



Chapter 9

**Studies of Modern Confucianism In Korea**

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## 1. Introduction

In 2020, a total of 35 papers were selected for this report: 16 on Neo-Confucianism (性理學 Seonglihak in Korean), 5 on the Yangming School (陽明學 Yangmyeonghak in Korean, Yangmingxue in Chinese), and 14 on other modern Confucian schools. By topic, 21 were categorized under philosophy, 6 under Confucian reform theories, 4 under the discourse of civilization, and the remaining 4 under other topics. In the category of Neo-Confucianism, research on the Hwaseo and Ganjae Schools was found to have increased, and the Nosa, Hwaseo, Yeonjae, and Myeonam Schools were also covered. A common feature of the Hanju and Ganjae Schools is the frequent use of the hermeneutics of classics. However, compared to the modern history of Confucianism in Korea characterized by sectarian division, there is no sign of a serious undertaking in the field of comparative studies between schools. It seems that we need to wait for a certain level of research on individual schools to be accumulated. Compared with 2019, there were fewer research outcomes regarding the Yangming School: one paper on Park Eun-shik's Daedong Thought, three on Jeong In-bo, and one on the history of Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty. A remarkable achievement worth noting is the analysis of Jeong In-bo's educational philosophy, research on Joseon Studies, and the Myth of Dangun and the Eol (soul) ideology based on Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity. The research boom for Korean ancient history was also evident in Japan at the same time for establishing the Imperial identity of Bansei-Ikkei (万世一系). In the face of the nation's fall, the maintenance of collective identity was particularly sought during the origin of the nation. However, the world pursued by Jeong In-bo's Myth of Dangun or the Eol ideology is geared toward not nationalism but peace for all humanity. Recent studies on "Journey to the West" by Yu Gil-jun, the pioneer in the discourse of civilization and enlightenment, assess that Yu Gil-jun still

relied on Confucian values as his theoretical basis while actively embracing Western civilization and pursuing the progress of civilization, under the premise of an equal relationship based on reciprocity, not exclusivity. Research topics regarding the Confucian reform and religionization movement have also been diversified. The work of tracing the Korean modern Confucianism in a modern capitalist society that prioritizes economic value and efficiency may be endowed with a particular meaning.

## 2. Classification by School of Thought

### 1) Neo-Confucianism

- 1 Cho, Woo-jin. (2020). The Flow of Hwasun Confucianism and Formation of NohSa (蘆沙) School, *Yongbong Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 56, Institute of Humanities.
- 2 Kim, Yong-Jae. (2020). Park-Sewha teacher's spirit of Confucius, *TOEGYE-HAK-LON-JIB*, Vol. 26, Yeongnam Toegye Studies Institute.
- 3 Gil, Tae-eun. (2020). Thoughts on Ganjae's Human Nature and The Nature of Things Theory - With a Focus on Jungyonggiu. *Journal of Eastern Philosophy*, Vol. 104, The Society of Eastern Philosophy.
- 4 Kim, Hyun-soo. (2020). A Consideration of the Collection of Ganjae's Theory of Li, *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, Vol. 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
- 5 Yoo Ji-woong, Hwang Gap-yeon. (2020). Ganjae Jeon Woo's Awareness of the Times and Theoretical Background, *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, Vol. 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy

- and Culture.
- 6 Kim, Dong-min. (2020). 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*, Vol. 81, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
  - 7 Sung, Ho-jun. (2020). Yi Gyujun's Theory of the Human Mind and the Moral Mind. *The Toegye Hak Nonchong*, Vol. 36, Busan Toegye Studies Institute.
  - 8 Choi, Young-sung. (2020). Nong-San Shin Deuk-Gu's Neo-Confucianism and Its Significance in Korean Philosophy History. *Journal of Korean philosophical history*, Vol. 66, The Society For Korean Philosophical History.
  - 9 Kim, Nak-jin. (2020). Cho Geung-sup and Jeon Woo's Criticism of Yi Jin-sang's Article on Sim jeuk Li. *Journal of Korean philosophical history*, Vol. 64, The Society For Korean Philosophical History.
  - 10 Kim, Dong-min. (2020). Understanding in Chunqiu by 19th-Century Joseon Intellectuals Examined through Gwak Jong-seok's Chunqiu Interlocution (1) (2), Vol. 65.66.
  - 11 Park, Hak-rae. (2020). A Study on the Formation and Development of the Yeonjae school (淵齋學派): Focus on Gyesanyeonwonrok (溪山淵源錄). *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 50, Confucianism Research Institute.
  - 12 Gil, Tae-eun. (2020). A Study on Ganjae's Reading Mencius: Examining Mencius's Theory of Self-Improvement. *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 52, Confucianism Research Institute.
  - 13 Lee, Hyung-sung. (2020). A Study on Aspects of Hwang Chul-won's Succeeding Philosophy of Nosa: Focusing on the Theory of Libal through the Understanding of Taegeukdo. *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 52, Confucianism Research Institute.

