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# SELF-CULTIVATION FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF MEN: THE BEGINNINGS OF NEO-CONFUCIAN ORTHODOXY IN YI KOREA

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For Yi dynasty Korea (1392–1910), neo-Confucianism served many purposes. The scholar-officials of the new dynasty, the *sadaebu*, adapted neo-Confucianism to Korea and used it as an ideological tool to transform Korean society in support of their claim to power. Neo-Confucianism gave access to the socio-political wisdom that lay stored away in China's classical literature. At the inception of the dynasty, this wisdom became the model for building a Korean Confucian society. Neo-Confucianism was also a moral way of life that demanded the cultivation of inner discipline and redefined the individual's relationship and commitment to kin and state. Moreover, neo-Confucianism functioned as philosophical armament against Buddhism. Neo-Confucianism at the beginning of the Yi dynasty possessed dynamic and activist qualities.<sup>1</sup>

This study explores the process through which the Learning of the Way (Chin. *tao-hsüeh*; Sino-Kor. *tohak*) – that is, neo-Confucian thought as developed in Sung China (960–1279) by the Ch'eng brothers, Ch'eng I (1033–1107) and Ch'eng Hao (1032–1085), and Chu Hsi (1130–1200) – was adapted and propagated in Korea as a method of self-cultivation as well as a means of governing people. The adherents of the Way came to see themselves as the guardians and the true practitioners of the neo-Confucian mission and thus took pains to establish themselves as the «rightful» transmitters of the Way. To legitimize their claim to ideological purity, they had to construct a creditable line of transmission. Who was capable of receiving, preserving, and handing on the Way in Korea?

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1 For a discussion of the social function of neo-Confucianism in Korea, see Martina Deuchler, «Neo-Confucianism: The Impulse for Social Action in Early Yi Dynasty Korea,» *The Journal of Korean Studies*, vol. 2 (1980).

One way of tracing the development of Confucian orthodoxy is to study the procedure by which the «rightful» transmitters were identified and officially honored, after their deaths, as the guardians of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy needs a historical dimension to sustain its authority and to assure its continued official recognition. The clarification of the «succession of the Way» (Chin. *tao-t'ung*; Sino-Kor. *tot'ong*) had been a central concern of the Sung neo-Confucians.<sup>2</sup> In Korea, this concern gained an additional dimension: how could the Way be connected to the Chinese tradition?

No other book of the Confucian canon suited the adherents of the Way better than the *Ta-hsüeh* (Great Learning). This small treatise, by tradition considered to be the product of the immediate post-Confucian period and selected by Chu Hsi as one of the Four Books, set forth a systematic and pragmatic program that combined the imperative of moral education with the urgent appeal to political action. The *Ta-hsüeh* sustained the neo-Confucians' claim to complete mastery over the totality of public and private life. Moreover, by taking recourse to the sage kings of Chinese antiquity, it lent credibility to the manner in which the Korean Confucians went about their tasks. It also provided the Koreans with a firm point of view in their struggle against Buddhism. Living in a Buddhist milieu that was shaped by a strong syncretic tradition, the Confucians considered themselves in real danger of being pulled into the vast caldron of Buddhist thought. The repulsion of Buddhism was therefore a condition for survival.

Throughout the first two hundred years of the Yi dynasty, the *Ta-hsüeh* was recognized inside and outside the government as one of the most important Confucian texts because it contained the «right words» for many purposes. The edition most widely used was Chen Te-hsiu's (1178–1235) *Ta-hsüeh yen-i* (Extended Meaning of the Great Learning) in which Chen expanded and elucidated the brief text of the *Ta-hsüeh* with examples from the classics and gave it relevance to the contemporary situation by adding materials from historical works.<sup>3</sup>

2 Cf., Wing-Tsit Chan, «Chu Hsi's Completion of Neo-Confucianism,» *Études Song – Sung Studies*. In *Memoriam Étienne Balasz*, ed. by Françoise Aubin (Paris, 1973), pp. 59–90.

3 Chen Te-hsiu's thought is studied in Wm. Theodore de Bary, «The Neo-Confucian Learning of the Mind-And-Heart.» I am grateful to Prof. de Bary for letting me read this unpublished paper.

*I The Beginnings of the Way*

The center of learning during the last decades of the Koryŏ period (935–1392) was the Confucian Academy (Sŏnggyun'gwan), which was re-established in 1367 after a long period of decay. The best known Confucians of the time were the appointed teachers, and after the daily teaching sessions they gathered to debate outstanding problems of neo-Confucian thought. This was an intellectual exchange that differed markedly from the earlier mechanical internalization of the classical wisdom. The leader of these disputations was Yi Saek (1328–1396) who, as a youth, had immersed himself in neo-Confucian studies while staying in the capital of Yüan China (1279–1368) for almost three years. Later, in 1354, he earned top honors in the highest civil service examinations in Peking. Although Chu Hsi's Four Books had been transmitted to Korea at the end of the thirteenth century<sup>4</sup> and certainly had been studied, Yi Saek presided over the first large-scale debates about the new literature. He is credited with having chaired the sessions skillfully because he «was analytical and was able to reconcile [differing opinions].»<sup>5</sup> Yi Saek thus helped shape an intellectual milieu from which the most inspiring thought of the time emerged.

One of the most fervent debaters was Chŏng Mong-ju (1337–1392). Calling literary composition a «peripheral art,» he found the «teachings of body and mind» (*sinsim chi hak*) all embodied in the *Ta-hsüeh* and the *Chung-yung* (Doctrine of the Mean). With a friend, he is said to have retreated to a Buddhist hermitage to study these books. At the Confucian Academy he expounded the meaning of the Four Books, and his interpretations were found to match those of Hu Ping-wen's (1250–1333) *Ssu-shu t'ung* (Interpretations of the Four Books) so closely that, when the latter work was brought to Korea, Chŏng's colleagues' respect for him increased rapidly. Because his works, except for some poetry, were lost in the tur-

4 The transmission of neo-Confucian thought to Korea is studied in Yun Yong-gyun, *Shushigaku no denrai to sono eikyō ni suite* (1933).

5 Yi Saek's obituary is in *T'aejo sillok*, 9: 6b–8. For a detailed biographical study, see Hans-Jürgen Zaborowski, *Der Gelehrte und Staatsmann Mogŭn Yi Saek (1328–1396)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976). Yi Saek's father, Yi Kok (1298–1351), also passed the Chinese civil service examinations. Their teacher was Yi Che-hyŏn (1287–1367), an eminent scholar who visited Yüan China a couple of times. A more detailed study of the intellectual exchange between Koryŏ Korea and Yüan China is overdue.



moil surrounding his death in 1392, an assessment of Chǒng's thought is not possible, and one must rely on a brief entry in his biography: «He widely read a lot of books and daily recited the *Ta-hsüeh* and the *Chung-yung*. He investigated the principle (*i*) and thereby perfected his knowledge; he searched in himself to give it practical expression. He truly exerted himself for a long time and thus, unaided, resolved the mysteries [the solution of which] the Sung Confucians had not transmitted.» Yi Saek worded his admiration for Chǒng thus: «When Mong-ju discusses the principle, none of his theories misses it.» It was Yi Saek who called Chǒng the «ancestor of the Eastern [Korean] school of principle (*ihak*).»<sup>6</sup>

The *Ta-hsüeh* was also recommended as essential reading for the king. When the last king of Koryŏ, Kongyang (r.1389–1392), wanted to see the *Chen-kuan cheng-yao*, a compendium on government policy of the *chen-kuan* period (627–649), he was admonished that T'ang T'ai-tsung (r.626–649) was not a sufficient model. Instead, the king was advised to read the *Ta-hsüeh yen-i* to familiarize himself with the rule of the sage emperors and kings.<sup>7</sup>

For Yi Saek and Chǒng Mong-ju and others with whom they shared the rostrum at the reestablished Confucian Academy – Kim Ku-yong (1338–1384), Pak Sang-ch'ung (1332–1375), and Yi Sung-in (1349–1392)<sup>8</sup> – the discovery and disputation of neo-Confucian thought was an intellectual adventure that liberated them from the dull routine of traditional scholarship. Their teachings contained the elements of a moral and political plan of action, but in the waning years of Koryŏ, disrupted by party strife and marked by the Buddhist heritage, neither Yi nor Chǒng could or would draw the ultimate consequences from the Confucian message. Yi was later stigmatized as a compromiser with Buddhism, and Chǒng died as a Koryŏ loyalist in his vain attempt to prevent the establishment of a new dynasty in 1392.

