Part II

Korean Confucianism
Chapter 5

Studies on the Korean Neo-Confucianism

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1. Introduction

This report is a comprehensive review and analysis of Confucianism-related research outcomes published in Korea in 2020. Included in the report are 90 papers published in academic journals registered with the National Research Foundation. After presenting the papers categorized by scholars and topics to give an overview of the overall research trend, we performed in-depth reviews of some select papers. If a paper is classified into two or more categories, it is included in all the relevant groups.

Yi I (李珥, pen name: Yulgok 栗谷, 1536-1584) is the most frequently studied Korean Confucian scholar, being the focus of 17 papers in 2020. He is followed by Yi Hwang (李滉, pen name: Toegye 退溪, 1501–1570), the next most-studied scholar, with six papers. This is noteworthy because 2019 was the first time that papers on Yi I outnumbered those on Yi Hwang and the disparity between the number of papers published about each of them has increased in 2020. Yi I and Yi Hwang are, and have been, the scholars most studied by an overwhelming majority, compared to other Korean Confucian scholars. In 2019, they were the subject of 47% of all the papers published in this field of research. However, in 2020, this significance dipped sharply, with them being the subject of a mere 26% of the total literature. This suggests that the previous trend in the research, overly concentrated on Toegye and Yulgok, has begun to change and diversify. Particularly, until 2018, the number of papers on Toegye was twice that on Yulgok. In 2020, however, the number of papers on Toegye reduced to six, which is the same number of papers on Han Wonjin. Relatedly, papers on Han Wonjin increased from five in 2019, to six in 2020. Five papers each were published on Jeon Woo (pen name: Ganjae) and King Jeongjo. Finally, Yi Ik (pen name: Seongho) and Yi Jin-sang (pen name: Hanju) both were the topic of three papers.
2. Classification by figure

1) Yulgok Yi I

1. Kim, Kyung-Rae, Understanding the Sŏnhakchibyo in Context with Two Keywords - “Conventionalists” (yusok) and “Careless Literati” (uyu), *The Society for Study of Korean History of Thoughts* 65, The Association for the Study of Korean History of Thoughts.


9. LEE CHEONSUNG, Theoretical foundation of ethical practice will(立志) in Yulgok(栗谷) philosophy through the problems of
supreme good (至善) and the middle (中), *Journal of Eastern Philosophy* 103, The Society Of Eastern Philosophy.


11 Lee Min Kyung, Yulgok(栗谷) Yiyi(李珥)’s The Compilation of *Gyeommonyogyoeyol*(擊蒙要訣) and Practice of Neo-Confucian Ideology, *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 42, Yulgok Society.


13 Kim Yong-jae, A Study on Yulgok’s Literary Thoughts of Chinese Poems - Focusing on personality education through Jeongeonmyoseon -, *Korean Thought and Culture* 102, The Society of *Korean Thought and Culture*.


17 Choi Bokhee, A Study on the Concept of ‘Sensibility’ in Neo-Confucianism, *Sogang Journal of Philosophy* 63, Institute of *Philosophical Studies* SOGANG UNIVERSITY.

Among the 17 papers on Yulgok Yi I, only two papers covered
traditionally popular topics, including the theories of Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings (Sadanchiljeong 四端七情), and Human Mind and Moral Mind (Insimdosim 人心道心). Other papers spanned a variety of topics including those related to state affairs, textual analysis on Seonghakjibyo and Gyeokmongyoyoyeol, and Yulgok’s thoughts as viewed through the lens of moral education. Choi Bokhee’s “A Study on the Concept of ‘Sensibility’ in Neo-Confucianism,” examined the notion of sensitivity in Neo-Confucianism. Bokhee focused on the theories posited by both Yi I and Yi Hwang, and was, therefore, included in both scholars’ categories.

2) Toegye Yi Hwang

2 An Yoo-kyoung, A study on the morality of Toegye and Kant, THE TOEGYE HAK NONCHONG 36, Busan Toegye Studies Institute.
3 Jang YunSu, The Characteristics of Toegye-studies from the Perspective of Western Scholars, The T’oegye Hakbo 147, The Toegye Studies Institute.
5 Choi Bokhee, A Study on the Concept of ‘Sensibility’ in Neo-Confucianism, Sogang Journal of Philosophy 63, Institute of Philosophical Studies SOGANG UNIVERSITY.
6 An Yoo-kyoung, A comparative study on the mind theory of zhuxi’s Neo-Confucianism and mamyung’s daeseungkisinlon, TOEGYE-HAK-LON-JIB 26, Yeongnam Toegye Studies Institute.
Six of the papers published in 2020 studied Toegye, which is a significant decrease compared to 2019. Papers on Yulgok slightly outnumbered those on Toegye in 2019; however, this difference in number became more apparent in 2020. The number of studies on Toegye, and the overall portion of the research that chose to focus on him, comprised an overwhelming majority of the literature on Korean Confucian scholars until 2018. This sharp decrease may reflect a tendency to move away from traditional Confucian studies, presumably because the related literature reached a saturation point. However, it is too early to confirm if the downward trend of research regarding Yi Hwang is a long-term phenomenon, much less to attempt to understand why it is happening. The studies published in 2020 had a notable absence of theories of Sadanchiljeong (四端七情) and likihobal (理氣互發), which were central to previous research on Toegye. In 2020, papers on Toegye, instead, focused on a new array of topics: one paper focused on Toegye and Yehak (Lee Bong-gyoo), two papers adopted the comparative philosophical perspective (Ahn Yu-kyoung), one paper examined the trends of Toegye research from the viewpoint of Western scholars (Jang Yunsu), and one paper focused entirely on Toegye’s critique of Yangmingism (Kim Hyoung-chan). Choi Bokhee’s study on the concept of sensibility in Neo-Confucianism covered both Yi Hwang and Yi I.

3) Namdang Han Wonjin

1 Yi Jongwoo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Perception at the Not-Yet Arouse State in Mind Has Motion inside the Quiet or Not -Focusing on A Debate between Gwon Sangha and Yi Heonik, and Han Wonjin’s Criticism of Yi, and between the Members in Rak Group-, Yeol-sang Journal of Classical Studies 72, Society Of Yol-Sang Academy.
2 Yi Jong Woo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether the Not-Yet Aroused in Mind in the Veritable Records in King Jeongjo’s Regime: Focusing on Debate between Kim Changheup and Han Wonjin, and between Yi Jae and Sim Jo, and Comparison of Yi Gan, *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 42, Yulgok Society.


6 Yi Jongwoo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Concious Awareness is Mind or Wisdom’s Function: A Debate between Kim Changheop and Yi Hyeonik Versus Yi Hijo, Gwon Sangha and Han Wonjin, *THE Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea* 54, The Society for Asian Philosphy in Korea : SAPK.

In recent years, approximately five to six papers have been published on Han Wonjin annually. In 2019, topics began to move away from the Ho-Rak Debate (湖洛論爭). However, the Ho-Rak Debate was at the forefront of research once again in 2020. Yi Jongwoo published three papers on the debates of the theories of an unaroused state of mind and perceptual awareness (Mibal 未發 Jigak 知覺). Yi pursued this line of inquiry in an effort to capture the patterns and issues of this debate more widely. He did so by expanding the range of voices in the debate. He
increased the scope of research such that it did not merely examine the
debate between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan, but also included other relevant
opinions. Bae Je-seong’s and Son Mi-ae’s papers examined Han Wonjin’s
theories of human nature and three-tiered nature. Kim Ga-ram’s paper
analyzed the concept of an “undisturbed flow of energy” (Gibulyongsa 氣
不用事) that can be associated with Han Wonjin’s theories of an unaroused
state of mind (Mibal 未發) and the Human Mind and Moral Mind
(linsimdosim 人心道心).

4) Ganjae Jeon Woo

1 Yoo Jiwoong, Hwang Kap Youn, 「Ganjae Jeon Wooʻs Awareness
of the Times and Theoretical Background, THE STUDY OF
CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE 82, The Korean
Society of Confucianism.

2 Kim Hyun Soo, A Consideration of The Collection of Ganjaje’s
theory of Li, THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND
CULTURE 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism.

3 Cho Sung-San, Joseon Neo-Confucian Intellectuals’ Recognition
of Cheon and Responses to Western Learning from the Mid-Late
Eighteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century, The Journal of Korean
History 191, The Association For Korean Historical Studies.

4 Gil Tae Eun, Thoughts on Ganjaje’s Human nature and The nature
of things Theory - With a Focus on Jungyonggiu, Journal of Eastern

5 Lee sang ik, Two Aspects of the Eclecticism of Toegye (退溪) and
Yulgok (栗谷) - with the Focus on Nongam (農巖) and Ganjae (艮齋)

Ganjae Jeon Woo was the topic of five papers published in 2020. The
diversity of topics and approaches adopted in these papers is particularly notable. The studies by Lee Sang-il and Gil Tae-eun are especially remarkable due to their originality and because of how starkly they differ from the rest of the research. Lee investigated Ganjae’s thoughts regarding the ideology of Kiho Neo-Confucianism (Kihohak 畿湖學 Eclecticism) and Gil investigated Ganjae’s thoughts on the Theory of Human Nature and the Nature of Things (inmulseongron 人物性論) in the context of the Ho-Rak Debate. Two papers chose to highlight the political and social situations: Yoo Ji-woong and Hwang Kap-youn focused on the relevance of Ganjae’s work in relation to a theoretical background, and Cho Sung-san’s study tackled the situation in which Seohak (西學, Western Learning) was introduced in Korea, and Ganjae’s response to it. Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-soo’s paper examined Ganjae’s scholarly characteristics from the perspective of Yehak.

