

Zhu Xi's Theory of Heterodoxy and King Sejong's Thinking of *Zhongyong*: Focusing on the Arguments over the Sarigak at Heungcheonsa Temple

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Abstract

King Sejong practiced faithfully the Confucian policies that had been established with the foundation of the new Joseon dynasty. He was a typical Confucian king who repressed Buddhism, which had been the state religion in the preceding Goryeo dynasty. When he expressed support for a Buddhist event of repairing the sarigak at Heungcheonsa temple in the capital in the 17th year of his reign (1435), however, King Sejong came into conflict with his Confucian subjects. The opposition assumed various aspects in the process until the conflict came to an end, and the will of King Sejong was accomplished in the 24th year of his reign (1442). Previous studies have interpreted the Buddhism-friendly events of the Confucian King Sejong from the viewpoints of social, national, and religious necessity as well as of functionalism, usefulness, and practicability. This paper, however, pays attention to the reasoning structure of King Sejong. It aims to show that while Confucian subjects argued on the basis of Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy, King Sejong employed zhongyong (doctrine of the mean) in the conflicts with his subjects on Buddhist events. In addition, this paper examines the relationship between Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy and the theory of zhongyong, and gives ideological meaning to the arguments between King Sejong and his subjects.

Keywords: King Sejong, Zhu Xi, Confucianism, Buddhism, theory of *zhongyong*, theory of heterodoxy

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Introduction

Sejong (1397-1450), who ruled the Joseon dynasty from 1418 to 1450, was a typical Confucian king. Following the revolution of Taejo Yi Seong-gye and the coup of Taejong Yi Bang-won, Sejong established the Joseon dynasty into a Confucian orthodox dynasty. He repressed Buddhism, which had been the state religion during the Goryeo dynasty and faithfully took over and put into practice Confucian policies that had been established together with the foundation of a new dynasty. In the 17th year of his reign (1435), Sejong expressed his opinion on a Buddhist event of repairing a *sarigak* 舍利閣 (sarira stupa) at Heung-cheonsa temple, which resulted in an antagonistic relationship with his Confucian subjects. The opposition assumed various aspects until the conflict was resolved, and the will of King Sejong was accomplished in the 24th year of his reign (1442). In the final situation, a memorial to the throne by the Saheonbu 司憲府 (Office of the Inspector General) expressed both compliments and regrets toward the Confucian King Sejong:

Your Majesty is a sage king made by the heaven, succeeded to the previous brilliant achievements as an erudite king, holds *gyeong-yeon* 經筵 (royal lectures) every day discussing political principle and reformed all temples. . . . Revealing repeatedly a prohibitory decree of Buddhist rituals and services and containing it in *Yukjeon* 六典 (Six Codes), monks could not survive and were destroyed spontaneously in a few years. It had been expected to see the prosperous three dynasties (*sandai* 三代) in Ancient China once again. . . .¹

Confucian government officials of the Saheonbu were believers of Neo-Confucianism accepted from the Chinese Yuan dynasty at the end of the Goryeo dynasty. Most of them studied Neo-Confucianism, passed the state examination, and became government officials. In particular, government officials of the Saheonbu were elite fundamen-

1. *Sejong sillok* (Annals of King Sejong), the 9th day of the 11th lunar leap month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

talists. They thoroughly maintained the core theory of Neo-Confucianism, which repels heterodoxy such as Taoism and Buddhism. Why the Confucian King Sejong consistently enforced such a Buddhist event, which was opposed by most of his subjects despite repeated arguments, is an interesting question.

Scholars have offered various answers to this question. Han Woo-Keun indicates a religious function of Buddhism, which can be satisfied by neither Confucian ideology nor politics. He argues that the natural disaster could not be solved by ideals, such as *sugi chiin* 修己治人 (“cultivating oneself and then becoming a ruler”); and Confucian rituals could not provide the repose of soul. Therefore, the religious desires of the royal family and common people could not be ignored (Han 1996, 61-62).

Keum Jang-tae, who has studied religious policies during the reign of King Sejong, also approaches the question from the viewpoint of functionalism. He argues that together with confirming the basic orthodoxy of Confucianism, Sejong also fulfilled social functions by moderately controlling various religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, and folk beliefs. There was a possibility that the pursuit of extreme destruction of Buddhism could cause a contrary effect of confusing the common people’s religious consciousness. According to Keum, Sejong sought to cultivate sound religious consciousness among the people through moderate control of Buddhist orders and to realize gradually an enlightened Confucian society (Keum 2001, 227-229). Similarly, Pu Nam Chul, who views Sejong as a Buddhist, argues that embodied in Sejong’s mixed responses and attitudes toward Buddhism were the recognition of the possible coexistence of Confucian knowledge and Buddhist religion as well as the comprehensive recognition of the immanent necessity of religion² in a society.

2. Sejong made good use of Buddhism in his statecraft by recognizing: (1) the demand for Buddhist faith, (2) the group of monks as the reserved labor force that could be mobilized in an emergency, (3) the group for taking charge of the delivery of a special tribute, (4) the possibility to mobilize the monks as military force, and (5) the Buddhist role in diplomatic relations with the Ming dynasty and Japan (Pu 2006, 73-76).

Park Hyun Mo also views Sejong's position on Buddhism as coming from the king's practical standpoint of being a realistic statesman. Sejong was conscious of controlling Confucian intellectuals, who were likely to fall into self-righteousness. From the practical point of view, Sejong understood Buddhism, Taoism, and geomantic principles, and could hardly accept the argument that only Confucianism could be true while the other thoughts were heterodoxy. Accordingly, it appears that, while humbling himself on occasion, Sejong enforced Buddhist events to preserve the complicated and vague political territory that could be divided into neither heterodox nor orthodox (Park Hyun Mo 2005a, 52, 59-60).

These previous studies take the Buddhism-friendly events of a Confucian King Sejong from the standpoints of social, national, and religious necessity as well as of functionalism, usefulness, and practicability. This paper's aims, however, are not to discuss the rights and wrongs of these previous studies. Instead, it pays attention to the reasoning structure of Sejong himself. This paper will try to reveal how Sejong aimed for the "mean"³ in the dispute over Buddhist events while Confucian subjects argued on the basis of Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy. This writer maintains that such reasoning structure of Sejong made possible the functional and practical policies of Sejong suggested by the previous studies. In addition, this paper will analyze the relationship between Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy and the theory of *zhongyong* 中庸 and give ideological meaning to the dispute between Sejong and his subjects. In the course of the events, Sejong's thoughts on *zhongyong* would eclipse the subjects' arguments based on heterodoxy.

