

Chapter 8

Korean Studies of Confucian Classics

Kim You-Gon

1. Introduction

This report is an analysis of the research outcomes related to the Study of Confucian Classics among the academic papers published in Korea in 2020. Papers to be included in the analysis were limited to the studies on the 13 Confucian Classics (Shisanjing 十三經) with a focus on the annotations written by Korean, Chinese, and Japanese scholars among those papers published in 2020 in the academic journals indexed (including candidates) in the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF). The literature search yielded a total of 30 papers, listed below:

- 1 Gil Tae-Eun, “A Study on Ganjae’s Reading Mencius: Examining Mencius’s Theory of Self-Improvement”, *Studies in Confucianism* 52, Confucianism Research Institute, Chungnam National University
- 2 Gil Tae-Eun, “Thoughts on Ganjae’s Human Nature and the Nature of Things theory: With a Focus on Jungyonggiu”, *Journal of Eastern Philosophy* 104, The Society of Eastern Philosophy
- 3 Kim Dong-Min, “Understanding in Chunqiu by 19th-Century Joseon Intellectuals Examined through Gwak Jong-seok’s Chunqiu Interlocution (1)”, *The Journal of Korean philosophical history* 65, The Society of Korean Philosophical History
- 4 Kim Dong-Min, “Understanding in Chunqiu by 19th-Century Joseon Intellectuals Examined through Gwak Jong-seok’s Chunqiu Interlocution (2)”, *The Journal of Korean philosophical history* 66, The Society of Korean Philosophical History
- 5 Kim Dong-Min, “The Characteristics of Sino-Barbarianism (Theory on the Civilized and Barbarians) on Lee Jin-Sang’s Chunqixue (春秋學) (1)”, *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 81, The Korean Society of Confucianism
- 6 Kim Dong-Min, “Abstract The Characteristics of Sino-Barbarianism

- (Theory on the Civilized and Barbarians) on Lee Jin-Sang's Chunqiu xue (春秋學) (2)", *The Journal of Korean philosophical history* 67, The Society of Korean Philosophical History
- 7 Kim Yun-Ji, "An Investigation of Seopomanpil's (西浦漫筆) Interpretation of Guanju (關雎) from The Book of Odes (詩經): Focusing on Seopo's Perspective of Zhuzi's (朱子) Shijizhuan (詩集傳)", *DAEDONGHANMUNHAK* 64, DAEDONGHANMUN Institute
 - 8 Kim You-Gon, "The Characteristic of King Jeongjo's Interpretation of The Great Learning", *Journal of Eastern Philosophy* 102, The Society of Eastern Philosophy
 - 9 Park Sang-Ree, "Modern Confucian Scholar Seol Tae-hee's Interpretation, Practice, and Consciousness of the Scriptures", *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 80, The Korean Society of Confucianism
 - 10 Bae Byeong-Dae, "The Structure of "Haoran Chapter's Explanation by Mencius" in Hagok and Its Ethical Implications", *YANG-MING STUDIES* 57, The Korean Society of *YANG-MING STUDIES*
 - 11 Seo Geun-Sik, "A Study on the Method of Analyzing I-Ching of Chashanxuetuan (茶山學團): Focusing on the Sons of Chung Yak-Yong (丁若鏞) and Bangsan Yoon Jeong-Kee's (尹廷琦) Yizhuanyi (易傳翼)", *Journal of Korean Classics* 55, Institute Translation of Korea Classics
 - 12 Seo Geun-Sik, "A New Study in the Daxue (大學) of the Bai-hu (白湖) Yin Xi (尹鐻)", *JOURNAL OF YULGOK-STUDIES* 41, Yulgok Institute
 - 13) An Seung-Woo, "Lee Byung-hun's (李炳憲) Understanding of the Yijing (易經) Based on New Text Classical Learning: Focusing on Tai Hexagram (泰卦) and Pi Hexagram (否卦)", *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 79, The Korean

