



ON THE RECEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ZHUZI SCHOOL IN KOREA DURING THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS: AN UNDERSTANDING OF ZHU XI THROUGH SEONGNIHAK

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(Received: January 05, 2024; Accepted: February 19, 2024)

Abstract. The Zhuzi School (The Cheng-Zhu School), a Confucian movement, emerged and flourished in China during the Song Dynasty. This intellectual movement strengthened the official position of Confucianism in the history of Chinese philosophy and spreading its influence to East Asian countries. In the open atmosphere of Sinology at that time, the scholarly spirit of great master Zhu Xi was absorbed, interpreted, and flexibly applied by indigenous Confucians in the regional countries according to their ideological identity. In this paper, the authors have based on the methodologies of historical materialism and diffusionism, as well as research methods such as comparison, analysis and synthesis, logic and history, abstraction and generalization. These research methods are appropriately applied to analyze and explain how the original Zhuzi School was received, developed, and localized into the so-called Seongnihak in Korea during the medieval and early modern periods. The results of this study prove that from the perspective of East Asian civilization, Neo-Confucianism is not One but Many.

Keywords. Neo-Confucianism, The Zhuzi School, Korean Seongnihak, Zhu Xi, Li-Qi

Introduction

The Zhuzi School 朱子學 is a philosophical trend within Song Confucianism that originated in the late Tang and early Song period, initiated by the Five Sages of Northern Song 北宋五子¹. This trend later reached its full development during the Southern Song Dynasty. The Zhuzi School holds a significant position in the history of Chinese Confucianism due to its solid metaphysical foundation. The term “the Zhuzi School” is associated with Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200)², who developed, refined, and perfected Confucianism theoretically and elevated it to become the bureaucratic ideology of Chinese feudalism.

The primary interest of the Zhuzi School and Song Confucianism is to establish a solid metaphysical foundation as a theoretical basis for interpreting socio-political issues. Li 理 (Principle) and Qi 氣 (Material Force or Vital Energy) are the two most crucial philosophical categories for explaining the world. Li reflects consciousness (attributes of principle) and is the source of all things, while Qi refers to matter, is regulated, and is relatively independent of Li. Based on the foundations of Li and Qi, the Zhuzi School further developed other related categories, such as Xin 心 (Heart-Mind), Xing 性 (Human Nature), and Qing 情 (Emotion), to discuss a priori ethics. The Zhuzi School constructed a pantheistic world model, arguing that only one Li (Principle) manifested in everything. Li within a human being is called Xing (Xing-Li), which is disturbed by the Qi that forms the essence of man. Therefore, realizing and reaching the realm of Li requires each individual to cultivate morality restlessly.

Along with the Zhuzi School, Song Confucianism also had another intellectual movement called the Lu Wang School 陸王心學 (Learning of the Heart-Mind) initiated by Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193), then further developed and perfected by Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1528). The Learning of the Heart-Mind advocates establishing a philosophical foundation on the fusion of Li and Qi within the ego. These two schools (The Zhuzi School and The Lu-Wang School) have attacked and competed with each other throughout the history of Confucianism. However, in

¹ Five famous thinkers of the Zhuzi School during the Northern Song Dynasty: Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073), Shao Kangjie 邵康節 (1011-1071), Zhang Hengqu 張橫渠 (1020-1077), Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1108).

² Zhu Xi was a great master of the Southern Song Dynasty in China. He attempted to inherit the philosophical spirit of The Five Sages of Northern Song, integrating various currents of thought, thereby initiating a new philosophy called Neo-Confucianism in order to restore the earlier rupture of the Confucian tradition, as well as shaping the ideological pattern for later dynasties. Zhu Xi's famous works include *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Collected Commentaries on the Chapters and Sentences of the Four Books), *The Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (A Collection of Conversations of Master Zhu), *Zhu Wen gong wen ji* 朱文公文集 (Zhu Xi's Collected Writings),... Subsequent Confucian generations reverently called him Zhuzi 朱子 (Master Zhu), proving his status was not inferior to Confucian masters such as Confucius and Mencius.

terms of status and influence, the Zhuzi School is superior to the Lu-Wang School. The influence of the Zhuzi School is not only within mainland China but also spreads in various forms in East Asian countries.