- 14 Lee, Hyun-joong. (2020). Academic Methodology of Nineteenth-Century Korean Confucian Scholars -Focusing on Hanju (寒州) Yi Jinsang (李震相) and Ilbu (一夫) Kim Hang (金恒). *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST*, Vol. 95, Korean Society for Philosophy East-West.
- 15 Park, Yong-tae. (2020). Concentrated Aspect of the Wijeongchucksa Movement and the Giho Noron-lined School: Confluence of Noron's Shipa and Byeokpa, and the Role of the Righteous Army's leader, Min Jongsik. *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST*, Vol. 95, Korean Society for Philosophy East-West.
- 16 Park, Hak-rae. (2020). A Study on the Topography and Development of the Honam Confucianism in Modern and Contemporary Korea: Focusing on the Formation and the Regional Distribution of the Literati Group in the Learning of Dao. *The Society Of The Eastern Classic*, Vol. 78, *The Society Of The Eastern Classic*.

Research in modern Confucian studies in Korea has shown a clear dominance of Neo-Confucianism, in both quantitative and qualitative growth, over Yangming Studies and other modern Confucian studies. Research trends have also shifted from investigating the sectarian division into and establishment of different schools such as the Nosa, Ganjae, Hwaseo, and Yeonjae Schools to elucidating the ideological differences among these schools through analysis of the writings and arguments of their founders and defendants. Research on the Ganjae school quantitatively outperformed those on all other schools. Lee Hyung-sung discovered the tendency toward the Theory of Libal (理發一途說) in Hwang Chul-won's thought and discussed the development of his thought system based on the importance of Li (理). Park Hak-rae examined the process of the establishment of the Yeonjae School centered around the brothers Song Byeong-seon and Song Byeong-sun. Furthermore, they

ascertained the continuous expansion of Honam-based literati (Confucian scholars) groups beyond the Nosa and Ganjae Schools into Choi Ik-hyeon's Myeonam School, Song Byeong-seon's Yeonjae School, (Yeongnam-based) Kwak Jong-seok's Myeonwu School, and Heo Jeon's Seongjae over a period of nearly 100 years after the mid-19th century, obtaining close to 20,000 Confucian intellectuals in the Honam regional academic line.

In terms of the methodology, three tendencies are observed: (i) analysis of the theoretical basis for each school regarding human disposition, which characterizes Neo-Confucianism in the late Joseon Dynasty, (ii) attention to the ideological differences manifested in the arguments of individual schools, and (iii) formation of regional networks of academic lines. The reason for the important position occupied by the formation of regional networks of Confucian scholars (Yurim in Korean, 儒林) in modern Confucian studies is above all the central position taken by the regional Yurim for the armed resistance and grassroots independence movement as well as the Confucian reform movement during the Japanese colonial period. It was also supported by the academic activities of the research centers for the respective regional Confucian ideologies. Furthermore, the hermeneutic approach to the classics is currently a widely employed methodology of modern Confucian studies.

Cho Woojin revealed the important mediating role played by the Nosa School in handing down the modern Confucian tradition by following the flow of Hwasun regional Confucianism and Yurim networks from the end of Goryeo until the late Joseon Dynasty. Ki Jeong-jin formed a huge intellectual stream known as the Nosa School in Honam, and his master disciple, Jeong Ui-rim, produced many scholars following the footsteps of Hwasun Confucianism. Kim Yong-jae paid attention to the Neo-Confucian worldview and the pragmatic philosophy of anti-intellectualism of Park Sehwa, who resisted the Gyeongsulnyeon national disgrace by martyrdom.