6 Chǒng Mong-ju's biography is in *Koryŏsa* (reprint, Seoul, 1955), 117: 1–20. There is another short biography, written by Ham Chŏl-lin and dated 1410, in Chǒng's collected works, *P'oŭn sŏnsaeng-jip* (reprint, Seoul, 1959), 4: 30b–39. Some personal reminiscences of his contemporaries are found in Chǒng To-jŏn, «P'oŭn pongsago sŏ,» of 1386 in *Sambong-jip* (reprint, Seoul, 1961), pp. 89–91. Pak Chong-hong tries to reconstruct the contours of Chǒng's thought on the basis of Hu Ping-wen's *Ssu-shu t'ung*. See Pak Chong-hong, «Tongbang ihak ŭi chosŏ ŭi Chǒng P'oŭn,» *Han'guk sasangsa non'go* (Seoul, 1977), pp. 24–29.

7 *Koryŏsa*, 106: 34a–b; 120: 12b.

8 Chǒng To-jŏn, *Sambong-jip*, p. 370.

Yet, Yi Saek and Chǒng Mong-ju inspired a sense of mission in others – men who had no scruples about joining Yi Sǒng-gye (1335–1408) in founding the Yi dynasty. Certainly their most prominent disciple was Chǒng To-jǒn (?1337–1398), who was highly rewarded for his contributions to the new dynasty.<sup>9</sup> Combining depth of scholarship with political acumen and ambition, Chǒng «made the elucidation of the Learning of the Way and the repulsion of heterodox teachings [i.e. Buddhism] his own responsibility.»<sup>10</sup> His contemporary and commentator, Kwǒn Kūn (1352–1409), connected Chǒng directly to the Mencian tradition. As Mencius (371–289 B.C.?) had to put an end to heterodox doctrines to carry on the work of the three sages (Yü, the Duke of Chou, and Confucius),<sup>11</sup> Chǒng was compelled to wipe out Buddhism to succeed Mencius. By teaming up with an enlightened ruler (i.e. Yi T'aejo, r. 1392–1398), Chǒng was able, Kwǒn stated, to restore the kingly influence (*wanghwa*) and to build a political order (*ch'i*) for a full age.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, Chǒng To-jǒn was a most remarkable personality, the prototype of the ubiquitous scholar-official of the Yi dynasty, whose broad erudition and copious oeuvre seems to eclipse the works of his contemporaries. His philosophical treatises, however, were written with the aim of delineating the Confucian point of view vis-à-vis the Buddhist challenge and thus carried a decidedly militant overtone; they were not intended as introductory texts. The stated purpose of Kwǒn Kūn's *Iphak tosŏl* (Illustrated Treatises for the Beginner) of 1390 was to give an overview of the key concepts of neo-Confucian thought. It tackled its didactic task by supplementing the abstract text with diagrams. Original neither in content nor layout – Kwǒn relied on a number of Chinese models, most notably on Chou Tun-i's (1017–1073) *T'ai-chi-t'u shuo* (An Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate) – Kwǒn's booklet was immensely influential as a convenient guide through the maze of neo-Confucian philosophy. It was reproduced a number of times during the first centuries of the Yi dynasty.<sup>13</sup>

9 Chǒng To-jǒn was made a merit subject, first class (*kaeguk kongsin*) in 1392.

10 Kwǒn Kūn, commentary to Chǒng To-jǒn's *Simgirip'yŏn*, in *Sambong-jip*, p. 286.

11 *The Works of Mencius*, Bk. 1, Pt. 2, Chap. 9, Sec. 13.

12 Kwǒn Kūn, «Preface» to Chǒng To-jǒn's *Pulssi chappyŏn* (dated 1398) in *Sambong-jip*, pp. 277–278. For a full study of Chǒng To-jǒn's thought, see Han Yŏng-u, *Chǒng To-jǒn sasang ūi yŏn'gu* (Seoul, 1973).

13 The *Iphak tosŏl* is available in a modern translation by Kwǒn Tŏk-chu, vol. 131 of *Ŭryu mun'go* (Seoul, 1974). Kwǒn's works also include commentaries to the Five Classics and the *Li Chi*.

Kwŏn Kŭn was fully committed to the new dynasty and claimed the «succession of the Way» (*tot'ong*) as the privilege of the scholar-official, as represented by Chŏng To-jŏn. But he was not intolerant. It was Kwŏn who pushed for the recognition of those of his colleagues who had not joined forces with the dynastic founder. He advocated that a scholar (*sa*) should have the option of staying away from government service without being penalized. He had his teacher, Chŏng Mong-ju, and his disciple, Kil Chae (1353–1419), in mind. He recommended them for official recognition because of their loyalty to the former dynasty and their moral integrity (*chŏrŭi*).<sup>14</sup> Whereas Chŏng died as a Koryŏ loyalist in 1392, Kil Chae had retired from government service as early as 1390 when he became convinced that the royal house of Koryŏ was doomed. Kil refused to take office again at the beginning of the Yi dynasty with the argument that «a loyal subject cannot serve two lords.» Although Kwŏn admitted that Kil's stubbornness was somewhat extreme, Kil was granted royal pardon.<sup>15</sup>

Even though Kwŏn mentioned Chŏng and Kil in one breath, there is no evidence that Kil regarded himself as the successor of Chŏng Mong-ju's loyalism and formed a «party of dissent.»<sup>16</sup> He did urge his son to enter public office. Rather, Kil's ambitions seem to have been primarily scholarly. He is said to have spent his days absorbed in studying neo-Confucian writings and translating his understanding directly into the practice of a ritually pure life. His scholarly reputation attracted a great number of students.<sup>17</sup>

The dilemma of the Confucians who were trained during the last decades of Koryŏ and who witnessed the founding of the Yi dynasty lay in their dual mission. They had to define, in an essentially non-Confucian milieu, the norms for the building of a Confucian state, and they had to maintain their commitment to the propagation of the Way. Under the circumstances they were facing, the Confucians had no choice but to tackle the constructive and educative tasks first – to find in the Confucian classics the models for building a Confucian society. This demanded an extraordinary amount of painstaking research and social experimentation.

14 *Chŏngjong sillok*, 5: 8; *T'aejong sillok*, 1: 7a–b.

15 *Sejong sillok*, 3: 31–32; Kil Chae, *Yaŭn sŏnsaeng ōnhaeng sŭbyu* (reprint, Seoul, 1959), 1: 14–20b. The biography was written by Kil's disciple, Pak Sŏ-saeng in 1422.

16 Key P. Yang and Gregory Henderson discuss dissent at the beginning of the Yi dynasty in their «An Outline History of Korean Confucianism. Part I: The Early Period and Yi Factionalism,» *Journal of Asian Studies*, 18.1: 88–89 (Nov. 1958).

17 Only fragments of Kil Chae's work are extant so that a full assessment of his thought is not possible.

Little mental power could be spared for absorbing and developing the more abstract and idealistic aspects of neo-Confucianism. It was a matter of stacking priorities: the majority opted for participation in the political process; a few kept to the books. They did not act as antagonists. All of them were the builders of Confucian orthodoxy.

## *II Self-cultivation versus Governance of Men*

The scholar-officials and the scholar-teachers of the early Yi dynasty shared the view that Confucian learning was relevant for the individual as well as for society. Kwŏn Kŭn, the scholar-official, spoke of learning as the instrument for bringing people under control (*ch'i*) by activating their moral nature. This «relevant learning» (*sirhak*), which stood in contrast to a mechanical internalization of the classics that had no practical application, had two closely related dimensions: it stimulated the process of self-realization with the ultimate aim of finding the Way in oneself, and it developed the proper human relations between ruler and subject, father and son, older and younger, and friends so that everyone would come to know his proper station in life. Both the search for the Way and the enrichment of human morality had to concentrate on the teachings of the Three Dynasties (Hsia, Shang, and Chou) and on the classics.<sup>18</sup>

Kwŏn Kŭn's thinking was clearly guided by the *Ta-hsüeh* to which he devoted a chapter in his *Iphak tosŏl*. Kwŏn interpreted the essence of the *Ta-hsüeh* as consisting of two processes. The first was a series of «efforts» (*kongbu*) that would lead to the most fundamental of actions, the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. The successful completion of this basic step would initiate the second process, a series of «effects» (*konghyo*), that would bring about universal peace in the world.<sup>19</sup> This message was not lost on the ruler. King T'aejong (r. 1400–1418) was an avid reader of the *Ta-hsüeh*. He had the full text of Chen Te-hsiu's *Ta-hsüeh yen-i* written in large characters on the palace walls for all officials to see. He also rewarded the workmen after they completed its first Korean printing in movable type in 1412.<sup>20</sup>

18 Kwŏn Kŭn, «Yŏnghŭngbu hakkyogi» in *Yangch'on munjip* (reprint, Seoul, 1969), 14: 8–9b. Han U-gŭn defines *sirhak* of the early Yi period in «Yijo sirhak ŭi kaenyŏm e taehayŏ», *Yijo hugi ŭi sahoe wa sasang* (Seoul, 1961), pp. 363–370.

