

**The fettered path to Yangch'on**  
**Fact and fabrication in representations of the life and**  
**thought of Kwŏn Kŭn (1352-1409)**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of**  
**Philosophy of the Australian National University**

**August 2013**



The National Health Service

Department of Health and Social Security

London W1A 0LW

Public Health Service

A book published for the Department of Health and Social Security

1972





## Declaration

This thesis is my own original work

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. H. Alston', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dane Hunter Alston

## Abstract

This thesis will for the first time in English provide a detailed examination of the life, thought and legacy of Kwōn Kūn. The importance of this thesis is that it will open up new insights into this fascinating and pivotal historical figure, compared to the partial and idiosyncratic treatment he has received in modern scholarship. The thesis will draw extensively on Kwōn's own writings, historical records and the spectrum of secondary studies undertaken up until the present to illustrate the contours of his life, reveal the intricacies of his thought on Confucianism and chart the rise and fall of his legacy.

This thesis argues three points concerning Kwōn Kūn. First, responding to scholastic perceptions of Kwōn of being of little significance and the ongoing partial depictions of his life, the thesis argues that Kwōn Kūn's was an important figure during his time, central to the political, educational, international and intellectual activities of the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn. In tracing Kwōn's life this chapter will also reveal how integral Confucianism was to informing and shaping Kwōn's actions, ideas and politics.

Second, the thesis will look at Kwōn's understanding of the Confucian canon and show that he saw it as a repository for a spectrum of knowledge ranging from the practical to the philosophical. This argument will show that Kwōn adopted a flexible approach in dealing with the canon, its commentators and commentaries. The important point here is that contrary to representations in modern scholarship, Kwōn was not a passive conduit for Neo-Confucian teachings but instead critically interpreted and evaluated key Confucian texts and commentaries, including those of Zhu Xi.

Lastly, the thesis will examine the legacy of Kwōn and show that his fall from grace was a consequence of domestic developments in Chosŏn and the changing focus of intellectuals from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Charting the fate of Kwōn's legacy will help explain why scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century held Kwōn in such poor regard.

These three points argued here contribute to the field by directly addressing the partial and prejudiced views of Kwōn as a historical figure, showing that he was in his time an important and influential figure. The thesis also reveals that Kwōn was far more nuanced in his intellectual activities and that our understanding of him to date has suffered from belligerent disciplinary and historiographical preoccupations.

## Notes for the reader

The McCune–Reischauer Romanisation system will be used for Korean names, places, texts and terminology, Pinyin for Chinese and Hepburn for Japanese.

References to people from Korea, China and Japan will follow the convention of surname followed by given name/s.

All translations appearing herein, unless stated otherwise, were done by the author.

## Acknowledgments

It has been a long, winding path to Yangch'on – a journey of ten years. I began this journey while attending the Department of Korean Studies doctoral program at the University of Tokyo. It was there that I started collecting materials and ideas, and was fortunate enough to study with some wonderful and inspiring students and teachers, in particular Professor Kawahara Hideki who was a stern but encouraging mentor. Outside of the university a number of friends provided support along the way, including Daniel Lee, Chad Brutomesso, Roger Andersson, Adam Young, Anton Anshin, Greg Ellis, Kim Kwangseob and Park Byung-kun.

A significant portion of the research behind this thesis took place in Korea where I was lucky to be able to tap into the knowledge of my friends, colleagues and teacher from the Department of Religious Studies at Seoul National University. In particular for all things Confucian, Professor Keum Jang-t'ae was always a gentle and encouraging force. Kwŏn T'ae-u was particularly kind in showing me around Kwŏn Kŭn's gravesite and discussing its features.

When I transferred to the Division of Pacific and Asian History (PAH), Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS), at the Australian National University I arrived at a time when the corridors were abuzz with students and researchers exploring all manner of interesting and unfashionable old topics, all supported by a wonderful administrative staff of Marion Weeks, Dorothy McIntosh, Indranee Sandanam and Oanh Collins. PAH and RSPAS, at that time, captured what it truly meant to do academic research and it provided a wonderful environment for me to delve into the many materials I had collected and to begin exploring some ideas.

Students who provided particular inspiration and encouragement to me included Jamie Greenbaum during the early days, then those who joined me in the PhD process like Takemasa Ando, Tim Amos, Nathan Woolley, Brett Baker, Dawn Deunsing, Hilary Howes, Rob Hurle, Mathias Hammer, Andy Connelly, Paul Brownell and my roommate Cathy Churchman, who has been a wonderful friend throughout.

Professors from PAH, RSPAS and the Faculty of Asian Studies were a constant source of help, in particular Professors Igor de Rachewiltz, Mark Elvin, Geremie Barmé, John

Minford and even the late David Hawkes who I was fortunate enough to read some of Kwŏn Kŭn's poetry with. Other supporters include Dr Li Tana, Duncan Campbell and Darrell Dorrington. Staff at the Korea Institute at ANU over the years provided opportunities to present portions of this thesis at domestic and international conferences, supported fieldwork and provided general encouragement, in particular Professor Choi Hyaeweol and Drs Ruth Barraclough and Roald Maliangkay. And of course thanks must also go to the Coombs nightwatchmen who even in the early hours of the morning provided a down to earth perspective on life.

While writing the thesis my supervisors at various points have provided wonderful feedback and support: Dr Colin Jeffcott helped in the early days of my return to ANU; Professor John Makeham gave me guidance on translations and literature to read; Professor Ken Wells read many of the conference papers that made up this thesis and lastly, Dr Benjamin Penny has been a friendly and encouraging voice from the beginning but helped particularly in the final stages of finishing up the thesis. Without the support and encouragement of my board of supervisors this thesis would not have come to fruition.

The number of friends who have helped me along the way is too numerous to count or include. Chong Daham and Isabelle Sancho have been two close comrades throughout, as too Kiri Paramore who I have shared the PhD path with. Then there is the old gang, now spread far and wide: Diana, Andrea, Jan, Max, Ian .... To all my friends – thank you for everything!

The biggest support and the people to whom I owe the biggest thanks is my family. My parents and brothers have patiently watched me disappear to foreign lands, and into foreign worlds and books – all the while remaining supportive. My wonderful wife and son – Heajin and Dion – have been with me for large portions of this journey and have put up with me labouring against this project for far too long. It is to them that I say the biggest thanks!

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# 1. Introduction

## Embarking on the path to Yangch'on

In 2004 I entered the doctor of philosophy program in the Department of Korean Studies at the University of Tokyo. At the time I planned to shift my focus from Buddhist religion and thought, which had been the focus of my Masters degree, to Confucianism and Confucian thought. Initially I thought of looking at the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century *Debate on the Similarities and Difference in the Nature of Man and Things* 人物性同異論 that took place between Confucians of Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392-1910), but my supervisor at the time suggested that this topic was too difficult and complicated to tackle. Instead, I proposed looking at the other end of the Chosŏn Confucian spectrum, namely the Confucians active towards the end of the Koryŏ period 高麗 (918-1392) and the cusp of the Chosŏn.

Through my studies of Korean intellectual and religious history I had naturally encountered the big names of Confucianism such as Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501-1570, pen name T'oegye 退溪) and Yi I 李珥 (1536-1584, pen name Yulgok 栗谷), both towering personalities who are unavoidable in any discussion of Confucianism in the Korean peninsula. Rather than traipsing over the well worn territory of T'oegye, Yulgok and the intellectual debates and lineages that they set in motion, I was interested in exploring their intellectual precursors and looking at Confucianism before their time, exploring in detail who these Confucian scholars were and how they understood Confucianism. As my interest was inclined to the intellectual aspects of Confucianism I was drawn to two figures of the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn: Chŏng To-jŏn 鄭道傳 (1342-1398, pen name Sambong 三峯) and Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1352-1409, pen name Yangch'on 陽村). Chŏng and Kwŏn both stand out among pre-16<sup>th</sup> century Confucians intellectuals for have written the earliest extant tracts on Confucian thought and being at the heart of dynastic change in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Chŏng To-jŏn's writings, like most Confucians, are broad. Along with his collected works in the *Sambongjip* 三峯集,<sup>1</sup> he contributed to the formation of the early Chosŏn state with his involvement in composing the laws and regulations for the new state in

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<sup>1</sup> Chŏng To-jŏn, (*Kugyŏk*) *Sambongjip*, Vol. 1 and 2, Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe, Seoul, 1982.

the *Chosŏn kyŏnggukchŏn* 朝鮮經國典 (*Complete Code of Chosŏn Law*).<sup>2</sup> Chŏng's best known works are his short pieces dealing specifically with Confucianism, namely the *Simmun* 心問 (*Questions of the Mind*), *Ch'ŏndap* 天答 (*Replies of Heaven*) and the *Sim, Ki, I, P'yŏn* 心氣理篇 (*Essay on the Mind, Material Force, and Principle*).<sup>3</sup> These two works touch on the philosophical issues that later captured the minds of Yulgok and T'oegye, and for this reason Chŏng's two essays have received significant academic attention to date and are held up as precursors to 16<sup>th</sup> century intellectual preoccupations. Lastly, Chŏng's polemic against Buddhism, the *Pulssi chapp'yŏn* 佛氏雜辨 (*Various Arguments Against the Buddhists*), stands out as encapsulating the frustrations of late 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucians towards Buddhism and Buddhists.<sup>4</sup> Although Chŏng is without a doubt a worthy subject through which to study aspects of 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucianism in the Korean peninsula, I decided to avoid him because not only is there a substantial body of scholarship on his life, writings and thought, but his writings specific to Confucian intellectual themes are quite brief and narrow in their scope. With this in mind, I turned to look at Kwŏn Kŭn.

### First impressions, first questions – a Neo-Confucian apostle

My first exposure to Kwŏn Kŭn, both in English and Korean, was through his iconic *Iphak Tosŏl* 入學圖說 (*Diagrams and Explanations for Beginning Students*, hereafter *IHTS*). This text is famous for its opening chapter which synthesises the Confucian notions of heaven, man, and mind nature into one diagram.<sup>5</sup> The common depiction of Kwŏn and his writings on Confucianism is that he offered essentially a distillation of Neo-Confucian figurehead, Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) thought on principle 理, material force 氣, mind 心, heaven 天 and other concepts. Kwŏn's project mirrored Chŏng To-jŏn, except that he incorporated the use of diagrams as visual aids. The *IHTS* is after all a primer and these were key concepts of the time. This depiction of Kwŏn stretched across English, Korean and Japanese academic literature. Michael Kalton, for example, wrote that Kwŏn was the "foremost Neo-Confucian scholar and literary figure of the early Yi [Chosŏn] dynasty".<sup>6</sup> Concerning his *IHTS*, it is the "only broad and

<sup>2</sup> Chŏng, *Sambongjip*, Vol. 2, 1982: pp. 230-325.

<sup>3</sup> Chŏng, *Sambongjip*, Vol. 1, 1982: pp. 371-381, 257-371.

<sup>4</sup> Chŏng, *Sambongjip*, Vol. 1, 1982: pp. 306-356.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix page 241 for a reproduction of the first page of the *IHTS*.

<sup>6</sup> Kalton, Michael, "The Writings of Kwŏn Kŭn: The Context and Shape of Early Yi Dynasty Neo-Confucianism" in William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush (eds.), *The Rise of Neo-*

systematic early Yi exposition of the Neo-Confucian vision of man and the universe...” and “...In the rest of his [Kwŏn’s] works one finds very little in the way of technical elaboration that goes beyond what is presented in the [*IHTS*].”<sup>7</sup> From Kwŏn’s *IHTS* Kalton concludes that Kwŏn’s interests are primarily doctrinal and ritual matters are of secondary interest. Therefore, “Neo-Confucians” of this time such as Kwŏn have, “few reasons to doubt the total adequacy and correctness of these doctrines, and much reasoning to be deeply impressed by them.”<sup>8</sup> From Kalton’s work Kwŏn appears to be a Neo-Confucian apostle, a conduit who merely conveyed Zhu Xi’s philosophy and added little other than elaboration. As Kalton’s work on Kwŏn remains the most definitive in English, even though it was published over twenty years ago, it remains the point of departure for analysing Kwŏn and his ideas on Confucianism.

Upon further examination of Kwŏn it became apparent that academic depictions of Kwŏn such as Kalton’s were, and continue to be, partial and prejudiced. The problem is that academic accounts of Kwŏn’s writings on Confucianism focused almost exclusively on portions of the *IHTS*; in particular, the first few chapters of the *IHTS* that deal with standard Neo-Confucian topics Zhu Xi brought to the fore in Song China and which T’oegye and Yulgok later fixated on. Adopting such an approach naturally highlights the intellectual genealogy of certain topics scholars were grappling with from the Song dynasty to mid-Chosŏn. While tracing the diffusion of such ideas is important, the consequence is that it is done at the expense of recognising the gamut of topics and issues Kwŏn dealt with. In the case of the *IHTS*, aside from the first two chapters that cover discussion of heaven, man, mind and nature, there are another 22 chapters that broach additional Confucian texts and themes. Therefore, it is necessary to critically examine the entirety of his writings on Confucianism, rather than a fraction of its contents, to see if he is offering “technical elaboration” of Zhu Xi’s ideas, as Kalton described.

Another peculiarity of the academic understanding of Kwŏn is that he wrote more than just the *IHTS*. In fact, compared to the *IHTS*, his *Ogyŏng Ch’ŏn’gyŏllŏk* 五經淺見錄 (*Record of Humble Thoughts on the Five Classics*, hereafter *RHT*) offers not only a detailed exegesis of the core Confucian classics, but along with the *IHTS* is the earliest extant exegesis of the Confucian classics in Korean history. Confucianism had been in

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*Confucianism in Korea*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985: p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> Kalton, “The Writings of Kwŏn Kŭn”, 1985: p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> Kalton, “The Writings of Kwŏn Kŭn”, 1985: p. 119.

the Korean peninsula since before the 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE and over time it came to provide educational frameworks and paradigms for governance and morality for centuries, yet through all that time a Confucian exegetical tradition did not develop. Meanwhile, scholars throughout the Chinese dynasties actively engaged with the Confucian canon and produced a formidable commentary tradition. In the case of Korea, historical records indicate that although a range of Confucian texts were printed and in circulation, only a handful of commentaries appeared before Kwŏn but were lost over time.<sup>9</sup> If we are to understand the antecedents of Confucianism, then it is obvious to look at the earliest extant writings, such as Kwŏn's. Furthermore, to understand Confucianism of this time it is important to look at all of Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism and not just select portions. Kwŏn's *RHT* thus offers a rich vein to explore the earliest and most detailed example of a late 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucian grappling with the core of the Confucian canon. Despite this, however, for all the pages and chapters that Kwŏn devoted to Confucianism, which are far more than Chŏng To-jŏn or even Kwŏn's own teachers, scholarship to date has remained fixated on a narrow selection of his writings in the *IHTS* and taken that as emblematic of his position on Confucianism. Even then, these issues appear to have been selected in anticipation of 16<sup>th</sup> century Chosŏn intellectuals and their particular interests. So long as this mentality prevails we will only understand but a fraction of 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucian concerns in the Korean peninsula.

### An ambiguous historical figure

In delving into Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism questions started to emerge in regard to his life and legacy. Starting with generic encyclopaedic accounts of Kwŏn, we find that they usually begin with a description of his personal details such as his various names, and a selection of his roles in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn government.<sup>10</sup> Some accounts note that he travelled to Ming China in 1389 and was exiled upon return due to his opening diplomatic correspondence, and was exiled again from 1389 until 1390 for siding with his teacher Yi Saek's 李穡 (1328-1396) moderate faction which did not support Yi Sŏng-gye's 李成桂 (1335-1408) push for the Koryŏ throne. Once pardoned from his exile, Kwŏn joined the Chosŏn court under Yi Sŏng-gye, now King

<sup>9</sup> Keum Jang-tae notes that Kim Yŏn 金緣 (?-1127) wrote a number of works including a commentary on the *Analeks*. See Keum Jang-tae, *Han'guk Chonggyo Sasangsa*, Vol. 2, Han'guk Haksul Chŏngbo, Seoul, 2002: p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> See for example *Han'gukhak Taebaekwa Sajŏn*, Vol. 2, P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, Seoul, 1991: p. 299 and even the more recent encyclopaedia reference such as Yao Xinzhong (ed.), *RoutledgeCurzon Encyclopedia of Confucianism*, Vol. 1, Routledge, London and New York, 2003: pp. 347-8.

T'aejo 太祖 (r. 1392-1398). In 1396 Kwŏn travelled to Ming again as an envoy, this time though to address the Ming emperor who was offended by Chŏng To-jŏn's correspondence. Upon Kwŏn's return he continued to hold positions in the government and *Sŏnggyun'gwan* 成均館 (National Academy). Even in 1401 when T'aejong 太宗 (r. 1400-1418) took the throne, Kwŏn remained in the government and he was awarded with a string of high offices up until his death in 1409. These kinds of popular account of Kwŏn occasionally mention his writings like the *IHTS* and note that it influenced later scholars, particularly Kwŏn's use of diagrams as pedagogical aids, but provide no elaboration. This kind of generic biographical description paints a rudimentary picture of Kwŏn that says nothing of the social, political and intellectual environment in which he grew up and lived in, let alone hint at what sort of person he was, who his peers were and why he did what he did. This kind of representation is generic and pervasive.

In contemporary English scholarship the depiction of Kwŏn is more flattering, but still incomplete with Kwŏn appearing as a peripheral figure in broader narratives. In John Duncan's *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, for example, Kwŏn is quoted in relation to the ongoing use of Koryŏ period political institutions in Chosŏn and he is cited as part of an account of the Andong Kwŏn genealogy.<sup>11</sup> Duncan also provides an anecdote of Kwŏn to illustrate the financially tight situation of the bureaucracy. In this instance Chŏng To-jŏn criticised Kwŏn and accused him of telling lies about receiving money from the King ahead of his trip to Ming, when in fact the King had given him the money.<sup>12</sup> It is not surprising that Kwŏn plays such a small role in Duncan's work; Duncan's focus is after all on the argument that the Koryŏ-Chosŏn dynasty did not herald the replacement of the old aristocratic regime with a cadre of new leaders and bureaucrats with new visions and institutions, but was rather a continuation Koryŏ institutions and aristocratic leadership.

The second major English language study in which Kwŏn appears is Martina Deuchler's *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, a study of late Koryŏ-early Chosŏn ideology and society.<sup>13</sup> In this book Deuchler maps the social changes brought on by Confucian ideology from Koryŏ to Chosŏn in terms of kinship, ancestor worship

<sup>11</sup> Duncan, John, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2000: pp. 101, 123.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

<sup>13</sup> Deuchler, Martina, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: a Study of Society and Ideology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.

and rites. Within this discussion Deuchler identifies Kwŏn in three contexts; the first context is biographical and as a member of a cadre of new men who helped shape Chosŏn. She identifies Kwŏn as one of a small number of elite civilians who became merit subjects and were the “true architects of the Choson dynasty.”<sup>14</sup> The account outlines Kwŏn’s distinguished family pedigree - his forefather Kwŏn Pu 權溥 (1262-1346) who was renowned for his commitment to Neo-Confucian studies - the various posts Kwŏn Kŭn held, his pro-Ming stance, his banishment from the capital for a diplomatic indiscretion and his writing philosophical works while in exile.<sup>15</sup> Deuchler notes that Kwŏn was in exile during the dynastic transition and that he “failed to take an active part in dynastic change in 1392, the prospect of which he viewed with reservations – a stance he would later apparently regret.”<sup>16</sup> Lastly, Deuchler accounts for Kwŏn’s return to the court, his employment for his literary skills, his falling out with Chŏng To-jŏn and his close ties to T’aejo. It was only after Chŏng’s death that Kwŏn could move to the fore and then, “Kwŏn’s contributions to the early dynasty were varied: with his annotations and exegesis of Chinese classical works, he opened an entirely new vista on the Chinese canon; and as a devoted teacher, he built a solid basis for Korea’s Neo-Confucian development.”<sup>17</sup>

Deuchler secondly identifies Kwŏn in the intellectual context of the new elite of Chosŏn. Thanks to the likes of Yi Sack, who promoted debate among the literati, and Chŏng Mong-ju 鄭夢周 (1337-1392), who was infatuated with the *Great Learning* 大學 and *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸, Neo-Confucian thought and its teachings were elevated to new levels towards the end of the Koryŏ. Neo-Confucian thought was an “intellectual adventure” and a welcome break from dull, traditional scholarship. The teachings were moral, political and focused on action. Deuchler quotes Kwŏn who described learning as an “instrument for bringing people under control by activating their moral nature”.<sup>18</sup> Kwŏn’s point here was to focus on concrete learning, rather than mechanical internalisation of the classics, so as to stimulate self-realisation towards finding the Way and developing proper relations between people.<sup>19</sup> According to Deuchler, Kwŏn saw the teachings of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang and Zhou) and

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp 101-2.

the classics as the means to achieve this. Deuchler writes, “Kwŏn’s thinking was clearly guided by the *Ta-hsüeh* [sic., *Great Learning*] to which he devoted a chapter in his *Iphak tosöl* of 1390”. Deuchler is certainly right about the *Great Learning* receiving a dedicated chapter in the *IHTS*, but her claim of its centrality in Kwŏn’s thinking is not a point she expanded upon.

The third context Deuchler references Kwŏn is in regard to ritual literature. With Neo-Confucians turning to the sage kings to provide models for ideal human order, ritual literature provided a description of the workings of ideal society and definitions and interpretations of important concepts. Similarly, in the context of Chosŏn these texts and their Neo-Confucian interpretations were looked to as “social blueprints”. In this light, Deuchler notes that Kwŏn’s *Yegi Ch’ŏn’gyŏllŏk* 禮記淺見錄 (*Record of Humble Thoughts on the Record of Rites*) was “a work that was praised for its clarifying qualities”, but her analysis goes no further as to who praised the text and what qualities were clarified.<sup>20</sup>

In the scholarship of Deuchler and Duncan we gain a glimpse of Kwŏn as a noteworthy figure of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, an active and significant political figure, educator and intellectual. However, in these accounts Kwŏn remains secondary to the larger narratives being pursued. He is one of a constellation of figures set against the arguments and even then, there are no details to flesh out the details of his life. While the accounts are useful as a starting point, it raises questions: Firstly, if Kwŏn was as important a historical figure as described, then why do we not know more about his life and thought? Secondly, if Kwŏn was as important an intellectual figure as portrayed, then why is the gamut of his writings not already teased out? Especially when it comes exploring how Neo-Confucian ideology impacted on the transformation of Koryŏ and Chosŏn society, Kwŏn was one of the pioneers of Confucian exegesis in the Korean peninsula living and writing during the formative time, yet he is relegated to being merely an interesting personality of the time.

In conjunction with looking at contemporary representations of Kwŏn I found puzzling historical references to him. When looking at T’oegye’s *Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* 聖學十圖 I was under the impression that Kwŏn’s *IHTS* had played a significant influence on T’oegye’s composition of the book. T’oegye does after all use

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

diagrams and commentary as a pedagogical aid to conveying the key points of Zhu Xi's writings. T'oegye even reproduces Kwŏn's chapter on the *Great Learning* almost verbatim. However, when T'oegye came to talk about Kwŏn he said:

"Above is the first chapter of "the writing handed down in the Confucian school." Kwŏn Kŭn, who was an official in the early years of this dynasty, made the diagram of it. The text of the first chapter is followed by a quotation from the Questions and Answers on the Great Learning's general discussion of the meaning of Great Learning and Elementary Learning; this treatise was introduced in the text accompanying the diagram of the Elementary Learning."<sup>21</sup>

If Kwŏn was as important an intellectual as sketched in contemporary scholarship and was said to have influenced T'oegye in the production of this *Ten Diagrams*, then why did T'oegye describe Kwŏn as merely, "an official in the early years of this dynasty"? What of the *IHTS* and all its other diagrams, not to mention his extended exegesis of the Five Classics and his treatment of other philosophical themes derived from Zhu Xi? T'oegye's ambivalence towards Kwŏn seemed to undermine the importance contemporary scholars placed on him. On the one hand contemporary scholars claim Kwŏn was important as a political figure, educator and intellectual. Yet, in the eyes of Kwŏn's successors he was held in significantly different light. Not only is there no superlative praise, but Kwŏn is referred to in a perfunctory manner and the range of his writings not even cited, let alone critiqued. Something must have happened between his death and T'oegye, but what? Furthermore how do we account for the discrepancy in treatment between T'oegye and contemporary scholars? These questions and uncertainties formed the basis of this thesis.

### **The boundaries of scholarship on Kwŏn Kŭn**

Looking into scholarship on Kwŏn Kŭn it became clear that the questions confronted at the outset of my investigations emerged due to the broader scholastic treatment of Kwŏn over the last century. Originating in the writings of early 20th century intellectuals, several themes have dominated academic analysis of Confucianism in the Korean peninsula, and by extension Kwŏn and his thought. Delving further into the

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<sup>21</sup> Yi Hwang and Kalton, Michael C. (trans.), *To Become a Sage: The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning, Neo-Confucian Studies*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988: p. 86.



primary sources, particularly his writings on Confucianism, highlighted the gulf between representations of Kwŏn in modern scholarship and his actual writings. In order for the reader to better understand the importance of this thesis and its argument it is necessary to outline the trends that have shaped academic discourses on Confucianism in Korea to date and treatment of Kwŏn therein.

*Pioneers of modern scholarship on Kwŏn Kŭn: Chang Chi-yŏn, Takahashi Toru and Hyŏn Sang-yun*

The earliest academic treatment of Kwŏn took place at a time when Confucianism as an ideology, and practice was being questioned and challenged in the Korean peninsula. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, events in the Korean peninsula and broader East Asian region challenged Confucianism in the late Chosŏn and the Confucian literati on several fronts. Years of isolation had fostered a domestic environment where court politics were dominated by clans, corruption, power plays, nepotism and factionalism. These strains left Chosŏn's political system incapable of dealing with its domestic problems, let alone coping with moves towards modernisation and confronting the increasing encroachment of Chinese, Japanese and Western forces.<sup>22</sup> As hardships increased, people in the Korean peninsula became ever more hungry for change, which manifested itself in popular uprisings such as the *Tonghak* 東學 (Eastern Learning) rebellion and the Kabo Reform movements – both popular movements that emerged among those disenfranchised by the social and political systems, and who sought to change Confucian ideology and practices which were perceived as the source of their present woes. These reforms, combined with foreign interference in domestic affairs and the arrival of Christianity, presented a direct and unavoidable challenge to the Confucian ideology that had been the bedrock of Chosŏn society for close to five hundred years. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time when Confucianism's grip on Chosŏn society began to weaken and fail, and its regard among the people of the Korean peninsula plummeted.

Some reformist Confucians of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, often referred to as the *Sirhak* 實學 (practical learning/scholars), attempted to address social, economic and political

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<sup>22</sup> For discussion and analysis of Confucian and court responses to the changing domestic and international scene see Deuchler, Martina, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys: the Opening of Korea 1875-1885*, University of Washington Press, Korea, 1977. Also see Chung Chai-Sik, "Reflections on Korea's Entrance to the Modern" World", *Shinhak Nondan*, 16, December 1982: pp. 465-478.

problems through re-evaluating the Confucian principles that had become the pillars of the state and society.<sup>23</sup> While attempts by the Sirhak failed to realise wholesale social and political change, other Confucian literati of the 19<sup>th</sup> century reacted to the challenges of their time in a variety of ways. Some resisted the calls for change and continued to serve the king and court out of loyalty.<sup>24</sup> A number of conservative elements ignored the calls for change and simply retired to the countryside, while others were swayed by the calls for change and messages of modernisation. Yet even among those who wanted change there was a spectrum that ranged from outright revolution through to reconfiguring Confucianism to adapt to modern times.<sup>25</sup> From within its own ranks, the Confucian literati was splintering along lines of what Confucianism meant in a new and changing world.

A by-product of this period was a questioning of the role of Confucianism in Chosŏn's history. It is within this endeavour that we can see the seminal treatment of Kwŏn Kūn that was to eventually define how scholars treated Kwŏn for most of the next century. The most prominent and earliest examination of Confucianism in Korean history is Chang Chi-yŏn's 張志淵 (1864-1921) *Chosŏn Yugyo Yŏmwŏn* 朝鮮儒教淵源 (*Origins of Chosŏn Confucianism*).<sup>26</sup> Chang's *Origins* was originally serialised in the

<sup>23</sup> For an introduction and discussion of the Sirhak see Kalton, Michael C., "An Introduction to Sirhak [sic]", *Korea Journal*, May 1975: pp. 29-46. Other account of the Sirhak scholars can be found in Keum Jang-tae, *Han'guk Sirhak Sasang Yŏn'gu*, Chipmundang, Seoul, 1989 and Yun Sa-sun, *Sirhak ūi ch'ŏrhak*, Yemooon Seowon, Seoul, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Chung, "Reflections on Korea's Entrance to the Modern World", 1982 and for an account of Confucian Yi Hang-no's resistance to the West see Chung Chai-Sik, *Korean Confucian Encounter with the Modern World: Yi Hangno and the West*, Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley California, 1995.

<sup>25</sup> Keum Jang-tae provides an account of the Confucian religious movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in his article, "The Confucian Religion Movement in the Modern History of Korean Confucianism", *Korea Journal*, 29:5, May 1989: pp. 4-12. Keum provides further discussion on the responses of Confucians during this time in, *Han'guk Kūndae Sasang ūi Tojŏn*, Hanguk haksul chŏngbo, Seoul, 2002. Also see Chung Chai-Sik "Korean Confucian Response to the West: A Semiotic Aspect of Culture Conflict", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 24:3, September 1997: pp. 361-399.

<sup>26</sup> See Chang Chi-yŏn, *Chosŏn Yugyo Yŏmwŏn (Origins of Chosŏn Confucianism)*, Asea Munhwasa, Seoul, (photographic reprint from Showa 10 (1935)) 1973. For translations into vernacular Korean see Chang Chi-yŏn, *Chosŏn Yugyo Yŏmwŏn*, Vol. 1 and 2, Cho Su-ik (trans.), Sol Ch'ulp'ansa, Seoul, 1998; Chang Chi-yŏn, *Chosŏn Yugyo Yŏmwŏn*, Volumes 1 and 2, Yu Chŏng-dong (trans.), Samsŏng Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1984-9.

Chang Chi-yŏn was born in Sangju 尙州, North Kyŏngsang Province, in 1864. His first given name was Chi-yun 志尹 and his common name was Sunso 舜韶. Later, Chang took the literary names Wiam 韋庵 and Sungyangsanin 嵩陽山人. The Chang's ancestral seat was Indong 仁洞 and he traces his heritage back to acclaimed Chosŏn scholar Chang Hyŏn-gwang 張顯光, (1554-1637). Chang apprenticed himself under Chang Sŏk-bong 張錫鳳 (?-1882), then sought tutelage under Chang Pok-ch'u 張福樞 (1815-1900) and Hŏ Hun 許薰 (1836-1907), and also associated with figures such as Kwak Chong-sŏk 郭鍾錫 (1864-1919) and Yi Sŭng-hŭi 李承熙 (1847-1916). Chang's educational pedigree gave him not only a solid basis in the standard Confucian teachings, but

also located him broadly within the Yŏngnam faction 嶺南學派 of the south west that traced its pedagogical and intellectual lineages back to Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501–1570) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). Hŏ Hun aligned himself within the Kunki faction 近畿學派, again reaching back to Yi Hwang, but he also focused on the reformist and more progressive teachings of Yi Yik 李瑄 (1629–1690) and the Sirhak philosophy of the Southerners faction 南人學派, like Chŏng Yak-yong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836). Chang thus emerged from an intellectual tradition that on the one hand aligned itself with the conservative pro-principle philosophy stemming from Yi Hwang, while on the other hand looked to newer philosophical trends that had unfolded over recent centuries and promoted creative Confucian derived solutions for everyday social and political problems.

In 1894 Chang passed the civil service examination to become a *chinsa* 進士: licensee at the age of thirty one. He started working in the government at point when foreign forces were encroaching on the workings and legitimacy of the Korean government. In 1895 Japan moved to strengthen its grip on the peninsula and assassinated Queen Min. In response to this Chang appealed to the throne to raise the Ŭibŏng, or Righteous Armies 義兵, to fend off foreign encroachment but nothing came of his appeal. Following the assassination of Queen Min, King Kojong sensed the increasing danger of foreigner forces and their sympathetic factions within the government that surrounded him. This lead Kojong to leave the palace in 1896 and seek refuge in the Russian legation with his son, the crown prince. Chang, along with many of the literati, was dismayed by this turn of events and he submitted a petition to the King asking him to return to the palace.

Chang was also active outside of court affairs. In 1897 he joined the Department of History and Rites 史禮部 and later in the same year he also held the post of interior minister. While working in the Department of History and Rites, Chang participated in compiling the ten volume publication, *Encyclopaedia of Taehan Rites* 大韓禮典. Working in the government, especially in the interior ministry, Chang confronted the dysfunctional nature of the court and government, and saw the pressing need for national reform and modernisation. Chang's increasing concern about national affairs prompted him to eventually join forces with Yi Sŭng-man 李承晩 (1875–1965), Namgung Ŏk 南宮德 (1863–1939) and others to form the *Manmin Kongdonghoe* 萬民共同會, a collective association of Koreans that censured the government for its faults and lobbied for reform and modernisation. Chang's concern for the nation also saw him in 1896 join the Independence Club 獨立協會. Underlying Chang's desire for reform was his conviction that while political and social structures ought to change according to the times, fundamental Confucian values must remain as guiding principles.

Chang also devoted himself to social and national reform through the media. Chang took on the role of editor and chief of the *Hwangŏng Sinmun* 皇城新聞 in 1899 and *Shisa ch'ongbo* 時事叢報 in the following year. Both publications were platforms that encouraged popular reform, but the *Hwangŏng Sinmun* in particular was the medium for Confucian literati to understand, interpret and explain reform through Confucian paradigms. While he only worked at *Shisa ch'ongbo* for a year, Chang continued to write for the *Hwangŏng Sinmun* in years to come. In 1900 he also started a publishing house called Kwangmunsa 廣文社, through which he published several works of famous *sirhak* scholar Chŏng Yak-yong. Chang's participation in the media took another big step forward in 1901 when he was appointed president of *Hwangŏng Sinmun*. This new appointment gave Chang even more leverage to push for national reform, independence and education based on reformulated Confucian principles.

When the Korean-Japanese Protectorate Treaty over Korea was signed on 17 November 1905 there was widespread dismay and disbelief in the Korean community. Some members of the literati were so dismayed they even committed suicide. On 20 November 1905, out of anger and despair Chang wrote his famous *Sillya PangsŏngTaegok* 是日也放聲大哭. Knowing that the editorial would not get past Japanese censors, Chang decided to print the editorial none the less, but to avoid Japanese authorities he had the newspaper delivered free of charge. Lamenting that he and the people thought Itō Hirobumi 伊藤 博文 (1841–1909) had come to offer peace and stability to Korea, Chang condemned the minister's complicity in signing the treaty.

Popular nationalist and independence movements found new inspiration in the Protectorate Treaty. Chang, along with Yun Hyu-chŏng 尹孝定 (1858–1939), Shim Ŭi-sŏng 沈宜性 (1899–1976), Im Chin-su (林珍洙), Kim Sang-bŏm (金相範) and others formed the “Korean Self-Strengthening Association” 大韓自強會. The Self-Strengthening Association came about due to Chang and other literati regarding previous reform attempts such as Donghak rebellion, Kabo reforms, Independence Club and Enlightenment Movement as being too radical and too reliant on foreign forces. As an alternative, the Self-Strengthening Association proposed organisation and solidarity of the Korean

*Maeil Sinbo* newspaper in 1917 and was later compiled and published posthumously in 1922. The *Origins* briefly treats Confucianism in Silla, Koryŏ and then Chosŏn, where the majority of the focus lies. In outlining Confucianism in Chosŏn, Chang concentrates on individuals, lineages, texts and debates. Within this historical narrative Chang regarded Kwŏn as part of Koryŏ Confucianism and his account is very brief.

Kwŏn Yangch'ŏn Kŭn received an education as a student of the two sages P'oun [Chŏng Mong-ju 鄭夢周] and Mokŭn [Yi Saek] and he transmitted his teachings to Yaŭn Kil Chae, Meritorious Subjects Kim Ku, Kim Pan and Kim Mal. Since these three Meritorious Subjects were well versed in the

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nation, promotion of education, development of industry, cultivation of patriotism and reform of Confucianism along religious dimensions, with the latter of these eventually leading to formation of Taedongkyo, a Confucian based religious group headed by Park Un-sik in 1909. In July 1907, following the failed attempt to get international recognition of Korean sovereignty, the Japanese cracked down on organisations deemed contrary to Japan's colonial objectives. Included in this crackdown was the Korean Self-Strengthening Association. Although the association was eventually disbanded on 19 August, by November a new organisation was formed called the "Korean Cooperative Association" 大韓協會 which continued on from the Self-Strengthening movement. As the Japanese continued to crack down on dissent Chang decided that in order to avoid arrest by the Japanese authorities he must flee the country. In February 1908 he made his way to Vladivostok where he met with Chŏng Sun-man 鄭淳萬 (1873–1928), who invited him to become editor of the *Haecho Sinmun* 海潮新聞. But Chang's time at the newspaper was brief as it soon closed due to financial difficulties. Chang stayed in China and travelled to Shanghai and Nanjing, before returning to Korea in August. Upon returning to Korea Chang was arrested due to his anti-Japanese activities with the *Haecho Sinmun*.

In 1909 Chang moved to the Yŏngnam region in the south east of the peninsular and participated in educational associations such as *Kyonam Kyoyukhoe* 嶺南教育會 and various other academic associations. In addition to continuing his work with the Korean Cooperative Association Chang also worked in the media as editor of the *Kyŏngnam Ilbo* 慶南日報 newspaper in Chinju from October of the same year.

