimed nor portrayed,
Without extravagance or changeableness,
Without consciousness of effort on your part,
In accordance with the pattern of God.’ 35)
2e. Cluster V: the Eastern Classics

The next cluster consists of sections 12, 14, 30, 35, 48 and 49 and focuses on Yi Byeok’s usage of examples and stories from the canon of Eastern classics to promote Christianity. Section 12 makes explicit reference to *gusa*九思 “the nine thoughts”, a section in Confucius’ work *Lúnyeu* 論語 (“The Analects”):

1) Section 12

Scattered and woven [through] the Book of Isiah

It is noted [that] a prophecy [will be along] soon

“I will build [your] ruined house again,
Before [the] end, remember the meek;
Barren soil will become fertile”

Who could trick you into believing that God is not treated with praise?

The streets [will] sing, the valleys [will] accede

This reminds [one of] the nine thoughts

The “nine thoughts” were a nontet of subject matter which a person (assumed to be male in the original text) concerned with self-improvement and enlightenment should concern themselves. 36) This inclusion is notable as it is an explicit reference

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to a work essential to the orthodox canon. It is also curious as the “nine thoughts” do not seem to bear much relevance to the subject matter of the section:

Confucius said, "The superior man has nine things which are subjects with him of thoughtful consideration. In regard to the use of his eyes, he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears, he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance, he is anxious that it should be benign. In regard to his demeanour, he is anxious that it should be respectful. In regard to his speech, he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing of business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts about, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry, he thinks of the difficulties (his anger may involve him in). When he sees gain to be got, he thinks of righteousness."

There is certainly the presence of these themes in the work as a whole – in sections 9 and 11, for example – so why Yi placed this reference to the “nine thoughts” here is something of a mystery.

Confucius’s *Daxue 大學* ("Great Learning"), a foundational classical text, demonstrates exactly the core values of the Confucian orthodoxy influencing Yi’s non-Confucian heterodox beliefs. This excerpt details the praise the Duke of Zhou gave to King Wen:

> Ever think of your ancestor,
> Cultivating your virtue,
> Always striving to accord with the will [of Heaven].
> So shall you be seeking for much happiness.
> Before Yin lost the multitudes,
> [Its kings] were the assessors of God.

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Many centuries before Christianity, classical Eastern orthodoxy was giving a prescription for proper behaviour and conduct: self-reflexive, disciplined effort at moral cultivation combined with a regard for the natural order of the universe (“Heaven” here). This pre-Confucian conception of Heaven does not refer to a sentient intelligence as some Christian scholars had claimed, but is instead the idea of *i*, principle, and *ki*, material force, the twin elements which create, and provide an inherent rationale to, all existence. Yi’s work simply (and cataclysmically) replaces these non-sentient drivers with the Christian God, a sentient force. The end result is the same – humans must strive towards perfecting themselves to live in harmony with this supernatural motivator and organiser. And when we look at the words of Solomon from the Judaeo-Christian Torah/Old Testament we can see that the theme of national and personal self-cultivation being inextricably intertwined is by no means exclusive to the Sinitic East. Solomon is recorded as saying:

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.39)

So while the moral man – pre-Confucian, Confucian, or Christian with Confucian leanings who is accused of heresy against that same Neo-Confucianism – is compelled to construct a nation which is righteous, the effort begins and ends with one’s inner reflections.


2) Section 49

Scheming to manage court officials
策絜臣僚

[Were kings such as] Yu, T’ang, Yao [and] Shun
禹湯堯舜

39) Book of Proverbs, 14:34
Guiding] court officials [&] scholars towards laws

[Were the sages] Tzu Lu, Min Tzeu K’ien, Confucius [and] Mencius

Excessive luxury is dismissed [at the wise ruler’s] discretion…

Yi’s mention of these worthies is an explicit method of framing his truths as a continuation of Eastern orthodoxy. The intellectual sphere in the late Joseon demanded that philosophical innovations be cast as uncoverings rather than developments – “this was the truth all along”. Yi’s beliefs were so deeply anathemical in some key aspects – the belief in equality before God, the focus on an afterlife, and the primacy of the bond between God and believer above any other bond – that there was never any realistic prospect of their adoption by the prevailing Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, but as a member of the marginalised Southerner political faction, his intellectual heritage was one where minority views were vigorously defended through appeals to links with undisputed orthodoxy. Thus he employs the semi-mythical figures of Yu, T’ang, Yao and Shun alongside the most venerated of Confucian thinkers within his Christian works. Writing a century ago the Protestant missionary Gilbert Reid (1857-1927) summarised the moral education which deployed these figures, a type of education which Yi’s work is part of:

The whole history beginning with the ancient rulers, Yao and Shun, down to Yū the Great, founder of the Hsia dynasty in 2205 BC, on to T’ang, founder of the Shang, in 1766BC, on to King Wu, founder of the Chou dynasty in 1122 BC, is a history full of warning, admonition, and exhortation, with examples of upright reformers and statesmen to follow and cherish, and with the example of bad rulers to shun and abhor.40

From the dynasty’s founding, propriety in the Joseon had been based upon the Zhou-li, the ancient rites of China’s Zhou dynasty (Chung, 1995). References to Zhou in Byeok’s work are an explicit attempt to situate Catholicism within moral correctness.

2f. Cluster VI: late Joseon society

In Cluster VI Yi Byeok directly addresses the conditions in his milieu, the late Joseon. Sections 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24 and 36 highlight Yi’s efforts to provide examples which his readers could relate to, while commenting on his homeland’s culture and society. His intention was to develop the Korean Catholic corpus beyond the distant Mediterranean backdrop of the Bible.

Section 13 references a cross-section of society, so important to Confucian thought: “artisans, workers, rich and poor”:

1) Section 13

Artisans, workers, rich [and] poor
工役貧富

Everyone41) gets on well with [and] is close [to one another]
左右近交

2g. Cluster VII: Meditations on Nature through a Christian lens

Neo-Confucianism has been characterised as a system of ordering (Gim Haboush, 2001; Gim, 2010; Oh, 1993) – defining the universe through naming and describing its content. In the thirty-third section of the work, Yi uses a similar rhetorical technique to the one seen in Cheong Yakchong’s Chugyo Yoji.42) Pairs of adjectives – “long

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41) Literally “left and right”, a phrase meaning “everyone”, “all people”.
42) Chugyo Yoji. 138
and short”, “straight and hidden” – are employed as a shorthand to mean “everything in existence”

1) Section 33

If we studiously examine the known world
致究實區

Long and short, open & cramped
長短闊狹

Concave and convex, rugged and perilous...
凹凸崎嶇...

3. Conclusion

Yi Byeok’s beliefs were indelibly marked by his association with Confucianism. His Seonggyo yoji emphasised the precepts of Confucianism and promoted its ethical concepts while espousing Catholic lore and doctrine. He also used the aesthetic and rhetorical techniques of Eastern orthodox classicism in the work. Furthermore its particular form – using many thousands of obscure Chinese characters – could only have been created by someone with an extensive classical Eastern education. As Yi (2004) writes:

[Yi] emphasized the righteous way, and explained, with examples of ethical goodness such as loyalty, filial piety, charity, mercy, love, and faithfulness, that these were the practical methods of putting this righteous way into action. And thinking that the holy way already exists in the minds of all men, he stressed the similarity between Catholicism and Confucianism... [Yi] harmonized the ethical ideas of traditional Confucianism and the morals of Western Catholicism.43

43) Yi, 2004. 74
Yi goes on to claim that Yi Byeok’s work shows a “strong consciousness”44) about his society. This, I think, is projection by Yi; a principal criticism of early Korean Catholicism by the establishment was its selfish disregard for society, and Yi is here trying to position Yi Byeok to counter those accusations. Yi Byeok criticised the late Joseon, but only in as much as it did not represent a pure expression of his ideal Confucian/Christian society. There is no evidence in Seonggyo yoji of any desire for a radical recalibration of the late Joseon towards anything we might recognise as a modern egalitarian Christian society. Instead Yi Byeok wanted his countrymen to begin understanding their Confucian practices via a Christian lens. This type of retrospective re-casting of early Korean Catholic works can also be seen in Iraola’s (2007) discussion of Cheong Yakchong’s Chugyo yoji.

Yi is on surer ground when, like Ri (1989), he holds that Yi Byeok’s embrace of Catholicism was a cerebral, explicit process driven by study and contemplation. His “knowledge of the Confucian tradition was so deep that he could not accept Seohak without reflection”; “the intellectual basis”45) on which he came to be Catholic “was his Confucianism, whose ideas he had cultivated throughout his life.”46) But when we compare Seonggyo yoji to Chugyo yoji we see that the Confucian tradition allowed men writing about the same subject at the same time to express their beliefs in very different ways. Chugyo Yoji is filled with complex justifications and deductions concerning the nature of God/Jesus. In sharp contrast, rather than attempt to persuade his audience with logical rhetoric, Yi Byeok presents the existence of God as an undeniable fact. Like the classical texts he drew upon, Seonggyo yoji is fully rooted in context-specific examples and practical exhortations. Yi was aware of the theological arguments discussed in the West around concepts like the trinity and the resurrection – “the same dogmas did not escape him”47) – but chose instead to

44) Ri, 1989. 69
45) Ibid.
46) Ibid. 75
47) Ibid.
forge a new path. Yi’s work “never departs from the concrete reality of the practice or of human conduct”,48) and this is itself characteristic of his education and milieu. Christianity was being criticised as nihilistic, selfish and wasteful, concerned as it was with the hereafter and eschatology (Choi, 2006; Cawley, 2012). Yi sought to defeat these attacks by grounding his theology in everyday life and current existence – in other words, using Confucian techniques and forms to combat Confucian criticisms.

Clearly, Yi Byeok attempted to fit Jesus into the lineage of Eastern exemplars. Yi Byeok’s Jesus accomplishes everything which would be expected of a classical Eastern sage: Jesus’ actions and their result in Yi’s portrayal are designed to show him as a subject worthy of adoration. More broadly, the sage of the East should seek to order the universe, both by understanding and classifying it and by making direct interventions as a ruler to promote harmony. The search for order is Confucianism’s central motivation – and all parts of Yi Byeok’s work reflect this concern. Ri (1989) argues that there was no inherent conflict involved in accepting Jesus as a part of this pantheon – his understanding of Confucius’ idea of sagehood is that the doctrine was open to the idea of sainthood and divine presence in the earthly realm, a further expression of in ēn

Being a natural man, Confucius did not deny the existence of a higher concept of in could be ‘sainthood’ because the saint could save all of humanity.49)

In his commentary, Ri also consistently conflates “saint” and “sage”, a comparison which is not correct: the two concepts are not interchangeable. “Sagehood” was not “sainthood”, and Jesus’s Western provenance barred him from accession of sagehood anyway. Besides, the Confucian sage achieved his position thanks to impeccable self-control and mastery of his natural tendencies, not bloodline (divine or otherwise). Ri argues that Yi’s examples showcase “sainliness” across the span of human history, but it is not accurate to designate Yao, Shun, Yu and T’ang as

48) Ibid.
49) Ibid. 77
“saints” in the Christian tradition when they held no Christian beliefs or knowledge of Christianity. One can argue that there is a commonality to expressions and practice of virtue across cultures and time, but that is not sufficient to claim, as Ri does, that sages are saints. Sages provided an example for emulate, and left behind useful works, while saints were required to perform miracles during their time on earth and would act as supernatural intercedents from heaven once they had passed away. Yi Byeok’s original text is not so bold; it is possible to read the stanzas of the *Seonggyo yoji* as comparing the great men of Eastern antiquity to Christian ideals without claiming them as Christian. The differences between the two concepts, saint and sage, are important. Christian sainthood represents lives of devotion and self-denial but the catalyst is external – God – rather than internal. Catholic sainthood may not always or even usually involve direct supernatural intervention from the deity, but the Catholic must understand their belief in terms of a sentience which exists independently of themselves. In contrast the central nub of orthodox Confucianism is perhaps that everyone possesses the internal possibility of greatness. In contrast anyone who professed their belief in the Christian God could potentially achieve sainthood, but that would always involve mediation with an external sentience, God. However, regardless of Ri’s overly-flexible interpretation, the potential conflicts here do not negate the plain fact that Yi was attempting to express his beliefs within the forms and rhetorical conventions of his society.

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Mapping the Making of Mao Shan Daoism

A Geographical Account of the Historical Process of the Making of the Mao Shan Sect

Bo Xie

I am a fourth year Ph.D. candidate at the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations of University of Pennsylvania. My main area of research is Early Medieval China (Pre-Tang dynasty), particularly focusing on intellectual and cultural history. The study of this period is necessarily interdisciplinary, and also involves archaeology, art history, literature, philosophy, and religion. My first major research project was on the relationship between Daoist religious tradition and Art History. Through the study on the landscape paintings by a group of Daoist artists, I put forward an idea of "Visualization of Daoist Elysium." My current major project focuses on the transcendence by females from the perspectives of religion and literature to investigate the symbolic meaning of the yin concept and its diverse expressions in the context of notion history in Early Medieval China.

Abstract

The ancestral mountain retreat of Mao Shan 茅山 has always played an irreplaceable and indispensable role in studies of Shangqing Daoism 上清派, whether focusing on the doctrines or spread of said religion. In contrast with traditional studies on Mao Shan, this paper attempts a “reverse” analysis, beginning with an examination of the overall layout of the religious buildings located on Mao Shanduring the Yuan dynasty and going on to the consider the existing restoration of contemporary Mao Shan, based on data from field work completed by the author in the summer of 2012. Mao Shan’s religious geography is captured in a number of maps which relate the sequence in which buildings were constructed, their features of distribution, and the multitude of faiths which have made use of the mountain over the centuries. Finally the paper examines historical literature, mainly Zhengao 真誥 and Mao Shan Zhi 茅山志, in order to make comparisons and find evidence for the conclusions.
of this paper. Using Mao Shana as a study case from the angle of religious geography may provide a new pattern for analysing the dynamic process of the construction of all Daoist sacred spaces, and not just Mao Shan.

**Key Words:** Mao Shan 茅山, Shangqing Daoism 上清派, religious geography

### 1. Introduction

As one of China’s most historically important retreats, the ancestral mountain of Shangqing Daoism 上清派, Mao Shan 茅山, has always played an irreplaceable and indispensable role in studies of Shangqing Daoism, whether the study focuses on the doctrines or spread of said religion.

Without doubt various outstanding scholars from different perspectives have accomplished many remarkable achievements while studying Mao Shan. Some masterpieces include *Mao Shan in T’ang Times* by E. H. Schafer¹, which restores the overall image covering all aspects of the religious and secular life around Mao Shan during Tang dynasty, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Shan: chronique d’une revelation* by Strickmann², which is actually a book on the history of Shangqing Daoism, *The Fragments of the Daoxue Zhuan* by S. P. Bumbacher³, which discusses the monastic life included in Mao Shan in some chapters, and finally *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 by Chen Guofu 陳國符⁴, which investigates the history of the doctrines and lineage of Shangqing Daoism.

There is, however, no book or paper that studies the geographical layout or making of Daoist buildings in Mao Shan, in order to gain insight on the historical process of Shangqing Daoism. The historical process of the making of a sacred mountain, or the final religious geography layout as manifested in a sacred mountain, is an

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actual material achievement bearing testament to the influence of a specific religious school. Accordingly this religious geography – a religion’s buildings and monuments – is more vital and authentic when compared to repeated interpretation of a religion’s scriptures. Yet this angle of study has been overlooked by most scholars up to the present day. This paper is designed to track back the construction of Daoist temples on Mao Shan during the Tang-Song periods, based on the author’s on-site observation and readings of *Maoshan Zhi* (茅山志), through which the author attempts to re-conceptualise the making of Mao Shan as a holy mountain of Shangqing 上清 and Zhengyi 正一 Daoism.