Gil Tae-eun has continued his research on Jeon Woo (pen name: Ganjae) thought with a hermeneutic approach. In 2020, he analyzed and presented Jungyong-Gieu (中庸記疑) and Dok-Maengja (Reading Mengzi), following Daehak-Gieu (大學記疑) and Dok-Noneo (讀論語) published in 2019. In interpreting Jeon Woo's commentary of Jungyong (中庸, Doctrine of the Mean), the author confirmed that Jeon Woo inherited the Nakron-line's Inmulseongdong Theory (人物性同論, theory of natural similarity between human and animal nature) based on Zhu Xi's Seongdong-Kiyi (性同氣異, theory of identical nature and different material force) and that Mengzi interpretation took the direction of self-improvement focusing on a steadfast mind, search for the lost mind, and the parable of the trees of the ox hill. Kim Hyunsoo studied the Collection of Jeon Woo's Theory of Li and revealed it as the succession of Yulgok's Theory of Li anchored in Zhu Xi and the Three Rites, with a focus on the heavenly principles and human innate nature as well as clan rules. Referring to the controversy surrounding Jeon Woo for neither participating in the armed resistance nor signing the Paris-Jangseo (petition letter of Korean independence), Yoo Ji-woong and Hwang Gap-yeon defended his position as the choice of keeping and transmitting Dao based on Simbonseong (心本性, mind based on nature) and Myungdeoksim-seol (明德心說, mind of bright virtue), instead of attributing the nation's fall to Li (Neo-Confucianism), which should not be regarded as a discrepancy between theory and practice.

Kim Dong-min, a veteran researcher of Chunqiu, is expanding his research into Chunqiu studies in Korea. In this context, he chose the Hanju School as his first study. First, he revealed that Yi Jinsang's Chunqiu interpretation is characterized by a strict division and realistic transformation of Hua-Yi (華夷, Sino-barbarian dichotomy) based on Chunquidayi (春秋大義). In Gwak Jong-seok's Chungju Interlocution, he discovered a salient tendency to emphasize objectivity and empirical testability under the

influence of the evidential research (考證學) in the Qing Dynasty.

The ideological basis of the Hanju School, the Simjeokri-seol (心卽理說 identification of mind with principle), was controversial even within the Toegye School, let alone other schools. Kim Nak-jin analyzed the difference in position regarding the identification of Xin (心, heart-mind) with Li (理, principle) while denying it in Cho Geung-sup and Jeon Woo's criticism. Lee Hyun-joong conducted a comparative study between Yi Jinsang and Kim Hang and argued that Yi Jinsang's focus is on strengthening the subjectivity centering on Simjeokri-seol (心卽理說), whereas Kim Hang focuses on the Dao itself, which allows the communication between Eastern and Western cultures by embracing Confucian/Buddhist Dao and Western Dao as having the same origin. Sung Ho-jun posited that the moral mind as the heavenly way and the human mind are not different based on the understanding of the integration of body and spirit (形神合一), drawing on Yi Gyujun's Insimdosim-seol (theory of moral mind and human mind) and Yikig-hapche (unification of principle and energy) and Simseong-ilmul (identification of mind and nature), and argued that Yi Gyujun prioritized mind over nature as the basis for morality.

Choi Young-sung noted that the controversy surrounding Yi I's successor Shin Deuk-Gu's claim of humanity in heaven was evidence of modern thinking that sought to elevate humanity's status by emphasizing moral awareness and practice while being skeptical of the absoluteness of heaven and truth. Park Yong-tae suggested that the conflicts of the Noron movement of Wijongcheoksa (reject heterodoxy and protect the right arguments) of the 19th-century Joseon Confucianism originated from ideological clash and that Min Jong-shik, who led the Hongju Righteous Army, contributed to resolving the academic conflicts within the Giho Noron-lined School and creating the Wijongcheoksa resistance army based on Hua-Yi (華夷) theory.

## 2) Yangming School

- 1 Park, Jeoung-sim. (2020). Reading Park Eun-sik's Daedong Thought in the Context of Modern East Asian Studies. *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 51, Confucianism Research Institute.
- 2 Jeon, Sung-kun. (2020). A Reorganization of Practical Mind and Practical Learning. *Journal of TASAN Studies*, Vol. 36, Tasan Cultural Foundation.
- 3 Kim, Yun-kyeong. (2020). Jeong In-bo's Educational Philosophy and Ethnic Education. *The Korean Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 42. no. 1, The Korean Philosophy of Education Society.
- 4 Chun, Chong-yoon. (2020). Jeong In-bo's "Dangun-Choseon" and "Eul (spirit)" Thought Based on Ricoeur's theory of "identité narrative." *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST*, Vol. 98, Korean Society for Philosophy East-West.
- 5 Kim, Sea-jeong. (2020). The Past, Present, and Future of Research on Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty: Focusing on Research on General Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty. *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 52, Confucianism Research Institute.