Arguments over Repairing the *Sarigak* at Heungcheonsa Temple

On the 12th day of the 5th lunar month, the 17th year of his reign

3. It will be called Sejong's "thinking of the mean" (中庸的 思惟) or thinking of *zhongyong*. Here, *zhongyong* signifies properness, appropriateness, and suitability in Sejong's thoughts.

(1435), Sejong said to several *seungji* 承旨 (royal secretaries) the following:

The *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple leaned dangerously. I asked carpenters how to repair and make it right. They said in unison, “It is of no use to repair the building and it will become dangerous again.” After due consideration, (1)⁴ it is impossible to destroy the building our forefathers had built. It will be likely to lean again after repair. I’d like to have the third story destroyed and a single-story building built with those timbers. It will be spacious and celebrated. Also, I’d like to have the stupa erected separately in the garden. Don’t fail to understand my intention.⁵

All royal secretaries then said, “Yes, yes, Your Majesty,” and retreated.⁶ On the 18th day of the 5th lunar month of 1435, Sejong called An Sun and Hong I, supervisors of the Office of Construction and Carpentry Works, and discussed with them the following:

I have a plan to repair the *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple causing less evil. It is (2) not because I admire Buddha but because it is impossible to destroy the building our forefathers esteemed. Also, (3) seeing that, since the Han and Tang dynasties, what has been distinguished as good or evil has survived consistently up to now, it is certain that there must be a meaning.⁷

An Sun and others responded that “to have monks gathered and fed by the government during construction, there will be no abuses.” Sejong said, “Your suggestion is very reasonable.”⁸ Two days later,

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4. All numbers in parentheses in the text citations have been inserted by this author.
 5. *Sejong sillok*, the 12th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong’s reign (1435).
 6. *Sejong sillok*, the 12th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong’s reign (1435).
 7. *Sejong sillok*, the 18th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong’s reign (1435).
 8. *Sejong sillok*, the 18th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong’s reign (1435).

Sejong sent his word to the Seungjeongwon 承政院 (Royal Secretariat):

In the past, as Gangnimsa temple was his favorite place, Taejong sent an advisory note signed by him to encourage a secretary monk to reconstruct the temple. The reconstruction was a large-scale one and cost ten times more than that of the *stupa* at Heungcheonsa temple. Nevertheless, monks easily finished the reconstruction without the assistance of the government and held a *gyeongchanhoe* 慶讚會 (a Buddhist ceremony). Now, (4) according to an ancient event of Taejong, the stamped advisory notice in a letter of royal instruction will be sent to a secretary monk. Let the monks be gathered and repair the temple (5) with Prince Hyoryeong in charge of the reconstruction. . . . (6) You are all Confucian scholars and do not tell me any more according to ingenuous and unsound logic.⁹

The event of repairing the *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple by Sejong came to its very end with a *gyeongchanhoe* held at Heungcheonsa temple on the 24th day of the 3rd lunar month of 1442. For almost seven years, Sejong had various arguments over Buddhism with his subjects, but the majority of the points argued by Sejong are shown well in the previous three quotations. First, Heungcheonsa temple cannot be destroyed because it was originally built by Taejo. Second, he does not believe in Buddhism. Third, despite distinguishing good from evil, evil does not perish. Fourth, he holds Buddhist events in accordance with the previous event of Taejong. Fifth, Prince Hyoryeong will take charge of the reconstruction. Sixth, Confucian scholars should not argue any more according to ingenuous and unsound logic. Facing consistent resistance from his Confucian subjects, who based their opposition on the ideas of heterodoxy, Sejong varied his expressions according to the situation and repeated those points.¹⁰

Royal secretaries, who had been at a loss by the unexpected an-

9. *Sejong sillok*, the 20th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong's reign (1435).

10. Among them, points (1), (2), and (3) are important. In particular, point (3) is the core of Sejong's thinking of *zhongyong*.

nouncement by Sejong on the 12th day of the 5th lunar month, expressed cautiously their opinion against the policy on the 20th day of the same month:

At the end of the previous dynasty, heterodoxy flourished and our Confucianism darkened. Since Taejo came to the throne, successive kings have (7) rejected heterodoxy and admired Confucius. As ritual, music, culture, and institutions have become similar to those of China, Your Majesty will be certainly followed afterwards. Led by the advisory note in the letter of royal instruction, (8) those monks will say, "Our Buddhism will arise again." They are willing to deceive and tempt people and rob them of their property. Subjects and people also will respond to the advisory note. (9) In the future, abuses will be beyond remedy and (10) certainly cause troubles in writing history as well.¹¹

This contains the major points of the subjects in their arguments with Sejong. The subjects' opinion in which the point (7) is the core is based on Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy.¹²

Zhu Xi's Theories of *Zhongyong* and Heterodoxy

In general, it appears that the theory of heterodoxy and the theory of *zhongyong* are contradictory to each other. While the theory of heterodoxy enforces to choose one of the two, the theory of *zhongyong* seems to pursue coexistence and balance at some points of time and place. What did Zhu Xi think about this?

Zhongyong zhangju 中庸章句 (Commentaries on the *Doctrine of the Mean*) is one of the most important texts Zhu Xi used to establish his theoretical system. In particular, by interpreting *Zhongyong* and a

11. *Sejong sillok*, the 20th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong's reign (1435).

12. For Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy, refer to the chapter "Bianbieyiduan 辨別異端," in *Jinsilu* 近思錄 (Reflections on Things at Hand).

chapter of *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites) into theories of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣 and the nature of mind, he formed the basis of Neo-Confucianism during the period of Song, which is different from the previous Confucianism of the periods of Han and Tang. In the *Zhongyong zhangju xu* 中庸章句序 (Preface to Commentaries on the *Doctrine of the Mean*), Zhu Xi explains the theory of heterodoxy as follows: the succession of moral philosophy whose content is *zhongyong* began with the king of Yao 堯 and reached Confucius through the kings of Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu. At the time of Confucius, Yanzi 顏子 and Cengzi 曾子 succeeded to the tradition. At the time of Zisi 子思, who was a grandson of Confucius, there occurred heterodoxy.¹³ Therefore, being afraid of losing the orthodoxy of Confucianism, Zisi wrote *Zhongyong*. Later, Mencius inherited the orthodoxy of the previous sages by revealing the book of *Zhongyong*. After his death, the succession of moral philosophy was lost. Confucian philosophy was barely alive only in language and letters. On the other hand, heterodoxy words were flourishing day by day. They became close to reason with the advent of the followers of Laozi and Buddhism, and disturbed the truths greatly. Nevertheless, it is fortunate that the book did not disappear. Chengzi 程子 succeeded again to the Confucian tradition, which had not been inherited for a thousand years and rejected the pseudo-philosophy of Laozi and Buddhism (*Zhongyong zhangju xu*).