The space and buildings of Mao Shan indicate that the religious geography of Mao Shan has always been in a continuous state of flux: buildings have been constructed, demolished and modified. The buildings of Daoist temples during the Tang-Song periods could be regarded as a typical sample of a religious transformation from local belief to Daoist worship. The particular religious development of a specific religious sect, Shangqing Daoism, is shown in the changes of layout and sequence of construction which can be mapped onto timelines of Mao Shan. This study is based mainly on the records collected in *Maoshan Zhi* by Liu Dabin 劉大彬 (activated during the reign of Emperor of Renzong of Yuan 元仁宗 1285-1320), who lived during the Yuan dynasty, as well as materials obtained through recent field work, which have provided a new perspective on studies related to Shangqing Daoism up to now. In other words, this paper focuses on how folk beliefs related to the

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6) The authorship of Mao Shanzhi is still debated. Chen Gaofu 陳國符 states that Mao Shanzhi is indeed edited by Zhang Tianyu 張天雨, but Liu Dabin stole this achievement (Daozang yuanliu kao 道藏源流考, V2: 248). Other similar records can be also found in Qian Daxin 錢大昕*Yuan shi yi wen zhi* (元史藝文志). Historical records concerning Zhang Yu can be found in Liu Ji 劉基 “Gouqu waishi Zhang Boyu mozhimin”, ed. Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Daojia jinshi lve* (道家金石略), and Yao Shou 姚綬 “Waishi Zhanggong mozhimin” 婉史張公墓誌銘, *Zangwai Daoshu* (藏外道書), 58 & 61. The historical records about Liu Dabin 劉大彬 were in Qing Xitai 卿希泰 *Zhongguo daojiao shi* (中國道教史) (1988): V3. In the year of 1322, Zhang Yu secluded himself in Mao Shan because of the fire disaster in the Palace of Kaiyuan 開元宮. Almost in the same period, Liu Dabin 劉大彬 edited Mao Shanzhi which was finally completed in 1327. Therefore, the duration of Zhang Yu seclusion in Mao Shan and the compilation of Mao Shanzhi by Liu Dabin definitely overlapped, but this is not sufficient to be definitive evidence concerning the authorship of Mao Shanzhi. In sum, the established view – that Liu Dabin is the author of Mao Shanzhi – is still accepted in this article.
Three Mao Brothers (san mao jun 三茅君)\(^7\) and immortality transformed into the Daoist faith, eventually manifesting itself through all the religious buildings distributed within Mao Shan. Consequently, the argument of this paper is actually based on a sort of reverse analysis that begins with the visual religious geographical space before analysing descriptive historical records.

Before the development of Shangqing Daoism, Mao Shan was certainly not recorded as a Daoist sacred mountain in historical documents; in the minds of most local people it was only connected to fairytales or legends about immortals or deities. The most influential of these legends, which can be tracked to the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC), concerned the Three Mao Brothers. The brothers had long been known of through oral and scriptural accounts before the revelations which two hermits named Yang-Xu 楊-許 and Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) came up with during a period of seclusion in Mao Shan. In folklore Mao Shan was the site where the three brothers became immortal and ascended to Heaven. The mountain was originally known as Gouqu 句曲 (“Hooked Bend”), a name it had been given because of its twist and contorted bearing:

山形似已, 故以句曲为名焉。过江一百五十里, 访索即得。\(^8\)

Although there was another legend around Mao Shan, that of Lady Wei 魏華存 (251-334) descending from heaven to reveal to Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-?) certain holy scripts and instructions, it was Tao Hongjing who established the basis of the religious geography of Mao Shan using the theory “grotto heaven” 洞天 (dongtian), in the


\(^8\) YOSHIKAWA Tadao and MUGITANI Kunio, Zhengao jiaoju真誥校注: 395.
process completing the religious transformation of Mao Shan whose sanctity was once based on folktales and existed within folks religions.

Tao, in the text of his *Zhen Gao* 真誥・稽神樞, ("Declarations of the Perfected Zhen") revealed an Elysium named Mao Shan to his followers which was closed to the secular world. Tao’s Mao Shan was a unique union of sacred and secular thought based on Daoist theories. *Zhen Gao*’s contents mainly cover revelations describing the secret subterranean structure and the administrative hierarchy of Mao Shan. Religious building construction peaked on Mao Shan as a result of Tao’s completion of its Daoist geographical theory system, particularly during the Tang and Song period. The historical phenomenon demonstrated through the below list and maps (see Appendix) created by the author according to the completed records in Mao Shan.

At that point the capital city of China was Nanjing 南京, located around 40 kilometres west of Mao Shan. According to the records in *Maoshan Zhi* and my 2012 field investigation, there is a mountain brook named King Chu Brook (chuwang jian 楚王澗) flowing from the east slope of Ji Jin Mountain 积金山, to the west of Mao Shan. This brook naturally scour out a trail into the sacred space, which can be regarded as a horizontal axis. A vertical axis can be traced along the natural trend of Mao Shan. The two axes intersect around Ji Jin Mountain as shown in the following sketch map (not to scale: relative positions approximate):\(^9\):

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\(^9\) Maps drawn by the writer based on the records of Mao Shanzhi and the data from the fieldwork are provided in this paper in the Appendix.
The below features can be summarised and demonstrated through the above sketch, which is based on the records of *Maoshan Zhi* and data obtained through my field work in 2012:

1. The trail along King Chu Brook was the primary road from Ji Jin Mountain into Mao Shan for pilgrims or seekers of immortality. Sites for temples can be found on both sides of the trail, such as those recorded in the historical texts as related to the three Mao Brothers. This is the primary trail into Mao Shan from west to the east.

2. The trail from south to north, which intersects with the west to east path near Ji Jin Mountain, offers an alternative route for travellers. There is also another religious or, with more accuracy, Daoist center here, Greater Mao Mountain,
where almost all entrances into another “grotto heaven” named Hua Yang (華陽洞天) can be found according originally to Tao Hongjing’s Zhen Gao, which coexists alongside with Ji Jin Mountain.

3. All peaks scattered along the vertical axis can be also divided into two area: the first area from Greater Mao Mountain to Lesser Mao Mountain is the site for Daoist worship, while the second area from Lesser Mao Mountain to Liangchang Mountain is an area for the relics of folk religion.

Obviously, Tao Hongjing played a pivotal role during the transformation of Mao Shan into a sacred Daoist space, based on the above-mentioned features summarised from analysis of historical data and maps of Mao Shan - we might even say that Tao was the only Daoist scholar who provided the theoretical basis and religious geographical description of Mao Shan within the Daoist system. As a result, analysis of the religious transformation of Mao Shan consists of the following observations10):

1. Pre-Tao Hongjing Phase (Han dynasty): Mao Shan was a special mountain with sanctity, referenced in widespread folktales.

2. Tao Phase (Six dynasties): Tao Hongjing’s description of the religious geography of the “grotto heaven” Hua Yang and reconstructing the lineage of Shangqing Daoism laid the basis for the transformation of Mao Shan into a Daoist religious site.

3. Post-Tao Hongjing Phase: from the Tang-Sung to Yuan dynasties, the construction of religious buildings on Mao Shan peaked.

This process reveals a general pattern of the accumulated process of Daoist significance within a special sacred space and/or during a special period that involved choosing a related special natural geographical site, most of which were well-known mountains connected to some deities or folk religions via legends. Typically, a Daoist master or scholar appeared to create or complete the religious theories necessary

10) Contemporary Mao Shan based on data from the fieldwork by the author in the summer of 2012.
for the space’s transformation from a site of folk religion into one associated with the Daoist faith. These processes naturally resulted in a period of intense Daoist promulgation and material construction, where multiple aspects of religious life were combined within a special sacred space, including Daoist monastic architectures.

This means that all Daoist or religious monastic architectures are not only historical or religious relics, but also provide a new research angle around the religious significance of the buildings and spatial analysis for a concrete sacred site. The making of a sacred mountain is always of strong religious interests, e.g. the study case of this paper, as it shows that the religious (re-)construction of Mao Shan undoubtedly led to the perfection of Shangqing Daoism as a religious system. In Mao Shan’s case, all its religious architectures with their clear religious orientation are actually particular spaces for the connection, integration, transformation and materialisation of religious significance.

We will now choose several typical Daoist temples located on the mountain and engage in detailed analysis, based on the inscriptions and local chronicles besides Zhen Gao and Maoshan Zhi. Through an analysis of the geographic changes of Mao Shan, I will establish how a shift occurred, bringing the site from being a pluralistic and flexible market of diverse religious thoughts to it becoming the most important sacred mountain for Shangqing Daoism, based, as mentioned above, mainly on Tao Hongjing’s theory.

All of the temples built on Mao Shan during the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD) are all connected to to folk religion or folktales concerning the Three Mao Brothers rather than codified religious Shangqing Daoism. The Palace of Lower Mooring 下泊宫 (xiabo gong) is apparently dedicated to the particular deity Greater Mao, where Mao Ying 茅盈 (145BCE-?) built himself a cottage in 44 BCE\(^{11}\) in which he cultivated his religious understanding while awaiting the arrival of his two younger brothers:

\(^{11}\) The data or statements on these selected temples are mainly from Table I of this paper; where the information used is sourced from different historical documents, this is noted separately.
Master Greater Mao built huts and practiced cultivation here (Mao Shan) from the Qin to the Han periods, and finally flew up to the heaven. In 68 BC, the temple was named as the Palace of Lower Mooring by an inscribed plague bestowed from the Emperor Xuan of Han. A statement which can be found in the biography written by Huang Dongyuan in 799 says that the Palace of Lower Mooring was once a humble home used the True Great Director of Destinies of Shingling.

天茅君自秦漢間結庵修行於此得道飛升，至宣帝地節二年，賜額為宮，唐貞元十一年黃洞元作記，記云：下泊宮者上清司命真君之舊宅也。12)

*Maoshan Zhi* says: Master Greater Director of Destinies flew up to the heaven at Xian-yang 咸陽 in 44BC. And went directly to Gouqu to build huts, which was also the site for teaching his two younger brothers. Master Tao said: (the huts) were said to be the old houses for Master Greater Mao. Which was repeated in a written record by Huang Dongyuan in 799.

茅山志云:大司命君以漢地節二年自咸陽昇，徑來句曲外立茅舍，以教二弟處也。隱居云:父老相傳是司命故宅，唐貞元十一年立碑黃洞元文。13)

There were still another two similar temples recorded in *Maoshan Zhi* during the first construction phase, the Pre-Tao Hongjing Phase. The temples were were called the Temple of the Realised Person of Three Mao 三茅真君廟 (*San Mao Zhenjun Miao*) and the Temple of Mao 茅司徒廟 (*Máo sī tú miào*). All three temples during the Pre-Tao Hongjing Phase were Shangqing Daoist palaces, rather than being connected closely to the folk religion of the Three Mao Brothers.

In particular, the Temple of Mao was documented extensively as being the site of various religious phenomena in a number of sources, including *Maoshan Zhi*, *The History of Song 宋史 (song shi)* and *The Collection Book of Anecdotes during Six Dynasties 六朝事跡類編 (liuchao shiji leibian)*, all of which mentioned a Buddhist monk Delin 僧德林, who once passed by a lot inhabited by a farmer who was working

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12) *Jingding Jiankang zhi*景定建康志, V45.
13) *Zhida Jinling xinzhi*至大金陵新志, V11-1.
with a hoe. The farmer told Monk Delin that General Mao’s 茅将军 (jiangjun) supernatural power had caused him to recover when he was suffering from a terrible disease; the farmer had been saved by the tutelage of two of Mao’s followers, and in gratitude the grateful farmer had constructed a shrine on the land to Mao and his teaching. Decades later, Temples of General Mao were quite commonplace in most villages around the area.

The combination mentioned above suggests that all three temples were initially constructed on the basis of folk religions, and then included into the Shangqing Daoist system during the Tang-Song period through various methods, such as the plaques erected or reconstructions ordered by royal families, or inscriptions about the hagiography or lineage of a given temple being written by influential literati, artists or Daoist masters. 14) This was the most effective and widespread method for the development of the religious geography of Shangqing Daoism.

In the year of 421, Tao Qian 陶潜 (365-427) finished one of his best known essays Taohua yuan ji 桃花源記 (“Record of the Peach Flower Spring”), which is believed to have been inspired directly by the story of a journey into a grotto paradise called Grotto Passage which is collected in the Daoist canon, in works such as Lingbao Wufu Jing xu 靈寶五符經序, Bao Pu Zi 抱朴子 by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343) and the revelations of Yang Xi. 15) The grotto paradise could be entered into through a passage marked by a special symbol like a pine tree, or a blooming peach tree or a stone with a strange shape; this grotto coexisted with the material world, and was accessed by an individual with the reputed virtues or supernatural power. Tao Hongjing defined the space and layout of Mao Shan as such a “grotto heaven” in his Zhen Gao:

There are in total 36 Earthly “grotto heavens” within Great Heaven, among them the 8th is the “grotto heaven” of Gouqu. Gouqu covers 150 li, and is named as

14) Detailed data on the authors of the inscriptions of the temples located at Mao Shan can be found in the Appendix A of this paper.
the “grotto heaven” of Huayang of the Golden Altar... there are five gates of the “grotto heaven” of Gouqu, two located in the south, and another three gates respectively in the east, west and north. There are indeed five side gates (entering into the “grotto heaven”).

大天之内有地中之洞天三十六所，其第八是句曲山之洞，週廻一百五十里，名曰金坛华阳之天...句曲之洞宫，有五门。南两便门，东西便门，北大便门，凡合五便门也。16)

The “grotto heaven” of Gouqu connects Linwu in the east, leads to Daizong mountain in the north, accesses to Emei mountain in the west and heads forward to Luofu mountain in the south. All are spacious and smooth roads.

句曲洞天东通林屋，北通岱宗，西通峨眉，南通罗浮，皆大道也。17)

Following the completion of the hagiography and lineage of Shangqing Daoism, Mao Shan played a more and more irreplaceable role in the development and spread of the said religion. Religious construction carried out in Mao Shan – that is, construction which was entirely based on Shangqing Daoism – began in the Six Dynasties period (220-589AD), when specialised monastic architectures were constructed or rebuilt in the back block18) of Mao Shan. Historical records of these structures almost all involve famous masters of Shangqing Daoism.19) This rear area of Mao Shan was also the highest concentration of sites mentioned in folk religion or folk tales: relics of immortals seeking cultivation, such as the Dragon-feeding Pool 養龍池 (Yanglong chi), the Dammed Lake of the Realised Person Guo 郭真人塘 (Guozhenren tang) and the Well for Refining Cinnabar 炼丹井 (Liandan jing).20) Furthermore almost all eminent masters or practitioners within Shangqing Daoism such as Wang Yuanzhi

16) Zhengao jiaozhu, 404.
17) Zhengao jiaoshu, 404.
18) The definition of the back block here is on the basis of the analysis on the sketch map of the two axes instead of a conventional division. This phenomenon is worthy of being investigated further, based on geographical positions, natural conditions and so on.
19) See Appendix A: List of Monastics Mao Shan of this paper.
20) The relic of the Well for refining Cinnabar is still close to the Belvedere of Qianyuan乾元觀 visited during the field work carried out in the summer of 2012.
Royal power was constantly involved in the making of Shangqing Daoism in Mao Shan; royal endowments aided in the construction of significant amounts of monastic architecture at historical sites connected closely to Shangqing Daoism. As a newly-emerged religious sect with very strong development momentum, Shangqing Daoism was shaped gradually, and uniquely, by means of the material religious layout in Mao Shan, which was consequently transformed into the concrete and magical Daoist Sacred Space “grotto heaven” Hua Yang (華陽洞天) – which existed as both a literal and imagined space. A real Daoist Elysium, coexisting with the profane material world, was a powerful religious anchorpoint for most common people, when understood alongside the complicated Daoist scripture system and its hierarchical religious organisations.

Religious construction on Mao Shan reached a peak during the Tang-Song Periods, when the front of the mountain superceded the back block as the centre of activity. Most newly built or rebuilt monastic architectures were located in spots which had mainly been closely associated with Tao Hongjing, and some other Shangqing Daoist masters. Meanwhile, the hagiography, lineage or the history of the temples was no longer a mix with folk religions or folk tales, but was understood as the pure historical system of Shangqing Daoism. Accordingly the religious layout and pattern of the religious Mao Shan was almost completed at that time.

But even so, a diversity of religious faith and phenomena had still continuously been maintained on Mao Shan. There was a cluster of buildings used by various religious faiths such as the Temple of the White Crane 白鶴廟 (baihe miao), which was built in the year of 778 and was renamed the Belvedere of Shengyuan 昇元觀 in the year 1118; a folk festival with a long tradition, the Crane Fair 鶴會 (he hui)
was also still conserved during Song dynasty. Additionally non-Daoist sites the Altar of Heaven, for official sacrifices, and a site for Casting Gold Register and Dragon Slip 金箓投龙简 (jin lu tou long jian) were located at Ji Jin Mountain. In addition, the source of the funds for the temples’ construction diversified; monies came in from donations from the local populace as well as official funding, and there were private funds investing into the construction of monastries. The Belvedere of Yuanyang 元陽觀 (yuan yang guan), for example, was rebuilt by the private financial aids of Liang Hongyu (梁紅玉, 1102-1135), the Palace of Yuanfu Wanning 元符萬寧宮 (yuan fuwanning gong) was rebuilt by the pecuniary support of Yang Yi 杨沂, and the funding for the reconstruction of the Belvedere of Baoyuan 抱元觀 (bao yuan guan) was from the personal investment of Wang Yuangang 王元綱. Even the Belvedere of Qianyuan 乾元觀 (qian yuan guan), one of the most important temples during the Tao Phase, converted to a famous retreat belonging to the Longmen Sect of Quanzhen Daoism 全真教龍門派 (quan zhen jiao longmen pai) during the Ming dynasty because of the Daoist abbot Yan Xiyan (閻希言 1509-1588).