When Japan formally annexed Korea in August 1910 many among the literati protested, and in some cases even took their own lives rather than suffer the disgrace of living under Japanese rule. The Japanese authorities closed many newspapers in response to the anti-Japanese sentiment that followed the annexation and when Chang decided to publish in the *Kyŏngnam Ilbo* Hwang Hyŏn's 黃琮 (1855–1910) final poem before he committed suicide, it too was closed down.

The details of Chang's life from 1911 onwards are scant. Chang appears to have withdrawn from public life to his home town. His biographical chronology describes the places he visited over the last ten years of his life, and as well as listing his publications on history and poetry, it states that from 1914 he started contributing to *Maeil Sinpo* 每日申報, a newspaper endorsed by the Japanese colonial regime. Kim, Gi-seung in "Embracing and Overcoming of Social Darwinism by Confucian Intellectuals in the Early 20th Century Korea: The cases of Park Eun-Sik (1859–1925), Jang Ji-Yeon (1864–1921), Lee Sang-Yong (1858–1931), Sin Chae-ho (1880–1936), and Cho So-Ang (1887–1958)" in *International Journal of Korean History*, Vol. 2, December, 2001, pp. 29–30, describes Chang as turning to drink and "self-torture" after he returned to Korea from China, and from 1911 onwards agreeing with the Japanese colonial regime in its justification for annexing and "modernising" Korea. Kim Do-Yung, "Modern Reform Theories and Confucian Thought of Jang Ji-yeon" in *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, August, 2002, pp. 36–9, describes these final years of Chang's life as a time when he continued to hold onto his views of social Darwinism, tacitly supporting elements of the Japanese occupation, but more importantly, maintaining his view that Confucian teachings and principles remain the bedrock of Korean society while it adapted to the new world. Finally, Chang died in 1921 in Masan and his grave now rests on Mount Tokma 禿馬山 in Ch'angwŏn city 昌原市.

teachings of principle 理, they held offices in the National Academy for over forty years and due to their studies of the classics many famous scholars emerged from their tutelage. Not exclusively venerating Cheng-Zhu learning, [Kwŏn's] chief concern was for the practical implementation of the teachings of the classics and unifying scholastic lineages of the Koryŏ up until that time.<sup>27</sup>

Chang provides a terse description of Kwŏn. Interestingly, Kwŏn is located in Koryŏ rather than Chosŏn where most contemporary scholarship places him; he is noted for those whom he studied under and those to whom he passed his knowledge; and, perhaps most poignant is that Kwŏn is portrayed not as "venerating" the teachings of Cheng-Zhu, but as being more concerned with the practical application of teachings from the classics. In Chang's eyes, Kwŏn is anachronistic and of little importance historically and intellectually. If anything, Kwŏn is regarded firstly as conduit between two Koryŏ sages and a group of early Chosŏn luminaries, and secondly as a person preoccupied with practical rather than intellectual concerns.

Takahashi Toru 高橋 享 (1878-1967) was a contemporary of Chang Chi-yŏn and his writings on Chosŏn and Korea have had a lasting influence on scholarship in Korea.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Chang, *Chosŏn Yugyo Yŏmwŏn*, 1973: p.7.

<sup>28</sup> Takahashi Toru was born in Nigata in 1878. In 1902 he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University where he had studied classical Chinese literature and history. In the following year Takahashi took over from the role of Lecturer of Kwanlip Chunghakkyoyong from Shidehara, who had been invited to the position by the Chosŏn court. In this position Takahashi associated with other Japanese scholar/bureaucrats like Maema and Shidehara to work in the Commission for Surveying Religion in the Japanese Colonial Government. At the time Takahashi proposed to then Governor-General, General Count Terauchi Masatake 寺内 正毅 (1910-1916) collecting Chosŏn documents, which then became the central point for the colonial government's activities. From that point onward Takahashi was engaged in collecting documents, such as old texts and stone inscriptions, through his work for the Japanese colonial government. In 1911, during his fieldwork collecting documents under the auspices of the Colonial Government, Takahashi was surprised to find a number of the members of the Righteous Army keeping *T'oebye's Collected Works* on their desk, which they would study during their spare time. In the same year Takahashi was appointed to Commission for Investigating Chosŏn Literature and while examining the Kyujanggak collection he developed ties with bureaucrats and scholars from the tail end of the Korean empire and thus kicked off his interest in Chosŏn Confucianism. It was around this time that he completed the *Biography of Chosŏn Literature* with Chŏng Man-jo 鄭萬朝 (1858-1936) and others. In 1912 Takahashi took on the role of councillor of the newly established Chosŏn Research Committee. In this role he continued to travel the country examining libraries and collections. It was during a visit to Wŏlchŏng-sa in Odae-san where he met with monks which in turn spurred his interest in Korean Buddhism. In the following year Takahashi kicked off a debate with Chang Chi-yŏn in Korean newspapers over the teachings of Confucius and the role of Confucianism in Korea's past. This exchange with Chang became the basis of Chang's writings on Confucianism in Korea, such as his *Origins of Chosŏn Confucianism*.

Takahashi worked in Korea as an administrator in the Japanese colonial government and he was active in exploring and writing about the Korean people and their history, particularly their religious and intellectual history.<sup>29</sup> He wrote widely on history, archaeology, Buddhism and, of course, Confucianism. Takahashi even engaged with Chang Chi-yŏn in a serialised debate over Confucianism in the *Maeil Sinbo* newspaper. It was not until after Chang died, however, that Takahashi published a number of works dealing with Confucianism in Korea.

In Takahashi's *Chosen Jugaku Daikan* 朝鮮儒學大觀 (*A Vista of Chosŏn Confucian Scholastics*) find his clearest and most concise appraisal of Kwŏn Kŭn.<sup>30</sup> Takahashi's appraisal of Kwŏn Kŭn, however, is enmeshed within his general interpretation of Confucianism in Korea. In his *Daikan*, Takahashi begins by defining what he understands Confucianism to be: he distinguishes Confucian scholastics 儒學, which he equates with Confucian philosophy, from Confucian teachings 儒教, which include

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Drawing on his various studies since 1901 Takahashi presented a paper to the *Japanese Sociology Yearly* in 1917 titled, *Chosenjin*. This presentation was later published in 1920 by the colonial government and along with his other paper, "The thought and temperament of Chosŏn people", came to be influential texts that the Japanese colonial government drew on to understand its colonial Korean subjects. In these works Takahashi outlined the key traits of the Korean people, such as subordination and attachment to philosophy, lack of creativity, factionalism, weak culture and a fixation with formalities.

After 1919, when Takahashi received his PhD from Tokyo Imperial University for his thesis on education and education policy in Chosŏn, he took up a position in the Inspector's Office of the colonial government which was responsible for managing and guiding educational agencies. At the same time Takahashi was involved in the establishment of the Kyŏngsŏng Imperial University, current Seoul National University. In 1926 Takahashi was appointed as a professor in the Faculty of Law at Kyŏngsŏng Imperial University where he lectured on Chosŏn language and literature. He stayed at the university until 1939 when he retired.

In the following year Takahashi assumed a position at the Kyŏngsŏng Sarip Hyehwa Technical College, present day Tonguk University, while at the same time receiving an award recognising his long term contribution to the research of Korean culture and in particular Confucianism. Takahashi's activities in academic circles in Korea continued up until Japan's defeat in 1945, with him chairing several research bodies, including Federation of Chosŏn Confucianism.

Upon returning to Japan Takahashi taught at Tenri University in Nara and was Deputy Chairman of the *Chosen Gakkai* from 1950 onward. His interest in Korea continued throughout and in 1961 Takahashi invited a number of Korean scholars, including Yi Byong-do, to attend the 12<sup>th</sup> Chosŏn Studies Conference.

<sup>29</sup> For an account of Japan's trajectory towards and justification for colonising Korea see Duus, Peter, *The abacus and the sword: the Japanese penetration of Korea, 1895-1910*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995 and for a comprehensive account of Japan's assimilation policy of Korea see, Caprio, Mark E., *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2009. Other texts dealing with Japan's annexation and control of Korea as a Japanese colony include Dudden, Alexis, *Japan's colonization of Korea: discourse and power*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2005. For a discussion on the impact of Japan's colonialism on the broader intellectual climate in Korea see, Kim Keongil, "Intellectual Context of Korean Studies in Colonial Korea" in *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol.1, September, 1998: pp. 53-75.

<sup>30</sup> Takahashi Toru, "Chosen Jugaku Daikan", *Chosenshi Kouza* 朝鮮史講座 [Lectures on History of Chosŏn], Bunryuishi 分類史 [History division], 1927.

daily practices, cultivation and politics.<sup>31</sup> According to Takahashi, the philosophical aspects do not relate to practical issues, but instead relate to cosmological, ethical and ontological issues. In other words, from a historiographical and methodological perspective, Takahashi regards Confucian philosophy and practice as two separate fields that need not bear anything in common.

In the case of Chosŏn, Takahashi's primary interest is with the philosophical dimensions of Confucianism, which he holds in a negative and dismissive light. As Ch'oe Yŏng-sŏng notes, Takahashi characterises Chosŏn Confucian thought as being defined by a number of traits, namely a fixation on particular ideas 固着性, subordination or dependence on Chinese ideas 從屬成 and lacking in creativity 依他性<sup>32</sup>. In attempting to write a "complete history" 通史 of Confucianism, he focuses particularly on the Chosŏn period and personalities, factions and lineages, and philosophical debates. Any developments before the Chosŏn period are overlooked unless they relate particularly to developments of T'oegye Yi Hwang and Yulgok Yi I, who Takahashi singles out as the zenith of Chosŏn Confucianism.

Kwŏn Kŭn falls into Takahashi's treatment of Koryŏ Confucianism. Kwŏn is located within a scholastic genealogy that is credited with conveying and transmitting Zhu Xi's teachings on Neo-Confucianism first into the intellectual sphere of the peninsula and then establishing the intellectual foundations for Chosŏn. The first of these genealogies lies on the Koryŏ side as follows:

An Hyang 安珦 (1243-1306) → Kwŏn Po 權溥 (1262-1346) → Yi Che-hyŏn 李齊賢 (1287-1367) → Yi Sack → Chŏng Mong-ju → Kwŏn Kŭn → Kil Chae 吉再 (1353-1419)<sup>33</sup>

The second, Chosŏn phase of the genealogy is:

Kil Chae → Kim Suk-cha 金叔滋 (1389-1456) → Kim Chong-jik 金鼎稷 (d. u.) → Chong Yŏ-jang 鄭汝昌 (1450-1504), Kim Koeng-p'il 金宏弼

<sup>31</sup> Yi Hyŏng-sŏng (trans.), *Takahashi Toru ūi Chosŏn Yuhaksa: Ilje Hwangguksagwan ūi Pit gwa Kurimja*, Yemunsŏwŏn, Seoul, 2001: pp. 41-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ch'oe Yŏng-sŏng, "Takahashi Toru ūi Han'guk Yuhakgwan Yŏn'gu", in Yi Hyŏng-sŏng (trans.), *Takahashi Toru ūi Chosŏn Yuhaksa*, 2001: pp. 23-5.

<sup>33</sup> Takahashi, "Chosen jugaku daikan", 1927: p. 6. Yi, *Takahashi Toru ūi Chosŏn Yuhaksa*, 2001: pp. 45-5. Also see Ch'oe, "Takahashi Toru ūi Han'guk Yuhakgwan Yŏn'gu", 2001: p. 25.

(1454-1504) → Cho Kwang-jo 趙光祖 (1482-1519) etc.<sup>34</sup>

It is from this point that “at long last it was the arrival of the most glorious golden age of Chosŏn Confucianism”, which is an era Takahashi equates to the debates and speculation of 15th and 16th century literati.

When Takahashi turns to look at Kwŏn in more detail, he does so in conjunction with his treatment of Chŏng To-jŏn. The majority of Takahashi’s attention is drawn to Chŏng and his essay on principle, material force, mind – the *Sim, Ki, I, P’yŏn* – and his anti-Buddhist polemic, *Pulssi Chapp’yŏn*, while his treatment of Kwŏn is short and perfunctory. Takahashi begins with a description of Kwŏn’s career as a minister in the Koryŏ government, his retirement and then return to the T’aejo court.<sup>35</sup> Kwŏn is credited with being honourable and upright, but Takahashi claims his scholarship and ambiguous attitude towards Buddhism made subsequent generations of scholars suspicious, if not dismissive, of Kwŏn as being heterodox. Takahashi singles out criticism from Yi I that claims Kwŏn lacked a deep understanding of Zhu Xi and was morally wanting in regard to condemning Buddhism.<sup>36</sup> Takahashi does, however, credit Kwŏn with being a man of letters equivalent to his teacher Yi Saek. But Takahashi concludes his account of Kwŏn and Chŏng by describing them as “grey scholars” due to their ambiguous intellectual positions,<sup>37</sup> stating that, “I decided to omit Kwŏn Kŭn’s explanations of scholastic Confucianism and arguments since there is no difference between that of Chŏng To-jŏn and others”.<sup>38</sup> In short, Takahashi is saying that Kwŏn’s writings, in and of themselves, do not constitute an intellectual contribution of any note, let alone stand out as deserving of analysis.<sup>39</sup> Takahashi regards Kwŏn as merely a scholar-official who worked in the court, was eloquent in his writings, but offered no intellectual contributions beyond that of his peers.

The ideas, issues and approaches of Takahashi and Chong were crystallised in the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 16

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 18. Trans. p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> While Takahashi’s evaluation of Kwŏn is not entirely negative, his treatment nonetheless shows the extent to which his definition of intellectual history entails evaluating philosophical arguments, or history of ideas. Also we can see how Takahashi’s colonial prejudices and preconceptions shaped his understanding of what constituted philosophically significant events. In the case of Kwŏn Kŭn, he was regarded as little more than a well educated man of letters who conveyed ideas but contributed none of importance.



pioneering work of Hyŏn Sang-yun 玄相允 (1893-?).<sup>40</sup> Hyŏn's *Chosŏn Yuhaksa* 朝鮮儒學史 (*History of Chosŏn Confucian Scholastics*) closely follows Takahashi's model and treatment of Confucianism in Korean history.<sup>41</sup> To begin with Hyŏn describes the "essence of Chosŏn Confucian scholastics" and the influences of Chosŏn Confucian scholastics on broader Chosŏn thought.<sup>42</sup> Like Takahashi and Chang, Hyŏn's analysis of Confucianism begins with a brief account of Confucian scholastics of the Silla-Koryŏ period, followed by the "Yi Cho[sŏn]" period, where the majority of his focus lies. Hyŏn follows Takahashi's approach in a number of ways. First, Hyŏn adopts the same definition of Confucianism as Takahashi by differentiating Confucian scholastics and Confucian practices. His interest is confined to Confucian philosophy and thus he focuses on Confucian scholastics, while ignoring all forms of Confucian teachings. Second, Hyŏn regards the Chosŏn period as the apex of Confucian thought, particularly the debates of the 16<sup>th</sup> century such as the Four-Seven Debate.<sup>43</sup> He views the periods leading up to Chosŏn as a time of reception and adoption of Confucianism,

<sup>40</sup> Hyŏn Sang-yun was born in 1893 in Chŏngju, Northern P'yŏngan Province. His common name was Chipjung 執中 and he later took on the pen names of Sosong 小星 and Kidang 幾堂. Up until the age of 17 he received an education in classical Chinese literature and history and was a student of Hyon Jin-am 玄鑑庵.

In 1909 Hyŏn graduated from Chŏngju Yukyŏng Hakkyo, then entered Taesŏng Hakkyo in P'yŏngyang. His time at this school was limited as the Japanese closed down the school following the "Incident of the 105 People", which entailed the Japanese authorities arresting Korean missionaries, activists and educators involved in the people's movement who were allegedly involved in a failed assassination plot. Against this backdrop Hyŏn transferred Seoul Posŏng School where he graduated in 1912. Immediately following this he travelled to Japan where he enrolled in Waseda University and studied history. While at Waseda he became acquainted with Kim Sŏng-su 金性洙 (1891 - 1955) and Song Jin-u 宋鎮禹, (1890 - 1945), and involved in compiling *Hakchikwang* 學之光.

In 1916 Hyŏn graduated from Waseda and returned to Korea where two years later he was to take up a teaching position at the Chungang Middle School. It was from this time onward that Hyŏn became involved in the growing independence movement and worked actively behind the scenes of the 1 March 1919 movement, which was one of the earliest Korean displays of resistance to Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula. The Japanese police arrested Hyŏn as he was identified as one of the key 48 people involved in organising the demonstration.

After serving a two year sentence Hyŏn resumed teaching. Initially he was reappointed to his position at Chungang Middle School and later in the same year became the principal. In 1925, however, Hyŏn resigned from the position due to an illness. In 1932 Hyŏn took on the position of principal of the Chungang Ordinary Highschool then following liberation he took on the role of deputy head of the preparatory course at Kyŏngsŏng University, current day Seoul National University. In 1946 Hyŏn became principal of Posong Technical School, then in 1947 he was promoted to become the first president of Korea University. Hyŏn received his doctorate from Korea University in 1953 for his *History of Korean Confucianism*.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1953, Hyŏn was captured by North Korean forces and kidnapped to the North. Nothing is known of his fate his fate in the North.

<sup>41</sup> Hyŏn, *Chosŏn Yuhaksa*, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3, 4-9.

<sup>43</sup> The Four-Seven debate 四端七情論 took place between Toegye Yi Hwang and Kobong Ki Dae-sung 高峯 奇大升 (1527 - 1572) in an exchange of letters and it centred on Toegye's interpretation of Mencius and principle and material force. The issues raised in this debate and positions taken shaped generations of Chosŏn literati and their intellectual activities.

when other religious practices were dominant. The Chosŏn period, however, is when Confucianism came to the fore and informed all facets of society. In particular, Hyŏn identifies Cheng-Zhu teachings as the locus of all intellectual activities in Chosŏn. Third, Hyŏn follows Takahashi's thematic approach of focusing on personalities, factions, genealogies and intellectual debates. As mentioned above, Cheng-Zhu teaching, especially *songnihak* 性理學 (teaching of nature and principle), is a defining feature. Fourth, Hyŏn's appraisal of the influence of Confucian scholastics on the intellectual atmosphere of Chosŏn is far from flattering. Hyŏn frequently echoes Takahashi's critique of Confucianism's negatives, namely that it retarded growth and creativity. One point where Hyŏn significantly departs from Takahashi is the breadth of his treatment. While Takahashi concluded his treatment of Confucianism with 15-16<sup>th</sup> century developments, Hyŏn looked at the entirety of the Chosŏn period, including developments into the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When considering Kwŏn Kŭn, Hyŏn is brief and resembles Takahashi in his focus.<sup>44</sup> Hyŏn provides a curt biographical description of Kwŏn, noting that he was a student of Yi Saek.<sup>45</sup> Following this he explains that Kwŏn worked in the Koryŏ court and was an accomplished writer. Kwŏn clarified "textual studies" 經學, established the reading and pronunciation of the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*, wrote a number of treatise and made an effort to help the study of Confucianism.<sup>46</sup> After this brief account, Hyŏn relates Kwŏn's intellectual work to his comments on Chŏng To-jŏn's essays on Principle, Material Force, Mind and provides a long quote from Kwŏn's collected work, *Yangch'onjip* 陽村集 (*Collected Works of Yangch'on*, hereafter *YCJ*).<sup>47</sup> Hyŏn includes another quote from Cho Ik 趙翼 (1579 - 1655), which again highlights Kwŏn's writing on Principle, Material Force and Nature, along with his position on certain issues that later emerged in the Four-Seven debate. Cho's quote notes Kwŏn's influence extending as far as T'oegye.<sup>48</sup> In closing, Hyŏn highlights Kwŏn's failure in the Koryŏ court and the shame he must have felt with his return to the Chosŏn court after being in exile. Nevertheless, Hyŏn writes that looking at Kwŏn's memorials praising Chŏng Mong-ju during the reign of T'aejong, we can see not only the integrity

<sup>44</sup> Hyŏn's treatment of Kwŏn in the *Chosŏn Yuhaksa* is almost exactly the same as his treatment in his *Chosŏn Sasangsa*, 2000. See pp. 91-2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

of Kwŏn's character, but also feel a sense of pathos surrounding his thoughts and feelings. Therefore we can see that Hyŏn's curt treatment of Kwŏn is similar to Takahashi: Kwŏn is given cursory treatment and his intellectual contributions of merit are confined to selected commentaries on his contemporary's writings on Cheng-Zhu ideas and his influence on the distant ideas of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Confucians.

### *Trends and developments in modern scholarship on Confucianism*

The pioneering work of Takahashi, Chang and Hyŏn provided the foundation, direction and parameters for later generations of scholars to explore Confucianism in Korea's history. In particular, from the 1960s onward the quantity and depth of research on Confucianism in Korea's past increased dramatically as a number of Korean and foreign scholars charted the contours Confucianism. Despite this output, however, the lines of inquiry into Confucianism crystallised along particular paths and around certain issues, and this tendency impacted on how Kwŏn has been understood in scholarship over the last few decades. To better understand this impact on scholarship about Kwŏn, we must first touch on the broader trends that have defined the field of Confucianism in Korea.

One of the first trends was a proliferation of broad intellectual histories to accompany the compilation of historical materials following the Korean War (1950-53). The approach taken in these studies was a continuation of the work of Hyŏn and Chang in that they sought to explain "Korean Confucianism" – its origins, development and uniqueness. Within these narratives the focus continued to be on established thinkers like T'oegye and Yulgok, intellectual debates like the Four-Seven debate and schools of thought that defined and epitomised Korean Confucianism. Representative of this kind of scholarship in the 1970s was Yi Byŏng-do's 李丙燾 (1896-1989) (*Charyo*) *Han'guk Yuhaksa Ch'ogo* published in 1959,<sup>49</sup> Bae Jong-ho's (Pae Jong-ho) 裴宗鎬 *Han'guk Yuhaksa* in 1974<sup>50</sup> and Ryu Sŭng-guk's 柳承國 *Han'guk ūi Yugyo* in 1976.<sup>51</sup> In the 1980s similar histories included Yi Byŏng-do's two works *Han'guk Yuhaksayak* in 1986<sup>52</sup> and *Han'guk Yuhaksa* in 1987,<sup>53</sup> Bae Jong-ho's three volume *Han'guk*

<sup>49</sup> Yi Byŏng-do, (*Charyo*) *Han'guk Yuhaksa Ch'ogo* (資料) 韓國 儒學史草稿, Sŏul Daehakkyo Munnigwa Taehak Kuksa Yŏn'gusil, Seoul, 1959.

<sup>50</sup> Pae Jong-ho, *Han'guk Yuhaksa* 韓國儒學史, Yŏnsei Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, Seoul, 1997.

<sup>51</sup> Ryu Sŭng-guk, *Han'guk ūi Yugyo* 한국의 유교, Sejong Daewang Kinyŏmsaŏp-hoe, Seoul, 1976.

<sup>52</sup> Yi Byŏng-to, *Han'guk Yuhaksayak* 韓國儒學史略, Asea Munhwasa, Seoul, 1986.

<sup>53</sup> Yi Byŏng-to, *Han'guk Yuhaksa* 韓國 儒學史, Minjok Munhwa Chujinhoe, Seoul, 1987.

*Yuhak Chagyo Chipsŏng* in 1980,<sup>54</sup> Yun Sa-soon's [Yun Sa-sun] 尹絲淳 *Han'guk Yuhak Rongu*<sup>55</sup> and Keum Jang-t'ae's [Kŭm Chang-t'ae] 琴章泰 *Han'guk Yugyo ūi Ihae* in 1989.<sup>56</sup>

Closely accompanying this trend was a proliferation of studies that thoroughly investigated these pre-established topics. From the 1980s onwards an increasing number of scholars remained fixated on Chosŏn intellectual history and did not deviate from the personalities, debates and schools highlighted in the earlier scholarship of Hyŏn and Chang. For example, studies flourished on the thought of T'oegye and Yulgok, Confucian rites, debates over the nature of man and things, and so forth. Collaborative works like the *Han'guk Sasang Taegye IV: Sŏngnihak Sasangp'yŏn*<sup>57</sup> also increased during this time. What sets this scholarship apart from previous histories was the rigour and depth to which these topics were pursued.

During this time Korean scholars helped whet the appetite of foreign audiences with English language translations of their works appearing from the late 1970s. The trend of general intellectual histories present in Korean scholarship carried over into English language publications with articles by prominent Korean scholars being translated into English. These works included, for example, *Korean thoughts (Korean Culture Series 10)*, edited by Chun Shin-yong, which was first published in 1979 and then republished in 1982.<sup>58</sup> In this volume Pae Jong-ho outlined the "Four-Seven" debate in Korean Confucianism<sup>59</sup> and Lee Wu-song wrote on Sirhak in his chapter "The Rise of Sirhak Thought."<sup>60</sup> A similar history was Choi Min-hong's *A Modern History of Korean Philosophy*, first published in 1979, which offered perhaps one of the first comprehensive intellectual histories of Korea in English.<sup>61</sup> His book charted philosophy in Korea, the adoption of Zhu Xi's philosophy, early responses against

<sup>54</sup> Pae Jong-ho, *Han'guk Yuhak Chagyo Chipsŏng* 韓國儒學資料集成, Yŏnsei Taehakkyo, Seoul, 1980.

<sup>55</sup> Yun Sa-soon, *Han'guk Yuhak Rongu*, 韓國儒學論究, Hyŏnamsa, Seoul, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> Keum Jang-t'ae, *Han'guk Yugyo ūi Ihae* 한국유교의 이해, Minjok Munhwasa, Seoul, 1989.

<sup>57</sup> Chŏng Bŏm-jin (ed.), *Han'guk Sasang Taegye IV: Sŏngnihak Sasangp'yŏn* 韓國思想大系, vol. 4: 性理學思想篇, Sŏnggyungwan Taehakkyo Taedong Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Seoul, 1973.

<sup>58</sup> Chun Shin-Yong and Kukche Munhwa Chaedan (eds.), *Korean Thoughts (Korean Culture Series 10)*, International Cultural Foundation, Seoul, 1979. The same book was reprinted as Shin-Yong Chun ed., *Korean Thought*, The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers Inc., Seoul, 1982.

<sup>59</sup> Pae Jong-ho, "The "Four-Seven" Controversy in Korean Confucianism" in *Korean Thoughts*, 1982: pp. 37-52.

<sup>60</sup> Lee Wu-song, "The Rise of Sirhak Thought" in *Korean Thoughts*, 1982: pp. 55-64.

<sup>61</sup> Choi Min-hong, *A Modern History of Korean Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Seong Moon Sa, Seoul, 1978.

Zhu's thought, and then its flowering and development into the pro-principle 主理 and pro-material force 主氣 streams. In the latter part of his book he covered the philosophy of the Sirhak scholars through to developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Choi's approach to Korean intellectual history was to focus on individuals and their thought, and he grouped them according to general philosophical positions or schools of thought. In his analysis he employed Western philosophical terminologies, such as epistemological, ontological, and axiological parameters and furnished the footnotes with liberal quotes in literary Chinese. In 1983 UNESCO also published a collection of papers under the title *Main Currents of Korean Thought*.<sup>62</sup> This book, again drawing on many prominent Korean scholars, covered the main currents of Korean thought that encompassed popular historical figures from Confucianism and Buddhism, such as Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617-686), T'oegye, Yulgok and Tasan Chong Yag-yong 茶山 丁若鏞 (1762-1836), and philosophical issues such as the Four-Seven debate and political histories. For English speaking audiences these general histories introduced and framed Korean Confucianism in terms of a range of themes and topics that had been circulating in Korean scholarship for the past decades. These histories introduced both the works of leading Korean scholars in the field of Korean intellectual history to an English speaking audience, along with the preoccupations that had captured Korean minds for the past decades.

Parallel to these English language translations, foreign scholars started conducting their own studies on Confucianism in Korea. Not surprisingly the trends and topics that dominated Korean scholarship on Confucianism cross-pollinated foreign scholarship and influenced the topics Western scholars chose to examine. The most obvious example of this has been the proliferation of publications on T'oegye and Yulgok. Michael C. Kalton, for example, in 1987 published a superb translation and analysis of T'oegye's *Ten Diagrams of Sage Learning*,<sup>63</sup> then in conjunction with Oaksook C. Kim and Sung Bae Park, produced an English translation of the correspondence between T'oegye and Kobong which formed the basis of the Four-Seven Debate.<sup>64</sup> Kalton also translated Yun Sa-sun's *Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: the Philosophy of Yi*

<sup>62</sup> Yunesŭk'o Han'guk Wiwŏnhoe, *Main Currents of Korean Thought*, Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers and Pace International Research, Seoul, 1983.

<sup>63</sup> Hwang and Kalton, *To Become a Sage*, 1988.

<sup>64</sup> Kalton, Michael C. and Oaksook Chun Kim, *The Four-Seven Debate: An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994.

*T'oegye*,<sup>65</sup> which came from Yun's earlier work published in 1980, *T'oegye Ch'ŏrhak ūi Yŏn'gu* (*Research on the Philosophy of T'oegye*).<sup>66</sup> Yun's work was originally a collection of his articles from the 1970s combined with several newer chapters and its contents covered T'oegye's life and facets of his thought, such as cosmogony, the Four-Seven debate, religious elements in his thought and so forth. As is characteristic of much of Yun's work, the focus is on the philosophical aspects of T'oegye's writings and the concepts of principle and material force. Aside from works on T'oegye, Ro Young-chan published *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Yulgok*<sup>67</sup> and other works in English have emerged on rites in Korea, *Sirhak*, Confucian education and so forth. One invaluable work that is emblematic of this scholarship was *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, published under the editorial aegis of William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush in 1985.<sup>68</sup> To date this work remains a valuable resource on Confucianism in the early to mid Chosŏn period and it includes contributions from many prominent scholars from Korea and abroad like Yun Sa-soon, Tu Wei-ming, Chan Wing-tsit, Julia Ching and Chŏng Chae-shik to name but a few. Topics in this book ranged from biographies of eminent intellectuals and their ideas through to chapters on the examination system, community compacts, education policy and intellectual debates and controversies. This one book elevated the level of awareness of Confucianism in Korea among English speaking readers beyond all previous histories.

Foreign scholarship on Confucianism in Korea also brought new questions and approaches to the discipline. This strand of scholarship has sought to examine the phenomenon of Confucianism through the application of Western academic methodologies to sociological, economical, political and even institutional dimensions. As mentioned above, Deuchler's *The Confucian Transformation of Korea* published in 1992 mapped the social changes brought on by Confucian ideology from Koryŏ to Chosŏn in terms of kinship, ancestor worship and rites.<sup>69</sup> Her focus in this book was not so much on how scholar-officials were interpreting the Confucian canon, but more

<sup>65</sup> Yun Sa-sun and Michael C. Kalton, *Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi T'oegye*, Korea University Press, Seoul, 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Yun Sa-sun, *T'oegye Ch'ŏrhak ūi Yŏn'gu* 退溪哲學의 研究, Koryŏ Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'ansa, Seoul, 1983.

<sup>67</sup> Ro Young-chan, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Yulgok*, State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1989.

<sup>68</sup> de Bary, William Theodore and JaHyun Kim Haboush (eds.), *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985.

<sup>69</sup> Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 1992.

on the social implications of the ideological shift towards a Confucian state. She describes the key players in this transition, their texts and key concepts. Two other works of a similar ilk are Duncan's *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*<sup>70</sup> and James Palais's *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwon and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* which examined the relationship between *Sirhak* scholar Yu Hyŏngwŏn's (1652-1670) thoughts on statecraft and the historical realities of statecraft in Chosŏn.<sup>71</sup> While Duncan looked at dynastic change from Koryŏ to Chosŏn from an institutional perspective, Palais's area of interest encompassed a time when Confucian principles had already permeated Chosŏn state and society, and intellectuals were beginning to question and challenge its shortcomings. The common denominator among these three studies is the examination of Confucianism as broad historical narratives through the application of western academic disciplines and methodologies so as to shed new light on Confucianism in Korea's past.

Finally, an emerging trend, especially among younger Korean academics, is a self-reflective awareness of the constraints that have dictated earlier scholarship. Here they are attempting to delineate trends within Korean scholarship and correlate their emergence and directions to social, political and even personal factors. For example, Ch'oe Yŏng-sŏng's *Han'guk Yuhak Sasangsa* covers not only Confucianism during Chosŏn and Koryŏ, but also includes consideration of 20<sup>th</sup> century trends in Korean scholarship on Confucianism.<sup>72</sup> In more recent years scholars have even started to look at pioneer scholars such as Takahashi Toru and Hyŏn Sang-yun to re-evaluate their role in shaping the current state of scholarship. Concurrent with this self-reflective trend are scholars who are actively challenging the pillars of accepted scholarship and seeking to explore issues, individuals and texts previously overlooked. One example of this comes from Park Byung-kun who wrote his PhD thesis at the Australian National University in 2004. Park examined Hyegang Ch'oe Han-gi 惠岡 催漢綺 (1803-1877), a radical intellectual of the late Chosŏn.<sup>73</sup> While Park's thesis examined a Confucian intellectual at the end of the Chosŏn period who was attempting to formulate new and alternative philosophies for his time, it is worth noting that the present thesis intends to examine

<sup>70</sup> Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Palais, James B., *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwon and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1996.

<sup>72</sup> Ch'oe Yŏng-sŏng, *Han'guk Yuhak Sasangsa* 韓國 儒學思想史, Vols. 1-5, Asea Munhwasa, Seoul, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> Park Byung-kun, *Hyegang Ch'oe Han-Gi (1803-1877): The Development of His Philosophical System*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2004.

Confucianism in Korea at a time when it was yet to crystallise into the traditions that Ch'oe was actively challenging. Even though Park's research and this thesis cover different eras, ideas and people, these two theses share a common ground of exploring the thoughts of Confucian intellectuals who have fallen outside of mainstream scholarship of Chosŏn Confucianism.

### *Kwŏn Kŭn's place in modern scholarship of Confucianism in Korea*

The trends in modern scholarship on Confucianism outlined above have influenced how Kwŏn Kŭn has been approached, examined and understood over the last fifty years. Scholarship on Kwŏn has focused on a narrow range of enquiries and reinforced a number of idiosyncratic characterisations. Aside from the scholarship of Takahashi, Chang and Hyŏn, the first academic article to look solely at Kwŏn came from Yi Byŏng-do in 1928-9. His article examined the provenance of Kwŏn Kŭn's *IHTS* and the variations that appeared in subsequent publications of the text.<sup>74</sup> Yi's article is significant for it is the first article to provide an in-depth analysis of one of Kwŏn's texts. The article does not, however, expand on the content, meaning and significance of the *IHTS*.

From the late 1970s onwards there was a general interest in reviving, defining and preserving Korea's past literature. With this movement a number of Kwŏn's works were rediscovered, reprinted and translated into modern vernacular Korean. Up until this time the only extant works of Kwŏn were thought to have been the *IHTS*, *YCJ* and the *RHT Rites*, but in the 1970s more of Kwŏn's *RHT* was discovered. Since Kwŏn's works are all originally written in literary Chinese, they remained inaccessible to the broader Korean audience. In line with a wider trend towards translating Korean classics into vernacular Korean, some of Kwŏn's works were also translated. For example in 1979 Kwŏn's *YCJ* was translated into vernacular Korean,<sup>75</sup> the *IHTS* was translated into vernacular Korean in 1974<sup>76</sup> and more recently, in 1999, three of Kwŏn's *RHT* were translated into vernacular Korean.<sup>77</sup> Hŏ Kyŏng-jin even translated a selection of Kwŏn

<sup>74</sup> Yi Byŏng-do, "Kon Yomura no Nyugakutzustu ni tsuite" 權陽村の入學圖説に就いて, *Toyo Gakupo* 東洋學報 上下, Vol.17, [Showa 3-4 & Showa 4] 1928-29.

<sup>75</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, (*Kukyŏk*) *Yangch'onjip*, Vol. 1, Minjok Munhwa Chujin Hoe, Seoul, 1984.

<sup>76</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, *Ipshaktoŏl* 入學圖説, Kwŏn Tŏk-ju 權徳周 (trans.), Vol. 131, Ŭlyu Munhwasa, Seoul, 1978.

<sup>77</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, (*Kukyŏk*) *Samgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk: si · sŏ · chuyŏk* (國譯) 三經淺見錄: 詩·書·周易, Yi Kwang-ho (trans.), Ch'ŏngmyŏng Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1999.



Kwŏn's poetry from his *YCJ* into modern Korean.<sup>78</sup>

The most prolific area of scholarship has focused on Kwŏn's intellectual and philosophical writings. Kwŏn's *IHTS* has been the primary source of attention and scholars predominantly have used the first two chapters of this book to argue that Kwŏn was one of the first Koreans to articulate Neo-Confucian, or Cheng-Zhu, teachings and discuss the philosophical issues of principle, material force and seven emotions and four beginnings. As seen above, the only article to appear on Kwŏn's thought in English comes from Kalton and it is representative of scholarship on Kwŏn's thought.<sup>79</sup> In Korean scholarship, similar works include Chŏng Tae-hwan's study of the characteristics and structure of Kwŏn's understanding of principle and nature<sup>80</sup> and the collected essay edited by To Kwang-sun in *Kwŏn Yangch'on Sasang ūi Yŏn'gu*.<sup>81</sup> Other topics that have featured in this area of scholarship are Kwŏn's interpretation of the *Book of Changes*<sup>82</sup> and to a lesser extent the *Book of Rites*.<sup>83</sup> The most recent and thorough analysis of Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism comes from Kang Mun-sik who wrote his doctoral thesis on Kwŏn - *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Kyŏnghak kwa Kyŏngsegwan* 權近의經學과經世觀 ([A] Study on Kweon Guen's classic text studies and aspirations to contribute to the world [sic]).<sup>84</sup> Kang published a number of articles from his thesis and

<sup>78</sup> Hō Kyōng-jin, *Yangch'on Kwŏn Kūn Shisŏn* 양촌 권근 시선, Vol. 46, Han'guk ūi Hanshi, P'yŏngminsa, Seoul, 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Kalton, "The Writings of Kwŏn Kūn", 1985.