Society of Confucianism

- 14) An Seung-Woo, "A Study on Lee Byung-hun's (李炳憲) Concept of Shen (神)", *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 80, The Korean Society of Confucianism
- 15) An Seung-Woo, "Comparison of Kang Yu-wei and Lee Byung-hun's Analysis of the Zhongyong: Focusing on the Equivalence of the Theory of Confucianism as a Religion", *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE* 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism
- 16) Eom Yeon-Seok, "The Characteristic of Chinese Classics and Culturally Pluralistic Horizon Seen in Kim Wonhaeng's Lecture of the Mean", *Tae-Dong Yearly Review of Classics* 44, The Taedong Center for Eastern Classics, Hallym University
- 17) Eom Yeon-Seok, "The Characteristic of Chinese Classics and Culturally Pluralistic Horizon seen in the Choi, Myeonggil's Understanding of the Mean", *TOEGYE-HAK-LON-JIB* 26, The Yeungnam Toegyehak Institute
- 18) Lee Won-Seok, "King Jeongjo's and Yoon Haeng-Im's Interpretation of "the Preface of Daehakjanggu (大學章句序)" and the Debate on Similarities and Differences of the Nature of Humans and Things", *Tae-Dong Yearly Review of Classics* 44, The Taedong Center for Eastern Classics, Hallym University
- 19) Lee Eun-Ho, "SikSan YiManpu's Yeoktong (易統) and Its Significance in the History of Confucian Classics", *Korean Studies* 42, Korea Studies Advancement Center
- 20) Lee Chang-Il, "The Integrated Methodology of Sin Hu-Dam's (慎後聃) Zhouyi (周易) Interpretation: Focused on Wenyan-zhuan (文言傳)", *Studies in Confucianism* 53, Confucianism Research Institute, Chungnam National University
- 21) Lee Hae-Im, "Tendency in Choe Myung-gil and Jo Ik's Interpretation

- of Confucian Classics and Its Significance: Focused on “Samunlog, Maengjagiui,” *Philosophical Investigation* 58, The Institute of Chung-Ang *Philosophical Studies*
- 22 Lee Hyun-Sun, “The Characteristic Aspect in Yi Hwang’s Interpretation of Great Learning“, *Philosophical Investigation* 57, The Institute of Chung-Ang *Philosophical Studies*
- 23 Cho Jang-Yun, “Samsan Lyu Jeong-won’s Thought of Yi Xue (易學)“, *Korean Studies* 43, Korea Studies Advancement Center
- 24 Jo Jung-Eun, “The Significance of Hong Dae-Yong in the History of Thoughts on Confucian Classics, Approached by “Noneo Muni”: Opening Up a New Interpretation Horizon Differentiated from Traditional Interpretations“, *Tae-Dong Yearly Review of Classics* 44, The Taedong Center for Eastern Classics, Hallym University
- 25 Choi Seok-Ki, “Habin Shin Hu-Dam’s Interpretations of the Doctrine of the Mean and Their Meanings“, *Journal of Korean Literature in Classical Chinese* 77, Society for Korean Literature in Classical Chinese
- 26 Han Jeong-Gil, “Dasan Jeong Yak-Yong’s Understanding of the Great Learning and Its Significance as Political Thought“, *Tae-Dong Yearly Review of Classics* 44, The Taedong Center for Eastern Classics, Hallym University
- 27 Ham Young-Dae, “Interpretation of Four Books by Sunam (順菴) An Jeong-bok (安鼎福)“, *The Study of the Eastern Classic* 81, *The Society of the Eastern Classic*
- 28 Hwang In-Ok, “A Study on the Yangmingistic Aspects of Sabyeonrok Zhong-yong: Focusing on the First Chapter of Zhong-yong“, *Studies in Confucianism* 51, Confucianism Research Institute, Chungnam National University
- 29 Hwang In-Ok, “A Study on Seogye’s (西溪) Division System of the Chapters and Sections (分章節) of Zhongyong“, *Studies in Confucianism* 53, Confucianism Research Institute, Chungnam

National University

30 Hwang In-Ok, "A Study on Seongho's Interpretation of Jungyong with the System of Saint Writing (經) and a Wise Man's Writing (傳): Focusing on Jungyongjilseo (中庸疾書)", *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST* 98, Korean Society for Philosophy East-West

In an effort to provide the report with a clearer overview, I divided the 30 papers into philosopher (annotator) and topic categories. The philosopher category is subdivided into papers covering Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Confucian scholars and the topic category into 13 classics. I have reviewed seven papers worthy of in-depth analysis, provided a comprehensive evaluation of the research outcomes on the study of Confucian classics published in 2020, and presented a brief note on future research directions.

2. Classification by philosopher

All 30 papers on the study of Confucian classics are about scholarly views centering on the annotations of 13 classics. Of them, 29 papers cover Korean Confucian scholars, and one covers Chinese Confucian scholars.