In the *Zhongyong zhangju xu*, Zhu Xi defined the *Zhongyong* as the book to criticize heterodoxy. As a result, the theories of *zhongyong* and heterodoxy should be compatible. The contents of Zhu Xi's theory of *zhongyong* will be reviewed concretely by focusing on *Zhongyong zhangju*. *Zhongyong zhangju* starts with the phrases of Chengzi: "Impartiality is called *zhong* and immutability *yong*; therefore, *zhong* is the correct course under heaven and *yong* the fixed principle under heaven. This is just the law of the mind inherited by Confucian schools."

Succeeding Chengzi, Zhu Xi interpreted *Zhongyong* from the

13. It refers to the Hundred Schools of Thought (*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家) during the Warring States Period.

viewpoint of “the law of the mind,” that is, the theory of the nature of the mind. It is interpreted in chapter one of the *Zhongyong*, particularly with the phrase, “When emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure do not occur, they are called *zhong* 中; when they do occur and become moderate, they are called *he* 化 (harmony). Although *zhong* is the great basis under heaven, *he* is common moral philosophy under heaven.” Meanwhile, chapter 6 of the text concerns different phase of *zhongyong*, than those of the nature of the mind or the law of the mind. It concerns matters outside the mind, such as the following:

Confucius said, “King Shun must be a man of great knowledge. He likes to ask something and takes care of shallow and vulgar words. He (11) conceals evil and reveals good, and (12) catches two extremes and uses *zhong* to the people. That is why he became a saint king” (*Zhongyong*, ch. 6).¹⁴

In *Zhongyong zhangju*, Zhu Xi annotates these phrases as follows:

The reason King Shun became a man of great knowledge is not to use his own wisdom but to take it from others. Though they are shallow and vulgar words, he never failed to take care of them. Certainly, he never discarded the good. On the other hand, (11) he concealed and did not reveal the wrong words while spreading and not concealing the good words. At the same time, he was very fair and broad-minded. There was no one who was not pleased to say him the good words. (12) Two extremes refer to the ultimate different two among various opinions. Everything has its own extremes, small and large, or much and little. To take hold of two extremes among good, measure them, and make use of *zhong* will be a clear choice and serious behavior (*Zhongyong zhangju*, ch. 6).

To understand these annotations better, the dilatation of Zhu Xi in *Sishu daquan* 四書大全 (Great Collection of the Four Books) will be

14. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the original texts in this article are my own.

reviewed. Foremost, the two extremes will be surveyed:

Two extremes . . . mean “from here to there.” They mean “from much to little,” “from large to small,” and “from heavy to light.” Among those that are much or little, large or small, and heavy or light, the choice and use of the most reasonable one will be *zhong* 中. If halving two extremes (the most and the least) and taking the median is called *zhong*, it is just “catching the *zhong* of Zimo 子莫,”¹⁵ Mencius said. How can the median be called *zhong*? If the opinion that the most should be taken is right, it should be followed and vice versa. The same is true of light or heavy, and large or small. Thus, the most reasonable should be followed (*Zhongyong zhangju daquan*, ch. 6).

Zhongyong does not mean just an arithmetic median, but “the most reasonable one.” Accordingly, even the choice of an extreme, if it is right, will be *zhongyong*.

Second, the part of “taking hold of two extremes among good” in the *Zhongyong zhangju* should be considered. This means to measure two extremes among various opinions—where good, right, or true is retained while wrong, evil, or false is excluded—and to take “the most reasonable one.”

Someone asked again, “*Zhongyong zhangju* said, ‘Various opinions are not the same.’ Then, do they only mean good?” Zhu Xi said, “Evil has already been concealed but not revealed itself” (*Zhongyong zhangju daquan*, ch. 6).

The expression that “evil has already been concealed but not revealed itself” is based on the phrases of “concealing evil and revealing good” in the text of *Zhongyong*. Then, Zhu Xi connects (11) concealing evil and revealing good with (12) catching two extremes and using *zhong*

15. “Zimo 子莫 caught the median, which is near the most reasonable one. On the other hand, catching the median but not weighing looks like catching an extreme” (“Jinxinshang 盡心上” [First Part of the Chapter on the Thorough Research of the Mind], in *Mengzi* 孟子 [Book of Mencius]).

to the people. At the first stage, good or evil should be distinguished (the theory of heterodoxy). At the second stage, *zhong* is chosen again among good that has already been distinguished (the theory of *zhongyong* in a narrow sense). Needless to say, it is reasonable (which pertains to the disciple of *zhongyong*) to Zhu Xi to distinguish between good and evil, and then choose good (which corresponds to the theory of heterodoxy). Accordingly, the theory of heterodoxy is included in the theory of *zhongyong*, in a broad sense, of Zhu Xi. In other words, Zhu Xi's theory of *zhongyong* in a broad sense is composed of the theory of heterodoxy and the theory of *zhongyong* in a narrow sense. Accordingly, the theory of *zhongyong* in a broad sense is not contradictory to the theory of heterodoxy and the theory of *zhongyong* in a narrow sense presupposes the theory of heterodoxy.

Mr. Ye 葉 said, "Two extremes are not what the common people talk of right or wrong and good or evil. As right has already been right, it cannot be wrong. As good has already been good, it cannot be evil. They are all what we should do. Not knowing *dao* 道 properly and catching two extremes among right and wrong or good and evil and taking *zhongyong*, the discussion will result in half right and half wrong. It will also be half good and half evil . . . Why shouldn't we be more sensible?" (*Zhongyong zhangju daquan*, ch. 6).

