

## Chapter 9

### Korean Studies of Confucian Classics

#### 1. Introduction

This report presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the research outcomes of Korean studies of Confucian classics among the academic papers published in South Korea from January to December 2021. The target literature was research papers published in the journals registered (including those under review for registration) in the Korean Citation Index (KCI), which were searched in the electronic database Research Information Sharing Service (RISS) hosted by the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS).

As a result, 52 papers, including one master's thesis and one doctoral thesis, were included for analysis. The scholars covered by the papers included in this report are mainly, but not limited to, Confucianists of the Joseon Dynasty. To provide a clear overview, this report is organized as follows:

(1) Classification by scholar: 1) Kwon Geun (pen name: Yangchon, 1352–1409), 2) King Jeongjo (Hongjae, the 22nd King of the Joseon Dynasty, 1752–1800), 3) Yi Hwang (Toegye, 1502–1571), 4) Yi Ik (Sungho, 1681–1763), 5) Yun Dong-gyu (Sonam, 1695–1773) 6) Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan, 1762–1836), 7) Jeong Guk-chae (late Joseon, birth/death date unknown), 8) Jeon Woo (Ganjae, 1841–1922), and 9) Other Confucianists

(2) Classification by topic: 1) Daxue 大学 (Great Learning), 2) Lunyu 論語 (Analects), 3) Mengzi 孟子 (Mencius), 4) Zhongyong 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), 5) Zhouyi 周易 (Book of Changes), 6) Shijing 詩經 (Classic of Poetry), 7) Shujing 書經 (Book of Documents), 8) Chunqiu 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals), 9) Liji 禮記 (Book of Rites) and Leji 樂記 (Record of Music), 10) Shisanjing 十三經 (All classics), and 11)

## Others

(3) Analysis and review of some selected papers worth noting

(4) Evaluation of the achieved research outcomes and the outlook for the future

The full list of papers on Korean Confucian classis published in 2021 is as follows:

1. Go Yoonsook, Self-cultivation of Jeong Yak-yong's theory of changes
2. Kil Tae-eun, A study on the meaning of Taoist righteousness through "The Reading of The Analects of Confucius" of Ganjae Jeon Woo
3. Kim Kyungsoo, A comparative study on Dasan and Haegang's political leadership though an interpretation of the great learning
4. Kim Boreum, Writing and revision of Jeong Yagyong's old exegeses of the Book of Documents: Focusing on the manuscripts
5. Kim Suyoon, Qianshi's (錢時) interpretation of Hongfan (洪範) viewed from Jeongjo's (正祖) Jingshijingyi (經史講義)
6. Kim Sungjae, Bibliographic reviews on the characteristics of the Tasan family collection's manuscripts of Sangseo gohun and Sangseo jiwonrok
7. Kim Seojoong, The practical problems of the musical instrumental theory of Jeong Yak-yong's "Akseo Gojon"
8. Kim SooKyung, Sŏkchŏng Lijŏngjik's theory on the Book of Songs — In addition to an analysis of the three volumes of Shigyŏngilgwa
9. Kim Youngwoo, Implications of Seo in Dasan Jeong Yak-yong's interpretation of *Daehak*
10. Kim Iksoo, Classical philosophy and character education policy in Goguryeo
11. Kim Jongsoo, The substitution of the academic world and academic discourse by Kyungho Lee Eyucho
12. Kim Jongsoo, A study on "four books and the transcription of scripture" by Jeong Guk-chae
13. Kim Jongsoo, Haminjae (含忍齋) Jeong Guk-chae's (鄭國采) study of *Chunqiu* (春秋) and succession to the theory of Uam (尤菴學)
14. No Yoonsook, A study on the condolatory poems and exchanged poems of Seongho Yi Ik