Compared with 2019, fewer studies were published on modern Yangming Studies in Korea in 2020. While research on Park Eun-sik and Jeong In-bo was still predominant, Kim Sea-jeong presented a historical overview of Korean Yangming studies. Park Jeong-sim, a veteran researcher of Park Eun-sik, read his Daedong Thought in the context of East Asian studies. The author differentiated Daedong Thought from Kang Yu-wei's utopian thought or criticism of imperialism based on Confucianism in that Park Eun-sik saw Korea's independence as a global realization process of humanitarianism, departing from the modern subjectivist principle equipped with individual moral autonomy as yangji (liang zhi

良知, knowledge of goodness). Jeon Sungkun reorganized Jeong In-bo's philosophical thought as Practical Learning (Silhak) consolidating silshim (practical mind) and silsa (practical action). The author interpreted Jeong In-bo's Silhak as the realization of silshim in silsa in yangji and emphasized the importance of reproducing this Silhak in today's society. Kim Yun-kyung revealed that Jeong In-bo's educational philosophy aims to restore the silsim, truth, subjectivity, and sensibility toward cultivating the ability to reflect on the subject through silsim and strengthen moral sensibility, with emphasis on the free manifestation of the spirit. Chun Chong-yoon compared and analyzed Jeong In-bo's Dangun Joseon and Eol ideology based on Paul Ricoeur's concept of "narrative identity." Ricoeur's dialectical methodology was applied to determine the harmonious mean and a third vertex by constantly diagnosing and contrasting two different theses or concepts. Here, using the work of mourning and the work of memory from Ricoeur's *Memory, History, and Oblivion* as motifs, Jeong In-bo's Dangun Joseon was reinterpreted from the standpoint of the meeting of the worlds of text and audience. Kim Sea-jeong collected the research outcomes in the field of Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty over the past 50 years, presented "The Past, Present, and Future of Research on Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty" to academia, and suggested the following future research tasks and outlooks: (i) research outcomes of individual Yangming scholars of the Joseon period, (ii) expansion of research skewed toward philosophy to literature and history, and (iii) discussion of Yangming Studies as a nexus to solving the tasks facing today's society.

### 3) Other modern Confucian schools

- 1 Park, Sang-ree. (2020). Modern Confucian Scholar Seol Tae-hee's Interpretation, Practice, and Consciousness of the Scriptures. *THE*

- STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, Vol. 80, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
- 2 Cha, Mi-ran. (2020). Embracement of Western Ethics and Sustainment of Confucian Ethics in the Modern Enlightenment Period: Focusing on the 1900s Self-cultivation (修身) Textbooks. *Journal of Moral & Ethics Education*, no. 69, Korea Society for Moral & Ethics Education Association.
  - 3 Na, Jong-seok. (2020). Neo-Confucianism and the Ideal of the Great Harmony. *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, no. 81, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
  - 4 Hong, Seong-duk. (2020). An Essay on Confucian Network of Post-Confucius Society. *Tae-Dong Yearly Review of Classic.*, Vol. 45, Tae-Dong Institute of Classic Research.
  - 5 Kim, Seseoria. (2020). Women's Knowledge in the Chosun Dynasty Through the Citation Patterns of Confucian Scriptures in Ms. Poongyang Jo's Ja-Gi-Rok. *Korean Feminist Philosophy*, Vol. 33, Korean Association Of Feminist Philosophers.
  - 6 Seo, Dong-il. (2020). Korean Confucian Literati's Migration to Southern Manchuria and Their Contributes to Shin-heung Military School (新興武官學校). *The Historical Association for Soong-Sil*, Vol. 45, The Historical Association for Soong-Sil.
  - 7 Jeong, Seong-hee. (2020). Recognition of the Reality and the Response Logic to Establish the Confucianism of the Colonial Period of Park Jang-hyun: "Gyeonggyeongwisa (經經緯史)" and "insichangseol (因時倡說)." *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, Vol. 80, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
  - 8 An, Seung-woo. (2020). A Study on Lee Byung-hun's 李炳憲 Concept

- of Shen 神. *THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE*, Vol. 80, The Korean Society of Confucianism-Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture/
- 9 Park, Tae-ok. (2020). Intellectuals' Recognition of the Subject and Others in the Period of Enlightenment: Focused on Choi Ik-Hyun and Yu Gil-Jun. *STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY EAST-WEST*, Vol. 95, Korean Society For Philosophy East-West.
  - 10 Yi, Hye-gyung. (2020). The Source of Sovereignty in Terms of the Concept of “職分” in Yu Gil-jun: Based on the Comparison with Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Journal of Eastern Philosophy*, Vol. 101, The Society of Eastern Philosophy.
  - 11 An, Seung-woo. (2020). 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*, Vol. 82, The Korean Society of Confucianism, Institute of Confucian Philosophy and Culture.
  - 12 Jung, Uk-jae. (2020). Reconsidering the Character of Joseon Confucianism Assembly during the Japanese Colonial Era. *TOEGYE-HAK-LON-JIB* (THLJ), Vol. 27, Yeongnam Toegye Studies Institute.
  - 13 Lee, Un-Sun. (2020). Hae-Hak Lee Ki's (海鶴 李沂) Thoughts of Homo Deus (神人) and Peace in Northeast Asia in the 21st Century. *Studies in Confucianism*, Vol. 50, Confucianism Research Institute.
  - 14 Baek, Min-jung. (2020). Choe Ik-han's Understanding of Dasan Studies and Its Significance. *Journal of TASAN Studies*, Vol. 36, Tasan Cultural Foundation.