19 Kwŏn Kŭn, *Iphak tosŏl*, pp. 155–163.

20 *T'aejong sillok*, 22: 47; 24: 17b.

Although the scanty material makes a definite statement impossible, it is reported that the scholar-teacher, as exemplified by Kil Chae, concentrated not only on the «investigation of the classics» (*kunggyōng*), but also on the practical training of his disciples in Confucian virtues such as filial piety, brotherly love, loyalty, and mutual trust.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Chōng To-jōn's warnings that candidates for government service should be chosen primarily on the basis of their proven knowledge of the classical literature,<sup>22</sup> the selection of the materials for the civil service examinations remained a controversial topic. Even Kwōn Kūn's position on this issue was ambivalent: although he demanded improvement of the candidates' scholarly achievements, he nevertheless insisted that their literary skills could not be neglected, especially in view of Korea's relations with China.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that the curriculum of the Confucian Academy, despite some attempts at compromise, favored literary training so that its scholastic standing gradually deteriorated.<sup>24</sup> From early in the dynasty complaints were voiced that the Confucians failed to strive after the Way and instead were using the examinations merely as a road to rank and emolument. Those who deplored the shallowness of «bureaucratic scholarship» (*kwanhak*) frequently quoted Confucius' disenchanted words: «In old days men studied for the sake of self-improvement; nowadays men study in order to impress other people.»<sup>25</sup>

During the first century of the new dynasty, neo-Confucian thought was marked by its own inherent ambivalence between its scholarly demands and its political mission. The minds of the Confucian officials were absorbed in building a new state and a new society on Confucian premises. Thus, scholarly efforts became institutionalized to meet the specific requirements of the young dynasty. The Hall of Worthies (Chiphyōnjōn), founded in 1420 with the assignment of, among other things, exploring China's ancient literature for societal models, was an elite institution that was staffed with the best scholars of the time. The censorial offices, also absorbing considerable talent, stood guard over a nascent Confucian order that was threatened by improper royal behavior, the continued Buddhist

21 Kil Chae's biography in *Sejong sillok*, 3: 31–32b.

22 Chōng To-jōn, *Chosōn kyōnggukchōn* in *Sambong-jip*, pp. 227–228.

23 *T'aejong sillok*, 13: 13b–14.

24 For a discussion of the debate on curricular matters, see Yi Sōng-mu, «Sōnch'o ūi Sōnggyun'gwan yōn'gu,» *The Yōksa Hakpo*, 35/36: 242–245 (Dec. 1967).

25 *T'aejong sillok*, 2:23; *Lun-yü*, Bk. 14, Chap. 25; Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (London, 1949), p.187.



tradition, and the raw struggle for power by various political groups. Toward the end of the fifteenth century a whole new generation of Confucians, disillusioned by a socio-political order that fell far short of embodying the neo-Confucian ideals, began to protest the loss of the Way and to initiate a restorative movement.

### *III The Way on a Side-track*

From the beginning of the dynasty the establishment of an authoritative «succession of the Way» was an important issue, but the initial attempts to select the proper candidates proved unsuccessful. Kwŏn Kŭn was the first to pay close attention to this problem. Recapitulating the hazardous history of «this Way» (*sado*) from the decline of the Chou dynasty (1155–256 B.C.) to its recovery in the Sung dynasty, Kwŏn seems to have had no trouble in explaining its transmission to Korea. Although Korea was situated «beyond the sea,» Kija, the second outstanding ruler of ancient Korea, had brought to the peninsula a civilization that in subsequent centuries had been nurtured by close imitation of Chinese institutions. The first person to request the printing of Chu Hsi's version of the Four Books, Kwŏn recalled, was his grandfather, Kwŏn Po (1262–1346), who entrusted his scholarship to his nephew, Yi Che-hyŏn (1287–1367). Thereafter Yi Kok (1328–1396), Yi Che-hyŏn's disciple, imparted his knowledge to his son, Yi Saek, who in turn became the teacher of Chŏng Mong-ju, Yi Sung-in, and Chŏng To-jŏn.<sup>26</sup> For Kwŏn Kŭn, this line of transmission had a familial quality, and this may be the reason he did not mention the names of those whom history credits with introducing Chu Hsi's works in Korea, An Hyang (1243–1306) and Paek I-jŏng (?).<sup>27</sup>

Among the scholars Kwŏn Kŭn enumerated, Chŏng Mong-ju became, partly on Kwŏn's initiative, the subject of considerable attention in the early years of the dynasty. In recognition of his unfailing loyalty and uprightness, T'aejong bestowed upon Chŏng the posthumous name (*si*) Mun-ch'ung and the posthumous title of chief state councillor.<sup>28</sup> Neither Kwŏn's recommendation nor T'aejong's gesture of conciliation had any connection with Chŏng's scholarship. Kwŏn undoubtedly acted out of concern for a disgraced friend; T'aejong could well afford a demonstration

26 Kwŏn Kŭn, «Preface» to *Sambong-jip*, p. 1.

27 An Hyang was canonized in 1319.

28 *T'aejong sillok*, 2: 17b; *Chōsen shi* (Keijō, 1932–1940), 4.1: 269.



of magnanimity. Government propaganda eventually built Chǒng up into the prototype of loyal subject (*ch'ungsin*). The young dynasty could make better use of Chǒng's loyalist image than of his scholarship.<sup>29</sup> In the long run this mystification was instrumental in elevating Chǒng to the exalted position of ancestor of Korean neo-Confucianism.

Kwŏn Kŭn, the tireless commentator and promoter of his contemporaries, was the first neo-Confucian scholar of the Yi dynasty to be recommended for the highest honor Confucian society could bestow upon its worthies: the enshrinement of the spirit tablet in the Shrine of Confucius (Munmyo). Only ten years after his death, in 1419, a member of the censorial office who had been closely associated with Kwŏn told the king that those who acquired merits for scholarship were traditionally remembered by canonization. Kwŏn, the memorialist stated, had been deeply learned in neo-Confucianism (*sŏngni*), had authored the *Iphak tosŏl* «to open the door to scholarship for later students,» and had written commentaries to elucidate difficulties earlier Confucians had not clarified. In addition, Kwŏn had been known as far as China for his elegant writing style. An edict ordered that the deliberations on this issue should also include other «famous ministers» (*myŏngsin*) such as Ch'oe Ch'ung (984–1068) and Ha Yun (1347–1416).<sup>30</sup> The matter rested there and was not taken up again until the mid-1430s. At that time Kwŏn was connected with his predecessors, Yi Che-hyŏn and Yi Saek. The memorial read that it was through these three men that the «way of Confucius and Mencius» gained followers in Korea.<sup>31</sup> Twenty years later, in 1456, the great scholar and prominent member of the Hall of Worthies, Yang Sŏng-ji (1415–1482), asked for the canonization of Shuang Chi, the Chinese advisor of Koryŏ's King Kwangjong (r.949–975), Ch'oe Ch'ung, Yi Che-hyŏn, Chǒng Mong-ju, and Kwŏn Kŭn for the purpose of «encouraging later generations.»<sup>32</sup> The last appeal to honor the «Eastern worthies,» Yi Che-hyŏn, Chǒng Mong-ju, Yi Saek, and Kwŏn Kŭn, was made by the influential Im Sa-hong (1445–1506) in 1477. Im had heard news of canonizations in China.<sup>33</sup> His initiative was rejected by King Sŏngjong (r.1469–1494) who retorted that

29 Chǒng Mong-ju was listed as a loyal subject in the *Samgang haengsilto*. Kil Chae was also put into this category.

30 *Sejong sillok*, 5: 2a–b, 28.

31 *Sejong sillok*, 59: 15–17; 72: 12–13b.

32 *Sejo sillok*, 3: 27b.

33 Im Sa-hong had received news of the canonization of Ts'ai Ch'en (1167–1230), Chen Te-hsiu, and Hu An-kuo (1074–1138) in 1437.

Yi Saek's sympathies for Buddhism rendered his canonization impossible.<sup>34</sup>

It is evident that all of these proposals were not connected with each other and were not inspired by the desire to construct a chain of succession to substantiate claims of legitimacy. They were motivated either by personal veneration or by the wish to adopt the trappings of Confucian convention. Although the lists of scholars recommended for a place in the Shrine of Confucius varied little, they were not underpinned by a sense of common cause.