<sup>80</sup> Chŏng Tae-hwan, "Kwŏn Kūn Sŏngnihak ūi Kujo wa T'uksŏng" 권근 (權近) 성리학 (性理學)의 구조와 특성", *Chunguk Ch'ŏrhak*, 1992.

<sup>81</sup> To Kwang-sun (ed.), *Kwŏn Yangch'on Sasang ūi Yŏn'gu* 권양촌사상의 연구, Kyomunsa, Seoul, 1989.

<sup>82</sup> For example, see Kang Mun-sik, "《Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok》 ūi Hyŏngsŏng Paegyŏng kwa Kwŏn Kūn ūi Yŏkhak 《주역전건록》의 형성 배경과 권근의 역할", *Han'guk Hakpo* (2003); Ōm Yŏn-sŏk, "Chuyŏk ch'ŏrhak: Kwŏn Kūn ūi 『Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok』 kwa Ūiriyŏkhak 주역철학: 권근의 『주역전건록』과 의의역학", *Chuyŏk ch'ŏrhak kwa Munhwa*, 2003; Yi Ki-hun, "Kwŏn Kūn Yŏkhak ūi Harangnon kwa Chuhui ūi Harangnon 권근 (權近) 역학 (易學)의 하락론 (河洛論)과 주희 (朱熹)의 하락론", *Chunguk Ch'ŏrhak*, 2002; and more recently Kūm Jang-t'ae, "《Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok》 kwa Yangch'on Kwŏn Kūn ūi Tohakjŏk Yŏkhaesŏ" 주역전건록(周易淺見錄)과 권근(陽村 權近)의 도학적 역(易)해석", *Tasan Hakpo* 118, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Examples of this scholarship include, Kūm Jang-t'ae, "Yangch'on ūi Yehak Sasang 양촌의 예학사상", *Tongbang ch'ŏrhak Sasang Yŏn'gu*, 1992; Hō Chong-ūn, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Yeron e Kwanhan Yŏn'gu - Yegi Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok ūl Chungsim ūro 권근의 예론에 관한 연구 - 예기전건록을 중심으로", *Han'guk Ch'ŏrhak Nonjip*, 1993; and Son Chŏng-hui, "Yangch'on Kwŏn Kūn Yŏn'gu - Yegi Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok ūl T'onghae Pun Kū ūi Munhŏnhakjajŏk Sŏnggyŏk ūl Chungsim ūro 양촌 권근 연구 - 예기전건록을 통해 본 그의 문헌학자적 성격을 중심으로", *Tongyang Hanmunhak Yŏn'gu*, 1988.

<sup>84</sup> Kang Mun-sik, *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Kyŏnghak kwa Kyŏngsegwan* 權近의經學과經世觀 ([A] Study on Kweon Guen's classic text studies and aspirations to contribute to the world), PhD thesis, Seoul National University, 2005. All of Kang's articles on Kwŏn Kūn from 2001 through to his book *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Kyŏnghak Sasang Yŏn'gu*, Ilchisa, Seoul, 2008, derive from his doctoral thesis.

later published *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Kyŏnghak Sasang Yŏn'gu* (A Study of Kwŏn Kūn's Thoughts on Classical Studies). This thesis shares some similarities with Kang's research and approach, but differs in that it looks at Kwŏn's life and legacy, and seeks to highlight the characteristics, differences and divergences in Kwŏn's understanding of Confucianism. Lastly, Kwŏn's anti-Buddhist polemics is another theme that frequently reoccurs in this area of scholarship because of his association with Chŏng To-jŏn and the general anti-Buddhist sentiment among Neo-Confucians of that time.<sup>85</sup> A dominant theme running through this strand of scholarship is the identification of elements of Cheng-Zhu thought in Kwŏn's writings so as to draw connections to intellectual developments of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Chosŏn.

A limited number of articles have looked at Kwŏn's writing on history and his understanding of history. During his lifetime, Kwŏn co-wrote one work specifically on Korean history, the *Tongguksaryak* 東國史略 (Short History of the Eastern Kingdom) and contributed to the compilation of the *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (History of the Koryŏ) and court records. Also, scattered through his writings are references to both Korean and Chinese history. From these sources scholars have sought to construct Kwŏn's historical and world view.<sup>86</sup>

Kwŏn Kūn's poetry and travelogue writings are another area that has received minimal attention. Aside from a translation of his poetry mentioned above, Chŏng Chae-ch'ŏl looked at Kwŏn's poetry to examine his world view<sup>87</sup> and Chŏn Su-yŏn's article *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Shimunhak Yŏn'gu* (Study of Kwŏn Kūn's Poetics) analysed his poetry from a literary perspective.<sup>88</sup> Other scholars have looked at Kwŏn's poetry while he was

<sup>85</sup> Scholarship examining Kwŏn's anti-Buddhist stance include, To Hyŏn-ch'ŏl, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Pulgyobip'an-gwa Kōndo Chungshiūi Ch'ulch'ŏkwan 권근의 불교비판과 권도 중시의 출처관", *Han'guk Sasangsaahak*, 2002; Yi Sang-sŏng, "Yangch'on Kwŏn Kūn ūi Pyŏkpullon-e taehan Chaeinsik 양촌 권근의 벽불론에 대한 제인식", *Han'guk Chŏrhak Nonjip*, 1993; and Ch'ae Chŏng-su, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Pulgyogwan 권근의 불교관", *Taehakwŏn Nonmunjip*, 1994.

<sup>86</sup> Studies examining Kwŏn's interpretation of history include, Shim Chae-gi, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Tongguksaryakron 권근(權近)의 동국사약론(東國史略論)", *Han'guk Hanja Munhwa*, Vol. 83, 2006; Kim Nam-il, *Koryŏmal Chosŏnch'ŏgi ūi Segyegwan gwa Yŏksaŭisik: Yi Saek gwa Kwŏn Kūn Chungsimūro* 고려말 조선초기의 세계관과 역사인식: 이색과 권근을 중심으로, Kyŏngin Munhwa-sa, Seoul, 2005; Kang Mun-sik, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Yŏksaŭisik gwa Yŏksasŏsul 권근(權近)의 역사인식과 역사서술", *Han'guk Hakpo*, Vol. 30 No. 4, 2004; and Ch'ae Ahn-bin, "Non Kwŏn Kūn jŏk Sahakgwan Ildok << Tongguksaryakron >> ch'algi non 권근적사학관 (論權近的史學觀) - 일독 << 동국사약론 (東國史略論) >> 찰기", *Tongbang Hanmunhak*, Vol. 18, 2000.

<sup>87</sup> Chŏng Chae-ch'ŏl, "Ŭngjesi e Nat'an Kwŏn Kūn ūi Segyegwan 응제시에 나타난 권근의 세계관", *Hanmun Nonjip*, 1990.

<sup>88</sup> Chŏn Su-yŏn, *Kwŏn Kūn ūi Shimunhak Yŏn'gu* 권근의 시문학 연구, T'aehaksa, Seoul, 1998.

abroad as an emissary, both in its own right and in comparison with the poetry of Chŏng Mong-ju.<sup>89</sup> While researching this thesis, I added this strand of scholarship by exploring Kwŏn's role in resolving a diplomatic impasse that developed in 1386 between the Ming and Chosŏn court.<sup>90</sup> Central to the resolution of this issue was an exchange of poetry between Kwŏn and the Hongwu emperor that broached the sensitive cultural, geographic and political issues at stake.

Since Kwŏn Kŭn wrote the *IHTS* to help his students understand Confucian texts and incorporated the use of diagrammatic summaries and commentaries as pedagogical aides, his approach towards education and pedagogy are another theme that has appeared in the scholarship. Son Kyu-hong examined Kwŏn Kŭn's attitude towards education specifically in his *IHTS*,<sup>91</sup> Chŏng Ch'an-ju examined his educational philosophy more broadly<sup>92</sup> and Yi Kyŏng-ŏn looked at his attitude towards education in his writings on the *Book of Rites*.<sup>93</sup>

Lastly, a very small number of articles have looked at Kwŏn's life and work as a scholar-official in Koryŏ and Chosŏn governments. Usually Kwŏn's life is dealt in a perfunctory manner and secondary to the examination of other issues, however Kang Mun-shik published two articles looking at Kwŏn's life: one focusing on his life and colleagues, the other comparing Kwŏn with Chŏng To-jŏn.<sup>94</sup> Other studies have examined Kwŏn's role as a scholar-official and politician, such as the scholarship of Ch'oe Yŏn-shik and Pu Nam-ch'ŏl.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See Chu Kyŏng-yŏl, "Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Sahaengshi Yŏn'gu – Pongsarok ūl Chungshim ūro 권근의 사행시 연구 - 「봉사록」을 중심으로 -", *Hanmunhak Nonjip*, 1998; and Ōm Kyŏng-hŭm, "Chŏng Mong-ju wa Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Sahaengshi e P'yohyŏndoen Kukchegwan'gye 정몽주와 권근의 사행시에 표현된 국제관계", *Han'guk Chungsŏsa Yŏn'gu*, No. 16, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Alston, Dane, "Emperor and Emissary: The Hongwu Emperor, Kwŏn Kŭn and the Poetry of Late Fourteenth-Century Diplomacy", *Korean Studies*, Vol. 32, 2008: pp. 104-147.

<sup>91</sup> Son Kyu-hong, *Iphaktosŏl ūl Chungsimŭrohan Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Kyoyuksasang 「入學圖說」을 中心으로 한 권근의 教育思想*, Masters Thesis, Chŏnnam Taehakkyo, 1982.

<sup>92</sup> Chŏng Ch'an-ju, *Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Kyoyuk Sasang Yŏn'gu 권근의 教育思想 研究 (A Study on the Educational Thought of Kwŏn Kŭn)*, PhD Thesis, Kŏnguk Taehakkyo, 1991.

<sup>93</sup> Yi Kyŏng-ŏn, "Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Yeaksasang gwa Kyoyukron 권근의 예악사상과 교육론 (Korean Li-Yue Thoughts and Views of Education of Kwan Geun)", *Ŭmak Kyoyungnon Yŏn'gu*, Vol. 27, 2004.

<sup>94</sup> Kang Mun-sik, "Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Kyoyuinmul 권근의 생애와 교육인물", *Han'guk Hakpo*, 2001 and "Chŏng To-jŏn gwa Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Sasang Pigyo 정도전과 권근의 생애와 사상 비교", *Hanguk Hakpo*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Ch'oe Yŏn-shik's studies include, "Yŏmalsŏnch'o ūi Chŏngch'i Inshik gwa Ch'ejegaehyŏk ūi Panghyangsolchŏng: Yi Saek, Chŏng To-jŏn, .... 여말선조의 정치인식과 체제개혁의 방향설정: 이색, 정도전... ..", *Han'guk Chŏngch'i Woegyosa Nonch'ong*, 1997 and "Susŏng ūi Chŏngch'iron: Kwŏn Kŭn 수성의 정치론 : 권근 (權近)", *Han'guk Chŏngch'ihak Hoepo*, 2000: while Pu Nam-

This overview of the scholarship has highlighted the main areas of scholastic focus on Kwŏn Kūn. Cutting across this scholarship, however, are a number of themes that have dominated the field. The first theme is that scholarship on Kwŏn Kūn has focused predominantly on portions of his life, thought and literature. Such a selective approach has meant that no comprehensive studies have yet been attempted in Korean, let alone in English. Thus our understanding of Kwŏn Kūn is partial at best. A second theme, especially with regard to his intellectual writings, is that researchers have focused on a limited selection of his writings to examine his thought. This strand of scholarship has been even more narrowly confined to a preoccupation with identifying in Kwŏn's writings elements of Cheng-Zhu derived thought that later captivated the minds of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Chosŏn intellectuals. The reason for this fixation is to locate the antecedents of these later developments in Kwŏn's writings, which is a trend that has carried over from general scholarship on Confucianism in Korea and its preoccupation with certain personalities in Chosŏn Confucianism. While this line of scholarship is useful in so far as it traces the unfolding and development of ideas, it has it has come at the cost of failing to appreciate the breadth and depth of Kwŏn's writings in and of his time. Another theme is the disparity between Korean and foreign scholarship. While Korean language scholarship on Kwŏn has made modest progress over the last few decades, in the last century only one article on Kwŏn's thought has been published in English and as outlined above, even this article leaves the many facets of his life and thought yet to be introduced to English speaking audiences. The disparity here is also indicative of a general paucity of scholarship on Kwŏn. While the above may give the impression of a significant body of literature on Kwŏn, this is far from the case, especially when his treatment is compared to other "notable" Confucian personalities. We can appreciate the extent to which personalities like T'oegye and Yulgok have been the focus when we look at bibliographical summaries like Kim Tong-su's *Han'guk Saron-jŏ Punryu Ch'ongmok*.<sup>96</sup> Covering scholarship up until 1995, Kim lists 291 publications on T'oegye, 155 on Yulgok and even 38 on Chŏng To-jŏn under individual personality classification. The relative importance of Kwŏn is evident in the fact that he is not even listed as an individual personality, but is incorporated into other generic classifications.

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ch'ŏl's works are, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Chŏngch'i Sasang 권근의 정치사상", *Pusan Chŏngch'ihak Hoepo*, 1998 and "Chosŏn Kŏngukgi Sŏngnihakcha ūi Yidannonjaeng: Pulgyo rŭl Paech'ŏk Hajianūn Kwŏn Kūn ūi Sarye 조선건국기 성리학자의 이단논쟁: 불교를 배척하지 않은 권근 (權近)의 사례", *Chŏngch'i Sasang Yŏn'gu*, 1999.

<sup>96</sup> Kim Tong-su, *Han'guk Saron-jŏ Punryu Ch'ongmok*, Vol. 2, Hyeon, Seoul, 1996.

## Contextualising Kwŏn: a life in a time of change

Before moving on it is useful to pause and sketch the context of Kwŏn Kŭn's life and times. Kwŏn lived during a time when there was significant political change taking place throughout north-east Asia. Looking broadly at the changes taking place during Kwŏn's lifetime, one of the most momentous changes was among the regimes of China and the Korean peninsula. During Kwŏn's life three different regimes controlled the Korean peninsula. In 1258 the Koryŏ court submitted to invading Mongolian forces after almost thirty years of conflict and resistance. Koryŏ then remained a vassal state within the Mongol led Yuan empire 大元 up until the 1350s. When Kwŏn was born in 1352, Yuan rule was beginning to wane in the Korean peninsula and domestic forces in mainland Yuan were starting to coalesce into manifestations of revolt and rebellion towards the "foreign" court. In 1368, peasant turned rebel leader Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398) pushed Yuan forces out of the Chinese capital and proclaimed himself emperor of the new Ming dynasty 大明 (1368-1644). When Zhu proclaimed himself as the Hongwu Emperor 洪武帝 (r. 1368-98) Kwŏn was already sixteen years old. Just as he set about expunging the vestiges of Yuan control from China, so too did the king of Koryŏ, Kongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351-74), who moved quickly to neutralise Yuan supporters in the Koryŏ court and reclaim lost territories.

It is difficult to speculate just what effect the regime change may have had on Kwŏn's life as a teenager in rural Koryŏ, but as he progressed through the education and examination system he gravitated towards the capital where he eventually found work in the government. In the twenty years following the Hongwu emperor's inauguration, rule of Koryŏ passed through the hands of four kings. Kwŏn, as a member of the court administration, witnessed members of the royalty, court officials and military men jostling for power and control. This period of political turmoil reached a climax in 1392 when General Yi Sŏng-gye rallied his troops, seized the throne and installed himself as King T'aejo of the new kingdom of Chosŏn.

By this point, Kwŏn had not only witnessed the fickle machinations of the Koryŏ and Ming courts, but had suffered from its vicious power squabbles. In 1389 Kwŏn was impeached for breaching diplomatic protocol and defending a colleague against baseless accusation. Kwŏn's punishment was exile and a year of intermittent incarceration. By the time Yi Sŏng-gye had become king, Kwŏn had been pardoned for his actions but

remained in self-imposed retirement in his home town of Yangch'on 陽村. It was in 1393, when T'aejo was touring the countryside and passed by Kwŏn's location that he summoned Kwŏn and offered to employ him in his new government. Kwŏn accepted the offer and returned to the capital where he set about working in the new Chosŏn government. The remainder of Kwŏn's life was spent in the capital where he played an important role in establishing the new government.

### **A Confucian on the cusp: last of the Koryŏ Confucians, first of the Chosŏn**

When Kwŏn emerged as a promising student and then embarked upon a career as a scholar-official in the Koryŏ government he entered an intellectual environment where Confucianism was ingrained into the fabric of educational, intellectual, social and political life in the Korean peninsula. Kwŏn entered the sphere of Confucianism at time when it was gaining momentum unlike any other time in the Korean peninsula.

While it is impossible to pinpoint the exact date that Confucianism entered the peninsula, Chinese histories point to it entering the Korean peninsula before the 5th century AD. The earliest recorded potential transmission occurred when Viscount Jizu 箕子 (Korean: Kija) travelled east and purportedly settled in the Korean peninsula and introduced cultural practices and laws, including Confucianism, to the tribal groups of the area.<sup>97</sup> Other Chinese histories show early states on the Korean peninsula displaying Confucian practices, such as the Wei 魏 noting the stratified society of Weiman 衛滿 demonstrating Confucian notions of etiquette and the *Han History* notes that Puyo 夫餘 customs resembled Confucian rites and divination practices such as those found in the *Book of Changes*.<sup>98</sup> Chinese cultural practices spread further east around the fifth century BCE onwards, especially during the Warring States period in China (403 BCE–221 BCE) when the records show the state of Yan 燕 waging war against Weiman Chosŏn (194 BCE–108 BCE), followed by the Han defeating the state of Weiman and establishing four commanderies 漢四郡 which remained in the north

<sup>97</sup> The story of Kija travelling east appears in a number of historical texts, such the *Shiji* 史記 and *Han History* 漢書.

<sup>98</sup> For example see "Biographies of the Eastern Barbarians" 東夷傳 in *Record of the Three Kingdoms* 三國志, *Book of Wei* 魏書 and also "Biography of the Eastern Brabarians" 東夷列傳 in *Late Han History* 後漢書.

of the peninsula from 108 BCE to 313 CE.<sup>99</sup> While this period is marked by conflict, violence and colonisation, nonetheless it was a time when general Chinese social, political, religious and cultural ideas passed into the tribal groups populating the Korean peninsula.

As the tribal states of the Korean peninsula coalesced into the Three Kingdoms 三國 of Koguryō 高句麗 (BCE 37-668), Paekje 百濟 (BCE 18-660) and Silla 新羅 (BCE 57- 935) historical records show further references to Confucianism. In the historical records of Koguryō, Ch'ihui 雉姬, concubine of Koguryō King Yuri 瑠璃 (?-18 CE, r. 19 BCE-18 CE), sang a song that cited the *Book of Odes*.<sup>100</sup> In Paekje, during the reign of Kunj'o 近肖 (?-375, r. 346-375 CE), Kohūng 高興 (d.u.) wrote the *Record of Documents* 書記, showing that by the fourth century CE not only was education and literacy well established in Paekje, but so too the idea and practice of writing histories.<sup>101</sup>

In Koguryō society Confucianism provided models for governance and the extent of its value can be seen in a memorial to the throne discussing the three ways: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. The memorial was submitted to the throne in 643, the second year of King Pojang 寶臧王, (? ~ 682) regarding a problem with the religious practices of the time. The memorial argued the importance of all three traditions and compared the three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism to the three legs of a cauldron. If one leg were to be removed, the cauldron would fall over.<sup>102</sup> This memorial shows that Confucianism, along with the other two main religious traditions, was established and integrated into Koguryō society to the point where it was seen as indispensable to Koguryō.

Historical records of Paekje show that Confucianism in Paekje was well established. In terms of scholarship, Paekje sent scholars Ajikki 阿直岐 and Wang In 王仁 to Japan,

<sup>99</sup> See Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian, Han II* trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1993: pp. 225-230 for an English translation of Emperor Wu's conquest of Wieman Chosōn. The Four Han Commanderies were established in the Liaodong and northern Korean territories and were called Lelang, Lintun, Xuantu and Zhenfan.

<sup>100</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Koguryō Pong'i", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 13, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 148.

<sup>101</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Paekje Pong'i", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 24, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 238.

<sup>102</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Koguryō Pong'i", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 21, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 206.

in addition to other cultural and religious artefacts and specialists.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, during the reign of King Sōng, in 541, when envoys were sent to Liang 梁, eligibility was confined to those who were specialists in the *Book of Odes*.<sup>104</sup> Testament to the high level of Confucian education and interpretation that Paekje reached is also found in a royal document sent to King Kaeno 蓋鹵 (415–475, r. 455–475) from the Northern Wei 北魏 in 472. The correspondence praises Paekje for its grasp of the Five Classics and Chinese history, and their understanding of Chinese modes of behaviour.<sup>105</sup> In addition to the high scholastic level of Confucianism in Paekje, accounts of the final years of the state also show that Confucian principles had penetrated society where King Ŭija was noted for his filial piety and friendship towards his brother, to the point where he was compared with Confucian exemplars of filial piety.<sup>106</sup>

The state of Silla quickly adopted Confucianism even though it was the furthest and last of the Three Kingdoms to receive Chinese cultural influences. Silla used references to Confucian ideals of loyalty and bravery in diplomatic relations with Paekje, as well as references derived from staple Confucian texts like the *Analects*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Specific to Silla was the Hwarang 花郎, a male youth militia, who among their various activities were required to cultivate the five Confucian virtues of loyalty, filiality, trust, courage and benevolence, and follow Buddhist principles.<sup>107</sup> The young boys who joined the Hwarang pledged themselves to a path of loyalty 忠 and to study the *Book of Odes*, *Documents*, *Rites* and *Spring and Autumn Annals* for three years. Further anecdotes describe Hwarang practitioners and attribute to them Confucian virtues such as loyalty, filiality and courage.<sup>108</sup>

Silla is also noteworthy for producing historical figures connected to Confucianism. Historical records show that Kangsu 強首 (?-692) was given a choice of studying either Buddhism and Confucianism, but he chose to study Confucianism.<sup>109</sup> Sōlch'ong

<sup>103</sup> For example see *Nihon shoki*, Fascile 10 and 17.

<sup>104</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Paekje Pongi", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 26, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 253.

<sup>105</sup> See the entry for Paekje in the "Biographies" in the *Book of Wei*, Fascile 100.

<sup>106</sup> See Best, Johnathan W., *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche: Together with an Annotated Translation of the Paekche Annals of the Samguk Sagi*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2006: p. 370.

<sup>107</sup> For example see, Kim Pu-sik, "Silla Pongi", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 4, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 54.

<sup>108</sup> For example see, Kim Pu-sik, "Biographies", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 47, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: pp. 450-1.

<sup>109</sup> For a biographical account of Kangsu see Kim Pu-sik, "Biographies", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 46, Vol.



薛聰 (655-?), the son of famous Silla Monk Wonhyo, was also a Confucian who is credited with inventing the first domestic script Idu and teaching the nine classics to his students at the National Academy.<sup>110</sup> Another famous scholar of this time was Ch'oe Chi-won 崔致遠 (857-?) who had studied in Tang and upon returning to Silla encouraged an amalgamation of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism under the rubric "P'ungryu" 風流.<sup>111</sup> Within this doctrinal troika he proposed that filial piety towards one's family and loyalty to the state were the teachings of Confucius.<sup>112</sup> The fragments that remain from these scholars show that among intellectuals of the Silla, Confucian ideas and terminology were circulating and were not considered alien or unfamiliar.

Confucianism in the Three Kingdoms therefore came to dominate three interlinked fields: governance, education and morality. In the case of governance Confucianism enabled Koguryō, Silla and Paekje to adopt Chinese derived administrative structures. The corpus of Confucian texts, such as the Five Classics, provided a mainstay and framework to educate people. In 372, King Sosurim 小獸林王 (?-384, r. 371-384) established the first equivalent of a university known as T'aehak 太學.<sup>113</sup> The spread of education in Koguryō was of high importance and thus it extended from the court to the countryside where through the "Kyōngdang" 局堂 the Five Classics, basic histories and other texts related to written Chinese were taught.<sup>114</sup> While Silla initially lagged behind its neighbours in receiving Chinese culture, envoys in the seventh century visited Tang and returned with ideas of how to reform Silla. Later in 682 the National Academy 國學 was established under King Sinmun 神文 (?-692, r. 681-692) and as more envoys returned from China they brought with them more Confucian materials.<sup>115</sup> By the time of King Wōnsōng 元聖 (?-798, r. 785-798), in 788, Silla's Confucian education system was fully established and it was divided into three tiers based on the

1. Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: pp. 440-1.

<sup>110</sup> For a biography of Solch'ong see Kim Pu-sik, "Biographies", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 46, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: pp. 444-5.

<sup>111</sup> For a biography of Ch'oe see Kim Pu-sik, "Biographies", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 46, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: pp. 441-4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Koguryō Ponggi", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 18, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 182.

<sup>114</sup> See the section on Koguryō in "Biography of the Eastern Barbarians", *Later Han History*, Fascile 149 and *Old Tang Documents* 舊唐書, Fascile 199.

<sup>115</sup> Kim Pu-sik, "Silla ponggi", *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 8, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 96.

Confucian classics.<sup>116</sup> More than simply teaching students to read and write, the first level of education shows a concern with establishing Confucian ideals such as loyalty and filial piety from the *Analects* and *Classic of Filial Piety*. Running through all levels of the education system and curriculum is an interest in rites, which pertain to Confucian conduct. There are even records of the kings attending lectures on the Confucian classics, such as King Hyegong in 765 receiving a lecture on the *Book of Documents* from the scholars at the National Academy.<sup>117</sup>

Towards the end of the unified Silla period tensions emerged between the weakening crown, aristocratic “True Bone” rulers, intellectuals constrained within the “Head-Rank” system and powerful local elites wielding military power and wealth. With the fall of Silla and the ousting of aristocrats as leaders, Wang Kŏn 王建 (877-943, r. 918-943) ascended to the throne and set about attempting to unify the peninsula. In 918, upon becoming king, he set forth his enthronement proclamation which was laced with Confucian notions.<sup>118</sup> In the speech he cited Confucian kings of antiquity and alluded to the *Book of Documents* and *Spring and Autumn Annals* to justify his claim to the throne. In this manner his words show that Wang Kŏn recognised a need to resort to Confucian tropes in order to legitimise his actions.

Wang Kŏn’s use of Confucianism at the outset of Koryŏ was more than a cosmetic display. His primary task upon taking the throne was unifying the peninsula which had been besieged by conflict. In addition to using force to quell rebellions and dissenters, he looked to create a centralised bureaucracy to manage state affairs and here he turned to Tang China and its Confucian based bureaucracy. It was clear that the hereditary Head-Rank system did not work and that a merit based bureaucracy was needed. Furthermore, Wang Kŏn sought to assimilate the local elites into the centralised power

<sup>116</sup> The three tiered reading and examination system - 讀書三品科 - comprised, in descending order, firstly those who read the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Record of Rites* and *Selections of Literature* 文選, along with illuminating the *Analects* and *Classical of Filial Piety*; next, those who read the “Rules of Proprietary” 曲禮 chapter from the *Record of Rites* and the *Analects* and *Classical of Filial Piety*; lastly the initial level entails merely reading the “Rules of Proprietary” and *Classical of Filial Piety*. See Kim Pu-sik, “Silla Pongŭ”, *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 10, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 115.

<sup>117</sup> Kim Pu-sik, “Silla Pongŭ”, *Samguk Sagi*, Fascile 9, Vol. 1., Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 2002: p. 111.

<sup>118</sup> An excerpt of Wang Kŏn’s enthronement proclamation appears in Lee, Peter H. (ed.), *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization: From Early Times to the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. 1., Columbia University Press, New York, 1997: pp. 152-3.

structure. Wang Kŏn set out his precepts for Koryŏ in the Ten Injunctions 訓要十條.<sup>119</sup> In addition to praising Buddhist and geomantic practices, Wang encourages people to read the classics, histories, and in particular reflect on “Against Luxurious Ease”, a chapter from the *Book of Documents*.

The push for a structured centralised government instigated by Wang Kŏn and carried on by his successors saw Confucianism take on an even greater role in supporting the bureaucracy to the point where it became the political ideology of Koryŏ. This came about firstly with scholar-officials like Choe Sŭng-no 崔承老 (927-989) submitting proposals to the throne that reviewed policies of the past and proposed social and political reforms.<sup>120</sup> Choe suggested incorporating Confucianism and Chinese learning, where suitable, into Koryŏ. Choe’s ideas were well received and enacted.

Another avenue through which Confucianism consolidated its position in Koryŏ was as an educational medium. The civil service examination 科擧 system had already been established in Silla, however in Koryŏ during the reign of King Kwangjong 光宗 (925-975, r. 949-975) the examination system took on even greater importance as the mechanism for measuring the literary, cultural and compositional skills of people seeking to work in the government. This increased emphasis on education saw the publishing of books, the writing of domestic histories, and the establishment of libraries and specialised colleges of learning for law, mathematics, calligraphy and literature. Even within the court a program was introduced of royal lectures 經筵 for the king and princes on the Confucian classics.

Coupled with this domestic embrace of Confucianism was the influence of a band of Koryŏ intellectuals returning from China with new literature from Song dynasty Confucian scholars. From the mid to late 13th century these Koryŏ literati were instrumental in transmitting Song period Confucian thought into Koryŏ society. Ahn Hyang is credited with being a central figure in introducing Song period literature and thinking to the Koryŏ society. During the reign of King Ch’ungnyŏl 忠烈王 (1289-90), he travelled to Yanjing 燕京, then central capital of the Yuan, where he transcribed *Zhu Xi’s Complete Works* 朱子全書 and commenced studies into Neo-Confucian

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp. 154-156. Also see footnote 122.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 157-61. In a similar vein see his writings on current affairs with a strong Confucian tone, pp. 161-67, and his critique of Buddhism and Buddhists for their corrupt ways, pp. 167-8.

thought. When Ahn returned to Koryŏ he took with him not only the writings of Song Confucians like Zhu Xi and his cohorts, but also portraits of Confucius, histories, classics, musical instruments, ritual implements and a desire to promulgate Confucianism.

A similar individual after Ahn was Paek I-jong 白頤正 (1260-1340). Paek travelled to Yuan in 1305 and spent ten years there studying the teachings of Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers. He returned to Koryŏ and passed on his teachings to individuals such as Yi Che-hyŏn. Kwŏn Po, a relative of Kwŏn Kŭn, travelled to Yuan and returned with a copy of *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books* 四書集註 which he then had printed and distributed in Koryŏ. This group of individuals were therefore responsible for introducing the new strands of Song Confucian literature and thought to the Korean peninsula.

This new strand of Confucian literature and thought found a receptive audience among scholars of Koryŏ, who were drawn in by the new ideas put forward in the writings of Cheng-Zhu Confucians. U T'ak 禹倬 (1263-1342) is said to have been fascinated with Cheng Yi's 程伊 *Commentary on [Book of] Changes* 易傳 and taught it to his students. Yi Che-hyŏn, a disciple of Paek In-jong, also saw merit in studying Neo-Confucian teachings and proposed that Koryŏ princes study the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*, before moving on to the Five Classics.

The new intellectual direction of the Song Confucians also provoked questioning in the minds of Koryŏ Confucians. In the writings of Yi Kok 李穀 (1298-1351), a disciple of Yi Che-hyŏn, we can see that he was mulling over the pros and cons of Confucian and Buddhist perspectives on the mind. Yi Kok felt that the Confucian understanding of the nature of mind, derived from the *Great Learning*, was correct while the Buddhist method of practice contemplation of the mind surpassed Confucian alternatives.

Yi Saek, another disciple of Yi Che-hyŏn, was instrumental in embedding Neo-Confucian teachings and ideas among literati of the late 14th century. Yi studied in Yuan and returned to Koryŏ to take on the role of headmaster of the national academy, along with other posts in the government. Yi brought with him a well-developed interest in Neo-Confucian thought which he promoted at the academy. His students and

colleagues included Chông Mong-ju, Yi Sung-in, Park Sang-ch'ung, Chông To-jôn and Kwôn Kûn – all of whom were key political and intellectual figures of the late Koryô and early Chosôn. Like his father Yi Kok, Yi Saek saw a great deal of merit in Neo-Confucian conceptualisations of the world, was sympathetic to some doctrinal aspects of Buddhism, but disliked Buddhism for its corrupt ways.

Where Yi Saek and his father held some sympathy towards Buddhism, Chông Mong-ju criticised Buddhism for its corruption and pushed for Confucian rites and rituals to replace Buddhism. Such was Chong's commitment to Confucianism that Yi Saek hailed Chông Mong-ju as the "founder of studies on principle in the East". Although none of his writings remain, he is noted to have taught the *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*.

Closely coupled with the regime change that took place in the Korean peninsula in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century was an ideological and religious transformation. One of the hallmarks of the Koryô was its pluralistic approach towards religion and ideology, but the court was particularly supportive of Buddhism.<sup>121</sup> In the early years of Koryô all of the religions and ideologies maintained a degree of civility towards each other and institutionally the government tried to enshrine injunctions preserving that diversity.<sup>122</sup> Over time, however, opportunistic elements within the clergy capitalised on royal patronage. Out of religious piety kings bequeathed large plots of land to temples, commissioned art works and publications, and showed monks great hospitality in the court – all of which placed enormous strain on the economic capacity of the Koryô court. With a king sympathetic to Buddhist concerns, monks increasingly had the ear of the king when it came to deciding on court affairs and as the clergy solidified its standing in the court, unscrupulous monks took advantage of the power and position

<sup>121</sup> For an overview of the role of Buddhism in Koryô, see Hô Hûng-sik, "Buddhism and Koryô Society" in Lewis R. Lancaster, Kikun Suh, and Chai-shin Yu, eds., *Buddhism in Koryô: A Royal Religion*, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley 1996: pp. 1-33. Also, for an account of Koryô court's relations with Buddhism, see Kamata Shigeo, "Buddhism during Koryô" in Lewis R. Lancaster, Kikun Suh, and Chai-shin Yu, eds., *Buddhism in Koryô: A Royal Religion*, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley 1996: pp. 35-66.

<sup>122</sup> The *Ten Injunctions* 訓要十條 ascribed to T'aejo Wang Kôn 太祖王建 (977-943) are an example of Koryô's early institutionalisation of religious and intellectual tolerance and diversity. For a detailed discussion of the *Ten Injunctions*, its contentious provenance and possible fabrication, see Breurker, Remco, "Forging the Truth: Creative Deception and National Identity in Medieval Korea", *East Asian History*, No. 35, June 2008: pp. 1-73. A translation of the injunctions can also be found in Lee, Peter H. (ed.), *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, Volume 1, 1997: pp. 154-6.

Buddhism held in the court and over the king.<sup>123</sup>

Bureaucrats and Confucian scholar-officials provided administrative support to the Koryŏ regime and tried in vain to implement reforms and curb corruption. Their attempts, however, were stymied due to the clergy's close relationship to the royal family. Towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century scholar-officials found renewed intellectual support in newly emerging Confucian literature, especially the writings of Zhu Xi and Song dynasty thinkers. This literature struck a chord with Koryŏ scholar-officials not only on account of its synthesis and reinterpretation of the Confucian classics, but also because of its opposition to Buddhism and use of Confucian ideas and principles to directly challenge Buddhism's hold over all matters metaphysical.<sup>124</sup> For Koryŏ scholar-officials, Song Neo-Confucian literature provided the intellectual weaponry to directly confront, challenge and discredit Buddhism's hold over social, state, moral, religious and court affairs.<sup>125</sup>

This group of Koryŏ intellectuals spanning from Ahn Hyang through to Kwŏn Kūn represent the vanguard of Confucian intellectuals in the Korean peninsula. Inspired and stimulated with Cheng-Zhu literature and ideas, these intellectuals set in motion changes within the intellectual, political and social fabric of Koryŏ. Up to this point the atmosphere of Koryŏ was permissive of all religious and intellectual traditions. However, the arrival of Cheng-Zhu literature brought not only new directions in Confucian thought, but also a philosophical armoury to challenge and attack Buddhism. For some the ideas challenged their personal beliefs, yet for others it provided the ammunition needed to attack the Buddhists who they saw as corrupt and wayward. It

<sup>123</sup> Han U-gŭn provides an account of the conflicts that emerged between Buddhists and the Koryŏ court, along with ideological and religious confrontations with neo-Confucian scholar-officials and policies of the first kings of Chosŏn. Refer to Han U-gŭn, "Policies toward Buddhism in Late Koryŏ and Early Chosŏn" in Lewis R. Lancaster and Chai-shin Yu, eds., *Buddhism in the Early Chosŏn: Suppression and Transformation*, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, 1996: pp. 1-58.

<sup>124</sup> See Kim Hyong-hyo, "Confucian Thought in Korea", *Korea Journal*, 17:9, September 1977: pp 47-9 for a summary of the reception of neo-Confucian literature and its affect on Confucians of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>125</sup> Emblematic of the ideological and religious conflict was a clash between Buddhist monk Kihwa 己和 (1376-1433) and neo-Confucian Chŏng To-jŏn. For discussion of this debate, see Choi Yeonsik, "To Survive as a Buddhist Monk in a Confucian State: Gihwa's Response to Jeong Do-jeon's Critique of Buddhism", *Korea Journal* 47:3, Autumn 2007: pp. 104-133 and Charles Muller's articles and presentations such as "The Centerpiece of the Goryeo-Joseon Buddhist-Confucian Confrontation: A Comparison of the Positions of the Bulssi japbyeon and the Hyeonjeong non", *Journal of Korean Buddhist Seminar: Memorial Edition for the Late Professor Kim Chigŭn* 9, September 2003: pp. 23-47 and "The Buddhist-Confucian Conflict in the Early Chosŏn and Kihwa's Syncretic Response: The Hyŏn chŏng non" presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Chicago, 18-22 November 1994.

was also these scholar-officials that provide Yi Sŏng-gye with the intellectual blueprint for the new kingdom of Chosŏn. After all, Yi needed not only a new mandate to rule, but also the framework to create a new society and restore power to the throne.<sup>126</sup> To answer his needs he turned to the literati who were armed with new Confucian doctrine and hungry for change.

