

Western Studies and Confucian Responses in 18th Century Korea

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18세기 朝鮮西學의 改革主義의 性格

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요 약

유럽에서 발달한 근대문명이 압도적인 기세로 東洋에 진출하는 것은 19세기 중엽 이후의 일이다. 이에 앞서 대략 16세기 말에서 19세기 초에 이르기까지 2세기 남짓한 기간에 걸쳐 동서간의 문화교류는 대체로 일정한 수준을 유지하였는데, 이 단계를 대표한 것이 예수회 선교사들로서, 이들은 그 이전에 유례가 없었던 체계적이고도 지속적인 방법으로 서양문명의 여러 측면, 특히 기독교와 과학기술을 동양인들에게 소개했다.

日本과 中國에서 16세기 후반과 17세기 벽두에 각각 예수회의 본격적인 활동이 시작한 것에 비하여 朝鮮의 경우는 서양문명과의 접촉이 더 늦고, 더 범위가 좁고, 그리고 간접적인 방법으로 이루어졌다. 中國 使行을 통해 예수회 제통의 책들이 朝鮮의 일부 지식인들에게 전해지기 시작한 것은 17세기 초엽의 일이었으나 17세기를 통해 이들 서적의 내용에 대한 깊이있는 연구가 이루어진 흔적은 전혀 보이지 않는다.

18세기에 들어와서야 李瀼(1681—1763)이 몇 가지 책자에 跋文을 쓰고 愼後聘(1702—1761)이 「西學辨」을 짓는 등 西學에 대한 차원높은 연구가 나타나지만, 아직도 좁은 범위의 사람들에 의한 개인적인 연구의 수준이었다. 그러다가 正祖朝(1776—1800)에 들어오면 西學이 비로소 집단적인 운동의 성격을 띠고 전개되기 시작하는데, 그 두드러진 흐름의 하나는 “利用厚生”을 제창한 北學派의 학자들이 서양의 科學・技術에 깊은 관심을 보인 것이고, 다른 하나는 “經世致用”을 제창한 畿湖學派의 일부 소장 학자들이 天主教 신앙운동을 전개한 것이다.

이 가운데 北學派의 경우는 집단운동으로서의 성격이 길게 지속하지 못하지만 宗教로서의 西學운동은 여러 가지 고비를 넘기면서 開港期까지 그 흐름이 계속된다. 따라서 보다 많은 연구자들의 관심이 종교운동의 방면으로 모여졌지만, 그 대부분은 운동의 추이를 신앙심의 성장이라는 기준에 의해서만 고찰해 왔다. 최근에 이르러서야 이 운동의 출발이 당시에 가졌던 정치적・문화적・사회적 배경과 의미를 실질적으로 추구하는 연구가 제출되기 시작하였다. 또 한 가지 지금까지의 연구에서 아쉬웠던 점은 中國의 西學界와의 연관이 충분히 세밀하게 검토되지 못한 것이다. 朝鮮西學의 발달이 비록 자주적으로 이루어진 것이었더라도 그 내용은 전적으로 中國의 西學界에서 유입된 서적에 근거를 두고 있었으며, 또 中國의 西學界가 17세기를 통해 祖上祭祀문제 등 중대한 변화를 겪고 있었으므로 그 변화가 朝鮮의 西學에도 상당한 작용을 했으리라는 개연성이 엄밀히 검토되어야 할 것이다.

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1784년에 李檣(1754—1786)·李承薰(1756—1801) 등의 주도로 출범한 天主敎會는 몇해 못가 珍山사건(1791)으로 중대한 기로에 서게 된다. 이 사건을 계기로 敎회의 지도층은 두 갈래로 분열하는데, 그 하나는 신앙을 절대시하는 경향을 보이면서 辛酉박해(1801)를 거쳐 敎회의 주체를 형성한다. 다른 하나는 祭祀거부가 문제가 된 珍山사건을 계기로 敎회와의 사이에 거리를 두면서도 西學에의 관련이 계속 논란의 대상이 되는 사람들로써 權哲身(1736—1801), 李家煥(1742—1801), 李承薰, 丁若鏞(1762—1836) 등 명망있는 학자와 전도유망한 판로들이 이에 포함된다.

18세기의 實學이 朱子學의 名分論에 의해 고착되어 있던 당시의 政治的·文化的 상황에서 변화를 위한 돌파구를 찾는데 그 기본적인 의미가 있었다면 李瀼에서 丁若鏞에 이르는 畿湖學派의 학자들이 西學을 추구한 것도 같은 방향으로 일관성있는 움직임이었다고 볼 수 있겠다. 17세기 중엽에서 18세기 초까지 中國의 祖上祭祀 문제를 통해 나타났던 東西間의 도그마의 대결이 18세기 말의 朝鮮에서 재현된 상황 속에서 畿湖學派의 일부 소장학자들은 補儒論의인 西學을 수용함으로써 이 대결을 극복하는 타협적이고도 연속적인 진로를 모색하였으나 마치 1세기 전의 예수회 선교사들과 마찬가지로 그들은 대결의 쌍방 어느 쪽에 의해서도 용납될 수 없었던 것이다. 요컨대 18세기 朝鮮에서의 西學의 발전은 體制의 변화를 추구하는 경향에 의해 뒷받침되었으며 그 구체적인 과정은 體制와 反體制 사이의 相乘의인 硬化화 이에 따른 中道的인 개혁파의 좌절로 구성되었고, 개혁파의 주도로 출범한 신앙운동이 짧은 시간내에 현실부정적인 극단적 성향으로 변질하고 개혁파가 그 실 망을 잃어버리게 된 것은 이에 앞선 中國의 祖上祭祀 문제가 직접적인 원인이 되었던 것이다.

1. Neo-Confucian predominance in Korea

Ever since the 5th and 6th centuries AD, when Chinese was generally adopted as the written language in Korea, down to the 19th century when the country was opened up to the rest of the world, almost all the major cultural achievements of the country were based on importations from China. It has been on these grounds that many Koreans, as well as the Chinese, considered the country as an "imitation on a smaller scale" of China(小中華).