5) King Jeongjo Yi San

1 Baek Minjung, King Jeongjo’s Understanding of the Study of Confucian Classics and Problems of Politics, Hanguk Munhwa 89, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies.
3 Kang Moonshik, Jeongjo’s study on the writings of Chu Hsi and the compilation of Juseobaekseon(朱書百選), Hanguk Munhwa 89, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies.
4 Lee Donghwa, King Jeongjo’s Reading and Application of Zhu Xi’s Factionalism, Hanguk Munhwa 91, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies.
5 Hyosoung Ahn, Theory of mind and self-cultivation in Jôngjo,
In 2020, five papers were published on King Jeongjo. Among all kings of the Joseon Dynasty, Jeongjo stood out for his scholarly pursuits and commentaries, especially regarding the theory of nature and principle (Seongliseol 性理說). He remains consistently studied within the field. Three of the five papers on Jeonjo were about this study of Confucian classics and compilations (Baek Min-jung, Kang Moon-shik, and Kim You-gon). Another paper examined his viewpoint of factionalism (Lee Dong-hwa), and the final paper covered typical Neo-Confucian topics, such as the theory of mind and self-cultivation, in Jeongjo’s work (Ahn Hyo-soung).

6) Seongho Yi Ik

1 Park Jihyun, Yi Ik’s Yi-Ja-Su-Eo(李子粹語): succeeding the thought of Toegye, Korean Studies Quarterly 43(1), The Academy of Korean Studies.
3 Choi Jeong Yeon, Seongho Yi Ik’s “Four-Seven” theory and the Response of Namin: Focusing on the reorganization of the Toegye’s “Four-Seven” theory, JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES 42, Yulgok Society.

Three papers were dedicated to Seongho Yi Ik’s body of work in 2020, focusing on the scholar in the context of his eponymous school of thought (星湖學派). Two papers, both published by Park Ji-Hyun, examined Yi Ik’s critical thinking and theories, with a focus on Yi Ik’s position as the
successor of the Toegye School. In contrast, Choi Jeong-yeon’s paper drew on the same line of critical thinking from Yi Ik; however, it examined the prominence of Yi Ik’s arguments and theories within discussion by Namin scholars.

7) Hanju Yi Jin-sang

1 Lee, Hyun Jung, Academic Methodology of Nineteenth-Century Korean Confucian Scholars -Focusing on Hanju (寒州) Yi Jinsang (李震相) and Ilbu(一夫) Kimhang (金恒) -, STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST 95, Korean Society For Philosophy East-West.

2 Kim, Jong-Seok, A Philosophical Study on Disputes over human mind of the Yeongnam Region at the late period of the Korean Empire, Korean Studies 43, The Korean Studies Institute.

3 Kim Nak-jin, Cho Geung-sup and Jeon-Woo’s Criticism of Yi Jin-sang’s article on Sim jeuk Li, Journal of Korean philosophical history 64, The Society For Korean Philosophical History.

In 2020, three papers were published on Hanju Yi Jin-sang. Kim Jong-seok examined the aspects and issues of the debate over the human mind that swept through the Yeongnam region. Meanwhile, Kim Nak-jin discussed the debate over the human mind, focusing on the criticism raised by Cho Geung-sup and Jeon Woo as compared to Yi Jin-sang’s Simjeukliseol (心卽理說, Concurrency Theory of Mind and Principle). Finally, adopting a different approach, Lee Hyun-jung’s paper analyzed the theories of Lee Jin-sang and Kim Hang within the scope of the academic methodology of 19th century Korean Confucian scholars.
8) Other scholars

1 Yi Jongwoo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Conscious Awareness is Mind or Wisdom’s Function: A Debate between Kim Changhyeop and Yi Hyeonik Versus Yi Hijo, Gwon Sangha and Han Wonjin, *THE Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea* 54, The Society for Asian Philosophy in Korea: SAPK.

2 Lee sang ik, Two Aspects of the Eclecticism of Toegye (退溪) and Yulgok (栗谷) - with the Focus on Nongam (農巖) and Ganjae (艮齋), *The Toegye Hakbo* 147, The Toegye Studies Institute.

3 Lee Jaebok, Shin Hudam’s Way of Thinking in His Theory of Four-Seven, *TAE-DONG YEARLY REVIEW OF CLASSICS* 45, Tae Dong Institute of classic research.


6 Uhm jinsung, I-ching Perspective of Yeo Heon Jang Hyun-kwang through the Concept of Taichi's Ti-Yong - from natural science to moral science, *Journal of Korean Culture* 74, Institute of *Korean Cultural Studies* Yeungnam University.


9 Lee Ki Yong, Metaphorical Sameness between Poeun Jeong Mong-ju and Yulgok Lee Yi, *JOURNAL OF Poeun STUDIES* 25, Association
of Poeun Studies.

10 Kim Moon Joon, Chung Mong-ju and Song Si-yol, The spirit of the Justice in Chun Chu and the response to the Ming Dynasty, JOURNAL OF Poeun STUDIES 25, Association of Poeun Studies.

In the papers listed above, selected for the 2020 report, other Neo-Confucian scholars were examined in categories separate from what has been covered so far. Five scholars were studied in two papers each: Kim Chang-hyeop (pen name: Nongam), Shin Hudam (pen name: Habin), Jang Hyun-kwang (pen name: Yeoheon), Jeong Do-jeon, and Jeong Mong-ju. Kim Chang-hyeop was examined in the papers published by Lee Sang-ik (Two Aspects of the Eclecticism of Toegye and Yulgok – with the Focus on Nongam and Ganjae) as well as by Yi Jong-woo. Shin Hudam’s Theory of the Nature and Principle (Seongli-seol 性理說) was analyzed in the papers published by Lee Jae-bok and Lee Sang-ik (Two-Nature Two-Ki Theory of Habin and Its Criticism). Jang Hyun-kwang’s views on Zhouyi (周易) were examined by Uhm Jig-sung, and his Four-Seven Theory was examined by Hong Seong-min. Jeong Do-jeon was studied by two researchers (Jeong Seong-sik and Song Jae-hyeok). Finally, two papers (Lee Ki-yong and Kim Moon-joon) compared Jeong Mong-ju with other Neo-Confucian scholars.

The theories on Li (理) and Ki (氣) and those on mind (Sim/Xin 心) and nature (Seong/Xing 性 論) are major pillars of theoretical Neo-Confucianism, and account for the greatest share of papers in the field of Neo-Confucianism studies. In 2020, 39 out of the 90 papers covered the topic of Li-Ki (Li-Qi) and sim-seong (Xin-xing) theories. The proportion of papers on this subject increased from 37% in 2019 to 43% in 2020, maintaining a similarly high proportion. The second most frequently covered topic was theories on self-cultivation and education (16 papers, 18%), followed by statecraft(13papers, 14%).
The proportions of these two categories also remaine data similar level. Lastly, 23papers(25%) covered topics other than those categorized separately. In this “other topics” category, novel research approaches to Neo-Confucian studies were employed and topics were diversified.

3. Classification by topic

1) Theories on Li and Ki (理氣論)

1 Hong Seongmin, Li-bal and Joong-jeol in Yeo-heon's Moral Emotions Theory, GONG JA HAK 40, Korean Society Of Confucian Studies.
2 An yookyung, A Study on the characteristic of the Neo-confucianism in nokmun (Im, seong-ju, Korean Studies 41, The Korean Studies Institute.
3 Uhm jinsung, I-ching Perspective of Yeo Heon Jang Hyun-kwang through the Concept of Taichi's Ti-Yong - from natural science to moral science, Journal of Korean Culture 74, Institute of Korean Cultural Studies Yeungnam University.
5 Jeong Kang-gil, An Atomistic Reconstruction of the Concepts of Li(理) and Ki(氣) in Neo-Confucianism - To configure differently from Zhuzi’s thought -, Journal of Korean Philosophical Society 156, Korean Philosophical Society.

Theories on Li and Ki (理氣論) were covered in 20 papers in 2020, a considerable increase compared to the mere two papers published in 2019. Considering the ambiguity in distinguishing between the theories of Li-Ki (理氣論) and those of mind-nature (心性論), it is reasonable to examine their combined number and ratio. A total of 39 papers were published on
the Li-Ki and mind-nature theories, accounting for 43% of all the papers on Neo-Confucianism studies in Korea; this proportion is slightly higher than it was in 2019.