Korea is a country imbued with Confucian culture. The cultural exchange and acculturation brought the Zhuzi School to “set foot” on this East Asian peninsula. By selective acquisition, Korean Confucians had unique, indigenous interpretations of Zhu Xi’s philosophy. This study focuses on the reception and development of the Zhuzi School in Korea, thereby clarifying a cultural commonality among countries with the same Confucian tradition.

1. Korean Confucianism in the pre-Zhu Xi period

The study of the Zhuzi School in an East Asian context aims to position this doctrine in a broader perspective (namely, the vision of East Asian civilization) rather than being “limited” to an original Zhu Xi of the Song-Ming period. On the Korean peninsula, it could be studies of Zhu Xi or attempts to position it in the history of Korean philosophy. In addition, the Sino-Korean comparison is also an essential point of view that we can discuss here. In this section, the authors approach the Zhuzi School by capturing its spirit in the companionship of Korean and East Asian³ Confucianism. Thereby initially outlining an indigenous Confucian philosophical consciousness in a regional context.

In Korea, the term “Seongnihak” 성리학(性理學, The School of Human Nature and Principle) is more commonly used than “the Zhuzi School”⁴. In essence, both are general concepts referring to Zhu Xi’s thought, but Korean Confucians paid particular attention to human morality (Xing Li) rather than purely metaphysical issues (Li Qi). We need to remember that before Zhu Xi sowed his influence on Korea (thirteenth century), Confucianism with the Confucius-Meng tradition and Han-Tang spirit established a relatively solid foundation in the structure of the Samgyohabil 삼교합일(三教合一, Three Teachings are of the same source) on this East Asian peninsula.

Samguk Sagi 삼국사기(三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms), one of the earliest written history books in Korea, calls philosophy by a strange term Punglyu 풍류/

³ The term “East Asia” here is considered from an intellectual-cultural perspective.

⁴ In this study, when discussing the influence of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, we carefully considered using the term “Seongnihak” instead of the term “the Zhuzi School” in order to emphasize the specificity of Korean Confucianism.

Fengliu 風流 (literally meaning: Romantic)⁵. Confucianism began to be introduced into the Korean peninsula during the Three Kingdoms period and significantly influenced on Goguryeo. During his reign, Sosurim Wang 소수림왕 (小獸林王, 371-384), the king of Goguryeo, built Taehak/taixue (太學, Imperial Academy) and Gyeongdang/Jiongtang(肩堂, The private school focuses on teaching reading and archery skills) to teach the sage-learning [6]. It can be seen as the first sign of the presence of Confucianism in Korea.

A normative characteristic in the internal development of Chinese Confucianism is that it derives from the widespread influence of humanism and prosperous and chaotic views in the early stages (Pre-Qin Confucianism), then shifts to a dogmatic and non-practical learning style mixed with mystical elements (Han-Tang Confucianism), followed by the search for metaphysical foundations (Song Confucianism/Neo-Confucianism), and embark on the path of East-West cultural continuation in the pre-modern period (modern Neo-Confucianism). The development of Korean Confucianism followed the same trajectory. Throughout the Three Kingdoms period on the Korean peninsula, there was a proliferation of Confucian prosperous and chaotic texts, including the *Analects* 論語 and *Mencius* 孟子 developed in Baekje, and *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋 in Silla [6, pp. 638-646]. At that time, Korean feudal powers gradually considered Confucianism the theoretical basis for establishing a monarchical political model. At the same time, the mastery of the classics and the profound erudition of history as the hallmarks of Han-Tang scholarship also manifested through the exchange of classics by doctors at that time, of which Wang In 왕인 (王仁, ?-?) of Baekje is one of the most typical cases⁶.

Korean Confucianism in the pre-Zhu Xi period is still relatively simple. Although the period from the unification of Silla to the Goryeo Dynasty witnessed “the historical period in which Confucius was deified” [11, p. 102], the philosophical issues raised at that time are modest. Only in the late Goryeo and the early Joseon period did philosophical Korean Confucianism gradually emerge since Korean scholars embraced Zhu Xi’s ideas.

