

Feature Article 【專題論文】

On the Interaction between Confucian Knowledge
and Political Power in Traditional China and Korea:
A Historical Overview
近代以前中國與朝鮮歷史中儒家
知識與政治權力之互動

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Abstract

This article discusses the interaction and tension between Confucian knowledge and political power in traditional China and Korea. It has been argued that Confucianism aimed at ordering the world while the Chinese and Korean rulers needed to recruit the Confucian intellectuals to manage their countries. Therefore, the Confucian knowledge and political power in China and Korea became mutually dependent and infiltrating. However, as the *modus operandi* of knowledge and politics are asymmetrical, the tension between the two become unresolvable.

The article is composed of four parts. The first section is an introduction. The second section analyzes the inseparability and infiltration between Confucian knowledge and political power in pre-modern China and Korea. The third tackles the tension between knowledge and power in the context of Chinese and Korean history. Two types of tension are discussed, namely, (1) the tension between the political self and cultural self of rulers and Confucian scholar-officials, and (2) the tension between the "people-centered subjectivity" and the "sovereign-centered subjectivity." Some concluding remarks are made in the final section.

摘要

本文以十九世紀以前中國與朝鮮歷史所見的實例為基礎，論述「儒家知識」與「政治權力」在中、韓兩國歷史中既密切的互動，但又極為緊張之關係。本文的分析指出：儒家知識以經世為其目標，而中、韓兩國國君為治理帝國，必須吸納儒家知識分子進入官僚體系，所以儒家知識分子與政治權力既互相依賴又互相滲透；但「知識」與「權力」畢竟是不同質的領域，兩者各有其不同的運作邏輯，所以儒家知識分子與掌握權力的帝王之間，有其永恆的緊張性。

本文共分四節，第一節引言，第二節分析中、韓歷史上，儒家知識與政治權力之互相依賴性與互相滲透性。本文第三節則分析兩者間之緊張性。所謂「緊張性」指在「知識」與「權力」的互動之中，常出現兩種緊張性，第一種類型的緊張性是指歷代帝王與儒家官僚這兩種人物的「政治自我」與「文化自我」，並互為緊張；第二種緊張性出現在「人民主體性」與「帝王主體性」之間的緊張關係之中。本文第四節則提出結論。

I. Introduction

Before the arrival of the Western Powers in the late 19th century, East Asian history, the history of China and Korea in particular, exhibited a stable structure. Epochal upheavals and overthrows were relatively few. It has been long noted that Chinese civilization lacked any sort of "creation myth" like that of Western Judeo-Christian civilization;¹ therefore, Chinese civilization lacked the sharp tensions between the sacred and secular worlds. Scholars also point out that Chinese history seldom witnessed millennial milestone revolutions, that it presented a relatively holistic and harmonious story.² The changes in Chinese history tended to be the change of accommodation, that is, marginal change; very seldom did total change occur there.³ The aforementioned character of Chinese history can also be espied in the long history of Korea's Choson dynasty (1392-1910) which had been under the influence of China.

The reasons for the formation of the "world's largest enduring state" of Chinese empire are highly complicated.⁴ However, the most important reason was the intimate relationship between the knowledge system of the Confucian classics and the political power system centered on the emperor. In the premodern histories of China and Korea, relationships of inseparability and tension persisted between Confucian knowledge and political power.⁵ These two

1 Cf. Frederick W. Mote, "The Cosmological Gulf between China and the West," in David C. Buxbaum and Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture: A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Hsiao Kung-ch'üan* (Hong Kong: Cathay Press Limited., 1972), pp. 3-22; Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (Cambridge, Mass: The Colonial Press, Inc., 1971), Chap. 2, pp. 13-28.

2 Cf. James T. C. Liu, "Integrative Factors through Chinese History: Their Interaction," in James T. C. Liu and Wei-ming Tu 杜維明 (eds.), *Traditional China* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), pp. 10-23.