Nevertheless, it was under the leadership of Shangqing Daoism that multiple religious phenomena could be always kept in harmony in Mao Shan, where it was possible for Daoist masters, refiners and practitioners, alongside common worshippers, to revel in the presence of magical talismans or holy scriptures. Various exotic plants and rare animals were also cultivated in Mao Shan with particular powerful magical effects for refining religious practice. Mao Shan was not only a “grotto heaven” literally but was also a concrete earthly paradise, influencing greatly all aspects of human life of the period around itself.

21) See in the Appendix.
22) Ibid.
23) Ibid.
24) Ibid.
25) See the other version of Mao Shanzhi edited by Da Chonguang 符重光, which is beyond the scope of this paper, and might be further investigated in follow-up research on Mao Shan. Besides the Belvedere of Qianyuan 乾元觀, there were still other important belvederes which were transformed successively into Quanzhen Daoism 全真派 retreats. This phenomenon did not simply mean the diversity and unity of the multiple religious faiths, but was also a sign of the decreasing influence of Shangqing Daoism.
During the Yuan dynasty, the construction of the Belvedere of Shengyou 聖祐觀, the Belvedere of Deyou 德祐觀 and the Belvedere of Renyou 仁祐觀, which were all separately located at the Mountains of the Three Maos, indicated the general completion of the religious geographical pattern of Shangqing Daoism:

In the year of 1312, Liu Dabin, the 45th generation progeny of the Grandmaster of Mao Shan, was given the title of True Person of Inspecting Mystery and Subtleness by the royal house. Five years later, the titles of the Masters of the Three Maos were respectively added with two more characters: Zhenying 真應, Miaoying 妙應 and Shenying 神應. The three peaks still kept their original titles: Shengyou 聖祐, Deyou 德祐 and Renyou 仁祐.

Even more significantly, this implied the completion of the religious transformation by the head of Shangqing Daoism in Mao Shan, where the folk worship and religion of the Three Mao Brothers had been thoroughly subsumed into Shangqing Daoism by means of material construction of a religious geographical layout:

(The mountain) was originally named as Gouqu because of its twisted contour and bearing. During the Han dynasty, the Master of the Three Maos secluded himself here, therefore, Gouqu Mountain was renamed as Mao Shan. According to the fairy tales popularised (in the secular world), people often saw the Master of the Three Maos flying from one peak to another riding on a white crane. Then, the peaks for the Masters’ mountains became respectively named as Greater Mao Mt, Middle Mao Mt. and Lower Mao Mt. In sum, all the names mentioned here were all for Gouqu Mountain.

按山形曲折,后人何为句曲之山, 汉有三茅君来治其上, 时父老又转名茅君之山, 三君往常乘一白鹤各集山之三处, 时人互有见者, 是以发于歌谣, 乃复因鹤集之处分句曲之山, 为大茅中茅小茅君三山焉。总而言之, 尽是句曲之一山耳无异名也。28)

The whole religious geographical pattern and layout and the gradual transfer process of the constructing center in Mao Shan is displayed clearly and entirely in the series of Sketches of the Religious Geographical Layout of Mao Shan mapped by the author based on the narratives of Mao ShanZ. It illustrates, firstly, the absolute predominance of Shangqing Daoism and secondly its harmonious and inclusive coexistence of multiple religious faiths and phenomenon. Even during the field work carried out in the summer of 2012, analysis of the change and development in Mao Shan during Ming-Qing Periods is regrettably shelved for the original intention of this paper. Completion of the religious layout and integration with nature topographical features still remains manifest.

2. Conclusion

Most previous or traditional studies on Daoist “grotto heaven”s are more inclined to rely on chronological materials; conversely, this paper attempts to show a reverse process through analysis starting from the overall layout of all religious buildings located in Mao Shan during the Yuan dynasty and the existing restoration of the contemporary Mao Shan based on data from this author’s field work in the summer of 2012, by which the Daoist sacred spaces on Mao Shan can be clearly and accurately mapped. Constructed features, the multitude of faiths represented on the mountain and the different levels of authority involved these religious geographies are depicted in the maps in sequence. This analysis has been combined with re-examining the historical literatures to make comparisons or find evidence for the conclusion of this paper. Based on the analysis about religious geographic data and historical literatures, the pattern of the making of Mao Shao Daoism can be shown in the following:

This paper using Mao Shan as a study case from the angle of religious geography may provide a new pattern for analysing the dynamic process of the construction of all Daoist sacred spaces, not just Mao Shan.

References


Liu Dabin. Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian歷世真仙體道通鑑. DZ: V5.

Primary Source from Si Ku Quan Shu《四庫全書》, digital edition from the database of Library of Peking University: http://www.lib.pku.edu.cn/portal/

Jingding jiankang zhi景定建康志
Zhida jinling xinzi至大金陵新志
Liu yi zhi yi lu六藝之一錄
Liuchao shiji leibian六朝事蹟類編
Ming yitong zhi明一統志
Jiangnan tongzhi江南通志


A pedagogical approach to

Jujaseojeol-yo 朱子書節要

In relation to Gambaheunggi 感發興起 and

Jinjisilcheon 眞知實踐

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Abstract

Jujaseojeol-yo 朱子書節要 is one of Yi Hwang Toegye’s Best Five Writings along with Seonghagsibdo 報學十圖, Cheonmyeongdoseol 天命圖說, Jaseongrok 自省錄 and Song-gyewonmyeong-ihagtonglog 宋季元明理學通錄. Toegye collected letters from the writings of Zhu Xi 朱子 (1130-1200), compiled them into 20 volumes, and added annotation and historical evidence. It was a breakthrough for the study of Neo-Confucianism during the Korean Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897). Jujaseojeol-yo’s purpose was to assist readers in perfecting their characters. Toegye tried to find a true path through
life via Zhu’s writings. He also tried to share that perception with others through his book – its primary purpose was educational. In this paper, focusing on an analysis of the preface of \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo}, we will examine the purpose and educational meaning of the work. For a long time, \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo} was not properly evaluated. It may be the result of the prejudice of “editing without personality.” I propose that the work clearly shows what the main principles of Toegye’s thoughts are. It suggests a desirable direction of education for us in looking back on today’s reality, where education and practice are separate and education cannot help personality formation and social development.

Key Words: Toegye 退溪, \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo} 朱子書節要, Zhu Xi 朱子, Neo-Confucianism, Letters, Motivation, Education.

1. Toegye’s Best Five Writings and \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo}

The scope of Toegye Studies is really wide. Research results on this subject are also very vast. The subjects and fields of Toegye Studies are so surprisingly wide that it is difficult to review the research results thoroughly. However, there is still a field that has not been studied properly. It is the study of Toegye's perspectives, consciousness, and perception of history. It is also a pity that there is not much research on \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo} 朱子書節要, even though it has had a great impact on future generations.\footnote{Research on Toegye’s \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo}, up until now, has mostly been done by bibliographers. Their focus was mainly on ‘the method of compilation of \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo} and distribution of the book.’ See references.}

Evaluation and further positioning of Toegye's writings may be different depending on researchers’ viewpoints, but I select \textit{Seonghagsibdo} 聖學十圖, \textit{Cheonmyeongdoseol} 天命圖説, \textit{Jaseongrok}自省錄 and \textit{Song-gyewonmyeong-ihagtonlog} 宋季元明理學通錄 alongside \textit{Juja-seojeol-yo} 朱子書節要 as the best five writings of Yi Hwang Toegye’s 李滉退溪 (1501-1570).\footnote{In the old manuscript, the author said, “The best four writings” excluding 「Songgyewonmyeong-ihaktongrok (宋季元明理學通錄)」. However, after deliberation, in this article, he changed it to “five best writings.”} It is necessary to explain why I have selected these 5 best books as opposed to others: \textit{Seonghagsibdo} is regarded by many scholars as a core of Toegye studies. \textit{Cheonmyeongdoseol} is a good work that shows the aspects of
Toegye as a philosopher and an ethicist. This book is said to have laid the foundation for the development of the Joseon Dynasty’s Confucianism, which centred on the Four-Seven Debate 四七論. *Jujaseojeol-yo* was originally compiled for Toegye’s own discipline and study, but its influence on later generations was great. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is the starting point of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. *Jaseongrok* can be said to be a sister book of *Jujaseojeol-yo* — if *Jujaseojeol-yo* was compiled for the purpose of “learning from or emulating Zhu Xi” (朱子), *Jaseongrok* was the footsteps of Toegye who had been practicing朱子 throughout his lifetime. Both works are collections of letters, and are good examples of the way in which diaries and letters can illuminate the aspects of a person's life with authenticity. *Song-gyewonmyeong-ihagtonglog* is a work that clearly illustrates Toegye’s doctrinal perception of history. It remains unfortunate that these works have failed to garner sufficient academic attention.

*Jaseongrok* was compiled for the purpose of Toegye’s personal reflections. It is a kind of confession of life. Subsequent to publication, quite independently of Toegye’s intention, it has become a teaching resource for the purpose of “learning from or emulating Toegye as an exemplar” for the followers of Toegye school. It was as the start of the movement of trying to practice “Learning Toegye” and “Emulating Toegye” that Yi Ik Seongho 李瀷星湖 (1681-1763) compiled Ijasueo 李子粹語, which expanded on some of the ideas in *Jaseongrok*.

During the Joseon era, there were many thinkers who were considered masters of Neo-Confucianist thought. A useful comparison with Toegye’s work during the first half of the Joseon Dynasty is with Uam Song Siyeol 尤庵 宋時烈 (1607-1689) of the second half. Toegye was praised as *Haedongjuja* 海東朱子 (“Zhu Xi of the Eastern Sea” — ie, “of Korea”) by Uam. The two scholars’ work is separated by about 100 years, and there are also important differences in personality between them. Both exalted Zhu Xi and were inspired by him, but the specific ways in which they did this were quite different, as was the background and purpose of their respective bodies of work praising Zhu Xi. In the case of Toegye, his focus was on emphasising
the importance of studying Zhu Xi’s work for the purpose of self-cultivation. Uam, in contrast, made use of the doctrines of Zhu Xi politically, taking the Chinese writer as an example for academic and political activities: he devoted his life to exalting and studying Zhu Xi. His followers also actively continued this path of research. The Uam School continued with systematic studies of the writings of Zhu Xi for three hundred years. Their centuries-long collective research legacy holds a unique place in our academic history. However, the Uam’s school perspective was sometimes limited, as their efforts were aimed at preventing academic disagreements and pursuing a consistent ideology through precise research on the words and speeches of Zhu Xi.

On the other hand, Toegye's compilation of Jujaseojeol-yo was, as noted above, aimed at the perfection of his individual character. Toegye tried to find an authentic way of living through Zhu Xi’s teachings. He also tried to share his perceptions with others through his books. The introduction of bibliographical aspects of this book and its impact on future generations can be seen through related prior studies.

2. Jujaseojeol-yo as a result of “learning Zhu Xi”

Toegye completed Jujaseojeol-yo which was composed of 14 volumes and 7 books when he was 56 years old, in the 11th year of King Myeongjong's reign (1556). Two years later, in 1558, the preface of the original edition was published. After that, the preface was reformed into a formal introduction through 13 amendments, increasing the size of the book to 20 volumes/10 books. Among 1,700 of the epistles of Zhu Xi, 1,008 were selected by Toegye and went through the process of reduction – around 60% of the totality of his canon.

In Confucianism, “education” comes from the cultivation of one’s personality. In addition, personality cultivation starts with emulating great teachers and

3) 「Toegyeeyeonbo.au, Gajeong (嘉靖) 35nyeon Jeongsa (丁巳), 56sejo. “Pyeoncha.Jujaseojeol-yoseong (編次朱子書節要成)”
respecting men of nobility. The word gyŏ 敎, “education”, contains a sense of "imitation". Gim Seongil, famous literary author, said that Jujaseojeol-yo, "is the book I have used to gain strength throughout my life" (eonhaengrok 言行錄), “record of behaviour”). As for the relationship between Toegye and Jujaseojeol-yo, it seems that Japanese Neo-Confucianist scholars evaluated it more actively than those from Joseon. Yamazaki Anzai 山崎闇齋 (1618-1682), the founder of Japanese Neo-Confucianism, said, Jujaseojeol-yo is Toegye’s lifelong masterpiece. All of him is in this book".4) Subsequently, Otsuka Daia 大塚退野 (1687-1750), a Japanese Confucian scholar from Kumamoto 熊本, said, “This book acquired the mind of Zhu Xi 朱子”, and that Toegye would have venerated Zhu Xi’s teachings even at risk to his life.5)

The purpose and background of Toegye's compilation of Jujaseojeol-yo is detailed in the preface of the book. This preface shows Toegye's personality and the characteristics of his school of thought, using masterful phrases. Inaba Usai 稲葉迂齋 (1687-1760), a Neo-Confucianist scholar in the 18th century in Japan, said that scholard recognised the importance of the preface, making it a rule to read it with reverence 奉讀 every time they met together 參集 at the first and the fifteenth days of the lunar month 朔望.

Let’s examine the ninth sijo 時調 (traditional three-verse Korean poem) of Toegye’s Dosansibigog 陶山十二曲 (“Twelve Poem Collection”).

The old man cannot see me and I cannot see him either.
Though I can’t see him, in front of me is the road through where he was going.
In front of me is the road, where do I go if not going that way?

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4) Sangiamjae (嶋堅齋)，『Munhoepillog (文會筆錄)』 Gwon (卷) 20 "Jujaseojeol-yo (朱子書節要). Toegyepyeongsaengjeonglyeog (李退溪平生精力), Jinjaechau (盡在此矣)。
5) Sugosan (藪孤山)，『Gosan-yugo (孤山遺稿)』 Gwon (卷) 9, "Saengjeong-eonjeso (聖敎遺稿)』 "Dechongseonseun (大塚先生), Bun-yeonheung-gi (奮然興起), Naessieonjeonguyujigaw (乃始專力朱子之學), Gideugjeontoegeyissoseon Jujaseojeol-yoidogii (旣得朝鮮退溪李氏所選朱子書節要而讀之), Choyeon-yudeug-eosim (超然有得於心), Huirwal (喜曰): "Sihoeugjjeisiminundai (是獲朱子之心者矣), Sujongsindoeyoseunmoon-un (遂尊信其書如神明)" (Abugil-ung (阿部吉雄), 『Ilbonjujahag to joseon (日本朱子學と朝鮮)』, p. 478.
“The way to go” in the poem is an actual, physical road - and at the same time a metaphor for the virtual road that Zhu Xi walked along; Zhu Xi was Toegye’s guide. There is a time span of 370 years between Zhu Xi and Toegye, but it may be that the road Zhu Xi walked was contained in his writings, especially in his letters, through which Toegye could follow him. Toegye was engaged in studying Zhu Xi’s life long enough to try to resemble his behaviour and even his literary style. Later, Sunam Anjungbok (順菴安鼎福, 1712-1791), who respected Toegye, commented that “every footstep of Toegye is that of Zhu Xi 步步朱子, every thoughts of Toegye are those of Zhu Xi 心心朱子.”6)

Toegye encouraged his students to take a closer look at the "holistic human image" of Zhu Xi through Jujaseojeol-yo. He compiled Jujaseojeol-yo work without abridging any of the original material, and in it the human aspects of Zhu Xi’s work can be seen, even though they are not all directly related to self-discipline. Thus, Junggu Yidam (仲久李湛, 1769-1786) said that there were a lot of unnecessary things in Jujaseojeol-yo. The unnecessary things Lee-dam pointed out were mostly related to "emotional cultivation." Toegye humbly accepted the criticism of Lee-dam, but he summarized his view saying, “In the Analects of Confucius 論語 there are some basic theories and some deep theories; some are rough and shallow, and some are elaborately made, some leisurely. But none of them has not become a clue to [the] way 道.”7) It seems that Yidam did not fully appreciate these thoughts of Toegye. Later, in relation to this, Dasan Jeong Yakyong (茶山丁若鏞, 1762-1836) commented as following in Dosansasugrok 陶山私淑録:

Toegye’s writing to Yi Junggu is very good on the whole. For example, the metaphor of cheongseon 聽蟬, (“listening to the cicadas”) and jeongcho 庭草 (“grass in the garden”)8) deeply grasped the essence of the old man’s Pungbeom sinchae 風範神彩.