⁵ *Samguk sagi: Silla benji*, Vol 4 section wrote: 「國有玄妙之道，曰風流。設教之源，備詳仙史，實乃包含三教」 [2]. Roughly translated: “An inherently magical Dao exists in our country, named romantic. Earlier history books have discussed its origins, which contained the three religions within it”.

⁶ A scholar of Baekje brought books such as *Analects*, *The Classic of Filial Piety* 孝經, and *Thousand Character Classic* 千字文 to Japan during the reign of Emperor Ojin. The term *doctor* refers to a position or person of erudite knowledge in a Confucian context.

2. The First Approaches to Zhu Xi's Thought in Korea

The rise and fall of the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula during the pre-Choson period has posed an urgent need for the ruling class to seek a solid ideology to consolidate its legitimate position. In such circumstances, the conception of *mingfen* 名分 (Normative status) through the practice of classical Confucian humanism is insufficient to satisfy this requirement, the root of which is the lack of metaphysical foundations. By combining the two aspects of *qiong li jin xing* 窮理盡性 (literally meaning “to develop one's nature to perfection through the penetration of principle”) and *da yi mingfen* 大義名分 (literally meaning “The great significance of the social divisions and social roles”) [10, p. 193], Korean scholars embraced, absorbed, and interpreted Zhu Xi to create an indigenous philosophy that concentrated on issues of Xing and Li so much that it was considered “the second highest peak after the original Zhu Xi” [14, p. 141].

The Zhuzi School began to be introduced to the Korean peninsula in the early thirteenth century and was associated with An Hyang 안향 (安珦, 1243-1306). In 1290, he accompanied King Chungyol (忠烈王, 1274-1308) on a royal trip to the Yuan dynasty, where he met Chinese Neo-Confucian scholars. At that time, Zhu Xi's thoughts were so charismatic that An Hyang believed he was the true heir of Confucius. Therefore, he “copied them by hand, drew [Chu Hsi's] likeness, and brought everything back home” [8, p. 17]. During this early period, scholars from the two countries exchanged ideas and books. Among Zhu Xi's works, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* (Collected Commentaries on the Chapters and Sentences of the Four Books) is the most famous work that demonstrates his platform. If An Hyang was the one who marked Zhu Xi's authority with Korean Confucianism, Gwon Bu 권부 (權溥, 1262-1346) contributed significantly to the revision and dissemination of Zhu Xi's work throughout the East Asia peninsula. We believe this is extremely important for the development of Korean Seongnihak because Zhu Xi's scholarly spirit manifested through his *Sishu zhangju jizhu*. For a long time, the content of this work became an essential factor in Confucian examinations – a clear expression of the Zhuzi School's bureaucratic status in feudal society.

In the early stages of Seongnihak, we quickly list prominent thinkers with various stances, including U Tak 우탁 (禹倬, 1263-1342), Yi Jin 이진 (李璘, 1244-1321), Lee Chon-nyon 이조년 (李兆年, 1269-1343), Yi Saek 이색 (李穡, 1328-1396), Jieong Dojeon 정도전 (鄭道傳, 1342-1398), Gwon Geun 권근 (權近, 1325-1409)... This diversity, on the one hand, has opened up the promising future of Seongnihak in the development process in Korea, but on the other hand, it also poses the dilemma of establishing a genealogy of the Confucian *Daotong* 道統

(intellectual orthodoxy)⁷ in this country. In fact, during the pre-Seongnihak period, no idea of the division of Confucianism existed. It was not until Zhu Xi's thoughts were introduced to Korea that the scholar-officials began to focus on establishing orthodoxy—derivatives in sage flow. This situation leads to an inevitable requirement for understanding the essence of Confucianism at the early stage of Seongnihak: Embracing the spirit of zhongyong中庸 [10, p. 210].