15. Park Jongbae, The educational significance of annotation and translation of Confucian scriptures in Hangeul by Toegye and Yulgok
16. Park Jongchun, A philological analysis on the Tasan family collection's manuscripts of Chunchu gojing (『春秋考徵』) and Minboui (『民堡議』)
17. Park Chanho, A study on Dasan's theory of Gyukchi Yukjo
18. Bae Jesung, A study on Hyeon Sangbyeok's theory of human and animal nature: Focused on the interpretation of *Mencius* and *Doctrine of the Mean*
19. Seo Geunsick, A study on the meaning of Qimengchuanyi (『啓蒙傳疑』) to Zhouyicantonggi (『周易參同契』) for Tuixi (退溪) Yi Huang (李滉)
20. Seo Geunsick, A study on the meaning of Zhen shan (貞山) Yi Bing Xiu's (李秉休) interpretation of Daxue (『大學』) in Xinghuxuepai (星湖學派)
21. Seo Geunsick, A study on the I xue (易學) of Sonam (邵南) Yun Dong-gyu (尹東奎)
22. Seok Seungjing, A study on Misu Heo Mok's "Chunchuseol"
23. Shin Jooyoun, A study on the politico-philosophical conception "Yuwi (有爲)" on Yak-yong Jeong by focusing on the metaphor "The Polaris (北辰) and stars (衆星)" coming from *The Analects of Confucius*
24. Shin Jaesick, Eodang Sang soo Lee's view on the *Analects* and Neo-Confucianism
25. Youm Younsuk, The problem of continuity between the theory of longitude and latitude and the theory of division and union in Yeoheon Jang Hyeon gwang's Yixue
26. Oh Bora, A study on "Joongyongjangbosul" by Suphy You Hee – Focusing on the characteristics of structural analysis and criticism of the main theory
27. You Minjungm, Zhu Xi and Yi Hwang's rhetorical commentaries on the *Analects*
28. Yoon Sangsoo, A study on Kwon Geun's (權近) understanding of the Book of Documents
29. Yoon Sukho, The differences in the statecraft discourses on Gongjeon

- (公田) in the late Joseon Dynasty as measured by *Mencius* (孟子)
30. Yoon Sukho, A study about the recognition of Kija (箕子) by Jeong Yak-yong (丁若鏞) – Focusing on the changes that were caused by exploration of the old law (古法)
  31. Lee Kyunghoon, A bibliographic review of the “Dongyugyeongseo” by Moksan Lee Geekyung
  32. Lee Sunkyung, The abstract Yijing thought of Jeon Woo (田愚)
  33. Lee Youngjoon, King Jeongjo’s critical perception of Sishu Daquan [四書大全] – On the reorganization of Saseo Jipseok 四書輯釋
  34. Lee Ikwhan, A brief survey of philosophical/phonetic studies on Hunminjeongeum and Garimto
  35. Inn Junghyun, Lee San’s understanding of “Gen” philosophy
  36. Lim Gyunam, A review of the Dongshi “Muninpyeyuga” by Gosan Yun Seondo
  37. Lim Jaegyul, The image number theory-based methodology shown in Kwon Geun’s (權近) Zhouyi Qianjianlu (周易淺見錄): Focusing on the relevance of Wu Cheng’s (吳澄) Yizuanyan (易纂言)
  38. Jun Sunggun, The significance of learning and four books by Sonam Yoon Dong-gyu
  39. Jung Kanggil, Why can’t Dao (道) broaden people? Understanding the Dao of Confucius from a non-substantialism perspective
  40. Jung Eelnam, Jang Namhee, The aspects of the Book of Odes’ application in Kim Jong Jik’s poems
  41. Cho Jungeun, Analysis of Gwon Geun’s interpretation of “Yueji” in the Yegi Cheongyeonnok: Focusing on reorganization of the text and the reading focus
  42. Jee Jungmin, How to teach Confucian Classics: Lectures on *Analects* with reference to commentary on the great book of *Analects*
  43. Jee Joonho, The theory of studying jeolchatagma of Dasan Jeong Yak-yong through “Noneokokeumju”
  44. Choi Jongho, A study on “Courtly Discussions on The Book of Ode” in question with King Jeong Jo – Focus on Junam and Sonam
  45. Ham Youngdae, A review of some aspects of the Tasan family collection’s manuscripts of Maengja Youi (『孟子要義』)

46. Ham Youngdae, A Study on *Saseodapmun Mencius* (四書答問 孟子) of Choryeo Lee Yu-tae (李惟泰)
47. Ham Youngdae, A contemplation on the foundation of Toegye Lee Hwang's *Seokui*
48. Hong Youbin, A comparative study on "Gookpungsul" by Sungho Lee Ik and that by Backwoon Sim Daeyoon
49. Hwang Byungki, The Yi-ology of the theory of the images of changes of Cho Ho Ik
50. Lee Seeyoun, A study on King Jeong Jo's interpretation of *Great Learning*
51. Lee Seungkyung, A study on the Yeokhak of Dasan Jeong, Yak-yong: Focused on an original interpretation of traditional Yeokhak

## **2. Classification by Scholar and Topic**

Scholars covered in two or more papers are as follows: 1) Three papers on Kwon Geun (pen name: Yangchon, 1352-1409), 2) five on King Jeongjo (Hongjae, the 22nd King of the Joseon Dynasty, 1752-1800), 3) four on Yi Hwang (Toegye, 1502-1571), 4) three on Yi Ik (Sungho, 1681-1763), 5) thirteen on Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan, 1762-1836), 6) two on Jeong Guk-chae (birth/death date unknown), and 7) two on Jeon Woo (Ganjae, 1841-1922). With 13 papers, Jeong Yak-yong is the most studied Joseon Confucian scholar followed by King Jeongjo and Yi Hwang.