Conspicuous is the absence of Chǒng To-jǒn's name from any of the mentioned lists. Although T'aejong eventually forgave him his involvement on the wrong side of the dynasty's first succession struggle in 1398, Chǒng's works were not published until 1492.<sup>35</sup> His political misjudgment apparently brought him scholarly oblivion.

#### *IV The Way in Peril*

The turn from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century was marked by events known to history as the literati purges of 1498 and 1504.<sup>36</sup> These events erupted in reaction to the increased pressure the censorial offices put on the higher echelons of the officialdom and even on the king himself, and they left an indelible impression on the minds of the Confucians. Although the issues that sparked the purges were not connected with Confucian concerns, the major victims were Confucian scholar-officials of considerable repute. The explanation of this phenomenon, though tied in with institutional change and contemporary politics, may lie in the increasing competition between that segment of the officialdom for which scholarship exhausted itself in the traditional pursuit of literary achievements, and the other, much smaller group of officials that was committed to fulfilling the neo-Confucian vision.

During the reign of King Sǒngjong there were clear signs of a Confucian revival. A new generation of officials climbed to higher government posts, the influence of which they wished to use for revitalizing the claim that a state without the Confucian-trained scholar-official (*yu*) was

34 *Sǒngjong sillok*, 82: 23.

35 *Chōsen shi*, 4.5: 793.

36 For a full discussion of the literati purges, see Edward W. Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

doomed to failure. «If there is no Confucian official [in the state], the Way (*to*) has no place to lodge. If the Way has nowhere to lodge, through what could the rule (*ch'i*) become successful?» These words, voiced by one of the most gifted Confucians of that period, Söng Hyön (1439–1504), expressed well the concern of the time. Remembering such eminent works of neo-Confucian learning as Chöng To-jön's *Simgirinon* (Discourses on the Mind, the Matter, and the Principle) and Kwön Kün's *Iphak tosöl*, Söng deplored the fact that in his own time there were only a few scholars who understood the «Learning of the Way» (*tohak*). For Söng, the essence of Confucian teaching lay in the simple formula contained in the *Ta-hsüeh*: «to rectify the mind and to make the will sincere.»<sup>37</sup> This was an obligation for both the ruler and the official. The official was to use the «Confucian Way» (*yudo*) to serve his ruler; the ruler was to use the «Confucian Way» to rule the people.<sup>38</sup>

This philosophy, as expressed by Söng Hyön, was shared by a small circle of men who were active in those offices that were in charge of educational and scholarly matters, primarily the Office of the Royal Lectures (Kyöngyön), the Confucian Academy, and the Office of the Special Counselors (Hongmun'gwan), an office that was established in 1478 to fulfill advisory functions. King Söngjong was not indifferent to the appeals, constantly repeated by his teachers and advisors, to concentrate on self-cultivation for the benefit of the state. In 1477 he lavishly rewarded the renowned official, Yi Sök-hyöng (1415–1477), who presented the king with a shortened version of Chen Te-hsiu's *Ta-hsüeh yen-i*, the *Taehak yönnüi chibyo* (Essentials of the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning), in which he supplied examples from Koryö history. Yi's work, however, was criticized as being sacrilegious and was not printed.<sup>39</sup> Largely as a result of royal docility during Söngjong's reign, the stage was set for the climactic confrontation between Söngjong's successor, Yönsangun (r.1494–1506), and the censorial offices, a confrontation that resulted in the literati purges of 1498 and 1504.<sup>40</sup>

37 These are the translations of Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). p. 86.

38 *Söngjong sillok*, 104: 10b; Söng Hyön, *Höbaektang-jip* (date uncertain), 11: 73–74b.

39 *Söngjong sillok*, 17: 4b–5; 43: 9a–b; 76: 3b–4b.

40 For a discussion of the increased role of the Royal Lecture, see You-Ung Kwön, «The Royal Lecture of Early Yi Korea, 1,» *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 50: 93–104 (Dec. 1979).

Yönsangun's violent outbursts were certainly not a conscious attack aimed at neo-Confucianism as such. That Kim Chong-jik (1431–1492) and his disciples were the major purge victims was largely circumstantial. Kim's followers did constitute an easily identifiable group that could be used as a convenient target.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the political reasons for selecting the victims, the impact of the purges on the Confucian mind of the time was traumatic. The martyrdom of Kim Chong-jik's best-remembered disciple, Kim Koeng-p'il (1454–1504), became symbolic of the predicament confronting the Confucian Way – a predicament, it was thought, that was comparable only to the dark days when the teachings of Chu Hsi and the Ch'eng brothers, Ch'eng I and Ch'eng Hao, were persecuted as heresy (*wihak*) by the Sung court. The memory of the purges, a contemporary witness remarked, deterred people from pursuing the Way, and anxious fathers and brothers discouraged possible candidates. This acute sense of danger had a rallying effect which came to be expressed in the term «scholars' forest» (*sarim*). First appearing in the post-purge period, this term denoted those who had laid down their lives for the Way as well as those who were struggling to revive it in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The recognized leader, who provided the restoration movement with ideological and political orientation, was Kim Koeng-p'il's disciple, Cho Kwang-jo (1482–1519).<sup>42</sup>

41 Yi Su-gön, studying Kim Chong-jik and his disciples, emphasizes the regional ties of the group. See his *Yöngnam sarimp'a üi hyöngsöng* (Taegu, 1979), pp. 251–257. In a recent paper, Edward W. Wagner expresses the opinion that the victims of 1498 were «symbolic victims.» If the issue of Kim Il-son's history draft had not arisen, the purge might have focused on a different segment of the officialdom. Wagner's paper is entitled «A Reexamination of the Ruling Class of the Yi Dynasty.» I should like to thank Prof. Wagner for letting me use this unpublished paper which contains many new and thought provoking points.

42 *Chungjong sillok*, 12: 43b. In this source, dated 1510, the term *sarim* seems to be used for the first time in the *Sillok*. Kim Chong-jik's group had earlier been identified as «the party of seniors from Kyöngsang Province» (*Kyöngsangdo sönbædang*). *Söngjong sillok*, 169: 6b. The term *sarim*, however, does not seem to denote a group sharply defined on the basis of geographical or social origin. Prof. Wagner focuses his attention on this point in his paper on the leadership formation of the Yi dynasty.

*V The Way of the Principle: Cho Kwang-jo*

What did Cho Kwang-jo and his group (*sarim*) stand for? It is an unfortunate by-product of the purges that the collected works of the scholars who later came to be regarded as the forerunners of the *sarim* were either burned as part of the author's punishment, as Kim Chong-jik's were in 1498,<sup>43</sup> or destroyed out of fear of implication, as Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang's (1450–1504) were in the same year.<sup>44</sup> Kim Koeng-p'il's thought, too, is only preserved in fragments. This partial transmission favored hagiographical embellishment that further obscures the outlines. It can be safely assumed, however, that Cho Kwang-jo well represented the intellectual tenor of the *sarim*. As a young man he studied under Kim Koeng-p'il, and in the aftermath of the purges he became the eloquent spokesman for *sarim* concerns.<sup>45</sup>

Cho Kwang-jo and his followers used the terms «school of principle» (*ihak*), or «school of nature and principle» (*sŏngni chi hak*), to refer to their thinking. These terms, not often used at the beginning of the dynasty, were interchangeable with «school of the Way» (*tohak*) and designated a full commitment to the Ch'eng-Chu philosophy. The essence of the school of principle, as Cho defined it, is concentration on self-cultivation as an individual act of self-improvement, unmarred by considerations of self-advancement in the world.<sup>46</sup> The practitioner of such an uncompromising course who «makes the advancement of the Way his personal responsibility» is the scholar (*sa*). The most perfect personification of the scholar is the worthy (*hyŏnja*) who «knows nothing besides righteousness (*i*) and principle» and, unperturbed by the external circumstances of success or failure, uses his full energy and willpower on scholarship and on «rectifying the Way» (*chŏngdo*).<sup>47</sup> There was a natural and direct correlation between the standard of scholarship and the quality of ruling (*ch'i*). At times when the scholars' spirits are high and their conventions well established, Cho stated, the political climate, too, is healthy and reminiscent of the blissful periods when the legendary Yao and Shun ruled the

43 Wagner, *Literati Purges*, p. 44.

44 Hong Hŭi, «Chosŏn hagiyesa.» in *Bunrui shi*, vol. 2 of *Chōsen shi kōza* (Keijō, 1924), p. 99.

45 For Cho Kwang-jo's career, see Wagner, *Literati Purges*, pp. 80–83.

46 *Chungjong sillok*, 26: 40b.