Therefore, while only scant historical references remain for the majority of these Koryŏ personalities, making it difficult to gain a full picture of their ideas, the majority of Kwŏn Kŭn's writings are extant meaning that he is the earliest figure we can focus on to best understand the intellectual climate of this time. Kwŏn also stands apart from his teachers and colleagues as a pioneer championing the Confucian cause. He was one of a handful of leading intellectuals who was at the fore of grappling with the affairs of the state, court and education, while also engaging with issues in Confucian literature that concerned morality, kingship, social order, education and culture. Furthermore, he was attempting to wrest power from the Buddhists and institute policy decisions along Confucian lines.

Kwŏn's location at the heart of political affairs in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn also meant that he was directly shaping the course of events in the Korean peninsula. As briefly outlined above, the trajectory of Kwŏn's life took him to the heart of state affairs as a young bureaucrat in the Koryŏ regime, and then later Kwŏn directed his energies towards helping establish the fledgling Chosŏn regime. In both regimes he worked in bureaus related to correspondence, education and ritual matters. Kwŏn also pushed for state reforms in education and the demilitarisation of regional clans. Kwŏn's talents were not confined to the domestic stage for in 1396 he demonstrated his diplomatic skills when he managed to resolve an international deadlock between the Ming court and Chosŏn. In resolving this deadlock he gained the Hongwu emperor's trust and exchanged poetry with him. The Hongwu emperor, impressed with Kwŏn's poetry, knowledge and conduct, provided him with feasts, clothing and tours. Upon returning to Chosŏn, Kwŏn gained considerable kudos for this diplomatic feat, further solidifying his position and reputation as an important scholar-official in the Chosŏn court.

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<sup>126</sup> For an account of Chŏng To-jŏn's role in the formation of the Chosŏn state, see Chung Chai-shik, "Chŏng Tojŏn: 'Architect' of Yi Dynasty Government and Ideology" in William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush, eds., *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985. New York: pp. 59-88.

Beyond affairs of the state, Kwŏn was involved in an array of activities. He wrote poetry, histories and commentaries on the Confucian classics, which were among the first of their kind in Korean history. He was involved with astronomical affairs, such as the composition of the *Sectional Chart of Astronomical Constellations* 天象列次分野地圖 and topographical developments like the *Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Capitals* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖, which is one of the earliest maps of Chosŏn, Ming China and Asia.<sup>127</sup> Kwŏn, therefore, was not merely a passive spectator to the unfolding domestic and regional events of the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> century, but was actively engaged in the social, political, regional and intellectual issues of his time. Given his position and his activities, Kwŏn is an important historical figure to explore and this thesis intends to bring to light for the first time in English the fascinating features of his life and thought.

## Liberating Kwŏn Kŭn from history's fetters

### *Thesis argument*

This thesis will for the first time in English provide a detailed examination of the life, thought and legacy of Kwŏn Kŭn. The importance of this study is that it will open up new insights into Kwŏn by drawing on his own writings, a range of historical sources and the spectrum of secondary studies undertaken up until the present. As outlined above, the genesis of this thesis came from an encounter with the disparity between the historical, textual and intellectual representation of Kwŏn and the partial and biased portrayal of Kwŏn in contemporary scholarship. This treatment of Kwŏn raised more questions than it answered. The other impetus behind this thesis is the issue of the historical treatment of Kwŏn, namely accounting for his fall from grace among later generations of intellectuals to the point of his marginalisation and dismissal at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Why and how did this happen? These lines of questioning form the basis of this thesis, the direction of its arguments and the parameters within which it focuses.

This thesis argues three points concerning Kwŏn Kŭn. Firstly, responding to early scholastic perceptions of Kwŏn of being of little significance and the ongoing partial

<sup>127</sup> For the *Sectional Chart of Astronomical Constellations* 天象列次分野地圖 and the *Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Capitals* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖 see Appendix pp. 276-7.



depictions of his life, the thesis will argue that Kwŏn Kŭn's was an important figure during his time, central to the political, educational, international and intellectual activities of the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn.

Secondly, the thesis will address the narrow and idiosyncratic treatment of Kwŏn's thought on Confucianism and his characterisation as non-reflective Neo-Confucian apostle. I will argue that his writings on Confucianism are far more nuanced than have been presented in secondary literature to date. The common perception of Kwŏn is that he was a conduit for Neo-Confucian thought (Cheng-Zhu thought) and he offered little, if any, intellectual contribution during his time, however I will argue on the basis of an analysis of Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism that he was engaging with Cheng-Zhu thought in a critical manner and that was not merely a passive recipient of their teachings. Furthermore, I will show that Kwŏn was engaging with the Confucian canon as a whole which meant that he was interrogating critically the writings of Cheng-Zhu thinkers just as much as he was trying to distil the essential teachings of the sages of antiquity. The implication of this argument is that it undermines the common perception of Kwŏn and throws into question the broader characterisation of intellectuals from this period as being intellectual lightweights and Neo-Confucian sycophants. This close examination of Kwŏn's thought will show that Kwŏn was a versatile intellectual of his time who was both actively engaging with the socio-political affairs of his time and while thoroughly investigating the Confucian canon to find answers and make sense of the world he lived in.

Lastly, the thesis will examine the legacy of Kwŏn and show that his fall from grace was a consequence of domestic developments in Chosŏn and the changing nature of intellectuals and their interests from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Charting the fate of Kwŏn's legacy will explain why scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century held Kwŏn in such poor regard. It is only after illustrating the contours of his life and revealing the intricacies of his thought on Confucianism that we can appreciate Kwŏn's fall. To further highlight the historical treatment of Kwŏn this chapter will also include a parallel review of Chŏng To-jŏn.

These three points, argued across the following three chapters, contribute to the field in several ways. The thesis addresses the partial and prejudiced views of Kwŏn as a historical figure by showing that he was in his time an important and influential figure.

The thesis also reveals that Kwŏn was far more nuanced in his intellectual activities and that our understanding of him to date has suffered from belligerent disciplinary and historiographical preoccupations. Illustrating the true depth and diversity of Kwŏn's intellectual activities, in addition to his treatment at the hands of later generations, highlights the extent to which modern scholarship of intellectual figures in Korea's past has been and continues to be influenced by the legacy of its subjects and is in need of serious reappraisal.

Naturally one thesis cannot cover all the details of Kwŏn's life and times. For this reason, while writing this thesis I sought to strike a balance between depth and breadth of analysis. As the research progressed it was clear that an entire thesis, if not a lifetime, could be devoted just to unravelling the intricacies of one of Kwŏn's treatises on Confucianism, or even his poetry, or a particular concept in his writings, for example. The same goes for breadth: tracing all of Kwŏn's contexts, such as charting the myriad of intellectual traditions and influences that fed into his milieu both in Koryŏ and from the Song, Yuan, Ming and before would have produced a number of theses and taken far more time and space than is allocated to one thesis. With this in mind I decided to focus on the three arguments outlined above and to strive for a balance between breadth and depth, which to date has been absent in the scholarship. The reason for adopting this approach is because these three arguments addressed an important and fundamental dimension of our understanding Kwŏn and draws to light a bigger issue, which is the dearth in our understanding of pre-modern intellectual history in the Korean peninsula. Naturally this approach – a balance of depth and breadth – will not please all people; it will provoke more questions and seek greater qualifications in one direction or another. Such questions are good because it again highlights how little we know and why need to explore even more.

### *Methodological considerations*

This thesis falls within the discipline of intellectual history. Concerning the study of intellectual history, Richard H. King explains the discipline as being concerned with, “theories, systems of thought and belief, and articulated traditions” and that to understand these ideas it is necessary to locate them within their original context.<sup>128</sup> King further notes that what constitutes this context remains problematic, be it a

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<sup>128</sup> King, Richard H., “Introducing Intellectual History”, *Culture, Theory and Critique*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2006: p. 1.

synchronic contextualisation that “focus[es] on systems and structures within which ideas operate” or a diachronic contextualisation that seeks to chart how ideas come into being and/or develop.<sup>129</sup> King concludes that in talking about intellectual history, “[o]verall, it is fair to say that every work of intellectual history tends to stress either the external (roughly ‘real world’) or internal (the logic of the idea) factors that determine an idea, a theory or an intellectual trend or movement.”<sup>130</sup>

As this thesis is seeking to explore and understand the life of an intellectual, his ideas, the application of those ideas and their posthumous currency, it is narrowing its line of enquiry to avoid the narrative of large-scale ideas, a trend common to the discipline of the history of ideas as opposed to intellectual history.<sup>131</sup> In fact, part of the aim of the thesis, as outlined above, is to highlight how Kwōn has been a victim of the history of ideas and that such an approach has inhibited our understanding of him. Instead, this thesis takes, as Peter E. Gordon notes, ideas as historically conditioned and best understood within their own context.<sup>132</sup> Rather than attempting to judge and evaluate the internal coherence of Kwōn’s thought this thesis is attempting to understand his thought through consideration of the contexts within which he lived and was later evaluated. This approach finds precedence in the work of scholars such as Quentin Skinner who has pioneered the study of early-modern European political theory and context specific intellectual history.<sup>133</sup> In the context of East Asian studies and Confucianism, Hoyt Cleveland Tillman’s *Confucian Discourses and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy* follows the same approach.<sup>134</sup> In this study Tillman examines Zhu Xi not as an isolated intellectual and nor does he examine Zhu’s writings and thought in a

<sup>129</sup> King, “Introducing Intellectual History”, 2006: pp. 1-2.

<sup>130</sup> King, “Introducing Intellectual History”, 2006: p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> As Peter E. Gordon notes in his essay “What is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field”, <http://history.fas.harvard.edu/people/faculty/documents/pgordon-whatisintellhist.pdf> Accessed May 2011: p. 2, the discipline of history of ideas attempts to examine large-scale ideas as they appear and transform across time, such as Arthur Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being: a Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1948. Such an approach, while useful in certain scenarios, tends to take ideas as fixed and unchanging across time and context, hence ignoring how ideas change and come to mean different things to different people.

<sup>132</sup> Gordon, “What is Intellectual History?”, 2011: p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> For examples of Skinner’s approach see his work on Machiavelli: Skinner, Quentin, *Machiavelli*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981 and also his account of intellectual developments from the Renaissance to the Reformation in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978. For Skinner’s discussion on the contextualist approach to intellectual history see “Meaning and Understanding in History of Ideas”, *History and Theory*, Vol. 8 No. 1, 1969: pp. 3-53.

<sup>134</sup> Tillman, Hoyt Cleveland, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992.

philosophical vacuum. Instead he locates Zhu and his thought within “the context of his relationships and interchanges with his major contemporaries.”<sup>135</sup> In much the same way, this thesis seeks to uncover the life and thought of Kwŏn Kūn, while also accounting for contextual influences that may have shaped him and his ideas.

The other discipline this thesis touches on, which is related to the above, is intellectual biography. In tracing Kwŏn’s biographical details we are in fact providing another means by which we can understand the context of his intellectual activities. Furthermore, the inclusion of a chapter that directly examines his writings on Confucianism and another that evaluates his legacy as an intellectual extends this thesis from the genre of mere biography of an intellectual into the realm of intellectual biography.

Adopting this approach to Kwŏn Kūn naturally entails some risks. An intellectual history that focuses on the contextualisation of an individual’s work and thought runs the risk of being too inward and introspective. Such an “internalist” approach favours evaluating ideas in relation to similarly located ideas at the expense of referencing them to a setting outside of their context. While acknowledging this risk, it can be countered by pointing out that at present we lack a full and extensive understanding of the internal workings of Kwŏn’s thought to begin with. To ignore the elucidation of Kwŏn’s thought and leap to making comparisons to greater intellectual narratives would be to resort to the well worn idiosyncrasies that have dominated the field of Korean intellectual history of Confucianism.

The focus on an individual and biography is also vulnerable to criticism. As Tracy Arklay has discussed in regard to political biography,

“Biography should not ever be viewed as a tool by which to make universal sense of a subject. It is a subjective and highly interpretive method, one in which seeking the ‘compassionate truth’ should never be underplayed.”<sup>136</sup>

The fixation on one person’s life, times and thought leaves the research being prone to oversimplification or presenting the subject as a being more important than they may

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<sup>135</sup> Tillman, *Confucian Discourses and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy*, 1992: p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> Arklay, Tracy, “Political Biography: Its Contributions to Political Science”, in *Australian Political Lives: Chronicling political careers and administrative histories*, [http://eprints.anu.edu.au/anzsog/auspol/mobile\\_devices/index.htm](http://eprints.anu.edu.au/anzsog/auspol/mobile_devices/index.htm) (Accessed May 2011).

have been. In other words, a case of the “great man in history”. To avoid this trap this thesis has attempted to use as many additional sources as possible from Kwŏn and his context to triangulate a narrative that faithfully portrays his life and achievements.

As a history, this thesis relies heavily on reading and interpreting historical sources. This is by no means an innocent and value free process as the researcher brings to the materials and the research question his own values and prejudices. To counter any undue projection from my part, I have sought to be as faithful as possible to the original sources and provide evidence in the voice of its originators to support the thesis.

### *Sources*

One of the problems in conducting any research on Korean history before the Chosŏn period is the scarcity of sources. Fortunately, in the case of Kwŏn Kŭn a number of his writings are extant and they form the foundation of this thesis. Since this thesis focuses on discerning the contours of Kwŏn’s life and his thought about Confucianism it will confine its attention to a number of historical works and Kwŏn’s own writings explicitly look at Confucianism, such as the *IHTS*, *RHT* and *YCJ*. Kwŏn’s other writings include his ideas on Confucianism, such as his brief commentary on the *Hyohaengnok* 孝行錄 (*Record of Filial Conduct*), but the above three texts provide Kwŏn’s dedicated writing on Confucianism and the Confucian canon.<sup>137</sup> The *YCJ* supplements these treatises by illustrating how Confucian ideas permeated Kwŏn’s everyday life and thinking.

### *Story of the Iphaktosöl*

Kwŏn’s *IHT* is his most well known and easily recognisable book. Since Kwŏn wrote the *IHT* explicitly to teach students about the key points of Confucianism, it provides a convenient avenue to explore how he conceived of and understood Confucianism. As the students he was teaching were having difficulties understanding certain concepts, he deliberately wrote the book for an audience unfamiliar with the concepts, tradition and literature. This means the *IHTS* covers topics and issues that Kwŏn deemed fundamental for students of that time. By focusing on beginners the text is inherently limited by not being a complete and comprehensive account of Confucianism. As the target audience are students Kwŏn may have left out issues that he considered too tough and complex

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<sup>137</sup> The Kyuchanggak archives at Seoul National University have a version of the *Hyohaengnok* from 1600 and for a modern translation into vernacular Korean see Kwŏn Bu and Kwŏn Chun (compilers), *Hyohaengnok* 孝行錄, Yun Ho-jin (trans.), Kyŏngin munhwasa, Seoul, 2004.

for the beginner student.

We can trace the provenance the *IHTS* to 1390, when Kwŏn was in exile and living in Yangch'on. Kwŏn's "Biographical Chronology" records the following:

Hongmu 23 (1390), age 39 ... Seventh lunar month, exiled again to Ikchu 益州; wrote *Iphaktosŏl*.<sup>138</sup>

The initial version of the *IHTS* comprised twenty-four chapters and according to its epilogue was printed in Chinyang 晉陽, in Hongwu 30 (1397). A later version of the *IHTS* appeared around Sejong 7 (1425) and this edition expanded on the earlier one to include an extra fourteen chapters. This 1425 edition was divided into two parts 上下, with the first portion reflecting the first 1390 version of the text and the second portion being the appended chapters that appeared in 1425. Subsequent to this publication, three other editions of the *IHTS* appear: one in Nangju 浪州 around 1545, one in Yongju 榮州 in 1547 and finally one in Japan in 1648. All of these editions of the *IHTS* comprise a first and second portion as found in the 1425 edition, sometimes printed together in one book or as two volumes.

Table 1. Contents of the 1390 version of the *IHTS*

Original chapter title	Translation of title
天人心性合一之圖	Diagram of the Union of Heaven, Man, Mind and Nature

<sup>138</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, "Yŏnpo" 年譜, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 4b. See also Kwŏn, *YCJ*, vol. 1, 1984: pp. 32 (*hangŭl*) and 5b (*hanmun*).

天人心性分釋之圖	Diagram of the Separate Interpretations of Heaven, Man, Mind and Nature
大學指掌之圖	Diagram of Key Points of the Great Learning
大學立傳變文以分知行 本末厚薄三節辨議	Establishing Transmissions and Changes in the Text in Great Learning through Discerning the Meaning of “Knowing and Action”, “Beginning and End” and “Deep and Shallow”
中庸首章分釋之圖	Diagram of the Separate Interpretation of the Chapter Headings of the Doctrine of the Mean
中庸分節辨議	Discerning the Meaning of Sections of the Doctrine of the Mean
諸侯昭穆五廟都宮之圖	Diagram of Disposition of the Five Temples and all the Palaces of the Feudal Lords
時禘之圖	Diagram of Periodic Sacrifice to Ancestors
一室之圖	Diagram of a Single Room
語孟大旨	General Principles of the Analects and Mencius
五經體用合一之圖	Diagram of Unifying the Essence and Function of the Five Classics
五經各分體用之圖	Diagram of the Separate Essences and Functions of the Five Classics

洛書五行相剋之圖	Diagram of the Five Phases of Mutual Destruction in the Lou Writings
先天方位圓圖	Circular Diagram of the Calenderic Bearings of the Preceding Heaven
先天方位方圖	Square Diagram of the Calenderic Bearings of the Preceding Heaven
伏羲先天八卦	Fuxi's Eight Trigrams of Preceding Heaven
文王後天方位	The Calenderic Bearings of King Wen's Latter Heaven
陰陽六九爲老之圖	Diagram of Six and Nine Becoming the Old Yin and Old Yang
天地生成之數	The Number of Heaven and Earth's Creations of Life
河圖中宮之數	The Number of the Central Palace of the He Chart
洪範九疇天人合一圖上	The Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan, Part 1
洪範九疇天人合一圖下	The Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan, Part 2
無逸之圖	Diagram of Against Luxurious Ease

Table 2 Additional chapters of the *IHTS* comprising the second portion of 1452 and future additions

Original Chapter Title	Translation of title
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十二月卦之圖	Diagram of the Hexagrams for the Twelve Months
周天三辰之圖	Diagram of the Rotation of the Three Luminaries
一卦生閏之圖	Diagram of the Generation of an Intercalary in each Period
天地豎看之圖	Diagram of Heaven and Earth Viewed Vertically
天地橫看之圖	Diagram of Heaven and Earth Viewed Horizontally
望前生明之圖	Diagram of the Waxing of the Moon
望後生魄之圖	Diagram of the Waning of the Moon
土圭測影之圖	Diagram of the Location and Aspect of Graves
土旺四季之圖	Diagram of the Days Commencing Each of the Four Seasons
律呂隔八相生之圖	Diagram of the Mutual Generation of the Scales and Tones
五聲八音之圖	Diagram of Five Tones and Eight Sounds
周南篇次之圖	Diagram of Sequence of Zhou Nan
變風十三國之圖	Diagram of the Changing Winds of the Thirteen States
公族及太宗之圖	Diagram of the Ruling Families up to the Emperor

In addition to growing in length, Kwŏn's *IHTS* also acquired additional appendixes over the last five hundred years. Firstly, the *IHTS* acquired several pages of explanation on the permutations of the hexagrams from the *Book of Changes* called, "Method of Penetrating the Ancient Manipulation of Hexagrams" 掛拊過揲之法. It is unclear who wrote this explanation but it appears in at least the Japanese and Nangju versions. Secondly, in the Nangju and Japanese version of the *IHTS* Kwŏn's introduction,

commentary and epilogue to Chŏng To-jŏn's *Sim, Ki, I P'yŏn* are appended, as too is Kwŏn's introduction and comments to Chŏng's *Simmun* and *Ch'ŏndap*. It is not clear why these writings were included with the *IHTS* or who decided to collate the essays, but that all the writings relate to standard Neo-Confucian concerns is telling of the intellectual climate in where the *IHTS* was circulating. Thirdly, the reprinting of the *IHTS* attracted postscripts. In the Korean and Japanese versions, postscripts appear from Chŏng To-jŏn, Pyŏn Kye-ryang 卞季良 (1369-1430), Hwang Hyo-gong 黃孝恭 (1496-1553), Kwŏn O-ch'ŏl 權五喆 and in the Japanese version Rimura Guko 里村遇巷 (d.u.).

Presently we are fortunate to have several versions of Kwŏn's *IHTS* still extant. In South Korea there are three institutes that hold a range of versions of the *IHTS*. At the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at the Seoul National University in South Korea there are five copies of the *IHTS* with the oldest being fragments from the 1390 woodblock edition.<sup>139</sup> The second oldest version is from 1397 and is a woodblock print of the original version of the *IHTS* with its 24 chapters.<sup>140</sup> This edition contains the preface composed in 1390 and a postscript from Kim I-ŭm 金爾音 (?-1409) that was written in 1397.<sup>141</sup> Another two versions of the *IHTS* come from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and both are handwritten. The 16<sup>th</sup> century versions contain 38 chapters but differ over the preface and postscripts appending the text. One version has postscripts from Ch'ae Mu-il 蔡無逸 (1496-1556) written in 1545, Chŏng To-jŏn written in 1398 and Pyŏn Kye-ryang in 1425, while the other version has hand written prefaces from Hwang Hyo-kong, Ch'ae Mu-il and Kwŏn, and the same postscripts from Chŏng To-jŏn in 1398 and Pyŏn Kye-ryang in 1425.<sup>142</sup> The 1929 version is a woodblock reproduction and has a 1928 preface from Kwŏn Sun-myŏng 權純命 (1891-1974) and 1929 postscripts from Kwŏn T'ae-hyŏp 權泰夾 and Kwŏn O-ch'ŏl. The abovementioned prefaces from Ch'ae and Kwŏn Kŭn, along with Pyŏn's postscript are also included.

The National Library of Korea has five versions of the *IHTS*. One version has no

<sup>139</sup> See Appendix p. 224.

<sup>140</sup> See Appendix p. 225.

<sup>141</sup> Kim I-ŭm's family seat was Hamch'ang 咸昌 and his father was Kim Yong 金勇. Kim's familiar name was Paekok 伯玉 and his pen name was Samno 三路. In 1374 he passed the literary exams and in 1376 was appointed to Office of Royal Decrees. Following this Kim worked in a number of roles in the Chosŏn bureaucracy. Kim's spiritual tablet was installed in the Sambong Sŏwŏn in Yŏngju.

<sup>142</sup> See Appendix pp. 226-8 for the 16<sup>th</sup> century version with the handwritten prefaces from Hwang Hyo-kong, Ch'ae Mu-il and Kwŏn.

information as to its provenance, publisher or date of publication. Also absent in this particular text is a table of contents or even Kwŏn's introduction. However appended to the text is Chŏng and Pyŏn's postscripts and the "Method of Penetrating the Ancient Manipulation of Hexagrams". The National Library also has a fragmentary copy of an *IHTS* that comes from around 1397, which has Kwŏn's introduction, a postscript from KimYi-ŭm and a number of incomplete pages. Again, the location of publication and publisher are not specified. In the 1547 version that the library possesses, a page close to the beginning points to it being published in Yongju. While this version shares a preface from Kwŏn and Hwang Hyo-kong, it also includes Kwŏn's commentary on Chŏng To-jŏn's writings on heaven, mind and materials force; this is the first instance where Kwŏn's other writings have been included with the *IHTS* and it is unclear why these commentaries on Chŏng To-jŏn were chosen and who decided on their inclusion. The National Library's 1648 version of the *IHTS* has not only Kwŏn's introduction but includes a 1633 postscript from Rimura Guko that indicates it was published in Japan in 1648 through Yasuda Juubei 安田十兵衛 but then returned to Chosŏn. This version is analogous to the University of Tokyo and Kochi University versions outlined below.

The Academy of Korean Studies holds two versions of the *IHTS*, one from 1425 and the other from 1547. The 1425 edition is a faint woodblock version of the upper and lower portions of the *IHTS* combined into one text, and has Kwŏn's introduction, no table of contents, and only Chŏng and Pyŏn's postscripts.<sup>143</sup> The 1547 version of the *IHTS* comes from Yongju and not only has standard chapters and postscripts as seen in other editions – table of contents, Kwŏn's introduction, postscripts from Chŏng, Pyŏn and KimYi-ŭm – but a couple of pages at the end of the main text are mixed up with the addendum on interpreting the hexagrams. Also, in margins of the text there are handwritten notes from a reader/s. On the front page there is a quote of 22 stanzas of eight characters from Cheng Hao's 程顥 (1032-1085) *Yanyue tingming* 顔樂亭銘, along with some notes in cursive.<sup>144</sup> Towards the end of the text where Kwŏn's commentaries on Chŏng To-jŏn's *Sim, Ki, I P'yŏn, Simmun* and *Ch'ŏndap* are included there are additional notes written in the margin, in cursive Japanese.<sup>145</sup> These cursive notes are near impossible to decipher, however on the back pages it seems that the

<sup>143</sup> See Appendix p. 231.

<sup>144</sup> See Cheng Hao, "Yanyueting ming 顔樂亭銘" in *Songni Taejŏnsŏ* 性理大全書, Vol. 7. Reproduced in Appendix, p. 232.

<sup>145</sup> See Appendix, p. 233.

reader was making notes in regard to the order of principle and material force  
理氣先後, good and bad 善惡, the character of material force 氣質 and feelings 情.

A number of institutes in Japan also have versions of the *IHTS* dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest version extant in Japan is at Kyoto University and was published in 1425.<sup>146</sup> The Kyoto version is a woodblock copy and has only Kwon's preface to the 1390 version. Following the standard 38 chapter, there is an appendix with "Method of Penetrating the Ancient Manipulation of Hexagrams" and postscripts from Chǒng To-jǒn and Pyǒn Kye-ryang. Tsukuba University 筑波大 has a version of the *IHTS* from 1545. This version is based on the Nangju edition and comprises of Ch'ae and Kwon's preface and Chǒng's postscript, along with the summary on the hexagrams.

The next batch of extant *IHTS* come from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are three versions appearing in 1634 (寛永甲戌) and two versions appearing in 1648 (慶安元年). The 1634 version is found at the University of Tokyo, Kochi University 高知大 in Shikoku and Hachinohe 八戸市立 Municipal library in Aomori. The Hachinohe edition is damaged in part and when I viewed it in 2007 the manuscript was crumbling in my hands.<sup>147</sup> The University of Tokyo and Kochi University versions are in fine condition, come in two volumes and appear to have been printed in Japan as the text includes *kakikudashi* 書き下し for reading the classical Chinese in Japanese.<sup>148</sup> In the 1634 version we also find the inclusion of Kwǒn's introductory commentary to Chǒng To-jǒn's *Sim, Ki, I P'yǒn, Simmun* and *Ch'ōndap*. The postscript in this version includes Chǒng, Pyǒn, Hwang Hyo-kong and Rimura Guko.

Additional versions of the *IHTS* are also kept at the Hosa library 蓬左文庫 (two copies) in Nagoya, the Maeda Ikutokukai in Tokyo 前田育徳会, the National Diet Library – unknown, micro fiche – and the National Archives of Japan 公文書館. These version of the *IHTS* were cited and where possible collected during fieldwork.

<sup>146</sup> Kyoto University library has digitised this text and it is available online at: <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0001.html> Selected diagrams from this version appear in the Appendix pp. 247-75.

<sup>147</sup> See Appendix p. 234 for a sample.

<sup>148</sup> For a sample of the Tokyo University version see Appendix p. 238 and the Kochi University version Appendix p. 236.

### *The Record of Humble Thoughts on the Five Classics*

Kwŏn Kūn's other primary source on Confucianism is his *RHT*. This book is a collection of commentaries on each of the Five Classics<sup>149</sup> and Kwŏn's biography shows that he was working on these commentaries around the same time as the *IHTS*.

Hongmu 24 (1391), age 40: First lunar month: went to the capital and received a pardon. Third lunar month: returned to Yangch'on in Ch'unchu, examined and corrected the order [of passages] of the *Record of Rites*. Also wrote *Record of Humble Thoughts on the [Book of] Changes*, *[Book of] Poetry*, *[Book of] Documents* and *Spring and Autumn Annals*.<sup>150</sup>

In this record we see that in 1391 Kwŏn had finished writing four of his *RHT* but was still working on the *Record of Rites*. The commentary on the *Rites* was a project bequeathed to Kwŏn by his teacher, Yi Saek, which he did not finish until 1405 when the *Sillok*, or *Veritable Records*, show Kwŏn submitting the book to the court for publication.<sup>151</sup> Following this, Kwŏn's son, Kwŏn To 權蹈 (1387-1445), had his father's commentary on the *Rites* republished in T'aejong 18 (1418), after which it was published once more in Sukjong 31 (1705) by Song Chŏng-gyu 宋廷奎 (1656-1710). According to Ch'ŏn Hye-bong, Kwŏn To's version of the *RHT Rites* was republished in 1433, 1454 and 1687.<sup>152</sup>

With the exception of the *RHT Record of Rites*, Kwŏn's *RHT* was thought to have been lost until it was re-discovered in the 1970s. The first of the *RHT* to be rediscovered was the *RHT Book of Changes*. In 1971 Yi Kyŏm-no 李謙魯 acquired the text and in the same year it was awarded the status of national treasure number 550 on account of its historical importance.<sup>153</sup> From within this text fragments of the *RHT Odes* and *RHT Documents* were also uncovered. These fragments were collated and published in 1973,

<sup>149</sup> The Five Classics are the *Book of Changes*, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Book of Documents*, *Record of Rites* and the *Book of Odes*.

<sup>150</sup> Kwŏn, *Yŏnpo*, YCJ, Vol. 1: 5a.

<sup>151</sup> *Taejong Sillok*, 12: 6/11/17 02. References to the *Sillok* such as 12: 6/11/17 02 refer to the second event recorded in book twelve for the seventeenth day of the eleventh lunar month of the 6th year of Taejong.

<sup>152</sup> Ch'ŏn Hye-bong, "Chuyok, Si, Sŏ Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", *Sŏji Hakpo*, Vol. 4., 1991: p. 167.

<sup>153</sup> Kim Kyŏng-il, "Bibliographical annotation to Kwŏn Kūn's *Record of Humble Thoughts on the Five Classics* (Kwŏn Kūn ūi Okyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk Haeje)", *Okyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk*, Academy of Korean Studies, Seoul, 1995: p. 16. b.

and received the status of national treasure number 573.<sup>154</sup> Lastly, the *RHT Spring and Autumn Annals* came to light in 1983 when Kim Sŭng-hyŏn 金承炫 published a handwritten version of the text in an appendix to volume four of *Tongyang Ch'ŏrhak Yŏn'gu*.<sup>155</sup> It was published together with the *RHT Odes and Documents*. This version of the *RHT Annals*, however, came from the collection of Kwon O-yŏng 權五榮 in Seoul and its authenticity cannot be confirmed.<sup>156</sup> In 1991 the *Sŏji Hakpo* 書誌學報 included appendices with reproductions of woodblock prints of the *RHT Changes, Annals and Documents*.<sup>157</sup> From these texts Ch'ŏn Hye-bong deduced that these three *RHT* were published in 1416 in four volumes: volumes one to three being *RHT Changes* and volume four being *RHT Odes and Documents*.<sup>158</sup> Following the unearthing of these versions of the *RHT* the Academy of Korean Studies published five *RHT* in 1995<sup>159</sup> and later, in 1999, a translation of the *RHT Odes, Changes and Annals* was published that combined the classical Chinese with vernacular Korean.<sup>160</sup>

As a source for this thesis, the *RHT* complements the *IHTS* in revealing an alternative facet of Kwŏn Kŭn's understanding of the Confucian canon. In the *IHTS* Kwŏn was broadly addressing the Confucian canon and touched on the Five Classics and their themes, but with the *RHT*, Kwŏn discussed the Five Classics explicitly and in far greater depth and detail. Reading these two sources in conjunction provides a means to better map Kwŏn's understanding of the Confucian canon.

### *Kwŏn's collected writings: Yangch'ŏnpi*

Aside from Kwŏn Kŭn's writings specifically on Confucianism, his collected works, the *YCJ*, provide a compilation of his poetry, travelogues and other miscellaneous writings. Forty volumes of Kwŏn's writings were originally compiled and published during the reign of King Sejong 世宗 (1397-1450; r. 1418-1450) but Hŏ Mok's 許穆

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Kim Sŭng-hyŏn, "Si Sŏ Ch'unch'u Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", *Tongyang Ch'ŏrhak Yŏn'gu*, Volume 4, 1983.

<sup>156</sup> Kim Kyŏng-il, "Bibliographical annotation to Kwŏn Kŭn's *Record of Humble Thoughts on the Five Classics*", 1995: p. 17. a.

<sup>157</sup> The *RHT Changes* appeared in *Sŏji Hakpo*, Vol. 4., 1991: pp. 179-300. See Appendix p. 278. The *RHT Odes and Documents* were published together in *Sŏji Hakpo*, Vol. 5., 1991: pp.121-193 and a selection of pages are reproduced in the Appendix, pp. 279-80.

<sup>158</sup> Ch'ŏn, "*Chuyŏk, Si, Sŏ Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk*", 1991: p.168.

<sup>159</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk* 五經淺見錄, Han'guk Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Sŏngnam, 1995.

<sup>160</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, (*Kukyŏk*) *Samgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk: si · sŏ · chuyŏk* (國譯) 三經淺見錄: 詩 · 書 · 周易, Yi Kwang-ho (trans.) Ch'ŏngmyŏng Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1999.

(1595~1682) introduction to the text was not included until 1674 when the collection was reprinted.<sup>161</sup> Currently there are quite a number of copies of the *YCJ* in circulation and the Korean Classics Research Institute (*Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe*) reprinted the originals and translated them into modern Korean in 1979.<sup>162</sup> The *YCJ* offers an invaluable insight into Kwŏn's public and private writings. For this thesis the *YCJ* reveals the spectrum of Kwŏn's writings from work as a scholar-official responsible for composition of epitaphs and other official documents through to his closer and more private thoughts as expressed in poetry he sent to his friends, poems he composed on the spot and records of his travels through the countryside. Through these writings we can construct a picture of Kwŏn Kūn as a public and private figure.

### Historical sources

Other sources we can use to explore Kwŏn Kūn's writings on Confucianism are his writings for other people. Kwŏn wrote a number of introductions for works written by his peers and colleagues. Some of these works were polemic, like those of peer Chŏng To-jŏn, others were introductions to collections of poetry and writings, like for his teacher Yi Saek. These writings, when read in conjunction with his other writings, provide yet another angle to better cross reference, compare and evaluate Kwŏn's life and thought, and at the same time gain an insight into broader intellectual issues of the time.

Other primary sources that allow us to explore the life and thought of Kwŏn are the official histories of his time. These official court histories have been widely used in studies of Koryŏ and Chosŏn social, political and institutional histories and they include the *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (*History of Koryŏ*), *Koryŏsa Chŏryo* 高麗史節要 (*Essential Themes of the History of Koryŏ*) and *Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 (*Veritable Records of the Chosŏn Dynasty*). These sources are available nowadays in electronic and print formats, and various modern Korean translations are available. As official histories, these sources focus on the work of people like Kwŏn Kūn in the court and reveal the details of his life as a scholar-official against the backdrop of political events in the court.

<sup>161</sup> Hŏ Mok, "Introduction for reissue of Yangch'on Kwŏn, meritious subject", in Kwŏn Kūn, (*Kigyŏk*) *Yangch'onjip*, Vol. 1, Minjok Munhwa Chujin Hoe, Seoul, 1984: pp. 27-8.

<sup>162</sup> The Korean Classics Research Institute now offer an online, searchable version of Kwŏn Kūn's *Yangch'onjip* in literary Chinese and modern Korean at <http://www.minchu.or.kr/MAN/index.jsp>. Many other works of Kwŏn and his peers are also available through this service.

The collected works of other intellectuals provide yet another insight into Kwŏn's life and thought. The writings of people such as Kwŏn's teacher, Yi Saek, and his contemporary Chŏng To-jŏn are extant and as people who not only lived during his time, but knew Kwŏn closely, their records and accounts add another dimension to the investigation. Also for tracing the legacy of Kwŏn, the collected writings of subsequent generations of scholars and intellectual are an invaluable source.



## 2. Kwŏn Kŭn: portrait of a Confucian intellectual

The introduction outlined the partial and at times contradictory portrayals of Kwŏn Kŭn. Beginning with early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars like Takahashi, Chang and Hyŏn, Kwŏn was seen as an ambiguous, “gray” scholar-official criticised for shallow and heterodox thoughts on Zhu Xi, and regarded as an inconsequential figure that had a turbulent and chequered life. Even depictions of Kwŏn in more recent scholarship remain narrow, idiosyncratic and partial. This is even more so the case with English language scholarship on Kwŏn which lags decades behind Korean scholarship and presents at best a fraction of who Kwŏn was and what he thought. In short, Kwŏn’s life and its importance remain contentious.

The aim of this chapter is to address these deficiencies in our knowledge of Kwŏn’s life and personality, and correct the partial, prejudiced and incorrect perceptions of Kwŏn currently in circulation. To do this, the chapter takes a two-fold approach: firstly, in presenting a chronological biography of Kwŏn this chapter will argue that he was an important figure of the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn whose activities had an immediate impact on affairs in the Korean peninsula, internationally in the Ming court of China and a long term impact on the composition and trajectory of life and society in the Korean peninsula for the next 500 years; and secondly, this chapter will redress the incomplete picture of Kwŏn and provide for the first time in English a portrait of an important late 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucian intellectual, and reveal some of the fascinating dimensions of his life and personality.