Therefore, Zhu Xi's theory of *zhongyong* in a narrow sense has already presupposed the theory of heterodoxy. The theory of *zhongyong* in a broad sense cannot be brought into existence without being preceded by the theory of heterodoxy. Then, the theory of heterodoxy is contained in the theory of *zhongyong*, but in fact the latter cannot be established without the former. Considering that "without the theory of heterodoxy, the theory of *zhongyong* cannot be established," to Zhu Xi, the theory of heterodoxy is fundamental while the theory of *zhongyong* is an element to decorate the theory of heterodoxy. This is because the theory of heterodoxy without the theory of *zhongyong* is possible while the theory of *zhongyong* without the theory of heterodoxy cannot be established. This writer calls such theory of Zhu Xi "the theory of heterodox *zhongyong*" (異端論的 中庸論). The same can

be applied to the ways in which Zhu Xi attempted to explain *zhongyong* from the heterodox point of view in *Zhongyong zhangju xu*. It can be viewed that such a theoretical structure of Zhu Xi caused the subjects of the Joseon dynasty, who were followers of Zhu Xi, to adhere to the theory of heterodoxy rather than *zhongyong*.

Confucian bureaucrats during the period of Sejong had been reading *Sishu daquan*. Nevertheless, it cannot be confirmed whether they had an interest in the relation between the theory of heterodoxy and that of *zhongyong*, as this writer maintains. Nevertheless, it is evident that the above mentioned argument of royal secretaries on the 20th day of the 5th lunar month was based on Zhu Xi's theory of heterodoxy. As for the opposition of his subjects, Sejong said, "Your discussion is very fair and right."¹⁶ Sejong did not deny the theory of heterodoxy insisted by his subjects and responded that their argument was quite fair and right. He, however, did not accept it.

The Theory of *Gong* and the Politics of *Gongnon*

To begin the repair of the *sarigak*, Sejong ordered Kwon Chae to write an advisory note. On the 1st day of the 6th lunar month of 1435, Sejong ordered a stop to the work of Heungcheonsa temple because of a memorial presented to the throne, which sought to stop the construction to save expenses because of a drought. Droughts were frequent during the period of Sejong. Since the *sarigak* was not in imminent danger of collapse, Sejong quite possibly suspended the construction because of the financial burden. One year later, on the 9th day of the 6th lunar month of 1436, the construction was taken up again for discussion:

As there is insufficient finance recently because of floods and droughts, it is difficult to build and repair. (13) The work will never be completed if it is put into practice after agreement at court. I am

16. *Sejong sillok*, the 20th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong's reign (1435).

going to put it into practice by having the kindhearted prime minister assume the work and monks receive donations from the people. Abandoning the intention as Confucian scholars¹⁷

To discuss national affairs and draw *gongnon* 公論 (public opinion) at court were the most essential contents of *gongnon* politics in the Joseon dynasty.¹⁸ The politics of Sejong were known as *gongnon* politics. The question then was whether or not this posture of Sejong indicated a king abandoning *gongnon* politics and exercising his power arbitrarily.

Sejong expected that it would be difficult to form *gongnon*. As anticipated, An Ji, *bujehak* 副提學 (first counselor) at the Jiphyeonjeon 集賢殿 (Hall of Worthies), sent an opposition letter to the king, adding another argument that (14) “the capital city could be a target from every direction and Your Majesty should be a model through all ages”¹⁹ in addition to the arguments (7), (8), (9), and (10). The work was stopped once again.

Sejong did not hurry but bided his time prudently. Another year and a half passed. It was three years since the repair was taken up for the first time. The reconstruction of Gangnimsa temple had cost ten times more than the repair of Heungcheonsa temple²⁰ and Taejong had completed it in almost two months.²¹ The repair of Heungcheonsa temple took a long time from the proposal to the start of the work, which could suggest that Sejong must have been conscious of *gongnon* at court. If Sejong had exerted arbitrary power like King Taejong,

17. *Sejong sillok*, the 9th day of the 6th lunar month, 18th year of King Sejong's reign (1436).

18. For the definition and contents of *gongnon* politics in the Joseon dynasty, refer to Kim Yong-Jick (1998), Lee Hyun-chool (2002), Yeom (2002), Kim Young-Ju (2002), Park Hong-kyu (2005b), and Lee Seung-Hwan (2005).

19. *Sejong sillok*, the 10th day of the 6th lunar month, 18th year of King Sejong's reign (1436).

20. *Sejong sillok*, the 20th day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong's reign (1435).

21. *Sejong sillok*, the 21st day of the 5th lunar month, 17th year of King Sejong's reign (1435).

the situation would have been very different. Seeking to draw *gongnon* among Confucian subjects while not ignoring their arguments, Sejong carefully watched how *gongnon* went and pushed forward gradually with the work.

In the process of construction, a daily Buddhist prayer²² was held and certificates of monks²³ were issued excessively. This caused opposition by Confucian believers. The Saheonbu 司憲府 (Office of the Inspector General), which “hadn’t idly suggested its opinion to the king in spite of seeing with eyes and hearing with ears,” sent up a memorial to the throne about the abuse and preventive measure on the 25th day of the 3rd lunar month.²⁴

Recognizing what Sejong argued and explaining precisely such arguments as (8) “Our Buddhism will arise again” and (9) “Abuses will be beyond remedy,” the office argued that wrong should be prevented by grasping well the hint that right is separated from wrong. In this situation, Sejong did not accept the memorial and the work continued.

On the 12th day of the 4th lunar month in the 20th year of Sejong’s reign (1438), there was an incident in which some officials at the Office of the Inspector General, including *daesaheon* 大司憲 (inspector general) An Sung-seon, resigned. During the previous day, an examination asked for countermeasures for solving national problems. In an answer to the question relating to the duty of censors, which was the first clause of the examination, Ha Wi-ji expressed a sharp criticism of the reconstruction of Heungcheonsa temple by asking, “Not hearing there is someone who comes into the king’s presence and tells of the abuse sincerely, is there something insufficient in *gongnon*?” Sejong responded, “Implementing the state examination and asking scholars for countermeasures are aimed at selecting scholars who will not hide proper words. Although someone criticized my fault severely, his proper words should be praised. Why should he be

22. It served one to three meals a day to monks.

23. The government issued certificates to new monks.

24. *Sejong sillok*, the 25th day of the 3rd lunar month, 20th year of King Sejong’s reign (1438).

accused of a crime and his criticism not be taken?”²⁵ Sejong recognized the proper opposition to Buddhist rituals and services apart from the repair of the *sarigak*. Here, by making the enforcement of the repair consistent with the opposition to it, Sejong led the situation. At the least, Sejong maintained the basic structure of *gongnon* politics. It can also be said to be a balanced thought and behavior,²⁶ which is further demonstrated in the following records; Sejong tried to confine the repair of the *sarigak* as a restrictive measure within the Joseon dynasty’s founding policy of repressing Buddhism.