Given the relatively small number of papers classified as Li-Ki theories, it is difficult to observe an ongoing theme or trend within the five papers available. Therefore, instead, salient features of each paper are presented here. Hong Seong-min’s paper “Li-bal and Joong-jeol in Yeoheon’s Moral Emotions Theory,” describes the characteristics of the four-seven debate (四七論) as expounded upon by Yeoheon Jang Hyun-kwang. This is distinct from the characteristics of this debate on Yi Hwang or Yi I. The author pays particular attention to Yeoheon’s views on the seven feelings. While holding differing views, Yi Hwang and Yi I did agree with the theory that feelings are an emotional display of Li that causes Ki to arise (氣發理乘). Contrastingly, Jang Hyun-kwang defined the seven feelings as eliciting Li (理發). Hong analyzes the implications of Jang’s assertion that seven feelings result from an aroused Li. An You-kyung’s paper “A Study on the Characteristic of Neo-Confucianism in Nokmun Im Seong-ju – Ki or Li-Ki,” presents the two strands of previous research on Im Seong-ju (pen name: Nokmun). One interpretation places Im as a proponent of Ki, whereas the other posits him as a proponent of Li-Ki. However, based on the emphasis that Im places on the concept of “capability” (能), An You-kyung opposes the view that classifies Im Seong-ju as merely being a Ki proponent. The author argues that Im proposed Neung to be able to reveal Li as an entity with substantial merit and ability. His paper presents an in-depth analysis of the notion of Neung in relation to all sides of this debate, such as the relationship between Li and Ki (principle vs. function) and the relationship between Sim and Seong (mind vs. nature). Uhm Jin-sung’s paper “I-ching Perspective of Yeoheon Jang Hyun-kwang through the Concept of Taichi’s Ti-Yong – from natural science to moral
science,” explains Jang Hyun-kwang’s views on the universe, humanity, and morality within a consistent framework. The framework begins with his understanding of the essence-function (Che-Yong/Tì-Yong 體·用) of Taiji (太極). Yi Sun-yuhl’s paper “Ki Jeong-ik’s Theory of Ki (氣) and Su (數)” presents the debates exchanged between Ki Jeong-ik, Pak Sang-hyun, and Yun Jeung. Specifically, the author focuses on the debate regarding the human potential for changes and fateful constraints surrounding the concepts of Ki (Qi 氣 energy) and Su (Shu 數, number). Then, he analyzes their implications. Both Ki and Su play a role in determining individual characteristics, abilities, and luck. However, Ki is more strongly associated with variable aspects, and Su with invariable aspects that represent realms that can be changed through human efforts as well as fatalistic constraints that are beyond human efforts. These two contrastive concepts are accessed and understood in different manners in the debates presented in this paper. Ultimately, the author discusses about human possibilities and constraints. Lastly, Jeong Kang-gil’s paper “An Atomistic Reconstruction of the Concepts of Li (理) and Ki (氣) in Neo-Confucianism –To configure differently from Zhu Xi’s thought,” attempts to reconstruct the concept of Li-Ki as expounded upon by Zhu Xi. He regards Taegeuk (Taiji 太極) as an intangible Ki, and defines it as the prime energy of Taiji (Taegeukwongi/Taijiyuanqi 太極元氣). Then, he interprets the li of this taegeukwongi as the intrinsic intelligence, which is the same as the temperamental intelligence of the taegeukwongi. Finally, he argues that there are multi-tiered hierarchies of temperamental intelligence.

2) Theories on mind and nature (Simseong-ron/Xinxing-lun 心性論)

In 2020, a total of 34 papers on the theories on mind and nature (Simseong-ron/Xinxing-lun 心性論) were published in the field of Confucian studies in Korea, a slight decrease compared with 39 papers published in
The papers are presented here under the categories of Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings (Sadanchiljeong/Siduanqiqing 四端七情), Human Mind and Moral Mind (IInsimdosim/Renxin-Daoxin 人心道心), Ho-Rak Debate (湖洛論爭), Morality Dispute (心說論爭), and “other topics.”

**2-1) Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings (四端七情)/ Human Mind and Moral Mind (人心道心)**

1. Park Dajin, Sungho’s Anti-Criticism about Yulgok’s Criticism of Theory of Mutual Issuance, *Studies in Confucianism* 50, Confucianism Research Institute.
2. Lee Jaebok, Shin Hudam’s Way of Thinking in His Theory of Four-Seven, *TAE-DONG YEARLY REVIEW OF CLASSICS* 45, Tae Dong Institute of classic research.

Compared to 15 papers in 2019, in 2020, only five papers covered the topics of Four Beginnings and Seven Feelings (Sadanchiljeong/Siduanqiqing 四端七情) and Human Mind and Moral Mind (IInsim-Dosim/Renxin-Daoxin 人心道心), revealing a drastic reduction in the number of papers. In recent years, papers on Sadanchiljeong and IInsimdosim have consistently taken center stage among all topics within
the morality dispute. In 2020, however, this topic was outnumbered by the papers on the Ho-Rak Debate, which has attracted particular attention. Three papers on the Seongho School (星湖學派), including its founder Yi Ik, attracted attention, covering the topic of Sadanchiljeong. Park Da-jin’s paper “Sungho’s Anti-Criticism about Yulgok’s Criticism of Theory of Mutual Issuance,” explains that Seongho YiIk attempted to compensate for the logical problems of Teogye’s theories. Hedidso, the author argues, in response to the criticism by Yulgok; this, consequently, resulted in a range of theoretical problems, including the loss of distinctiveness between Toegye’s theories and Yulgok’s one way theory of Li leading to the rise of Ki(Ki-balLi-seungIlDo/QifaLichengYitu(氣發理乘一途說)). Likewise, Choi Jeong-yeon’s paper “Seongho Yi Ik’s Four-Seven Theory and the Response of Namin: Focusing on the Reorganization of the Toegye’s “Four-Seven” Theory” highlights Yi Ik’s endeavors that were geared toward compensating for Toegye’s theories. However, this paper goes a step further, including the responses of Namin line intellectuals, who criticized him. Lee Jae-bok’s paper “Shin Hudam’s Way of Thinking in His Theory of Four-Seven,” paid special attention to an approach adopted by Shin Hudam, that modifies Yi Ik’s Four-Seven Theory. In this paper, he also covers the arguments used to justify his views. Additionally, Hong Sung-min’s paper “On Manifestation of Principle and Realization of Publicness in Yulgok and Yeohoen’s Moral Emotions Theory” compares and analyzes the Four-Seven Theory as expounded upon by Yi I and Jang Hyun-kwang, respectively, focusing on the issuance of Li (理 principle) and realization of Gong (公 publicness). Lastly, Sung Ho-jun’s paper “Yi Gyujun’s Theory of the Human Mind and the Moral Mind” analyzes the theory of the human mind and the moral mind (人心道心說), as put forth by Yi Gyujun, a Confucian doctor of the late Joseon period. The author examines his views from various perspectives based on the understanding that he was influenced by Na Heum-sun and Noh Su-sin.
2-2) Ho-Rak Debate


2. Yoo Jiwoong, The Theoretical Structure to the Naknon (洛論) of the Kiho School’s Simbonseon (心本善) and its Significance for Putting Morality into Practice, *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST* 98, Korean Society For Philosophy East-West.

3. Yi Jongwoo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Conscious Awareness is Mind or Wisdom’s Function: A Debate between Kim Changhyeop and Yi Hyeonik Versus Yi Hijo, Gwon Sangha and Han Wonjin, *THE Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea* 54, The Society for Asian Philosophy in Korea : SAPK.


6. Yi Jongwoo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Perception at the Not-Yet Arouse State in Mind Has Motion inside the Quiet or Not -Focusing on A Debate between Gwon Sangha and Yi Heonik, and Han Wonjin’s Criticism of Yi, and between the Members in Rak Group, *Yeol-sang Journal of Classical Studies* 72, Society Of Yol-Sang Academy.

7. Yi Jong Woo, Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether the Not-Yet Aroused in Mind in the Veritable Records in King Jeongjo’s Regime: Focusing on Debate between Kim Changheup and Han Wonjin, and between Yi Jae and Sim Jo, and Comparison of Yi Gan, *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 42, Yulgok Society.