### The Andong Kwŏn clan and infamous in-laws

Kwŏn Kŭn hailed from the Andong Kwŏn family 安東權氏, which had a long history of significant figures. The family seat is located in Andong, Kyongsangbuk-to province, in the south-east of the Korean peninsula. According to the Kwŏn family genealogical record, the *Andong Kwŏnssi Songhwapo* 安東權氏成化譜 (*Register of the Andong Kwŏn Genealogy*), the Kwŏn family originated from Silla royalty when Kim Haeng 金幸 (d.u.) was entrusted with guarding over Koch’ang district when Paekche troops invaded the area in an attempt to kill the Silla king.<sup>163</sup> On account of Kim Haeng’s

<sup>163</sup> *Andong Kwŏn-ssi Songhwapo* 安東權氏成化譜, Pōma Insoesa, 1988: pp. 8, 51. See also Pak Yong-un, “Andong Kwon-ssi ūi Sarye rŭl pon Koryŏ sahoe ūi iltanmyŏn: sŏnghwapo rŭl ch’amkoro hayŏ [A Phase of Koryŏ Society as Reflected in Andong Kwon Clan; with reference to Chenghua Era

success in rallying the people and routing the Paekche troops, the first king of Koryŏ, T'aejo Wang Kŏn, bestowed on him the new surname of Kwŏn 權—signifying authority, power, influence—and Kwŏn Haeng was promoted to governor of Andong prefecture, an area that was now the ancestral seat of the Andong Kwŏn family.

Kwŏn Kŭn's lineage traces back to Kwŏn Haeng over approximately 450 years and 16 generations. Between Kwŏn Haeng and Kwŏn Kŭn there are a number of notable personalities but due to the scarcity of extant historical documents we can only gain a glimpse of their achievements. In Kwŏn Kŭn's immediate family line, his great-great-great-great grandfather Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng 權守平 (?-1250) is the head of his branch of the family. Records show little about Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng, other than that he spent several years as a general and was able to garner taxes from the lands of Pok Chang-han (d.u) while he was exiled.<sup>164</sup> After Pok was released Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng sought to return the land to Pok, along with the funds raised from the land, but Pok refused and praised Kwŏn for his morality and left him with the land and money. Later Kwŏn was to enter the government and achieve the position of assistant delegate of Ch'uimilwŏn 樞密院副使.

We know little about Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng's son, Kwŏn Ui 權隨 (d.u.). Histories record that he held a number of government posts, was a Hallim Academician 翰林學士<sup>165</sup> and travelled to Yuan China as an Ŏsa 御史 (general inspector) in 1240.<sup>166</sup> Kwŏn Tan 權咀 (1228-1311), Kwŏn Ui's son, benefited from his father's position in that he received good tuition and passed a number of civil service exams.<sup>167</sup> With such training he entered the government and served as deputy delegate in a number of regional posts such as Yesan 禮山, Sŭngju 昇州, Maengsan 孟山 and Kaech'ŏn 价川. He then rose

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Genealogy 成化譜 (sic)]", *Yŏksa Kyoyuk*, No.94, 2005: pp. 35-86.

<sup>164</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Yŏnhui Tachakkyo Tongbanghak Yŏn'guso, Seoul 1955: Vol. 1, p. 477b and Vol. 3 pp. 253b-254a. For more on Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng's life see Yi Jŏng-ho, "Koryŏ hugi Andong Kwŏn-ssi Kamun-ŭi Kyŏngjaejok kiban – Kwŏn Chung-shi-Kwŏn Su-p'yŏng Kyeyŏl-rŭl chungshimuro" [The Economic Basis of the Andong Kwŏn Clan During the Latter Period of the Koryŏ Dynasty], *Han'guksa Yŏn'guhui*, No. 132, Seoul, 2005: pp. 333-366.

<sup>165</sup> Note the term Hallim in Korean and Hanlin in Chinese derive from the same characters. The Romanisation used herein reflects the context, namely Hallim when referring to the Korean context and Hanlin when talking of the Chinese.

<sup>166</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 1: p. 474a. See also T'aejong, Koryŏ in Chapter 95 of "Biographies of the Eastern Barbarians", *Yuan-shi*: Year ten (1240), third lunar month.

<sup>167</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: pp. 358b-359b. See also his epitaph, "Kwŏn Tan Chimyoji" 權咀誌墓誌 in Fascile 23 of Yi Yik's 李瀾, *Sŏngho Sasŏl* 星湖傳說. Kwŏn Kŭn also refers to Kwŏn Tan in his *Tonghyŏn Saryak* 東賢事略 in *YCJ*, Vol. 4: pp. 126-7.

through the ranks and the King noted his efforts towards reducing the suffering of the ordinary people. In one instance, where there were bandits harassing the populace during the rice harvesting period, he ordered that people volunteer one day out of seven to help protect against the bandits. His thinking was that such a request would not unduly impose on the people's agricultural duties. Further promotions followed and he was awarded for his contributions. In the end though he shaved his head and decided to enter Sŏnhŭng temple 禪興寺.

Kwŏn Kŭn's great-grandfather, Kwŏn Pu was another forebear to follow the trajectory into the Koryŏ bureaucracy. He gained his a literary licentiate 進士 at the age of 15 and then by 18 had already advanced into his first position in the government.<sup>168</sup> In 1298 an office for composing official correspondence called Sarimwŏn 詞林院 was established and Kwŏn Pu took on a role at the Sarimwŏn with other scholars in the court where they focused on writing official correspondence for King Ch'ungsŏn 忠宣王 (1275-1325, r. 1298, 1308-1313). Even after King Ch'ungsŏn was summoned to Yuan, Kwŏn continued in a similar role under King Ch'ungnyŏl 忠烈王 (1236-1308, r. 1274-1298, 1299-1308). Like his father, Kwŏn Pu served in a variety of roles throughout the country, travelled to Yuan and in 1308 was promoted to the position of minister and enfeoffed with land. Kwŏn Pu is also noted for being a disciple of An Hyang, who is credited with introducing Cheng-Zhu literature and teachings to Koryŏ. Kwŏn was involved in the classifying of texts given to the Confucian academy from the Yuan government and promoting the publishing of the Four Books 四書.<sup>169</sup> Kwŏn Pu, along with famous Confucian scholar and son-in-law Yi Che-hyŏn, also compiled 64 anecdotes for the *Record of Filial Conduct*. Kwŏn Pu's son, Kwŏn Ko 權皋 (1294-1379) continued the commentary tradition on the *Record of Filial Conduct*, and Kwŏn Kŭn also provided a commentary for the same text. Kwŏn Kŭn's grandfather Kwŏn Ko, also entered into the government and in 1355 was enfeoffed with the Yŏngga prefecture 永嘉君 for his performance.<sup>170</sup> Unlike his father, there are few records of his life and achievements. We can therefore see that Kwŏn Kŭn's forefathers, especially in his immediate genealogical line, were particularly active in state affairs of Koryŏ, spent considerable periods of time in Yuan and were involved in a range of academic and

<sup>168</sup> See Lee Nam-bok, "Koryŏhugi Sŏngnihak Suyong kwa Kwŏn Pu ūi Sasang", *Han'guksa Yŏn'guhwibo*, no. 105, Seoul, 1998: pp 173-192.

<sup>169</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: 359b-360a.

<sup>170</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 1: p. 767b.

intellectual activities.

Somewhat surprisingly there is not a great deal recorded of Kwŏn Kūn's immediate family. His father Kwŏn Hui 權僖 (1319-1405) followed in his forefather's footsteps by attaining notable academic levels such as the *T'aehaksa* 太學士 but his career began in the military through holding positions such as military commander of Hongju province 洪州道兵馬使. In 1363 Kwŏn Hui fought off the Red Turban Rebellion 紅巾賊之亂<sup>171</sup> at Changdan 長湍. Following this he returned to the court, rose through the ranks of the civil service, receiving titles such as meritorious subject and was enfeoffed with Yŏngka prefecture.<sup>172</sup> Kwŏn's mother, although we do not know her name, was the daughter of Han Chong-yu 韓宗愈 (1287-1354), a notable scholar-official who served at the heart of the Koryŏ court in a variety of posts and travelled to Yuan on a number of occasions.<sup>173</sup> Kwŏn Kūn's siblings include Kwŏn Hwa 權和 (d.u.) who worked as a magistrate of Ch'ŏngju 淸州牧使 and arrested a self-proclaimed Buddhist messiah and four of his followers.<sup>174</sup> He also fought against Japanese pirates and for his efforts received rewards of food and alcohol from the king.<sup>175</sup> Other siblings include Kwŏn Ch'ung 權衷 (1352-1423) who rose through the ranks to become a minister, meritorious subject and enjoyed a trip to Ming after Kwon Kun's death.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, his younger brother Kwŏn U 權遇 (1363-1419) studied under Chŏng Mong-ju, entered the government and rose through a number of posts in the government.<sup>177</sup> Later, after the establishment of Chosŏn, Kwŏn U lectured the prince who would later become King Sejong 世宗 (r. 1418-50). He is also said to have shown some interest in thoroughly investigating the *Book of Changes*. Lastly, one of Kwon's brothers became a monk - Yiki 二己 - but there is no record of what he did or where he went.

<sup>171</sup> The Red Turban Rebellion was a peasant led rebellion against the Yuan government borne out of the damage inflicted by flooding and natural disasters. In 1359 part of the Red Turban army moved into the Liaodong peninsula, but the army mounted two waves of invasions against Koryŏ taking northern cities like P'yŏngyang and the capital Kaegyŏng (current day Kaesŏng) and forcing the king to flee south. In response Koryŏ mustered its troops and flushed the Red Turban troops from the peninsula.

<sup>172</sup> See *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: pp. 468a-474a, *T'aejo Sillok* 11: 06/05/01 and *T'aejon Sillok* 10: 05/12/19.

<sup>173</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: pp. 407b-420a.

<sup>174</sup> Kwŏn Hwa entered the government and held a number of posts in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn courts, see for example *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: p. 421b. and *T'aejo Sillok* 2: 01/10/09

<sup>175</sup> See *Koryŏsa* Vol. 3: pp. 945a-b and *T'aejo Sillok* 10: 05/11/23.

<sup>176</sup> *Sejong Sillok* 22: 05/ 11/ 19.

<sup>177</sup> *Sejong Sillok* 3: 01/03/14.

Family structures of the Koryŏ differed from that of Chosŏn, especially in regard to marriage and composition of the family unit. During the Koryŏ period, both uxoriocal and virilocal residences were common for the aristocratic elite, children were often raised by the mother's natal group and kin allegiances, which were quite flexible, could be paternal, maternal and affinal.<sup>178</sup> In the case of the Kwŏn family clan their genealogical record shows that a number of luminary figures were closely related to the family during the Koryŏ period in the generations preceding and overlapping with Kwŏn Kūn. These people include Koryŏ statesman, poet and scholar Yi Che-hyŏn. Yi was a precocious child who excelled at his studies, passed through the examination system and embarked on a career in the Koryŏ bureaucracy from 1303 to 1314. In 1314, King Chungŏn, who was in Yuan, summoned Yi to the Yuan capital Yŏngyŏng 燕京 to study at the Mangwŏndang 萬卷堂. King Chungŏn established the Mangwŏndang as an academy to study the classics and eminent Yuan scholars, especially with links to the Southern Song, like famous painter, calligrapher and scholar Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), Yuan Mingshan 元明善 (1269-1322), Hanlin academician and envoy Yan Fu 閻復 (1236-1312) and one of the "Four Great Confucian Scholars" 儒林四傑<sup>179</sup> Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348) were invited to study and lecture on the classics and histories.<sup>180</sup> Yi travelled with King Chungŏn through various parts of Yuan, but eventually returned to Koryŏ to take on a number of senior roles in the bureaucracy. On the scholastic front Yi was a disciple of Paek Yi-jŏng 白頤正 (1247-1323) and was active in the publication of texts like the *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books* 四書集註, along with the *Record of Filial Piety* with Kwŏn Pu. He was interested in the teachings of nature and principle 性理學 and through his studies at the Mangwŏndang he gained first hand exposure to leading intellectuals in the field of Confucian thought. Yi's interests also extended to history and he helped with the writing and editing of the histories in Koryŏ. One of Yi's disciples, Yi Saek, wrote in his teacher epitaph that he was "the first of virtue, the founder of prose".<sup>181</sup>

Another prominent Koryŏ figure to marry into the Kwŏn family was Yi Saek. Yi

<sup>178</sup> Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: a Study of Society and Ideology*: pp.79-87.

<sup>179</sup> Aside from Yu Ji the other Four Great Confucians of the Yuan include Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270-1342), Huang Jin 黃潛 (1277-135) and Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274-1344).

<sup>180</sup> See *Shin Yuanshi*, juan 249, leizhuan 146 and *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: pp. 409a-420a.

<sup>181</sup> Yi Saek, *Mokŭn-jip*, Vol. 16: 道德之首 文章之宗.

married Kwŏn Chung-dal's 權仲達 (d.u.) daughter.<sup>182</sup> In 1341 he becoming a literary licentiate and in 1348 he travelled to Yuan but he returned to Koryŏ in 1351 to attend his father's funeral and ended up staying. During this time Yi pushed a number of reforms, such as reforms to the land system, national defence policy and the control Buddhism exerted over the state. In 1352 he passed the county examinations 鄉試 and the Eastern Expedition Field Headquarters' examination in first place, and then returned to Yuan to where he sat the civil examination 制科 and the second stage examination 會試 in 1354 and again passed in first place, and the palace examination 殿試 in second place. Having reached such a level of scholarship, Yi was appointed to the Hanlin academy and took on senior positions in the Yuan and Koryŏ governments. Later Yi, in Koryŏ, assumed a senior position in the National Academy and was responsible for hiring renowned Koryŏ scholars such as Kim Ku-yong 金九容, Chŏng Mong-ju and Yi Sung-in 李崇仁. Yi's link to the Kwŏn family started with his marriage to Kwŏn Chung-tal's 權仲達 daughter, but as we will see later, he was Kwŏn Kūn's teacher, mentor and then colleague in the court.

Other significant figures of the mid to late Koryŏ married into the Kwon family. Hong Ŏn-bak 洪彦博 (1309-1363),<sup>183</sup> a colleague of Yi Che-hyŏn and active advocate in the Koryŏ court, married Kwŏn Chun's 權準 (1280-1352) daughter. Yet another late Koryŏ political figure to marry into the Kwŏn family was Han Su 韓脩 (1333-1384) who married one of Kwŏn Chŏk's daughters.<sup>184</sup> The presence of such prominent figures marrying into the Kwŏn clan, or being closely associated to it, shows that even before the arrival of Kwŏn Kūn the family was already closely connected to key political and intellectual figures in the government of the Koryŏ and Yuan. While the Kwŏn family not born of royalty, through the deeds of their forebears they rose to be a prominent family by the time of Kwŏn Kūn.

### Kwŏn Kūn's childhood

Historical records tell us very little of Kwŏn Kūn's birth and childhood. When Kwŏn was born his familiar name 字 was Kawŏn 可遠 or Sasuk 思叔, and his first name

<sup>182</sup> Although the majority of Yi Saek's activities are recorded in the *Koryŏsa*, the *Wangjo Sillok* obituary record provides one of the best summaries of his life and achievements. See *Taejo Sillok* 9: 5/57.

<sup>183</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 2: pp. 424a-426a.

<sup>184</sup> See Yi Saek's "Hanmun Kyŏnggong Myojimyŏng" in *Tongmunson* Vol. 126.

was Chin 晉. In the “Biographical Chronology” 年譜 in the *YCJ*, it simply states Kwŏn was born in 1352.

12th year of Chichŏng, Imjin (1352): 6th day of the eleventh lunar month – Master was born.<sup>185</sup>

The next reference in the “Biographical Chronology” is of Kwŏn passing the examination for the National Academy 17 years later:

1st year of Hongmu, Musin (1368): Master was 17 years old; eighth lunar month — passed National Academy examination.<sup>186</sup>

Despite an apparent absence of details regarding Kwŏn’s childhood, Kang Mun-sik, through cross-referencing a number of historical materials, deduces that Kwŏn probably spent his youth in Kaegyŏng 開京, Hanyang 漢陽 (the Koryŏ and Chosŏn period name for present-day Seoul), Chasŏng 積城 of Kyŏnggi province and Yangch’ŏn 陽村 in Ch’ungchu province.<sup>187</sup> Kang arrives at this conclusion by first looking at records of where Kwŏn Kŭn’s father – Kwŏn Hŭi – was employed when he was born and believes it was probably Kaegyong. Secondly, Kang points out that it was common for children of the Koryŏ to be raised by their maternal families, who in Kwŏn’s case were located around Hanyang. Kwŏn’s maternal grandfather Han Chong-yu retired to Hanyang in his later years,<sup>188</sup> and according to one of Kwŏn’s farewell poems, he notes that at the time of writing his mother was staying in Mangp’o 芒浦, Yanggun-county 陽根郡.<sup>189</sup> In the case of Chasong, Kwŏn’s father lived there in his later years, a point reinforced by a gazette from Chasong, the *Chasonghyŏmup-chi* 積城縣邑誌, which states Chasong is Kwŏn Kŭn’s “old origin”<sup>190</sup> and references in Kwŏn U’s (Kwŏn Kŭn’s brother) collected works further point to links to the area. From these references Kang opines that Kwŏn’s family had close links to the area. Lastly, Kwŏn refers to Yangch’ŏn as his hometown in a number of his writings. In the poem, “Reaching Yangch’ŏn” 到陽村 Kwŏn writes:

<sup>185</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 29.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Kang Mun-sik, “Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Kyoyu’inmul”, *Han’guk Hakpo*, 2001: p. 57.

<sup>188</sup> See Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 80.

<sup>189</sup> See Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 76.

<sup>190</sup> See Kang, “Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Kyoyu’inmul”, 2001: p. 58: “權近舊基”.

Ten years in the court and only once have I escaped;  
 Old neighbours come, wine glasses in their hands – I must look awfully  
 lonely;  
 The hand that was to directly embellish the king's written words;  
 Can now find its ruin as it leans to the wine glasses of the mountain  
 village.<sup>191</sup>

Kang points to other writings from Kwŏn where he expresses his fondness for the town, such as "Introduction to the Departure of Im Ku, Regional Minister, to Kyoju-do" 送交州道按廉使林球序 and "On the Departure of Kim Tae-so, Magistrate's Aide, to Ch'ungju" 送金大素判官肇赴忠.<sup>192</sup> In the latter we can see just how fondly Kwŏn regards the area of Yangch'on.

Humane, wise and caring are the people;  
 We see good men come from their academies;  
 They excel in all their endeavours;  
 Mounded roots of the citron trees unsettle one's heart;  
 The open fields of Yangch'on are faint and far away;  
 Clouds tip deep against the moon and mountain peaks;  
 Someday we will meet without promise;  
 And sit together listening to the zither playing.<sup>193</sup>

In addition, Yangch'on is the place where, in the future, Kwŏn resided while in exile from the court and capital. Kwŏn's poetry reveals his fondness for Yangch'on, pointing to a long acquaintance with the place since childhood.

<sup>191</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 80-1.

<sup>192</sup> See Kang, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi Saengae wa Kyoyu'inmul", 2001: pp. 58-9 and Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3: p.22 and Vol. 2: p. 97.

<sup>193</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p 97.



## To the capital, to the government

Kwŏn Kūn quickly gravitated to the capital through his studies. In 1368 Kwŏn successfully entered the National Academy. Over the next few years Kwŏn was one of a select few who passed additional exams such as the Academy Examination 館試, *Yeui* 禮闈 and Palace Examination 殿試 in 1369, which at the time were presided over by Yi In-bok 李仁復 (1308-1374) and Yi Saek. In 1370 Kwŏn passed the County Examinations for Civil Servants 科擧鄕試 but because he was under the age of 25 – at the time Kwŏn was 19 in Korean age – he was forbidden from participating in the *Pushi* (Chinese *Fushi*) 赴試, which was another examination system held under the Ming administration.<sup>194</sup> Three years later Kwŏn passed the County Examinations but again because he was under 25 he could not participate in the *Pushi* in the Ming system of government.

In the period from 1369 to 1389, Kwŏn held a number of positions and appointments in the Koryŏ government. Almost on a yearly basis, Kwŏn was appointed to new positions, at times even holding several posts at once. However across the various positions he held there are several reoccurring fields. The first is his work in Bureau of State Records 春秋, which is where he began his career as an inspector 檢閱, then he progressed through to be a compiler 編修官, then editor 修撰 and finally 3rd Deputy Director 同知事. The Board of Rites 禮儀 is another area Kwŏn worked in and he served as an assistant section chief 佐郎, then section chief 正郎 and finally minister 判書. Kwŏn worked in several positions in the Office of Royal Decrees 藝文, which deals with court correspondence. These positions included drafter 應教 and later deputy director 提學. Yet another area Kwŏn worked in is education. He had a long association with the National Academy, first as a student then later as a teacher. After completing his studies and exams, Kwŏn worked in the academy first as a lecturer 直講 then as an adjudicator for the examinations on a number of occasions, and lastly Kwŏn held the position of headmaster 大司成. Kwŏn even adjudicated the National Examinations and under his auspices more than 240 students were recruited, including Hong Sang-bin 洪尙賓 (d.u.), Yun Bong 尹逢 (d.u.), Yi Ŭn 李垠 (d.u.), Sin Hyŏ 申

<sup>194</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 2: p. 617a.

曉 (d.u.) and Pyŏn Kye-ryang.<sup>195</sup> Kwŏn's achievements and efforts in the government did not go unrecognised and he was rewarded early on with two awards: the *Plŏdae* 緋魚袋 in 1372 and the *Chagŭmŏdae* 紫金魚袋 in 1374.<sup>196</sup> Kwŏn's career over this twenty year period shows that he continued his rise through the ranks of the Koryŏ bureaucracy across the fields of archiving and record keeping, correspondence, education, and ritual affairs.

In addition to his role as a bureaucrat in the Koryŏ government, Kwŏn engaged in military activity. He took part in a battle at Sodo 西都 in the spring of 1388 (Hongwu 21).<sup>197</sup> Although there are no further details regarding this battle or Kwŏn's role therein, the most notable military campaign to take place in 1388 occurred when Ming forces moved into the Liaodong peninsula and Koryŏ troops were mobilised to oust the Ming from Liaodong. It was during this time that General Yi Sŏng-gye while en route to confront the Ming turned his troops around and marched on the Koryŏ court in an event known as *Uihwado Hoegun* 威化島回軍, or Uihwa Island Withdrawal, named after the location where Yi turned his troops around. Yi removed King Wu 禡王 (r. 1374-88) and replaced him with a puppet king until Yi took the throne in 1392. It is possible that Kwŏn might have been mobilised as part of this engagement with the Ming.

Kwŏn's first notable foray into the domain of politics occurred in the first year of King Wu when debate erupted over whether to receive an envoy from the Northern Yuan. At the time, the Koryŏ court was in an awkward position in relation to its neighbours: only six years earlier in 1368 Zhu Yuanzhang led a revolt against the incumbent Yuan regime that expelled the Mongols from China and instituted a new dynasty – the Ming – with Zhu as the Hongwu emperor; meanwhile, the Yuan remained an ominous presence to the north of the Ming and north-west of Koryŏ, who while no longer in control of its previous empire, were seeking to regain its power and control. Within the Koryŏ court there were people such as Yi In-im 李仁任 (?-1388) who saw the Ming as an illegitimate and weak regime, and thus argued that the Koryŏ court sever ties with the new Ming regime and restore relations with the Yuan.

<sup>195</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 30, 31, 34, 35.

<sup>196</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 29, 30.

<sup>197</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 31.

Kwŏn and a number of his colleagues, however, argued the counter case. Along with Chŏng To-jŏn, Pak Sang-ch'ung 朴尙衷 (1332-1375), Chŏng Mong-ju and Kim Ku-yong 金九容 (1338-1384), Kwŏn collectively argued against receiving the Yuan envoy and in favour of adopting a pro-Ming stance.<sup>198</sup> Their contention was that the Yuan was in a position of "disavowing the strong [Ming], flattering the weak [Koryŏ]", a strategy the group believed would lead to Koryŏ's ruin.<sup>199</sup> The anti-Yuan group, however, failed to persuade the king and the group, with the exception of Kwŏn, were expelled from the court. Kwŏn managed to avoid the same fate as the others on account of his young age.<sup>200</sup>

### The scholar-official who fell from grace

Events in 1389 and 1390 dramatically changed the course of Kwŏn's life. Up to this point he was a prodigal student and rising star in the Koryŏ bureaucracy, but his actions and allegiances over this period changed his fortunes dramatically. The first event was in 1389 when Kwŏn wrote a memorial to the throne defending friend and colleague Yi Sŭng-in against accusations that Yi allegedly sold goods while visiting the Ming court as an envoy.<sup>201</sup> Kwŏn's allegiance to Yi was two-fold: firstly, in the lead up to and following general Yi Sŏng-gye's seizure of the Koryŏ throne in 1392, officials in the court were divided roughly into two groups: "progressives" who supported Yi Sŏng-gye's and his push for reform; and "moderates" who were more cautious in regard to adopting change and replacing who they regarded as the legitimate king. Yi Saek was one of the prominent figures among the moderates and Yi Sŭng-in and Kwŏn aligned with the moderate camp. Kwŏn's long time friend Chŏng To-jŏn, however, supported Yi Sŏng-gye and soon became central to crafting the foundations of the new dynasty. Since Yi Sŭng-in was a fellow supporter of Yi Saek, the moderates perceived the accusation levelled against Yi as part of a broader attack from the progressives. To defend his friend Kwŏn wrote a memorial to the king protesting Yi's innocence and as a result of this, Kwŏn unequivocally declared his alignment with the moderates. He was duly punished, along with the rest of the group, with exile to Ubong in the 10<sup>th</sup> lunar month. Kwŏn's *YCJ* mentions the incident briefly:

<sup>198</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: p. 605a.

<sup>199</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: p. 461a.

<sup>200</sup> To Kwang-su (ed.), *Kwŏn Yangch'ŏn Sasang ŭi Yŏn'gu*, Kyomunsa, Seoul, 1989, p. 14. Also see *Koryŏsa*, Vol.3: pp292b-293a.

<sup>201</sup> *Koryŏsa Choryŏ*, Vol. 2: pp. 566-7; *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 3: p. 543a.

Tenth lunar month: exiled to Ubong 牛峯 due to dispute over political memorials. 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month: exiled again to Yōunghae 寧海.<sup>202</sup>

This quote also shows Kwon's second exile to Yōunghae in the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month of 1389.<sup>203</sup> Kwōn's exile to Yōunghae stemmed from his activities prior to his defence of Yi Sung-in and his exile in Ubong. In the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month of 1389 Kwōn was dispatched to Ming as secondary envoy with Yun Sūng-sun 尹承順.<sup>204</sup> As the delegation returned to Koryō, Kwōn opened a diplomatic communiqué addressed to the king – a serious breach of diplomatic and professional protocol. The contents of the communiqué concerned the rights of then King Ch'ang 昌王 (r. 1388-89) and his predecessor King Wu 禡王 to the throne, namely that Kings Ch'ang and U were not the legitimate children of King Kongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351-74), but Sin-ton 辛珣 (?-1371) was and ought to be king. Not only did Kwōn open and read the communiqué, he showed it to Yi Rim 李琳 (?-1391), then sent it to the administrative branch of the government. This breach of diplomatic and court protocol was the cause for Kwōn's second exile.

The repercussions of Kwōn's actions with the communiqué were quick. Two months after serving his exile in Ubong, Kwōn was sent to Yōunghae in the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month of 1389, then Kyerim gaol (present day Kyōngju) 鷄林 and Hūnghae 興海 prison in second month of 1390.<sup>205</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month of 1390 Kwōn's offences were lessened, meaning he did not have to serve his exile in the most distant of locations, and he was instead sent to Kimhae 金海.<sup>206</sup> In the following month, however, he was re-incarcerated due to being implicated in an incident involving Yun I 尹穉 (d.u.) and Yi Ch'o's 李初 (d.u.) management of penal sentences. Due to his implication in this incident, Kwōn, Yi Saek and others were sent to Ch'ōnghae 淸海 in the 5<sup>th</sup> lunar month.<sup>207</sup> According to the *YCJ*, Kwōn was pardoned in the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month following auspicious floods and he returned to Hanyang.<sup>208</sup> His freedom was short lived as he was imprisoned again in Iksan in the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month, before being released in the 11<sup>th</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Kwōn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 32.

<sup>203</sup> *Koryōsa*, Vol. 1: p. 470b.

<sup>204</sup> *Koryōsa*, Vol. 3: pp. 906a-b.

<sup>205</sup> *Koryōsa*, Vol. 1: p. 875a.

<sup>206</sup> *Koryōsa*, Vol. 1: p. 881a.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Kwōn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 32.

lunar month of 1390.<sup>209</sup> Following his release, after almost a year of intermittent incarceration, Kwŏn finally settled in the hometown where he took his pen name from, Yangch'on.<sup>210</sup>

### Life in exile and beyond: A time to think, write and teach

We can get better sense of what exile meant for Kwŏn when we look at his "Record of Travels in the South" 南行錄, which is a collection of 49 poems that chronicle his exile from 1389 to 1390, then his retirement from the capital through to 1393.<sup>211</sup> Early in the preface to the "Record" we can see that the initial period of incarceration was anything but easy; Kwŏn writes that he suffered from frosts and winds as he trudged over mountains and crossed rivers on foot.<sup>212</sup> While he saw and heard many strange and new things along the way, Kwŏn continued to worry about having left behind the court and his parents. Fatigue and worry also plagued him to the point that he felt anxious about writing poems to sooth his sorrows. At one point he realised the seasons had rolled by and six months had passed, whereupon he explains that he felt like a mute, devoid of emotion and unable to put his hand to writing poetry. Such was the depth of Kwŏn's despair.

Further into his exile, when Kwŏn moved from Hŭnghae to Kimhae the conditions of his exile improved somewhat, but uncertainty over his future remained. In the preface to his poem, "A poem conveyed to Master Kyu of Kūmyang temple who is moving his priest's staff to Ch'iljang temple", Kwŏn writes that Kimhae, unlike Hŭnghae, was a little more distant but was densely populated and the people there thought him lucky to have been moved to the area.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore the judge of the area, Lord Yi of Ik-yang 益陽 (d.u.), was an old friend and had Kwŏn stay at an old temple in Kimyang.

At the temple Kwŏn met the head priest, Master Kyu 圭公, a Yogācāra 瑜伽 monk. Kwŏn writes fondly of Master Kyu, describing him as an honest and sincere man who took pity on Kwŏn's exile.<sup>214</sup> Kwŏn found support and friendship in Kyu, enough to say that he felt blessed, happy and, "I in fact did not feel exiled to this distant place".<sup>215</sup>

<sup>209</sup> *Koryŏsa*, Vol. 1: p. 885a.

<sup>210</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 32.

<sup>211</sup> Kwŏn, "Record of Travels in the South" in *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 13-45.

<sup>212</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 13-4.

<sup>213</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol 2: p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

However after a short while Master Kyu left to Ch'iljang temple 七長寺 and at this point Kwŏn's sadness re-emerged. He wrote, "Lost is the person who supported me in the morning and lost is the person who was my friend in the evenings. The sadness of when people meet and part is the human condition".<sup>216</sup>

Kwŏn's writings show stoicism and resignation towards the uncertainties his life faced. He writes that, "The meeting and parting of people is Heaven's will", and the good and bad of things is something beyond human intervention.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, Kwŏn says he feels fortunate having been exiled, survived and met such a person as Master Kyu. After all, he notes that Chiljang temple is close to his old hometown of Yangch'on and should he be freed of his exile in the future he hopes he might be able to join the common folk and till the soil as a farmer in his old hometown. Should this happen, Kwŏn sees himself donning sandals, taking up his walking stick and climbing Mangi Mountain to look for his old friend Master Kyu. In the brief introduction to the poem we can appreciate that Kwŏn has passed through some tough times and is relieved to be in a somewhat comfortable place where he can foster new friends and begin to contemplate a life after exile. At this point, life after exile is where he sees himself drifting off to a quiet, rural life in obscurity. That future life, however, balanced on the uncertainty of his present situation which in turn was dependant on events in the capital.

Although away from capital and his colleagues Kwŏn stayed in touch with his old friends and fellow exiles. In the preface to the poems Kwŏn writes that his old friend Ha Ryun was also exiled to Ulsan 蔚山 and at the time of writing was "only a few *ri*" from where Kwŏn was in Hŭnghae.<sup>218</sup> Kwŏn laments that he would like to meet his friend but cannot. Kwŏn thus hopes that the exchange of poems with Ha will be enough to convey his thoughts and feelings. Kwŏn also wrote to other friends and colleagues for a variety of reason. For example, Kwŏn replied to a former classmate, Park (fnu), with a poem<sup>219</sup> and sent poems to friends such as Yi Sung-in and Chŏng To-jŏn who had sent Kwŏn gifts and letters. In the case of Yi, Kwŏn wrote a poem thanking him for his letter and fan,<sup>220</sup> and he thanked Chŏng for sending candles, writing:

Straight from outside into a golden light;

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 13-4.

<sup>219</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 23.

<sup>220</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 40.

Where possible, night upon night beams of light are cast out;

Thus sent from my seniors – how generous their kindness;

Wanting to face my books and windows, wary of what passes my way.<sup>221</sup>

In another instance he wrote a poem on parting from Yi Sung-in<sup>222</sup> and he even wrote congratulatory poems to Chŏng Mong-ju and Cho Jun.<sup>223</sup> Both of these latter poems, as they are to his seniors, are rather gushing in their complements and praise. During his exile Kwŏn crossed paths with Chŏng To-jŏn's son. They met around the fourth lunar month of 1390 when Kwŏn was relocating to Kimhae. Kwŏn had previously examined Chŏng's son when he was at the National Academy and upon their meeting wrote a poem praising Chŏng's son for his governance which mirrors that of the sages of antiquity.<sup>224</sup>

Aside from sending fans, letters and candles, Kwŏn's friends on a number of occasions sent him wine. This was a gift that Kwŏn appreciated for he wrote a number of poems showing his thanks. At one point Kwŏn was staying at Miruk temple 彌勒寺 when an unnamed colleague or friend sent him a bottle of wine. In response he wrote:

Exiled to this lonely place, a temple now my abode;

How lucky I am this wonderful night, a bottle of wine now in hand;

All the more, this fine drop worthy of praise;

The old monk sings a graceful tune.<sup>225</sup>

Another poem shows Kim Ik-chŏng 金益精 (?-1436) and Yi Sa-jong 李斯正 (d.u.) come looking for Kwŏn not only to exchange poems, but to share a drink. In the poem marking this occasion Kwŏn comes across as being comfortable with his lot in exile, yet appearing to miss his colleagues in the capital.

With guests taking a seat, the sequence of initial etiquettes are achieved;

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<sup>221</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: 53.

<sup>222</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p.25.

<sup>223</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 33, 45-6.

<sup>224</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 14.

<sup>225</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 29-30.

Behind the frost chrysanthemums bloom;

Before Mount Nango this day I wander;

On a day like today, I miss the old pine capital.<sup>226</sup>

On yet another occasion the deputy of Chŏnju sent Kwŏn a *kisaeng*, or female entertainer, but Kwŏn declined. However when the deputy later sent food and alcohol Kwŏn did not hesitate in accepting and wrote:

White haired and sitting on this Zen cushion, I study the principles of emptiness;

Discarding all the limits and bonds, this mundane world is indeed but naught;

But I cannot do away with my palate;

Suddenly receiving such fragrant food I feel such deep thanks.<sup>227</sup>

While away from the capital not all the news Kwŏn received from friends was good. Kwŏn received letters informing him of the death of friends or people he knew. Again Kwŏn replied with poems such as when he learnt of the death of Im Sup 林濕 (d.u.), where he wrote:

This morning I suddenly heard that your grave was closed;

In the notes of the flute my sorrow knows no end.<sup>228</sup>

The poems exchanged with friends and colleagues touched on above are interesting for they show that despite his exile to distant lands, Kwŏn's friends stayed in touch and where possible he reciprocated with poems. Also, despite the factionalism and strife in the court Kwŏn remained on amicable terms even with people like Chŏng To-jŏn, who during the upheaval took an opposing stance to Kwŏn over political change and lobbied for his punishment. From this snapshot of exchanges we get a sense that friendship and

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<sup>226</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 33.

<sup>227</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 31.

<sup>228</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 41.



civility among the literati of this time trumped politics, at least in part.

In regard to political change taking place in the capital, Kwŏn's poem show that despite being exiled to the south he still managed to stay abreast of some events in the capital. One poem shows that he received news of Yi Sŏng-gye becoming the king of Chosŏn and penned a poem to mark the occasion.

A five coloured cloud rises from the Palace;

Among the solemn patterns the sounds of jade jewellery echoes;

I wonder if this year I will participate in the lord's affairs;

Drunk from the order of ceremonies, it's a time to celebrate the king's  
ascension;

Since being exiled to these southern lands, yet another year has passed;

Lifting my head, time and again I think of the court<sup>229</sup>

As we have seen above, Kwŏn's exile was defined by travel outside the capital. This travel was at times forced, albeit from gaol to gaol, but even still he garnered inspiration to jot down impressions of his surroundings and some of the places he visited. Not only do these poems show us where Kwŏn travelled, but they also provide a glimpse into Kwŏn's feelings. In the preface to the poem "Arriving at Iksan" Kwŏn writes that in the fifth lunar month of 1390 he had received a conditional pardon and was prohibited from going to the capital.<sup>230</sup> However, he was then arrested again and sent to Iksan, where when he arrived a huge storm broke with thunder, lightning and flooding.