3 Cf. S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of the Empires: The Rise and Fall of the Historical Bureaucratic Societies* (New York: The Free Press, 1963, 1969), pp. 221-256.

4 See Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past: A Social and Economic Interpretation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

5 Frederick P. Brandauer and Chun-chieh Huang (eds.), *Cultural Change in Traditional China*

factors, while intertwined, were always in conflict. This pattern was characteristic of East Asian culture. The present essay will focus on the impact of the Confucian classics, the *Analects* and the *Mencius* in particular, on the interpretations of the proper roles of ruler and minister that appeared in Chinese and Korean history in order to illustrate and demonstrate the inseparability and tension between knowledge and power in traditional China and Korea.

II. The Inseparability of Confucian Knowledge and Political Power in Chinese and Korean History

In Chinese and Korean history, Confucian knowledge and political power were inseparable. This inseparability manifested itself in two ways: (1) these two factors had relations of mutual dependence. Confucian knowledge depended on the support of political power in order to remain influential itself. Moreover, imperial stability depended on the support provided by Confucian ideology. (2) These two factors had relations of osmosis. The Confucian knowledge system seeped into and infused imperial political activity and became the foundation of political ideology. At the same time, the imperial power also seeped into and infused, to the extent of altering, the content of Confucian knowledge.

(1) Mutual Dependence

Let us first consider the Chinese historical experience. Soon after the first emperor of the former Han dynasty (206 BCE-25 CE), Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202-195 BCE), assumed the throne, he became concerned with the key to long-term rule and stability of the empire. At the time that Liu Bang seized power, he had no specific interest in this problem. Therefore, he told Lu Chia 陸賈 (240-170

(Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

BCE), "[I] won my empire on horseback, why should I study the *Odes* and the *Documents*?"⁶ However, before long, he started to realize that political power needed the support of firm politico-moral consciousness and therefore he started to revive the requirement of Confucian learning. Soon after, also in the former Han dynasty, Emperor Wudi 武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE), who revered Confucian learning, took the further step of excluding the other schools of thought and designated solely Confucianism as the state orthodoxy.⁷ From that moment when Confucian learning received sole imperial recognition, the relations between Confucianism and political power became ever closer. The Confucian classics, especially the *Book of Documents* (尚書) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋), began to exert a strong impact on politics.⁸ Under the auspices of the Han political authority, Confucian learning stealthily became the intellectual mainstream. After Emperor Wudi of Han, the stage was set for Chinese imperial rule to assign Confucian culture a guardian role, thus granting Confucianism a tremendous opportunity. Indeed, Confucianism, now enshrined as the mainstream intellectual current of the Chinese empire, became caught up in the imperial examination system, and while the empire offered high office to gifted Confucian-trained officials, they in turn lent the foundation of steadfast ideology to the empire.

Now, let us consider the situation in Korea. Starting in the 14th century, Korean society, politics and thought were all deeply steeped in Confucian values and indeed had been transformed by Confucianism. The noble class of Korean society, the Yangban (兩班), who were the holders of central political authority and the most influential social group, promoted Confucianism actively. Confucianism

6 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Hanshu buzhu* 漢書補註 (Taipei: Yee Wen Publishing Company, photo-reproduction of the 1739 wood-block edition), vol. 9, p. 1b.

7 Before Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 suggestion, Emperor Wudi had already paid attention to Confucianism. See Tai Chun-jen 戴君仁, "Han Wudi yichu baijia fei fa zi Dong zhongshu kao" 漢武帝抑黜百家非發自董仲舒考, *Kong Meng Xuebao* 孔孟學報, no. 16 (Sept., 1968), pp. 171-178.