Seongnihak interprets the category of Zhongyong with a relatively broad connotation. Zhongyong is not only *immovable*, but it also requires a balance between two aspects: (1) *Seek transcendent realms* and (2) *maintain the prosperity and chaos of Cheonha*천하/ *Tianxia*天下 (literally meaning “(all) under heaven”). Zhu Xi combined the two into the so-called “ju jing qiong li”居敬窮理 (literally meaning “Abidance in Reverence Exhaustive Study of Principle”). In the context that Korean Confucianism already has a deep-rooted foundation of “Dayimingfen,” a thorough understanding of metaphysics on the other side of Zhongyong becomes a prerequisite if Confucian scholars want to set foot on the orthodox path of Confucianism. However, symbols of indigenous religions and beliefs, such as the mythology of Dangun단군 (檀君) or the spirit of Hwarang화랑(花郎), were not enough for Seongnihak to create a new metaphysics. This situation forced the Confucians to face two possible solutions: Rejection of Buddhism and Diagram Explaining⁸.

In the first solution, Seongnihak and the Zhuzi School have similarities and differences. Specifically, The Tang Dynasty was a period of solid development of Buddhist sects in China. At that time, Buddhist views on the origin of creation and the nature of the self showed marked opposition to the Confucian stance. Interestingly, however, when confronted with Buddhism, the Confucian scholars did not have an absolute negation of this doctrine but carefully selected the profound metaphysical values of Buddhism to complement their school's philosophy. In Korea, the situation is similar. From the late Goryeo period to the early Choson period, Buddhism had a strong secular expansion associated with “the monastic economic model that expanded and controlled the imperial economy” [4, p. 67]. At that time, the challenges of Buddhism, ideologically and politically, were one of the reasons for the emergence of Confucians who were imbued with Seongnihak. They use it as a “theoretical weapon” to criticize Buddhism. Specifically, 20 chapters of *Bulssijabbyeon*불씨잡변 (佛氏雜辨, Buddha's

⁷ A doctrine initiated by Han Yu(韓愈, 768-824) to establish orthodoxy in the spread of Confucianism. Most famous Confucians promoted their own Daotong (in Korean: Dotong). On Zhu Xi's ideas about inheriting the Confucian tradition, please refer to the *Preface to Commentary on Great Learning*大學章句字[3, p. 1-13], which is part of his work *The Four Books*.

⁸ A way of presenting and interpreting the content of Confucian doctrine with diagrams.

Nonsense) by Jeong Dojeon aims to critique the non-secularity and ethics of Buddhism. It can be seen as the starting point for the anti-Buddhist tendencies of Seongnihak. However, from a philosophical perspective, if “compared with the profound teachings of the noble monks of the Goryeo dynasty, many inadequacies are inevitable” [10, p. 205]. Thus, Seongnihak went one step further: Explaining ontological issues with diagrams on the foundation of Confucian classics.

Regarding the second solution, China and Korea both inherited from Yiology. If the Zhuzi School focused on establishing and interpreting diagrams about the relationship between heaven and man, such as Zhu Dunyi's *Taiji tushuo* (太極圖說, Tai Chi Diagram), Shao Kangjie's *Yuantu* (圓圖, Circular diagram), Seongnihak (such as Gwon Geun) aims to deeply explain the diagrams of human nature such as *Cheon-insimseonghab-iljido* 천인심성합일지도 (天人心性合一之圖, The Diagram of the Oneness of Heaven and Human Beings, Mind, and Nature), *Ogyeong-gagbuncheyongjido* 오경각분체용지도 (五經各分體用之圖, Diagram of the Separate Essences and Functions of the Five Classics), *Hongbeomgujukcheon-inhab-ildosang* 홍범구주천인합일도상 (洪範九疇天人合一圖, The Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan), *Daehagjijangjido* 대학지장지도 (大學指掌之圖, The Diagram of Key Points of the Great Learning), *Jung-yongsujangbunseogjido* 중용수장분석지도 (中庸首章分釋之圖, The Diagram of the Separate Interpretation of the Chapter Headings of the Doctrine of Zhongyong). These diagrams are helpful for visually grasping incomprehensible theoretical content and, at the same time, contribute to testing the conviction of the Seongnihak [4]. Both of these tendencies [Critique of Buddhism and Establishment of Diagrams] took place and developed throughout the dominance of Seongnihak in Korea.