Most citizens, and even most scholars of modern Korea, however, are usually more reluctant to take it quite that way. Great efforts have been exerted for the establishment of a national identity, especially after 1945, and they do not seem to have been totally fruitless. Even with the most obvious importations from China, it seems by now to have been generally established that the Koreans can assert their uniqueness on the following points; (1) that the importations were selective, (2) that different versions were developed on the Korean soil, and (3) that different bearings were taken on by parallel elements in Korea and China.

It is one the best-known facts about Korean history that "a brand of Neo-Confucianism called *sōng-ri-hak* was predominant among the Korean scholars all through the Chosun dynasty(1392—1910)".¹⁾ To see exactly what this statement amounts to, a little elaboration seems necessary even for those who are well-acquainted with Neo-Confucianism in China. As an introduction to the main discussion of this paper, I will try to present a short summary from recent works on the topic, by making use of the three points given above.

Confucianism was among the first items imported into Korea during the 5th and 6th centuries, but it did not become the predominant element until towards the end of the Koryo dynasty

1) Yi Ki-baek, *A new history of Korea* (tr. by E.W. Wagner, Harvard U.P., 1984) and Han Woo-Keun, *The history of Korea* (tr. by Lee Kyung-shik, Eul-yoo Pub. Co., Seoul, 1970) can most easily be consulted for the outline of Korean history, including statements like this.

(918—1392), when the Neo-Confucian version was imported; after a century of rapid spread among the newly rising literati class, it was established as the orthodoxy, first of that class, and then of the newly founded Chosun dynasty.²⁾

The importing of Neo-Confucianism was highly selective. Buddhism had been prevailing for nearly a millennium and little effort had been made by the Koreans during the time to import any other religious or philosophical elements from contemporary China. Only toward the end of Koryo did a substantial need emerge for a new political and social ideology, as a result of the deteriorations of the Mongol rule³⁾ and of the domestic aristocracy.

Neo-Confucianism, or one of its brands, was able to meet the Korean need of the time in several ways; Firstly, it had a universality of theorisation sufficient to replace the current Buddhism. Secondly, it contained a value system such as was urgently needed for the construction of a new political and social order. Thirdly, through the emphasis on the practise of virtue, it supported the moral and intellectual aspirations of a country which was emerging from the long and strong suzerainty of Mongol China. Fourthly, its principle of civilian priority gave ground to the political and social reorganization in favour of the newly rising literati class.

The new dynasty entered another tributary relationship on its foundation, this time under the suzerainty of the Ming dynasty. This new suzerainty, compared to the one before it, relied less on material forces and more on moral obligations, allowing Korea more political autonomy and encouraging Koreans to develop their Neo-Confucian ideology. Early monarchs of the Chosun dynasty⁴⁾ also saw the need for the cultivation of the literati class, serviceable to the new order, and also for the establishment of a universal value system among the people.

The 15th and 16th centuries saw a great development of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, along with the settlement of the new political and social order. It would be out of place here to go too deeply into the details, but a few remarkable aspects of this phase may be mentioned; (1) the ardent adherence to Sung scholars, especially to Chu Hsi, at the cost of Ming period developments,⁵⁾ (2) the achievement of a highly sophisticated metaphysical system,⁶⁾ and (3) the new ideology's extraordinarily long service as state ideology.

Just as Neo-Confucianism in Korea reached its apogée in the latter half of the 16th century, things began to go wrong for its further development. The flourishing of schools caused over-

2) Wm. T. de Bary & J. K. Haboush eds., *The rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea* (Columbia U.P., 1985) is the most convenient reference for Neo-Confucianism in Korea. Important references in Korean are to be found in the papers contained there.

3) Since 1231, the Mongols made several expeditions to Koryo until their suzerainty was established in 1270. This suzerainty, the severest Korea has ever experienced, began to deteriorate in around 1360. See Yi and Han in n.1.

4) Most conspicuous of them was King Sejong (世宗, r. 1418—1450), considered the Sage King in Korea. See Yi and Han in n.1.

5) *Yang-ming-hsueh*(陽明學) was imported and taken up by several Korean scholars during the 17th century, but was never popularised. See Kim Kil-hwan, *A study of Yang-ming-hsueh in Korea*(金吉煥, 『韓國陽明學研究』, Iljisa, Seoul, 1981) and Yu Myung-jong, *Yang-ming-hsueh in Korea*(劉明鍾, 『韓國陽明學』, Tong-hwa Pub. Co., Seoul, 1983).

6) Yi Hwang (李滉, or T'oegye 退溪, 1501—1570) and Yi I (李珥, or Yulgok 栗谷, 1536—1584) are the most celebrated authors of this achievement. See Sa-soon Youn, "T'oegye's Identification of 'To be' and 'Ought'", Tomoeda Ryutaro, "Yi T'oegye and Chu Hsi: Differences in Their Theories of Principle and Material Force", Tu Weiming, "Yi T'oegye's perception of Human nature", Wing-tsit Chan, "How T'oegye Understood Chu Hsi", Julia Ching, "Yi Yulgok on the 'Four beginnings and the Seven Emotions'" and Sakai Tadao, "Yi Yulgok and the Community Compact" in de Bary and Haboush, eds., op. cit.

population in the literati class, which in turn gave rise to severe conflicts among factions. The invasions of the Japanese(1592—98) and of the Manchus(1627—37) stirred many people out of the existing order. The rise of Ch'ing(1644) challenged the Sino-centric part of the ideology. Socioeconomic developments began to take place beyond the government's control.

As a result of these phenomena, the literati class went through a process of differentiation during the 17th century. One group tried to stick even more strongly to the old order. Some of them indulged in the metaphysical or individualistic aspects of Neo-Confucianism, while others developed a blind adherence to orthodoxy, accusing all the new elements of heterodoxy.⁷⁾ Another group was more ready to come to terms with the reality and sought various ways of accommodating the new problems. Some of them tried to develop certain extensions from the existing order, while others tried to introduce new elements from contemporary China or from any other sources.