Papers about the Ho-Rak debate have been steadily increasing in recent years. From four papers in 2018, to seven papers in 2019 and eleven papers in 2020, the Ho-Rak Debate has clearly gained traction, demonstrating the ongoing expansion of the realm of research on the Ho-Rak Debate between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan. Of the 11 papers published in 2020, only two (Bae Je-seong, Son Mi-ae) focus on the debate between Han Wonjin and Yi Gan; the rest examine a wider range of related topics. Yoo Ji-woong’s paper “Yi Ik’s response and refutation to Yulgok School-based on Ho-Rak Debate,” analyzes the implications of the advocacy of the innate goodness of a mind. The author views this as the essence of the Nakron-line morality discussion during the 17th to 19th century. Park Ji-hym’s paper “Yi Ik’s response and refutation to Yulgok School-based on Ho-Rak Debate” is a novel attempt at understanding the characteristics of Seongho Yi Ik’s Four-Seven Theory within the context of the Ho-Rak Debate. “Study of Geunjae Park Yun-won’s Unaroused Mind Theory – with a focus on the perception of the experience of unaroused
mind,” co-authored by Kim Beong-mok and Kim Jun-tae, analyzes the unaroused mind theory of Geunjae Park Yun-won, the leading scholar of the Nakron line, who succeeded Miho Kim Won-haeng. Gil Tae-eun’s paper “Thoughts on Ganjae’s Human Nature and the Nature of Things Theory – With a Focus on Jungyonggieu” explores Jungyonggieu (中庸記疑), which was authored by Ganjae Geon Woo, a leading scholar of the Nakhak line in the late Joseon period. He does so to explore the Human Nature and the Nature of Things Theory (人物性論). Yi Jong-woo published a trilogy to elucidate the implications of Han Won-jin’s Ho-Rak Debate in the light of the relevant views of other scholars: 1) Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Conscious Awareness is Mind or Wisdom’s Function: A Debate between Kim Changhyeop and Yi Hyeonik Versus Yi Hijo, Gwon Sangha and Han Wonjin; 2) Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether Perception at the Not-Yet Aroused State in Mind Has Motion inside the Quiet or Not -Focusing on A Debate between Gwon Sangha and Yi Heonik, and Han Wonjin’s Criticism of Yi, and between the Members in Rak Group; 3) Ho and Rak Group’s Debate on Whether the Not-Yet Aroused in Mind in the Veritable Records in King Jeongjo’s Regime: Focusing on Debate between Kim Changheup and Han Wonjin, and between Yi Jae and Sim Jo, and Comparison of Yi Gan. Additionally, Kim Ga-ram’s paper “A Study on Theoretical basis of Nam-dang’s Human nature through Influence of material force” analyzes the concept of Gibulyongsa (氣不用事). This concept was meant to shed light on Han Wonjin’s concept of the unaroused state of mind (Mibal 未發). Finally, Kim Seung-young’s paper “A Study and Perspectives of Ho-Rak Debate” provides an overview of the research outcomes on the Ho-Rak Debate, and presents an outlook for future research.
2-3) Morality Dispute

1 Kim, Jong-Seok, A Philosophical Study on Disputes over human mind of the Yeongnam Region at the late period of the Korean Empire, *Korean Studies* 43, The Korean Studies Institute.

2 Kim Bong Gon, Rohbaekhyeon (老柏軒) Jeong Jaegyu (鄭載圭)’s succession to Philosophy of Nosa (蘆沙學) and the Deepening Process of the Theory of Li (主理論), *Nammyung* 68, Institute of Gyeongnam Culture.


The Morality Dispute, which swept the Confucian society in the late Joseon period after the Ho-Rak Debate, was covered in three papers in 2020, a decrease by one paper compared to 2019. Historically, many school soft hought have been involved in the Morality Dispute. The main focus of two of the papers published in 2020 was on the Yeongnam region. Kim Jong-seok’s “A Philosophical Study on Disputes over human mind of the Yeongnam Region at the late period of the Korean Empire” and Kim Bong-gon’s “Rohbaekhyeon (老柏軒) Jeong Jaegyu (鄭載圭)’s succession to Philosophy of Nosa (蘆沙學) and the Deepening Process of the Theory of Li (主理論)” both focus on the Nosa School. Meanwhile, Kim Nak-jin's “Cho Geung-sup and Jeon Woo's Criticism of Yi Jin-sang's article on Sim jeuk Li” focuses on Hanju Lee Jing-sang.

2-4) Other topics

1 Jeon Su-Yeon, Kim Min-Jae, Kim Yong-Jae, A Review of Critical Perceptions of *YANG-MING STUDIES* by Neo-Confucian Scholars
of the Joseon Dynasty (4) - Focusing on Park Se-Chae’s "Wang Yangming’s Scholarly Discrimination (王陽明學辨)" -, Studies in Confucianism 51, Confucianism Research Institute.

2 Han Jaehoon, Maeheon Geum Bo’s Learning and Thought, Korean Studies 41, The Korean Studies Institute.


7 KIM HEE YOUNG, Kim Min-Jae, Kim Yong-Jae, A Review of Critical Perceptions of YANG-MING STUDIES by Neo-Confucian Scholars of the Joseon Dynasty (3) YANG-MING STUDIES 56, The Korean Society Of YANG-MING STUDIES.

8 Lee sang ik, Two Aspects of the Eclecticism of Toegye (退溪) and Yulgok (栗谷) - with the Focus on Nongam (農巖) and Ganjae (艮齋), The T'oege Hakbo 147, The Toegye Studies Institute.


10 Jeon, Byoung-Ok, A Reinterpretation of Mind-Nature theory of Iphakdoseol (入學圖說), The T'oege Hakbo 148, The Toegye Studies
11 Choi Bokhee, A Study on the Concept of ‘Sensibility’ in Neo-Confucianism, *Sogang Journal of Philosophy* 63, Institute of Philosophical Studies SOGANG UNIVERSITY.

12 Kim Kyungho, Gubong Song Ik-Pil’s Understanding of the Liqixinxing and the Metaphor of "Supa, water and waves" - Compared to "Inseungma, a person riding a horse" Metaphor and "Sugi, water and bowl" Metaphor-, *Studies in Confucianism* 50, Confucianism Research Institute.


Of the 34 papers published in 2020 that fall under the category of the theories on mind and nature (Simseong-ron/Xinsing-lun 心性論), three papers cover Joseon Neo-Confucianists’ criticism of Yangming Studies (A Review of Critical Perceptions of *YANG-MING STUDIES* by Neo-Confucian Scholars of the Joseon Dynasty (3); A Review of Critical Perceptions of *YANG-MING STUDIES* by Neo-Confucian Scholars of the Joseon Dynasty (4) – Focusing on Park Se-Chae’s “Wang Yangming’s
Scholarly Discrimination (王陽明學辨); Toegye Yi Hwang’s Critique of Yangmingism and the Establishment of Joseon Confucianism). Kim Hee-young et al. published their third paper in a series of Joseon Neo-Confucianists’ critical views of Yangming Studies. In 2020, they focused on Yi Min-seo, Seo Jong-tae, and Song Jing-eun. Along the same lines, Jeon Su-yeon et al. analyze the details and characteristics of the criticism on Yangminism, with a focus on Park Se-Chae’s “Wang Yangming’s Scholarly Discrimination” (王陽明學辨). Kim Hyoung-chan analyzes Toegye’s critique of Yangmingism and concluded that Toegye’s critique, coupled with integrating its critical aspect into Joseon’s Neo-Confucianism, prevented Yangmingism from gaining a foothold in Joseon. Park Byungmann’s paper “Modern Meaning of Yulgok and Dasan’s Interpretation for the Efficacy-Implementation Process of ‘actualizing the Mean and Harmony’ from Joongyong” compares the theories of Yi I and Jeong Yak-yong. Specifically, he compares the theories surrounding the issue of the “actualization of the mean and harmony” (致中和) and brings the related implications into modern society. Kim Kyung-ho’s paper “Gubong Song Ik-pil’s Understanding of Li-Qi and Xin-xing (理氣心性). Mainly, this paper focuses on the metaphors of “water and waves” (水波), “a person riding a horse” (人乘馬), and “water and bowl” (水器), and brings the philosophical affinity between Gubong Song Ik-pil’s and Yulgok Yi I to the forefront. Lee Sang-ik’s paper “Two Aspects of the Eclecticism of Toegye (退溪) and Yulgok (栗谷) – with the Focus on Nongam (農巖) and Ganjae (艮齋)” presents Ganjae Jeon Woo’s critique of Nongam Kim Chang-hyup’s Four-Seven Theory, put forward in an effort to reach a compromise between Toegye and Yulgok, and his alternative proposals. He then points out the limitations of Ganjae’s proposition. Son Mi-ae’s paper “ZhuXi’s Zhiyan
(知言) Criticism and ZhongHeXinShuo (中和新說) Development – with a Focus on Zhiyanyi (知言疑義),” discusses the characteristics of Zhu Xi’s Theory of Mind and Nature (Xinsing-Lun 心性論) as exhibited in his New Theory on Equilibrium and Harmony (ZhongHeXinShuo 中和新說). There is also a focus, in this paper, on his Zhiyan (知言) criticism.

3) Self-cultivation and education

3 Park Jong-Do, A Study on the Practical Character of the unity of knowledge and practice between Wang, Soo-In and Jo, Sik, Nammyung 66, Institute of Gyeongnam Culture.
5 LEE CHEON SUNG, Theoretical foundation of ethical practice will(立志) in Yulgok(栗谷) philosophy through the problems of supreme good(至善) and the middle(中), Journal of Eastern Philosophy 103, The Society Of Eastern Philosophy.
6 LEE YOUNGHO, A Study on a Discourse of Getting at the Truth through Writing by Changgye Im Young, The Journal of Korean Classics 56, Institute for the translation of Korean Classics.
7 Kim, Nak-Jin, Shin Gyesung’s transmission of Taoxue and Influence on Choshik, Youngnam Studies 75, Institute of Youngnam Culture.
Chapter 5. Studies on the Korean Neo-Confucianism

8 Gong Youn-hyun, The Characteristics and self-discipline of Mokeun(牧隱)’s Neo-Confucianism of Cheoninmugan(天人無間), *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism

9 Jang YunSu, The Characteristics of Toegye-studies from the Perspective of Western Scholars, *The T’oegye Hakbo* 147, The Toegye Studies Institute.