47 Cho Kwang-jo, *Chŏngam-jip* (reprint, Seoul, 1959), 4: 8b.



world. On the other hand, the ruler should be able to create the proper milieu for the scholars to come forward to serve the state.<sup>48</sup>

This emphasis on the interdependence of ruler and scholar was not new, but in Cho Kwang-jo's formulation it gained fresh relevance and urgency. After the abrupt end of Yönsangun's disastrous rule, young King Chungjong (r.1506–1544) was constantly reminded of his obligation to use the right scholar-officials to recreate the perfect political order (*chich'i*) on the pattern of Yao and Shun as expressed in the *Ta-hsüeh*. The headmaster of the Confucian Academy, Yu Sung-jo (1452–1512), offered the king his own version of the *Ta-hsüeh*, the *Taehak samgang-p'almok cham* (Admonitions on the Three Main Points and the Eight Subsidiary Points of the *Ta-hsüeh*). Yu was motivated to do so by his anxiety that Chungjong might neglect to take the essence of the *Ta-hsüeh* as the «measuring square and the marking line» for cultivating himself and ruling the country.<sup>49</sup>

Chungjong became the personality upon which the advocates of the school of principle pinned their hope for a general renovation. The visionary zeal which inspired Cho and his group made them critical observers of the contemporary scene. They castigated the low level of scholarship that exhausted itself in the practice of literary styles for the sole purpose of advancement in the government. For a purist of Cho's persuasion, the pursuit of literary arts was marginal and, through its emotional involvement, detrimental to self-cultivation. An examination system that one-sidedly tested literary skills was, in Cho's eyes, neither the right instrument for promoting Confucian studies nor an adequate means of selecting candidates for government service. Cho contrasted the «true Confucian» (*chinyu*) who really understood the contents of the classics and lived up to them with the «ordinary Confucian» (*sogyu*) who merely paid lip service to the Confucian cause. Cho demanded that those scholars who preferred to stay away from the examinations should be detected and recruited through a special recommendation examination.<sup>50</sup>

It may well be asked how Cho Kwang-jo's «school of principle» (*ihak*) differed from Kwön Kün's «relevant learning» (*sirhak*). Both were state-centered, although to a differing degree. Kwön was, at the very beginning of the dynasty, committed to building a Confucian state by the practical

48 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 16b–17.

49 Yu Sung-jo, «Preface» to *Taehak samgang-p'almok cham* (reprint, Seoul, 1973), pp. 7–13.

50 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 16b–17.



application of Confucian fundamentals. One hundred years later, Cho still aimed at the same goal but, perhaps because of past events, with a lower level of tolerance. In contrast to Kwŏn's concept of self-cultivation as a starting-point for a Confucian political order, Cho's understanding of self-cultivation was more uncompromising. Although the ultimate goal of the Confucian message was for both the secure establishment of a society anchored in Confucian principles, Cho regarded self-cultivation more as an end in itself. He was therefore less tolerant and more idealistic than Kwŏn. He was ready to acknowledge that the day-by-day running of the government was the responsibility of «high ministers,» but only on the condition that they be sincere and public-spirited; if they failed to live up to Cho's high standards of conduct, they had to be subjected to merciless remonstrance. In Cho's eyes self-cultivation could be meaningful even outside the involvement with state affairs. The highest ideal, however, was the simultaneous realization of both.<sup>51</sup>

#### *VI The First Links in a Line of Succession*

The assurance that the Confucian cause under King Chungjong's tutelage was slowly regaining importance and influence encouraged Cho Kwang-jo and his followers to seek for themselves a heightened standing by asking for the official recognition of those they regarded as their immediate intellectual forebears. They saw themselves as the rightful practitioners of a doctrine that had its antecedents in the early part of the dynasty, and they were looking for reassurance by marking their own place in a firm line of succession.

The debates on the canonization of Chŏng Mong-ju, the famed Koryŏ loyalist, and of such purge victims as Kim Koeng-p'il and Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang, gained momentum in 1517. Entrenched in strategic posts in the censorial offices, Cho Kwang-jo and his followers renewed in that year the demand, first submitted in 1510, that Chŏng Mong-ju be honored with a permanent place in the Shrine of Confucius. Rather than stressing Chŏng's loyalist image, which had brought him rehabilitation at the beginning of the dynasty, the memorialists now presented Chŏng as the ancestor of Korea's school of principle, a scholar who had received his learning directly from China.<sup>52</sup> Chŏng's merits in the propagation of Confucian scholarship and rituals and his dedication to the advancement of educa-

51 Cho Kwang-jo, *Chŏngam-jip*, 3: 1b.

52 *Chungjong sillok*, 27: 35b, 37.

tional institutions, it was stated, compared with such Chinese neo-Confucian giants as Chou Tun-i and the Ch'eng brothers. Chǒng's by then almost legendary fame, confirmed by earlier kings, shielded him from the arguments of those government circles which opposed his canonization on the grounds that he had served the fake Sin (i.e. Sin U, r.1374–1388, and Sin Ch'ang, r.1388–1389) at the end of Koryŏ.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, King Chungjong was clearly in favor of giving the cause of the school of principle an official boost by installing Chǒng in the Shrine of Confucius.<sup>54</sup> In the fall of 1517 Chǒng Mong-ju became the first Korean neo-Confucian to be honored with a spirit tablet in the Shrine of Confucius.

While Chǒng Mong-ju's canonization met with little outright opposition, it proved to be much more difficult to shape Kim Koeng-p'il and Chǒng Yŏ-ch'ang into proper candidates for the same honor. To be sure, Kim Koeng-p'il combined all the virtues that Cho and his group admired. In the course of recommending «scholars who were spending their lives in hiding» (*ũnil chi sa*) for government service, Kim was discovered in 1494 and highly praised for his dedication to the school of principle and his correct behavior.<sup>55</sup> It was noted that Kim did not make any efforts to enter government service by taking the higher civil service examinations.<sup>56</sup> His unassuming attitude and scholarly integrity reportedly was inspired by such Confucian classics as the *Hsiao-hsüeh* (Elementary Learning) and the *Ta-hsüeh*, the gist of which he found summed up in the brief formula: «to guide men through self-cultivation» (*sugi ch'iin*).<sup>57</sup> Although Kim enjoyed high respect even in government circles, he became, through his association with Kim Chong-jik, one of the major victims of the purge of 1504. Kim's martyrdom was heightened by the rather quick rehabilitation the purge victims of 1498 and 1504 were granted by King Chungjong,<sup>58</sup> but, more importantly, it underscored the tenuous position of the school of principle at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

53 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 14a–b, 21b, 31a–b.

54 For Chǒng Mong-ju's canonization, see Wagner, *Literati Purges*, pp. 88–92. It could be argued that An Hyang was the first neo-Confucian who was enshrined in the Shrine of Confucius. The neo-Confucians of the early Yi dynasty, however, did not regard him as an important personality in the line of transmission. Yi I, for example, says that An Hyang had no connection with «this Way» (*sado*). «Kyŏngyŏn ilgi II» in *Yulgok chŏnsŏ* (reprint, Seoul, 1971), 29: 12b.

55 Earlier Kim Koeng-p'il had come out against Buddhism. *Sŏngjong sillok*, 118: 13–15.

56 *Sŏngjong sillok*, 290: 39.

57 *Yŏnsangun ilgi*, 31: 4b; *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 14b.

58 *Chungjong sillok*, 1: 26b, 31b.

By 1517, Kim Koeng-p'il and Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang had become the personalities the *sarim* looked up to as their «ancestral teachers» (*chongsa*),<sup>59</sup> and their canonization became a major *sarim* concern. Their enshrinement, it was memorialized, would uplift the depressed spirit of the scholarly circles and also revitalize the school of principle. Although Kim's personal moral rectitude was not subjected to doubt even in the higher bureaucracy, there were critics who maintained that Kim had not substantially contributed to the elucidation of the classics and who belittled Kim's teaching activities.<sup>60</sup> In response, Kim's admirers conceded that none of their master's works was transmitted, but countered with the Mencian argument that among the ways through which a superior man effected his teachings, books were not included.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, if Heaven had not brought forth Kim, who would have continued Chŏng Mong-ju's heritage? This emotional plea was supported by Cho Kwang-jo, who argued that the undiminished fascination with Kim's personality was proof enough of his worthiness to be enshrined. If people of Kim's and Chŏng's calibre had been in office under Yŏnsangun, another memorialist claimed, that ruler could not have gone to the excesses he did.<sup>62</sup> Although King Chungjong was inclined to agree with these arguments, he was continuously cautioned by his highest ministers, and in the end he refused to grant Kim's enshrinement.