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6) 『Sun-amjib (順菴集)』 Gwon (卷) 6, 40b, 「Dabjeong-gunhyeonseo (答鄭君顯書)」 "…… Jitoedoja (至退陶子), Jibgidaeseong (集其大成), Igipyeongsaeng-wihag-ya (而其平生爲學也), Bobojuja (步步朱子), Simsimjuja (心心朱子), Yeogdongbangjiiljuja (亦東方之一朱子)."
7) 『Toegyemunjib (退溪文集)』 Gwon (卷) 10, 34b, 「Dab-jung-gu (答李仲久)」
8) This refers to the words of Zhu Xi in the letter written to Yeodonglae (呂東萊), “I was thinking Gopung (高風) while listening to the cicadas” and the words of Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤) “The weeds in the courtyard wants to live
(“windbugs and newborns”). It is truly a matter of urgency to always go out to gangwhag 講確, (“to convict and confirm”) from uiri 義理 (“righteousness”) and simsin 心身 (“the mind and body”). However, having the spirit 性靈 recreated 休養, being well-minded and well-blooded, moving the limbs, dancing, tepping on the mountain, going to the water, looking for flowers, and running through the flowing willow leaves are all worthy activities. This is why the answer of Jeungjeom 曾點, that is “I will take a bath in Gisu 沂水, and take air in Muu 舞雩” is acknowledged by Buja 夫子. The teacher alone reached the origin of the way 道 and rose to the mysterious 奥妙 level. It was not really anything which the followers of Toegye could understand.9)

Dasan’s summary represented well the attitude of Toegye, who emphasised not only inquiry into righteousness, but also life sentiments. Toegye seems to have believed the delicacy of life could even be found through “unnecessary things” and “leisurely conversation.” The implication is that Toegye is a poet-type Confucian scholar rather than a philosopher-type.10)

Toegye thought that he could understand Zhu Xi’s teachings through his letters. He thought that he could get a glimpse of Zhu Xi as a successful man and also as an ideal human being through his compilation of Jujaseojeol-yo 朱子書節要. It was also crucial to help the compilation’s readers to cultivate comprehensive thinking and judgment and to equip themselves with intelligence, emotion and willingness in order to be reborn as a whole person全人的. This point can be possibly proved by empirical analysis in the aspect of modern psychology and pedagogy. So Jujaseojeol-yo may well be called a “book for the education of the entirety of one’s personality.”

9) Yeoyudangjeonseo (與猶堂全書), Je1jib (第1集), Simanjib (詩文集) Gwon (卷) 22, 6b, 「Dosansasuglog (陶山私淑錄), “Seonsaenghaseojeoljeonyeonsimho (先生此書全篇其好), Yeocheongseonjeongchojiyu (如聽蟬庭草之喩), Simdeuggoin pungbeomsinchaejijin (深得古人風範神采之眞), Daegaechwiuilisimsinsang (大概就義理心身上), Sang-gaganghwag (常加講確), Gowijeolsil (固為切實). Yeongihyuyangseonglyeong (然其休養性靈), Balseojeongsin (發舒精神), Sahyeolmaeg dongtang (使血脈動), Sujogdomuja (手足蹈舞者), Piljaehodeungsanlmsubanghwasulyujije (必在乎登山臨水訪花隨柳之際), Chajeungjeom-yoggijidae (此曾點浴沂之對), Doggyeonheoeobujajaya (獨見許於夫子者也), Seonsaengdlog dodowon (先生獨到道源), Choye-omyo (超詣奧妙), Gobijegongsoneunglyeonghoejaya (固非諸公所能領會者也).”

3. *Jujaseojeol-yo* as 'empirical reality'

Toegye confessed in the preface to *Jujaseojeol-yo* that he felt the writings of Zhu Xi were like the sea: Toegye wondered how he could “sail into the sea of Neo-Confucianism.” The compilation of *Jujaseojeol-yo* was a decision made after long thought.

While Toegye read through the writings of Zhu Xi, he paid most attention to Xi’s letters (書牘 *seodok*), selecting the most significant and compiling them into 20 books. This was not because the writings of Zhu Xi were voluminous (浩翰), and it wasn’t for the purpose of solving the discomfort of the text and the consideration (考覽) either. *Jujaseojeol-yo* differs from the compilations of other scholars, because it was aimed at perfecting an understanding of Zhu Xi’s thought.

There is a reason why Toegye chose to focus on the letters. *Seodok* are letters to be exchanged between individuals. There is an advantage in these letters that one is able to express his/her opinion more sincerely, rather than to some extent, being constrained by the frame of form and formality of other forms of debate; an individual can talk freely about issues with others in letters. While official writings deal mainly with universality and principle, Zhu Xi’s letters are far from preaching abstract theories or truths because they presuppose the particularity of the individual. There is nothing as free as letters to discuss the handling of a given issue. Also, the letter form is comparatively freely available in discussing a person’s *sibisajeong* (是非邪正, “right or wrong, good or bad”). If reading writings for public dissemination is like chewing dry grasses, reading personal letters can be compared to chewing fresh grasses.

Plato, together with Socrates, adorned the preface of Western philosophy. His Epistle 13 is considered to be very important for studying his philosophy. The reason for this is that Plato’s surviving writings are relatively few, and studying his letters brings his philosophy alive. It is not difficult to imagine why Toegye focused on the letters of Zhu Xi in that the epistle of Zhu Xi are more vivid than any of his articles.
Toegye commented on the importance of the letters in the preamble of *Jujaseojeol-yo*:

If we talk about *Zhu Xi Daejeon* (朱子大全) (“The Perfection of Zhu Xi”), it is like the earth carrying all things and the sea embracing all kinds of things. Although there is nothing missing, it is difficult to understand the point, because the material is challenging. However, the letters, which are written according to the author’s abundance of skill and the depth of his learning, are like writing prescriptions according to the symptoms of an illness... some push down, some reveal, some lead away, some save. Do not let ill nature 心術 with little to no exposition do evil, and reflect on even a small mistake when pursuing what is right. The scale is wide and large, and mind control method 心法 is strictly fair and precise. Be careful as if stepping on the thin ice of a pond, and there is no time to rest for a while. Be afraid that it will not be enough to suppress anger, to prevent greed, to move oneself to good, and to heal evil. Do not be afraid to follow one’s teacher, do not feel the need to distinguish one’s teacher from others, be strong, devote, and shine every day, renew your virtue. Therefore, when teaching people, it makes them *gambalheunggi*. This does not apply only to those who learned directly at that time from a given teacher. Even after the centuries, those who truly see this text will be no different from those who have been taught directly by the Master.11)

To summarise, the scale of learning and academic achievement of Zhu Xi is large and broad, and his self-control method 心法 is fair and precise. In addition, it showcases his academic experience and his accrued wisdom of life according to the personality of the other person. Thereafter, *eungbyeongyeoyak* 應病與藥 “prescribing medicine according to a disease” is an important advantage of the work. Toegye stated that

11) 『Toegyemunjib (退溪文集)』Gwon (卷) 42, 3b-4a, 『*Jujaseojeol-yoseo* (朱子書節要序)』. "Gaechwigijeonseolonji (蓋就其全書而論之), Yeojibuhacham (如地負海涵), Samseobul-yu (雖無所不有), Igjinandaeggyo (而求之難得其要), Jeeoseochal (至於書札), Chigaagusgijjaepunjiyoaha (則各隨其材稟之高下), Hagnunjicheonsim (學問之淺深), Simjeong-iyong-yaseog (密囑而用藥石), Eungmul-isilochu (應物而施鈍鍊). Hog-eogho-yang (或抑或揚), Hgodhohgu (或導或救), Hogyeyeong-i Jinji (或激而進之), Hogyehoe-igyeongji (或斥而警之), Sumsul-eunmijigan (心術隱微之間), Musoyong-giseon-ag (無所容其纖惡), Uiligungsaegjije (義理窮索之際), Dogseonjo-cohocha (獨先照於毫差), Gysamgonwangdae (規模宏大), Simbeob-eommil (心法嚴密), Jeongeunglimli (戰兢臨履), Musihogsig (無時或息), Jingjilcheongae (懲窒遷改), Yeogongbulgeub (如恐不及), Gang-geondogsilhwigwang (剛健篤實輝光), Ilsingideog (日新其德). Gisoimyeonmyeonsunsun-ibul-ija (其所以勉勉循循而不已者), Mugan-eoin-yeogi (無間於人與己), Gogigoin-ya (故其告人也), Neungsamgabul-iheung-gion (能使人感發而興起焉), Buldog-codangsigubmunjiisanwiyeon (不獨於當時及門之士為然), Subaegjejwol (雖百世之遠), Gudeugmungyoja (苟得聞敎者), Mu-ieojeiimyeonmyeong-ya (無異於提耳而面命也)."
the reason why he chose only letters among the great works of Zhu Xi was related to how to study.

Starting with *Jujaseojeol-yo*, one can trace a thought-lineage from it to thought Zhu Xi then back to Confucius and Mencius through Yi Luo. Through the letters of Zhu Xi contained in *Jujaseojeol-yo*, which demonstrated his empirical reality, one can apprehend the true meaning of Zhengzhou 程朱 and go on to understand the essence of Gongmaeng 孔孟 (Confucius and Mencius), eventually reaching *seonggyeonghyeonjeon* 聖經賢傳 (“an appreciation of the doctrines”).12) This approach can be evaluated as a rational education method, in that it gets to the original problem of “the way” 道 (do) by empirical understanding of objective facts. This is a characteristic approach of the Confucian educational method.13)

Following in the same tradition, Ubok Jeong Gyeongse 愚伏鄭經世 (1563-1633), who was born 60 years after Toegye, chose writings from Zhu Xi’s canon which were concerned with a passion for learning, studying, and maintaining general physical appearance and compiled them into eight volumes and named it *Jumunjaghae* 朱文酌海. Subsequently, Wuam Song Seol 尤庵宋時烈 (1607~1689) edited *Jujaseojeol-yo* and *Jumunjaghae* together to compile *Jeoljagtongpyeon* 節酌通編. King Jeongjo (1752-1800) said of this book, "*Jujaseojeol-yo* took the language only, *Jumunjaghae* only the letters, but *Jeoljagtongpyeon* is best as it takes both."14) The compilation of *Jumunjaghae* was designed to complement Toegye’s *Jujaseojeol-yo*. However, in the light of the fact that Toegye emphasised the importance of Zhu Xi’s letters, and that his compilation of *Jujaseojeol-yo* was aimed at those seeking to study Zhu Xi and cultivate themselves, it seems to be far from Toegye’s original intent.
4. *Jujaseojeol-yo* as a book for body and mind training and for teaching

Toegye said in the preface of *Jujaseojeol-yo*, "In the letters of Zhu Xi, I chose only those things related to studies 關於學問 and which were desperately needed to be received and used 切於受用." He added, "I have only tried to compile some tips 惟務得要." Here, the word *suyong* 受用 ("acceptance") is conspicuous. It means to take the teachings of Zhu Xi and use them for the training of mind and body. By this saying, it can be seen that *Jujaseojeol-yo* was not a compilation book simply edited in order to reduce the inconvenience caused by the vast and enormous volumes and numbers of the books.

Toegye edited *Jujaseojeol-yo* for his own studies (為己之學) and for the education of his disciples. In the preface to *Jujaseojeol-yo*, he said, "What would you do with this book if you wanted to make future learners engage in learning and subsequently truly learn and truly act?" It is clear that the ultimate purpose of the compilation of *Jujaseojeol-yo* is, as mentioned above, *jinjisilcheon* 真知實踐, "to truly know and to steadily practice." In addition, Toegye said in *Toegyeeonhaengrok* 退溪言行錄 "This book does not already have such an obligation to study for the highest-level state examination, and it encourages 感發興起 ("to induce emotions and stimulate senses") people to read it. Therefore, this book is very useful for beginners." Here, the words *gwageojieob* 科擧之業 ("studying for the highest-level state examination to recruit ranking officials"), *gambalheung-gi* 感發興起, and *chohak* 初學 ("first learning") are remarkable. *Chohak* is not the beginning of study, but the start of studying specifically *Neo-Confucianism*. Toegye emphasised *Jujaseojeol-yo* was to be a primer

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15) These words are originally found in Buddhist scriptures.
16) 「Toegyemanjib (退溪文集)」Gwon (巻) 42, 5h, 「Jujaseojeol-yoseo (朱子書節要序)」, “Jjangsahagja (將使學者), Gambalheung-gi (感發興起), Ijongsa-eojinjisilcheonja (而從事於眞知實踐者), Sasiseohaijae (舍是書何以哉)?”
17) 「Toegyeeonhaenglog (退溪言行錄)」Gwon (巻) 5, 「Nongwageojipye (論科擧之弊)」, "Geum-inbibuldogji (今人非不讀之), Iljecheobsong-gyeolgwawieob (而只以帖誦決科為業), …… Yagsiseochigimnuppie (若是書則旣無其弊), Idogjilyeong-in-tigambalheung-gi (而讀之令人易以感發興起), Gojeob-inchohag (故接引初學), Daisiseoun (多以是書云)."(Kim Seong-il Gi, 金誠一記)
for beginners - ibdojiseo 入道之書, “a guide book for entering the way” (道).

_Jujaseojeol-yo_ had a clear message that it is possible to attain _jinjisilcheon_ through the human being Zhu Xi and his teachings and example of self-mastery. Toegye was advocating _simhak_ 心學 (“mind/heart learning”) as a _simbeobjihak_ 心法之學 (“school of the mind/heart learning”) for the perfection of self-mastery in human beings. This book alone shows that the main principle of Toegye’s school was the study of human beings. There are limited examples of the theoretical controversies within Neo-Confucianism 性理學, such as Four-Seven Debate 四七論, in _Jujaseojeol-yo_. This is not a coincidence; it is the result of intentional editing. Toegye himself quietly emphasised that the Neo-Confucian theoretical sector such as _rigihobalron_ 理氣互發論, “the theory of mutual occurrence of _ri_ and _ki_”, which is important in the Korean philosophical world today, cannot represent Toegye’s school of thought. In retrospect, Toegye neither emphasised the philosophical aspects of Neo-Confucianism nor led the academic atmosphere in that direction. In the questions of _cheonnmyeongdosul_ (天命圖說, “the explanation of the diagram of heavenly mandate”) and _toegosachilronbyeon_ 退高四七論辨 (“Controversy on Four-Seven Debate through the letters between Gobong and his teacher Toegye”), Toegye always replied to correspondents but did not take the initiative. The venerable sage merely responded to issues raised by opponents. When Toegosachilnonbyeon (退高四七論辨), which was started by Gobong Gi Daeseung 高峰奇大升 (1527-1572)'s question to Toegye, seemed to endlessly continue, Toegye sent him a poem which signified that the debate should end:

Yangintaemulgungyeongjaeng 兩人駄物重輕爭
(Two people carried their luggage and struggled with the weights)

Sangdojeoanggipyeong 高度低昻亦已平
(I counted the height, and it was already fair)

Gyeonggeugeulbyeongwijingab 更剋乙邊歸盡甲
(At any time, will the load be even?)
Gisitaesedeuggyunjeong 幾時駄勢得勻停
(When you unload one side and load the other side)\(^\text{18}\)

This response illustrates where Toegye school’s centre of gravity is. Toegye's goal was to study and practice Confucian simbeob 心法 (“heart/mind law”) and to reach the status of sage. In that respect, as mentioned above, Toegye’s school can be said to represent simhak 心學 (“heart/mind learning”). Toegye put a great deal of emphasis on Xinjing, written by Zhen Dexiu 眞德秀 (1178-1235) of the Chinese Song Dynasty. According to the Toegye’s disciple, Lee Deokhong 李德弘 (1541-1596), Toegye perfected his theories of the origin of simhak and the sophistication of simbeob after obtaining this book. Toegye held Zhen’s Xinjing in extremely high regard; he believed the book to be “as important as one's life” (simmyeong 神明), and respected it as it were eombu 嚴父, “a strict father”). When one of his disciples asked Toegye, "Which book among Sohak 小學, Geunsarok 近思錄) and Simgyeong 心經 is most vital?" Toegye answered, “Sohak 小學 contains che (體, “the body”) and yong (用, “use”), and Geunsarok contains uiri (義理, “the truth”) and jeongmi (精微, “fine and detailed”). So, I was obliged to read all of them. However, there is nothing more urgent than Simgyeong for beginners to start studying for the first time."\(^\text{19}\)

The main content of Simgyeong is Jonyanggongbu 存養工夫), “studying to keep one’s spirit awake in tranquility”). This book is composed of four volumes about the practice of gyeong 敬, “propriety”, selected from Confucian scriptures and the writings of later scholars such as Zhou Lianxi 周廉溪, the two Jeongs 二程, and Zhu Xi. In short, it is a “textbook of simhak.” However, most of the contents in this book are textual and theoretical, rather than based on self-cultivation. Later on, in the Chinese Ming Dynasty, Cheng Min-zheng 程敏政 (1445-1499) wrote Xinjingfuzhu 心經附註), but this book was also just a commentary. It was difficult for the students reading Simgyeong to feel a sense of being able to study because they would be

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\(^{18}\) "Toegyekkeomseo (退溪全書), Gwon (卷) 17, 3a, "Yeogimyeong-con (與奇明彦) (Imsul, 壬戌).

\(^{19}\) "Toegymunjib (退溪文集), "Eonhaenglog(Il) (言行錄(一)), "Yapyeon (類編), "Dogseo (讀書) (Kimsugi, 金睟記)"
more likely to be reluctant to study owing to the work exhorting them to practice jeongje 整齊, “dress up properly and keep a correct posture” and eomsuk (嚴肅, “being solemn”).