8 Cf. Li Weitai 李偉泰, *Liang han shangshuxue ji qi dui dang shi zhengzhi de yingxiang* 兩漢尚書學及其對當時政治的影響 (Taipei: College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University, 1976).

had already become the national religion in Choson Korea.⁹ From the 14th century, Confucians from China and Korea started to enjoy ever closer relations, and increasing numbers of Koreans gathered in the capital of the Yuan dynasty, Beijing. Reflecting this development, Korean Confucian scholarship was relatively well-developed and large numbers of Koreans passed the Chinese civil-service examination. Besides receiving approval and recognition for their academic accomplishments and bringing wide acclaim to their clans, Koreans who passed these examinations strengthened the tendency toward Confucian elitism in Korean society. Korean Confucians firmly believed the *Five Classics* were sacred texts left by the sage-kings which contained the main principles of upright statecraft; and that only those who had mastered the Confucian classics were qualified to undertake concrete political reform. The *Four Books* (the *Great Learning* in particular) then began to be seen as containing the essence of Neo-Confucian thought and were read eagerly by everyone at court and in society, from the emperor to the ministers to the commoners. Moreover, the Song Neo-Confucian disciplines of metaphysics, cultivation and ritual regulations were taken seriously by Korean scholars; and, the philosophical concepts and daily practice discussed in Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (Hui'an 晦庵, 1130-1200) *Reflections on Things at Hand* (Jinsilu 近思錄) and the *Four Books with Collected Commentaries* (Sishu jizhu 四書集註) also became "must-read" classical texts for Korean Confucians.¹⁰

(2) Mutual Infiltration

In Chinese history, the examples of the intimate interactive relationship between Confucian knowledge and political power are too numerous to be enumerated. Beginning with the reign of Emperor Wudi (r. 140-86 BCE), the *Spring*

9 Cf. Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), pp. 3-27.

10 Martina Deuchler, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-128.

and *Autumn Annals* and the *Book of Documents* were brought into play in guiding the judicial affairs in the Han court.

In the former Han, the *Analects* of Confucius was brought into play at the highest political levels. During the reign of former Han emperor Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33-8 BCE) appointed Zhang Yu 張禹 (?-5 BCE) who served for 6 years as the Prime Minister, and the emperor. From 16 to 9 BCE, there had been frequent eclipses of the sun and earthquakes, which had inclined officials and commoners to write petitions blaming these disasters and extraordinary events on Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE-23 CE) and his usurpation of imperial power (in the period between 8-23 CE). The emperor inquired into the reason for these anomalies of nature and people's petitions. Although Zhang Yu was advanced in age, his descendants were young and powerless and he feared the wrath of Wang Mang; so, he cited three passages from Confucius' *Analects* (9/1, 7/12, 5/13) in order to protect Wang Mang and win the positive attitude of the Wang family, as well as to avoid the destruction of his own clan. Zhang Yu thus cited the *Analects* in his political context and used it to exercise influence on the politics of the day.¹¹

From another perspective, political power also exerted a sort of infiltration effect on the interpretations of Confucian knowledge. Commentaries on the expression "facing south" (*nanmien* 南面) in *Analects* present a highly representative example. In classical antiquity, whenever a leader of any rank received his subjects, he would be seated facing south to receive them. Consequently, ancient architecture was designed to have the leader's seat on the north side, facing south, ensuring that whenever any leader or ranking official received visitors he would be seated facing south. Therefore, the expression "facing south" as used in the *Analects* could refer to the king, but also to the

11 Ban Gu 班固 (Mengjian 孟堅, 32-92), *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), Juan 81, p. 3351. Cf. Chun-chieh Huang, "On the Relationship between Interpretations of the Confucian Classics and Political Power in East Asia: An Inquiry Focusing upon the *Analects* and Mencius," *The Medieval History Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1 (June, 2008), pp. 101-121.

feudal lords, vassals,¹² even administrators of local prefectures.¹³ Consequently, the manner in which Confucian scholars at various times interpreted "facing south" in the *Analects* reflected the extent to which they were under the domination of political power.¹⁴