1) Korean Confucian scholars

Two papers focus on six scholars: Pak Se-dang, Shin Hu-dam, Lee Jin-Sang, Jeon Woo, Gwak Jong-seok, and Lee Byung-hun (in chronological order). Fourteen scholars are studied in one paper each: Yi Hwang, Choi Myeong-gil, Yoon Hue, Kim Man-joong, Jeong Je-du, Lee Man-bu, Yi Ik,

Kim Won-haeng, Lye Jeong-won, An Jeong-bok, Hong Dae-yong, King Jeongjo, Jeong Yak-yong, and Seol Tae-hee (in chronological order). Two papers are about two scholars: King Jeongjo and Yoon Haeng-im in one of them and Choi Myeong-gil and Cho Ik in the other. One of the 29 papers focused on a school of thought, that is, Dasan (Jeong Yak-yong).

2) Comparison between Korean and Chinese scholars

The one paper classified as the subcategory of Chinese scholars compares Kang Yu-wei and Lee Byung-hun.

3. Classification by topic

In the topic category, which is the other content-based classification category of this report, various thoughts and ideologies are covered including Confucian classicism, philosophy, education, politics, and economics. After breaking down the topic category considering Confucian classicism and its scholarly features, 28 out of the total 30 papers were found to be about Confucian classics. Of these, the most frequently studied book is the Doctrine of the Mean(中庸, n = 8), followed by the Book of Changes (周易, n = 6), the Great Learning (大學, n = 5), Spring and Autumn Annals (春秋, n = 4), Mencius (孟子, n = 3), *The Analects* (論語, n = 1), and the Book of Odes (詩經, n = 1).

4. Analysis of and commentary on major papers

1) On the Doctrine of the Mean (中庸)

Of the eight papers on the Doctrine of the Mean (中庸, Zhongyong), one is about Shin Hu-dam (pen name: Habin), who has been little discussed thus far, that is, “Habin Shin Hu-Dam’s Interpretations of the Doctrine of the Mean and Their Meanings”(Choi Seok-Ki). This paper proposes three aspects of Shin Hu-dam’s basic views interpreting Zhongyong: 1) analyzing Zhongyong’s structure and understanding its essence based on Zhu Xi’s Zhongyong Zhangju (中庸章句), 2) drawing rational interpretations from a broad spectrum of scholarly views, and 3) attaching importance to elucidating the principles of righteousness (義理發明) through the quest for principal purpose (本旨探究). It also proposes three features of Shin Hu-dam’s attitudes toward the interpretation of Zhongyong: 1) discussing Zhongyong by broadly quoting Confucian classics, 2) exploring the dictionary of Chinese characters (字書) and Sino-Korean dictionary (韻書) in search of the interpretation closest to the original meaning of each word in Zhongyong, and 3) attaching importance to elucidating the anaphoric relations by exploring the logical structure of sentences and paragraphs. With regard to the key premises of Zhongyong, this paper proposes six characteristics of Shin Hu-dam’s unique interpretative features: 1) interpretation of Zhongyong as the mean (時中) and perpetuity (常久), in contrast to Zhu Xi; 2) interpretation of Chapter 1 comparing it to Daxue’s (大學) three guiding principles (三綱領) and eight aspects of cultivation (八條目); 3) characterization of the essence of the entire Zhongyong as the study of human nature (性), righteous quest (道), and guidance (教); 4) interpretation of Zhongyong not as an ontological quest (道體) but as an empirical realization; 5) identification of Kongzi Zhongyong (孔子中庸) as a reality manifested in human behavior

(行事) by mentioning the mean (時中); and 6) interpretation of an evident way (費) as something that can be understood and practiced by the general public and a subtle way (隱) as something that cannot be practiced even by saints, not from the perspective of the Treatise on Reality and Function (體用論). In conclusion, Shin Hu-dam's Zhongyong interpretation focuses on the human way (人道) rather than the heavenly way (天道) and human affairs (人事) rather than heavenly principles (天理), and his interpretation is evaluated to be influenced by Seongho Yi Ik, reflecting the reasoning of the practical science advocated by the School of Seongho.

2) On the Book of Changes (周易)

Regarding the Book of Changes (Yijing 易經 or Zhouyi 周易), two papers cover two scholars little discussed thus far. One of them is “A Study on Lee Byung-hun's (李炳憲) Concept of Shen (神)” (An Seung-Woo). This paper analyzes Jinam Lee Byung-hun's Yijing annotations, illuminating the fact that Lee Byung-hun paid particular attention to Zhouyi to emphasize the religious nature of Yijing in an attempt to religionize Confucianism as part of Confucian Reform and examining the characteristics of the new concept embraced in Lee Byung-hun's Yijing ideology. The author proposes two salient features of the new concepts derived in Lee Byung-hun's Yijing ideology. First, he mentions the concept of Shen (神, God) as the object of Yijing's divination, with attention given to people's mindset toward god, not to god as an external entity. Specifically, the author identifies the origin of divination as the divination in quest of the heart based on Meng Hexagram (蒙卦, teaching) and Bi Hexagram (比卦, alliance) and the mind that recovers its true nature by pursuing the heart's original quest while being well aware of Yijing's nature as a book of divination. The second feature proposed by the author is Lee Byung-hun's emphasis on subjective and active human efforts and

executive faculty in the process of connection and communication with God, which was interpreted as earnestness (誠). That is, according to Lee Byung-hun, what really counts in approaching the essence of religion is how earnestly the human subject cares for his or her heart.