Among Toegye's meaningful words, there is Chinjeolyumi 親切有味. Simgyeong was distant from not only chinjeol 親切 (“kindness”) but also yumi 有味 (“aesthetics”). Therefore, while Toegye attached great importance to Simgyeong, through his own experience, he thought Jujaseojeol-yo was more crucial. He said:

In my case, there was nothing better than Jujaseojeol-yo. Since the qualities and the dispositions of friends and disciples are different, they were taught according to their qualities and dispositions, just like prescribing according to the patient’s symptoms. How could there not be something appropriate for you among so many questions and answers? How could it not be helpful to train yourself, if you really sink your heart into the truth, and quietly enjoy it, as if you are being taught directly from an old teacher?20)

Through these testimonies, you can see that one of the reasons why Toegye compiled Jujaseojeol-yo was with an appreciation of the importance of “real experience.” Toegye had himself suffered sadaesahwa 四大士禍, “the four disasters of the classical scholar” in the Joseon Dynasty. There are various theories about the nature of Sahwa, but it basically was a result of political struggle. At that time, gwanhag 官學, state-run schools in the country, had long been simply institutions devoted solely to preparing for the state civil service exams. (Success in the exam was crucial for advancement in public life.) They had deviated considerably from the philosophy of wigijihak 爲己之學, “studying aiming to cultivate one's personality,” the essential foundation of Neo-Confucianism. So, Toegye took the lead in education reform and academic development in order to escape from this academic climate which was focused on state exams and bureaucratic success. He developed the “movement for the creation of seowon 書院, private academies” and strived to develop teaching materials for true study of the humanities and other worthy disciplines. Jujaseojeol-yo was one

20) Ibid.,
of these teaching materials. This book was not made only with justification. It was meaningful because it was based thoroughly on his actual experiences. Toegye quoted Zhengzhou 程朱, who said that the Analects of Confucius 論語 the most critically-needed materials for studying. He said:

Aha! The Analects of Confucius 論語 alone would be enough to enter the road 道. However, now people do not think of trying to read them, but only talk about reading this book. This is because they have been tempted to profit and lost their minds. 21)

Judging from Toegye’s saying that there is “no harm from yutal 誘奪 (“deviations caused by temptation”), his philosophy is thoroughly based on the idea of jaseongchal 自我省察 (“self-reflection”) and simsungdoya 心性陶冶 (“training of the mind”). Later on, Sunam An Jeongbok 順菴安鼎福 (1712-1791) emphasised that Jujaseojeol-yo is a very useful textbook to help readers reject degraded studies 俗學 and concentrate on real studies 實學.22) The real studies found within Jujaseojeol-yo, according to An, were true scholarship.

5. ‘Gambalheung-gi (感發興起)’: Motivation

In the preface to Jujaseojeol-yo, Toegye explained in detail the purpose and intent of editing this book by way of a self-addressed Q&A. "Both Seong-gyeong (聖經, scriptures of the saints) and hyeonjeon (賢傳, scriptures of the sages) are the same real studies (實學). What is the reason why I have focused only on the letters of Zhu Xi? Toegye’s response was as follows:

21)『Toegyemunjib (退溪文集)』Gwon (卷) 42, 5a-5b. 「Jujaseojeol-yoseo (朱子書節要序)」, “Seogseong-injigyo (昔聖人之教), Siseolyeaggaejae (詩書禮樂皆在), Ijjeongjuchingsul (而程朱稱述), Naeilon-eowichoejeol-eohagmunja (乃以論語為最切於學問者), Giuiyeog-yusiya (其意亦猶是也), Oho (嗚呼) Lon-eoilseo (論語一書), Gijog-iibdoui (旣足以入道矣). Geum-injoeocha (今人之於此), Yeogdanmusongseol (亦但務誦說), Ibul-igudowisimja (而不以求道為心者), Wilisoyutal-ya (為利所誘奪也). Chaseoyulon-oojiji (此書有論語之旨), Imuyutalijaehae (而無誘奪之害).”

22)『Sun-amjib (順菴集)』Gwon (卷) 6, 41a. 「Dabjeong-gunhyeonseo (答鄭君顯書)」, “Jeol-yeolsae (節要一書), Jinjijeonglyeog (盡其精力), Chigseonghagjichoechongyong (窮誠學者之最初用工), Jongsimnyugnya (終身受用者也), Yeonngeunseindabuldogji (然後近世人多不讀之), Sii (是以), Silhageornhoeisoghagjeornseung-ya (實學漸晦而俗學漸勝也).”
Usually, in learning, there should be a tip or clue to open a student’s mind who learns so that he can follow along. There are many gifted people in the world. People read the writings of sunghyeon (聖賢, “the sage”) and remembered diligently the words of Zhu Xi. However, there was another reason why few tried to learn this material to the end, because there was no way to provide a clue to the students in order for them to make a resolution to study firmly. The words in these letters now refer to the essentials 要訣 of the sage 聖賢 at that time, and encouragement to study between teachers and students (師友). Everything in the letters could touch the students’ will and move their heart.23)

Here, it is necessary to pay attention to the phrase baldanheunggi 發端興起. Toegye divided it into balgidan 發其端 and jaggisim 作其心 and explained these words. Toegye saw that it was important to provide learners with as many relevant tips and clues as possible. It is perfectly natural that they do not know where to go 入處 if they cannot find a clue in a huge academic sea 學海. The next task after giving them a clue is to "set the mind". This natural procedure to give meaning to learning after clues and motivations are given properly.

Toegye quoted Zhu Xi, ‘The reason why people who are learning did not make progress in learning is that they did not know where to enter and the fact that they can enjoy the taste of learning. It is because there is no 'attitude of emptying the mind and humbling one's thoughts' 虛心遜志, and no 'trying to understand with patience' 耐煩理會.” The learners who are trying to do as Zhu Xi said, will know where to “enter” a text and will be able to enjoy a real taste of studying.24)


24) Toegyemunjib (退溪文集) Gwon (卷) 42, 5b, 「Jujaseojeol-yoseo (朱子書節要序)」, “Bujajieon-wal (夫子之言曰):
Toegye stressed that the texts of the elder sage and Confucian scholars were “kind and aesthetically pleasing” (親切有味). This is how Toegye emphasised that teachers should explain concepts kindly and in detail, and he himself put it into practice. He saw that it was important to read a book and to appreciate the true taste of the eternal righteousness contained in it, just like the process of a child being weaned off breast milk and beginning to appreciate the taste of rice. He also thought that in order to know the true taste, the learners must be immersed in the contents of the book and embody it 體化 so that they can attain the spirit of the scholarship 眞境 that sages 聖賢 speak of. Toegye's reading method is deeply related to yumi as mentioned above.

Toegye felt that learning by rote was harmful. Jeong Myeongdo’s 程明道 (1032-1085) words are still relevant in relation to this topic. Jeong that the reactions that people usually have one of four reactions after reading the Analects of Confucius. The first is no response after reading the book, the second is liking only one or two passages, the third is knowing that the book is good and the fourth is dancing involuntarily with joy 手舞足蹈, “dancing with hands and stepping with feet”25) – the highest level of inspiration 感興.26) This is the culmination of Toegye’s gambalheunggi 感發興起. Gambalheunggi means that one rises with all one’s heart and strength after experiencing a great feeling.27) In other words, it means one’s great stimulus to learn. It is also


26) These expressions from 『The Analects of Confucius』 (論語) are also in 『Geunsarok (近思錄)』, “近思錄” Gwon (卷) 1, Doche (道體) “Myeongdoesosaeng-wal (明道先生曰): Cheonjimpanjuli (天地萬物之理), Mudogpi-yudeu (無獨必有對), Gaejayeon-iyeon (皆自然而然), Biyuanhaeya (非有安排也). Maejung-yaisa (每中夜以思), Buljisujimujijogjinya (不知手之舞之足之蹈之也).”

27) “Gambalheung-gi (感發興起)” was also used to emphasize the importance of 『Simgyeong (心經)』, 『Toegyemunji』 (退溪文集) Gwon (卷) 41, 『Simgyeonghulon (心經後論)』 “Gichogambalheung-gieochasaja (其初感發興起於此事者), Chaseojilyeoga (此書之力也).”
connected with spiritual awakening 发心 in Buddhism, and a resolution 作心 to do something. Gambalheunggi is thoroughly voluntary. Toegye saw that it was a voluntary effort, not a compulsion, that makes feelings rise in the mind. Toegye's learning method and education method are derived from “voluntary gambalheunggi”感發興起.

Toegye is the master of the neo-Confucianism 性理學 that could be described as gunglijinseong 窮理盡性28), “to study both the essence of heaven and human nature in depth.” However, there is another axis called gomujinsin 鼓舞盡神29), beyond gunglijinseong 窮理盡性. Both terms are found in the text of Zhou Yi 周易. Gomujinsin, meaning “encouraging people to do their best” shares a context with gambalheunggi 感發興起 in Jujaseojeol-yo: gambalheunggi can be a specific method of gomujinsin. This particular gambalheunggi also goes well with yeonggamudo 詠歌舞蹈, “reciting, singing, dancing, jumping”, which Zhu Xi presented as a method of first learning 小學 in Sohagjesa 小學題辭, the first part of his Sohak 小學.

The methods of Sohak 小學 comprise the following: cleaning up, responding, serving one's parents with devotion after coming in and conducting oneself courteously. If any energy remained after practicing these tenets, one should try to engage in the following: trying to memorise poetry, reading, singing and dancing, but strictly within the limit (Sohagjibang, Swaeso-eungdae, Ibhyochulgong, Dongmanghogpae. Haeng-yuyeolchegog, Songsidogseo, Yeong-gamudo, Samanghog-yu. 小學之方，灑掃應對，入孝出恭，動罔或悖，行有餘力，誦詩讀書，詠歌舞蹈，思罔或逾).

Zhu Xi's Yeonggamudo 詠歌舞蹈 is a kind of an educational method related to the emotional development of children. Although it is mentioned in the 'child' education, it is relying on emotion rather than reason. It is considered that there should be separate research on the source of Toegye’s education method which emphasises

28) 「Juyeog (周易).」「Seogwacjeon (說卦傳): “Seogjaseong-injijag-yeog-ya (昔者聖人之作易也), Yuchan-eosinimeong-isuengsi (幽贊於神明而生蓍). Samcheon-angjiiisu (參天兩地而陰數), Gwanbyeong-eoem-yang-ibgwae (觀變於陰陽而立卦), Baolhwekeog-yausngyhyo (發揮於剛柔而生爻), Hwasun-eododeog-ilieoui (和順於道德而理於義), Gunglijinnel-ejmyeong (窮理盡性以至於命).”

29) 「Juyeog (周易).」「Gyesa (繫辭) Sang (上): “Jawal (子曰): Seong-inilseun-ijin-ui (聖人立象以盡意), Seogwacjeonjeongwi (設卦以盡情僞), Gyesa-eon-eun-ijingieon (系辭焉以盡其言), Byeon-itongjiijinli (變而通之以盡利), Gojimuhijinsin (鼓之舞之以盡節).”

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reason and emotion together.

It is possible to link *Gambalheunggi* 感發興起 with the motivation of modern educational theory (動機附與, 動機誘發). Motivation is a factor that aims toward a goal and leads to action. However, Toegye’s *Gambalheunggi* is not external motivation including elements such as duty, punishment, compulsion, but thoroughly voluntary motivation of aiming at a goal and achieving it. In this sense, it can be said to be 'spontaneous motivation' or 'internal motivation'. This kind of education method cannot be easily found in the work of other Confucian scholars.

On the other hand, *Gambalheunggi* is linked to “searching for truth through emotion.” Toegye emphasised “the search for truth through emotion” and practiced it himself along with exploring truth through reason, In general, exploration of truth is said to be connected with “reason.” Thus, there are not many scholars who have advocated such a “quest for truth through emotion.”

Confucius’s students appraised him for his skill to well lead people in a calm and orderly way (循循然善誘人). It appears that Toegye’s educational method and pedagogic qualities are directly related to Confucius’s spirit. In light of the above examples, Toegye could be evaluated as a great educator, as well as a great philosopher.

6. *Jujaseojeol-yo* and later generations’ studies on the writings of Zhu Xi

A letter is an essay written on the basis of content delivery without any form. Thereafter, there are many things that future generations cannot understand, such as the date the letters were exchanged, the characters, the context of the contents, and the background of the times. Toegye was very careful in exploring and researching these matters and wrote *Giui* 記疑. He did not stop supplementing even after he wrote *Giui*. He also seriously discussed the questions in *Jujaseojeol-yo* with other scholars.
Regarding annotations, the comments of Dasan Jeong Yakyong (1762-1836) are worth mentioning.

Toegye compiled about 80 answers to all the doubtful questions in the work. They made all the doubtful points clear. It was rather easy for him to classify the points of contention by dialect 方言, slang 俗語, specialty 名物 and literal meaning 字義. He also summarised and sorted by item source 出處, friendship 交際, sequencing of the time 年月 and the beginning and end of the story of Zhu Xi, which were originally unclear and tangled up with other writings. How could he do this, if it were not for his attitude of always seeking every short cut 跋遠 and pattern 紋理 of Zhu Xi 朱子 with a genuine pure heart, extreme sincerity and devout love? Modern readers who who want to study Zhu Xi could take the work’s blueprint as an example here.30)

Toegye’s Jujaseojeol-yo played a role as a catalyst for the study of Neo-Confucianism in Korea and Japan. In Japan, Toegye’s Jujaseojeol-yo was highly regarded as “reading right the mind of Zhu Xi” and adopted as a teaching material. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that Japan entered the world of the doctrines of Zhu Xi through Toegye. However, a somewhat different pattern appeared in Joseon. Toegye’s followers and the Southerner faction continued to supplement Jujaseojeol-yo31), while the Old Doctrine clique expanded their studies to the whole writings of Zhu Xi, with political ambitions in mind.32)

The representative achievements of the Kiho School 畿湖學派 of the Noron faction

30)Yeoyudangjeonseo (與猶堂全書) Je1jib (第1集), Gwon (卷) 22, 「Dosanasuglog (陶山私淑錄)」, “Seonsaengdahjujasoueuui (先生答朱子書疑義), Beompalsib-yeojo (凡八十餘條), Ggajeonghwagmyeongbaeg (皆精確明白), Sasug-uidongseog (使宿疑釋)”, Ghibong-eonsog-eogebmyeonghangjaejageujoja (其方言俗語及名物之易知者及字義之有據者), Jaeonsaesong-jujujeon-wiwa (在先生猶之易為也), Jeejuja-chulcheogyojyeyeonwoljeongwon-wi (是朱子出處交際年月先後事蹟源委), Bulgyeon-eonjeonbo (不見於年譜), Jabeoll-eosihochub-ya (當於是乎取法也), “Jiheugdeug-yeocha (則何得如此), Chighadeug yeocha (則何得如此), Wonhagjujaja (願學朱子者), Dang-eosihochub-ya (當於是乎取法也).”

31) Typical examples of supplementation of Jujaseojeol-yo are Disciple of Toegye, Lee Deokhong’s (李德弘) 「Jujaseojeol-yoganglog (朱子書節要講錄)」 and its revised (and enlarged) edition by Mil-am (密菴) Lee Jae (李栽), 「Juseogangganga (朱書講錄刊補).」

32) 「Juseobaegseon (朱書百選)」 written by the command of King Jeongjo (正祖, 1752-1800) also could be ultimately included in these ranks, because it was also made for the political purpose of ‘Munchebanjeong (文體反正)’. 
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A pedagogical approach to Jujaseol-yo 朱子書節要

老論 were Jujadaejeonchaui 朱子大全箚疑, “Suspicion of Zhu Xi” (by Song Siyeol) and Jujaeonlondongigo 朱子言論同異致, “Zhu Xi’s discourse.” Therafter, a series of studies on Zhu Xi continued until the 19th century. There were too many for them all to be mentioned here.33) Song Siyeol’s Jujadaejeonchaui continued to be commented on and analysed by several well-known scholars. It was supplemented 補足 by Gim Changhyeop 金昌協 (1651-1708) and corrected 補正 by Gim Minjae 金敏材, Yi Uicheol 李宜哲 and Kim Maeseon (金邁淳). The history of these supplementations 註釋史 was bookended by Lee Hangno 李恒老 (1792-1868), a prominent figure of the Choksawijeong faction 斥邪衛正派 (“Defending the Correct and Expelling the Perverse Faction”).34) It is a phenomenon characteristic of Joseon that the manuscript of one individual was treated like a scripture, with commentary and analysis continuing for several hundred years.35)

These supplementations were a natural phenomenon due to the development and deepening of Neo-Confucianism. Juja-eonlondong-igo 朱子言論同異致 in particular was planned and accomplished with a clear purpose. It was an overview of the words and writings of Zhu Xi according to their themes, considering the experience of Confucianist debates about the interpretation of Four-Seven Debate from the viewpoint of rigiron 理氣論 and the differences 同異 between personality 人性 and materiality 物性.