In modern Confucian studies in Korea, the number of papers covering the modern Confucian schools unclassified as Neo-Confucianism or Yangming Studies has increased compared to previous years. This is

partially attributable to the emergence of new areas of research, that is, people who demonstrated ideological transformation based on Confucian learning, in addition to the conventional topics of Confucian reforms and discourses on civilization or modernity. Cha Miran reviewed the self-cultivation (修身) textbooks published in the 1900s and reported that the Ethics Textbook (倫理學教科書), High school So-Hak Textbook of Self-cultivation (高等小學修身書), and Elementary school So-Hak Textbook of Self-cultivation (初等小學修身書) succeed the tradition of Confucian education for self-cultivation on the one hand and embrace the Western modern social thoughts and democratic ideas on the other. This demonstrates the maintenance of the validity of the educational mission of seeking “harmony between Confucian ethics and civic ethics.”

Hong Seong-duk also draws attention by presenting a new research methodology of analyzing the social network of Confucian scholars. First, by analyzing the social network in a time series, starting with the extraction of the relationship makers from the individual collections of modern Confucian scholars in Korea, the author identified the essence and status of Confucianism in the post-Confucian society and explored its role and function in modern society. By examining the citation patterns for Confucian classics in Lady Poongyang Jo’s Jagirok (diary), Kim Seseoria prepared the foundation for Joseon women’s Confucian classics reading landscape and discussions about knowledge and power and discussed the diversity of the knowledgebase produced by women in the traditional era.

Seo Dong-il divided Yurim who migrated to Southern Manchuria in the 1910s and participated in the independence and anti-Japanese movement into three types and explored their ideological transformation centering on the Shinheung Military School (新興武官學校). Kim Dae-rak and Lee Sang-ryong were classified as reformative Yurim converted from conservative Yurim around 1905. In particular, the author evaluated

Kim Dae-rak as a “Confucian Republican” for his contribution to republican ideology by proposing the concept of “public interest” (共理) as the ideology of ideal community and understanding republicanism (共和主義) as the zeitgeist of East Asia.

Jeong Seong-hee divided Park Jang-hyun’s Confucian reform logic into Gyeonggyeongwisa (經經緯史, viewing the Confucian classics and a history as warp and weft) and Insichangseol (因時倡說, providing Confucian doctrines matching the zeitgeist). Based on these two principles, he conducted various activities such as studying Confucian classics and historiography, taking interest in religionization of Confucianism, and studying Western philosophy. The author attached great value to the fact that he evaluated Hunminjeongeum(訓民正音) as the spirit of our nation and put effort to translate the Confucian classics into Korean and disseminate them, evaluating his contribution as the bridge to modern Confucianism in Korea. An Seung-woo’s research on Lee Byung-hun’s (李炳憲) activities for Confucian religious movement (孔教運動) also continued in 2020. He adopted hermeneutic and comparative approaches. First, by comparing the interpretation of the Zhongyong (中庸) by Kang Yu-wei and Lee Byung-hun, specifically the concepts of nature (xing 性), zhongyong (中庸), and the interpretation of Ghost Chapter (鬼神章), the author discussed the commonalities and differences between the two scholars regarding Confucianism as a religion. By analyzing Lee Byung-hun’s interpretation of the Zhongyong, the author revealed that for Lee Byung-hun, based on the logic that the mind is a shen (神 spirit/ghost/god), sincerity of the mind is the key to access the essence of religion.

Park Tae-ok examined the differences in the perception of the self and others between Choi Ik-Hyun and Yu Gil-jun during the period of enlightenment. For the former, China was an internalized other with a small sense of Sinocentrism, while Western powers and Japan were hostile others that could not be internalized. Therefore, maximization of moral

subjectivity and maintenance of integrity as a bearer of civilization were practical coping measures. In contrast, for the latter, true enlightenment is achieved when one accepts others with subjective awakening and self-responsibility, and the civilizing function of Western laws and institutions are prerequisites for conducting human morality.

Yi Hye-gyung explored refractions appearing in the process of translating and accepting Western concepts. Fukuzawa Yukichi translated “rights” and “duties” into “通義” (justice or common morality) and “職分” (job or vocation); Yu Gil-jun adopted “職分” as the translation of duty and did not accept people’s “職分” shared with the government for institutional achievement of innate human rights. Consequently, people’s sovereignty based on innate human rights was no longer the subject of his consideration.