In the imperial "classics mat" discussions between the emperor and his ministers on the *Analects* of Confucius, they frequently confirmed its relevance for current political affairs, thus heightening the mutual osmosis between Confucian knowledge and political power. In the Choson court, the king and his ministers applied the moral principles of the *Analects* to the political events they were managing at the time they were reading. This served to develop and enrich the contemporary political significance of the *Analects* for them. This sort of political reading of the *Analects* and other Confucian classics appears often in the *Veritable Records* of Korean kings from the 14th through the 19th centuries. This sort of political reading always extrapolated and enriched the implicit, potential meaning of the *Analects*. For example, on January 7, 1399, King Jeongjong 定宗 (정종, Yi Gyeong 李暉 이경, Bang-gwa 芳果 방과, r. 1398-1400) and Jo Bak 趙璞 (조박, 1356-1408) discussed *Analects* 11/14. From this passage, Jo Bak extracted the contemporary political lesson, "this passage intends that the sovereign stop pursuits that burden the people and waste resources."¹⁵ In this

12 Wang Yinzhi 王引之 (1766-1834) said: "The expression 'facing south' [in general] [...] was sometimes spoken in reference to the emperor, to the feudal lords, [...] and sometimes in reference to the feudal vassals." But, Wang Yingzhi criticized Bao Xian 包咸 (6 BCE-65 CE) and Huang Kan's 皇侃 (488-545 CE) explanation of "facing south" in *Analects* 6/1 as referring to feudal lords and other people's explanation of it as referring to the emperor, on the consideration that, "If I were just a commoner, how could I presume to assume the ruler's position?" Wang perhaps said this because he lived during a period when the imperial power was at its zenith, and so imposed this reality back into his reading of this pre-Qin classic.

13 Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 (1901-1995), *Rongo no sinkenkyu 論語の新研究* (New Study on the *Analects*) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoden, 1975), p. 214.

14 Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903-1982) was the first scholar to notice this problem, see his essay, "Guoshi zhong renjun zunyan wenti de tantao," 國史中人君尊嚴問題的探討 (Discussion on Ruler's Dignity in Chinese History) in Xu Fuguan, *Rujia zhengzhi sixiang yu minzhu ziyou renquan* 儒家政治思想與民主自由人權 (Confucian Political Thoughts and Democracy, Liberty, Human Right) (Taipei: Bashi niandai chubanshe 八十年代出版社, 1979), p. 162.

15 *Gongjeongwang-Silrok* (공정왕실록, 恭靖王實錄), vol. 1, pp. 1-2, in *Joseon Wangjo Sillok*

way, he established firm contemporary relevance for the *Analects*. In the original *Analects* text, the words of Ming Ziqian 閔子騫 (536-487 BCE) were directed against the state of Lu's reconstruction of the treasury; therefore, in the 14th century, when Jo Bak spoke with the Korean emperor Jeongjong, he referred to the original meaning of this passage in beseeching the sovereign to give up such ostentatious construction projects that belabor the people and waste precious resources. The purpose of his words matched the meaning of the original text perfectly and also hit the mark regarding contemporary Korean political affairs. His reading and application of *Analects* 11/15 were appropriate and well considered.

III. Tension in the Interactions between Confucian Knowledge and Political Power in Chinese and Korean History

The tension that arose in the interactions between knowledge and power took two basic forms: (1) the first form was the tension that often arose in the fracturing and bifurcation of the "self" of the emperor and the Confucian official. (a) First, let us consider the tension on the inner "self" of the rulers of the empire. Historically, the emperors all played dual roles. They held absolute political authority and yet they also had to be paragons of Confucian virtue, hence there was eternal tension between these two roles. For example, the Prime Minister of the former Han, Ji An 汲黯 offended Emperor Wudi of Han. Having claimed to subscribe to the Confucian ideals, Emperor Wudi had to be very tolerant in the face of this criticism of Ji An. In another example, Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r.626-649CE) of Tang also was caught up in the tension between these two aspects of self when facing the straight and upright prime minister Wei Zheng 魏徵

(조선왕조실록, 朝鮮王朝實錄), 1 (Seoul: Dongkuk-Munhwasa 東國문화사 東國文化社, 1955), "Jeongjong" (정종, 定宗), vol. 1, 1399, pp. 143a-143b.