Since the middle of the seventeenth century, the words and writings of Zhu Xi have been comparable to religious scriptures in the context of Korean Neo-Confucianism; his writing were in fact a judgment criterion for the right and wrong in all academic and political differences of opinion (聚訟). There were, however, a lot of controversies, because the theories of Zhu Xi were often different in his first, middle, and last years, and there were a lot of inconsistencies caused by wrong recordings and

33) For more information, see Choi Yeongseong,『Hangug Yyuhag Tongsa』 Jung-gwon, (Simsanchulpansa, 2006) pp. 477-479.
34) See Kim Changhyeob (金昌協), 「Jujadaejeonchaunmunno (朱子大全箚疑問目)」; Kim Minjae (金敏材), 「Jujadaejeonchaunbo (朱子大全箚疑補)」; Lee Icheol (李宜哲), 「Jujadaejeonchaunhoe (朱子大全箚疑後語)」; Kim Maesan (金邁淳), 「Jujadaejeonchaunmogyoobo (朱子大全箚疑問目標補)」; Lee Hanglo (李恒老), 「Jujadaejeonchaunjinbho (朱子大全箚疑輯補)」.
35) Sampogug-ung (三浦國雄), 「Sibchilsegijojoseonkukjeongtongtoidan (十七世紀朝鮮における正統と異端)」, 「Joseonhagbo (朝鮮學報)」 Je (第) 102 Jib (集), 1982.
misunderstandings of junior scholars. In order to avoid such controversies and different theories, it was necessary to properly examine and organise the original meaning of Zhu Xi’s words and writings. These extensive studies of Zhu Xi’s writings and theories were closely linked to Zhu Xi absolutism and dogmatism. These studies aimed at “the control of the realm of ideas” were very different from the intention and purpose of Toegye’s when he wrote *Jujaseojeol-yo*. However, in the late Joseon Dynasty, *kyeong* (敬), “rightness”, which represents the philosophy of Toegye, came to be used as means of controlling the realm of ideas in conjunction with political purposes. Such a viewpoint could (and did) distort the original academic nature of Toegye’s writings.

7. Conclusion

*Jujaseojeol-yo* was a guide to help Neo-Confucianism in the Joseon Dynasty take root. From the youth of King Yeongjo (英祖) (1694-1776) onwards, *Jujaseojeol-yo* was included within the king’s educational curriculum (經筵). The work’s emphasis on the importance of Zhu Xi’s (朱子) writings, was a breakthrough for the study of Neo-Confucianism in the Joseon Dynasty. I think that future generations’ evaluation of it as “a good example of Jeol-yomunheon” (節要文獻) is not overdue. In conclusion, it is useful to summarise the previous discussions.

First, Toegye's compilation of *Jujaseojeol-yo* was aimed at *Jinjisilcheon* (眞知實踐), “to truly know and to steadily practice”. Toegye criticised the academic atmosphere

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36) Han Wonjin (韓元震), 「朱子言論同異攷」序 (<Seo (序)>, “Jujagongjahu-il-inui (朱子孔子後一人而已矣). Yulgokjishigbulgarnjuja (有孔子則不可無朱子), Ijongajawonja (而尊朱子者), Naesoijongongja (乃所以尊孔子也). Bulhaengsesoedomi (不幸世衰道微), Sateugbyeong-gi (邪慝幷起), Sim-yuichimmojuja (甚有以侵侮朱子), Gaeyeog giseol-wineungsu (改易其說為能事), Siseongbuljijongongja (是誠不知尊孔子也). Igihwajangjieosolsusig-in (而其禍將至於率獸食人), Injangsang-siu (人將相食), Uyeogtong-ui (吁亦痛矣).”

37) The ‘Kyung (敬)’ idea, which means ‘Ju-ilmeogeog (主一無適, focusing one’s mind on one thing and eliminating one’s worries)’, has had a considerable impact on the later establishment of Joseon academy overwhelmed by Neo-Confucianism (朱子學). It is necessary to reconsider the fact that Yulgok school scholars including Song Si-yeol (宋時烈) followed Toegye’s ‘Kyung (敬)’ instead of Yulgok’s ‘Sung (誠)’ and greatly emphasized 「Simgyeong (心經)」.

of the time, when most scholars had set their minds on pursuing high-level bureaucracy through the state examination. Therefore, Toegye was directly or indirectly involved in the founding movement of Seowon 書院, private Confucianist academies. He also planned the compilation of Jujaseojeol-yo for his own studies and for the education of his disciples. In this regard, Jujaseojeol-yo was his own textbook and workbook for self-studying and self-culture.

Second, Toegye thought that for his own studies it was firstly important to imitate the ideal human character. He presented Zhu Xi as an example of Jinjisilcheon, and he himself practiced “Learning Zhu Xi” (朱子) and “Walking Zhu Xi’s way again” (朱子). In this process, Jujaseojeol-yo was compiled as both his workbook and textbook. Toegye presented its two editorial standards. The first was important in academic discipline. The second was necessarily needed for one’s life. When these two standards were met, he suggested that adherents would become "a desirable whole-person human character" in the mould of Zhu Xi.

Third, Toegye insisted that in order to reach the standards of Zhusi, we must return to Yi luò (伊洛, 二程, 程顥, 程頤, Chéng hào, Chéng yí) through the 'experiential reality' of Zhu Xi 朱子. Toegye emphasised that Jujaseojeol-yo was directly related to the method of study, bangtongjigsang 旁通直上.

Fourth, Toegye became keenly aware of the importance of the epistles in Zhu Xi’s writings. Through his letters Zhu Xi had undertaken variety of discussions with many scholars in various fields, ranging from fundamental problems to pending issues. The epistolary format allowed Zhu Xi and his correspondents to express themselves somewhat more frankly than the highly ritualised style of other debate formats; accordingly Toegye praised Zhu Xi for teaching through his letters, describing his method as eungbyeongyeoyak 應病與藥, (“prescribing medicines according to the illness”). He also emphasised that later learners should take care to appreciate this attribute of Zhu Xi’s letters.

Fifth, Toegye thought that it was most desirable to study Simgyeong 心經 in order
to do his own studies of Jinjisileon, “to truly know and to steadily practice.” However, he admitted that Simgyeong 心經 was too theoretical, textual and high-leveled for beginners to use effectively. In addition, he said that for himself, Jujaeseojeol-yo was very effective in practice and emphasised its value as a guide book. Jujaeseojeol-yo shows that the core of Toegye’s scholarship is not centered on Ikisinseongron 理氣心性論).

Sixth, Toegye presented Gambalheunggi 感發興起 as one of the educational methods in Jujaeseojeol-yo. Gambalheunggi means being greatly impressed by a certain object, setting a goal, thinking about it and then moving to action. In other words, it means a great stimulation to learn with all one’s heart and strength after reading the writings of Zhu Xi. Toegye’s Gambalheunggi is not external motivation – elements such as duty, punishment, and compulsion – but is instead an internal motivation: voluntarily aiming at a goal and achieving it.

Seventh, in Joseon, since the middle of the 17th century, Neo-Confucianism was widely studied by differing factions. Toegye’s c had a great influence on later generations of scholars, quite apart from Toegye’s intentions. The Yeongnam Namin 嶺南 南人 (“Southerner”) faction continued their studies in the direction of supplementing it with respect to the intention of Toegye’s compilation of Jujaeseojeol-yo. However, scholars from the rival Noron 老論 (“Old Doctrine”) faction had also entered into a general and full-fledged study of Zhu Xi’s (朱子) writings, with political objectives in addition to academic purposes, in connection with the fact that Neo-Confucianism had become the principle of political and educational ideology in the later Joseon dynasty. They expressed their intention to level and control “the realm of ideas” with thorough studies of Zhu Xi’s writings. A lot of relevant works were accomplished by them including Jujaeonlondongigo 朱子言論同異攷, which was planned by Song Siyeol and completed by Han Wonjin 韓元震(1682–1750). It was a sensation in the history of Neo-Confucianism in Joseon. However, it should be clearly distinguished from Toegye’s “for oneself studies” 爲己之學.
Toegye’s followers consistently said that Toegye’s academic source was the writings of Zhu Xi. However, up to the present day, Toegye's Jujaseojeol-yo has not been properly evaluated. It may be the result of the prejudice of “editing without personality.” I estimate that in truth, Jujaseojeol-yo clearly shows what the main principles of Toegye’s thoughts are. It seems that “all the energy of Toegye's longevity has been contained in this book” (晩年精力，盡在此書). It is natural to expect that Toegye's Jujaseojeol-yo will be properly evaluated. It suggests a desirable direction of education, and allows us to look back on today's reality where education and practice are separate and education cannot help personality formation and social development.

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Abstract

The 1930s witnessed a number of important developments in the intellectual life of Korea, which was under Japanese colonial rule at the time (1910-1945). Amidst the nascent growth of modern-type academia, Korean Studies attracted huge interest, as Korean intelligentsia attempted to counter the Orientalist assumptions of Japanese colonialist scholarship. This paper focuses on one concrete case of intellectual contention, namely regarding the attempts of 1930s Korean Marxists to interpret the iconoclastic, non-orthodox Sirhak Confucians of Joseon Korea (1392-1910) as precursors of modernity and critics of “feudalism.” Special emphasis is put on the Marxist reinterpretations of Dasan Jeong...
Yagyong 茶山丁若鏞 (1762-1836), who was regarded as an adept of Western learning, a pioneer of modernity and the foremost antagonist of Joseon Dynasty’s “feudal system.” These interpretations were further deepened in both North and South Korea after the 1950s: nationalistic scholars on both sides of the Korean divide made Dasan, in fact a staunch conservative unwilling even to contemplate any loosening of Joseon’s slavery system, into a proto-democrat and a champion of societal equalitarianism. The present paper argues that the pre-1945 Marxists were “modernising” Dasan in much more careful way than the post-1945 nationalist scholarship in both Koreas. However, their presentist take on Dasan, combined with a disregard of Joseon realities and a focus on the global picture of Western advances and Korea’s assumed indigenous responses to them, did in fact constitute an act of epistemic violence which contributed to the nationalist nurturing of the historical myths in both Korean states after 1945.

**Key Words:** Sirhak, Dasan, Orientalism, Japanese colonialism, Baek Namun 白南雲, Choe Ikhan崔益翰

1. Introduction

Our view of the past is always a presentist interpretation. While not necessarily disregarding the facts per se, a presentist viewpoint always tends to emphasise facts currently regarded as more timely and important, and interpret it in ways strongly influenced by contemporary discursive struggles.1) In this way, the space of memory is always a battlefield. However, after the heat of battle has cooled, professional historians are usually able to come up with reflections on what was disregarded and neglected in the midst of the struggle. Some of the interpretative biases end up being corrected, and the academic community – sometimes in conjunction with the broader public – comes to understand certain episodes of the past in a more nuanced, inclusive and less teleological way. However, such a reflexive view over past discursive struggles in no way guarantees that biases of different kinds will not subsequently appear. Indeed, as long as present-day interests continue to dominate our general perception of the past and the present-day, and desires and concerns continue to be projected on our picture of the bygone days, “objective” history will remain an

impossible aim. However, critical reflections over bygone historical battles do help to advance our historical consciousness, potentially preventing us, at the very least, from re-applying past interpretative biases again to different historical episodes and issues. In this way, historiographical reflection is the engine moving forward history as an academic discipline.

For both Korea and Japan, it was “modernity” that shaped images of the past for the most part of the twentieth century. Japan’s claim to rule over colonised Korea was to be underpinned by an extremely self-serving, teleological vision of history in which Japan, uniquely among the East Asian states, was following a sort of predestined historical trajectory towards its modern glories. By contrast, subjugated Korea was to be proclaimed as not only “pre-modern” but also as predestined to stagnation and unable to reach the coveted “modernity” by itself, due to what the Japanese colonialist scholars defined as its pre-eminent cultural flaws. Confucianism, as the dominant philosophy of the fallen Joseon Dynasty, was a natural target for colonialist deprecation, aimed at legitimising the colonial conquest in the name of Japan’s purported “modernising mission.” 2) However, there was one salient difference between the frame through which the Japanese colonialist scholars viewed Korea’s Confucian heritage, and the general trends of the European Orientalist dismissal of the cultural or religious identity of the colonised elsewhere: Confucianism, including its Korean variety, could not be summarily dismissed as long as Japan’s own imperial ideology demonstrated strong neo-Confucian traits. Indeed, the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku ni Kansuru Chokugo 教育ニ関スル勅語, 1890) and other important ideological landmarks of modern Japan deployed the Confucian phraseology of “loyalty,” “filial piety” and “self-sacrifice” in their attempt to construct Japan’s own version of authoritarian statist nationalism. 3) So, it was not Confucianism per se but rather the Korean way of appropriating it that was targeted for the Orientalist denigration.

A typical example, Takahashi Tōru (1877-1967), Japan’s best-known “Korea hand” and the author of the seminal 1929 article on Joseon Korea’s Zhuxian 朱子學 tradition which pioneered the classification of Joseon Confucian thinkers into lineages primarily emphasising respective principle (ri 理) and material force (gi 氣) , developed a framework for dealing with Joseon Confucianism in his brochure Chōsenjin朝鮮人 (Koreans), published in 1921 by the Academic Department of the Japanese Government General in Korea. According to Takahashi, the undoing of Korean Confucianism was its ‘slavish obedience’ to the Zhuxian dualism of principle and material force, to the extent of not allowing any other Confucian schools to develop. Takahashi accused the Confucians of Chosŏn Korea of dogmatic rejection of the new teachings of Wang Yangming王陽明 as well as neglect towards the Qing philological studies of the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries. Takahashi’s conclusion was that Koreans were the only people in the world who had worshipped the same philosophical dogma for more than a half millennium. Moreover, this dogma was of foreign – Chinese – provenance, and this fact made it possible for Takahashi to additionally accuse Korean Confucians of blindly worshipping imported ideas while lacking their own. Of course, this pitiful picture of Joseon Confucianism painted by Takahashi was to contrast with his depiction of Japanese Edo-period Confucianism, with its abundance of both Yangming School thinkers and practically-, rather than simply doctrinally-minded scholars.

Certainly, colonial experts on Korean history did not fail to acknowledge the stature of such figures as Dasan Jeong Yagyong (1762-1836), an exegete of the Confucian classics with deep interests in many fields including geography, medicine and technology, whose theories arguably represented a challenge to the Zhuxian dogmas. Ayugai

Fusanoshin 鮎貝房之進 (1864-1946), another of the “old Korea hands” known for his expertise on Korea’s pre-modern past, published a journal article on Dasan as early as in 1912, emphasising Dasan’s role as an opponent of the canonical Zhuxianism of the dominant Patriarchs” Faction (Noron 老論) and his interest in Western scientific ideas. However, from Ayugai’s viewpoint, the iconoclasm of the kind Dasan represented was an exception rather than the rule in pre-modern Korea, weakened as it was by factional struggles inside its ruling class and its general ‘subservience’ to the letter of Zhuxian dogma.7)

This colonialist misrepresentation expectedly provoked the resistance of the colonised. A broad spectrum of Korean intellectuals, from nationalistic academics and educators (many of whom, in fact, studied themselves in Japan) to Marxists, were involved in de-constructing the colonialist image of a helplessly dependent and stagnant Joseon Korea. Marxists, whose take on Dasan and other iconoclastic, non-orthodox Confucian thinkers of the Late Joseon period who since the early 1930s were being often collectively referred to as the Sirhak School (although in reality they hardly ever constituted any single coherent academic lineage)8) is the focus of the present paper, were doing their best to prove that Korea, like Japan or any other country, was simply following the universal laws of historical development. This affirmation of Korean history’s universality was only commendable per se, especially given the fact that it was to serve as an argument against the colonialist stance denying any potentiality of independent development for Koreans. The Marxist belief in the centrality of the development of European capitalism with its derivatives, liberalism and modern science, for the modern part of the universal history was also understandable, although the ways in which it often was articulated exposes 1930s Korean Marxists to retrospective accusations of somewhat naïve Eurocentrism. Affirming Europe’s centrality to world history simply for its own stake hardly was,

however, the intention of colonial-age Marxist historians. The universality of global historical development, exemplified by the growth of capitalism in eighteenth- nineteenth century Europe or the 1917 socialist revolution in Russia, was to give realistic hope for Korea’s own liberation from the colonial yoke as a part of the worldwide revolutionary movement.9) However, as I will attempt to demonstrate in this paper, the deductive, top-bottom manner of reasoning of the 1930s Marxists who strove to find at any cost the analogues of the global (by which we mean “European”) historical developments in contemporary Joseon Korea, constituted an act of epistemic violence vis-à-vis the inevitable specifics of Joseon history. Whereas the colonial-age Marxists were doing their best to make clear that, all the “general similarity of the historical trends” notwithstanding, Dasan still was a far cry from being a “propagandist of freedom ideas,” the post-1945 discourses on Dasan in both North and South Korea went exactly in this direction, unconditionally “modernising” Dasan into a direct forerunner of modernity. This mythologisation of Dasan and Sirhak, related as it was to the ideological demands of post-colonial Korean societies, represented, in a way, the further deepening of the logic of 1930s Marxist interpretation of Dasan.