2. Practical Learning(*Shil-hak*) in the 18th century

In the 18th century, circumstances became once more favourable to an academic renaissance in Korea. Monarchs with strong personalities came to throne, determined to restore order to the country. The authority of Ch'ing as suzerain was well established by this time, and it had become more and more obvious that the socio-economic developments in the country could not be coped with by mere adherence to orthodoxy.

The consolidated regal power allowed, indeed, sometimes even encouraged, officials and scholars to seek various ways of dealing with the problems of the time, with little fear of being accused as heterodox. It brought about the rise of a new intellectual movement which was marked by a direct and deep concern about practical matters. Later, during the Japanese occupation(1910—1945), nationalist historians defined this movement as the manifestation of the progressive and creative spirit of the nation and awarded it with the name of *Shil-hak* (實學).⁸⁾ After the liberation in 1945, this subject drew more and more scholars into its studies and grew into a large field of study on its own right.

The definition of *Shil-hak* is still rather vague, but scholars on the whole have tended to make an extensive use of the term, and it now usually refers to all those academic trends between the 17th and 19th centuries that were directly and deeply concerned about practical matters. Three schools with different slogans have been identified as sub-trends of *Shil-hak*; the reformists(經世致用), the pragmatists(利用厚生) and the scientists(實事求是).⁹⁾ The distinctions

7) Perhaps the most dramatic case was the persecution of Yun Hyu (尹鑰, 1617—1680), one of the most celebrated scholars of the time. See Miura Kunio, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in 17th Century Korea: Song Si-yol and Yun Hyu" in de Bary Haboush, eds., op. cit.

8) A detailed account is given in Ch'on Kwan-u, "The history of *Shil-hak* thoughts in Korea" (千寬宇, 『韓國實學思想史』) in v.12 of *Outline of Cultural History of Korea*, compiled and published by Minjok-Munhwa-Yon'guso of Korea University (高麗民族文化研究所, 『韓國文化史大系』, 1970).

9) Korean Historical Association, ed., *Introduction to the study of Shil-hak* (韓國歷史學會, 『實學研究入門』, Iljogak, Seoul, 1973), Yu Won-dong, *Outline of Shil-hak* (劉元東, 『韓國實學概論』, Chong'umsa, Seoul, 1984) and Chong Song-ch'ol, *Lineages of Shil-hak thoughts* (鄭成哲, 『韓國實學思想の系譜』, tr. into Japanese by Ch'oe, Kwon & Kim, Tokyo, 1983) are to be consulted for general discussion about *Shil-hak*.

among these schools are also still vague, but the slogans themselves are quite distinct from one another, even though more than one of them are often to be found in a single person.

In the 18th century, there were two scholarly lineages that made outstanding contributions to *Shil-hak* and were also conspicuous for their deep and broad interest in Western studies(西學). One of them was called either *Kiho*(畿湖) *School*, after the name of the area where it was most active, or *Sŏngho*(星湖) *School*, after the literary name of its early master Yi Ik (李瀼). It was active all through the 18th century and was carried on into the 19th century by Chŏng Yak-yong(丁若鏞, 1762—1836), who is widely acknowledged as the greatest master of *Shil-hak*.¹⁰⁾ Reformist ideas were most characteristic of this school.

The other lineage was called *Northern School*(兆學派) and consisted of a group of scholar-officials who were resident in Seoul and active during the second half of the 18th century. Representative characters of this school were usually minor officials with academic talents who had visited China with envoys.¹¹⁾ They were deeply impressed by the prosperity of China of the time and often were also enchanted by various articles of European origin which they found in Peking. The discussions among them led to a sizeable movement for the improvement of practical matters including commerce and industry, which had been neglected by previous scholars as marginal elements of society. They are known as the most ardent exponents of the pragmatic trend.

3. Western studies among the 18th century Korean scholars

Nobody from Europe reached Korea before the 1830's except for a handful of occasional ship-

10) Tasan (茶山, Chŏng's literary name) is the central figure of this paper, even if he does not appear so often by himself. Not only because he was one of the greatest scholars of Chosun, but because he was the only one from his group to survive long enough to leave a vast writing, from which the religious movement of the 1780's can be traced. There has been a complicated debate over his attitude to Western studies and the degree of his commitment to the religion, which can be seen in Kum Chang-t'ae, "The influence of western studies on Tasan's thought and its bearing" (琴章泰, 「茶山の思想에 있어서 西學의 影響과 意義」) in *Journal of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kukje University* (國際大『人文社會科學研究所 論文集』), 3, 1975, Pak Chong-hong, "The westernized world-view and Tasan's proto-Confucianism" (朴鍾鴻, 「對西歐의 世界觀과 茶山の 洙泗舊觀」) in his *Studies on the history of Korean philosophy* (『韓國 思想史論考』, Somundang, Seoul, 1977) and Ha U-bong, "A study of Tasan's commitment to Western studies" (河宇鳳, 「丁茶山の 西學關係에 대한 一考察」, master's thesis at Dong-a University, 1977). There have been a vast amount of studies on Tasan, of which the outline is reflected in Han Woo-keun *et. al.*, *The present stage of studies on Tasan* (韓治勛 外, 『丁茶山 研究의 現況』, Min'umsa, Seoul, 1985). I will give here the outline of his life.

Born in 1762 in a small village about 20 miles upstream from Seoul as the fourth and last son of a minor official. Won Chinsa (進士) degree in 1783 and became the favorite of King Chongjo while studying in government institutions. Won the Final (文科) degree in 1798 and entered court service. Served as a royal secretary or as a provincial administrator for most of the time until 1801, when his official career came to a stop. During Chŏngjo's reign, he was repeatedly accused of involvement in heterodoxy, and after the King's death he was tried again and this time was convicted guilty. He was exiled to a place near the southwestern coast where he lived 18 years until he was remitted by the government in 1819. After that, he returned to his birth place and lived 17 more years there in peace until his death in 1836. During the 35 years of seclusion(1801—1836), he authored a great amount of writing, much of which is contained in at least three different compilations. They are: *Yŏ-Yu-dang Chŏn-so* 與猶堂全書, comp. 1935—1937, *Chŭng-bo Yŏ-yu-dang Chŏn-so* 增補與猶堂全書, comp. 1970, and *Chŏng Tasan Chŏn-sŏ* 丁茶山全書, comp. 1960.