On the one hand, it shows similarities between Seongnihak and the original Zhuzi School in China; on the other hand, it makes Seongnihak adaptable to the needs arising from the spiritual context of the Koreans at that time, the most obvious of which is their attitude towards an in-depth study of human nature⁹ instead of the pantheistic speculation of the Learning in the Song Dynasty (*Song Xue*).

⁹ During the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu's disciple Li Ao 李翱 (?-c. 844) initiated discussions about the issue of returning to the original human nature in the *Fuxing shu* 復性書 (The Book of Recovering the Nature). Scholars such as Zhang Hengqu and Zhu Xi inherited and developed it. Nevertheless, perhaps due to the requirements of the socio-historical context at that time, Seongnihak gave this issue more attention than the original Zhuzi School.

3. Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: Their Metaphysical Conversations with Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi's thought was introduced to Korea as early as the Goryeo era; however, "the full understanding of it seems to have come quite late, only after Yi Hwang 李滉 (Toegye 退溪, 1501–1571) launched an all-out effort to come to grips with the entire scope of the Zhu Xi learning" [16, p. 25]. T'oegye's intellectual legacy was inherited and promoted uniquely way by his outstanding disciple Yi I 이이 (李珥, 1536–1584), pen name Yulgok 율곡. The two lived in a turbulent era with many political struggles among factions that plagued contemporary intelligentsia. In other words, scholars are in chaos. In this context, it was not surprising that Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok shared the same concern about the Way (Do/ Tao) and the World (Cheonha/ Tianxia) [13, p. 15]. It is one of the fundamental reasons Seongnihak is so deeply realistic—which is relatively alien from the Zhuzi School.

In his time, T'oegye's reputation was not only widely known as the head of Sungkyunkwan 성균관 (成均館, A National Elite Educational Academy a par with Taixue 太學宮, Quốc Tử Giám 國子監), but also as the most authoritative Korean scholar of Zhu Xi. His works such as *Seonghagsibdo* 성학십도 (聖學十圖, The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning), *Jujaseojeol-*yo** 주자서절요 (朱子書節, Outline and Explanations of the Works of Zhu Xi) portrayed him as a philosopher who was proficient in the Seongnihak. He was the one who developed and localized Zhu Xi's Jing/Gyeong¹⁰ into learning of Gyeong/Jing (敬學/경학)¹¹.

Politically, the Zhuzi School demanded its total dominance both academically and ideologically. In Korea then, by rejecting the Lu-Wang School, Yi T'oegye contributed to Zhu Xi's "shadow" covering the rest of the Choson dynasty [5]. Yi T'oegye understood Zhu Xi's dualistic views and attitude towards Li, and granted this category dynamism rather than merely an idea derived from Qi. It manifested through the famous *Sachilnonjaeng* 사칠논쟁 (四七論爭, Four Beginnings - Seven Ordinary Emotions Debate, as known as the Four-Seven Debate) between Yi T'oegye and Ki Taesung 기대승 (奇大升, 1527-1572), pen name Gobong 고봉.

¹⁰ The *Jing* is an elaboration initiated and developed by Zhu Xi; "means that within each and every one of us there exists a luminous spiritual something, and that in our every act we should keep the realization of this fact within our minds" [18, p. 561].

¹¹ Yi Toegye's conception of *Jing*, see also "The Idea of Gyeong/Jing 敬 in Yi Toegye's Korean Neo-Confucianism and Its Availability in Contemporary Ethical Debate" [7, pp. 121-142].