3) On the Great Learning (大學)

One of the five papers on the Great Learning (Daxue 大學) shed light on the characteristics of King Jeongjo's understanding of Daxue: "The Characteristic of King Jeongjo's Interpretation of The Great Learning" (Kim You-gon). This paper differentiates itself from previous studies on King Jeongjo's interpretation of Daxue in that it analyzes the characteristics of this interpretation by determining the real nature and intent of the questions posed by King Jeongjo in his "Interpretation of Daxue" (經史講義) rather than taking them at their face value. It thus focuses on King Jeongjo's real intent disguised in his questions. The author assumes that King Jeongjo's understanding of Daxue is basically similar to that of Zhu Xi based on the fact that he largely accepted the views of the scholar-officials of Gyujanggak (royal library), who was of the opinion that Zhu Xi's interpretation was not flawed, although King Jeongjo himself raised questions about a great portion of Zhu Xi's interpretation of Daxue in his work. The author understands this aspect as King Jeongjo's inclination to constantly question and thoroughly scrutinize the coherence of Zhu Xi's position rather than uncritically accept it and mentions King Jeongjo's perspectives on three controversial views of Zhu Xi as incidents supporting the rationale behind this: 1) Regarding Zhu Xi's controversial remark on the concept of Minde (luminous virtue 明德) that "it is what man has obtained from heaven, responding to all things equipped with a plethora of rationales (衆理) conceived with an unclouded mind (虛靈不昧)," King Jeongjo clearly defines Minde as the true heart. 2) Regarding Zhu Xi's

controversial amendment of “loving the people” (親民) to “reforming the people” (新民), King Jeongjo also accepts Zhu Xi’s new position of “reforming the people” while repeatedly raising questions about it. 3) Finally, regarding Zhu Xi’s historically controversial learning method of “thorough scrutiny of objects” (格物致知) and its supplementary chapter (格物致知補亡章), while repeatedly questioning to test whether the scholar-officials in Gyujeongguk understood it properly, King Jeongjo basically accepted Zhu Xi’s views. This paper concludes that the most salient feature in King Jeongjo’s interpretation of Daxue is that he tried to understand Zhu Xi’s interpretation of Daxue in depth by thoroughly analyzing it.

4) On the Spring and Autumn Annals (春秋)

Of the four papers on the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋), two examine the interpretation of Chunqiu made by Gwak Jong-seok (郭鍾錫; pen name: Myeon-woo) little studied thus far: “Understanding in Chunqiu by 19th-Century Joseon Intellectuals Examined through Gwak Jong-seok’s Chunqiu Interlocution (1)” (Kim Dong-Min) and “Understanding in Chunqiu by 19th-Century Joseon Intellectuals Examined through Gwak Jong-seok’s Chunqiu Interlocution (2)” (Kim Dong-min). These two papers consider the interlocution between Gwak Jong-seok and a scholar on Chunqiu depicted in Chunqiu Interlocution (茶田經義答問) by Gwak Jong-seok to elucidate how the intellectuals in 19th-century Joseon understood Chunqiu as well as the scholarly features of Chunqiu at the time. In these two papers, Gwak Jong-seok’s understanding of Chunqiu is characterized by four major aspects. First, regarding the relationship between Chunqiu and the history book of the state of Lu, Gwak Jong-seok acknowledged that Chunqiu was based on that book, but declared: “The history book of the state of Lu is in itself the history book of the state of Lu, and Chunqiu is in itself Chunqiu.” The

author noted that Gwak Jong-seok points out that the name of Chunqiu was first used by Confucius and that Confucius is credited for its creation. Second, regarding the beginning of the recording of Chunqiu, Gwak Jong-seok argued that while the history book of the state of Lu was already in a completed form before Duke Yin's time and thus did not require further addition or correction, its recording was incomplete thereafter, and Chunqiu was written to give the post-Duke Yin history a completed form. On this note, Gwak Jong-seok also exhibited a meticulousness to secure the rationality of his reasoning by grounding his argument on objective evidence showing that the ubiquitous chaos at that time did not begin in the era of Duke Yin and that the history books on the state of Lu were different before and after Duke Yin. Third, Gwak Jong-seok presented the reading principle that Chunqiu's import should be interpreted thoroughly in light of the classics since Chunqiu has objective records of historical facts. Fourth, Gwak Jong-seok criticized the existing interpretations of Chunqiu centering on writing style or loyalty and tried to establish the rationality and legitimacy of its interpretation by focusing on objective interpretation through meticulous analysis of the text itself. These two papers conclude that the Chunqiu interlocution between Gwak Jong-seok and his fellow scholar has a great significance in academic history for the development of Chunqiu study in Joseon in that they faithfully reflect the academic traditions of histology and practical science in 19th-century Joseon.