11) Hong Tae-yong (洪大容, 1731—1783) went to Peking in 1765. Yi Tŏkmu (李德懋, 1741—1793) in 1778. Pak Chi-won (朴趾源, 1737—1805) in 1780. Yu Tŭk-kong (柳得恭, 1748—1807) and Pak Che-ga (朴齊家, 1750—1815) three times each beginning 1790.

wrecked travellers and one Catholic priest who was despatched from Japan to a Japanese post in Korea in 1594. Some of the shipwrecked travellers lived in Korea for substantial lengths of time,¹²⁾ but they do not seem to have represented Europe well enough to the Koreans to arouse any lasting interest among them. Nor does Cespedes, the Jesuit priest from Japan, seem to have left any significant impression on the Koreans.¹³⁾ On the other hand, there is no trace at all of Koreans reaching Europe, except for a boy who is said to have been taken to Japan as a war captive and sold at the slave market there to a Jesuit priest, who later took him to Rome.¹⁴⁾

Only after the beginning of the 17th century when the Jesuits were established in Peking, was a regular channel set up for the Koreans to become acquainted with anything European; the envoy to Peking, virtually the only channel at all between Korea and the outside world for a long time. Some members of the envoys met and spoke with the Jesuits in Peking and brought back a number of Jesuit publications in Chinese, together with various items of European origin such as alarm clocks and telescopes.¹⁵⁾ It is speculated by many people that the stay of Crown Prince So-hyon(昭顯世子) as hostage in Peking in 1644 might have led to a great promotion of western studies in Korea, but for his sudden and mysterious death shortly after his return to the country.¹⁶⁾ At any rate, the Crown prince's stay in Pecking brought about a large-scale importing of European matters.

Mentions were made about things European in the writings of several Korean scholars during the 17th century.¹⁷⁾ But they were no more than fragmentary and occasional mentions which reflected little of serious consideration of the authors. Apparently, the first Korean scholar to give any systematic thought to these things was Yi Ik(李穡, 1681—1763), who wrote prefaces to three Jesuit books, as well as shorter discussions here and there. He began writing these prefaces in the 1720's, but obviously he had been thinking about them for a long time and had been advising his followers to study them as well. On the whole, he showed considerable respect to the European matters, especially to those of science and technology and also to some of ethics, though he was often very critical to the religious doctrines. As well as being the

12) Three survivors from a wrecked Dutch ship reached Korea in 1628. Two of them died during the war with the Manchus in 1634, but the last one, Jan J. Waltevre, was naturalized and lived at least 20 more years in Korea. Another shipwreck in 1653 brought 38 more Dutch to Korea, who were confined in military camps for a long time. Eight of them, including Hendrik Hamel, managed to escape to Japan in 1666 and returned to Holland. Hamel wrote *Relation du Naufrage d'un Vaisseau Hollandois*, the first detailed account of Korea in an European language.

13) Gregorio de Cespedes (1551—1611) was despatched to Korea at the request of Konishi Yukinaga, one of the most influential *daimyos* under Toyotomi Hideyoshi, to serve in the camps of Christian *daimyos* stationed in Korea.

14) An Italian priest, Carletti, bought five children from Korea at the slave market in Japan during his stay there in 1597—1598. He gave them baptism, took them to Goa and set them free, except the one he called Antonio Corea, who accompanied him to Italy. See Ryu Hong-ryol, *The History of the Korean Catholic Church* (柳洪烈, 『韓國天主教會史』, The Catholic Press, Seoul, 1962).

15) Section 1 of Pak Song-nae, "Western science and Shilhak scholars" (*Korea Journal*, 26-3, 1986) illustrates the role of envoys in importing Western elements into Korea.

16) The Crown Prince stayed at the Ch'ing court as hostage for eight years. In 1644, he was taken to Peking and stayed there for about 70 days before he was sent back to Korea. During his stay in Peking, he made friends with Adam Schall and showed great enthusiasm about Western science. See Yamaguchi Masayuki, "Crown Prince Sohyun and Adam Schall von Bell" (山口正之, 『昭顯世子と湯若望』) in *Ch'öng-gu-hak-ch'ong* (『靑丘學叢』) 5, 1931, and Kim Yong-dök, *Studies on Thoughts of late Chosun* (金龍德, 『朝鮮後期思想史研究』, Eul-yoo Pub. Co., Seoul, 1977).

17) Better known among them are Yi Su-gwang (1563—1628) and Ryu Mong-in (1559—1623).

most important *Shil-hak* scholar in its early phase, he is also reckoned as the true initiator of Western studies in Korea.¹⁸⁾

Among the later members of *Kiho School* who succeeded to Yi Ik's ideas and scholarship, there were many who more or less took after his interest in Western studies as well. During King Chǒngjo(正祖)'s reign(1776—1800), a group of them carried it further and even attempted to embrace the whole system, including the religious creed. They were the founders of the first Christian church in Korea.