12 Lee Min Kyung, Yulgok(栗谷) Yiyi(李珥)’s The Compilation of Gyeokmongyogyeol(擊蒙要訣) and Practice of Neo-Confucian Ideology, *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 42, Yulgok Society.


14 Kim Yong-jae, A Study on Yulgok's Literary Thoughts of Chinese Poems - Focusing on personality education through Jeongeonmyoseon -, *Korean Thought and Culture* 102, The Society of Korean Thought and Culture.


In 2020, a total of 16 papers were published on the theories regarding self-cultivation and education. A salient trend among these papers is the scholars they cover. For example, five out of the 16 papers focus on Yulgok. When broken into topics, two of the 16 papers deal with education and classical Chinese, two papers compare Confucianism with Western philosophy, and the remaining 12 focus on self-cultivation. This suggests that self-cultivation is still the mainstream research topic in the Neo-Confucian studies in Korea. This reflects the current situation of the issue regarding personality education through the classics, which is emerging in secondary education. However, this has not been met with immense academic interest. Considering the current reality of an increasing demand for education in both the classics and ethics, and a growing number of students opting for similar or related subjects, even though these are not compulsory for the national college entrance exam, there is a compelling demand for textbooks and research outcomes that can serve as reference materials for teachers. With this sudden surge in demand for and interest in Neo-Confucian classics among high school teachers, it is suggested that materials for classics-based personality education be widely produced. When doing so, one must bear in mind that research on simple morality-based self-cultivation cannot satisfy all practical scholarly needs on the topic.

4) Statecraft


6 Kim, Kyung-Rae, Understanding the Sŏnghakchibyo in Context with Two Keywords -“Conventionalists” (yusok) and “Careless Literati” (uyu), *The Society for Study of Korean History of Thoughts* 65, The Association for the Study of Korean History of Thoughts.


Thirteen papers cover topics related to statecraft. As is the case with theories related to self-cultivation and education, Yulgok-related studies account for the highest proportion of papers about statecraft (five out of 13 papers). This is especially noticeable within a specific journal. Further, two papers focus on Sambong Jeong Do-jeon. Research on statecraft covers a wide spectrum of scholars, especially when compared with the theories of Li-Qi and Xin-xing (理気心性).

5) Other topics

1 HyangJoon Lee, Li(理), Three-State System(三國體制) and Civilism: Philosophical Foundation of Wijong Choksa(衛正斥邪), *GONG JA HAK* 41, Korean Society Of Confucian Studies

2 Nam, Yoon-deok, Understanding and Characteristic of『Maengja-Jibju-Sangseol』『Jinsim-Janggu』by Hosan Park Moon Ho, *GONG JA HAK* 41, Korean Society Of Confucian Studies


5 Park Yong Tae, Concentrated Aspect of the Wijeongchucksa Movement and the Giho Noron-lined School -Confluence of Noron’s Shipa and Byeokpa, and the role of righteous army’s leader, Min
Jongsik, *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST* 95, Korean Society For Philosophy East-West

6 JO, MIN HWAN, Confucian scholars’ views and acceptance of ‘Ablution at Yi and then return home singing’ by Zengdian, *THE EASTERN ART* 47, KOREA SOCIETY FOR SCIENCE OF EASTERN ART


8 Park Jihyun, Yi Ik’s Yi‒Ja‒Su‒Eo(李子粹語): succeeding the thought of Toegye, *Korean Studies Quarterly* 43(1), The Academy of Korean Studies


10 LEE BONG KYOO, Lee Hwang’s Research on Family Rituals and Subsequent Transmission, *The T’oegye Hakbo* 147, The Toegye Studies Institute


12 Cho Sung-San, Joseon Neo-Confucian Intellectuals’ Recognition of Cheon and Responses to Western Learning from the Mid-Late Eighteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century, *The Journal of Korean History* 191, The Association For Korean Historical Studies


14 Kim Min Jae, A Study on the Changes of Yulgok Ideas as Described in the Textbooks: from the ‘self-cultivation subject’ of enlightenment

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period to the ‘moral subject’ of modern day, *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 43, Yulgok Society

15 An Yoo-kyoung, A study on the morality of Toegye and Kant, *THE TOEGYE HAK NONCHONG* 36, Busan Toegye Studies Institute

16 Lee Ki Yong, Metaphorical Sameness between Poeun Jeong Mong-ju and Yulgok Lee Yi, *JOURNAL OF Poeun STUDIES* 25, Association of Poeun Studies

17 Kim Moon Joon, Chung Mong-ju and Song Si-yol, The spirit of the Justice in Chun Chu and the response to the Ming Dynasty, *JOURNAL OF Poeun STUDIES* 25, Association of Poeun Studies

18 Kim In-Gyu, Su-am(遂庵) Kwon Sang-Ha(權尙夏)’s View on learning and Spirit of Chun Chu(春秋), *JOURNAL OF Poeun STUDIES* 25, Association of Poeun Studies

19 Kang Moonshik, Jeongjo’s study on the writings of Chu Hsi and the compilation of Juseobaekseon(朱書百選), *Hanguk Munhwa* 89, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies

20 Lee Donghwa, King Jeongjo’s Reading and Application of Zhu Xi’s Factionalism, *Hanguk Munhwa* 91, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies


The above-mentioned theories revolving around Li-Qi, Xin-xing, self-cultivation, and education are typical academic categories in Neo-Confucian studies. However, the wider spectrum of Neo-Confucian studies goes beyond these core issues to include many other aspects. Such topics and approaches are included in the list above, under the heading “other topics.” These papers span a wide gamut of topics, covering Yehak (禮學 study of rituals) and Gyeonghak (經學 study of classics), displaying
a strong tendency for ideological concepts, analyzing important scholars’ theories from regional perspectives, illuminating Confucian scholars’ thoughts against the historical backdrop of the late Joseon period, discussing the methodologies for dealing with Confucianism appropriate for modern day curriculum, and elucidating the characteristics specific schools of thought.

4. Critical analyses and reviews

- Outstanding papers

1) Jeong Do-Won, “A Study on the Discourses of Heart and Mind in the 16th century Neo-Confucianism in Joseon – with a Focus on Toegye”

This paper offers a partial solution to the problem posed by the previous author’s research methodology. The author set Toegye as the standard of 16th-century Neo-Confucianism, which was called Daoxue 道学 at the time. Thus, it was named after a Confucian school of philosophy of the Song Dynasty. By setting Toegye as the standard, with the intent to compare and analyze Toegye’s understanding, the author then tries to compare and analyze the understanding of reverence (敬) by Toegye, Jo Sik, Yulgok, Woogye, and Toegye’s disciples. The author argues that the differences in the various concepts of the theory of mind and nature (Simseong-ron/Xinxing-lun 心性論) arose from the differences in the understanding of the concept of reverence. Meanwhile, the author admits that these scholars were essentially propagating the studies of Jeongju/Cheng-Zhu’s (程朱) Neo-Confucianism. To prove this, the author dedicates ample time to demonstrating that these differences in understanding are attributable to mere linguistic variations.

The author argues that Toegye proposes mind cultivation (心法) in the form of “平平存在 略略收拾” based on “心不可有一物.” Then, the author
argues that righteous actions that are appropriate for certain situations, develop from a well-cultivated, normal mind without being obsessed with any fixed object. Contrastingly, Nammyung (Jo Sik) understands mind cultivation as reaching the level of having nothing left in one’s mind (無一物), based on Zhou Lianxi’s (周濂溪) idea of reducing desires until one’s mind reaches a state of total absence (寡之又寡 以至於無), debates the author, stating that what Namyung perceived to be the cultivation of one’s mind was an incessant human endeavor. In other words, the difference lies in the understanding of the state of an unaroused heart-mind as an incessantly cultivated mind.

This idea continued to be propagated by Toegye’s disciples. Wolcheon Jo Mok’s question shows an attitude that meets the unaroused heart-mind intuitively by materializing it. This suggests that, the author explains, the type of mind that is defined by Toegye is not attainable by self-cultivation alone. Thus, the author determines the attitude held by Toegye’s disciples, wherein they perceive the unaroused heart-mind as something to be realized through contemplation. This is unlike Toegye himself; the view his disciples have adopted is closer to Nammyung’s beliefs. Furthermore, Toegye’s mind cultivation is well-expressed by Woogye and, in particular, is similar to Yulgok’s understanding. By explaining that Toegye’s calm mind (平平存在) can be realized, to a certain degree, by surrendering at the very moment of light reflection (輕輕照管), the author provides an opportunity to discuss the 16thcentury Daoxue scholars’ cultivation of mind and spirit. This is relevant, as the concept of Li can vary according to difference sin perceiving integrity and righteousness.