As a part of the policy to oppress Buddhism, Sejong had dismissed monks who were eager to obtain the certificates of monks and prohibited them from entering the capital. As certificates were issued again because of the repair of the *sarigak*, there began discussions about recruiting monks to repair the Dongpyeongwan 東平館 (East Building for Japanese Envoys), Bukpyeongwan 北平館 (North Building for Chinese Envoys), Seobu Hakdang 西部學堂 (West School Building), and Hanseongbu 漢城府 (Prefecture of the Capital). Sejong discussed this delicate situation with government officials.²⁷ Some officials asserted that “Except for *sarigak*, it is not proper for other government offices to begin such work. Every work should be stopped and dismissed.” Others said that “The work that has already begun should be finished. However, what has not been started should be canceled.” Other officials contended that “Schools and guest houses are important so they should be repaired. It is difficult to recruit farmers but possible to recruit monks. As the period of working is not long, certificates should be given at least in a month. Afterwards, every work should be stopped and dismissed.” Sejong accepted what Chief Minister Hwang Hui said: “It is opportune that monks should be given certificates after a full month of working, afterwards other works should be stopped.” This decision to prevent the loosening the policy of

25. *Sejong sillok*, the 14th day of the 4th lunar month, 20th year of King Sejong’s reign (1438).

26. This also forms a part of Sejong’s thinking of the “mean.”

27. *Sejong sillok*, the 20th day of the 4th lunar month, 20th year of King Sejong’s reign (1438).

oppressing Buddhism because of the reconstruction of the *sarigak* demonstrated Sejong's well-balanced thought and behavior.

Moreover, such thinking of Sejong can further be confirmed in the following records. At that time, the monks of Heungcheonsa temple, Myeongyeon, Geukcheol, and Cheoyun remained at the temple for a long time, committed injustice, and caused many problems. Sejong said, "All the monks at Heungcheonsa temple must be ousted. Make it a rule to select the oldest monk who observes faithfully the religious commandments and make him enter the temple this September and leave the temple next September."²⁸ Sejong never forgot to impose restrictions on excessive cases.²⁹

Sejong's Thinking of Zhongyong and the Incident of Angeohoe

When Prince Hyoryeong became seriously ill, on the 2nd day of the 7th lunar month of 1438, Sejong had monk Haengho, who was living at Hamyang, move to Heungcheonsa temple.³⁰ On the 12th day of the 11th lunar month, the Saheonbu asked Sejong to stop Hyoryeong's gathering of monks and reading of Buddhist scriptures. Sejong said, "Hyoryeong has been ill for almost two months. He has got a little better and begun reading scriptures. Even though it is not proper, how should I stop him considering his illness?" Sejong did not accept the suggestion. Hyoryeong continued Buddhist rituals and services at Heungcheonsa temple. At the *gyeongyeon* held on the 15th day of the 2nd lunar month of 1439, lecturer An Ji expressed his anxiety that the number of monks was increasing day by day while they did not farm but only ate. Sejong responded to this by using the point (3):

28. *Sejong sillok*, the 8th day of the 9th lunar month, 20th year of King Sejong's reign (1438).

29. This part is connected to the entry on the 16th day of the 4th lunar month in the 21st year of Sejong's reign (1439), which will be discussed later.

30. *Sejong sillok*, the 18th day of the 7th lunar month, 20th year of King Sejong's reign (1438).

Confucian scholars say that monks deprive people of their food. However, though good and evil have coexisted since the beginning of the world, evil has not been abandoned yet. The previous emperors had not abolished all of those abuses. How can I, who am less virtuous, abolish them all? Now, the policy of saving people is nothing more than to reduce taxes.³¹

When Sejong expressed the point (3) at first, it was obscure in meaning. Here, the intention of Sejong can be fully understood. He says that good and evil coexist. Despite distinguishing between good and evil and reducing evil, he does not recognize the extermination of evil.

In the theory of heterodoxy, there is a normative thinking (thinking of *sollen*) that the distinction between good and evil and the extermination of evil should be pursued because if evil is not exterminated, then the undesirable situation of the coexistence of good and evil continues. Meanwhile, the thinking of Sejong is ontological (thinking of *sein*): that good and evil coexist not because evil is not terminated, but that good and evil coexist because evil cannot be exterminated. Zhu Xi's theory of *zhongyong* in a broad or narrow sense is based on the theory of heterodoxy which presupposes the extermination of evil. On the contrary, Sejong presupposes the world of coexistence of good and evil and pursues *how* good and evil coexist in it. It is King Sejong's thinking of *zhongyong*.³²

On the 11th day of the 4th lunar month of 1439, Hwangbo Gong of the Saganwon 司諫院 (Office of the Censor General) argued that Buddhist rituals and services led by Prince Hyoryeong should be stopped. Sejong soothingly said, "It is natural that monks recite Buddhist scriptures at a temple. As a senior of the royal family, Hyoryeong has once cited scriptures. Why is it impossible and how can I stop him forcibly?" The following day, Yi Ye-jang of the Saganwon said, "At Heungcheonsa temple, monks not only cited scriptures but also held an *angeohoe* 安居會 (meditation retreat) on a large scale.

31. *Sejong sillok*, the 15th day of the 2nd lunar month, 21st year of King Sejong's reign (1439).

32. The way of coexistence will be mentioned later.

They consumed food.” He said that it would be regrettable to use riches to no purpose. Sejong responded as follows: “Buddhist monks are also my people. They have already become my people. If there is anyone who is starving, how can the state neglect him without helping? It would be harmless that the people were eager to provide them with food.”³³

Sejong considered those whom he ruled as his people, irrespective of their faiths. Moreover, if they were starving, he had to take care of them. It may as well be viewed that Sejong expressed benevolent governing out of natural sympathies. Unlike the king's standpoint, Yi Ye-jang reiterated with a point about a model king from a subject's standpoint, “Hyoryeong takes the lead in admiring Buddhist rituals and services as a senior of the royal family. Unless Your Majesty prohibits him, how can people's belief be stopped?”³⁴ Saying that there was no evidence that Hyoryeong performed Buddhist rituals and services, Sejong ordered not to demand baselessly.