There were others from the same school who were openly opposed to Western studies and to the religious movement. One of them, Shin Hudam(愼後聃, 1702—1761), wrote a long treatise to refute the contents of the Jesuit books as early as in 1724, one year after he had been first advised by Yi Ik to read them.¹⁹⁾ Another, An Chǒng-bok(安鼎福, 1712—1791), one of the greatest historiographers that Korea has produced, wrote a short treatise, and then a longer one, to warn the younger scholars against Western studies, when the religious movement broke out as a scandal in the literary sphere around 1785.²⁰⁾ To be noted in both Shin and An's treatises is their close understanding of the subject, which betrays their own great interest in it.²¹⁾ There were several more people from the same school and the same generation as the church-founders who at first either supported or took part in the religious movement, but later deserted and became foremost in its suppression.²²⁾

Around the same time as the religious movement among the *Kiho School* scholars, *Northern School* was active in Seoul. *Northern School* scholars are noted for their belief in the improvement of the material conditions of living, which led to a deep interest in science and technology. The leading figures of the school had the experiences of visiting Peking with envoys, and some of them met and had discussions with Catholic priests who were resident there. Hong Tae-yong(洪大容, 1731—1783) was most conspicuous among them for his deep interest in Western science. Recently, many scholars have paid great attention to his unusually early adherence to the theory of the Earth's rotation, together with his idea of the infinite universe.²³⁾ Towards

18) Yi wrote prefaces to Matteo Ricci, Emmanuel Diaz and Julius Aleni's books (『天主實義』, 『天問略』, 『職方外紀』). His attitude towards Western studies has been studied by many scholars, including Han woo-keun, A *Study of Yi Ik* (韓治勳, 『星湖 李瀛研究』, Seoul Nat'l U.P., Seoul, 1980), Yi Yong-bǒm' "Yi Ik's theory of the rotating Earth and its basis" (『李龍範, 李瀛의 地動說과 그 論據』, *Chindan Hakpo* 『震檀學報』 39, 1972) and Yi Won-sun, "Western studies of Yi Ik" (李元淳, 『星湖 李瀛의 西學世界』, *Journal of Church History* 『教會史研究』 1, 1977).

19) Ch'oe Tong-hi, "A study on Shin Hu-dam's Sǒ-hak-Pyǒn" (崔東熙, 『愼後聃의 西學辨에 관한 研究』, *Journal of Asian Studies* 『亞細亞研究』 15-2, 1975). See also Yi, Won-sun, "Shin Hu-dam's views on Western education and Chih-fang-wei-chi" (李元淳, 『職方外紀와 愼後聃의 西洋教育論』, *Journal of History Education* 『歷史教育』 11 and 12, 1969).

20) Yi Won-sun, "An Chong-bok's discussions on Christianity" (李元淳, 『安鼎福의 天學論攷』, 『李海南博士華甲紀念史學論叢』, Seoul, 1970) and Ch'oe Tong-hi, "On An Chǒng-bok's criticism on western studies" (崔東熙, 『安鼎福의 西學批判에 관한 研究』, *Journal of Asian Studies* 『亞細亞研究』 19-2, 1976).

21) This point, the relatively deep understanding of Christianity shown in anti-Western treatises by 18th century Korean authors, was the central point of my presentation at the 3rd Korea-Japan History of Science Seminar in Seoul, 1986, under the title, "Late Chosun scholars' views of European religion and science".

22) Most conspicuous among them was Yi Ki-kyǒng (李基莛, 1756—1819), who later compiled *Pyǒk-wi-p'yǒn*(縣衙編), a collection of anti-Western writings and records of suppressions. Shin Hu-dam's "Sǒ-hak-pyǒn" (西學辨) and An chǒng-bok's "Ch'ǒn-hak-ko" (天學考) and "Ch'ǒn-hak Mun-dap" (天學問答) are all contained here. There exists a different version with the same title, compiled by Yi Man-ch'ae (李晩采), one of Yi Ki-kyǒng's descendants. The new version does not contain the early treatises, but includes records of later events which took place after Yi Ki-kyǒng's time.

23) Pak Sǒng-nae (Park Seong-rae), "Hong Tae-yong's idea of the rotating Earth", *Journal of the Korean History*

the end of the century, as the suppression of the religious movement led to an overall ban on Western studies, the scientific and technological pursuits of *Northern School* were also seriously affected.

4. The beginnings of the religious movement and of its suppression

Aside from Cespedes who was in Korea for about a year in 1594—1595 with the invading Japanese army, Chou Wen-mo(周文謨, 1752—1801) was the first ordained Catholic priest to set foot on Korean soil. The formal foundation of the Korean Catholic Church used to be given as 1795, the year of Chou's arrival in Korea,²⁴⁾ but recently, more has been made of 1784, when a spontaneous religious movement was launched in Korea by a group of young scholars. One member of the group, Yi Sŭng-hun(李承薰, 1756—1801), received baptism in Peking early that year, and on returning, administered baptism to his colleagues who started regular services among themselves.

The group, though small, was a very select one. It consisted chiefly of promising young scholars and officials from *Kiho School*. It is obvious that they inherited Yi Ik's deep interest in Western studies. The difference was that, while Yi's system of thought was firmly based on Confucianism and he thought of Western studies only as a possible source of supplements to Confucianism, these young people tried to introduce a fundamental change into the existing order, or even to replace it with a new, foreign one. In the true sense, they were more in line with the Jesuits' theory of complimenting Confucianism(補儒論)²⁵⁾ than their teacher had ever been.

Their divergence from Yi's path seems to have taken place a little time after they started a series of seminars on Western studies in 1779.²⁶⁾ Most of them had been studying various Jesuit books separately and had been impressed by one aspect or another, but were not ready to consider the religious aspects seriously. When they got together, one of the members, Yi Pyök(李檠, 1754—1786), ardently urged the others that they get to the bottom of the subject by trying to embrace all its elements, including the religious ones. In a short time, Yi Pyök made a religious leader of himself, and after leading the group for a few more years, despatched Yi Sŭng-hun to Peking to get in touch with the Catholic priests there, to find ways of setting up the movement on a new level.

Yi Sŭng-hun followed his friend's instructions quite faithfully. Though he does not seem to have been deeply interested in the religion by himself, he visited Pei-tang during his forty-odd days' stay in Peking and learned from the priests there about the religion as well as about

of Society (『韓國科學史學會誌』) 1-1, 1979, reviews previous works on the the subject. His 1986 paper (see n.15) supplements the review.

24) The year is given as 1794 in some books, according to the lunar calendar.