When classified in topic categories, the following classics were covered: 1) Five papers on Daxue 大学 (The Great Learning), 2) seven on Lunyu 論語 (The Analects), 3) four on Mengzi 孟子 (Mencius), 4) five on Zhongyong 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), 5) ten on Zhouyi 周易 (Book of Changes), 6) six on Shijing 詩經 (Classic of Poetry), 7) five on Shujing 書經 (Book of Documents), 8) three on Chunqiu 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) 9) two on Liji 禮記 (Book of Rites) and Leji 樂記 (Record of Music), 10) three on Shisanjing 十三經 (thirteen classics of elementary learning), and 11) five on others classics. Zhouyi 周易 and Lunyu 論語 take up the largest proportion, and some papers address topics across two or more classics.

## **3. Review of Major Papers**

Among the 52 papers on Korean Studies of Confucian Classics published in 2021, five papers are presented in this section for review.

1) Kil Tae-eun, “A study on the meaning of Taoist righteousness through *The Reading of The Analects of Confucius* (R.A.C.) of Ganjae Jeon Woo”  
The author presents this study as an attempt to explore the meaning of Dao 道 through the lens of the *Analects* as interpreted by Ganjae Jeon Woo. To this end, the author enquires into the important views expounded in *The Reading of The Analects of Confucius* (R.A.C.) and seeks therein the meanings of Daoist righteousness and scholastic self-purification in Ganjae’s life. Ganjae, who began his scholarly pursuits in the mid-9th century, was defiant toward foreign invaders and their cultures. In his interpretation of the word hak 學 (learning) in the phrase Hakisiseup 學而時習 of the R.A.C., he recognized 心學性 (the mind should learn the heart) as authentic scholarship. He insisted that the mind should follow the Dao, arguing that if mind is interpreted as meaning 尊心 (self-esteem), one can easily take on an insane or arrogant nature. In view of this, Ganjae is preoccupied with the question as to how the mind, which is free to choose between good and evil, can be anchored in a purely good nature. Put differently, Ganjae suggests that a mind practicing Neo-Confucian righteousness on nature by establishing a moral agent anchored in the original human nature is the spirit of noble literati and Daoists. Ganjae’s teaching/learning and writing activities, committed to his scholastic self-purification, were true to self-discipline toward the realization of Dao as expounded by Confucius in his phrase “Coming out and acting when Dao prevails in the world and withdrawing and hiding when Dao recedes from the world.” Ganjae’s life and attitude toward Confucian learning was obviously grounded in the Daoist righteousness that attaches great value to 尊性

(reverence of human nature), and Ganjae attributed the situation of the time transgressed by the political and social irregularities and invaded by Japanese and Western powers to the failure to set the human mind and nature in Daoist righteousness. Ganjae's scholastic critical mind regarding how to cope with his reality can be understood in the light of the extreme existential alienation of the downfall of the nation he witnessed and the atrocious irrationality of the Japanese occupation he suffered.

## 2) Go Yoonsook, "Self-cultivation of Jeong Yak-yong's theory of changes"

In this study, the author noted that Jeong Yak-yong 丁若鏞 sorted out the concept of yeokbeop 曆法 (calendar system) from yeok 易 (change) along with the logic of cheoninseongmyeong 天人性命 using yeoklisabeop (易理四法 Four Methods in I Ching), which is the core methodology of yeokhak 易學 (art of divination). This characteristic is the critique toward Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism. The kernel of Jeong Yak-yong's art of divination is the yeokli 易理 of chui 推移, hyobyeon 爻變, and hoche 互體 and the material phenomena of seolgwae 說卦. The fundamental difference between the two lies in the dichotomous configuration of cheoninbunli 天人分離 (separation of heaven and humans) in which Sangje 上帝 (Almighty God of the ancient Confucianism) is separated from the universe and humans. This arose from Jeong Yak-yong's interpretation that gwaehyosa 卦爻辭 of divination is not a mere reading of the internal rules of the sign system of gwaehyo 卦爻 (divination characters) but that deriving a practical meaning can be in tandem with silli 實理 (practical benefits) when tackling various problems of living circumstances. By reading yeoksa 易詞 (statements) as a contemporary cultural text, Jeong Yak-yong denies reading I Ching in the integrative manner of cheyongilwon 體用一元 (substance and function has one source).