What distinguishes this paper from the previous ones is simple: its rigor of argument. The author recognizes that mind cultivation is based on experience rather than reasoning and debates; to this end, he develops his points based on experiential memoirs surrounding the study of mind cultivation. He demonstrates Toegye’s teaching, of keeping the mind as
calm as still waters and attending to affairs in that state of mind. Moreover, he visits what Toegye’s disciples came to reflect upon: how to perceive the unaroused heart-mind through contemplation. Through this, he also shows that one concept can be understood and practiced differently. This paper aptly reveals how the 16thcentury Daoxue Confucianist saccessed the unaroused heart-mind and how they practiced mind cultivation.

It also demonstrates how the concepts of Neo-Confucianism are closely associated with the lives of the people of the time. Unlike other papers describing the Li-Qi and Xin-Xing relationships, as if substituting them into a mathematical formula by simply schematizing them, the concerns and thoughts of the scholars involved are conveyed through their language. This allows the reasons for their ongoing influence on the conceptual structure to be understood.

Of course, the readers are given the opportunity to internalize Neo-Confucianism through the applicable resources based on experiential statements. Yet, there remains a clear problem of inaccessibility due to the choice of words or expressions. Particularly the word “materialization” and the parts with imperfect conceptual distinction, may be challenging for those unfamiliar with the understanding of the mind cultivation of Daoxue. Therefore, it seems necessary for many researchers to find ways to increase the accessibility of the concept and practice of mind cultivation for a better understanding of the first-hand experiences of the scholars of the time.

2) Yi Sun-Yuhl, “Ki Jeong-ik’s Theory of Ki (氣) and Su (數): with Focus on the Debate between Pak Sang-hyun and Yun Jeung”

This paper stands out for its originality. This originality is related to how it presents a discussion about Ki (Qi 氣) and Su (Shu 數 number), which are rarely covered in the Neo-Confucian studies in Korea. Ki (Qi 氣) and Su (Shu 數 number) are philosophical values that capture an important
characteristic of the philosophical thinking of Neo-Confucian scholars. In Neo-Confucianism, Ki plays a central role in explaining the diversity of phenomena. However, among this diversity, there are aspects that are more difficult to alter due to their immobility and aspects that are easily changeable due to their fluidity and mutability. The former corresponds to Su, and the latter to Ki. In this respect, Ki and Su pertain to a wider category of Ki. Now, “Ki” references a more general sense of the word than its subcategories do. However, why is the immobility and fluidity of Ki a problem? The author explains that these two aspects of Ki can be tied to its “disposition” (kipum/qibing 氣稟), which has a great influence on human characteristics and destiny in Neo-Confucianism. Thus, it can be a matter of importance in the Yulgok School due to its emphasis on self-cultivation through change of temperament, while attaching value to the consistency of Ki (Kiguk/Qiju 氣局). In this regard, the author poses the following questions: Is the destiny of a person determined by the immovable and immutable rule of Su and impossible to alter? Or is there any room for change within the given destiny through will and effort? If the destiny can be changed, to what extent is it changeable? These questions can lead readers to the question of what can and cannot be changed through an alteration in temperament. The author defines this as the gist of the Theory of Ki-Su.

After briefly introducing the Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars’ discussion presented in this paper on this matter, Park Sang-hyun explains his deterministic view; he does not believe that that Ki-Su can be changed. Meanwhile, Ki Jeong-ik holds the opposing view, that there exists a mutable realm governed by Ki that can be modified and improved through human endeavor, despite there being an immutable realm governed by the rule of Su. However, in Ki Jeong-ik’s view, the immutable realm is something like lifespan or fate. He argues that there is a realm of Ki (Qi数), but that it is a realm of moral possibility that can be improved,
through human effort.

The author defines Ki Jeong-ik’s position as follows: Neither should one abandon what can be done under the pretext that it cannot be done, nor undertake what cannot be done by relying on what can be done. Separating Ki and Su and defining them as mutable (可變) and immutable (不變) matters, respectively, is one aspect of this worldview. While Yun Jeung appears to agree with Park Sang-hyun’s position that Ki and Su cannot be clearly distinguished, he places particular emphasis on human will. Yun Jeung argues that even the realm of Su, such as lifespan, can be changed through human endeavor. In this regard, Ki Jeong-ik emphasizes the need to adequately distinguish between the realm that is changeable through human effort and the realm that is not, while continuing to attempt to distinguish between Ki and Su.

This paper successfully captures the pursuits and thoughts of Joseon Neo-Confucian scholars on the matter of “attitudes and methods of understanding human possibilities and limitations.” It does so through the lens of an unfamiliar concept, defined as the Ki-Su Theory. This is an exemplary case in that it diversifies the topic of Neo-Confucianism research and methodology of approaching it, while revealing practical thoughts of Neo-Confucian scholars.

3) Yoo Ji-woong, “The Theoretical Structure to the Naknon (洛論) of the Kiho School’s Simbonseon (心本善) and its Significance for Putting Morality into Practice”

This paper illuminates the issue of “Simbonseon” (心本善) which represents the main tenet of the Mind-Nature Theory (Simseong-ron/Xinsing-lun 心性論) of the Nak School (洛學) of Kihohak, which existed from the 17th to 19th century. Simbonseon meansthattheminmind(心) is Ki (氣), and the original state of the mind is good because it is made up of clear and pure Ki. The author posits a question: “Why did the Neo-
Confucian scholars of the Kiho School (Eclecticism) claim that the mind is innately good?” and spends the remainder of the paper answering this question, to attempt to contribute to the ongoing research regarding the Ho-Rak debate. Research on the Ho-Rak Debate goes beyond the study of the debate that initially took place between Han Won-jin and Yi Gan, expanding to the continuous confrontation between the Ho and Nak Schools. It further expanded to the topic of the Morality Dispute in the late Joseon period. However, toward the end of the Joseon Dynasty, various concepts related to the Theory of Li-Qi-Xin-Xing of Neo-Confucianism took on a dimension of complexity that is difficult to understand without knowing the characteristics or context of the related issues. Therefore, it is very important to understand the relationship between the Xin-Xing-related issues and concepts; one of the best ways to understand this is through the Ho-Rak Debate. In this context, this study is expected to provide meaningful insights into the understanding of the matter of Li-Qi-Xin-Xing.

According to the author, Simbonseon has a significance as a necessary condition that can guarantee universal morality and the possibility of practice. However, it is not a sufficient condition as it requires discipline for full realization. The author theoretically explains the meaning of Simbonseon from the Neo-Confucian standpoint, leaning heavily on Yulgok Studies. However, this theoretical explanation is also presented as a part of the framework of the history of Yulgok Studies since the 17th century. This provides the theoretical structure and characteristics of Simbonseon and, at the same time, the context of how to understand it, as well as how to position it within the historical context of Yulgok Studies. These aspects are yet to be elucidated in the current expanding research on the Ho-Rak Debate mentioned above. This paper also presents a balanced understanding of Simbonseon and Simseong-ron (theory of mind and nature) of the Nakron School, in that it expands the discussion to include
an explanation of the significance of the set theoretical characteristic sin moral practice.

- Papers selected for critical review

1) Park Ji-hyun, “Yi Ik’s response and refutation to Yulgok School – based on Ho-Rak Debate”

This paper aims to clarify the meaning of Seongho Yi Ik’s philosophy, focusing on his Theory of Gongchiljeong (公七情 Seven Public Feeling) in relation to the Ho-Rak Debate. Conclusively, Seongho Yi Ik’s philosophy can be regarded as the basis for his “Confucian community model” that sets “the public as voluntary participants in the community.” This opposes the sector of Neo-Confucianism that did not part with the sense of community based around a social status system that predominantly centered on the literati aristocrats. In the process, this paper helps readers understand the context better by providing them with detailed explanations of Seongho’s important arguments. For example, this paper includes the differentiation between Four Beginnings (sadan 四端) and Seven Feelings (chiljeong 七情), done by differentiating between Simki (心氣 mind-ki) and hyeongki (形氣 shape-ki), and Gongchiljeong. Additionally, this paper boldly interprets the significance of Seongho’s philosophy while comprehensively viewing the political social situation of the time, serving as a good reference point for future research. Nevertheless, this paper does have several points that leave room for questions.

First, although the topic is presented as being “based on Ho-Rak Debate,” there lacks a concrete connective explanation. Indeed, except for a brief introduction to the positions of Yi Gan and Han Won-jin surrounding the differentiation between mind-ki and shape-ki, the only relevance to the Ho-Rak Debate is its historical situation (i.e., the background against which the identity of the literati aristocrats as the
ruling class is established, which strongly presupposes the status system of Joseon). Of course, as cited by the author in previous research, this critical awareness may have been important background for the Ho-Rak Debate. However, it is hardly understandable how the association between Yi Ik’s philosophy and the Ho-Rak Debate can be explained without clarifying how that critical awareness is related to the concrete issues or discussions of the Ho-Rak Debate. Should this be possible, this paper would even serve as a reference work for elucidating the relevance to all academic activities with the similar backgrounds, going beyond the scope of the Ho-Rak Debate. Even if we admit that the paper is a cursory review, in a total absence of concrete explanations of the Ho-Rak Debate, it is difficult to understand how this paper can be described as a study “based on the Ho-Rak Debate.” Moreover, the definition of the Ho-Rak Debate is ambiguous, leaving the reader to assume that it is the “pursuit of unequal relationship between the literati aristocrats and the people,” an explanation that lacks justification. Above all, such a comparison can be sufficiently replaced with an opposition to the general orientation of the Kihohak (Eclecticism) or Neo-Confucian scholars. Therefore, there is no need to bring the Ho-Rak Debate to the foreground.