25) This theory was one of the key elements of the Jesuits' 'accommodationism'. See, for example, J. Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact* (tr. by J. Lloyd), Cambridge U.P., 1985, pp.27—29, 34—37, 50—53.

26) Ch. Dallet, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Corée*, 2 vols., Paris, 1874, gives a detailed account of the seminar, but with another date, in 1777(v.1, pp.14—15). As all the Korean sources point to 1779, with unmistakably identical details, it is now understood as a mistake on Dallet's side. See Kim Ok-hi, "Reception of Western studies and the mentality thereof" (金玉潔, 「西學의 受容과 그 意識構造」, *Papers on Korean History* 『韓國史論』 1, 1973).

mathematics, in which he was more interested in the first place. He was baptized just before leaving Peking, and on returning, offered baptism to his colleagues. At first he took charge of all the services by himself and other leaders constituted a council which took charge of the organization of the church. But soon, as the number of the followers increased, more priests were elected and ordained among themselves.²⁷⁾

The movement met its first suppression in the spring of 1785 when it was accidentally detected by the police through a routine inspection. The members were caught in the middle of the service and though they were not severely punished by the authorities,²⁸⁾ the incident gave rise to general feelings against Western studies in the government and in the literary sphere. Most of the leading members gave in to the social pressure and declared their desertion from the religion. Even Yi Pyok, who had been the most ardent member from the very beginning, could not persist any longer when his father attempted suicide because of his adherence to the religion. He died in agony early next year.²⁹⁾

Not all the deserters seem to have been as serious about their declarations as Yi Pyok was. Some of them resumed their roles in the religious movement and some kept on studying Western books. The religious group kept in touch with the priests in Peking and asked for their advice on ritual and dogmatic matters.³⁰⁾ The priests, obviously impressed by this spontaneous development in Korea, tried to offer as favourable replies as possible, but they still posed a couple of very critical problems to the young church in Korea; one was the inappropriateness of holding religious services without the presence of an ordained priest and the incompatibility of traditional rites with the Catholic creed.³¹⁾

To the first problem, the young church responded in due course, stopping the illegal services and asking for the despatch of an ordained priest, to which it presently received a favourable reply. But the second problem put the Korean church to a severe test, which resulted in a kind of differentiation among the members; most of the first leaders with scholarly dispositions and official standings dropped out and only people with more determined minds stuck to the cause. This was bound to be followed by another, severer suppression which broke out in 1791 when

27) Their misconduct of assuming the priesthood for themselves has usually been explained as the result of their ignorance about the liturgical matters. But I find it difficult to imagine that Yi Sŭng-hun should not have been taught about such basics when he was baptized. Telling from the circumstances, a more likely interpretation seems to be that, eager as they were to start the movement right away, they did not feel like waiting for the despatch of a priest, which they had no way of counting on, and that they just thought it would be all right to handle the matter by themselves, as long as they were doing it all of their own accord. Such a strict priesthood as was expected in the Catholic Church was alien to Korea, even with her Buddhism.

28) The only one punished on this occasion was the owner of the meeting place, who was exiled and died one year later.

29) For Yi Pyok's thought, see Kim Ok-hi *Yi Pyok's thoughts on Western studies* (金玉姬, 『曠庵 李栗斗 西學思想』, the Catholic Press, Seoul, 1979) and Yi Sŏng-bae, *Confucianism and Christianity* (李聖培, 『儒教과 Christ 教』, Benedict Press, Waegwan 1979).

30) A messenger was sent to Peking in 1789 with Yi Sŭng-hun's letter, which is preserved in Latin translation in Vatican. It seems unlikely, however, that Yi should have been so actively involved in the movement at this point of time as he had been before 1785. It was another 'priest', Ryu Hang-gŏm (柳恒儉, 1756-1801), who had been urging Yi again to send the letter. It was also Ryu who arranged and financed the messenger to Peking.

31) For a straightforward account of the Rites Centroveery in China, see K.S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, London, 1929, Ch.7.

two members were accused of refusing to pay respect to their ancestors.³²⁾ This constituted the vilest conceivable crime in the existing Korean social order, and alarmed even those who had so far been more or less sympathetic to the movement.³³⁾

Though three people were executed or tortured to death on this occasion, the government was on the whole still quite tolerant.³⁴⁾ Those who declared defection were either acquitted or very lightly punished. But the image of the religion to the eyes of the public underwent a significant change; it shifted from "indecent" to "evil". Previous leaders with any social prominence broke up with the religion for good and the church was left with people who did not care so much about the existing order. They ushered in Chou Wen-mo, the Chinese priest, and spread the belief among more neglected sectors of the society. The number of memberships is supposed to have grown to around 10,000 by 1801.³⁵⁾

The death of King Chǒngjo in 1800 was followed by another suppression, severer and more thoroughgoing than the previous ones. It lasted a whole year, from the end of 1800 to the end of 1801. Around 100 people died on this occasion, though several times more people were released after pledging against the religion,³⁶⁾ and those of any political or academic prominence were more severely tried and punished despite their pronounced denial of their involvement.³⁷⁾ After this, the church went into a long period of depression until the arriving of French priests in the 1830's.

5. Characteristics of the pseudo-church

So far I have been making out a brief description of the development of Western studies into a religious movement in late 18th century Korea. It's time, I think, I tried to offer some explanations. I will focus on the pseudo-church of 1784 and go on to its surrounding factors.

In terms of the religious attitude, the early leaders of the movement stood somewhere between their teacher Yi Ik, the father of the Western studies in Korea, and later members of

32) Yun Chi-ch'ung (尹持忠, 1759—1791), with his cousin Kwon Sang-yon (權尙然, 1750—1791) refused to go through the conventional rites when his mother died in 1791. They also had buried their ancestor-tablets in the ground. After they were arrested, they maintained an extraordinary confidence in their faith up to the time of execution. Particularly was their assertion that the rites were personal matters with which the authorities had no reason to interfere, and that members of the literati class did not have any more obligation than people from lower classes to observe the rites. Yun was a cousin of the Chǒng(丁) brothers', through whom he had acquired his faith in 1784.