Emerging from the west, that day, the water as vast as the sky above;

Immensely grateful for pardoning my errors, already the downpour begins;

Tonight in Iksan suddenly a storm of thunder and rain;

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<sup>229</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 25-6.

<sup>230</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 29.

Who will take pity on this exiled lonely traveller bereft of sleep.<sup>231</sup>

In Kwŏn's other poems such as "Feelings upon looking at a mountain", he describes the "light before the mountain shimmering in blue" and the onset of autumn has him thinking of his wanderings.<sup>232</sup> On another occasion he writes a poem at night when, "A westerly wind blows the clouds away; water drips in the night as the moon sits high in the sky".<sup>233</sup> Kwŏn also writes nature poems to mark an eclipse in the ninth lunar month,<sup>234</sup> the first lunar month of 1391 and the last night of the third lunar month of 1390.<sup>235</sup>

In the poems above we have seen a number of references to Buddhists and Buddhism. Looking more broadly across this collection of poems we see that Kwŏn had a variety of dealings with Buddhism. While in exile he visited Haein 海印寺 and Kamno 甘露寺 temples, where he composed a poem for each temple.<sup>236</sup> Kwŏn also composed a poem on parting from a *sŏn* (zen) master called Naeyu 乃乳 (d.u.) and a poem to put on the back of hand drawn images of a Tientai monk.<sup>237</sup> The interesting thing with these poems is that Kwŏn is respectful to the monks, their ascetic practices and temples. For example to sŏn monk Yang 陽 Kwŏn writes in admiration of his solitary religious practice. In yet another poem Kwŏn incorporates terminologies from Buddhism and Hwaŏm 華嚴 (Chinese: Huayan) teachings.<sup>238</sup>

Kwŏn's admiration, however, does not translate to a conversion.<sup>239</sup> In a poem to monk Ongmyŏng 玉明, who is an adherent of the Shinin 神印 school that developed during the Silla period, Kwŏn admires his efforts but writes that nature 性 is not to be found in Buddhist temples or Buddhist practices, and that filialness and friendship originate in Heaven's constitution.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, in the same poem he displays his Confucian sympathies when he writes of his embarrassment upon receiving correspondence from his parents. The employment of these Confucian terms and ideas, and tracing it to

<sup>231</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 29.

<sup>232</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 31.

<sup>233</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 30-1.

<sup>234</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 31.

<sup>235</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 38.

<sup>236</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 26.

<sup>237</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 38, 37-8.

<sup>238</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 57-8.

<sup>239</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 48.

<sup>240</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 50.

fundamental Confucian ideas such as heaven's nature illustrates Kwŏn's grounding in Confucianism. Therefore behind Kwŏn's polite and respectful words towards Buddhism and Buddhists, we see that at heart he remains unflinching in his adherence to Confucianism.

Another facet that emerges from Kwŏn's poems is that he was still engaged in intellectual and literary affairs, even while away from the capital. Within the collected poems there is a preface that Kwŏn wrote for a compilation of poetry. The compilation is titled *Yŏgangyŏn Chipsi* 驪江宴集詩 (*Collected Poems of Yŏgangyŏn*) and although from extant materials it is unclear who the author was, Kwŏn praises his personality, learning, scholarship, work in the government and achievements as an envoy in China.<sup>241</sup> It is clear from the familiarity that Kwŏn knew the author closely.

In 1390 Kwŏn's life in exile took a positive turn when he received a pardon for his earlier indiscretions. In the collected poetry of his "Record of Travels in the South" Kwŏn's happiness for being pardoned is evident:

Pardon received, my happiness knows no end and again I can feel my body;

Once more a man between heaven and earth I become...<sup>242</sup>

This response contrasts with the subdued account of the pardon in his Biographical Chronology:

Seventh lunar month: exiled again to Ikju; wrote the *IHTS*. 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month received conditional pardon [that I am free to live anywhere outside of the capital].<sup>243</sup>

Aside from being released from exile and the threat of incarceration, Kwŏn's pardon marks a change in his intellectual focus. From 1390 Kwŏn starts teaching and on account of his student's questions he starts writing a primer on Confucianism, the *IHTS*. In the introduction Kwŏn outlines the genesis of the text, namely that novice students were coming to him for help with reading elementary Confucian texts and they were having trouble understanding the meanings of those texts. Kwŏn writes:

<sup>241</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: pp. 41-3.

<sup>242</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 2: p. 36.

<sup>243</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 32.

Autumn 1390, during the reign of Hongwu, I was living in Kumma county and had one or two beginner students come and read the two texts of the *Doctrine of the Mean* and *Great Learning* to study, but despite repeatedly explaining the words, they still could not understand. Thereupon, based on Master Zhou's "Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate" and considering [Zhu Xi's] explanation of the *Variorium* [of the Four Books 四書章句], I composed these diagrams to show the meaning. In addition, I chose maxims of the ancient sages and interpreted their meanings. If the students raised questions, I then accordingly replied to them. Thus, the questions and answers were recorded and attached to the end [of the respective chapters] and its name was described as *Diagrams and Explanations on Introductory Studies*. Beyond this, I selected other texts and I was also able to compose diagrams for all them. Occasionally for each of them I added my own conjectures. I wanted to follow the correctness of my seniors and teachers, but in the country I had no seniors and my body embraced its exile. Meanwhile, I only wait for the future. I hope the reader will excuse my mistakes and learn from them. This is my hope.<sup>244</sup>

In the following year, 1391, Kwŏn continued writing on Confucianism. This time though he turned his attention to the Five Classics 五經<sup>245</sup> and wrote extended commentaries for each of the books in a work titled *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllok* 五經淺見錄 (*Record of Humble Thoughts on the Five Classics*, hereafter *RHT*). His biography states:

24<sup>th</sup> year of Hongwu (1391): Master was 40 years old: First lunar month travelled to the capital and received a pardon. Third lunar month: return to Yangch'on in Ch'ungju; investigated and corrected the order [of passages] of the *Book of Rites*. Also wrote *Record of Humble Thoughts on Book of Changes*, *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Documents* and *Spring and Autumn Annals*.<sup>246</sup>

In that year Kwŏn completed four of the five commentaries on the Five Classics. The

<sup>244</sup> Kūn, Kwŏn, *Iphak Tosŏl* 入學圖說, Kwŏn O-ch'ŏl-ka, Ŭmsŏng, 1929 (reprint of 1547): pp. 3-4.

<sup>245</sup> The Five Classics are the *Book of Changes* 易經, *Record of Rites* 禮記, *Book of Documents* 書經, *Book of Odes* 詩經 and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋.

<sup>246</sup> Kwŏn, YCJ, Vol. 1: p. 32.

commentary on the *Book of Rites* was a project that Yi Saek had bequeathed to Kwŏn and he did not finish the project until 1406 when the *Sillok* show Kwŏn submitting the book to the court for publication.<sup>247</sup> Following this Kwŏn Kŭn's son, Kwŏn To 權滔 (1387-1445), had his father's commentary on the *Rites* republished in 1418, after which Song Chŏng-gyu 宋廷奎 (1656-1710) had them republished in 1705.

### Return to the capital and the court of King T'aejo of Chosŏn

Kwŏn stayed in self-imposed retirement for over another year, but in 1393 his life took yet another turn. In the second lunar month, Yi Sŏng-gye, now T'aejo 太祖, the new king of the new kingdom of Chosŏn, happened to be travelling close by to where Kwŏn was staying. T'aejo summoned Kwŏn to Mt Kyeryong 鷄龍山 and he rushed to the king's encampment. T'aejo asked Kwŏn to write an epitaph for King Hwan 桓王.<sup>248</sup> There are no further details of what discussions took place between T'aejo and Kwŏn on Mt Kyeryong, but the result of the meeting was clear: in the third lunar month Kwŏn escorted T'aejo back to the capital and he entered the Chosŏn court, taking on the positions of Lecturer 大學士 in the Bureau of State Records 春秋館 and Headmaster 大司成 of the National Academy.<sup>249</sup> Kwŏn was no longer the disgraced scholar in exile; he had returned to the court with the trust and backing of King T'aejo, the first king of Chosŏn.

Kwŏn's exile lasted almost four years, during which time significant changes had taken place in the court. Yi Sŏng-gye dethroned the last of the Koryŏ kings, Kongyang 恭讓王 (r. 1389-1392,) and established himself as the new king of Chosŏn. Chŏng To-jŏn and his group of reformers supported Yi's seizure of the throne. Even though Kwŏn Kŭn, Yi Saek and others who opposed the move were in exile, Chŏng Mong-ju remained in the court as a voice of opposition. As respected and established as Chŏng Mong-ju was, in 1392 he was murdered following a dinner with T'aejo's son Yi Bang-wŏn (1367-1422, r. T'aejong 太宗 1400-18) for allegedly refusing to give up his loyalties to the Koryŏ; the momentum for political change could not be stopped, nor could Yi's pursuit of the throne. The new king took on his reign title of T'aejo and the Ming dynasty granted the new kingdom the title of Chosŏn. T'aejo then set about a

<sup>247</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 12: 6/11/17 02.

<sup>248</sup> King Hwan 桓王 is a reference to T'aejo's father, also known as Yi Cha-ch'un 李子春 (1315-1361).

<sup>249</sup> Kwŏn, *JCJ*, Vol 1: p.32

range of reforms to the government, land entitlements to the clergy, regional governance, education, and sought to relocate the capital to Hanyang (present day Seoul). Thus, the atmosphere in the court by the time Kwōn returned to the court was quite different to when he left.

Over the next two years, 1394 and 1395, Kwōn held a number of posts relating to education. During this time, we can see that Kwōn continued with a variety of intellectual ventures. One of the first major projects Kwōn participated in upon returning to the capital involved astronomy. In 1395 Kwōn was part of a twelve man team of that created the *Chōnsang Yōch'a Pūnya Chido* 天象列次分野之圖 (*Chart Dividing Heaven's Constellations in Order*).<sup>250</sup> Although maps of constellations had previously been drawn in the Koguryō tombs, this particular chart is unique as it was the first of its kind from the Chosŏn period and it was commissioned not long after T'aejo assumed the throne. The tablet for the chart comprises several sections: in the upper section the various positions of the sun, moon and twelve celestial divisions are explained; in the center is a circle with a diameter of 76 cm representing the night sky, and 1,464 engraved constellations, along with the trajectories of various celestial bodies across 28 divisions; and at the base of the tablet is an explanation of the chart, background to its composition, history of its making and the names of those involved in its making. The chart was allegedly finished in the twelfth lunar month of 1395 and after China's constellations chart *Suzhou Star Chart* 淳祐天文圖 of 1247, this chart from Chosŏn is the second oldest extant in the world today. According to the *YCJ*, Kwōn wrote:

The original stone constellation chart used to be in Pyōngyang castle but due to the chaos of wars it was lost in the river and a long time ago the location of the original print was also lost. One of the first orders of our king upon him assuming the throne was based on his knowing how important a treasure the chart was and he ordered the Office of Astronomy and Geomancy 書雲觀 to oversee the engraving on the stone. Upon seeing the original [His Majesty said], "This diagram dates back a long time and since there were some differences over the degrees of the stars, the measurements of the degrees have been re-done correctly and calibrated [the position of]

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<sup>250</sup> See Appendix p. 276.

the central star of dawn and dusk for *Sajung* months 四仲月 [the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> lunar months]. On these grounds, a new chart was made for future generations to look at.” Upon the King considering it correct, the new position of the middle star was submitted on the sixth lunar month of the year Ŭrhae [1395]. On the old chart, Pleiades 昴星 fell on the night of middle star at the start of spring, now it has crossed the 24 seasonal divisions of the year and is located in [the constellation of] *Musca Borealis*. Hereupon, the [position of the] central star has been corrected based on the old diagram and [I.] Minister [Kwŏn] Kŭn was ordered to write the record for posterity.

[I] Minister [Kwŏn] Kŭn thought, from ancient times the political affairs of feudal lords were received from heaven and they could not do any important matters without first consulting the times of the calendar. Yao’s ordering of Xi and He 羲和 was based on the regulating of the four phases [of the sun, moon, stars and zodiacs]<sup>251</sup> and Shun’s observation of the pearl and sphere was the basis for regulating the Seven Directions.<sup>252</sup> One cannot be slow in being sincere in venerating heaven or being diligent in the affairs of the people. I think his Majesty received the throne through sagacity and mercy and the country based on the humility of ancient ceremonies. Affairs inside and outside the kingdom became tranquil. Enjoyment spreading throughout the lands was the virtue of Yao and Shun. First they examined the star charts and corrected the position of the middle star, then Yao and Shu governed. However, if one searches for the thinking of Yao and Shun that made the tools to observe celestial phenomenon, then its origin is no more than having reverence [towards heaven]. If his Majesty also has reverence in his mind, he will receive Heaven’s seasons from above and undertake civil affairs from below; then his spiritual achievements will also be equal to the heights of the two sage kings. Moreover, this diagram will be carved on a stone tablet and clearly it will be a treasure for generations of our

<sup>251</sup> See Legge, James. “The Canon of Yao” in *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents, The Chinese Classics*, Vol 3, SMC Publishing, Taiwan, 2000: p. 18.

<sup>252</sup> See Legge, James. “The Canon of Shun” in *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents, The Chinese Classics*, Vol 3, SMC Publishing, Taiwan, 2000: p. 33. The Seven Directions are also known as the Seven Regulated Bodies and relate to the Seven Stars of the Great Bear. The the seven stars are Sun, Moon, Mars, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn.

grandchildren.<sup>253</sup>

Kwŏn's work on the astronomical chart shows that despite his years in exile his capacity for intellectual work remained undiminished, even in those fields outside of strict Confucianism textual exegesis. Equally, we can see that extent to which Confucian ideas permeated Kwŏn's framework for working on the astronomical chart.

### The Ming-Chosŏn *p'yojon* dispute

Kwŏn's quiet return to the capital and to official duties did not last long for in 1396, Kwŏn became embroiled in what is known as the "*p'yojon* problem" in Korean. *P'yojon* is an abbreviation of two types of diplomatic communications: *p'yo* 表 which are memorials presented to kings and emperors and *chŏn* 箋, which are memoranda sent to a king or emperor expressing congratulations or condolences for special events.<sup>254</sup> The source of these problems, according to the Ming, was that memorials and memoranda coming from Chosŏn contained impolite words and expressions. Out of anger and in order to punish Chosŏn, the Ming detained Chosŏn's envoys and demanded that those responsible for composing and editing the documents be sent to the Ming court. Once these demands were met, the envoys would be released and diplomatic relations could resume.

The first of the *p'yojon* problems formally occurred on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, 1396 (T'aejo 5), but its origins lay in events of the previous year. Chosŏn envoys Yu Ku 柳珣 (1335-1398) and Chŏng Sin-ŭi 鄭臣義 (d.u.) travelled to the Ming capital to deliver a diplomatic memorial to the court expressing New Year's greetings.<sup>255</sup> The emperor, however, took offense at the wording of the message and detained the Chosŏn envoys.<sup>256</sup> The *Ming History* records Yu Ku as explaining to the Ming court that Chŏng To-jŏn was responsible for compiling the offensive memorial, to which the Ming responded by sending an order to Chosŏn demanding that those responsible for composing the message be sent to the Ming. Only after securing the

<sup>253</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3: pp. 164-5.

<sup>254</sup> When *p'yo* and *chŏn* are read together as one word, the pronunciation of *chŏn* changes to *jŏn* according to vernacular Korean.

<sup>255</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 8: 04/10/10.

<sup>256</sup> *Ming Shi*, *juan* 320, *liezhuan* 208, Chaoxian: Year 28, envoy Yu Ku [delivers] congratulations for the new year, but the Emperor rebukes him for the arrogant wording of the memorial. [Yu] Ku said that the memorial was compiled by Chancellery Arbiter Chŏng To-jŏn. When an order was dispatched to restrain [Chŏng] To-jŏn, [then Yu] Ku would be released to return [to Chosŏn].



culprits would the Ming release the envoys.<sup>257</sup>

Kim Ŭl-chin 金乙珍 (d.u.), Ko In-baek 高仁伯 (d.u.) and others arrived at the Chosŏn court on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, 1396, and delivered an official message 咨文 from the Ming court.<sup>258</sup> The message acknowledged receipt of the earlier Chosŏn memorial but harshly rebuked the Chosŏn court for the wording of their earlier correspondence, describing it as “flippant and disrespectful”<sup>259</sup> and its expressions as contemptuous. So offended were the Ming that they alluded to possible military retaliation. In the message the Ming cited the historical case of a Zhou general’s desire to attack the northern Quanrong people,<sup>260</sup> but being persuaded of the inappropriateness of sending soldiers too far away, the general decided against this course of action. For the same reason, the Ming decided not to rally its troops. In closing, the Ming demanded that the authors responsible for composing the offensive script be sent to the Ming court.

The second *p’yojŏn* problem is recorded in the *Sillok* on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month, just over a month after the first one, but its origins also lay in events that took place late in the previous year. In the 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month of 1395 the Chosŏn court sent Chŏng Ch’ong 鄭摠 (1358-1397) to the Ming court to ask for official seals and mandates<sup>261</sup> for the Chosŏn court and when he returned on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the same month he reported on his petitioning to the throne.<sup>262</sup> Later, in a message sent to Chosŏn in the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month of 1396, the Ming noted Chŏng Ch’ong’s earlier visit and request but then censured Chosŏn for making such an impolite request.<sup>263</sup> Unlike the earlier objection where the Ming felt so offended by the wording that they threatened to attack Chosŏn, in this instance the Ming framed their problem in terms of trust and transparency. The Ming explained that since antiquity Chinese emperors had maintained relations with the wise and protected their people, and when rulers of lands who were respectful and kept their promises appeared on their periphery, they were then considered to be under the influence of the emperor and Sinitic ways. In other words

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> *T’aejo Sillok* 9: 05/02/09.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> The Quanrong 犬戎 were a tribe to the north-west of central China and they conquered the Western Zhou 771 BCE, but later the Duke of Qin defeated the Quanrong around 753 BCE.

<sup>261</sup> *Insŏn* 印信 and *Komyŏng* 誥命 are the official seals and imperial mandates necessary for legitimising a ruler in the eyes of the Chinese court.

<sup>262</sup> *T’aejo Sillok* 8: 04/11/11.

<sup>263</sup> *T’aejo Sillok* 9: 05/03/29.

they were “inside of the influence” 化内. On the other hand, there were surrounding peoples who followed customs different to China and while each of their chiefs vied for control, none of them became rulers of the lands. Such groups the Ming described as being “outside of the influence” 化外, meaning that they could not be guided by orders, nor reprimanded by laws. In other words, the Ming measured relations with its border people according to the extent to which they had adopted Sinitic ways, or were part of the Sinitic realm of practice, which was not necessarily a realm of territory. From the Ming’s perspective, being within the Sinitic realm ensured trust and transparency.

In the case of recent communications, the Ming’s contention lay with the mixed messages they received from the Chosŏn court. The Ming appeared to have welcomed and recognised the new king of Chosŏn but took offense at the wording of the communications and the abruptness of the request for official seals and mandates.

Now Chosŏn is a country with a king [and] by his disposition he has sought to have close relations with us and rules accordingly, but the foolish and treacherous [envoys] do as they please and the document they brought requested seals and imperial mandates, which cannot be given lightly. Chosŏn is hemmed in by mountains and blocked by the sea, it has been fashioned by heaven and earth to be the land of the eastern Yi people where customs are different. If I bestow the official seals and mandates and order these here envoys be vassals, then in the eyes of the ghosts and spirits would I not be being exceedingly avaricious? Compared to sages of antiquity, I would certainly not have shown a measure of restraint.<sup>264</sup>

This excerpt initially shows that the Ming did not harbour ill will towards Chosŏn and, in fact, welcomed the new king and favourable relations between the two countries. But the Ming still held doubts and suspicions. While welcoming the Chosŏn king and his desire to work closely with the Ming, the Ming’s suspicion is roused when envoys arrive from Chosŏn and abruptly request seals and mandates. The Ming, then, are not suspicious of the Chosŏn king per se, but of his intermediaries. Furthermore, the Ming are asking if geographical isolation makes Chosŏn customs more foreign than they thought, which in turn raises questions in the mind of the Ming of how trustworthy Chosŏn might be, how transparent their practices are and, ultimately, whether they are

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

inside or outside the realm of Sinitic influence. Lastly, the Ming's rhetorical question shows that the Chinese court is not only well aware of the power it holds to grant the seals and mandates the envoys requested, but that the court was willing to flaunt this power behind obsequious references to ghosts, spirits and sages. Although the arrogance is thinly veiled, the Ming nevertheless was conscious of the fragile nature of relations with Chosŏn. After all, should the Ming grant the seals and mandates to the envoys it would precipitate a change in power relations that would undermine not only the Chosŏn king's control over his envoys, but jeopardise the king's favourable disposition to the Ming.

The second excerpt from the Ming's official communication recorded in the *Sillok* continues with the Ming explaining how they expect diplomatic relations to be conducted. The Ming wrote that "From ancient times through to the present, when smaller states serve larger ones, of the most respectful expression of etiquette, nothing is more valued than cultivated speech."<sup>265</sup> The Ming explain that since antiquity Chinese sages had developed a system where when dealing with border people they encouraged them to cultivate their speech, intentions and writing.<sup>266</sup> Cultivating these three skills ensured that no conflict developed between China and its border peoples. In raising this point and making this reference, the Ming is emphasizing the importance of Chosŏn communicating clearly and appropriately with the Ming, and with the correct intentions. Needless to say, underlying the Ming's assertion is an assumption that all foreign people conform to Sinitic norms when dealing with the Ming, thus confirming that they are within the Sinitic realm of influence.

In the latter part of this message the Ming return to address their pressing concern with Chosŏn, namely diplomatic etiquette. They explain that Chosŏn appear to send envoys with memorials and memorandum to convey congratulations on special occasions but the wording of their messages is rude and impolite, and hence betray their apparent intentions. Furthermore, these communications have the gall to ask for official seals and mandates. Finally, the Ming complain that in making such a request, the fact that Chosŏn should make reference to the affairs of King Zhou 紂, the last ruler of Shang, is "extremely discourteous."<sup>267</sup> Precisely how and in what way Chosŏn referred to King

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. "Now every time there is an appropriate special event Chosŏn sends an envoy with a congratulatory memorial, appearing to have etiquette, but recently in the memorial asking throne for

Zhou is not mentioned in the *Sillok*<sup>268</sup> but it is clear that Ming felt the content and manner of the Chosŏn memorial to be out of step with what the Ming deemed suitable diplomatic etiquette.

Rather than laying blame for this transgression completely with the Chosŏn king, the Ming suggest that it is the intermediaries who are to blame and they leave open room for Chosŏn to answer their complaint and make amends. In closing the Ming wrote,

Perhaps this is the original intention of the nation's king, perhaps it is the insolence of an envoy, how much more so that he [envoy] is not restrained by the official seal, or perhaps the envoy changed it [memorial] *en route*. All these things we cannot know. Since this is the case, the envoys cannot return [home to Chosŏn]. Only if the person/s that compiled and edited the document are all sent to us will the envoys be returned home.<sup>269</sup>

Here we see that the Ming court is concerned that not only might there be a lack of transparency in the Chosŏn bureaucracy but, more importantly, that there might be people within the Chosŏn court who are meddling in communications. Nevertheless, the Ming are offering Chosŏn avenues through which to respond to their complaint and, at the very least, to resume relations, the Ming are asking that those responsible for the composition of the document be sent to the Ming court. Until that time, Chosŏn envoys would remain in detention.

The final *p'yojŏn* problem occurred on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, 1397. Although Kwŏn Kūn was not involved with this dispute and it falls outside of the focus of this thesis, it is nonetheless worth noting what happened. Yu Ho 柳潏 (d.u.) and Ch'oe Ho 崔浩 (d.u.) arrived back in the Chosŏn court with a message from the Ming complaining that "in the previous memorial and memorandum that were prepared so as to congratulate our country [Ming], the wording was slanderous. Because of this, in the

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the official seal and mandates reference was made to the affairs of King Zhou and this is extremely discourteous."

Di Xin 帝辛, whose name was Zhou, was the last king of Shang. He is known for being infatuated with a woman called Daji 妲己 and bring chaos to Yin through his ruthless policies. He was defeated by King Wu 武王 of the Zhou 周.

<sup>268</sup> The memorial sent to the Ming is found in *T'aejo Sillok* 8: 04/11/11 but no mention is made of King Zhou and nor is there any sign of deliberately discourteous language.

<sup>269</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 9: 05/03/29.

future when tribute is paid, memorials and memoranda may no longer be used."<sup>270</sup> The words used were so inappropriate that the Ming asked whether the talented officials of the Chosŏn court were deliberately trying to spoil relations between the two countries. Once again, the Ming detained Chosŏn envoys and demanded the author/s of the document be sent to the Ming. Only then would relations resume, albeit with tribute being sent no more frequently than once every three years.

As outlined above, central to all of the *p'yojŏn* problems was the alleged poor wording in diplomatic correspondence coming from Chosŏn. It is odd, however, that nowhere do Ming or Chosŏn historical sources elaborate on precisely what the wording was. The only evidence of Chosŏn's wrong doing is the accusation from the Ming court and even then, the closest insight they provide is an alleged reference to King Zhou, as cited in the second dispute. As Park Wŏn-hyo notes after an extensive examination of Chinese and Korean historical materials, it is unlikely that such offensive references would have been removed when the *Sillok* was revised in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Ming's accusations were most probably baseless.<sup>271</sup> Given the significance of the *p'yojŏn* in relations between the Ming and Chosŏn, it is hard to imagine either side would simply erase evidence of the event so quickly. What is more, given that Koryŏ and Chosŏn envoys had a long tradition of visiting Chinese courts and were well versed in Chinese customs, etiquette and learning, it is difficult to imagine them deliberately, or even inadvertently, setting out to offend the Ming emperor and court.

Chosŏn responded reasonably quickly to the first and third of the *p'yojŏn* problems. In the first instance, Chosŏn sent envoy Kwak Hae-yong 郭海龍 (d.u.) to the Ming on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, six days after receiving the complaint.<sup>272</sup> Kwak apologized to the Ming court for the difference in Chosŏn language and the shallowness of their learning. On this trip Kwak was accompanied by Kim Yak-hang 金若恒 (?-1397), who travelled under escort as the author of the offensive document.<sup>273</sup> Chosŏn handled the third *p'yojŏn* problem in the same manner by sending Kwak again to Ming on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, seven days after receiving the complaint. On this trip Kwak was accompanied by Cho Sŏ 曹庶 (d.u.), the author of the offensive

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Park Wŏn-ho, "Myŏngch'o Munjaok kwa Chosŏn P'yojŏn Munje," in *Sahak Yŏn'gu*, 25, 1975: p. 87.

<sup>272</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 9: 05/02/15.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

document.<sup>274</sup> In both of these cases the Ming appear to have been satisfied with Chosŏn's relatively quick response but the close of the third problem was soon eclipsed by other events, namely Yi Sŏng-gye's abdication and the Ming emperor's death in 1398.

### Kwŏn's role in the second *p'yojŏn* dispute

Chosŏn dealt with the second *p'yojŏn* complaint over a longer period and in Chosŏn's response we see Kwŏn Kŭn's involvement in resolving the dispute. The *Sillok* show that on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month the Ming sent another message to Chosŏn and this time they demanded that the families of those who wrote the last offensive document also be sent to the Ming.<sup>275</sup> Over a month passed before the Ming court sent another delegation to Chosŏn in the 6<sup>th</sup> month. This delegation included envoys Niu-niu 牛牛, Wang Li 王禮, Song Boluo 宋孛羅 and Yangtiemu 楊帖木兒, and they presented their message to T'aejo demanding in no uncertain terms that all of the authors of the offensive memorials be sent to the Ming court. This time, however, they specified exactly who they wanted: Chŏng To-jŏn and Chŏng T'ak 鄭擢 (1363-1423).<sup>276</sup> The envoys also reminded the Chosŏn court that they wanted the families of Yu Ku and the other detained envoys. Once these demands were met, relations could be resumed.

T'aejo's initial response to these demands was to send a reply to the Ming court explaining why a reply had not been sent earlier. On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month, three days after receiving the latest Ming demands, Cho Pan 趙胖 (1341-1401) was sent to the Ming with a memorial stating that as a smaller state, Chosŏn felt obliged by etiquette to send official memoranda celebrating special events and that any offensive expressions were not deliberate but were on account of Chosŏn being foreigners with coarse and shallow learning.<sup>277</sup> But by the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month it was clear to T'aejo that this was not enough. The Ming would not let Chosŏn get away with ignoring their

<sup>274</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 12: 06/12/28. Donald Clark writes that the third dispute "precipitated a crisis at the Korean court, during which there was renewed talk of attacking Liao-tung as a show of Korean determination not to be bullied." See Clark, Donald N., "Sino-Korean tributary relations under the Ming", in (eds.) Twitchett, Denis and Frederick W. Mote, *The Ming Dynasty, 1398-1644*, Part 2, Cambridge University Press, 1998: p. 278.

<sup>275</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 9: 05/04/08.

<sup>276</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 9: 05/06/11. The envoys' note acknowledges that authors of some of the offensive letters had been sent, that authors of the *chŏn*, according to their earlier demands, had not yet been sent and they specified that they wanted Chŏng To-jŏn and Chŏng T'ak. Ming knew of their involvement possibly thanks to Yu Ku who was recorded as saying that Chŏng To-jŏn was involved in the composition of the official memorials.

<sup>277</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 9: 05/06/14. *Ming Shi*, Juan 247.

complaint, nor with the usual excuses of linguistic differences.<sup>278</sup> T'aejo decided not to capitulate to the Ming's demand to send the families of the envoys<sup>279</sup> and informed the Ming of his intentions.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month T'aejo held a farewell for the remaining Ming envoys and informed them that four people involved in the composition and editing of the offensive memorials would be sent to the Ming.<sup>280</sup> These people included No In-do 盧仁度, Chǒng Ch'ong 鄭摠 (1358-1397), Chǒng T'ak and Kwŏn Kūn. The *Sillok* entry explains that Chǒng T'ak composed the *chǒn*, memorandum, and Kim Yak-hang had written the *p'yo*, or memorial. Since Chǒng T'ak was ill at the time Kim Yak-hang was sent with the documents to the Ming court on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, 1396. Chǒng To-jŏn, the entry explains, was not involved in the production or editing of the documents because at the time he was engaged in moving royal ancestral tablets.<sup>281</sup> Besides, due to his age (55) and ill health, Chǒng To-jŏn could not be sent to the Ming. Instead Chǒng Ch'ong, who wrote the draft *p'yo*, and Kwŏn Kūn who edited the document, were to be sent to Ming.<sup>282</sup> No In-do was also responsible for editing one of the documents and was also included in the party. Lastly, the entry explains that if the family of Yu Ku and others were to be sent, it would cause great sadness among the people of Chosŏn and the Chosŏn court sought the Ming's understanding and pardon for not sending them.

### An envoy's tale of triumph, an emperor's praise

T'aejo charged Ha Ryun 河崙 with escorting the four culprits to the Ming. When they arrived in the Chinese capital they were all promptly detained, including Ha.<sup>283</sup> The *Ming History* records their arrival,

In year 29, escorted compilers of the *p'yo* (Chinese: *biao*), Chǒng T'ak and

<sup>278</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 10: 05/07/04.

<sup>279</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 10: 05/07/08.

<sup>280</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 10: 05/07/19.

<sup>281</sup> The entry explains that Chǒng To-jŏn was involved with rites concerning the relocation of ancestral tablets for the royal family ancestral temple, *Chongmyŏ* 宗廟, when the documents were composed. This is certainly feasible as *Sillok* entries for September, T'aejo 4 (1395), show that the new palace was not completed until 29 September.

<sup>282</sup> Although in this entry from the *Sillok* Kwŏn appears to have been ordered to Ming, later entries in the *Sillok* show that Kwŏn volunteered to go and initially T'aejo refused his request but Kwŏn made his request again and T'aejo finally agreed. Interestingly, in the same entry Chǒng To-jŏn attempted to block Kwŏn from going and petitioned T'aejo saying that Kwŏn was a student of Yi Saek and was untrustworthy. See *T'aejo Sillok* 11: 06/04/20.

<sup>283</sup> *Ming Shi*, juan 247.

three others, arrive and say the *p'yo* was in fact compiled by [Chǒng] Ch'ong [and Chǒng] To-jǒn was sick and could not travel. The Emperor held [Chǒng] Ch'ong and the others responsible for the chaos abroad and detained but did not banish them.<sup>284</sup>

The Chosǒn party, however, was not detained for long. The first to be released were Ha Ryun and Chǒng T'ak and they arrived back in Chosǒn on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month.<sup>285</sup> Yu Ku and Chǒng Sin-ūi, who had been detained in the Ming since the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, were also released and they arrived in Chosǒn two days after the others.<sup>286</sup> By the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month the Ming had sent a communication to Chosǒn pardoning their actions.<sup>287</sup> Those that remained under detention were Kim Yak-hang, Chǒng Ch'ong, Kwǒn Kūn and No In-do.

Among these four that remained in the Ming, only Kwǒn managed to secure his release and, perhaps most important of all, he played a pivotal role in restoring relations between the Ming and Chosǒn. Kwǒn achieved this by gaining the trust of the Ming court and creating a favorable impression on the Hongwu Emperor. Kwǒn's "Biographical Chronology" records that Kwǒn entered the Ming court on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> lunar month, 1396 and in a poem Kwǒn composed about delivering a message to the Ming court we can see the excitement and reverence Kwǒn felt.<sup>288</sup>

*Arriving at the Capital with my Order from Chosǒn*<sup>289</sup>

The flourishing majesty of Your Highness' sagely rule brings peace and security to all;

People from afar come bearing tribute that has crossed distant mountains and seas.

Auspicious mists gather in a profusion, surrounding your august abode in a magnificent aura;

Resplendent in radiant vestments, the Emperor's affairs flourish.

<sup>284</sup> *Ming Shi*, Juan 320, *Liezhuan* 208.

<sup>285</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 10: 05/11/04.

<sup>286</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 10: 05/11/06.

<sup>287</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 10: 05/11/23, *Ming Shi*, Juan 250.

<sup>288</sup> Kwǒn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 5b.

<sup>289</sup> Kwǒn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 2b-3a.



Mists of dawn withdraw, revealing the sun-like demeanor of Your Highness;

A divine wind delivers fragrance from the incense burner.

This humble servant is bathed in the favor of your imperial grace;

Entering to wait upon your majesty and draw near to your radiance.

Once in the court, Kwŏn had an audience with the emperor. We can catch a glimpse of the emperor's impression of Kwŏn and his colleagues in a message that was later sent to Chosŏn.

Among the four scholars who arrived, Kwŏn Kŭn's view of things is the most sincere [and he will be] released to return home. Please explain what I have said to the King of Chosŏn. Among the three who have just come there is not even one who can be spared.<sup>290</sup>

The emperor was clearly impressed by Kwŏn's conduct and this guaranteed his return to Chosŏn. Kwŏn's three colleagues, however, were less fortunate and they remained in the Ming indefinitely.<sup>291</sup> For Hongwu, the capacity to communicate was clearly a factor in his decision, as was his conduct, and from this excerpt Kwŏn appears to have known how to conduct himself in the court and the presence of the emperor, perhaps on account of his earlier visits to Ming in 1389. Furthermore, that Hongwu found Kwŏn to have a sincere view of things is significant because it would be far more beneficial, if not strategic, for Hongwu to have an official like Kwŏn in the Chosŏn court whose views he could trust to be sincere and honest, rather than officials who did not perhaps concur with the emperor's point of view.

Hongwu further noted Kwŏn Kŭn for his erudition. Another excerpt from the same communication sent to Chosŏn describes Kwŏn's audience with the emperor in the Ming court in the following manner,

First, Kŭn entered the court and the Emperor granted him an audience,

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<sup>290</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 11: 06/03/08.

<sup>291</sup> After Kwŏn returned to Chosŏn the three others remained in Ming. Later, the Chosŏn court received word of their passing away in *T'aejo* 6 (1397). See *T'aejo Sillok* 12: 06/11/30.

realizing [Kwŏn] Kŭn to be a man of learning.<sup>292</sup>

As a sign of respect Hongwu composed three poems and presented them to Kwŏn. Hongwu then prescribed a number of topics for Kwŏn to write poetry on and Kwŏn obliged with three collections of poems, totalling twenty four individual poems. Hongwu's poems are known in Korean as *Ŏjesi* 御製詩 (*Poems of the Emperor*) and Kwŏn's poems are known as *Ŭngjesi* 應製詩 (*Poems Written at Royal Command*), both of which are discussed in the next section.

The rapport between Hongwu and Kwŏn extended beyond court courtesy and exchanging poetry. Kwŏn, in his postscript to the poems, explained the treatment he received from the emperor.

The Emperor forgave me and did not take the matter further. I respectfully received his gracious pardon. According to [my] rank I was lodged in Wenyuange 文淵閣, granted feasts at Guanglusi 光祿寺, given clothes to wear in the court, [and] given entertainment while touring for three days.<sup>293</sup>

In addition to enjoying the hospitality of the emperor and seeing the sites of Nanjing, Kwŏn was also granted an opportunity to fraternize with eminent court scholars. He explains that he was shown around by Hanlin Academician, Minister Liu San-wu 翰林學士 劉三吾, whom Kwŏn held in high regard, and that he saw Ministers Xu Guan 許觀, Jing Qing 景清, Zhang Xin 張信 and Dai De-yi 戴德彝 who were "like ornate orioles and brilliant phoenix flying about the Forbidden Forest"<sup>294</sup> and treated Kwŏn as an equal.