When viewed from the mutual association of Zhu Xi's art of divination and self-cultivation theory, I Ching's meaning is yeonkli, that is, belief toward legal norms and the internalization of that belief. This belief and its internalization suggest that he agrees to the regulatory development of the world, that is, plausible regularity. Therefore, Zhu Xi's art of divination goes beyond the realm of determinism relying on bokseo 卜筮 (divination) and takes on the character of the agent's voluntary agreement and confluence of the subjective agent on norms and probability. The state

of mibal 未發 (unaroused state) held by Jeong Yak-yong, who accepted Zhu Xi's point critically, is a state of unmanifested joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure (喜怒哀樂), which is integrated into a realm of self-cultivation, where the mind's consideration is activated. In other words, in an unaroused state, the agent of self-cultivation exercises ethical considerations and shindok (prudence) from the vantage point of autonomous equilibrium. This self-cultivation process unfolds, revolving around cheonmyeong 天命 (Mandate of Heaven), which is the reflective voice (= dosim 道心 moral mind). Jeong Yak-yong proposes prudence and consideration through the eyes of the 上帝 (Almighty) as the critical system of self-cultivation methods toward Neo-Confucianism's geogyong 居敬 (cultivation of mind) and goongli 窮理 (deliberation about principle).

3) Bae Jesung, A study on Hyeon Sangbyeok's theory of human and animal nature: Focused on the interpretation of *Mencius* and *Doctrine of the Mean*

This study investigated Hyeon Sangbyeok's theory of human and animal nature and defined its features with special reference to his interpretation of *Mencius's* Saengjiwiseongjang 生之謂性章 and the *Doctrine of the Mean's* Sujang 首章 (first chapter), in particular, Solseongjewido 率性之謂道. Han Wonjin and Yi Gan, widely known as the leading speakers of the Horak Debate, were in fact fellow disciples of the Kwon Sangh School who would form a large group of debaters. Hyeon Sangbyeok was also an important participant mentioned alongside Yi Gan, and gaining a good understanding of his arguments can lead to a deeper understanding of various features and implications of the debate. In particular, Hyeon Sangbyeok's contribution is clearly shown in his interpretations of the *Mencius's* Saengjiwiseongjang 生之謂性章 and the first chapter of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (in particular, Solseongjewido 率性之謂道), which are viewed as the most important source books of Hyeon Sangbyeok's theory of human and animal nature. In



interpreting these two source books, Hyeon Sangbyeok adamantly held to his original position advocating the sameness of human and animal nature. More specifically, in the interpretation of *Mencius's* Saengjiwiseongjang 生之謂性章, he quickly established a position for the sameness of human and animal nature and influenced Yi Gan's opinion building. In the interpretation of the *Doctrine of the Mean's* Solseongjewido 率性之謂道, however, these two scholars kept their respective positions without finding much common ground. At this point, while Yi Gan partially embraced Han Wonjin's critique, Hyeon Sangbyeok adamantly defended the position of the sameness of human and animal nature emphasizing the absolute universality of bonyeonjiseong 本然之性. By shedding light on Han Sangbyeok's role in the debate surrounding the theory of human and animal nature, the author also showed the dynamic discussion process to build a common ground from which to tackle the problems raised by the debate.

#### 4) Seo Geunsick, A study on the I xue (易學) of Sonam (邵南) Yun Dong-gyu (尹東奎)

This paper presents Yun Dong-gyu's 尹東奎 philosophy about I Ching. Yun Dong-gyu left no proper writings except for a few critiques (志疑) on I Ching (Book of Changes), as noted by Ahn Jeung-bok (安鼎福), the writer of the *Biography of Yun Dong-gyu* (邵南先生尹公行狀) and *Yun Dong-gyu's Learning and Vision* (祭邵南尹丈東奎文). In the biography, Ahn mentioned that Yi Yik 李瀼 complimented Yun for his erudition about Taehyeongyeong 太玄經. Thus, Taehyeongyeong 太玄經 gives clues to Yun's understanding of I Ching.