The canonization of worthies from among their own ranks was a very serious matter for the *sarim*. That they included Chŏng Mong-ju solely for the purpose of making Kim Koeng-p'il a more acceptable candidate, as the *Sillok* historians scathingly claimed,<sup>63</sup> is, however, open to question. Although the relationship between Kim and Chŏng was not yet worked out satisfactorily – the connecting links were still missing – Chŏng was a necessary intermediary from a temporal as well as an intellectual point of view. He represented the nascent neo-Confucian tradition of late Koryŏ and at the same time related Korean Confucianism to the Chinese source, the Ch'eng-Chu school. To underscore Chŏng's pivotal position, he was even credited with having compiled a *Sasŏ chipchu* (Selected Commentaries to the Four Books) that allegedly followed Chu Hsi's spirit.<sup>64</sup> Cho

59 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 12, 13.

60 *Chungjong sillok*, 29:16.

61 *The Works of Mencius*, Bk. 7, Pt. 1, Chap. 40.

62 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 16, 22, 31b–32; 32: 67b; 33: 40b–41.

63 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 15; Wagner, *Literati Purges*, pp. 90–91.

64 *Chungjong sillok*, 30: 42b.

and his adherents pursued the construction of a historical perspective with such intensity that they exposed themselves to the charge of being cliquish.<sup>65</sup> The effort to place themselves in the course of an ongoing Confucian tradition did not save Cho and his group from a further disastrous setback, the purge of 1519,<sup>66</sup> but they nevertheless secured for the Way a foundation from which it could take off again some decades later.

### *VII The Way Reconsidered*

The shock of the purge of 1519 was not overcome even toward the end of Chungjong's reign. The fact that a seemingly unforgiving Chungjong was unwilling to close the case by rehabilitating Cho Kwang-jo kept the *sarim* in suspense. Memorialists agreed that the school of principle had suffered a grave decline and that scholarship had consequently deteriorated to a lamentable degree. More aggressively, they blamed Chungjong for having sacrificed Cho so easily in 1519 and for being reluctant, more than twenty years later, to honor him as an outstanding Confucian. The king, it was demanded, should be as magnanimous toward Cho as Sejong had been toward Chŏng Mong-ju. The memorialists topped their request with the bold assertion that the literati mores were, after all, an exact indicator of the quality of the «national tradition» (*kuksok*).<sup>67</sup> The fate of the *sarim* had thus grown into a national concern.

Like no other scholar before him, Cho Kwang-jo became the embodiment of the Way and seems to have set the standards by which his predecessors as well as his successors were judged. At mid-century the two towering philosophers who gave Korean neo-Confucianism its permanent shape, Yi Hwang (1501–1570) and Yi I (1536–1584), reviewed the history of the Way in general and Cho Kwang-jo's contribution to it in particular. Analyzing the origin of the «Learning of the Way» (*tohak*) in Korea, Yi I opined that the emergence of this concept was a clear sign of troubled times when the Way was in decline. The scholars who under such circumstances were «investigating the principle (*kungni*) and rectifying their hearts (*chŏngsim*),» and who rose to prominence through the Way were easily singled out as a special group and exposed to attacks from

65 *Chungjong sillok*, 29: 15; Wagner, *Literati Purges*, p. 91.

66 For a thorough discussion of the 1519 purge, see Wagner, *Literati Purges*, pp. 70–120.

67 *Chungjong sillok*, 91: 76; 103: 32b–38; *Injong sillok*, 1: 63b. For a discussion of the term *kuksok*, see Deuchler, «Neo-Confucianism.»

those who did not share the same values. For Yi I, the true representative of the Way was the scholar-official who combined learning with an uncompromising government career, a combination of talents Yi found in the person of Cho Kwang-jo.<sup>68</sup> Yi I's opinion that Cho rose too rapidly in the world before his scholarship was completely matured and therefore eventually met disaster was shared by Yi Hwang. As one of Cho's biographers, Yi Hwang praised Cho's early dedication to the pursuit of the Way and the sincerity with which he took upon himself the task of speaking up for the Way in dangerous times. But, Yi Hwang noted, Cho did not rein in his political activities with the judgment of a fully developed scholar.<sup>69</sup> Despite these reservations, Yi I and Yi Hwang admired Cho as an unusually gifted scholar whose mission for the Way was terminated too abruptly.

In a sense, Cho Kwang-jo's counterpart was Yi Ŏn-jök (1491–1553) whose scholarly contribution to the school of principle was highly acclaimed by both Yi I and Yi Hwang. Yi Ŏn-jök's government career epitomized the hazardous position of a Confucian official who became caught up in the dirty play of power politics. In 1545, when once again scholars were sacrificed in a purge, Yi did not forcefully enough defend *sarim* interests and was even made a merit subject by the newly enthroned King Myōngjong (r. 1545–1567). Only a couple of years later, however, Yi was implicated in the so-called wall inscription incident of 1547, and as a consequence the attacks against the *sarim* were renewed. Yi was sent into exile where, far away from government concerns, he devoted himself to scholarship and wrote a great number of works that inspired later generations of scholars. His most original contribution was the *Taehak changgu* (Commentary to the *Ta-hsüeh*). Regretting that the classics of the sages and the commentaries of the worthies were not without deficiencies and obscurities, Yi felt compelled to go beyond Chu Hsi's textual arrangement and to work out his own version,<sup>70</sup> a willful deviation from established norms that was censured by both Yi Hwang and Yi I.<sup>71</sup> Besides the *Taehak changgu*, he produced a number of compilatory works and one of the Yi dynasty's first ritual manuals, the *Pongsŏn chapŭi* (Various Ceremo-

68 Yi I, «Kyöngyŏn ilgi II» in *Yulgok chönsö*, 28: 22b, 23–24.

69 Yi Hwang, *T'oegye chönsö* (reprint, Seoul, 1971), 5: 34; 48: 28–38 (Biography of Cho Kwang-jo).

70 Yi Ŏn-jök, «Preface» to *Taehak changgu* in *Hoejae chönsö* (reprint, Seoul, 1973), p. 553.

71 Yi Hwang, *T'oegye chönsö*, 11: 7b–11; Yi I, *Yulgok chönsö*, 14: 36–37.



nies Concerning the Veneration of Ancestors).<sup>72</sup> Whereas Yi Hwang frequently acknowledged his indebtedness to Yi Ŏn-jŏk and considered him one of the great Confucians of his time, Yi I could not forgive him his bad judgment of 1545 and therefore denied him the attribute of «great Confucian» (*taeyu*).<sup>73</sup>

Both Cho Kwang-jo and Yi Ŏn-jŏk were defenders of the Way, albeit with different emphasis, and they came to be regarded by their contemporaries and successors as firm links in a philosophical tradition that awaited official recognition.

### *VIII The Enshrinement of the Five Worthies*

The motivation for linking the representatives of a common cause in a coherent line of succession seems to have been inherent in the concept of the Way. At the beginning of the dynasty Kwŏn Kŭn concerned himself with this problem, and toward the end of the sixteenth century the preoccupation with tracing the orthodox tradition (*chŏn*) and with fixing its main stations grew intense. A major reason for this search for security in official recognition undoubtedly was the memory of the times when the exponents of the Way were threatened with extinction. Another reason, although difficult to document, may have been the ambition of the Korean neo-Confucians to emulate Chu Hsi's authoritative construction of the Chinese line of transmission.<sup>74</sup>

The issue of the rehabilitation of Cho Kwang-jo was revived a few months after King Sŏnjo (r. 1567–1608) ascended the throne in 1567. The eminent scholar Ki Tae-sŭng (1527–1572) implored the young king to exercise sounder judgment than his predecessors and to do justice to such superior men as Cho Kwang-jo and Yi Ŏn-jŏk. To support his argument, Ki gave a historical review of precedents, reaching as far back as Chŏng Mong-ju.<sup>75</sup> The aged Yi Hwang seconded Ki's plea by reiterating his praise for both Cho Kwang-jo and Yi Ŏn-jŏk.<sup>76</sup> Encouraged by the counsel of such outstanding scholars, the king granted Yi Ŏn-jŏk the posthum-

72 *Myŏngjong sillok*, 15: 59a–b.