Kwŏn appears to have revelled in the Ming court and found it to be a place of stimulating, new ways. Whilst he admitted that he was embarrassed when asked to do work, Kwŏn was obviously fascinated by what he saw in the Ming court. He reported to the Chosŏn court,

I always wanted to hold up the hem of my clothing when receiving work, ask questions when in doubt and increase my learning of things I did not

<sup>292</sup> *Taejo Sillok* 11: 06/03/08.

<sup>293</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol 1: pp. 8a-b.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9a.

know, but as our languages were different and also there were no interpreters, in the end I could not achieve what I wanted.<sup>295</sup>

Kwŏn clearly wanted to learn more about the many new things he saw in China but linguistic barriers seemed to have frustrated his efforts. Linguistic barriers were not Kwŏn's only hindrance for his time in the Ming was limited. In the same passage as above, he reported that he was suddenly ordered to return to Chosŏn. Kwŏn returned to Chosŏn and presented himself to the court on 8 March 1397,<sup>296</sup> thus ending a sojourn of almost eight months. He delivered condolences from the Ming court for the death of T'aejo's wife, a message regarding the conduct and skill expected of future Chosŏn envoys and the poems Kwŏn and the emperor had exchanged.

The trip to the Ming court left a significant impression on Kwŏn. It was not only his longest stint in China, but also perhaps the most exciting and stimulating. He had, after all, been detained, faced the prospect of indefinite incarceration, had audience with the emperor, been involved in the resolution of the *p'yojŏn* problem, exchanged poetry with the emperor, received warm hospitality in the court and met many new and talented people. Reminiscing on the trip Kwŏn wrote,

[T]hinking back on the past days, faintly like a dream they rise to the heavens but I realize they are dust and dirt. Thankfully, as the radiance of the Emperor's poems are kept in a trunk, they will be properly stored as precious objects to be treasured by my descendants in perpetuity.<sup>297</sup>

Kwŏn's foresight proved correct for his grandson, Kwŏn Ram 權孳 (1416-1465), would later write commentaries in the early 1460s on the collection of poems and have them republished.<sup>298</sup> Also, following his success in Ming, Kwŏn Kŭn petitioned the court for the title of *Wŏngjong Kongsin* 原從功臣 (Meritorious Subject) and T'aejo approved the title on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month in 1397.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 11: 06/03/08.

<sup>297</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 47-8.

<sup>298</sup> See Kwŏn T'ae-ŏk, "Ŭngjesiju Haeje" *Han'guk Munhak* 3, Seoul National University, Han'guk Munhwa Yŏn'guso, November, 1982, p. 169.

<sup>299</sup> *T'aejo Sillok* 12: 6/12/24.

## Final years of reform: 1397-1409

After returning from the Ming court, Kwŏn Kŭn lived for another twelve years and over that time he became even more of a central figure in Chosŏn's political, educational and intellectual affairs. His trip to the Ming court and dealings with the Hongwu emperor cemented his credentials as a recognised statesman, poet and scholar. But Kwŏn also grew in prominence as a number of his teachers, peers and colleagues died. Chŏng Mong-ju had been killed off in 1392 due to his opposition to Yi Sŏng-gye's seizure of the throne and Yi Saek – Kwŏn's long time family friend, teacher and colleague – died in 1396. Even Kwŏn's father passed away in 1405. Further pushing Kwŏn to the fore was the death of Chŏng To-jŏn in 1398.<sup>300</sup> Although previously close friends with Chŏng prior to 1389, relations between Chŏng and Kwŏn soured when Kwŏn chose to support Yi Saek and the moderates, rather than Yi Sŏng-gye and the Chŏng's reformist clique.<sup>301</sup> When Kwŏn returned to the court in 1394, antipathy remained between the two, only to be exacerbated by Chŏng's role in creating the *p'yojŏn* problems with the Ming and Kwŏn's successful resolution. Following Chŏng's death, however, Kwŏn had more freedom to engage in the political process and contribute to political and intellectual issues. As Kang Mun-sik notes, even despite the points of friction that emerged between Chŏng and Kwŏn, the two seem to have maintained a cordial, working relationship.<sup>302</sup> In these last twelve years, however, Kwŏn became increasingly the oldest and most established scholar-official in the Chosŏn court.

This new prominence for Kwŏn meant that as he moved into higher positions within the bureaucracy he was able to propose a range of reforms through the various positions he held. From 1398 up until his death in 1409, Kwŏn was appointed to 23 posts under the reign of three kings: T'aejo, Ch'ongjo 定宗 (r. 1398-1400) and T'aejong 太宗 (r. 1400- 18). The positions included Minister 判事 of the Board of Works 工曹,

<sup>300</sup> Chŏng To-chŏn's death came from a rift that developed between Chŏng and Yi Bang-wŏn over the role of the king in the new dynasty. Chŏng wanted the king to assume a symbolic role with ministers holding political power. Yi, who had helped his father assume the throne, wanted to establish a monarchy. Following the death of Queen Sindŏk, Yi and his supporters stormed the palace and killed Chŏng, his supporters and the Queen's two sons who were in line to assume the throne ahead of Yi Bang-wŏn.

<sup>301</sup> Kang Mun-sik notes that one of the first issues that divided the scholar-officials concerned land reform. Chŏng To-jŏn, Cho Jun and Yun So-jong sided with Yi Song-gye's plans to reform private land ownership and Kwŏn Kŭn, Yi Saek, Yu Paek-yu and others opposed the move. Kang also notes the vested interests of Kwŏn and Chong during this time and links it to the positions they took. See Kang Mun-sik, "Chŏng To-jŏn kwa Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Sasang Pigyo", *Han'guksa*, Vol. 30 No. 2, Seoul, 2004: p. 148-50.

<sup>302</sup> Kang, "Chŏng To-jŏn kwa Kwŏn Kŭn ūi Saengae wa Sasang Pigyo", pp. 150-56.

Director 大提學 of the Office of Royal Decrees 藝文館, Deputy Director 知事 of the Office of Royal Lectures 經筵館 and Bureau of State Records 春秋館, and Councillor 贊成事 for the State Council 議政府. Kwōn was also promoted from a number of positions such as from Headmaster to Director 知事 of the National Academy and from First Mentor to Second Deputy Director of the Crown Prince Tutorial Office 世子貳師. As the titles suggest, the positions Kwōn worked in centred around education, records, composition and governance.

In holding these positions of seniority Kwōn was able to propose a range of reforms. Although the Chosŏn regime had been in place since 1392, there were still many areas of the bureaucracy that were inefficient or in need of reform and refinement. Kwōn engaged with these issues through the medium of memorials to the throne, raising issues, responding to requests and debating contentious policies. For example, in 1402 Kwōn addressed the issue of reform to financial methods used to keep track of profits, receipts and accounting. Kwōn cited cases from the Han, Tang and Song, and argued successfully for a centralised accounting unit over the decentralised system that was being used.<sup>303</sup> Another issue Kwōn tackled was the retention of private armies 私兵.<sup>304</sup> Kwōn argued passionately on historical and practical grounds against those advocating the retention of private armies. Not only did he succeed in having the group's case dismissed, but he managed to have the advocates impeached. Other issues he addressed included the relationship between human activity and natural occurrences, saying that "it is difficult talking about mankind and heaven, and in regard to natural disasters there is never just one reason". In short, Kwōn attempts to say that you can never anticipate all the factors that influence heaven and cause it to issue calamities and auspicious weather events such as natural disasters and famine years.<sup>305</sup> Separately, Kwōn also argued against land claims from alleged Paekche descendants who lived in Japan.<sup>306</sup>

In addition to the various political issues that arose, Kwōn submitted a number of memorials proposing changes to the political structures and workings of the Chosŏn court. In 1399 Kwōn proposed six changes to the running of affairs in the court.<sup>307</sup> Grounded in Confucian notions and argued upon practical needs, the six changes

<sup>303</sup> *T'aejong Sillok* 2: 3/1/1

<sup>304</sup> *Chōngjong Sillok* 2: 4/4/5

<sup>305</sup> *T'aejong Sillok* 6: 3/8/21.

<sup>306</sup> *Chōngjong Sillok* 2: 1/7/10.

<sup>307</sup> *Chōngjong Sillok* 2: 1/10/8.

included correcting workings of the mind 正心術, elevating the practice of filial piety and reverence 崇孝敬, diligently listening to state affairs 勤聽政, regulating travel and hunting 戒遊畋, establishing limits for public lawsuits 立詞訟之限 and watching for trustfulness of cabinet orders 示政令之信. In 1401, along similar lines, Kwōn proposed to the king six points to foster the way of governance. These points included being earnest in one's sincerity and filial piety 篤誠孝, diligently listening to state affairs 勤聽政, receiving courtiers 接朝士, diligently attending royal lectures 勤經筵, praising righteousness 褒節義 and conducting ceremonies for the spirits 行厲祭.<sup>308</sup> Yet another issue Kwōn addressed was the relationship between the rulers 君 and his ministers 臣. On this issue, in 1407, Kwōn wrote a memorial to the court arguing that for there to be effective governance, right and wrong need to be clearly defined, and rulers and ministers need to work as one. Kwōn provided examples from the sages Yao and Shun, along with other Confucians. According to Kwōn, the king ought to work without thought of himself, and ministers should provide feedback to the king through court mechanisms such as petitions and memorials. Such a working arrangement would result in a state where errors are quickly caught and corrected 調護匡救, and help and support both sides of government 維持夾輔.<sup>309</sup> In the relatively new Chosŏn regime there were a plethora of social and political issues to address and thus we see that Kwōn was engaging the issues and their advocates.

Education was another issue that remained a central concern for Kwōn. From 1401 to 1406, Kwōn held a number of roles at the National Academy that saw him influence and prescribe educational systems and practices. In a memorial of 1403 he proposed a strengthening of the royal lectures 經筵 system, along with promotion of the education and studies for the princes.<sup>310</sup> In one of the records we can see how well-regarded Kwōn's role in the education system was:

Now Kwōn Kūn, who holds the position of Participant 參贊 [of the Office of Royal Lectures] and Headmaster 大司成 [of the National Academy], is one who studied under Yi Saek and received his teachings. I hope from now on Kwōn, except for important discussions concerning military affairs of the

<sup>308</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 1: 1/1/14.

<sup>309</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 13: 7/6/22.

<sup>310</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 5: 3/3/3.

state, will everyday fulfil his duties at the National Academy, as well as avoiding sitting sessions with the exception of performing his official duties in public offices; work at improving lectures and encourage learning and also choose those from among the Confucian ministers who can convey and teach the classics on the classics, and those intelligent ones capable of receiving an education to all join the teaching academy, lecture and illuminate the classics and their teachings. Then in the future we will see real Confucians emerging and the way and its teachings will be illuminated. Correctly regulated conduct and popular customs will be favoured.<sup>311</sup>

T'aejo approved the proposal to renew and strengthen education, and Kim Kwa 金科 (d.u.) was charged with conducting the royal lectures but it was noted that "should there be anything [Kim Kwa] does not know, then go and ask Kwŏn Kŭn for a response".<sup>312</sup> In his "Biographical Chronology", Kwŏn was asked to run the royal lectures and the *Sillok* records Kwŏn contributing to discussions over historical and textual issues, such as debating the *T'onggam Ch'walyo* 通鑑撮要 (*Tiny Essentials of Comprehensive Mirror*).<sup>313</sup>

Kwŏn retired from his position at the National Academy in 1406 but maintained a strong interest in improving the educational standards of scholar-officials aspiring for office, as well as those currently working in the government. In fact, in the reforms Kwŏn proposed in his later life, we can see his appraisal of the results of the education system to date, in addition to his critique of its shortcomings and proposals for improvements. In 1407, he submitted a proposal to the court of seven articles of what he called *Kwŏnhak Samok* 勸學事目 – rules for public officials to encourage learning.<sup>314</sup> Kwŏn's *Kwŏnhak Samok* comprised the following rules:

1. Ensuring that early career scholar-officials do more than simply memorise the meaning and styles of the classics and instead read and study broadly the deeper principles of classical literature and be tested thereon;
2. Substituting the study and examination of difficult and impractical

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> *T'aejong Sillok* 5:3/3/10.

<sup>313</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: p. 34.

<sup>314</sup> *T'aejong Sillok* 13: 7/ 3/ 3.

classical literature genres for practical ones, such as essays 論, memorials 表, and critiques 判;

3. Have students tested on classical and supplementary literatures 漢吏文 that are of direct relevance to the affairs of court officials and do away with the study of unrelated texts, such as those on medicine;

4. Office of Royal Decrees start selecting and compiling the poetry and writings of suitable people into collected works;

5. As part of a program to promote Confucian scholastics, have scholars from the Three Offices 三館 every month read and write on selected classics;

6. Have students from both the capital and country study the *Lesser Learning* 小學 first before progressing to other texts;

7. Try not to deliberately move regional scholars and teachers to other areas.

Within these seven articles we can see Kwŏn's interest in pragmatic study and on-going intellectual cultivation. In a similar vein, another proposal Kwŏn put to the court, which was accepted, was for scholar-officials to compose poetry and memorials to kings and emperors for evaluation.<sup>315</sup> This proposal was adopted by the court and continued long after Kwŏn's death.

In looking across Kwŏn's engagement in the political process, his proposed reforms and his suggestions for reforming the education system we can see that his view of the world was filtered through the prism of Confucianism. Kwŏn drew on his extensive knowledge of Confucianism to find solutions to the problems the Chosŏn court faced. However this did not mean simple mimicry of the past; it was looking to the teachings of Confucianism as a repository of paragons and pariahs, and guidance on personal conduct and leadership. Kwŏn's seven articles on education, the *Kwŏnhak Samok*, show that he saw learning as an on-going process of refinement and that, although the materials of the curriculum are drawn from the Confucian canon which dates back to antiquity, learning needed to be grounded in practical, ever-day use and needs. Kwŏn

<sup>315</sup> *T'aejong Sillok* 14: 7/ 8/25.



insisted on the need for scholar-officials and envoys to be able to communicate and not just parrot quotes from the canon. He saw that it was necessary for scholar-officials to be able to relate the meaning of the canon to reality, which is no doubt a lesson he learnt from his trip to the Ming court in 1396. Kwŏn's ideas must have had some resonance in the court and with the king for not only were his proposals adopted but he was rewarded with the title of Meritorious Subject three times.<sup>316</sup>

### Forever the inquisitive mind

Outside of issues concerning the court, politics and education, Kwŏn remained engaged in broader intellectual pursuits and activities. In 1402, Kwŏn worked on a cartography project that was the first of its kind in the history of Chosŏn to include the charting of Chosŏn territory, with Ming, Japan and other lands. In his *YCJ*, Kwŏn explains that the *Yŏktae Chewang Honil Kangnido* 歷代帝王混一疆理圖 (hereafter referred to as *Kangnido*) was a collaborative work with Kim Sa-hyŏng 金士衡 (1333- 407), Yi Mu 李茂 (?-1409) and Yi Hŏe 李藎 (d.u.), and was based on Yi T'aek-min's 李澤民 (d.u.) *Sŏnggyo Kwangp'i-do* 聲教廣被圖 and monk Ch'ŏngjun's 清濬 (d.u.) *Honil Kangnido* 混一疆理圖.<sup>317</sup> Kwŏn noted in his text for the *Kangnido* that unlike other maps it is far broader than most in the geography it covers, extending beyond Ming to even include Japan. The reason for this, Kwŏn explains, is to help readers understand lands close and far, and who rules which lands.<sup>318</sup>

Writing and publishing is another area that Kwŏn remained engaged in. As mentioned above, Kwŏn wrote a number of commentaries on Confucianism while in exile, however it was not until 1406 that he finished the last of these commentaries on the *Record of Rites*.<sup>319</sup> The *Sillok* also shows that Kwŏn asked for help with the project a number of times before finishing it.<sup>320</sup> Other projects Kwŏn was involved in include the compilation and editing of the *Short History of the Eastern Kingdom*,<sup>321</sup> contributing to the *History of the Koryŏ*<sup>322</sup> and commenting on and printing the *Record of Filial Conduct*, a text that Yi Che-hyŏn and Kwŏn's relatives, Kwŏn Bu and Kwŏn Chun, had

<sup>316</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1: pp. 34-5.

<sup>317</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3: p. 165.

<sup>318</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3: pp. 165-6. See Appendix p. 277 for a reproduction of the *Kangnido*.

<sup>319</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 12: 6/ 11/17.

<sup>320</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 8: 4/11/28.

<sup>321</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 6: 3/8/30.

<sup>322</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 8: 4/12/19.

commented on.<sup>323</sup> Regarding the *Record of Filial Conduct*, Kwŏn wrote of its provenance and the accumulation of commentaries and diagrams. Here, again, Kwŏn saw the *Record of Filial Conduct* as part of a part of broader educational program.

The recording of the *Record [of Filial Conduct]* clearly comes from the conduct of people of the past. Its guidance can also be sung and recited to great enjoyment. If this document is circulated widely among the people, taught to children, sung night and day, practised that which is seen and heard, rise in those with good hearts, and one's feelings give rise to heaven's nature, then people can increasingly practice filial piety without running contrary to the teachings found in the writings of the sages and help with educating the people and setting the ideas about customs. Although this text is small, their contribution from famous teachings is large, so how could it be thought of today so carelessly? Nowadays when I look at this text I always feel more love and respect for my grandfather. How can I dare not be respectful?<sup>324</sup>

An on-going feature of Kwŏn's intellectual activities was his contribution of introductions and epilogues to other people's writings. The most notable are his contributions to Chŏng To-jŏn, such as the introduction and postscript for Chŏng's essays on Neo-Confucianism themes - *Sim, Ki, I P'yŏn* - written in 1394, and in 1398 an introduction for Chŏng's treatise against Buddhism, the *Pulssi Chapp'yŏn*.<sup>325</sup> Other contributions include an introduction and posthumous biography for Yi Saek's collected works, introductions for the collected works of Chŏng Ch'u 鄭樞 (1333-1382), Han Su 韓脩, Yi Sung-in and an epilogue for Chŏng Mong-ju's collected works. An interesting feature of Kwŏn's contributions is that he also wrote a number of epilogues for Buddhist publications. After 1400 the court had a number of Buddhist sūtras published, such as the *Mahāprajñāparamitā-sūtra* 大般若經 and the *Lotus Sūtra* 妙法蓮華經 with golden characters and Kwŏn provided short pieces for them.<sup>326</sup> Some scholars have taken this as evidence of Kwŏn's sympathy for Buddhism. Such an assertion, however, fails to appreciate two important points: firstly, Kwŏn wrote these

<sup>323</sup> Kwŏn Bu, Kwŏn Chun, et. al., (compilers), *Hyohaengnok*, Yun Ho-jin (trans.), Seoul, 2004: pp. 186-8.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-8.

<sup>325</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3: pp. 50-54, 70-2.

<sup>326</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 3, pp. 180-1, 182-4.

contributions as part of his court responsibilities and secondly, Kwŏn's writings and ideas show his Confucian disposition. While he may have been knowledgeable about certain Buddhism ideas and even admired some of their religious devotion, he remained grounded in Confucian territory.

On the second lunar month of 1409, Kwŏn passed away at his residence at the age of 57. The *Sillok* records his death on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, stating that he died following a critical illness and that the Crown princes had gone to visit him but he died before they arrived.<sup>327</sup> The *Sillok* entry outlines Kwŏn's family background, his quick rise through the examination system and meteoric trajectory into the Koryŏ government. Other points of Kwŏn's life that are covered include mention of his superb writing skills, his activities in the court, his exile, writing of the *IHTS*, and his involvement in the resolution of the *p'yojŏn* dispute with the Ming. The King, it was reported, upon hearing of Kwŏn's death was surprised and saddened, organised three days mourning and ordered officials to take care of Kwŏn's funeral. Even the princes went to pay their respects at the funeral mourning service, along with many of the officials from the court. Kwŏn's sons and sons-in-law began their period of mourning and started compiling his writings into a collected works. Kwŏn was granted the posthumous title of Munch'ung 文忠 and initially buried at Monokŭm'dong 毛奴金洞 in Kwangju, then in 1444 his grave was relocated to Mibopkok 彌法谷 in Ch'ungju.<sup>328</sup> Kwŏn's death was felt from the king and princes to the scholar-officials in the court. His death marked the loss of a fountain of knowledge and experience. Kil Chae, a student and colleague of Kwŏn, reportedly wept upon hearing the news of his death and of Kwŏn he said:

He was a man who lived among the three [rulers, teachers and his father]  
working with them all as though they were one.<sup>329</sup>

<sup>327</sup> *Taejong Sillok* 17: 9/2/14.

<sup>328</sup> Kwŏn's grave remains at this location, however the name of the region has since changed and is currently Bangch'uk-ri, Saenggŭk-myŏn, Ŭmsŏng-gun, Ch'ungch'ŏngbuk-do province. Furthermore, the site also houses the graves of Kwŏn's son, Kwŏn Che 權蹠 (1387-1445), and grandson, Kwŏn Ram and is recognised nationally and regional for its historical treasures. Kwŏn Tae-u 權泰佑 is the current caretaker of the site and is a direct descendant of Kwŏn Kŭn. See Appendix pp. 219-223 for photographs of the gravesite.

<sup>329</sup> *Sejong Sillok* 3: 1/ 4/ 12.

## Kwŏn Kŭn: a life reconsidered

The provenance of this chapter was the contentious and conflicting depictions of Kwŏn Kŭn in academic literature spanning the last century. As we have seen above Kwŏn Kŭn was an influential figure for his time. From an early age he excelled as a student, rose through the ranks of the Koryŏ government, fraternised with eminent scholars-officials of the time and gravitated to the heart of state and international affairs. Kwŏn's meteoric rise was tempered by his breaking diplomatic protocols which cost him several years of exile from the capital. Although away from the capital, Kwŏn wrote poetry and several seminal texts on Confucianism that came to mark the beginning of the Confucian commentary tradition in Korea. Meanwhile, the new regime of Chosŏn emerged under T'aejo, who in 1394 recalled Kwŏn to the court. Kwŏn returned to the court and resumed his career as a scholar-official. A crowning point in his career was his involvement in and successful resolution of the *p'yojŏn* dispute in 1396: Breaking the diplomatic deadlock between the Ming and Chosŏn courts; exchanging poetry with the Hongwu emperor; receiving hospitality from the Ming court and fraternising with many eminent scholars of the Chinese court. All of this proved Kwŏn's skills and ability as a statesman, scholar and poet. Upon returning to Chosŏn, Kwŏn continued with his engagement in affairs ranging from education and political reform through to domestic and international political affairs.

Underlying Kwŏn's activities was a strong Confucian foundation. His approach to institutional, bureaucratic and educational reform was argued through Confucian historical, textual and intellectual prisms. Kwŏn's writings are peppered with references and allusions to Confucian tropes from his poetry through to his work on astronomical charts, in which he reverts to the sage kings Yao and Shun who are praised by Confucians as paragons of perfect government and conduct. Even in the poems exchanged with the Hongwu emperor, Kwŏn makes reference to the *Book of Odes*. Kwŏn clearly held Confucianism – its practice, doctrines and teachings – as the basis for understanding and ordering the world, along with the repository for solutions to the problems of his time.

As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Kwŏn has suffered as a historical figure. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars criticised him for being heterodox, having shallow views on Zhu Xi and being sympathetic to Buddhism. This chapter has proved just how limited and misguided these perceptions are. Kwŏn was not a grey scholar of little intellectual

capacity, with little to offer and nor was he a marginal historical figure of no value. Rather, Kwŏn Kūn was an important and central figure in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, whose life and achievements were enmeshed with the unfolding events of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century in the Korean peninsula.

### **3. Confronting Confucianism: Kwŏn Kŭn and the Confucian canon, its commentaries and commentators**

Confucianism has played a significant role in shaping Korean societies for centuries. It has provided administrative and bureaucratic structures; shaped social, familial and cultural realms; been the foundation of educational systems and learning; and constructed moral, intellectual and religious frameworks for people to understand and interpret the world. Behind all of these facets Confucianism remained informed and supported by a canon of authoritative literature and a cumulative tradition of commentaries. For intellectuals in pre-modern Korea, the meaning and significance attributed to the canon and its commentaries derived from the questions posed to these bodies of knowledge. As time and circumstance changed, so too did the questions asked of this knowledge and accordingly the importance attached to parts of the canon and its commentators fluctuated. For present day scholars of Korea, exploring how Confucian intellectuals approached and understood the canon and commentaries throughout the ages provides a means to chart an important facet of the topography of Korean intellectual history.

When it comes to exploring the broader picture of Confucianism in Korea's history at first glance Kwŏn Kŭn is a noteworthy figure. His writings on the Confucian classics represent both the earliest extant commentaries in Korea and the beginning of the Confucian commentary tradition which continued up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since Kwŏn's commentaries provide the earliest available picture of how Confucian intellectuals of that time understood the canon, once we have determined his particular perspective we can then better appreciate the preoccupations and interests of later Confucian exegetes. Another point that makes Kwŏn an important intellectual figure to examine is that he was a pivotal figure in the late Koryŏ/early Chosŏn intellectual landscape. Kwŏn was at the centre of court affairs for the best part of his life; he occupied bureaucratic positions that determined policy, education, civil service examinations, correspondence and foreign affairs; furthermore, he was educated by and fraternised with other prominent intellectuals of that time. In other words, Kwŏn was located physically, professionally and intellectually at the heart of domestic and international affairs for Koryŏ and Chosŏn, and he was enmeshed within a coterie of key intellectuals, thus making his writings perhaps the closest we can come to probing the issues and ideas that occupied the minds of that time.

As we have seen in the introduction, however, in the eyes of scholars over the past century Kwŏn occupies a contentious position as a Confucian intellectual.

Representations of him range from dismissive through to derivative. Among scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century like Chang Chi-yŏn, Takahashi Toru and Hyŏn Sang-yun he was not a figure of particular merit. Chang saw Kwŏn as focusing on implementing teachings from Confucianism and attempting to unify scholastic lineages of the Koryŏ up until his time. Takahashi, on the other hand, singled out Kwŏn for his ambiguous orientation toward Buddhism, being heterodox in his thought and lacking a deep understanding of Zhu Xi's thought. Further to this he saw Kwŏn as offering no intellectual contributions beyond what was contained in the writings of his peer Chŏng To-jŏn. Even then, Takahashi regarded Kwŏn and Chŏng as mere "grey scholars". Hyŏn was the first scholar to place Kwŏn intellectually in relation to 16<sup>th</sup> century intellectual development by highlighting elements of his writings on Principle, Material Force, Nature and noting his influence on T'oegye.

Scholars in the past few decades have been more generous in their treatment of Kwŏn as an intellectual, however they have not strayed far from the parameters set forth in Hyŏn's work. As touched on in the introduction, Kalton acknowledges Kwŏn as the first commentator to offer a systematic exposition of Neo-Confucian notions of man and the universe, but claims that Kwŏn provided little in the way of technical elaboration. For Kalton, Kwŏn was a transmitter of Neo-Confucian thought. However, overall in the eyes of contemporary scholars Kwŏn is regarded as little more than a conduit for introducing Zhu Xi and Neo-Confucian philosophical teachings to the mainstream.

From this scholarship we can identify a number of general representations of Kwŏn as an intellectual. First, he was an insignificant thinker for his time; second, that his ideas were heterodox; third, that he merely conveyed select ideas of Song period intellectuals and offered little or no input of his own; fourth, that his ideas on Confucianism were no different to his peers; and lastly, that he attempted to apply Confucian teachings to reality and unify past lineages. These representations of Kwŏn as a Confucian intellectual are problematic because they are contradictory and argue mutually exclusive positions. For example on the one hand Kwŏn is lauded for his use of diagrams and explanations in the *IHTS*, and recognised for transmitting select Neo-Confucian philosophical notions, yet on the other hand he is derided as being insignificant, derivative or even heterodox. Alternatively if Kwŏn's thought on Confucianism was

heterodox and mirrored that of his peers, then were his peers also heterodox? If he was an insignificant thinker then why do some people point to him as starting the literary trend of diagrams and commentaries that even influenced T'oegye? Also, what were the traditions that Kwon was allegedly attempting to unify, how was he doing this and why? This state of contrasting and contentious representations of Kwŏn as an intellectual asks for clarification and thus forms the basis of this chapter, which charts the topography of Kwŏn's thought on Confucianism.

This chapter will argue that on an intellectual level Kwŏn was engaging with the Confucian canon, its commentaries, commentators and its ideas in a broad and thorough way beyond the narrow prescriptions to date. This chapter will demonstrate that Kwŏn's mastery of the literature and the breadth of his knowledge show that he was anything but an intellectual lightweight, a passive conduit for Confucian teachings or an intellectual sycophant to Cheng-Zhu thought; rather, he was an intellectual who was grappling with the enigma of the Confucian canon in an attempt to understand its meanings. Importantly, this chapter will show that the perception of Kwŏn being an uncritical transmitter of Cheng-Zhu thought is incorrect and instead that Kwŏn evaluated Zhu Xi's thought and highlighted both his strengths and weaknesses. These facets and nuances of Kwŏn's thought have been overlooked in modern scholarship, yet are important for it undermines the prevailing discourse of Kwŏn being the point of departure for the adoption of Neo-Confucianism in Chosŏn.

The argument of this chapter will proceed in the following way. The first issue to be addressed is how Kwŏn saw the Confucian canon. It will show that he saw the canon as a body of knowledge and layered meaning, ranging from simple concepts through to practical and abstract knowledge, as well as historical and moral paradigms. Here we will see the breadth of Kwŏn's knowledge of and interest in the canon. Next, the chapter will focus on Kwŏn's hermeneutic engagement with the canon, namely how he interrogated the canon and its commentators in his pursuit of knowledge. Following this is Kwŏn's treatment of commentators. Kwŏn was of course one of many people to look at the canon and attempt to make sense of its shambolic state. How he regarded the endeavour of these other thinkers, like Zhu Xi, will illustrate that his intellectual engagement was not founded on holding any one particular line or supporting a particular thinker or school, but was instead based on understanding the teachings of the canon. Lastly, this chapter will illustrate that Kwŏn was part of a broader intellectual



ethos within North East Asia that permitted diversity, divergence and difference. It was an intellectually plural world in which Kwŏn's thought, interpretations and critiques, especially of Zhu Xi, were equally at place next to people who were particularly enamoured of Zhu's thought.

The argument presented in this chapter is a subtle one, which at first glance may seem unimportant or self-evident. As outlined above, the argument is important for it illustrates the strictures that have bound academic discourses on Kwŏn to date. The argument is important not just for clarifying Kwŏn's intellectual position, but because it attempts to surmount the echo chamber of scholarship that has defined and prescribed Kwŏn's thought on Confucianism in recent decades. Of all the scholarship on Kwŏn to date, that which focuses on his understanding of Confucianism is by far the most prevalent. While this scholarship over the last few decades has taken large steps forward when compared to the curt treatment Kwŏn received from Takahashi Toru, Chang Chi-yŏn and Hyŏn Sang-yun, it has however suffered from an echo chamber effect whereby his thought has been approached, iterated and reiterated through the prism of philosophical issues that occupied the minds of 16<sup>th</sup> century Chosŏn Confucians. These issues include Kwŏn's ideas about principle 理, material force 氣, the four beginnings 四端, seven emotions 七情, nature 性 and the heart/mind 心 – all of which in Korea are taken as standard Neo-Confucian fare. Without a doubt these are important ideas and gaining an understanding of their antecedents before the 16<sup>th</sup> century is a valid and indispensable line of enquiry. The problem is, however, that there is very little scholarship that seeks to look beyond these ideas and these 16<sup>th</sup> century fixations because they are taken as the benchmark for evaluating the value of a Chosŏn *sŏngnihak-ja* 性理學者, a scholar of principle and nature. Therefore clarifying the breadth and depth of Kwŏn's intellectual position towards Confucianism is important.

### **The Confucian canon: an integrated blueprint for man, society and the world**

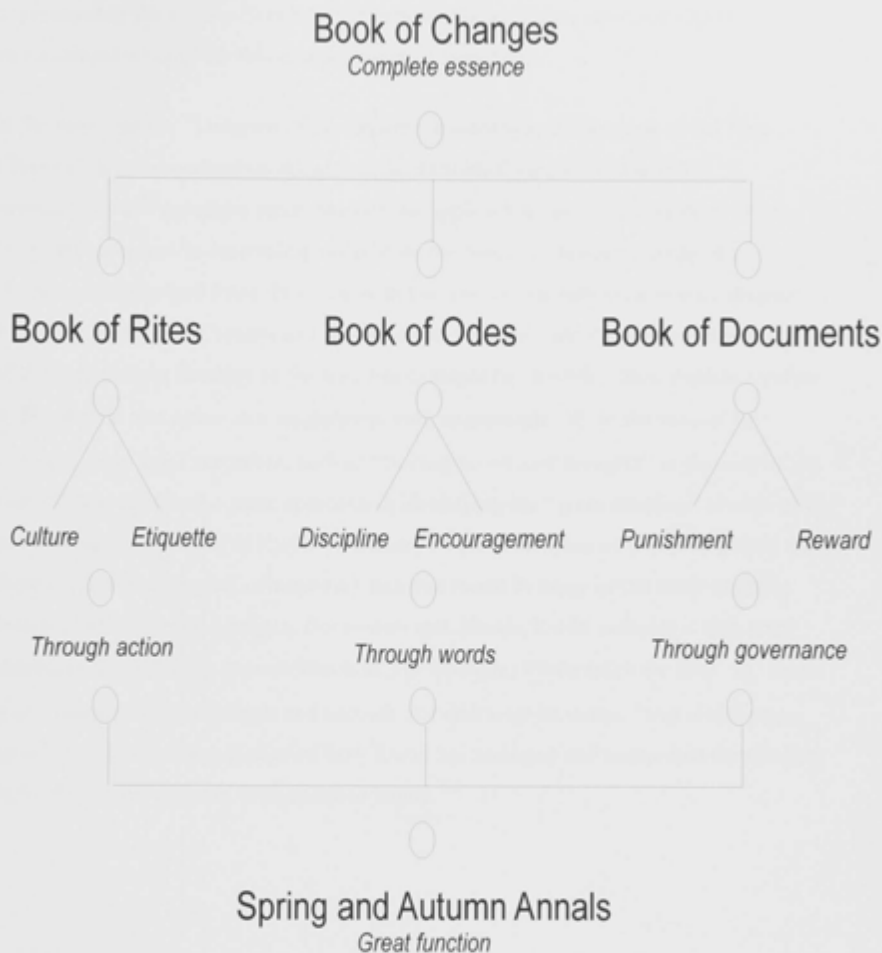
In Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism discussion of the Five Classics takes up more space than any other topic. Each of the *RHTs* is dedicated to one of the five classics and in the *IHTS* he devotes more chapters to topics derived from the Five Classics than any other topic. When Kwŏn first tackles the Five Classics in two chapters of the *IHTS* he offers his most succinct expression of how he conceived of the classics.

In these two chapters Kwŏn looks at the classics from two different, yet linked perspectives. In the first of the chapters, "Diagram Unifying the Essence and Function of the Five Classics", he depicts the classics as an integrated whole. Kwŏn writes:

I think the *Book of Changes* is the complete essence of the Five Classics, [and] the *Spring and Autumn Annals* are the great function of the Five Classics. The *Book of Documents* through the way of governance [manages] affairs, the *Book of Odes* through words [expresses] nature and feelings, the *Books of Rites* through respect [establishes] discretion and culture. Even if each [Book is regarded] exclusively as one text, they are still furnished by the essence and function of the *Book of Changes* and *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Alas, they are called great! Sages [were the] complete essence of the Five Classics, [and] the Five Classics [were the] great function of the Sages. The *Book of Changes* is the way that has Heaven and Earth and the essence of Sages. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is the way that has Sages and cannot be different to Heaven and Earth. Therefore He 伊尹 put forth the diagrams and the pictures of the *Book of Changes*, *Spring and Autumn Annals* was written and a rare creation was achieved.<sup>330</sup>

<sup>330</sup> Kwŏn Kūn, *Iphaktosŏl* 入學圖說, Andong Kwŏn-sshi Sŏul Hwasuhoe, Seoul, 1982: pp. 52-3. All references to the *IHTS* herein will refer to this edition unless stated otherwise and, as stated in the Introduction, the title of the text will be abbreviated to *IHTS*.

Diagram 1. – Unifying the Essence and Function of the Five Classics



Kwōn thus takes the *Book of Changes* and *Spring and Autumn Annals* as respectively representing the polarities of the essence and function of the classics. Placed between them are the three remaining classics of the *Odes*, *Rites* and *Documents*, each of which relate to a specific topic such as governance, human nature and culture. While the classics, as texts, deal with these issues, he describes the sages of antiquity as personifying these themes. The sages are at once the manifestation of the essence and function of these ideals and they are the subject upon which the classics and their teachings are based. A common feature that starts in this chapter but extends into the next chapter is his use of the essence/function 體用 paradigm to interpret the

classics.<sup>331</sup> In the commentary and diagram to this chapter Kwŏn illustrates the importance of the classics and how the individual classics are arranged together to form an integrated whole with this essence/function paradigm.

In the next chapter, “Diagram of the Separate Essences and Functions of the Five Classics”, Kwŏn summarises the gist of the individual classics and uses the essence/function paradigm again however he applies it to the individual texts. The books are arranged in descending order from the *Book of Changes* through the *Documents*, *Odes* and *Rites*, finishing with the *Annals*. As with the previous chapter, Kwŏn maintains the *Changes* and *Annals* as the polarities and he offers a curt summary of the essence and function of the text. For example he identifies the complete essence 全體 of each text either as a single term, such as principle 理 in the case of the *Changes*, or as brief statement, such as “Having no wicked thoughts” in the case of the *Odes*. Kwŏn applies the same approach in identifying the “great function” of each of the books. One final feature of Kwŏn’s summary of the Five Classics in this chapter is that there is no accompanying commentary like that found in many of the other chapters. Instead, in the case of *Changes*, *Documents* and *Annals*, Kwŏn includes a very brief statement beneath their essence/function. For example, Kwŏn takes the Way 道 as the great function of the *Changes* and beneath that character he writes, “that which sages have”. To gain a clearer picture of how Kwŏn has arranged and interpreted the Classics individually, his diagram is reproduced below.<sup>332</sup>

<sup>331</sup> Jörg Plassen observes that Kwŏn appears to use the essence-function schema across several of the chapters of the *IHTS*. He also notes the prevalent use of this schema by Song dynasty neo-Confucians. See Plassen, Jörg, “Some notes on structural aspects of Kwŏn Kŭn’s *lphak tosŏl*”, presented at the Association for Korean Studies in Europe (AKSE) Conference, Hamburg, 1999: pp. 11-12.