2. Dasan of the Nationalists, Dasan of the Marxists

As we might expect, Korea’s own cultural nationalists could not fail to respond to colonial Orientalism. What is noteworthy, however, is that in many cases, and not necessarily only those of the Marxists, this response followed the rules of the modernist game introduced by the colonisers who themselves had appropriated it from the Western historiography.10) Foremost amongst these rules was the decree that the sacred shibboleth of “modernity” was not to be questioned. It also remained


a textbook truth, for Korean nationalist scholars as well as their Japanese colonialist counterparts, that the “desirable” history was to teleologically lead to the fruits of modern development.\textsuperscript{11}) The difference between the colonisers and their nationalist antagonists was in their views on the existence, or lack thereof, of such a “desirable” history in the Korean case. The latter, in contrast to the former, were eager to argue that Koreans were moving towards the predestined goal of “modernity” themselves, and could in theory have reached it on their own, even without Japanese interference. On Confucianism, the nationalist scholars were prepared to agree with Takahashi’s categorisation of Korean Neo-Confucian thinkers into introspective ones who were primarily interested in principle理, and the more extrovert, pragmatically oriented scholars who prioritised material force 氣.\textsuperscript{12}) There was, however, one salient difference between them and the likes of Takahashi: they were much more interested in that group of less dogmatic and more practically oriented seventeenth-nineteenth century scholars, who by the late 1920s-early 1930s were being lumped together as the Sirhak (Practical Learning) School. These scholars, who often demonstrated serious interest in Western science and even Western religion (Catholicism) were the best argument in favour of the thesis that Korea, if left alone, could have attained the dream of modernity on its own.

One of the first modern, Japanese-educated nationalist intellectuals of the colonial age to seriously engage with the Joseon Confucian philosophical legacy was Hyeon Sangyun玄相允 (1893-?), later known for his pioneering outline history of Korean Confucianism (1949).\textsuperscript{13}) Already in the colonial period, he devoted a number of popular scholarly pieces to the practically oriented late Joseon thinkers. In fact, he was among the first researchers to use the term Sirhak for characterising these thinkers as a group. Naturally enough, his interest was largely centred on Dasan who had


already been promoted as a giant of “political and economic learning” by such earlier nationalist intellectuals as Chang Jiyeon 張志淵 (1864-1921). The centennial anniversary of Dasan’s passing was celebrated in 1935-1936 by much of colonial Korea’s nationalist intellectual milieu. Two years prior to that, Hyeon dedicated a journal article to Dasan, in which he compared the Confucian pragmatist to the earlier Scottish thinker and seminal economist, Adam Smith (1723-1790). While Korea had its own “economic school”, the difference between it and Britain was, according to Hyeon, the Joseon Dynasty’s inability to implement its teachings. While in his later works Hyeon demonstrated a more favourable attitude towards Joseon’s orthodox Neo-Confucian thought, this article simply contrasted the scholastic debates of the Neo-Confucians after Toegye Yi Hwang 退溪李滉 (1502-1571) and Yulgok Yi I栗谷李珥 (1536-1584) with the pragmatic, down-to-earth attitude of Seongho Yi Ik星湖李瀷 (1681-1763) and his school, which included Dasan. One more article on Dasan followed a year later (“Yijo Yuhak sasang eui Jeong Dasan gwa geu wichi” 李朝 儒學史上의 丁茶山과 그 位置, 1935). There, Hyeon more or less followed Takahashi in representing the Joseon Neo-Confucian world as having been monopolised by the Zhuxian dogmas. However, against this stagnant backdrop Hyeon highlighted the role of what he was now terming the Sirhak movement – centred on Seongho and Dasan – in shifting focus towards the pragmatics of the administration and economy and pioneering the reception of the Western scientific ideas. In such a way, the Japanese colonialist scorn towards the “unmodern” legacy of the Korean Confucianism was at least partially refuted. Korea’s Neo-Confucianism as a whole could be stagnant and dogmatic but the Sirhak movement, with its supposedly imminent proto-modern traits, was to appear as the saving grace of Joseon’s Confucian history.

Yet another proponent of the Sirhak-centred vision of Joseon Confucian history,

Jeong Inbo (1893-1950), was a colourful figure, who, in a way, symbolised a certain degree of continuity between the pre-modern, authentic Confucian tradition and a modernist retelling of Korea’s traditional past. Born to a distinguished scholarly family and raised as a heir to the Late Joseon tradition of Wang Yangming School studies, Jeong, by the 1930s a professor at Yeonheui College and a prominent public intellectual, was fond of contrasting the Wang Yangming School’s emphasis on authenticity and innate, embedded nature of knowledge against the penchant for uncritically accepting the authority of Zhu Xi which was supposedly so characteristic of Joseon Dynasty’s average Confucians. As he lamented in his own contribution (timed to the celebration of Dasan passing’s centennial) “Yuilhan Jeongbeopka Jeong Dasan Seonsaeng Seoron” (The unique way in which Jeong Dasan organised his thought), serialised in Donga Ilbo, September 10-15, 1934: ‘self-respect forever morphed into the veneration of China as soon as our capital was moved to the banks of the Han River following the downfall of the Goryeo Dynasty”; all the diverse “theories on mind and human nature, righteousness and the cosmic principle (…) could astonish an eye, but they were nothing more than other people’s words, not my own.”

The liberation from the heteronomy of Zhuxian learning first came, according to Jeong, with the arrival of more pragmatic statesmanship by such seventeenth-century figures as Gim Yuk (1570-1658, Joseon’s Prime Minister in 1651-2 and 1655) or Chang Yu (1588-1638, Minister of the Right in 1637-8). However, the systematisation of “authentic” scholarship rooted in Joseon’s own needs, took place only due to the efforts by Seongho and Dasan, whom Jeong considered, in broader sense of the word, a part of Seongho’s scholarly lineage. Jeong maintained that Dasan was a genius whom his own epoch rejected, and that he strove to renovate Joseon on the basis of practically oriented, non-dogmatic scholarship which represented
a ‘synthesis of Eastern and Western ideas” and at the same time was in sync with the iconoclastic currents in the contemporaneous Qing academic milieu. Importantly, Jeong, as well-versed in the art of interpreting Confucian classics as he was, did not deny that Dasan strongly emphasized the exegesis of the Confucian canon in his life work; he explained, however, that Dasan was attempting to interpret the classics in the clearest and least confusing way, with popular enlightenment in mind.17) Jeong’s emphasis on the “illness” of uncritical subservience vis-à-vis China and its official Zhuxianism which supposedly befell Joseon practically from the time of its founding and which Seongho and Dasan as well as their older predecessor, Bangye Yu Hyeongweon磻溪柳馨遠 (1622-1673), were assumedly attempting to “cure,”18) indeed were not fully dissimilar to Takahashi’s assumptions about Joseon-era Koreans” “innate” propensity to blindly imitate China. However, whereas Takahashi tended to downplay the significance of Yangming School and other iconoclastic currents in Joseon’s intellectual history and sharply contrasted the intellectual ferment of late eighteenth-century Qing China with the purported ‘stagnation” in Joseon Korea, Jeong provided his readers with an elaborate genealogy of Late Joseon’s pragmatic thought (which also included a number of figures from the Yangming School lineage) and emphasised the similarity between Dasan’s quest for authentic scholarship and the philosophical inquiries of his contemporaries in Qing China. Seen this way, Joseon was not a static, stagnant “vestige” of antiquity of the kind which the Japanese colonialist scholars were so fond of describing; on the contrary, it was marching towards the same teleologically ordained goal of modernity, with its emphasis on pragmatism, practicality and subjectivity, as the rest of humanity. While Jeong’s accentuation of “authenticity” was definitely related to the philosophic tradition of his own Yangming School lineage, it also did not deviate from the standard definitions of epistemological and aesthetical modernity – centred around individuals” inner

worlds and recognition of their unique subjectivity – as accepted in Korea’s intellectual milieu in the 1920s and 1930s.19)

While Hyeon or Jeong were rather conservative nationalists, the nascent Marxist scholarship of colonial-age Korea was, interestingly enough, broadly sympathetic to the same picture of retrograde Neo-Confucians versus progressive Sirhak pioneers. Marxists too were keen to find the traces of pre-ordained movement towards modernity in the Joseon past: after all, from the Marxist point of view, such movement constitutes the teleological essence of history developing from feudalism towards capitalism and then hopefully further, to the bright socialist future. Korea was no exception. On the contrary, colonial-age Marxists, hopeful for the perspective of first anti-colonial and then socialist revolution in Korea, were even more eager than their nationalist rivals to draw a well-systemized picture of the Korean traditional society, its Confucian ideologists included, dutifully following the “world-historical rule” of modernity-oriented development. Unlike the nationalists, Marxists were less obsessed with personalities and more interested in the larger socio-economic structures. Personalities were, in the end, simply a part of the superstructure reflecting the developments in society’s socio-economic basis. However, as long as Confucian personalities were concerned it was again Dasan and Sirhak movement that stood in the centre of Marxist response to the Japanese Orientalist (mis)interpretations of Korea’s Confucian history. They attracted a special interest not only as Korea’s endogenous proto-modernists, but also as possible harbingers of modernity’s alternative, non-capitalist version. Indeed, Yun Yonggyun尹瑢均, a graduate of Keijō Imperial University京城帝國大學 who pioneered academic study of Dasan’s socio-economic ideas in early 1930s Korea, claimed in his 1930 and 1931 contributions to a Marxist student journal, Sinheung新興, that Dasan was not only simply a “pioneer of modernity”: more than that, his ideas on the equalitarian distribution of land were even “Communist.” At the

same time, however, Yun was academically-minded enough to acknowledge that Dasan’s immediate goal was to deal with the increasing number of landless vagrants and the tendency towards concentration of landholdings in the hands of richer landlords. “Communist” Dasan, it had to be acknowledged, indeed strove to preserve peasant holdings as the tax basis of the ruling dynasty and uphold the existing status distinctions.20) Rather self-contradictory statements of this kind, with Dasan being simultaneously interpreted as an indigenous forerunner of “historical progress” to come and realistically assessed as a thinker of his own time, are quite typical, as we will see later, of 1930s Marxist writings on Dasan.

Baek Namun (1894-1979), a pioneering Korean Marxist historian educated in Japan and, coincidentally, Jeong Inbo’s colleague and friend at the Yeonheui College where both were teaching, also considered Dasan the central figure in Late Joseon history of ideas as a whole. In his contribution to the centennial of Dasan’s passing (“Jeong Dasan eui Sasang” 丁茶山의 思想 Donga Ilbo, July 6, 1935), Baek construed the history of Korea’s eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the story of the struggle between the progressive tendency towards the development of monetary exchange, market economy and eventually capitalism on the one side, and the feudal exploitation ideologically sustained by the Neo-Confucian dogmatism on the other side. Feudalism was facing its terminal crisis, visible from the inability of the ruling bureaucracy to control the rent-seeking behaviour of its own local agents, notorious for levying extortionist taxes on the new-born toddlers and dead parents of the commoner taxpayers. The opposition to feudalism, buoyed by the rising tide of the “naturally growing” monetary exchange, was, as Baek saw it, taking a form of religious protest. The acceptance of Catholicism, this “vanguard of capitalist expansion”, was a sign of the progressive development, while the Neo-Confucian anti-Catholic repression epitomised the anti-modern feudal reaction. Baek likened the anti-Catholic persecutions, like the large-scale Sinyu辛酉purge of 1801 – which eventually sent Dasan into his

eighteen years-long exile – to the papal persecution of the natural scientists in the context of European Counter-Reformation. That Catholicism, obviously no friend of the liberal reforms in late eighteenth-century Europe (as Baek himself acknowledged by mentioning the papal repression of modern science), was to be assigned a role of an “anti-feudal opposition” in contemporary Korea, was indeed a serious self-contradiction in Baek’s logic, which Baek offered no further explanation for. In his picture, Dasan, a “feudal” yangban philosopher persecuted for his supposed conversion to Catholicism, was a harbinger of the modern changes, which the contemporaneous Joseon government was stubbornly rejecting, inflicting harm on its own country by refusing to trade with the Western powers. While Dasan’s association with Catholicism and Western thought was in the focus of Baek’s argument, Korea’s pioneering Marxist historian made also an important caveat: all his relative progressivity notwithstanding, Dasan “cursed the feudal society” only “passively,” never fully liberated himself from “feudal ideas” and did not attempt to actively propagate the “ideas of freedom.”


The relationship between Sirhak – represented by the towering figures like Dasan – and the religious imports from the West were indeed intriguing for the pioneering Marxist thinkers of 1930s Korea. On the one hand, as good Marxists, they were not supposed to harbour any illusions about Christianity. Indeed, Korea’s pioneering Communists had already started their anti-religious movement by the early 1920s, aiming at Christianity in particular. While acknowledging its role in introducing Western culture to Korea, they accused Christianity of being essentially non-scientific and superstitious, of de facto supporting capitalism by “anaesthetising” the believers instead of sensitising them to the realities of class oppression, and of general social conservatism. Some Christian activists attempted to counter these accusations by introducing the notion of Christian socialism to Korea but, by and large, church reaction to socialist ideas was indeed mostly of rather inimical kind.23) On the other hand, especially as the grip of Japanese colonial rule was being further tightened from the late 1930s, there was some room to take a second look at Christianity and its role in Korea. After all, it was among few institutions not directly controlled by the colonial state, and it represented something qualitatively different from the “Imperial Way” ideology of the totalitarian statehood.24) Thus Im Hwa 林和 (1908-1953) – the poet and critic who led the Marxist literature movement of the 1930s – went as far as to suggest in a 1941 journal publication that Christianity in Korea (as well as in Japan or China) played a role essentially different from that it had in the Western societies where its doctrine “did not possess any elements accelerating the collapse of the feudal system and nurturing the new bourgeois culture.” In East Asia, by contrast, the advent of Christianity was a direct consequence of the European maritime trade, an element in capitalist development; moreover, what primarily interested the Sirhak scholars, Dasan included, in the Western books, was early modern science


rather than religion as such. Christianity provided a tool of self-reflection regarding the long-term Neo-Confucian domination over the realm of Korean thought; as to the nineteenth-century Korean peasant converts to Catholicism, they were mainly attracted by the egalitarianism of the universal brotherhood offered by popular Catholic literature. In a word, according to Im, Christianity was an important catalyst of the “collapse of Korean feudalism” as well as the soil on which Korea’s new culture was nurtured. However, as we will see below, not every contemporary Marxist was prepared to integrate Catholicism into the genealogy of Korea’s early modern transformation. For some, giving too much credit to any religion was in itself problematic: Dasan was to be left as primarily an adept of broadly Western rather than specifically Catholic learning.

A vision of Dasan’s importance for Korea’s modern development broadly similar to that of Baek Namun was further concretised in the works of Choe Ikhan (1897-?), a Japanese-educated Marxist scholar and Communist activist who extensively engaged with Dasan’s texts and later spearheaded research into the Sirhak school in North Korea, where he moved after liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Not unlike Jeong Inbo – whose work he often referenced in his own writings – Choe was a rather special personality: he managed to experience the full spectrum of modern Korea’s ideological developments, from orthodox Neo-Confucianism to socialism. In his youth, he studied under Myeonu Gwak 俛宇 Chongseok俛宇郭鍾錫 (1846-1919), a revered heir to the Yeongnam 嶺南 School of Neo-Confucianism whose academic lineage went back all the way to Toegye Yi Hwang. The apprenticeship to Gwak was followed by an infatuation with modernity and nationalist ideas and a stint at Waseda University 早稲田大学. There, Choe was, in turn, introduced to Marxism, becoming a member of an early Communist group of Korean students in Japan, the Sun and Moon Society (Irweolhoe 日月會). Several Communist groups, the Sun and Moon Society included, formed the underground Korean Communist Party in

25) Im Hwa. 2009 [1941]. “Gidokkyo wa Sinmunhwa” (Christianity and New Culture) In Im Hwa Munhak Yesul Jeonjip (Collected Works of Im Hwa: Literature and Art), Vol. 2. 296-308. Seoul: Somyeong.
April 1925. Choe Ikhan participated in the Party’s activities in the most active way (he was elected the Party’s Organisational Secretary on September 20, 1927), but his socio-political engagements were interrupted when he was arrested by the Japanese police on February 2, 1928. After a seven-year-long stint in the colonial prisons, the Confucian-turned-nationalist-turned-Communist returned to Seoul where the underground Communist Party was no longer in existence. Consequently, as a number of other ex-militants, Choe switched to academic and journalistic pursuits. And, due to his first-hand experience of Confucian education, it was only natural that Korea’s Confucian past stood in the centre of his interests.\footnote{Song Chanseop. 2011. “Joka ga Jakseonghan Choe Ikhan (1897-?) Yeonbo” (Choe Ikhan’s (1897-?) Life Chronology Compiled by his Nephew) Yeoksa Yeongu 20: 271-298.} It has to be remembered that Choe’s scholarly interests were indeed broader than Confucianism per se. As a result of his research on Dasan’s opus magnum, *Mongmin Simseo* ("Admonitions on Governing the People," 1818),\footnote{This classic was recently translated into English: Choi Byonghyon, transl. 2010 *Admonitions on Governing the People: Manual for All Administrators*. Berkeley: University of California Press.} and other sources on Joseon Korea’s institutional history Choe came up, for example, with first-ever outline history of pre-modern Korea’s societal relief policies, *Joseon Sahoe Jeongchaek Sa* ("The History of Social Policies in Korea", 1947).\footnote{Song Chanseop. 2011. “1940 Nyeondae Choe Ikhan eui sahoe Guje Jedo Yeongu - "Joseon Sahoe Jeongchaek Sa" (1947) real Jungsim eur" (A Study on the Social Relief System [in Traditional Korea] by Choi Ikhan in 1940s: focusing on the History of Social Policies in Korea) Yeoksa Gyoyuk 120: 227-260.} Choe moved to North Korea in 1948, and his meticulous research contributed greatly to the early development of the academic studies on traditional Korea there.