This debate began with Yi T'oebye commented on Jeong Jiun's view expressed in Jeong's *Cheonmyeongdoseol* 천명도설(天命圖說, The Diagram of the Mandate of Heaven): The Sadan사단 (四端, Four Beginnings) are the issuance of Li, the Chiljeong칠정(七情, Seven ordinary Emotions) are the issuance of Qi.¹² Advocating for the inseparable relationship between Li and Qi, Ki Gobong strongly opposed Yi T'oebye's action because it was contrary to Zhu Xi's teachings. He emphasized that Li and Qi are not separate from each other, just as the four beginnings belong to the seven ordinary emotions. Ki Gobong demonstrates the Qi-oriented point of view (which manifests itself in the seven ordinary emotions), capable of encompassing Li (the four beginnings). On the contrary, T'oebye argued that he did not confront Zhu Xi. Distinguishing the four beginnings and the seven ordinary emotions is to emphasize that Li and Qi are different originations without denying their intrinsic "unity."

As noted above, during the debate, Yi T'oebye gave Li a vital ability, namely: The four beginnings are the issuance of Li and Qi follows it, and the seven ordinary emotions are the issuance of Qi and Li governs it [6, p. 683]. Li's dominance suggested the existence of an idea as an independent entity rather than dependent on things. Once that idea arises (the issuance of Li), the four beginnings will become apparent rather than mixed with the seven ordinary emotions.

This concept of Yi T'oebye aims to connect Mencius's priori moral theory with Zhu Xi's as the basis for the argument that "pure goodness can also be realized in reality" [12, p. 122]. Based on this argument, some scholars assert that Zhu Xi misunderstood Yi T'oebye because he [Zhu Xi] never allowed Li operate independently [16].

The Four-Seventh debate marked the beginning of metaphysical discussions associated with issues that arose in Korean social practice at that time. For the first time in the history of East Asian Confucianism, there was a discussion with a large concentration of scholars during the more than 500-year period of the Choson dynasty [17, p. 334]. This debate was the premise for the formation of two branches within the Seongnihak (one emphasizes Li and the other emphasizes Qi), as well as arose related debates, thereby spreading out a large area for the Seongnihak to be deeply rooted in the history of Korean Confucianism. It is worth mentioning that, after the Four-Seventh Debate, Yi Yulgok, who was a student of Yi T'oebye, is considered

¹² The Four Beginnings (or The Four Sprouts) are discussed in the *Mencius* (孟子) to refer to the four clues of goodness, including pity and compassion (惻隱), shame and dislike (羞惡), compliance and deference (辭讓), and right and wrong (是非) [3, p. 238]. The Seven ordinary Emotions (or the Seven Kinds of Feelings) is listed at the *Book of Rites (Liji)* 禮記: 「何謂人情?喜,怒,哀,懼,愛,惡,欲,七者弗學而能」 [1, p. 432]. Roughly translated: "What are the feelings of human beings? They are joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire. These seven kinds of feelings are what human beings are capable of without learning"

the embodiment of Aristotelian criticism in the East when he “became the first person to formally criticize T’oegye [Yi Hwang]’s doctrine” [9, p. 31]. Yi Yulgok had an excellent attraction for scholars who studied Korean Confucianism. He was the one who reconciled and converged opposing currents of thought in Seongnihak in particular and Confucianism in general at that time. Yi Yulgok’s intellectual legacy shows he was a Confucian philosopher with a consistent stance. Throughout his entire life, he relentlessly strived to pursue the state of “inner sageliness and outer kingliness”(內聖外王)through the spirit of strict righteousness. In the Confucian tradition, Yi Yulgok’s status can be compared to his teacher, Yi T’oegye. His works, including *Cheondochaeg* 천도책(天道策, Essay on the Tao of Heaven), *Seonghagjib-yo* 성학집요(聖學輯要, The Essentials of the Studies of the Sages), *Donghomundab* 동호문답(東湖問答, Questions and Answers at East Lake)..., on the one hand, show the creativity of his thinking about Zhu Xi; on the other hand was a bridge for the later transition from Seongnihak to Practical Learning tendencies in Korea.