(580-643CE). When faced with his blame, all he could do was examine within and utter elegant words while repressing his inner rage.¹⁶

During the several thousands of years of being baptized and steeped in Confucian learning, the "self" of Chinese and Korean scholar-officials also bore its duality and pressure. These scholar-officials were faithful to traditional Confucian values but also executed the power of the authoritarian system. Under the pressures of the concrete political reality, their ideals were torn asunder. The tension between inner ideal and outer reality was unavoidable for them. In 1488, when Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1487-1505) of the Ming dynasty was attending Liu Ji's 劉機 lectures on the *Mencius*, Liu came to section 4A1 that concludes with, "To take one's prince to task is respect; to discourse on the good and keep out heresies is reverence; to say 'My prince will never be capable is to cripple him!'"¹⁷ The emperor and Liu first discussed how on the word *chen* 陳 should be interpreted; both decided on "elaborate (*fu chen*, 敷陳) on the Way of true rulership." Then the emperor asked why Liu did not explain the last statement; Liu answered, "I would not dare, my lord."¹⁸ This illustrates the pressure between the two facets of "self" of the Confucian official.

(b) Next, the Korean sovereign always felt tension between his two "selves," so when the Korean King Jungjong 中宗 (Yi Yeok, 이역, 李懌, r. 1506-1544) was being lectured on the *Analects* in the classics mat tutorial, the tutor recited the words, "The gentleman has three changes of appearance" (*Analects* 19/9) and requested that the emperor "treat his ministers with a mild demeanor." Jungjong

16 Sima Guang 司馬光, annotated by Hu Sansheng 胡三省, *Xinjiao Zizhitongjian zhu* 新校資治通鑑註 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1970), vol. 10, Juan 192, 627 CE, p. 6040.

17 D. C. Lau (tr.), *Mencius* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984), 4A1, p. 137.

18 Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1592-1676) *Chunming mengyu lu* 春明夢餘錄 (Record of Dreams of the Capital) (*Siku quanshu zhenben* 四庫全書珍本, 6th Series), Juan 9, pp. 5a-b. The stories that demonstrates the tension between imperial rulership and Mencius' political ideal can also be found in Tokugawa Japan. Cf. Inoue Junri 井上順理, *Hongo Chūse mateni okeru Mōshi Shuyoshi no Kenkyū* 本邦中世までにおける孟子受容史の研究 (Tokyo: Fuma Shobo 鳳出版, 1972), pp. 512-517, et passim.

replied, "The relationship between a sovereign and his ministers is not like the relationship between friends among common people."¹⁹ King Jungjong subtly expressed the power relationship between the sovereign and his ministers. Viewed from another angle, in this dialogue between king and ministers, they narrowed down the meaning of the term "gentleman" from the *Analects'* view as "exemplary person to be emulated" to simply "ruler." From yet another angle, by interpreting the *Analects* sentence "The gentleman has three changes of appearance" in the context of the relationship between a sovereign and his ministers, they added to the implicit, potential meaning of the original text, turning it into an excessively bloated image. Although King Jungjong respected Confucius, he still firmly grasped his imperial authority. Consequently, his "cultural self" and "political self" were embroiled in stressful relations.

Among the reasons why the Korean king and his ministers interpreted and applied the *Analects* in their own political context, the most important was that the Confucian classics were all aimed at bringing peace and order to the empire with a firm commitment to take responsibility for governing the world well. Throughout history, most Confucians in China and Korea simultaneously bore the dual identities of Confucian scholar and government official. When their share in imperial power extended to the apex of the networks of authority in China and Korea, their "political self" became especially prominent. Thus, their interpretation of the classics always took place in the context of the interactions between the sovereign and his ministers.