33) Chancellor Ch'ae (see n.39 below), usually sympathizer to Western studies (he even suffered posthumous degradation in 1801 because of this), suggested the prime punishment of Yun and Kwon to the king, after trying for a little while to leave the matter to the provincial governor.

34) Yun and Kwon were executed and Kwon Il-shin died on the way to his exile. Yi Sŭng-hun was dismissed from his office. Ten-odd more people were released after more or less detentions.

35) This figure from Hwang's Secret Letter (see n.46 below) may be a slight overestimation. Even though Hwang tends a bit to exaggerate the size of the church, the overall exactness of the letter suggests that the figure is not so much removed from the fact.

36) The number of arrests is estimated at around 500 in *Korean Catholic Encyclopedia* (1985) while Cho Kwang, "An analysis of the 1801 persecution" (趙光, 「辛酉迫害의 分析의 考察」, *Journal of Church History* 『教會史研究』 1, 1977) presents 576.

37) Yi Sŭng-hun was executed, Yi ka-hwan died in jail, and the brothers Chong Yak-chǒn(丁若鎰) and Yak-yong were exiled, all regardless of their denials.

the regular church after 1795. They tried to get to the bottom of Western studies by embracing the Western religion as well as the Western science and technology, but they gave up their pursuit when it turned out to conflict with certain fundamental elements of the existing order. In order to find exactly where they stood, it is necessary to understand what connections they had to those before them and to those after.

Yi Ik was more conspicuous for his reform ideas than for anything else and he thought of Western studies as a possible instrument for his aim. During King Chǒngjo's reign, such views of his were, with different shades, inherited by different groups of people, who made different responses to the religious movement. To begin with, the leaders of the movement were more or less radical reformists who sought to build the framework of the reforms through Western studies.

A group of senior members of *Kiho School*, such as An Chǒng-bok and Yi Hǒn-gyǒng (李獻慶, 1719—1791)³⁸⁾, were openly opposed to the religious movement. They believed in comparatively moderate reforms and did not expect anything more from Western studies than the selective adoption of certain harmless elements. The King himself, together with his favourite Chancéllor Ch'ae Che-kong (蔡濟恭, 1720—1799), had a firm belief in traditional values, but they tried not to ignore the good points of Western studies because of the seemingly bad ones. They expected Western studies to provide a stimulus to the orthodox studies at least.³⁹⁾

On the other hand, the religious zeal does not seem to have been the primary inducement to most of the first leaders of the movement. Yi Pyǒk was an exception, and Chǒng Yak-chong (丁若鍾, 1760—1801) possibly another. Aside from them, almost all the leading members gave up the religion when they were instructed in 1790 by the priests in Peking to give up the rites to their ancestors. They had been reading those Jesuit books which had been published before the settlement of the Rites Controversy in 1742,⁴⁰⁾ and their reformist zeal had let them consider positively the most bizarre ideas in these books as long as they were within the boundary of "accommodationism". The instruction from Peking broke their illusion. It also denied the kind of autonomy of the Korean Church that they probably had had in mind.⁴¹⁾ Instead of a possible source of supplements to Confucianism as was described in the Jesuit books, they were all of a sudden faced with a totally foreign religion.

Then exactly what was it that motivated them to set about the movement in the first place? The reformist zeal was evident. They were promising young scholars and officials from a

38) Yi left a short treatise "Ch'ǒn-hak Mun-dap" (『天學問答』), which is contained in Yi Ki-kyǒng, *Pyǒk-wi-p'yǒn*.

39) Ch'ae was chancellor for an extraordinary length of time between 1788—1799. He was obviously in a very difficult position with the Western studies matters, because most of both the accusers and the accused were closely related to himself. The King and Ch'ae supported each other all through the 1790's in maintaining a policy of 'aloofness' over Western studies, asserting that the emergence of heterodoxy was no more than the result of the stagnation of orthodox studies, therefore stress should be laid more on the promotion of orthodoxy rather than on the direct suppression of heterodoxy. See Cho Kwang, "Ch'ae che-gong's views of Western studies" (趙沆, 『樊巖 蔡濟恭의 西學觀研究』, *Sa-ch'ong* 『史叢』 17 and 18, 1973).

40) The extent of Western books imported to Korea is studied in Pae Hyǒn-suk, "Christian publications imported to Chosun" (裴賢淑, 『朝鮮에 傳來된 天主教書籍』, *Papers on the History of the Korean Church* 『韓國教會史 論文集』 I, 1984) and Ch'oe So-ja, *The reception of Western studies during the Ming and ch'ing dynasties* (崔詔子, 『明清時代 西學受容에 관한 研究』, unpublished doctoral dissertation at Ehwa University, 1981). To be noted is Chǒng Yak-yong's statement at a minor enquiry in 1797 that he had been unaware of the Western religion's prohibition of rites until 1790, because it was not written anywhere in the books that he had read.

41) See n. 27.

scholarly lineage of strong reformist inclination. They lived at a time when the old order had long betrayed its inability to cope with contemporary problems, but when the regal power was newly consolidated and the King was eager to restore order to the country. Given these circumstances, and with chances to study the Western books, it was only natural that they tried to make out the most from Western studies for their reformist aims. There were some elements of Western studies which could be easily made use of and would not incur much objection from people with any awareness of the need for reforms. But there were still others, especially of cosmology and of religion, which could be neither proved nor refuted, but would still conflict severely with the Neo-Confucian metaphysics current at the time.⁴²⁾

The religious movement of the 1780's was, after all, a challenge to the old order, not by revolutionaries, but by reformist. It challenged the prevailing Neo-Confucian metaphysics of the time, but it did not challenge Confucianism itself.⁴³⁾ It doubted the privilege of the literati class, but not the royal authority. The leaders aimed at an extensive reform under the auspices of an enlightened monarch. Chŏng Yak-yong in his twenties was undoubtedly the greatest favorite of King Chŏngjo. Yi Ka-hwan(李家煥, 1742—1801) in his forties was among the most likely candidates for the highest offices.⁴⁴⁾ The King himself(1753—1800) showed every sign of enlightenment, being one of the finest scholars of the time on his own. They had a prospect, sufficiently wellgrounded, of a bright future for their reforms. In the new order they had in mind, the essence of the tradition would be preserved, while new elements were contained.