Paying attention to the fact that the Joseon Confucianism Assembly founded by Ahn Sun-hwan in 1932 did not participate in the Joseon Confucian Alliance, unlike the Kyeonghakwon (The Academy of Confucian Classics Studies) that cooperated with the Japanese Empire by practicing Hwangdo Confucianism and tried to defend Joseon Confucianism, Jung Uk-jae highlighted the necessity of conducting research on the gray area of colonized Korea, breaking away from the dichotomy of pro- and anti-Japanese Confucian scholars. Lee Un-sunn discussed the Honam Confucian scholar Lee Ki’s efforts to boost Korean people’s unique national spiritual awareness centering on the Homo Deus (神人/眞君, divine human) thinking and genuine religion (眞教) and to build a new country of genuine independence and self-reliance based on grassroots’ rights and community.

Baek Minjung discussed Choe Ik-han’s understanding of Dasan (Jeong Yak-yong) studies that cover a wide spectrum of ideological backgrounds, from Confucianism to socialism. Choe Ik-han called Dasan a Western learning scholar because he located Dasan’s knowledgebase in modern

Western science. He had a contradictory view of Dasan. While he recognized it as Dasan's intellectual accomplishment that he had viewed the power in the hands of a small minority of ruling class not as an invariable constant but as a variable outcome of the process of historical change, he criticized Dasan for failing to go beyond the boundary of royalism and monarchism while holding on to an independent and subjective position in the areas of morality and ethics. Choe Ik-han's criticism of Dasan Studies deserves attention in that it reminds us of the impact of socialism on modern Korean Confucianism along with related problems.

### 3. Classification by Topic

#### 1) Philosophy

Among the 35 papers on modern Confucian studies in Korea published in 2010, 20 fell under the category of philosophy. A salient research trend in the field of Neo-Confucianism concerns studies initially examining the sectarian division of the schools of thought, the Hanju and Ganjae Schools, and other schools such as Hwaseo, Nosa, Yeonjae, and Seongjae. However, it appears to be too early to attempt to explore the ideological differences among these schools. In this respect, Kim Nak-jin's study comparing different positions regarding the Simjeokri-seol (心卽理說) within the Hanju School and Lee Hyun-joong's study comparing Yi Jinsang and Kim Hang allow us to hope for follow-up studies. While research on Jeon Woo's studies of Confucian classics is steadily increasing, Kim Dong-min's hermeneutic approach to tap the possibility of Chunquiu studies in Korea via the Hanju School deserves due attention. Despite a quantitative decrease of papers on the Yangming School, Chun Chong-

yoons analysis of Jeong In-bo's thoughts of Dangun Joseon and Eol (soul) ideology, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity, is significant in that it presented a new interpretive opportunity for myth narratives. Furthermore, Jeong In-bo's thought came under the spotlight from various angles such as the expansion of Jeong In-bo's educational philosophy and national identity education to national studies and his contribution to elevating national spirit.

## 2) Confucian reform theories

A salient feature of the papers published in 2020 on Confucianism reform theories is that the scope of research has been expanded to cover areas such as the Confucian religionization movement, restoration of the Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius (pre-Qin Confucianism), the activities of the Joseon Confucianism Assembly, and Lee Ki's thought of Homo Deus (神人/眞君, divine human). What is interesting in these studies is that most of the Confucian reform theories in the modern period adopted a hermeneutic approach. Lee Byung-hun, who led the Confucian religious movement (孔教運動), found the key to religion in the interpretations of Yijing (易經 The Book of Changes) and Zhongyong (中庸 The Doctrine of the Mean), and Seol Tae-hee and Park Jang-hyun interpreted the practical coping logic in the interpretations of Confucian classics. Specifically, Seol Tae-hee attempted a hermeneutic critique of Confucianism of the Joseon period. The pragmatic and ethical Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius was transformed into metaphysics in the Cheng-Zhu School (Neo-Confucianism), presumably due to Zhu Xi's arbitrary interpretations of the Confucian classics. Moreover, the Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius tried to establish a new order of ethical values by emphasizing that all people are essentially equal, which is the basis of the Confucian ideal of Great Harmony (大

同). A view similar to that of Seol Tae-hee is still valid, and Na Jong-seok's study points to the problem of the academic stigmatization that Neo-Confucianism restricts the Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius. It is worth comparing these two opposing views. According to Na Jong-seok, referring to the positive correlation between the democracy and Confucian tradition in Korean society, the positive association between Neo-Confucianism and Great Harmony reveals the theoretical vulnerability of such criticism, which arises from understanding the latter as the gist of the thinking of Confucius and Mencius and perceiving Cheng-Zhu School as a constraint on the philosophy of Confucius and Mencius.