Judging from the mentions of Yun Dong-gyu made by Yi Ik and his early disciples, he assumed his role of a disciple of the Seongho school well and was respected by peers and younger disciples. However, he began to be forgotten in the Seongho school on the occasion of the

Gonghiro 公喜怒 debate initiated by Shin Hu-dam 愼後聘 where young disciples took Lee Byeong-hyu's 李秉休 stance, who agreed to Shin's views, rather than those of Yun Dong-gyu. Yun Dong-gyu intended to argue with Gyesajiui 繫辭志疑 that I Ching should not be understood through Shao Yong's 邵雍 Gailbaebeop 加一倍法 (divination method of stacking hexagrams) because Gyesajeon 繫辭傳, explanatory notes of I Ching, was the must-read book for those who wished to gain a proper understanding of I Ching. What Yun wanted to say was that the law of I Ching was in Geongwae 乾卦 (heaven) and Gongwae 坤卦 (earth) of I Ching. Yun's understanding of seobeop 筮法 (divination method) seems to stem from that of Yi Yik. They differ in that Yi Yik questioned Zhu Xi's divination method (筮法) and left many records, such as Shigwaego 著卦攷, while Yun Dong-gyu produced only a few short writings because his understanding stayed within the scope of Yi Ik's views on the lack of his own insights (自得).

Taehyeongyeong 太玄經 is a Daoist book written in the Han Dynasty. Yun Dong-gyu studied it to criticize Shao Yong 邵雍 and Zhu Xi 朱熹. It is regrettable that he did not expand his critiques of the I Ching understanding of Shao Yong 邵雍 and Zhu Xi 朱熹 to a commentary on I Ching. Yun Dong-gye's understanding of I Ching is worthy of being reflected on for its implications for today's society.

5) Ham Youngdae, Study on *Saseodapmun Mencius* (四書答問 孟子) of Choryeo Lee Yu-tae (李惟泰)

Choryeo Lee Yu-tae (1607–1684) was a Confucian scholar representing the mid-Joseon Dynasty. He kept close ties with Wooam Song Si-yeol, Dongchundang Song Jun-gil, and others fellow disciples. He had deep knowledge not only of the studies of Confucian rites and classics but also of statecraft. His writings, such as Jeonghoon 庭訓 and Saseodapmun 四書答問, which he wrote while in exile, are widely known in their respective fields. For his scope of erudition, he is evaluated as a scholar of his time who succeeded the Yulgok School.

In a turbulent era that witnessed Jeongmyo-horan and Byeongja-horan (Qing invasions in 1627 and 1637), Choryeo entered the government service, but his court career was far from splendid. On the occasion of the Yesong Dispute (disputes on funeral rites) in 1674, he was alienated from Song Si-yeol and eventually sent to Youngbyeon in exile.

Choryeo entered the discipleship of Sagye Kim Jangsaeng, who was Yulgok's disciple. Thus, he naturally followed Yulgok's interpretations of the classics, and *Saseodapmun Mencius* came out in this academic context. At the time of writing this book, Choryeo was a septuagenarian, living in exile for his involvement in the Yesong Debate, which broke out in 1674. *Saseodapmun Mencius* was written in the format of answering the questions of his grandsons. It is an important book that shows a shift in the Mencius interpretation of Joseon after Sagye Kim Jangsaeng. This book shows that Choryeo read through the *Complete Writings of Mencius* (孟子集註大全) critically and devotedly, without leaving out sub-annotations (小註), which provides evidence of the level of his interest in the political and economic theories, classics and related writings, and annotations and comments along with limitations.

In conclusion, Choryeo can be evaluated to have contributed to a more elaborate and faithful analysis of the *Complete Writings of Mencius* (孟子集註大全). However, because it was written during exile, it has a limited scope of bibliographic coverage, and its Q&A format makes it suboptimal for a full-fledged review as a serious academic work. Additionally, Choryeo's narrow fields of interest also impeded his vision for an all-out interpretation of the full breadth of *Mencius*. These limitations make the author somewhat hesitant to assess *Saseodapmun Mencius* as a full-scale academic writing except for its significance as a refreshing attempt at analyzing and utilizing sub-annotations. Unfortunately, this dilutes the symbolic value of this writing as a reliable reference book for sub-annotations of the *Complete Writings of Mencius* (孟子集註大全).

#### **4. Evaluation and Outlook**

In 2021, a total of 52 papers were published on Confucian classics in

Korea. This is a big stride forward and an utterly encouraging signal when compared to the 30 papers in 2020 (29 on Korean Confucian scholars and one comparing Korean and Chinese Confucian scholars). It is my sincere hope that more thus far unknown scholars will be introduced in the years to come. It is also hoped that more researchers will realize the importance of studying Confucian classics and will contribute to adding to the existing body of literature of high-quality Korean studies in Confucian classics.