While the conflict between Sejong and his subjects relating to *angeohoe* became worse, 648 Confucian students including Yi Yeongsan, *saengwon* 生員 at the Seonggyungwan 成均館 (National Confucian Academy), sent a lengthy memorial to the throne on the 18th day of the 4th lunar month of 1439. They contended that “It will be very fortunate to the dynasty to order officials to behead monk Haengho and terminate the root of wickedness. Fragrant grass cannot be kept in the same container with bad-smelling grass. Truth and falsehood are incompatible. A person of virtue hates that purple disturbs red. As a false charge derives from doubt, a man of wisdom restrains himself. It is regrettable to men of knowledge that Buddhism stands side by side with Confucianism during this glorious reign.”³⁵

33. *Sejong sillok*, the 12th day of the 4th lunar month, 21st year of King Sejong's reign (1439).

34. *Sejong sillok*, the 12th day of the 4th lunar month, 21st year of King Sejong's reign (1439).

35. *Sejong sillok*, the 18th day of the 4th lunar month, 21st year of King Sejong's reign (1439).

Sejong did not respond to this theory of heterodoxy, but defended Hyoryeong in the case of monk Haengho. He indicated his intention to charge them because some accusations in the memorial were groundless and improper. *Doseungji* 都承旨 (top secretary) Kim Don made a recommendation to the king to forgive generously some mistakes in the memorial of Confucian students. When Sejong asked the number of attendants to the *angeohoe*, the answer was not more than 100 persons. Sejong said, "I hear there were 50 persons and the head monk did not join in." He judged that the response of his subjects was too excessive considering the number of attendants. Then, what was the appropriate Buddhist policy Sejong had in mind?

On the 19th day of the 4th lunar month of 1439, *bujehak* Choe Man-ri presented a memorial to the throne:

Founding a new dynasty and observing carefully the abuses of Buddhism, Taejo made it a rule to prohibit Buddhist lecture meetings and special rituals and services. Taejong also succeeded to this tradition. Reducing the number of temples and withdrawing lands and slaves, he showed a sign of reform. Our majesty added more restrictions and abolished seven or eight abuses out of ten. Since monks held a *suryukjae* 水陸齋 (water and land ceremony)³⁶ on the Hangang river and had a meeting at Hoeamsa temple last year, they came to wield power again.³⁷

The subjects viewed Sejong's policy as limited to partial oppression of Buddhism. As they aimed for the termination of Buddhism, they asked Sejong to enforce a policy of complete suppression of Buddhism.

Since the foundation of the glorious dynasty, seven or eight abuses out of ten consumed the energy of the dynasty and people were abolished through the oppressing policies. In my consideration, Your Majesty will root out, stop the basis, and finally abolish it. In my opinion, this people will experience the politics of *ije samwang*

36. A Buddhist ceremony for the hungry ghosts both in water and on land.

37. *Sejong sillok*, the 19th day of the 4th lunar month, 21st year of King Sejong's reign (1439).

二帝三王 (two emperors and three kings) again. I felt auspicious and joyous but³⁸

Sejong, who adhered to the thinking of *zhongyong*, did not accept such theory of heterodoxy aiming for the extermination of Buddhism. Neither did he show a negative response to “the policy of partial suppression.” Perhaps he viewed such an extent of oppression toward Buddhism proper. That good and evil coexisted at the ratio of 70:30 or 80:20 might have been the proper coexistence Sejong sought. Or was it his *zhongyong*?³⁹

Let us now review why Sejong did not reject his subjects' theory of heterodoxy, but took it as “very fair and right.” Could it be possible that Sejong did not deny the theory of heterodoxy of Zhu Xi and his subjects because he sought not to exterminate evil but to reduce it? Sejong applied the theory of heterodoxy to increase good and decrease evil in the world. On the one hand, when the theory of heterodoxy was excessive beyond appropriateness, he put restrictions on it. On the other hand, when it was insufficient for its own role, he employed the policy based on the theory of heterodoxy.⁴⁰ This was Sejong's *zhongyong*.

Sejong, whose thoughts were guided by *zhongyong*, regarded the incident relating to Haengho as excessive and decided to send him back in due time. Meanwhile, on the 22nd day of the 4th lunar month of 1439, Sejong did not allow the abolition of *angeohoe*, saying, “All the temples outside the capital hold an *angeohoe*. There is no reason to abolish it only inside the capital. Wherever there are temples, there are always monks; wherever there are monks, there is always *angeohoe*. If *angeohoe* is to be strictly prohibited, it would not be possible until the temples are abolished.”

38. *Sejong sillok*, the 23rd day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

39. It can be expressed as “asymmetric coexistence.”

40. Refer to “a balanced thought and behavior” mentioned in page 76 for concrete instances.

The Incident of *Gyeongchanhoe* and the Use of the Prerogative Power

One year had passed since the incident of *angeohoe* connected with Prince Hyoryeong. After the reconstruction of Heungcheonsa temple, Hongjo, who was a monk in charge of supplying food at the temple, asked Sejong to hold a *gyeongchanhoe* in summer. Sejong said, “The previous king Taejo had already built the temple. It is difficult to have only monks take charge of the expenses and for us to assume an indifferent attitude. The previous king held a celebration. How can I entrust the responsibility for the celebration only to monks and ignore it?”⁴¹

On the 4th day of the 5th lunar month of 1440, when the Saganwon opposed the proposal, Sejong delayed action, saying, (15) “Everything will be all right without reconstruction of the temple; however, it has been newly rebuilt and why can’t there be a celebration?⁴² The celebration will be held not today but in the future. You are misunderstood.” *Uheonnap* 右獻納 (officer of remonstrance) Kwon Hyeong argued that a celebration should never be held. Sejong said, “The previous kings built the temple and it has been newly rebuilt. Without holding a celebration, it will be like not performing an ancestral sacrifice after making an ancestral tablet.”⁴³ On the 11th day of the 6th lunar month, a celebration of the repair of the *sarigak* was held. Therefore, it appeared that the incident of *gyeongchanhoe* simply ended. However, one and a half years later, on the 25th day of 11th lunar month of 1441, Sejong called Seong Dal-saeng to discuss the matters necessary for a celebration of the *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple. The dispute over *gyeongchanhoe* became serious again.⁴⁴

41. *Sejong sillok*, the 23rd day of the 4th lunar month, 22nd year of King Sejong’s reign (1440). Here, Sejong still depends on argument (1).