### **3) Discourse on civilization**

Among the papers on the discourse on civilization, two are dedicated to Yu Gil-jun. While most of the studies on Yu Gil-jun involve Seoyu-Gyeonmun (西遊見聞, Observations on a Journey to the West), those conducted by Park Tae-ok and Yi Hye-gyung are comparative studies. Park Tae-ok compared the views of Choe Ik-Hyun and Yu Gil-jun regarding the perception of the self and others, and Yi Hye-gyung shed light on the phenomenon of refractions appearing in the process of translating and accepting Western concepts on the example of Fukuzawa Yukichi. How to perceive the West and Japanese imperialism in the period of Seosedongjeom (西勢東漸, the Eastern penetration of Western powers) is an important yardstick for determining the discourse on civilization. While it is well-known that the perception of others is clearly divided between anti-Japanese Wijeongcheoksa (reject heterodoxy and protect the right arguments) and pro-Japanese civilization theorists, the significance of this study lies in its concrete comparisons of individual cases. Yi Hye-gyung presented a new research methodology by paying attention to the selective meaning distortion of Western concepts in the translation process

revealing that the limitations of Yu Gil-jun's discourse on civilization were thus predestined. There are a number of studies that review the self-cultivation (修身) textbooks published around the 1900s. Cha Miran's paper differentiates itself from previous studies in that it draws attention to the fact these self-cultivation textbooks sustained Confucian ethics while embracing Western ethics. However, it should also be noted that the limitations of the Confucian ethics of these textbooks were also predestined in that they were compiled by government scholars dispatched from Japan. Despite its excessive focus on the Shinheung Military School (新興武官學校), Seo Dong-il's study is worth noting considering the research gap regarding the Confucian scholars (Yurim) who migrated to Southern Manchuria in the 1910s, such as Lee Sang-ryong and Kim Dae-rak. It is interesting to examine how they received the Western modernity, underwent the process of ideological change, and integrated republican ideology into Confucianism.

#### **4) Other topics**

A total of four studies covered topics other than those specified in the first three topic categories: (i) Kim Sea-jeong's historical overview of Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty, (ii) Hong Seong-duk's study on the social network of Confucian scholars, (iii) Kim Seseoria's presentation of Jagirok (diary) and knowledge of Joseon women, and (iv) Baek Minjung's study on Choe Ik-han's understanding of Dasan Studies.

Kim Sea-jeong's "The Past, Present, and Future of Research on Yangming Studies in the Joseon Dynasty" is a follow-up study to the "New prospect of research on Yangming Studies in Korea nowadays" published last year, produced in the process of recapitulating the history of Korean Yangmyung studies. Entering into the modern era, the regional activities of Yurim increased with the development of printing technology and

transportation. Its association with the sectarian division of Korean modern Confucianism can also be easily assumed. In view of this, Hong Seong-duk's analysis of the social networks of Confucian scholars also has timely and methodological implications. However, even admitting the weakened influence of Confucian culture, whether it should be defined as a "post-Confucian society" is still open for discussion. Kim Seseoria has conducted research into women's perceptions, attitudes, and identities in the traditional Korean Confucian society. In her 2020 paper, she analyzed the Confucian classics quoted in Jagirok, and revealed Joseon women's Confucian classics' reading landscape and characteristics of their knowledge creation. In the research landscape in the field of Joseon Studies, unlike the interest in the nationalist movement, that in the socialist intellectuals is rather weak. This may be partially ascribed to the fact that most went to North Korea and partially to the difficulty accessing related data. Baek Minjung's study analyzing Choe Ik-han's *Understanding of Dasan Studies and Its Significance* was a necessary undertaking not only for modern Confucian studies in Korea but also for the philosophical history of the unified Korea.

#### 4. Analysis and Review of Major Papers

A scholarly debate, one that lasted for eight years from 1892 to 1900, brought death to a scholar. Shin Deuk-gu (申得求), who succeeded the academic lines of Cheng-Zhu, Yulgok, and Nakron Schools, is not a well-known figure in academic circles. However, Choi Young-sung acknowledges the weight of the problem raised by him. In his 2020 paper "Nong-San Shin Deuk-Gu's Neo-Confucianism and Its Significance in Korean Philosophy History," Choi summarizes the background and gist of the debate between Shin Deuk-gu and Song Byeong-seon. He