From a different angle, an additional explanation is needed on whether Yi Ik’s position can be regarded as the introduction of the “Confucian community model” that sets “the public as voluntary participants in the community.” Indeed, the author hardly provides any rationale or prior research that speak to this interpretation of Yi Ik’s position. Lee Bong-gyu’s “Silhak as a Reproduction of Confucian Order – Cases of Bangye and Seongho,” which was cited as a study interpreting Yi Ik’s position from a socio-political perspective, concluded that Yi Ik had essentially no intention of modifying the Confucian order. Lee Bong-gyu even notes, “It is not persuasive to interpret Yi Ik as holding a position to move away from the Confucian order represented by Neo-Confucianism toward
modern ideology.” His reformed proposal of ideas for the underprivileged may be attributable to the fact that Yi Ik himself was a commoner. Of course, it is not necessary to fully accept the views of this previous study, and other interpretations can also be considered; nevertheless, it seems unjust to conclude that Yi Ik introduced the Confucian community model with voluntary participation of the public without reviewing relevant literature or records. That is an extremely large claim to make, and must, therefore, be adequately supported.

Additionally, the interpretation of Yi Ik’s assertion as meaning that “the difference between sage and non-sage was narrowed down without the process of moral cultivation, such that social reforms or changes based on moral cultivation of literati aristocrats were no longer expected,” as is written in the concluding section of this paper, requires further consideration. If the aspect of the necessity and extent of moral cultivation is excluded, how should such a distinction be understood? Could it be that the “Gongchiljeong,” which was asserted by Yi Ik, is a specific case of a sage who has completed moral cultivation under the premise of the distinction between sages and ordinary people? It is absolutely necessary to consider these and other possibilities. Moral cultivation is an essential element for Confucian scholars, and the above conclusion from this paper seems to require much reconsideration. After all, there is an interpretation that Yi Ik continued to attach importance to the Confucian social order.

Finally, in the concluding section, this paper notes that “by interpreting Sadan and Chiljeong in a state of separate mind-ki and shape-ki, he obliterated the significance of Hobal (互發, reciprocal emanation) and presented the Theory of Sadanchiljeong without the need for moral cultivation of the unaroused state.” This statement also requires a clearer explanation. When viewed through the lens of Neo-Confucianism, self-cultivation toward the aroused Sadanchilkjeong and unaroused state of moral cultivation (or reverence cultivation) take place in different
contexts. It is for this reason that the issue of the unaroused state was not discussed at all in the first place or was only mentioned marginally in the Sadanchiljeong and Insimdosim debates among Yi Hwang, Ki Dae-seung, Yi I, and Seong Hon. Therefore, it is necessary to add a more detailed explanation about the context in which Yi Ik’s Theory of Sadanchiljeong came to be, without the need for moral cultivation of the unaroused state, as this takes on an important meaning for Yi Ik.

2) **Kim Yong-jae**, “A Study on Yulgok’s Literary Thoughts of Chinese Poems – Focusing on personality education through Jeongeonmyoseon”

This paper analyzes the characteristics of Yulgok’s classical Chinese poems based on Jeongeonmyoseon, an anthology of Chinese poems compiled by Yulgok Yi I. The paper is composed of two parts: the first half describes Yulgok’s ingenuity and moral character as revealed in his poems. The second half describes the ideological characteristics and significance of his poems in Jeongeonmyoseon. The author asserts that Yulgok already possessed outstanding poetic prowess in his youth, which contributed to his philosophical perfection and enabled him to publish an anthology of poems entitled Jeongeonmyoseon. However, this paper shows a few limitations in its attempt to derive Yulgok’s philosophical and human aspects through his poems, and to highlight the effect of personality education through poetry merely because of the idea that he was proficient in poetry from an early age.

First, this argument shows a leap in the logical structure. If the author had intended to relate proficiency in poetry to philosophical and personal perfection, he should have revealed how closely Yulgok’s poetry is associated with his philosophy. However, this article only mentions that Yulgok was proficient in poetry from an early age, and that the scholar was a great figure in the history of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, without presenting the characteristics of his classical Chinese poems and their
association with his Theory of Xing-Li (Seongliseol 性理說). Instead, some of his poems are merely presented, without any further attempt to analyze them in relation to his philosophy and personality.

Second, the author puts forth weak arguments regarding Yulgok’s achievements. His assertions such as, “Yulgok is famous as an unprecedented universal educationalist, and sought to build an ideal society and achieve great national development through humanistic education, focusing on filial piety as the basis of education” (p. 48) and “Yulgok’s literary ideas not only represented well Confucian traditional views and the philosophy of literature, but they also had an impact on Silhak and Neo-Confucian scholars in the late Joseon period, and are highly convincing even in the present day” (p. 49). Both lack citations or any form of strong argument. The contents such as “universal educationalist” and “impact on Silhak” require verification through in-depth analysis. Their suspicious absence is evidence of the work’s shortcomings as an academic paper.

Third, there are misleading aspects leading to misunderstanding that the contents generally described in Neo-Confucianism originated from Yulgok. Attending to the fact that Yulgok’s Jeongeonmyoseon is arranged according to Wonhyeong-ijeong (元亨利貞 blamelessness of heavenly way of four seasons) and Ineuiyeji (仁義禮智 four human virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom), the author notes on p. 53, “Yulgok’s influence on literary philosophy and poetry seems to be, first, seeking the unity of nature (天) and humans (人).” However, it is questionable whether this evaluation can be derived from the mere fact that Wonhyeong-ijeong and Ineuiyeji are applied to the table of contents. It is also questionable whether this is attributable to Yulgok because they are common concepts in Confucianism.

Fourth, there is a serious discrepancy between the title and the content of the paper. From the title, it can be assumed that personality education
would be discussed based on Yulgok’s ideas manifested in his poems; however, the paper makes no mention of personality education. From the mention that Yulgok’s proficiency in poetry in his youth had a positive influence on his perfection of moral personality, it can be inferred that the author thought there was a connection between poetry and personality education. However, nowhere in the text is it argued that proficiency in poetry can lead to perfection of moral personality. This paper would greatly disappoint those who study the field of personality education in high school, which is currently enjoying an increased interest. Ethics occupies a significant proportion in high school education, whereupon classics and ethics are being frequently selected as career electives. At this juncture, personality education through Yulgok’s writings is a topic of interest for teachers. However, should cases of paper title selection and contents of this kind be rampant in academia, teachers would be led to believe that the level of research in oriental philosophy and personality education, especially personality education though class, is low if they only encountered this paper. Such a negative image of oriental philosophy will likely result in its complete exclusion from high school curricula and related research.

3) Gong Youn-hyun, “The Characteristics and self-discipline of Mokeun (牧隱)’s Neo-Confucianism of Cheoninmugan (天人無間)”

The research question set by the author is that although Cheoninmugan (天人無關) is mentioned as Mokeun’s ideological feature, the meaning of Cheoninmugan is yet to be defined. Therefore, this paper set the goal of analyzing the clear difference between Mokeun’s Cheoninmugan and Jeong Ju-hak’s Cheoninhabil (天人合一). It further strives to clarify Mokeun’s theory of self-cultivation. To this end, the author first described how Mokeun came to accept Neo-Confucianism, and analyzed the differences between Mokeun’s Cheoninmugan and
the traditional Cheoninhabil. Then, he explored the details of Mokeun's practices of self-cultivation through Jagangbulsik (自強不息) and neutralization (中和).

This attempt to examine Mokeun's Seongliseol (性理說 theory of nature and principle) and identify original features in it in intellectual history, encounters two difficulties. First, comparison of meaning between two similar concepts, such as Cheoninmugan and Cheoninhabil, inevitably leads to forced sophistry. Therefore, despite the author's emphasis on differences, readers are rarely persuaded into believing there are actual differences. Even more seriously, when examining individual Neo-Confucianists, researchers tend to overlook their psychological characteristics. The Neo-Confucian scholars they study have a strong sense of lineage. That is, most of them believe in Confucius, Mencius, and Zhu Xi, and pursue their academic directions accordingly. Therefore, they often end up producing works that only verify the achievements of earlier scholars, rather than creating original outcomes by adding their own understandings while citing earlier scholars’ theories. Therefore, it is a very laborious and meticulous argumentation process to identify the key figures of the lineage and discuss their differences. Unless this is done successfully, any research will most likely end up producing a repetition of intellectual history.

The author seems to be well aware of this. He mentions on p. 12, “This paper aims to examine the structure, characteristics, and practical measures of Mokeun’s Neo-Confucian ideology of cheoninmugan and its influence on the Korean Neo-Confucianism.” This is an attempt to find distinctive features that are specific to Mokeun. However, it is unclear whether this process led to the desired results.