42. This is based on argument (3).

43. *Jwajeongeon* 左正言 (senior royal advisor) Bak Jeok-seon said, “It is reasonable to perform an ancestral sacrifice with an ancestral tablet because it shows respect toward our forefathers. Why should we admire Buddha, comparing him to an ancestral tablet?”

44. There are no records of what happened between the first *gyeongchanhoe* and the

On the 9th day of the 11th lunar leap month of 1441, the Saheonbu praised the achievements of Sejong as a model king who oppressed Buddhism, as stated in the preface and asked him to stop *gyeongchanhoe*. Sejong insisted obstinately that “since Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty, there have been kind-hearted emperors who believed in Buddhism without causing any harm.”⁴⁵

The following day, Choe Man-ri, who was *bujehak* at Jiphyeonjeon, sent a memorial to the throne. He clearly expressed disbelief in the argument (2) that Sejong did not believe in Buddhism and aimed at the argument (1), which was Sejong's last resort and base.

If you say that “The buildings the previous kings had built must be repaired. As a building is newly repaired, a celebration should be held,” we, subjects, cordially ask you to be more sensible. It is said that to inherit and respect well the will and works of forefathers means only to follow the great thing. If the great thing has already been the same, it does not matter whether the trivial thing isn't always the same.⁴⁶

Choe argued that it did not matter whether a trivial thing like Buddhism is followed according to the last injunctions of the forefathers. Moreover, by newly interpreting the last instructions of Taejo, Choe tried to refute the argument (1):

Also, (16) Taejo built this Buddhist tower by chance and did not intend at first that it should be inherited eternally to descendants as a precious treasure. It is not too much to destroy it. Moreover, it would collapse of itself in the course of time. How can it be an obstacle to inheriting the work of the forefathers?

second one. Afterwards, a lengthy dispute continued for a month.

45. *Sejong sillok*, the 9th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441). The argument (3) was strengthened. *Ujeongeon* 右正言 (officer of remonstrance) Yi Gye-seon retorted, “There have been no blessed emperors who believed in Buddha since Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty. Why should we follow them?”

46. *Sejong sillok*, the 10th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

“I think your words are beautiful,” expressed Sejong, but the king still argued that his own measure was proper. Sejong took the criticism that “The learning of Your Majesty contains the principle of Heaven, human affairs, and knowledge of the past and present. You are proud of ritual, music, politics, and education as those of *sandai*. Why do you consider yourself as an intermediate king of the Han and Tang dynasties only in this matter?”⁴⁷ To this, Sejong only kept silent.

On the 14th day of the 11th leap lunar month of 1441, Choe Man-ri presented a memorial to the throne, indicating five mistakes. Facing Sejong’s thinking of *zhongyong* squarely, Saganwon and Saheonbu also sent a memorial to the throne in joint signature and asked Sejong to select one of the alternatives based on the theory of heterodoxy.

We, subjects, asked a favor of Your Majesty about this many times. Your Majesty neither neglected nor accepted our remonstrance. We have no idea of what Your Majesty thinks about this. Saying it is right and not accepting it, it will be like regarding goodness as right and not following it. Also, we have no idea what Your Majesty thinks about *gyeongchanhoe*. If Your Majesty says it is wrong and does not abandon it, it will be like hating evil and not discarding it. It is a great virtue and priority of politics of the king to like goodness and follow it and to hate badness and reject it. This is the reason why we, subjects, ask a favor of Your Majesty to consider seriously and consistently this matter.⁴⁸

Based on the argument (3), Sejong still expressed his opinion that he had no intention to abandon *gyeongchanhoe*, claiming that “There were kings who liked Buddhism in the past. In our dynasty, Taejong was strong-minded and a man of decision. He rejected heterodoxy but did not reform everything.”

On the 15th day of the 11th leap lunar month of 1441, there was

47. *Sejong sillok*, the 11th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong’s reign (1441). The basic structure of Zhu Xi’s thought is to view *sandai* and the Han and Tang dynasties as opposite.

48. *Sejong sillok*, the 14th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong’s reign (1441).

a meeting held at Yukjo 六曹 (Six Ministries). *Yejo panso* 禮曹判書 (Minister of Rites) Kim Jong-seo and *byeongjo panso* 兵曹判書 (Minister of War) Shin In-son were supposed to make a suggestion to Sejong at the meeting. On the 17th day of the 11th lunar leap month, Choe Man-ri expressed his new opinion that the law should be changed.

Your Majesty said, "A relic of the previous kings has been repaired. Why won't *gyeongchanhoe* be held?" Considering this matter, laws were made with all mind and heart to be handed down permanently without fault; however, (17) if they are not appropriate for the times, they should be changed. This tower will be no exception. If it is once repaired, it will be sufficient. How will *gyeongchanhoe* be inescapable?⁴⁹

The theoretical confrontation was over. The argument (1) was refuted, the argument (2) distrusted, and only the argument (3) was left. Nevertheless, the argument (3) allowed no compromise with the subjects' theory of heterodoxy. Accordingly, *daegan* 臺諫 (censors) stood against the king by a gesture of resignation.⁵⁰ They could not control their anger because Sejong said, "Though your words are right, I have already made up my mind and cannot accept your suggestion," or "I have nothing more to say as I have said enough in the past."⁵¹ The subjects at Uijeongbu 議政府 (State Council), Yukjo, and Jiphyeonjeon and Confucian scholars at Taehak 太學 (another name for Seonggyungwan) dissuaded the king. At last on the 23rd day of the 11th lunar leap month of 1441, unwell Hwang Hui, who was the chief minister at the age of 80, asked the king to follow "public opinion."⁵² On the 26th day of the 11th lunar leap month, however, Sejong expressed his

49. *Sejong sillok*, the 17th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

50. *Sejong sillok*, the 18th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

51. *Sejong sillok*, the 21st day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

52. *Sejong sillok*, the 23rd day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

opinion not to accept memorials to the Throne and suggestions any more. On the 29th day of the 11th leap lunar month, *daegan* asked in vain the king to dismiss themselves.