(2) Consequently, in Chinese and Korean history, the second form of tension appeared: that is, the tension between "popular subjectivity" and "imperial subjectivity." According to the Confucian political ideal, it is the people who play the role of political subject; but, because in the reality of the autocratic imperial political system the emperor was the sole political subject, these two forces

19 *Jungjong Wangjo Sillok* (중종왕조실록, 中宗大王實錄), vol. 40, pp. 22-23, in *Joseon Wangjo Sillok*, 15, "Jungjong," vol. 40, 1520, pp. 683b-684a.

formed irreconcilable tension. The contemporary Confucian scholar, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1902-1982) insightfully pointed out that this sort of stressful relationship between "popular subjectivity" and "imperial subjectivity" formed a "contradiction of dual subjectivity." Xu Fuguan added that the Chinese Confucians had advocated that rulers must transform their talent, wisdom and likes and aversions into a sort of higher moral capacity, which when extended to the utmost, the ruler assumes the "status of non-action" by which he rouses the talent and wisdom of the empire to satisfy the likes and aversions of the empire. Under the "contradiction of the dual subjectivity" between the ideal world and the real world, the Chinese Confucian scholar-officials always looked to the ideals of classical Confucianism and regarded the people as the ultimate subjects of political life. After the establishment of Qin-Han Empire, this sort of ideal lost its grounding to the political reality of imperial subjectivity. Consequently, the great Neo-Confucian master of the Southern Song, Zhu Xi, considered that the "Three Dynasties," the Xia 夏, Shang 商 and Zhou 周, were the period when the ideals of Chinese culture were expressed most purely. It was the age when the "mind of the Way" and "Heavenly principle" flourished. However, after the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty unified China in 221 BCE, these ideals lost their luster and the rites and music were corrupted for over two millennia. Thus, commenced the age in Chinese political and cultural history when human desires formed a cesspool.²⁰

During the reign of Korean King Seonjo 宣祖 (선조, 李昞, r. 1567-1608), on April 19, 1569, when the scholar Gi Dae-seung 奇大升 (1527-1572) was lecturing in the cultural hall on the *Analects*,²¹ he criticized Rao Lu's 饒魯 (1194-1264) commentary on *Analects* 14/23, which read: "Zilu asked how best to serve the ruler." The Master replied, "Never deceive him; oppose him openly." Whereas Zhu Xi had interpreted the term "oppose" in this passage as "incur the

20 Chun-chieh Huang, "Imperial Rulership in Cultural History: Chu Hsi's Interpretation," in Brandauer and Huang (eds.), *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), pp. 144-187.

21 *Seonjo Wangjo Sillok* (선조왕조실록, 宣宗大王實錄), vol. 3, p. 6, in *Joseon Wangjo Sillok*, 21, "Seonjo," (선조, 宣祖) vol. 3, 1569, p. 204b.

ruler's ire by admonishing him directly" (fan yan jian zheng, 犯顏諫爭),²² Rao Lu added to Zhu's point by adding, "In serving the ruler, never deceiving him is fundamental"²³ and advocating that only the minister who was absolutely sincere (i.e. with unity of inner thought and outer expression) was qualified to remonstrate with the ruler. In effect, however, Rao Lu's interpretation was less powerful than Zhu's "incur the ruler's ire by admonishing him directly" and displayed trepidation and inclination to retreat and shrink from imperial authority. This aroused the attention of the Korean Confucian ministers. Yun Geun-su 尹根壽 (1537-1616) was stirred to criticize Rao Lu²⁴ in order to protect the Confucian minister's power to remonstrate with the ruler. Gi Dae-seung extended Yun Geun-su's viewpoint by advocating that the emperor must not read various secondary commentaries on the *Analects*. Gi said, "Whenever I taught the emperor in his later years, I did not get into the various editions and notes. I only focused on the *Four Books*, skimming an edition with large print text and notes."²⁵ He advocated turning back to the *Analects* with Zhu Xi's notes. He believed in the importance of remonstrating with the emperor in order to play the Confucian minister's rightful role of the emperor's moral guardian. Viewing this case in the context of Korean history, we can see the presence of tangible tension between the imperial subjectivity in political reality and the popular subjectivity in the minds of the Confucian scholars.