73 Yi I, *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, 28: 23–24. Also see Yi Pyŏng-do, «Yi Hoe-jae wa kŭ hangmun,» *Chindan hakpo*, 6: 132–147 (Nov. 1936).

74 See Wing-Tsit Chan, «Chu Hsi's Completion of Neo-Confucianism,» pp. 73–81.

75 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 1: 4–5.

76 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 1: 6a–b; 2: 22–23; Wagner, *Literati Purges*, p. 118.



ous title of chief state councillor early in 1568 and finally, two months later, bestowed the same honor on Cho Kwang-jo.<sup>77</sup>

The case, however, did not rest there. Seizing upon these long-awaited rehabilitations, students of the Confucian Academy immediately requested the canonization of the four worthies (*sahyŏn*), Cho Kwang-jo, Yi Ŏn-jŏk, Kim Koeng-p'il and Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang. The king refused such fast action.<sup>78</sup> The canonization drive nevertheless gained momentum. In the general search for the roots of Korean neo-Confucianism the pedigree of the transmitters of the Way was being fixed in ever greater detail. One of the first to present an uninterrupted line of transmission was Ki Tae-sŭng. His reconstruction started with Chŏng Mong-ju, followed by Kil Chae, Kim Suk-cha (1389–1456), Kim Chong-jik, Kim Koeng-p'il, and Cho Kwang-jo. The most precarious link was certainly that between Chŏng Mong-ju and Kil Chae, a relationship which could not be convincingly established, but which was necessary to connect Koryŏ with the early Yi dynasty. Kil Chae's disciple, Kim Suk-cha, handed the Way to his son and major disciple, Kim Chong-jik, from whom the scholarly lineage was uninterrupted up to Cho Kwang-jo. Kwŏn Kŭn's name, although mentioned a couple of times, was definitely dropped.<sup>79</sup>

The cause of the Way was strongly supported by Yi Hwang, who in 1568, during his last sojourn in the capital before his death, submitted to Sŏnjo a lengthy memorial – one section of which was devoted entirely to the theme of the Way. Drawing on his neo-Confucian wisdom, Yi argued that the Way emerged from the mandate of Heaven (*ch'ŏnmyŏng*) and was embodied in human morality. It had reached its apogee when Yao and Shun and the three sage kings (Yü, T'ang, and Wen) were ruling the world. Confucius, his disciples, and Mencius further elucidated the Way, but because they did not attain political office they could only hand their teachings on to later generations. After a long period of eclipse by heterodox teachings (*idan*), the Way was resurrected by worthies of the Sung time. Finally, at the end of Koryŏ, the teachings of the Ch'eng-Chu school reached Korea. Although there had been wise rulers at the beginning of the dynasty, the Way in Korea was still endangered by Buddhism and «conventional learning» (*soghak*). Yi closed his exposition by urging Sŏnjo to reestablish the age of Yao and Shun in order to give the Way a perma-

77 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 2: 10b, 12a–b, 13b; *Chōsen shi*, 4.8: 695.

78 *Chōsen shi*, 4.8: 699.

79 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 2:27; 3: 33.

nent abode and to set the people's minds straight.<sup>80</sup> Yi Hwang's memorial had the forceful tone of a political testament and undoubtedly contributed to making the restoration of the Way a central issue of the 1570s.

In the spring of 1570 the students of the Confucian Academy renewed their demand for the enshrinement of the four worthies. The king once more was reluctant to take action.<sup>81</sup> The decision on the matter was difficult because there was no written testimony for evaluating Kim Koeng-p'il's and Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang's merits. This was the reason even Yi Hwang counseled caution.<sup>82</sup> A search for works left by Kim, Chŏng, and Cho Kwang-jo did not produce much new evidence.<sup>83</sup> Encouraged by the Royal Secretariat, however, the king finally ordered the first counselor of the Office of the Special Counselors, the scholar Yu Hŭi-ch'un (1513–1577), to submit the remaining works and the biographies of the four candidates for printing and distribution. Yu's compilation, prefaced by Yi Hu-baek (1520–1578), carried the title *Kukcho yusŏllŏk* (Records on the Confucian Forebears of the Dynasty).<sup>84</sup> Besides these records, the list of candidates was expanded by adding the name of Yi Hwang, who had died in 1570. This lent the movement additional prestige.<sup>85</sup>

There are several reasons King Sŏnjo was so reluctant to take a final decision on the issue. Despite Yu Hŭi-ch'un's efforts, Kim Koeng-p'il and Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang remained doubtful candidates. Yi I, who was, after the death of Yi Hwang, the most prestigious neo-Confucian thinker of the time, communicated to the king his uneasiness about Kim and Chŏng. Yi fully endorsed only the enshrinement of Cho Kwang-jo and Yi Hwang.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Yi Ŏn-jŏk's unorthodox interpretation of the *Ta-hsüeh* cast doubt on his candidacy.<sup>87</sup> Although Yu Hŭi-ch'un also considered the simultaneous canonization of five worthies no easy matter, he tried to encourage Sŏnjo by reminding him that the canonization of the five worthies in Sung China (Chou Tun-i, the Ch'eng brothers, Chang Tsai

80 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 2: 20b, 21; Yi Hwang, *T'oegye chŏnsŏ*, 6: 46b–50. This memorial is called «Mujin yukchoso» (Memorial in Six Sections of 1568).

81 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 4: 1a–b, 2a–b; Yi I, «Kyŏngyŏn ilgi II» in *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, 28: 46b–47, 47b–48.

82 Yi Hwang, «Ŏnhaengnok,» *T'oegye chŏnsŏ*, 5: 34b.

83 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 4: 3b, 4b.

84 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 4: 4b–5, 6b–7, 8b; *Sŏnjo sujŏng sillok*, 4: 14b–15; *Chōsen tosho kaidai* (Keijō, 1932), pp. 357–358.

85 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 8: 16b.

86 Yi I, «Kyŏngyŏn ilgi II» in *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, 29: 12–13; *Sŏnjo sillok*, 7: 57b.

87 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 175: 1b–3b.

(1020–1077), and Chu Hsi) had been an outstanding event that should be repeated in Korea.<sup>88</sup>

After the debate had been interrupted by the Japanese invasions in the 1590s, it gained national significance during the years of reconstruction. The students of the Confucian Academy now presented the issue of canonization as an integral part of national reconstitution. Just as neo-Confucianism had functioned as a bulwark that eventually stopped the southward march of the Chin armies against the Sung, the canonization of the five worthies, the memorialists urged, would now contribute to the revitalization of the Confucian spirit of the country.<sup>89</sup> A flood of memorials reasoned in the same vein,<sup>90</sup> and the rebuilding of the war-torn Shrine of Confucius in 1604 was considered by the highest government circles as a proper occasion for celebrating the enshrinement.<sup>91</sup> National consensus finally was reached, but the king shrank from granting his ultimate consent with the worn-out argument that canonization was a grave matter that was difficult to decide.<sup>92</sup> Sŏnjo's successor, Kwanghaegun (r.1608–1623), was put under mounting pressure from the memorialists for more than two years before the enshrinement of the five Korean worthies was granted in the fall of 1610.<sup>93</sup>

### *IX The Permanent Shaping of the Way*

The enshrinement of the Five Worthies in the Shrine of Confucius ended the long struggle by the defenders of the Way for official recognition. It was a victory for the *sarim*, whose concerns were no longer confined to a small group but had developed the «right learning» (*chŏnghak*) now accepted by the general officialdom. The term *sarim* therefore disappeared into oblivion.

From the very beginning of the dynasty, the Way – that is, the philosophical heritage of the Ch'eng-Chu school – had never been endangered by competition from any other Confucian school of thought. Rather, it stood in danger of its totality being destroyed by the separation of its two

88 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 10: 16.

89 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 172: 20b–23, 23–24.

90 *Sŏnjo sillok*, entries throughout 1604.

91 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 180: 9b–12.

92 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 183: 16b–18; 195: 11b–12b; 196: 10; *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 1: 98ff.

93 See *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, *kwŏn* 6, 14, 24–26.

component parts, the Way of scholarship (*hakto*) and the Way of ruling (*ch'ido*). Kwŏn Kŭn kept emphasizing that profound learning was a necessary concomitant of wise rulership. But all too easily scholarship was degraded to a mere vehicle to power and thereby was deprived of its moral assignment. Consequently, the quality of government suffered. Cho Kwang-jo tried to redress this imbalance by making the *Ta-hsüeh* again the measure of the school of principle, insisting that the moral, Confucian-trained official be admitted as the authoritative counselor and critic. In such a lofty position, however, the Confucian worthy (*hyönsa*) easily became the target of «small men» (*soin*) who resented being constantly reminded of their moral deficiencies. Moreover, the worthy was confronted by the ruler who was apt to resist indoctrination as an undue limitation on royal authority. Although Cho Kwang-jo failed to meet this dual challenge successfully, he nevertheless came to symbolize the ideal representative of the Way.