Choe’s serialised articles, entitled altogether “Yeoyudang Jeonseo reul Tokham” ("Reading [Dasan’s] Yeoyudang Jeonseo", Donga Ilbo, December 9, 1938 to June 4, 1939) are perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive research on Dasan ever appearing in colonial-era Korea’s periodicals. A staunch Marxist, Choe paid indeed little attention to Takahashi’s selective depreciations of particularly Korean Confucianism: from Choe’s viewpoint, any Confucianism, in whatever form and wherever, was a “cultural product of the Oriental feudal societies” and at the
same time an ideology “rationally supporting the dignified life of their dominant classes.” As Choe saw it, the degradation of Confucianism into “pseudo-learning and evil custom” followed the downward trajectory of the ruling classes which used these teachings in their interests; in the very end, Confucianism became simply a tool of “oppressing and crushing all the progressive elements of human life.”

Choe, indeed, found few reasons to be more merciful towards the Catholic missionaries, through which the classic Chinese translations of the Western books came into the hands of Gwangam Yi Byeok (Yohan Yi, 1754-1785) and the other Catholic pioneers whom Dasan closely interacted with. As Choe remarked, religion and science had already parted their ways in Europe in the age of Renaissance: Jesuit missionaries coming to East Asia were using the ideas of Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galilei (1564-1642) in order to attract the attention of East Asian scholars, but they were in no hurry to reveal to their local interlocutors the truth about the Catholic church’s persecutions against the pioneers of modern astronomy.

Contrary to Baek Namun’s and Im Hwa’s benign vision of Catholicism as relatively progressive compared to Joseon’s own Neo-Confucian dogmas, Choe emphasised the rather lukewarm attitude of Seongho vis-à-vis Catholicism as it was (Seongho saw a number of similarities between Catholicism and Buddhism) and defined Dasan’s engagement with Western science, and not Western religion, as the essence of his greatness. Attempting to situate Dasan in the context of what he himself saw as the mainstream of global history, Choe, just as Baek Namun had done several years earlier, reminded his readers that Dasan’s youth, the 1770s, 1780s and early 1790s, was the time of the epochal shifts in the Euro-American part of the world. Choe listed American independence, the French Revolution and the Polish struggle for the preservation of country’s dying statehood as the crucially important events temporally coinciding with Dasan’s formative years. The events in Paris in 1789 signalled “the most basic

change in the organization of human culture”; 32) against such a background, it was of paramount importance that Dasan was, first and foremost, a diligent student of the faraway European teachers.

Accordingly it was, indeed, Dasan’s posture of learning from the “advanced West” that earned Choe’s highest praise. Choe did his best to situate Dasan in the context of the global scientific development: Korea’s greatest thinker was born exactly 130 years after Galilei published his epoch-making comparison of the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems, Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo (Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, 1632) and 96 years after Newton’s (1643-1727) discovery of universal gravitation and the physical quality of light (which Choe placed around 1666). In addition, Dasan had to learn whatever Western science he could access via the writings of the missionaries who, as Choe once again put it, used the scientific theories in order to cast the “bait,” in search of educated converts. Dasan thus had to be praised for “eating the bait” and studying the science of the missionaries in defiance of all the associated political dangers, in order to share these discoveries with the Joseon public; yet another praiseworthy trait of Dasan was, according to Choe, his willingness to propose learning science and handicrafts from China while at the same time countering Sinocentric theories and effectively “de-centring” the Middle Kingdom. 33)

Viewed from our current angle and compared against the much less reserved and less nuanced praise of Sirhak and Dasan by nationalistic contemporaries and the future scholars, Choe’s take on Dasan perhaps has to be commended for its noteworthy sobriety in delineating Dasan’s achievements and limitations. Making clear that whatever Dasan could learn were at best smatterings of the pre-existing Western scholarship carried to East Asia by Catholic missionaries – who also had a different, and not necessarily very “scientific” agenda of their own – Choe also emphasised

that Dasan’s crowning achievement was an epistemological shift rather than a full-blown socio-political reform program. While the later scholars redefined Dasan’s short treatise on the origins of country magistrate system, Weonmok原牧, as “proto-democratic” or suggestive of the inchoate development of popular sovereignty notion,34) Choe makes it abundantly clear that Dasan remained a “monarchist” and an adept of the Confucian “moral politics,” with their focus on the rulers’ “civilising influences” upon the ruled. At the same time, as Choe saw it, Dasan managed to historicize the emergence of autocracy out of relatively equalitarian original human communities and, in his other famed short treatise, Tangron湯論 (Exposition of King Tang) redefined the supreme power as a product of a historical shift from a down-top to the top-down modes of the political representation. Dasan’s historicizing approach highlighted the role of the ruled as the original source of the societal power and could imply a measure of relativization of the current mode of the governance “from above,” but never developed into a structured theory of political reform challenging the existing system of governance. As Choe formulated it, whereas Benthamite utilitarianism advocated the greatest good for the largest number of the beneficiaries, Dasan, at best, saw the benefits for the majority as a secondary derivate from the success of rulers” moral self-cultivation and “civilizational influence.” This having been said, the degree to which Dasan took the position and interests of the majority into consideration and contextualized the power of the ruling minority as a result of historical shifts (rather than an unchanging constant of the human affairs) was, according to Choe, a major achievement *per se*.35)

The arguments deployed by the colonial-age Korean thinkers were fully adequate for their place and time – that is, for the circumstances of the discursive battle over Joseon Dynasty Confucianism in which they had to be engaged. The battles of this kind were raging all over Asia: Chinese modernist thinkers were foregrounding the
allegedly progressive and equalitarian Mohist School墨家, as largely rediscovered by the philologists of late imperial China,36) Buddhist scholars were mastering the art of modernist Buddhist apologetics with an emphasis on the supposedly scientific nature of the Buddhist teachings,37) and Indian scholars were rediscovering the materialism of ancient India.38) In the fight against colonial Orientalist (mis)perceptions of Asia and Asians as inherently unable to progress, the history of philosophy was to be re-assessed from an explicitly presentist viewpoint and utilised as a discursive weapon of sorts. And in Korea and elsewhere, in fact all around the Asian and African periphery of the West-centred capitalist system, the epistemic privileging of “modernity” was to be taken for granted by the combatants in these ideological battles. The history of the past was to mirror the situation of the present where the modern nation states were triumphing over the traditional polities. The best hope for the colonised was, in fact, an independence universally understood as transition towards modern national statehood modelled after one of the Western patterns (classical capitalist or Soviet). Marxists, with their penchant for placing the protagonists of their historical accounts into the concrete socio-economic context of the periods in question, sometimes contributed to checking and balancing the usual modernist exaggerations through more meticulous historicization of the proud narratives of new-born or reborn nations” past. They were, however, in complete agreement with modernity – by definition, measured against the modern European developments – being made into the epistemological axis of the newly produced national narratives.

The question, however, is whether privileging “modernity” and making the whole pre-modern history appear as a prelude to the teleologically ordained modern development makes any sense today, with modernity widely seen as the principal reason for the ecological crisis of potentially apocalyptic proportions and generally treated as the object of deeply critical reflection rather than the pre-ordained apex

of the human history.39) In the case of the Joseon Confucian history, modernist interpretation, with its focus on the allegedly progressive Sirhak, clashes with a number of facts perhaps better known to today’s researchers than to their colonial-age predecessors who had shaped our paradigm of the understanding of Joseon Confucian history. Was Dasan, a heir to the academic lineage stretching all the way back to Toegye,40) and a staunch proponent of the maintenance of both slavery and the hereditary status system,41) really a proto-modern thinker of the kind Baek Namun or Choe Ilhan were attempting to paint? Was Sirhak ever a unified, coherent group, and can it be termed “movement”? And was not a relatively tolerant attitude towards Western science a trademark of Confucian pragmatism in general rather than of a particular Confucian school? Indeed, Dasan’s mastery of Western geometry, optics or astronomy was hardly exceptional by the standards of Korea’s late eighteenth-century intellectual elite, and was mostly dependent on the rather outdated Jesuit missionary sources42) which also implied that the great Joseon scholar could hardly ever familiarise himself with contemporary Western developments, be it the French Revolution or American independence. While Dasan could be indeed iconoclastic in his rejection of the time-honoured Five Elements theory, or in his rather personalist understanding of Heaven and general emphasis on human subjectivity in his philosophical writings and poems,43) and such iconoclasm must have reflected important cultural and ideological shifts in late Joseon’s changing social environment, should measure the Korean philosopher be measured against the standards of his European contemporaries with whom he never had any direct contact throughout his life?

3. In Place of Conclusion: beyond the Modernisation of Dasan and Sirhak

To be sure, the modernist interpretations of Sirhak or even the phenomenon of Dasan were never monolithic and unitary, even inside the time and space of Korea’s 1930s. While a prominent nationalist writer, An Jaehong 安在鴻 (1891-1965), characterised Dasan’s Weonmok as a ‘socio-democratic” treatise in 1935, and this characterisation was approvingly cited by one of South Korea’s seminar systemisers of the official nationalist view of Sirhak, Hong Iseop 洪以燮 (1914-1974), in 1959, Choe Ikhan demonstrated a much more nuanced approach in his 1938-39 series on Dasan. He made clear that Dasan’s views, all the novelty of his historicizing approach and his attempts to relativise the hierarchical governmental system of East Asia’s centralised monarchies notwithstanding, essentially constituted a self-reflection by a member of a ruling class caught in a serious crisis rather than a challenge to this ruling class. Indeed, Choe’s pre-Liberation approach to Dasan was perhaps more scholarly and objective than his own post-1945 take on Dasan, more openly influenced by the political considerations. His opus magnum on Sirhak and Dasan, published in Pyeongyang in 1955, the same year when Gim Ilseong 金日城, North Korea’s supreme leader, made his famous speech emphasising ‘self-reliance’ (juche 主體) in ideological work and chiding Soviet Koreans in positions of power for their inattentiveness to the splendour of Sirhak tradition, made Dasan into a champion of “democracy,” although it noted at the same time his failure to develop scientific materialist views. Choe went as far as to liken Dasan’s project of restoring China’s ancient Well-Field system (which was supposed to guarantee the state’s tax income and prevent the loss of the land by the peasantry) to Russian late nineteenth-century populist Narodniks’ interest in building socialism via resuscitation of the

traditional peasant *obshchina* community. 47) With Dasan promoted into the ranks of Korea’s home-grown “revolutionary democrats,” the advent of Marxist socialism to 1920s Korea could be portrayed as more of an endogenous development, in good ‘self-reliance” spirit. Choe Ikhan, as we saw above, never made claims of this kind before 1945. However, even Choe’s pre-1945 portrait of Dasan hardly can be free from the charges of epistemic violence: 48) Sirhak as a significant Other of the contemporary architects of the Korean historical identity was being constructed on the basis of the interpretation which, indeed, had little to do with the Sirhak scholars themselves.

Of course, not only the Marxism of Choe Ikhan’s own times but also much of today’s global historiography would define the age of Dasan as the time directly predating and partly overlapping with the “great divergence” of the early nineteenth century when Western Europe, with its nascent industrialism and growing modern science, starting its unprecedented jump, increasingly differentiating itself from older civilisational centres, East Asia included, in its standards of productivity, incomes or literacy. 49) Indeed, by the late eighteenth century, East Asia was already in a position of learner rather than teacher, vis-à-vis such imports from the West as Copernican astronomy, Newtonian physics, or improved gunnery. 50) With the larger picture like this in mind, there is undeniably a strong temptation to assess Dasan primarily from the vantage point of his encounters with the West – mediated via the Jesuit writings in classical Chinese – and the (dis)similarity of his views with that of his European contemporaries. And, while the suggestions that Dasan managed to develop a “popular rights” theory directly corresponding with the contemporary


European quests for more contractual and balanced interrelationship between the rulers and the ruled\(^{51}\) are hard to accept at their face value, it is also undeniable that a shift of sorts was taking place. Indeed, Dasan’s focus in *Weonmok* and *Tangnon* on the assumed system of nominating higher-ups by their subordinates in ancient times and the well-being of the ruled as the ultimate goal of the government, while albeit patently Mencian in its spirit, does strike a different note if compared to much of Joseon’s theory of statecraft, with its emphasis on the minutiae of the bureaucratic rule. It is undisputable that the epochal changes of the age, from the crisis of the Joseon polity (which Choe Ikhan accentuated in his writings on Dasan) to the intensified international flow of knowledge, made at least some Joseon thinkers, Dasan among them, more reflective and more disposed to broader historical analyses, often more focused at relativising and re-thinking some of the most sacrosanct contemporary institutions than many of their predecessors.

However, at the same time the characterisation of Dasan as a persecuted proto-moderniser and an adept of Western knowledge *par excellence*, as strongly proposed by both Baek Namun and Choe Ikhan, constitutes an act of epistemic violence against the late Joseon thinker, cast in a role he hardly could ever envision for himself. While definitely interested in imported science, Dasan envisaged himself as, first and foremost, an exegete of the Confucian canonical writings. He made it abundantly clear in his writings that he considers the “laws of the sages” sacred and basically inviolable,\(^ {52}\)and was deeply worried about the progressing weakening of the traditional hereditary status distinctions between the *yangban* lineages and the rest of the population.\(^ {53}\)A rather socially conservative thinker, he wanted to strengthen the system of slavery which was economically so important for the status and prestige of *yangban* clans, and concurrently ensure that the local authorities were able to control the non-*yangban* petty officials and richer peasants and protect weaker


\(^{52}\)Gyeongse Yupyo (Deathbed Petition for Governing), Fascicle 7 (Jeong jeoneui 1).

\(^{53}\)Bal Go Jeong nim Saengweon non (The Preface to Gu Yanwu’s Treatise on the Junior Degree-holders)
commoners from the violence on the part of their stronger neighbours. It was abundantly clear to him that Joseon’s system of government was no longer up to the task of controlling private rent-seeking on the part of its own local administrators and could not fully enforce its own laws in the local communities; however, his preferred recipes for mending the system had indeed little to do with what we commonly conceptualise as “modernity”, be it abolition of bound labour or status equality. 

Would not defining such a thinker primarily in the context of West-generated modernity – as Choe Ikhan and Baek Namun did in the 1930s – be tantamount to an act of epistemic violence towards an intellectual who lived and worked inside the framework of a completely different reality, even if his lifespan coincided with and was in diverse ways indirectly influenced by the world-historical changes with Europe as their epicentre? Why should not it be possible to acknowledge that, while being – in a larger sense of the word – a part of the global transformation towards an economy based on commercial production and monetary exchange, a more participatory polity and a society less constrained by the hereditary status system, the Joseon Korea of Dasan’s time manifested at the same time its own special traits, stronger persistence of ascribed statuses or Confucian political orthodoxy (obviously visible from Dasan’s spirited defence of slavery or the “laws of the sages”) being some of them? Should not the global development towards economic, social or political modernity be viewed as highly uneven and combined – a view which would allow integrating relative conservatism of such unorthodox Joseon thinkers as Dasan into the larger picture of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century global changes?

Of course, the modern scholarship on Joseon Confucianism in general and Sirhak in particular has long developed far beyond its colonial-age pioneers. However, the modernist framework dating back to the discursive battles of the 1920s and 1930s still underpins much in the way how Sirhak is being represented in both North and South Korea. It may be timely to critically reflect on this framework, with a view


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to paint a picture of Joseon Confucian developments which would be closer to the historical realities of the past rather than the expectations of the present. It is undoubtable that late Joseon Korea was undergoing important changes, with at least some of its finest intellectuals growing increasingly critical of Zhuxian dogma, pragmatically appreciative of the scientific developments elsewhere and more relativist – or at least broadly-minded – in their approach towards the received truths of statecraft. Dasan has to be given due credit for exemplifying this trend. But it would amount to an act of epistemic violence to measure him against the contemporary developments in faraway Europe – as 1930s Korean Marxists indeed did, albeit with the best of intentions.

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