On the 9th day of the 12th lunar month, when the catastrophic confrontation between Sejong and his subjects reached its peak, Jeong In-ji demonstrated a decisive opposition to the throne:

In the previous dynasty, Buddhism flourished and all people became believers in Buddhism. It seemed that its influence was overwhelming throughout the country. Taejong discussed the matter with Ha Ryun and rejected Buddhism severely. Seven or eight cases out of ten were abolished. Taejong had our *dao* 道 revealed and customs corrected again. Today, all the people know Buddhism is not right, reject it as heterodoxy, and have returned into the right path. Much gains with few pains. However, Your Majesty rejects all discussions arbitrarily, thinks highly of and respects Buddhism. It is against the hope of our subjects.⁵³

Sejong didn't grant royal sanction in the end, saying as follows:

I have received many sealed letters in relation to this matter. I have already become Emperor Wudi 武帝 of the Liang dynasty. It is not difficult to stop this. As I am unable to make him a true man and burn Buddhist scriptures, I won't follow you. It is my fault that I haven't prohibited a Buddhist monk from entering the palace and cutting the hair of the princess. More often than not, it is *xiaoru* 小儒 (narrow-minded Confucian scholars) that fabricate the faults of the king. While they cannot dissuade their parents from praying to Amitabha and reading Buddhist scriptures, is it right that they fabricate the faults of the king according to the memorials sent by others to the throne?⁵⁴

53. *Sejong sillok*, the 9th day of the 12th lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

54. *Sejong sillok*, the 9th day of the 12th lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

At last, on the 24th day of the 3rd lunar month of 1442, Sejong exerted his prerogative power and had a *gyeongchanhoe* held at Heungcheonsa temple.

Conclusion

Looking back at the matters from the 12th day of the 5th lunar month of 1435 to the 24th day of the 3rd lunar month of 1442, it can be viewed that Sejong had already decided from the very beginning to reconstruct the *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple and subsequently perform the *gyeongchanhoe*. He had expected the consequent opposition of subjects; he had anticipated that he would have to use the prerogative power in the end. Then, is it not true that the expressions of Sejong—such as “Your discussions are very fair and right,” “I don’t admire Buddha,” “Buddhist monks are also my people,” and “I think your words are beautiful”—were only rhetoric to accomplish a certain established purpose? When he faced a breakdown in the relations with his subjects after failing to find any common ground with them, he ridiculed himself by saying, “I have already become Emperor Wudi of the Liang dynasty,” while also criticizing his subjects as *xiaoru* for “fabricating the faults of the king.” Is this the real characteristic of Sejong, the so-called most representative sage king in the Joseon dynasty?

It is evident from past incidences that when Sejong established a purpose, he anticipated the opposition of his subjects and the final use of the prerogative power.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there is little to doubt the sincerity of Sejong’s expressions in the process; Sejong searched for *zhongyong* and met every moment wholeheartedly. If not, there would have been no need for the arguments at court to last for such a long time. The seven-year-long arguments exemplified the *gongnon* poli-

55. It appears that Sejong coped with the incidents of Yangyeong and the corruption of Jo Mal-saeng according to the thinking of *zhongyong*. For further information, refer to Park Hong-kyu (2008).

tics, which characterized the politics of Sejong. Meanwhile, although Sejong exerted tactics to achieve a purpose, he had neither stopped the opposition of his subjects nor produced any political scapegoats. As to his use of the prerogative power, he recognized himself as “a king refusing remonstrance.”⁵⁶ Thus, arguments over the *sarigak* at Heungcheonsa temple had developed in the frame of the *gongnon* politics.⁵⁷ The expressions such as “Emperor Wudi of the Liang dynasty” and *xiaoru* elucidate how difficult it was to pursue *zhongyong* with sincerity.

Moreover, the numerous achievements of the king and subjects in the course of the incident of *sarigak*, as the consequences of *zhongyong* thinking, included: the establishment of a type foundry inside Gyeongbokgung palace in the 7th lunar month of 1435; the production and distribution of *Jachi tonggam hunui* 自治通鑑訓義 (Explanations on the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*) in the 4th lunar month of 1436; the conquest of the Jurchen and the establishment of six fortresses in the 9th lunar month of 1437; the completion of Heumgyeonggak 欽敬閣 by Jang Yeong-sil in the 1st lunar month of 1438; the enforcement of the law of tribute tax in Gyeongsang and Jeolla regions in the 7th lunar month of 1438; and the production of a rain gauge in the 8th lunar month of 1441.

It is viewed that Sejong practiced two types of Confucianism. One was exclusive Confucianism, which rejected Buddhism, Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Legalism and treated even geomantic studies, geography, and astronomy as knowledge of miscellaneous matters. Sejong neither denied such Confucianism nor tried to stick to it, however. The thinking of Sejong moved beyond exclusion and toward the world of inclusion and embracement. King Sejong in the actual world knew well that the real world could not be governed only by exclusion. Perhaps, he may also have hoped to escape from the exclusive Confucian characteristics demonstrated in the revolution by his grandfather

56. *Sejong sillok*, the 29th day of the 11th leap lunar month, 23rd year of King Sejong's reign (1441).

57. It is known that there had never been arguments between kings and subjects over the thought of Zhu Xi and its practice in China, the origin of Neo-Confucianism.

Taejo and the coup by his father Taejong. Sejong may have practiced inclusive Confucianism that imagined the world where Buddhism, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Legalism, geomantic studies, geography, and astronomy coexisted asymmetrically together with exclusive Confucianism. Sejong's thinking of *zhongyong* appears to have been derived from such Confucianism.

For Sejong, an ideal and enlightened world could be reached by a sage who was cultivated with "the law of the mind" of *zhonghe* 中和 and transmitted through spiritual awakening, which is suggested in the *Zhongyong zhangju*. He sincerely approached the perfect world through pursuing only good, right, and truth. At the same time, he prudently thought about the incomplete real world where evil, wrong, and falsehood still existed. This paper tried to explain Sejong's thinking and behavior, which mixed the gravity toward the ideal and the prudence toward the reality, from the viewpoint of *zhongyong*. Most likely, the thinking of Zhu Xi aiming for the ideal world of *sandai* might be the same as that of Sejong's *zhongyong* (Choi and Park 2007, 28-32). Nevertheless, Zhu Xi neither could be a king during his life nor had an opportunity to design such a world with a king. An opportunity to argue about such a world with a king at court had not been given to the followers of Zhu Xi of China, either. At the Joseon court, however, one side tried to think and practice in accordance with the real intention of Zhu Xi while the other side performed an experiment that in some ways excelled Zhu Xi.

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