On p. 15, the author notes, “Mokeun introduced a new element into Korea’s Neo-Confucianism by transforming Cheoninhabil (天人合一), which constituted the core of the Chinese Neo-Confucianism, to
Cheoninmugan (天人無間) in the process of accepting it at the end of the Goryeo Dynasty, describing that Cheoninmugan is a transformation of Cheoninhabil. […] While Cheoninhabil means that heaven and man become one, that is, their reunification under the premise that they are separate, Cheoninmugan means that heaven and man are not separated in the first place, but are one connected entity.” What needs to be clarified here is on what grounds Habil (uniting into one) and Mugan (no gap between two) have a fundamental difference in meaning. The essence of the meaning of Habil is “being united as one” or “need to be united as one.” The semantic gist is the state of being united, not being separated. If the word “Habil” itself posits a prior state of separation, then the word “Mugan” also posits a state of being separated. Here, a question then arises as to whether the author has a biased opinion or is excessively distorting the interpretation to achieve the paper’s argument.

Similar descriptions continue to appear. On the next page, it reads: Of course, Mokeun is not the first scholar to use the term “Cheoninmugan.” Zhu Xi has also used the world. However, Zhu Xi’s philosophy is basically Cheoninhabil. Zhu Xi systematized the proposition of Lidong-ki’i (Litong-qiy 理同氣異 same Li different Qi) and established Neo-Confucian concept of Cheoninhabil, in which lies the difference from Mokeun’s Theory of Li-Ki.

It is the author’s assertion that even though Zhu Xi also used the word Cheoninmugan, it had a different meaning from Mokeun’s Cheoninmugan. The argument is that Mokeun and Zhu Xi show different characteristics when applying the theory of Li-Ki. However, when stating that Zhu Xi established Cheoninhabil from the proposition of Lidong-ki’i and mentioning that Zhu Xi’s Cheoninmugan is different from that of Mokeun’s, the author gives the impression that Zhu Xi’s theory of Li-Ki is diminutive. Moreover, the author does this not with any credence but to highlight that Mokeun put forward a new theory of Li-Ki different
from the teaching of Zhu Xi. To demonstrate this, the author argues that Mokeun “has the same ki as the heaven and earth” and “unlike Seongjeukli (Xingjili 性即理 human nature is li), Cheonjeukli (Tianseli 天則理 heaven is li) is a “concept that connects heaven and man without any medium.” The problem here is that it has little persuasive power and is not grounded in facts.

The author asserts that Lidong-ki'i (litong-qiy 理同氣異) is a characteristic of the theory of Li-Ki. However, the theory is not fully explained. Zhu Xi explained not only Lidong-ki'i, but also Li'i-kidong (理異氣同) in the annotations to Mencius. Further, if Mokeun explained the relationship between li and ki based on the teaching of Zhu Xi, he should have, of course, accepted the proposition of Lidong-ki'i. In this respect, if the author’s argument that Mokeun’s theory of Li-Ki differentiates itself from the teaching of Zhu Xi in that Mokeun sees heaven and earth as the same ki, that does not stand to reason, either. Above all, there is no authoritative data that can be cited to support this. Even if heaven and earth are the same ki, no claim can be made that this is a discourse about ki that is significantly different from that of the Cheng-Zhu School.

The same applies to Cheonjeukli (Tianseli 天卽理). Zhu Xi already mentioned Cheonjeukli in his annotations to The Analects, and also affirmed in Yulei (語類) that He Sun (賀孫) mentioned that Ming and Li, when combined, become Cheonjeukli. “When combined” here signifies that the posited characteristic of Mokeun’s Cheonjeukli also exists in ZhuXi’s Cheonjeukli. Therefore, it is a far-fetched, arbitrary claim that Seongjeukli is a proposition that distinguishes between heaven and man, and Cheonjeukli is a proposition that connects heaven and man.

Therefore, it follows that it is difficult to mention anything in Mokeun’s statements that can be distinguished from the teachings of Zhu Xi. This is because the concepts pertaining to the relationship between Cheon-
In-Li-Ki, which forms the basis of Mokeun’s original theory of self-cultivation, have already been proven fallacious. The author states that Mokeun emphasized Jagangbulsk (自强不息) and neutralization (中和) as well as reverence and righteousness, but does not mention how they develop into self-cultivation. This indicates that the author’s attempt to identify Mokeun’s original theory is a failed attempt. However, such papers do have the function of providing researchers with an occasion to reflect upon the approaches to intellectual history.

5. Concluding remarks

I have presented the papers on Neo-Confucian studies in Korea published in 2020, analyzed the research trends, and reviewed major papers. To summarize the overall research landscape of 2020, there was a big change in the scholars that were studied. Since the inception of research outcome analysis, papers on Yi Hwang have overwhelmingly outnumbered all other scholars, except in 2019. In 2020, however, only six papers were published on Yi Hwang, which was approximately 33% of the number of papers on Yi I. Accordingly, the combined proportion of Yi I and Yi Hwang, relative to the total number of papers, also decreased from 47% in 2019 to 26% in 2020. Indeed, overwhelmingly, the proportion of papers on Yi Hwang and Yi I over the past few years has been constant. Currently, the number of papers on Yi Hwang double those on Yi I. The change in this trend was first noticed in 2018, when the gap between the studies on Yi Hwang and Yi I was considerably reduced to 26 and 19, respectively. In 2019, a reversal took place, with the papers on Yi I slightly outnumbering those on Yi Hwang. In 2020, the difference became apparent, in Yi I’s favor. However, this occurred as a result of a sharp decrease in the number of papers on Yi
Hwang, rather than a sharp increase in the number of papers on Yi I. It may be natural for the research on Yi Hwang to shift from the center stage, with the accumulated literature reaching a saturation point. However, it is too early to confirm this trend. The trend will have to be observed after 2021. The number of papers on the Namdang Han Won-jin was the same as that of Yi Hwang. The number of papers on Han Won-jin has maintained its level of five to seven papers per year over the past several years. This is because he is established as one of the central figures of Neo-Confucianism in the late Joseon period. Whereas the papers published in 2019 cover a wide variety of research topics, the Ho-Rak Debate was dominant again in 2020. This can be interpreted as implying that the axis centered around the Han Won-jin-related Ho-Rak Debate, crossed with the axis of the methodological approach to the circumstances of the time, causing a stabilization into a type of static equilibrium.

The next most frequently studied scholars were Ganjai Jeon Woo and King Jeongjo, each with five papers. Regarding Ganjae Jeon Woo, the five papers covered different topics and methodological approaches. Likewise, there were papers covering Jeongjo-related traditional topics such as Simseong-ron; however, other topics, such as politics, classics, and book compilation, were also included. Further, three papers each were written on Seongho Yi Ik and Hanju Yi Jin-sang. Papers on Seongho covered the lineage of the successors to the Toegye School. When broken down into detailed topics, arguments responding to the Yulgok School and patterns of acceptance among Namin-line intellectuals were discussed. Two of the three papers on Yi Jin-sang covered the topic of the Morality Dispute, and one delved into Yi Jin-sang’s scholarship from the perspective of exploration of the methodologies attempted by 19th century Confucianists.

Classification of the papers by topic resulted in 39 papers published on
the theories of Li-Ki (Li-Qi) and Sim-seong (Xin-xing), 16 papers on selfcultivation and education, and 12 papers regarding statecraft, accounting for 43%, 18%, and 14% of the publication in 2019, respectively. There were 21 papers that did not fall into these categories and were thus classified as “other topics.” These account for the second largest percentage of papers, second only to the theories of Li-Ki (Li-Qi) and Sim-seong (Xin-xing).

Among the papers on the theories of Li-Ki (Li-Qi) and Sim-seong (Xin-xing), five papers (a significantly lower proportion compared to 2019) covered the topics of Sadanchiljeong and Insimdosim. In contrast, papers on the Ho-Rak Debate soared from seven in 2019 to eleven in 2020. Papers on the Morality Dispute sharply decreased from six in 2019 to three in 2020. Conspicuous trends include a sharp decrease in studies on Yi Hwang and on Sadanchiljeong and Insimdosim theories. In contrast, research on the Ho-Rak Debate has been gradually expanding its scope to the period after Han Won-jin and Yi Gan, or to other commentators. The research on the Morality Dispute declined in 2020; however, given the general revitalization of research in the late Joseon period, it is expected to expand further.

Overall, a conspicuous trend in 2020 was the considerable decline in the papers on Toegye and Yulgok as well as Sadanchiljeong and Insimdosim. There may be different interpretations about this phenomenon. I consider it an encouraging sign because it reflects the trend that while the center of the study of Joseon Neo-Confucianism is gradually expanding, studies on the late Joseon period are expanding to cover new and exciting territory. The ongoing growth of these studies comes with a framework for understanding the overall history of Joseon Neo-Confucianism. It can only be a positive aspect, to expand on the research of Toegye and Yulgok in Korea’s intellectual history under a new spotlight and within the new framework. Therefore, I welcome this
diversification of Neo-Confucian research topics and the shift toward the center of the late Joseon period.