In Korea, scholarship was very closely linked to government service, and it also had to conform to the standards set by the Ch'eng-Chu school that was recognized as state orthodoxy. The final settlement of the line of transmission was not the streamlining of conflicting theses of different schools; rather, it underscored the powerful hold orthodoxy had on the Korean Confucians. This mainstream of thought, carefully banked by the early commitment to the orthodox Way, did not easily absorb new substance in subsequent centuries.

## GLOSSARY

An Hyang	安珣
Bunrui shi	分類史
Chang Tsai	張載
chen-kuan	貞觀
Chen-kuan cheng-yao	貞觀政要
Chen Te-hsiu	真德秀
Ch'eng-Chu	程·朱
Ch'eng Hao	程顥
Ch'eng I	程頤
ch'i	治

ch'ido	治道
chich'i	至治
Chin	金
Chindan hakpo	震檀學報
chinyu	真儒
Chiphyŏnjŏn	集賢殿
Cho Kwang-jo	趙光祖
Ch'oe Ch'ung	崔冲
chŏn	傳
Chŏng Mong-ju	鄭夢周
Chŏng To-jŏn	鄭道傳
Chŏng To-jŏn sasang ŭi yŏn'gu	鄭道傳思想研究
Chŏng Yŏ-ch'ang	鄭汝昌
Chŏngam-jip	靜庵集
chŏngdo	正道
chŏnghak	正學
Chŏngjong	正宗
chongsa	宗師
chŏngsim	正心
ch'ŏnmyŏng	天命
chŏrŭi	節義
Chŏsen shi	朝鮮史
Chŏsen shi kōza	朝鮮史講座
Chŏsen tosho kaidai	朝鮮圖書解題
«Chosŏn hagesa»	朝鮮學藝史
Chosŏn kyŏnggukchŏn	朝鮮經國典
Chou	周
Chou Tun-i	周敦頤
Chu Hsi	朱熹
Chungjong	中宗
ch'ungsin	忠臣
Chung-yung	中庸
Ha Yun	河崙
hakto	學道
Ham Chŏl-lin	咸傳霖
Han U-gŭn	韓祐
Han Yŏng-u	韓永愚
Han'guk sasangsa non'go	韓國思想史論攷
Hŏbaektang-jip	虛白堂集

<i>Hoejae chönsö</i>	晦齋全書
Hong Hŭi	洪薰
Hongmun'gwan	弘文館
Hsia	夏
<i>Hsiao-hsüeh</i>	小學
Hu An-kuo	胡安國
Hu Ping-wen	胡炳文
hyönja	賢者
hyönsa	賢士
i	理
i	義
idan	異端
ihak	理學
Im Sa-hong	任士洪
Injong	仁宗
<i>Iphak tosöl</i>	入學圖說
kaeguk kongsin	開國功臣
Ki Tae-süng	奇大升
Kija	箕子
Kil Chae	吉再
Kim Chong-jik	金宗直
Kim Koeng-p'il	金宏弼
Kim Ku-yong	金九容
Kim Suk-cha	金叔滋
kongbu	工夫
konghyo	功效
Kongyang	恭讓
Koryö	高麗
<i>Koryösa</i>	高麗史
<i>Kukcho yusöllök</i>	國朝儒先錄
kuksok	國俗
kunggyöng	窮經
kungni	窮理
Kwanghaegun	光海君
<i>Kwanghaegun ilgi</i>	光海君日記
Kwangjong	光宗
kwanhak	官學
kwön	卷
Kwön Kün	權近



Kwŏn Po	權 溥
Kwŏn Tŏk-chu	權 德 周
Kyŏngsangdo sŏnbaedang	慶 尚 道 先 輩 黨
Kyŏngyŏn	經 筵
«Kyŏngyŏn ilgi»	經 筵 日 記
<i>Li Chi</i>	禮 記
<i>Lun-yü</i>	論 語
«Mujin yukchosŏ»	戊 辰 六 傳 疏
Munch'ung	文 忠
Munmyo	文 廟
Myŏngjong	明 宗
myŏngsin	名 臣
«Ŏnhaengnok»	言 行 錄
Paek I-jŏng	白 頤 正
Pak Chong-hong	朴 鍾 鴻
Pak Sang-ch'ung	朴 尚 衷
Pak Sŏ-saeng	朴 瑞 生
<i>Pongsŏn chapü</i>	奉 先 雜 儀
«P'oŭn pongsago sŏ»	圖 隱 奉 使 葉 序
<i>Poŭn sŏnsaeng-jip</i>	圖 隱 先 生 集
<i>Pulssi chappyŏn</i>	佛 氏 雜 辨
sa	士
sadaebu	士 大 夫
sado	斯 道
sahyŏn	四 賢
<i>Sambong-jip</i>	三 峯 集
<i>Samgang haengsilto</i>	三 綱 行 實 圖
sarim	士 林
<i>Sasŏ chipchu</i>	四 書 輯 註
Sejo	世 祖
Sejong	世 宗
Shang	商
Shuang Chi	雙 箕
Shun	舜
<i>Shushigaku no denrai to sono eikyō ni tsuite</i>	朱 子 學 の 傳 來 と そ の 影 響 に 就 いて
si	謚
<i>Sillok</i>	實 錄
<i>Simgirinon</i>	心 氣 理 論

Sin Ch'ang	辛昌
Sin U	辛福
sinsim chihak	身心之學
sirhak	實學
soghak	俗學
sogyu	俗儒
soin	小人
«Sönoch'o üi Sönggyun'gwan yön'gu»	鮮初引成均館研究
Söng Hyön	成俔
Sönggyun'gwan	成均館
söngni	性理
söngni chi hak	性理之學
Sönjo	宣祖
Sönjo sujöng sillok	宣祖修正實錄
Söngjong	成宗
Ssu-shu t'ung	四書通
sugi ch'iiin	修己治人
Sung	宋
Ta-hsüeh	大學
Ta-hsüeh yen-i	大學衍義
Taehak changgu	大學章句
Taehak samgang-p'almok cham	大學三綱八目歲
Taehak yönnüi chibyo	大學衍義輯要
T'aejo	太祖
T'aejong	太宗
taeyu	太儒
T'ai-chi-t'u shuo	太極圖說
T'ang	湯
T'ang T'ai-tsung	唐太宗
tao	道
tao-hsüeh	道學
tao-t'ung	道統
to	道
T'oegye chönsö	退溪全書
tohak	道學
«Tongbang ihak üi chörösö üi Chöng P'öün»	東方理學의祖으로서의鄭圃隱
tot'ong	道統
Ts'ai Ch'en	蔡沈

ũnil chisa	隱逸 元士
Ŭryu mun'go	乙酉 文庫
wanghwa	王化
Wen	文
wihak	偽學
Yang Sǒng-ji	梁誠 元
<i>Yangch'on munjip</i>	陽村文集
Yao	堯
<i>Yaũn sǒnsaeng ōnhaeng sũbyu</i>	冶隱先生言行拾遺
Yi	李
Yi Che-yŏn	李齊賢
«Yi Hoejae wa kũ hangmun»	李晦齋外工學問
Yi Hu-baek	李後白
Yi Hwang	李滉
Yi I	李珥
Yi Kok	李穀
Yi Ōn-jŏk	李彦迪
Yi Pyŏng-do	李丙燾
Yi Saek	李穡
Yi Sŏk-hyŏng	李石亨
Yi Sǒng-gye	李成桂
Yi Sǒng-mu	李成茂
Yi Su-gŏn	李樹健
Yi Sung-in	李崇仁
<i>Yijo hugi ũi sahoe wa sasang</i>	李朝後期의 社會와 思想
«Yijo sirhak ũi kaenyŏm e taehayŏ»	李朝實學의 概念에 대하여
<i>Yŏksa Hakpo</i>	歷史學報
«Yŏnghũngbu hakkyogi»	永興府學校記
<i>Yŏngnam sarimp'a ũi hyŏngsŏng</i>	嶺南士林派의 形成

Yönsangun	燕山君
Yönsangun ilgi	燕山君日記
yu	儒
Yu Hŭi-ch'un	柳希春
Yu Sung-jo	柳崇祖
yudo	儒道
Yulgok chönsö	栗谷全書
Yun Yong-gyun	尹鏞均
Yü	禹
Yüan	元