If they had nice ideas, they fell short of luck and insight. They were unlucky when the movement was accidentally exposed at the premature stage in 1785 and made a scandal in the literary sphere. After this, not only were they restricted in spreading the movement among the literati class, but were pressed hard to drop it themselves. If the incident of 1785 made it difficult for them to keep up with the movement, the instruction from Peking in 1790 made it just impossible. There was by now a new group of people in the church who cared less about the existing order and insisted upon the full and literal practice of the instructions from Peking.⁴⁵⁾ The previous leaders were not in a position to fight back for an independent line for the Korean church, not with the threat of persecution behind them. When the decision was urged by the government suppression the next year, all of them left the church for good, with the one obvious exception of Chŏng Yak-chong, who was to be martyred in 1801.

42) The points of conflicts are well displayed in Shin's and An's writings in *Pyŏk-wi-pyŏn*(see n.22).

43) Reformists in Confucian societies repeatedly stood against the current versions of Confucianism by turning to the 'genuine' Confucianism of the past. See 張灝, 「宋明以來 儒家經世思想試釋」, *Proceedings of the Conference on the Theory of Statecraft of Modern China*(『近世中國經世思想研討會論文集』), Taipei, 1983. There, the term 經世 is translated into 'statecraft', but I would prefer 'reform', as far as its usage in post-Sung periods is concerned.

It is also my speculation that the 'theory of complimenting Confucianism' manifested in Matteo Ricci's 天主實義 was influenced by his Chinese colleagues with reformist inclinations like Hsü Kuang-ch'i.

44) During much of the 1790's, Yi was one of the six ministers(判書), next only to the chancellors. On one occasion in 1797, Ch'ae Chegong recommended Yi to the King as his successor to the chancellorship.

45) Ryu Hang-gŏm(see n.30), the wealthiest of all the members, seems to have been the leading figure in the new group, which was made up chiefly by people of the *chung-in*(中人) class, the one next to the literati.

6. The fall of the middle road

The death of King Chǒngjo in 1800 immediately brought about a bitter political struggle in the court. During his reign, he had always been in favour of the Shi-p'a(時派) Faction, which had much to do with *Kiho School*. When he died, the new King Sunjo(純祖, r.1800—1834) was barely ten years old and Queen Dowager Kim(Chǒngjo's step-grandmother) came into regency, who favoured the opposing Pyōk-p'a(僻派) Faction. To take the most advantage of this opportunity to seize the power in the court, the Pyōk-p'a leaders wanted to make a political attack on the Shi-p'a, and found an excuse in the suppression of Western studies.

The suppression was at first aimed at little more than putting a political ban on the Shi-p'a. But as things developed, the persecutors got carried away, and the incident grew into a nationwide persecution lashing for a whole year. What roused the 'greatest indignation in the persecutors was the famous Hwang's Secret Letter(黃嗣永帛書) which was seized just before being sent to Peking. After describing the proceeding suppression, the letter suggested various ways of stopping the Korean government from making suppressions, including the incorporation of the country into China and the armed intervention by the European countries.⁴⁶⁾

If the refusing of rites in 1791 amounted to a rebellion in a symbolical way, this invitation of foreign intervention appeared to constitute a real one. At this stage, we find uncompromising attitudes at both ends of the suppression. The authorities were set against anything Western, including science and technology, which had been freely discussed among scholars. On the other hand, followers of the faith gave up the hope of winning the tolerance of the government through reasonable means and proved themselves ready to fight for their faith by any means and at any cost. The image of the religion shifted from 'evil' to 'danger' in the eyes of the government.

On the surface, the suppression of 1801 shows the extreme confrontation between native and foreign factors. But also to be found beneath it is the confrontation between old and new elements. The old order, its class system in particular, was no more compatible with the current changes in the society. It needed a revolution, or at least a reform, in order to avoid a catastrophe. The consolidated regal power in the 18th century enabled scholars and officials to seek various roads to reform, of which the religious movement of the 1780's could be counted as one. The select group of reformists who led the movement aimed at a "revolution from above" with the King as the driving force. The death of King Chǒngjo and the subsequent weakening of the regal power washed everything away, and no way was left for the reconcilia-

46) There were three stages at which the suppression was escalated. The first was the accidental seizure of Chǒng Yak-chong's documents in the 1st month. The second was the appearance of Chou Wen-mo in the 3rd month and the subsequent exposure of some of the church members' intention to call for the intervention by foreign powers. The third was the capture of Hwang Sa-yong and his Secret Letter in the 10th month.

The text of Hwang's letter, together with its Korean translation, is contained in *Hwang Sa-yong Paek-so*(『黃嗣永帛書』, Chǒng'umsa, Seoul, 1981, tr. by Yun Chae-yong). Cho Kwang, "The social thoughts behind Hwang's Secret Letter"(趙光, 「黃嗣永 帛書의 社會思想的 背景」, *Sa-ch'ong* 『史叢』, 21 and 22, 1977) deals with various implications of the letter.

tion between the old order and new changes.

I will conclude this paper by returning once more to the three points on the first page: (1) The importing of Western studies was the result of a selection. During the 17th century, when Western studies prospered in China, no Korean scholar paid much attention to them. Only towards the end of the 18th century, when Christianity was dwindling in China, did need arise in Korea to import it. (2) A different version was developed in Korea. At the beginning, in the 1870's, the religion was adopted as a vehicle for the reform. When the reform was blocked in 1801, it went right underground and became a subversive element. (3) Either as a vehicle for the reform or as a subversive element, the religion was never free from heavy political and social implications; it represented the newly rising factors in the country.