22 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注, in *Zhu Zi quan shu* 朱子全書 (Shanghai and Hefei: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House and Anfei Education Publishing House, 2002), no. 6, p. 194.

23 Hu Guang 胡廣, *Lunyu jizhu daquan* 論語集註大全, in Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰 (ed.), *Wuqiubeizhai Lunyu jicheng* 無求齋論語集成 (Taipei: Yee Wen Publishing Company, 1966), vol. 6, Juan 14, p. 27.

24 *Seonjo Wangjo Sillok*, vol. 1, p. 8, in *Joseon Wangjo Sillok*, 21, "Seonjo," vol. 3, 1569, p. 205a.

25 Ibid.

IV. Conclusion

Based on some historical examples in premodern Chinese and Korean history, the present paper discussed the intimate interactions and tension between "knowledge" and "power" in China and Korea. Our analysis disclosed the patterns of mutual symbiosis and infiltration between Confucian "knowledge" and Sino-Korean political authority. However, ultimately, "knowledge" and "power" differ in themselves and have different scopes and purposes. They have different *modus operandi*, so consequently an eternal storm and struggle persisted between Confucian scholars, on one hand, and the holders of imperial power, on the other hand.

The reasons why "knowledge" and "power" had this relationship of inseparability yet mutual tension in traditional Chinese and Korean history included internal factors in the character of Confucian knowledge itself and external factors in the make-up of the imperial system. The character of Confucian knowledge was rooted in the classical Confucianism which manifested a comprehensive holistic mode of thinking. In this mode of thinking, the "part" was reflected in the context of the "whole" and the resolution of any question about the part had to be undertaken in the context of the "whole." This sort of holistic mode of thinking inclined the classical Confucians to reflect from the "individual" to the "family," the "society," the "state," and finally "All under Heaven," as in the *Great Learning* (Daxue). Moving between each two succeeding levels continued an ongoing serial process. Any fractures or breakages between the levels could be attributed to the imperfect practice of the people involved. Based on this, the classical Confucians indicated "Sageliness within and Kingliness without" as the loftiest human ideal which expressed an inseparable unity between a person's cultivation of inner virtue and proper conduct of outer affairs. In other words, the cultivation of inner virtue was not only a matter of personal inner intellectual reflection and realization; it was also a matter of getting involved in the external environment and flexing one's wings. Under the

Confucian ideal of "Sageliness within and Kingliness without," Confucian culture kept and encouraged the implicit—yet potentially huge—impact of Confucian knowledge and values on the concrete political affairs. The possibility of this sort of impact infused Chinese culture with a basically pragmatic tendency. The French sinologist, Étienne Balazs (1905-1963), said that, from a certain perspective, Chinese philosophy is entirely social philosophy.²⁶ Confucian philosophy strongly emphasized concrete practice, which made Confucian knowledge exert such a strong impact on political power in premodern China and Korea.

Before the twentieth century, the Chinese and Korean states needed the Confucian value system as their ideological infrastructures in order to mobilize all kinds of manpower and material resources. In order to plot the long-term order and stability of their imperial power, the Chinese and Korean rulers also ceaselessly had to recruit Confucian scholars to enter the political stage as scholar-officials. In order to realize the ideal of "inner Sageliness and outer Kingliness" through taming and "civilizing" the holders of imperial power, the Chinese and Korean Confucian intellectuals were always ready to die for the Way in contemporary politics, thereby heightening the tension between knowledge and political power in East Asian civilization.♦

26 Étienne Balazs, "Political Philosophy and Social Crisis at the End of the Han Dynasty," in H. M. Wright (tr.), *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 195.

♦ Responsible editor: Kirill O. Thompson (唐格理).

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