evaluates Shin's statements "Heaven is not an all-good-no-evil thing" and "Even heaven has a selfish and evil nature" as an act of destroying the absoluteness of heaven and voicing a strong skepticism about the absoluteness of the truth. The author argues, "Skepticism about or denial of the absoluteness of the truth enables humans to liberate themselves from the strong bondage of the moral law and to seek escape from the absolute power disguised as an absolute truth. That is, it has great potential to be associated with modernity." However, as the author presupposes, Shin was not interested in the debate on the mind (心說論評) including the essence of Xin (心, heart-mind) and bright virtue (明德) arising from Li (主理) or Qi (主氣), which was at the core of the debate among many schools at the time, and the background of his writing Cheonseol (天說). Cheoninbyeon (天人辨) was his response to Yulgok's statement in Geunsa-Sokrok (近思續錄), a collection of quotes from the "Five Sages in the East" (東方五賢): Jo Gwang-jo, Yi Hwang, Yi I, Kim Jang-saeng, and Song Si-yeol, "There is only the center of Dao in heaven without physical energy (literally, Qi of blood and flesh). Humans manifest the mind because they have a shape made of blood and flesh." Referring to this statement, Shin wrote, "Yet, inexpedience of cold, heat, disaster, and presage jeopardizes heaven, and it may be compared to the flow of human mind." As such, this is a thoroughly hermeneutic issue. In Cheoninbyeon, in particular, he wrote, "It would cause no problem to say that it is inappropriate to mention heaven in terms of the human or moral mind. On this note, saying that even heaven has a flow of the human mind is an allegory for lack of proper expression." In these euphemistic expressions, a plurality of fortress-like superimposed semantic layers are acutely felt, from the Confucian worldview with a long tradition of regarding natural phenomena as the flow of heavenly principles to the human view, such as the distinction between heaven and humanity and the division of innate and temperamental intelligence. Shin noted that he had found the

answer to his skepticism toward the classics, which were not concretely analyzed in this study. Shin's skepticism with regard to the Four-Seven Debate's Similarities and Differences in Zhu Xi's Speech (朱子言論同異考) or the metaphorical problem of the questions and answers by Yulgok eventually arose from the conceptual complexity and ambiguity, and his death was a sacrifice resulting from the academic cliquishness that did not acknowledge and rejected interpretations and views that were different from their own, trapped in their own semantic networks of a single concept. Furthermore, if Shin's skepticism were to be evaluated to have called into question the absoluteness of the truth, he should have harbored an all-out skepticism toward Ibeopcheon (Lifatian 理法天, heaven of Dao and Li) and Ingyeokcheon (Rengetian 人格天, moral heaven) or denied them, instead of cautiously limiting his skepticism to the Jayeoncheon (Zirantian 自然天, natural heaven), with only natural phenomena, such as cold, heat, disaster, and presage, in mind.

## 5. Evaluation and Outlook

The characteristics and achievements of modern Confucian studies in Korea viewed based on the papers examined herein can be boiled down into four aspects. First, there are an increasing number of studies, often using the hermeneutic approach, on individual schools of thought of Neo-Confucianism that underwent accelerated sectarian division in the late Joseon period. It is worth noting that research on Chunqiu has made a leap ahead amid the research landscape with a dense concentration of studies on the Four Books of Confucian classics. Yet, compared to the modern history of Confucianism in Korea characterized by diversified sectarian division, there is no sign of a serious undertaking in the field of comparative studies between schools. It seems that the time is not yet

right and that a certain level of research outcomes on individual schools should be reached. Second, an attempt has been made to analyze the Yurim (Confucian scholars) network following the regional public arenas of discussion. It is expected that the scope of networking will extend to the establishment of a useful instrument for the analysis of the inter-school debates in addition to the presentation of the patterns of exchange among the scholars representing their respective academic lines. Third, the study of Confucian reform theories and discourse on civilization was diversified in terms of both scholars and methodologies. In covering the topic of Confucian religionization, which is represented by Lee Byung-hun's Confucian religious movement (孔教運動), thus far unattended aspects have been covered, such as the religious perspective of Lee Ki's Homo Deus (神人, divine human) thinking and genuine religious (眞教) discussion presented by Lee Un-sunn, Park Jang-hyun's advocacy for popularizing Hangeul and Confucian reform, and Seol Tae-hee's theory of restoration of Confucianism. Fourth, a study delved into the understanding of Confucianism by the Confucian scholars and socialist intellectuals who were active in Manchuria, which has thus far been in a blind spot in the modern Confucianism studies in Korea. This first attempt is expected to arouse academic interest and be followed by active research for the scope of modern Korean Confucianism to be further expanded, filling the ideological divide between the two Koreas and preparing a narrative on the history of philosophy of the unified Korean Peninsula despite the current research restrictions due to ideological self-discipline and the reality of division.