5) On Mencius (孟子)

Of the three papers on Mencius (孟子), one examined the Mencius interpretation by Hagok (霞谷) Jeong Je-du (鄭齊斗): "The Structure of 'Haoran Chapter's Explanation by Mencius' in Hagok and Its Ethical Implications" (Bae Byeong-Dae). This paper sheds light on Mencius's

Haoran Chapter as expounded in Jeong Je-du's "Interpretation of Mencius," arguing that the content structure of the Haoran Chapter (浩然章) touches on the ethical theme of "fusion of knowledge and virtue." The author proposed two factors as the rationale of this assertion: First, while "fusion of knowledge and virtue" set forth in the Haoran Chapter is Zhu Xi's view in which the cultivation of vital force (養氣) is the bottom rung, it is not clearly manifested in Yangming's perspective, which pays little attention to discernment through words (知言). Hagok interpreted the Haoran Chapter as meaning that knowledge as the study of words and cultivation of virtue as the study of vital energy are aligned through the study of mind. Second, while holding on to the doctrine of mind-heart, Jeong Je-du understood discernment through words as a high state of mind that can be achieved by cultivating the mind and was aware of the importance of trying neither to forget (勿忘) nor to instigate (勿助). This paper concludes with Jeong Je-du's "Interpretation of Mencius" Haoran chapter, showing Jeong Je-du's scholarly finesse and bravery for critical acceptance of even Zhi Xi in the scholarly tradition of Joseon, which is overwhelmed by Neo-Confucianism, at the risk of Yangming's vicious left-wing effects.

6) On The Analects (論語)

Regarding *The Analects* (論語), one paper examined Damheon (湛軒) Hong Dae-yong (洪大容) "Interpretation of *The Analects*": "The Significance of Hong Dae-Yong in the History of Thoughts on Confucian Classics, Approached by 'Noneo Muni': Opening Up a New Interpretation Horizon Differentiated from Traditional Interpretations" (Jo Jung-eun). The author characterized Hong Dae-yong's interpretation of *The Analects* as an attempt to break away from the scholarly authorities, especially with regard to annotations, of the revered Confucian scholars

and to propose common sense and Confucian ideology as tools to confront the authorities. That is, the author defines the characteristics of Hong Dae-yong's interpretation of *The Analects* as follows: 1) warning against all needless discussions with little relevance to the original intent of *The Analects* by contriving far-fetched topics, 2) reviving Confucius as a human being with flesh and blood, and 3) denouncing the evil practice of drawing arguments contrary to the Confucian ideology under the pretext of revering Confucian saints. The author evaluates Hong Dae-yong's criticism manifested in his interpretation of *The Analects* not as a repulsion against Confucianism but rather as faithfulness to the original spirit of Confucianism overlooked thus far; this idea should be assessed as a sensible deed in light of reality as a reminder of the Confucian spirit that there must be no violation of the mutual duties between lord and subjects and parents and children. In conclusion, this paper considers the significance of Hong Dae-yong's interpretation of *The Analects* in the history of Confucian ideology in his pioneering work, preparing a springboard from which to create a new current of the study of Confucian classics by critically examining the classics and their annotations based on empirical common sense and Confucian ideology and breaking away from Confucian authorities.

5. Evaluation and outlook

One of the most important tasks for the Korean study of Confucian classics is describing the history of the study of Confucian classics for each text and compiling the results in a comprehensive and elaborate history of the Korean Study of Confucian Classics. To this end, it is necessary to continue research on scholars of Confucian classics thus far unstudied. On this note, the study of Confucian classics in 2020 can be

evaluated as having meaningfully improved. The research achievements regarding Confucian scholars little studied thus far such as Shin Hu-dam's *Zhongyong*, Lee Byung-hun's *Yijing*, and Gwan Jong-seok's *Chunqiu* studies are all the more meaningful for this very reason. It is my earnest hope that research achievements in examining the works of little-studied Confucian scholars will continue.