After the Four-Seven debate, Yi Yulgok and Seong Hon 성혼(成渾, 1535-1598)continued to develop the issues of Li - Qi, the four beginnings - the seven ordinary emotions into two related categories: Simdo 심도(道心, the heart-mind of the Tao)and Simseol 심설(人心, the heart-mind of man). According to Zhu Xi’s interpretation, Simdo is a purely metaphysical moral element, the supreme good (Li), while Simseol is a disturbance caused by desire (Qi). Seong Hon agrees with Yi T’oegye’s notion that it is necessary to distinguish the four beginnings and the seven ordinary emotions as the issuance of Li and Qi. Yi Yulgok opposed his teacher and Seong Hon’s dualistic stance. Influenced by Ki Gobong ’s Qi-oriented view, Yi Yulgok argued that if Zhu Xi was attached to the absolute separation between Simdo and Simseol and between Li and Qi, then “Zhu Xi has also made a mistake. How could it be Zhu Xi” [10, p. 20]. Thus, Yi Yulgok reconciled above absolute separation by advocating “dul-imyeonseo hana” 둘이면서 하나(二而一, meaning “Li and Qi are One and at the same time Two, and Two but One at the same time”). The One here is the possibility of the human mind-heart, which Unifying Human Nature and Emotions 心統性清. The heart-mind of man formed by the co-issuance of Li Qi, i.e., *two*. “However, do not believe that the goodness of the Four is a distinct moral property explained exclusively by li but a common property shared by the Seven explained by both li and qi” [15, p. 24].

The conflicts between the two branches of Qi and Li in Seongnihak arise from the internal contradiction in Zhu Xi’s philosophical doctrine. It should be noted, however, that these contradictions are not the result of a fallacious eclecticism by the Chinese thinker because Zhu Xi himself applied the views he acquired to solve problems dynamically according to

circumstances, creatively, in line with the Confucian spirit of “inner sageliness and outer kingliness.” It was also inherited and developed by the philosophers of Seongnihak. They have excellently exploited issues that Zhu Xi has yet to discuss much in China to establish for themselves a foundation of indigenous Confucianism. After the Yi T’oegye and Yi Yulgok era, Korean Confucianism continued to transform and develop into various trends such as Li-oriented, Qi-oriented, Practical Learning, and Anti-Zhu Xi. We believe that the rich and diverse development of Zhuzi School demonstrates the strong vitality of this intellectual movement in the East Asian peninsula.

Conclusion

Based on reflections on the reception and development of the Zhuzi School in Korea, we have an additional dimension to identify the influence of this intellectual movement on East Asian culture. From the perspective of East Asian civilization, the Zhuzi School is a system with a relatively complete structure. However, depending on the unique interests of each country and nation, that system is expressed in a concrete, flexible, and variable way.

If the original Zhuzi School in China was interested in the principle of metaphysical transformation of the universe, the Korean Seongnihak focused on subtle issues in human psychological life. Through philosophical discourse, the Korean Confucian scholars’ ability to perceive and analyze concepts has achieved many significant achievements, of which the Four-Seventh Debate is the most prominent. With its unique explanations of human nature, Seongnihak has penetrated deeply into the practice of social life, thereby “truly becoming the most important cultural resource to shape Korean national behavior, lifestyle, and character since the Goryeo period and remains influential today” [14, p. 140].

It can be unequivocally stated that the development of Confucianism in China and other East Asian countries was not framed within the framework of Confucius-Meng or Han Confucianism. Therefore, it is necessary to define the characteristics of Confucianism in each historical period to adequately capture what G.W.F. Hegel called the “spirit of the age” (Zeitgeist). This study aims to clarify the flexible adaptation of the Zhuzi School to each specific and specific historical context of societies in East Asia. Accordingly, each country, nation, and dynasty contains unique features despite the same feudal socio-economic form. Therefore, if the Zhuzi School does not have a flexible transformation, it will be challenging to maintain and strengthen a long-term official position throughout the medieval–premodern period. From the perspective of East Asian civilization, we believe that, with its ability to adapt to historical changes flexibly, the Zhuzi School did not decline with the end of feudalism. In the context of East-West cultural exchange and the change of political models in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, the Zhuzi School still showed its enduring vitality through new faces. These new faces have

demonstrated Confucianism's core values and modernization, which can be integrated with contemporary currents of thought and science to become one of the spiritual driving forces for the sustainable development of Korea and various East Asian countries.

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