<sup>332</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982: pp. 53-4.

*Diagram 2. - Separate Essences and Functions of the Five Classics*



From these two chapters we can see how Kwōn regarded the Five Classics as an integrated scheme. The abstract principle of heaven, as found in the *Book of Changes*, is connected to the perfect embodiment of heaven's principles, as seen in the personification of the sages in the *Annals*. The conduit through which the principles of heaven came to be embodied is the *Odes*, *Documents* and *Rites*, each of which deal with a particular facet of society or human nature. So when arranged with the *Changes* and *Annals* at either pole, the integrated vision of the Five Classics reads as an ideal framework that explains and orders the world, society and human conduct. This macro

understanding is further complemented by Kwŏn's micro analysis of each of the Five Classics by applying the same essence/function paradigm to each of the texts to draw out its key points.

Kwŏn therefore can be understood as taking the Five Classics as at once describing how an ideal society was best embodied by the sages of antiquity, while also prescribing how he thinks the Five Classics can best apply to constructing and ordering just such an ideal society. In other words, Kwŏn's understanding of the Five Classics is a description of and prescription for a Confucian utopia. Since these two chapters are but a summary and offer little elaboration on the details, Kwŏn then devotes the remaining chapters of the *IHTS* and his dedicated commentaries on the Five Classics in the *RHT* to explaining in more detail the key themes and issues of the Classics.

### Elaborating the essentials: strata of meaning

In the *IHTS* and *RHT* Kwŏn wrote about Confucianism from a variety of angles and focused on a range of topics, however Kwŏn used the *IHTS* specifically to instruct novice students on key issues, texts and concepts in Confucianism. Accordingly, across the *IHTS* we can identify Kwŏn's fundamental interests with the Confucian canon as needed by late 14<sup>th</sup> century Koryŏ Confucian neophytes. The *IHTS* is also important for its way of delivering this message, namely through the combination of diagrams and textual commentaries.

The genre of combining text and diagram is not entirely unique in Korean history. Silla monk Ŭisang 義湘 (625-702), for example, wrote a summary of Huayen teachings called *Diagram of the Dharma World of the Single Vehicle of Huayen* 華嚴一乘法系圖 in which he arranged 210 characters in the shape of the square seal.<sup>333</sup> Even in China the use of diagrams was widespread and common before Kwŏn's time. Chinese Taoist and medical practitioners frequently used diagrams in their texts and these diagrams often show a sympathetic relationship between the human body and territory.<sup>334</sup> As Jörg Plassen has discussed, the use of diagrams enjoyed a renaissance

<sup>333</sup> For the original of Ŭisang's *Diagram of the Dharma World of the Single Vehicle of Huayen* 華嚴一乘法系圖 see TT 45:711a/T 1887A.45.711a-716a. For a translation see Lee, Peter and de Bary, William Theodore (eds.), *Sources of Korean Tradition, Volume One*, 1997: pp. 92-3.

<sup>334</sup> See Schipper, Kristofer, "The Taoist Body", *History of Religions*, Vol. 17, No. 3&4, Feb-May 1978, University of Chicago Press: pp. 355-387. There is an example of the personification of the environment on p. 356.

among Song dynasty Neo-Confucians who sought to revive the teachings of antiquity by presenting them in a palatable format.<sup>335</sup> The most conspicuous Confucian example is that of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) who composed the *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* 太極圖 and included with it an explanation to make the *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* 太極圖說. Likewise, Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–77) made use of diagrams, which like Zhou, were praised and utilised by Zhu Xi.

Kwŏn's *IHTS* is noteworthy because it is the first indigenous Korean text to combine diagrams and commentaries on Confucian topics.<sup>336</sup> This genre proved to be popular among Chosŏn Confucians since it was adopted by a number of prominent scholars. Yi Hwang, for example, in his *Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning* not only copied the style of Kwŏn's *IHTS* but even copied one of Kwŏn's chapters almost verbatim. Other Chosŏn scholars who also adopted this genre included Yi I and Chang Hyŏn-gwang 張顯光 (1554–1637), and the popularity of this genre continued through to 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars like Yi Hang-no 李恒老 (1792–1868) and Yi Chin-sang 李震相 (1818–1886).<sup>337</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn's use of diagrams and commentaries in the *IHTS*, while not unique in East Asia, is significant in the context of Korean history, as it the first of its kind in Korean Confucian history and it stimulated later generations of scholars to adopt the same genre of combining explanations and diagrams.

The knowledge summarised in the *IHTS* covers a number of fields, the first of which is introductory concepts from the Classics that all aspiring, educated scholar-officials should know. Kwŏn explains in commentaries and through diagrams the meaning of central Confucian texts like the Four Books, such as the *Great Learning*, which he praises for its simplicity, detail and usefulness for beginning students.<sup>338</sup> Kwŏn also uses these text to highlight teachings and concepts that relate to real life activities and daily affairs, such as the mandate of heaven 命, nature 性, the way 道 and teachings 教 from the *Doctrine of the Mean* and concepts like benevolence 仁 and righteousness

<sup>335</sup> Plassen, "Some notes on structural aspects of Kwŏn Kŭn's *Iphak tosŏl*", 1999.

<sup>336</sup> Plassen's presentation points out the similarities that Kwŏn's *IHTS* share with Song period works, especially in regard to the use of diagrams and the attempt to summarise Confucian texts and ideas into diagrams. He also acknowledges that not all of Kwŏn's *IHTS* is simply imitation.

<sup>337</sup> For a study of the use of diagrams in Korean Confucianism see Han'guk Sasangsa Yŏn'guhui, *Tosŏllo Ponŭn Han'guk Yuhak*, Yemun Sŏwŏn, Seoul, 2003.

<sup>338</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 24.

Further to outlining the key concepts behind certain texts, Kwōn explains basic concepts. For instance, Kwōn explains how from the Supreme Ultimate 太極 the two qualities of yin and yang 陰陽 represent the broken and full lines that comprise the basic trigrams and hexagrams from the *Changes*.<sup>340</sup> In another chapter he explains the arrangement of ancestral tombs according to the *Rites*.<sup>341</sup> However, Kwōn's *IHTS* is best known for its iconic first two chapters that textually and schematically present the basic ideas of heaven 天,<sup>342</sup> man 人,<sup>343</sup> mind 心<sup>344</sup> and nature 性,<sup>345</sup> concepts

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., pp. 33, 51. See Appendix p. 245 for *Doctrine of the Mean*.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-9. See Appendix p. 230. In the chapter, "Diagram of Supreme Ultimate Producing the Two Laws, Four Shapes and Eight Trigrams" Kwōn gives a succinct summary explaining the basic formation of hexagrams from the supreme ultimate 太極 to the two righteousnesses 兩儀, namely yin and yang as represented by either a full or broken line. These in turn combine to produce Four Symbols 四象 which are composed of two lines of Yin and Yang. Lastly, these four symbols combine to create the eight hexagrams 八卦 which are the basis of the *Changes*. Kwōn's diagram is intended for the beginner and is an important basis for understanding the theoretical foundation of the *Book of Changes* which carries over into many related issues.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., pp. 96-7. See Appendix p. 267.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 7. Also see Appendix, p. 262. Kwōn describes heaven as both universal 一 and great 大, which he describes as, "When that which is universal is spoken of in terms of principle, it is without end [and] when spoken of in terms of action, it is without end; when that which is great is spoken of in terms of its essence, it is all encompassing [and when] spoken of in terms of transformations, it is inexhaustible." The greatness and universality of heaven relate to the source of all things and is the origin of all the different things in the world. Kwōn connects these descriptions to sincerity 誠 and respect 敬, emphasizes the unity of heaven and man by stating, "Unifying heaven and man to be one." Here Kwōn is not only describing the traits of heaven, but is also indicating where and towards what a person directs their respect and sincerity. Just as these traits are of heaven, they are also the fundamental traits of the individual. Kwōn is then not only enumerating the individual traits of Heaven, but is also pointing to where and how the individual directs their practice of respect and sincerity.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., p. 8. Also see Appendix p. 243. Kwōn's explanation of man revolves around the trait of benevolence 仁, or human heartedness. Kwōn explains benevolence as: "...the principle through which heaven and earth bring forth things. Through receiving it [benevolence] human beings are able to live, and it becomes their mind. Therefore humans become the spiritually powerful of all creatures and benevolence becomes the chief of all good virtues." By describing benevolence this way, Kwōn shows that benevolence is both an essential cosmological trait of heaven and a defining characteristic of people. In addition, Kwōn again relates his discussion of people and benevolence to the archetypes of the sage, superior man and ordinary people, and their respective moral traits of sincerity, respect and desire. All humans share the same universal principle with heaven but their physical constitution and actions are what determine whether they do good or bad. To illustrate the point, Kwōn uses the character for man 人 in a heuristic manner with the two strokes descending to the left and right away from principle into good and bad. Lastly, he qualifies that only when a person can embody benevolence so as to complete the virtues of his mind and make use of those principles that are ever present, are they then content with being called a person. Therefore, we see that Kwōn is arguing that the cultivation of benevolence is crucial in becoming a person in the fullest Confucian sense of the word and benevolence is essential in leading a full and proper life.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10. See Appendix p. 244. Kwōn enumerates its origin, role and a function, pointing out that it is what people receive from heaven and it controls the body. In addition to this, the heart/mind is where "principle and material force subtly combine," it is a pure place, yet it also controls people's nature and temperament, contains all principles and responds to external events. Kwōn says that the heart/mind is, "...constrained by the material force we are endowed with and it is obscured by our



desires. When its function becomes active, [the heart/mind] is confused. The student must keep his face towards reverence, so as to straighten within, dispelling confusion and returning to clarity.” Kwŏn thus saw the heart/mind as a complex juncture where innate principles derive from heaven and mix with the physical and emotional constituents of the person. The heart/mind is also that which responds to external stimuli.

Kwŏn also uses the character for heart/mind and its strokes to help students understand the complex nature of the heart/mind. According to Kwŏn, the central dot represents the origin of the various principles and this corresponds to the essence of the heart/mind. The lower u-shaped stroke holds the multitude of principles while the stroke itself, from the top left down is the source of various material principles that subtly combine to create the heart/mind. The second part of the same stroke that rises to the right is where the heart/mind is housed in fire of the five phases and it flares up in response to events of the outside world. The right-hand stroke symbolises when the nature of the heart/mind produces feelings, which Kwŏn describes as a “function of the mind.” The final left-hand stroke “symbolises when the active heart/mind produces intentions which are also a function of the mind”, so the mind, Kwŏn explains, has one essence but two functions. The essence of the heart/mind is the principle of heaven while the two functions Kwŏn describes as the heart/mind of the way 道心 and heart/mind of man 人心. Kwŏn explains the heart/mind of the way as, “The one which has the origins of its activity in nature and the mandate of heaven is called the heart/mind of the way and it is associated with feelings. From its beginning it has nothing which is not good, its beginnings are subtle and difficult to discern, hence it is said the heart/mind of the way is subtle. You must definitely give reverence the lead so as to broadly realise this moral heart/mind of the way.” The human heart/mind, on the other hand, is, “The one which has its origin in form, and material force is called the human heart/mind and is associated here with volitions. From its faintest stirrings this mind has both good and evil, its tendency is to be precarious and it seeks to fall, hence it is said ‘the human heart/mind is precarious.’”

Here Kwŏn is explaining that while the essence that all people receive is one and the same as the principle of heaven, of the two functions of the mind it is the heart/mind of the way that is closest to the unadulterated principle of heaven, yet is subtle and hard to identify unless the individual cultivates it. The mind of man, however, is where the emotions and the material forces of the individual will meld to form the genesis of good and bad. In describing the two functions of the mind in this way, Kwŏn highlights firstly, that the heart/mind of the way is ever present within all people and that people only need to cultivate it. Not only do people then always have the principles of heaven within them, but they always have the capacity to find within themselves the principle of the way, nurture it and become a sage. Secondly, Kwŏn’s account of the human heart/mind explains why people do good and bad, while at the same time highlights the importance of people being in control of their thought, emotions and actions.

The last feature of Kwŏn’s discussion of the heart/mind addresses how a person can take control of their heart/mind and attempt to discover and nurture the principles of heaven. Kwŏn wrote, “It is only when you block the buds of desire, realise the correctness of heavenly principle, make the heart/mind of the way your guiding principle and the human heart/mind takes its commands from it, that the precarious will become secure and the subtle becomes plain, in movement or in rest, and in all that you do or say, you will be free from error. Given that, you will be at one with the saints and sages and participate in and assist heaven and earth. You will then be able gradually to attain it [heavenly principle or the way].”

Kwŏn is suggesting that firstly, a person must sever the buds of desire that lead the heart/mind astray. Secondly, that they must follow the heart/mind of the way as a guide to their thought and actions. Once this is achieved, the dangers of the heart/mind are mitigated and a person’s actions approach that of a sage. If this prescription is not followed, Kwŏn gives the following warning: “If this is not the case, then as human desire lengthens daily, heaven’s principle diminishes daily. This function of the mind does not exceed feelings and desires, and affairs of gain and loss. Even if you have the appearance of a man, you are not far from the dumb beasts. How is this anything but a lack of reverence [towards heaven]?”

The danger then is that if the principle of heaven and the precarious nature of the heart/mind are ignored, a person will increasingly become susceptible to capricious emotions and end up no different to wild beasts. In the last sentence Kwŏn points to the key deficiency, namely reverence. Reverence then is a key feature in not only guarding against this descent into the realm of birds and beast, but is a crucial means by which people achieve sage-hood.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p. 11. Kwŏn describes nature firstly, as that which heaven commands, then secondly, as that which people receive from heaven, the principle of life which is instilled within people’s hearts. It is for these reasons, Kwŏn explains, that the character for nature, is composed of the two characters,

brought to prominence through the work of Cheng/Zhu scholars from Song China. In the opening diagram for the first chapter, Kwōn combines all of these concepts and into one human-like representation.<sup>346</sup> The idea of heaven is placed at the crown of the

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"heart/mind" 心 on the left and "to arise, or be born" 生 on the right. Unlike others such as Buddha, Hanzi and Gaozi who also talk about nature, Kwōn distinguishes the Confucian sense of nature from the others thinkers by quoting the *Doctrine of the Mean* and *Mencius*. He claims that the three others only discuss nature in its material form, while the Confucian understanding of nature includes the element of principle.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p. See Appendix p. 261. In the first chapter of the *IHTS*, Kwōn presents a diagram that unifies heaven, man, mind and nature in a human-like form in the centre with a head, neck, torso and limbs. Above and outside the "body" are the Supreme Ultimate and two of the four cardinal points: east and west. These two references locate the "body", or person, within both the metaphysical and physical realm. In the centre of the "head" is the character heaven 天 and the four virtues: beginning, [fountain] head, proper interaction and completion 元亨利貞. From the centre of the crown, a path descends through sincerity 誠 and fate 命, between the five phases 五行, to become the principle of the source of nature 理之源性, which in turn connects to the mind 心. Yin and yang encase the crown and as they descend through the neck, they form the roots of the five phases, which in turn split into material and moral qualities. In depicting heaven, its qualities and the key constituents of all phenomena within the head and as the source from which other qualities then flow forth, Kwōn is then establishing moral and metaphysical characteristics of heaven as the foundation of man's nature.

As these qualities flow through the head into the heart/mind 心, the diagram shows how the qualities transform into an array of emotions and moral actions. The principle of the source of nature connects the head to the centre of the character heart/mind and within the stroke it has the five moral virtues of benevolence, propriety, righteousness, wisdom and trust. Branching off from the stroke with the five moral values, to the right, is another stroke that denotes emotions 情 and descends through the four beginning 四端 of humanity, propriety, rightness and wisdom at the top of the right-hand limb. The central stroke connects to the bottom stroke which includes the seven emotions 七情 of happiness, anger, sorrow, fear, love, evil and desire, and to the right-hand side Kwōn writes "flare up" 炎上, implying the seven emotions flare up. On the left-hand side of the same stroke is the, "source of material substance" 氣之源, indicating that the seven emotions are the source of material substance. The far left-hand stroke of mind/heart has the "mysterious will" 意幾, below which are good and evil. Outside and to either of the character mind/heart are two notes: To the right it says, "[moral/physical] disposition 質 is endowed from within; spirit issues forth from yang," while to the left, "form arises from yin; material force from/to the outside".

From the bottom of the character mind/heart extends two "limbs" which represent the external manifestation of that which comes forth from a person's heart/mind. The space surrounding the top of the limbs marks good to the right and bad to the left, and between the two limbs is, "good and bad divide; the myriad of things emerge." The bottom half of the diagram which stems from the mind/heart is then the moral, psychological and worldly unfolding of the individual's inherent nature. Starting with the right-hand "good" limb that descends from the stroke of the mind/heart character with emotions, there is a bubble with the four beginnings. This stroke of the character heart/mind and the four beginnings is linked by lines making not only the traits of the heart/mind connected to external manifestations, but also internal traits linked to moral actions: Compassion is linked to benevolence; shame to dutifulness; courtesy and modesty to propriety/rites; and right and wrong to wisdom.

Below this bubble is another with the character sincerity 誠 and a note stating "it [sincerity] is the nature of the Sage: correct results and not being inappropriate; purity also without end." The next and bottom most bubble describes the sage as "participating in heaven and earth he obtains a greatness equal to that of heaven; assisting the transforming and nourishing [powers of heaven and earth]". The three bubbles of the right-hand limb that stem from the emotions of the mind and flow through the four beginnings, sincerity of the sage and culminate in the perfect actions of the sage illustrate the ideal characteristics of a sage and the ultimate embodiment of heaven's principle. In two remarks that flank this limb it is noted that outside the right-hand side limb that, "pure goodness without badness" and beneath the limb he wrote, "Heaven and its flourishing life".

The left-hand limb charts the evil and the deliberate ignorance of the principle of heaven. Coloured black, this limb descends from the left-hand side of the character heart/mind where the mysterious will splits

figure, then beneath it various concepts like yin and yang, the five elements, mind, nature, feelings, good and evil, unfold and extend to the extremities where they represent the poles of personal expression and behaviour, namely the righteous sage or the man whose behaviour is as base as the animals and beasts.

Another field Kwŏn identifies in the canon is practical knowledge. In this case Kwŏn relates knowledge in the canon to the physical world and explains how the former explains/describes the latter and its functions. For example, Kwŏn describes how the hexagrams and trigrams from the *Changes* relate to the cardinal points,<sup>347</sup> and through elaborate diagrams he connects the days, months, seasons, and years to the sexagenary cycle.<sup>348</sup> In other chapters of the *IHTS*, Kwŏn explains the path of the sun and moon from different perspectives,<sup>349</sup> and even discusses the phases of the moon<sup>350</sup> and the arrangement of burial mounds.<sup>351</sup> For Kwŏn, the knowledge within the canon carries a utility that relates to and describes the functioning of the world.

Kwŏn's discussion of practical knowledge draws from a reservoir of abstract knowledge contained within the canon. Throughout both books of the *IHTS*, Kwŏn pauses to

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into good and bad, and in the first bubble it describes obstructions to the four beginnings. The next bubble has the character "desire" 欲 and within the bubble it says, "it [desire] harms the people: from violence, from abandoning [the principles of heaven]". The final bubble is empty of text within but surrounding it is written, "It [the person] distance from birds and beasts is not far" then below and signifying the extreme is written, "on the same level as all the birds and beasts." Accompanying the descent of this limb and the descent of man to the domain of birds and beasts, it is noted that to the left, "never yet without good" suggesting that no matter how low a person might stoop to the realm of animals, there always remains a grain of goodness and an avenue to mend one's ways.

The two limbs of good and bad are not entirely isolated, but are interconnected through the archetype of the superior man or gentleman 君子 and the ideal of respect 敬. In this bubble it is described that the superior man cultivates respect. The branch that connects the superior man to a sage explains that when a superior man succeeds in this endeavour, he is in accord with the way of heaven. The branches that interconnect the good and bad limbs highlight the potential for all people to not only become sages, but also the ever present danger that should a person, even a sage, disregard the way of heaven then they will descend to the level of animals.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-5. See Appendix p. 253. Kwŏn illustrates the application of the principle of heaven through two diagrams: "Fu-xi's 伏羲 Eight Trigrams of Preceding Heaven" and "Calenderic Bearing of King Wen's Latter Heaven". With these two diagrams and explanation, he points to the sages of antiquity who distinguished themselves in that they used the principle of heaven once it was revealed, hence distinguishing between 'Preceding Heaven' 先天 revealing its principle and 'Latter Heaven' 後天 where the principle has been revealed. In this chapter Kwŏn is seeking to describe the function of the sages who embodied the principle of heaven and he illustrates how in each case the quadrants of the compass were correctly aligned with the trigrams and the Five Phases, resulting in a period of fortuitous rule. Underlying this explanation and even the previous ones too, Kwŏn is using the essence-function theory. In this particular case he is equating 'Preceding Heaven' to the essence of heaven, and 'Latter Heaven' to the function, or the embodiment of the Way by the sages.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80, 81-4. See Appendix pp. 260-1.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-8, 89-91. See Appendix pp. 263-4.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-5. See Appendix pp. 265-6.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-50.

explain the mysterious workings of heaven and the nuances of the relationship between heaven as a metaphysical source of all truths and principles, and man's responsibilities to heaven, himself and his civic duties. Perhaps the best instance of this is found in the opening two chapters of the *IHTS* where Kwŏn explains the relationship between heaven, man, mind and nature first from a unified perspective,<sup>352</sup> then from an individual perspective. In the latter discussion he delineates heaven's position as the ubiquitous source of all principles, phenomena and morality, following which he links it to the moral and ontological dimensions of man through the moral and soteriological notions of sincerity 誠 and respect 敬.<sup>353</sup> Even in the discussion of mind, man and nature, Kwŏn reiterates the fundamental position of heaven and its principles as though it is the warp and weft of the ontological fabric of man.<sup>354</sup> Extended discussion of the five phases is another case where he expounds abstract notions and then connects it to reality. Here he provides an account of the two cycles of the five phases, namely their emergence and dissolution,<sup>355</sup> and then in subsequent chapters he highlights the role that the five phases play in defining the seasons and months of the year.<sup>356</sup>

To support his discussion and arguments, Kwŏn frequently invokes the moral credibility of historical figures in the canon. Since the personalities found in the canon are located in antiquity it provides Kwŏn with historical support for his argument. For example, Kwŏn evokes the sage kings Yao and Shun not only as moral paragons and models of wise leadership, but also lauds their role in calculating the calendar year and seasons, making observations of constellations, and instituting perfect rule over their domains.<sup>357</sup>

<sup>352</sup> See footnotes 341-344 for discussion of these points.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7. See also footnote 341.

<sup>354</sup> For discussion of man, mind and nature see *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7. See Appendix p. 253. Kwŏn explains the basic function of the principle using "Diagram of the He Chart's Five Phases of Mutual Production" and "Diagram of Lou Document's Five Phases of Mutual Destruction". With these two diagrams and their accompanying text, Kwŏn shows how the five phases evolve through either mutual production 相生 or mutual destruction 相克. Each of the five phases corresponds to spatial quadrants of the compass, numbers represented by black or white dots and their process is described as "circulating, endless and producing". The explanation for the latter diagram basically follows the same path as the former, except emphasising extinction rather than production between the five phases. One notable difference in the latter diagram is that yin and yang are introduced in the explanation along with correctness 正 and partiality 偏. Kwŏn explains these two qualities writing that, "Yang houses correctness. Yin houses partiality". Following on from this, Kwŏn proceeds to explain how the numbers relate to directions of the compass, the five phases and also yin and yang. These two diagrams and their accompanying explanations show how the basic nature or matter of phenomena forms and evolves through the five phases, yin and yang, and how they are morally coloured as 'correct', in the case of yang, or 'partial' in the case of yin.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>357</sup> Kŭn Kwŏn, "Sŏgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok", in *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok*, Han'guk Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Sŏngnam, 1995, pp. 101a2-102b2.

In arguing about the danger of heirs of kings and rulers abusing their positions of power and luxury, Kwŏn cites the three Zhou Kings<sup>358</sup> and Three Kings of Yin<sup>359</sup> from the chapter "Against Luxurious Ease" in the *Documents*.<sup>360</sup> In yet another case Kwŏn draws on the songs of the Dukes of Zhou and Shao from the *Odes* to exemplify the ideals of ordering one's family affairs, one's responsibilities to ruling the state and making the world peaceful.<sup>361</sup> To make his argument in this case, Kwŏn assembles a diagram and summary in the *IHTS*, while in the *RHT-Odes* he provides an expanded explanation.<sup>362</sup> Kwŏn further bolsters his argument by citing songs of the remaining thirteen states in the *Odes* as examples of the consequences of not following the appropriate paths.<sup>363</sup> Kwŏn thus frames historical knowledge as being tightly entwined with moral authority and presents figures of the past as paragons of virtue, disgrace and normative values. Underlying this portrayal is the notion that antiquity provides visions of society, ideal and otherwise.

### Interrogating the canon

While the *IHTS* is noted for focusing on basic themes and issues for beginning students, Kwŏn used both the *IHTS* and *RHT* as avenues to explore in greater depth issues and problems at the heart of Confucianism. Kwŏn's *RHT* in particular honed in on the Five Classics which were considered the ideological, moral, philosophical pillars of Confucianism. Kwŏn's writings on these texts reveal the breadth and depth of his familiarity with these materials.

### The Book of Changes: the junction of heaven and man

Kwŏn divided his *Record of Humble Thoughts on the Book of Changes of the Zhou Dynasty* (*RHT-Changes*) into two main sections: the first is the main canon, which is further divided into a first and second section 上下, and the second is a brief commentary on elements of the appendices.<sup>364</sup> While there is no distinct introduction to

<sup>358</sup> The three Zhou kings are King Tai 太王, King Ji 王季 and King Wen 文王.

<sup>359</sup> The three Yin king are Zhongzong 中宗, Gaozong 高宗 and Zu Jia 祖甲.

<sup>360</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp. 74-6. See also Legge, "The Book of Chow, Book IV, The Great Plan", *The Shoo King*, 2000: pp 320-344.

<sup>361</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp. 104-106.

<sup>362</sup> Kŭn Kwŏn, "Sigyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok", in *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok*, Han'guk Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Sŏngnam, 1995, p. 109a2.

<sup>363</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 108-112.

<sup>364</sup> A reproduction of the original *Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok* appears in the appendix of *Sŏji Hakpo*, Vol. 4, March, 1994, however in parts it is illegible. Another version of the text appears Kwŏn, Kŭn, *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok*, Han'guk chŏngsin munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Sŏngnam, 1995: pp. 21-100, where again

this work, preceding his analysis of the hexagrams in the upper section Kwŏn does provide a brief and general discussion of the *Changes*. He writes:

[The *Book of*] *Changes* [means] transmutation. Transmutations of the way of heaven are sincerity 誠. Transformations of the way of man are equilibrium 中. Sincerity is always the non-living principle, [while] equilibrium is change, but following the way of righteousness 義. This is the essence-function of [the *Book of*] *Changes*.<sup>365</sup>

In the first sentence Kwŏn encapsulates his understanding of the *Book of Changes* with 'change' representing transmutation or transformation, which is found in the way of heaven through the quality of sincerity and in the way of man through balanced action. The non-living principle of heaven is the essence, while following the path of righteousness is the function of the way of man. Kwŏn's adherence to the essence-function schema is also seen here as structuring his thought from the abstract relationship between heaven and man, through to the explanation of their respective natures.

Kwŏn further clarifies his philosophical and theoretical understanding of the *Changes* and its division of the way of man and heaven by relating it to the upper and lower portions of the text. The upper portion, relating to hexagrams Kŏn 乾 to Yi 離 reflects the "extremity of the actions of the way of heaven" and the lower portion, from hexagram Ham 咸 to Mije 未濟 is the "utmost of changes of the way of man".<sup>366</sup> Thus Kwŏn's basic conception of the *Changes*, its structure and its fundamental message can be summarised in the following manner:

Change of Way of Heaven – sincerity – principle – essence – actions of  
Heaven – Upper portion [of the text]

Changes of Way of Man – equilibrium – righteousness – function – changes

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the quality of the text varies in readability. The clearest reproduction appears in Yi Kwangho's translation, which includes both the vernacular Korean and the original classical Chinese, and all references herein are to this version – Kŭn Kwŏn, "Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok" in Yi Kwang-ho (trans.), (*Kugyŏk*) *Samgyong Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok: Shi, Sŏ, Chuyŏk, Ch'ŏngmyŏng* Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1999, pp. 107-276.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p. 110-1. Note the Romanisation of the hexagrams herein is done according to Korean pronunciation.

In addition to relating the divisions of the text to heaven and earth and the essence-function schema, Kwōn extends this manner of interpretation to the mind of man 人心. Again employing the essence-function schema, he explains that the essence of man's mind as having the 'principle of heaven' 天理 as its nature and its function as having the rightfulness of the principle of heaven.<sup>367</sup> The innate connectivity grants all individuals the potential for sagehood, however Kwōn qualifies this by explaining that while the principle of heaven in its singularity is universally within all humans, animals and things, it is their physical composition 氣稟 that determines whether they are sages, worthies or imbeciles.<sup>368</sup>

Aside from these philosophical points, Kwōn also provides a more general explanation of the *Changes* and covers its origins, composition and history. He explains King Wen, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius's roles in the early formation of the text, the formation of the diagrams and their culmination into hexagrams.<sup>369</sup> Following this he gives a very brief account of the history of the *Changes* from the Qin to Tang and to its more recent developments during the Song Dynasty with Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi.<sup>370</sup> In his evaluation he notes a handful of authors who have written commentaries including those he considers who have strayed from orthodox understandings. In this regard, as we will see later, he particularly singles out the work of Yuan dynasty scholar Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333).<sup>371</sup>

### *Upper portion of the Book of Changes*

Turning now to Kwōn's analysis of the upper portion of the *Changes*, we see that a large part of his analysis is focused on explaining the meaning of the hexagrams, their constituent lines and commentaries. Throughout, his explanation follows his above mentioned distinction of the upper portion of the *Changes* representing the way of heaven. Across the thirty hexagrams his analysis and explanations seek to illustrate the workings of the principle of heaven and highlight its connectivity to man and he does

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., pp. 107, 109-110.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-3. For an account of Wu Cheng, see also Gedalecia, David, "The life and Career of Wu Ch'eng: A Biography and Introduction", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 99, No. 4, Oct. - Dec., 1979: pp. 601-641.

this in a number of ways. For example, Kwōn takes concepts from the *Changes*, such as yin and yang, and correlates them to the roles of ruler and subject. In his discussion of hexagram Kon 坤 he equates ruler and subject respectively to yang and yin and discusses their relationship in terms of power, subjugation and principle.<sup>372</sup> In addition to yin and yang's correlation to social roles, Kwōn also uses them to describe the nature of a sage, who in "extolling is yang and in restraint is yin".<sup>373</sup> At another point he describes yin and yang as 'responding' 和 and 'calling' 倡 and their interaction as affecting the weather and natural events.<sup>374</sup>

A common means Kwōn uses to illustrate the translation of the principle of heaven into the social and political realm is with the allegory of the superior man and sages. In the hexagram Su 需, for example, he explains how the superior man follows the principles of heaven and listens to heaven's commands without calculation of life, death or reward, in spite of being angered.<sup>375</sup> Continuing with the superior man, and even with the yin-yang bifurcation, Kwōn draws attention to the two hexagrams T'ae 泰 and Pi 否, writing that the virtue of a superior man is that he is "internally strong and externally gentle", while the small man in following his emotions was, "internally weak and externally strong".<sup>376</sup>

In a similar vein Kwōn frequently highlights the embodiment of the principle of heaven and other such similar concepts by evoking the sage kings of the past, namely those found in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. King Wen and the Duke of Zhou are often held up as exemplars and used to support his discussion of the application of the principle of heaven in the social realm. Another interesting facet, however, is in his commentary on hexagram Pok 復 where he explains how he regards these sages of the past. Kwōn explains that the way of the sages was embodied in the *Annals*, a time which has passed, however the *Changes* looks to the future.<sup>377</sup> Here Kwōn is clarifying that as glorious as the time of the ancients was, it has passed, and that the key to its future embodiment lies in the principle of the *Changes* and not necessarily in recreating past times.

Throughout his discussion in the upper portion, Kwōn is attempting to illustrate the

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., p. 131-2.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., p. 172.



embodiment of the principle of heaven and he correlates concepts and themes from the metaphysical framework of the *Changes* to the real world. Accordingly, throughout his discussion he draws attention to concepts such as yin and yang, principle, the way and so forth. He even evokes the ideals of the superior man and the sages of antiquity to prove his point, and the connection he articulates is inevitably morally coloured. For example, Kwŏn encapsulates this dynamic of connecting man to heaven by relating the heavenly virtues of origin, life, benefit, and purity (respectively: 元亨利貞) to the four human virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom (respectively: 仁義禮智) in the following manner:

In heaven they become origin, life, benefit, and purity and people become humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom. 'The superior man embodies humanity' and so forth is spoken to men. 'The superior man through performing these four virtues is therefore said to be origin, life, benefit and purity of heaven' is said to mean the unification of a person with heaven. Saying the superior man bases his actions in virtue is namely the four virtues of heaven. This is the so-called unification of heaven and man as one.<sup>378</sup>

### *Lower portion of the Book of Changes*

In the lower portion of the *Changes* Kwŏn continues with his overall explanation of the hexagrams and their various facets, but he also draws particular attention to its relation to human affairs. In the preamble to his analysis of the hexagrams, Kwŏn reiterates the point made above of the upper and lower portions of the *Changes* respectively relating to the way of heaven and essence, and the way of man and function.<sup>379</sup> As seen in the upper section, sages and the superior man feature frequently in the lower portion, however here Kwŏn uses them as an allegory around which he describes responses to various moral, social and political situations. In his discussion of hexagram Ham 咸, Kwŏn emphasises the sage's 'natural response' to people and events being based on his unforced understanding of his mind, and by extension heaven.<sup>380</sup> This though does not mean that the sage's life is without worry or difficulties and Kwŏn explains that in such predicaments the sage relies on his self-cultivation of virtue and holds firm to his belief

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p.195.

in truth.<sup>381</sup> The prime arena of the sage in almost all Confucian literature is social and political, yet such areas in real life are inevitably fraught with difficulties, recalcitrant rulers and men of lesser aptitude holding positions beyond their capacity. To illustrate how the sage or superior man best adapts and capitalises on his situation according to the principles of heaven, Kwōn draws analogies with nature, such as the appropriate use of fire and water.<sup>382</sup> Ample space and advice is also given to the complicated dynamic of the ruler and subject too, where Kwōn advises rulers to keep their subjects at a distance so as not to taint the responsibilities of their respective posts.<sup>383</sup> While Kwōn generally maintains the yin-yang polarities of gentleness and hardness throughout in describing the sage, he also cautions against dogmatically or over-zealously holding these ideals in statecraft and the family. He warns that if followed too strictly such things inevitably strain relations, if not destroy them. Conversely, he warns against being too complacent and diluting the importance of roles and relations.<sup>384</sup>

Generally speaking we see that Kwōn's lower portion of the *Changes* continues with the general explanation of the hexagrams and their meaning, however he places particular emphasis on explaining how the sages and superior men, in spite of their resonance with the principle of heaven, navigate the inequities of political life, duplicitous and wily inter-personal relations, and manage delicate family relations. Throughout his discussion Kwōn attempts to articulate how a sage would ideally act and underlying this is firstly the necessity of following the way of righteousness, and secondly maintaining equanimity 中 towards the world, one's work, one's family and one's self. These two points, as seen in Kwōn's introduction to the *Changes*, comprise his greater understanding of the way of man.

### **The Spring and Autumn Annals: the function of the Classics**

Kwōn's treatment of the *Annals* is by far the briefest of all the Five Classics. As seen above, when discussing the Five Classics in the *IHTS* Kwōn shows that he sees the *Annals* as the "great function" of the Five Classics, sitting opposite the *Changes* which represents the "complete essence". Furthermore, he took the *Annals* as the way of the sages and being no different to "heaven and earth". When applying the essence/function schema to the *Annals* Kwōn describes the *Annals* as having the "Way" 道 as its

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., pp.198, 202-3.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., pp. 238-9.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., pp. 206-7.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

essence and “Authority” 權 as its function. Beneath these characters he writes that, “[the Way] is the origin of the principle of heaven and earth”, while for Authority he notes “[Authority] is the action in the mind of the sages.”<sup>385</sup> Brief though this account is it reveals Kwōn’s general conception of the *Annals*: he regarded the *Annals* as epitomising the personification of the Confucian Way, as opposed to the *Changes* which embodies the metaphysical principle as its essence and the Way as its function. The *Annals* and the personalities it deals with are the closest embodiment of the perfect Confucian principles.

### *The Autumnal King and the conundrum of reigns*

Kwōn’s treatment of the other four classics spans a number of chapters of the *IHTS* before he turns to an extended discussion of each classic in his *RHT*. In the case of the *Annals*, however, Kwōn only provides one chapter in the *IHTS* before offering his extended commentary, which even then is the shortest of all his commentaries spanning just a few pages. This is somewhat surprising given the significant position that Kwōn locates the *Annals* in as complementing the *Changes* and that he regards the text as dealing with an issue as important as the personification of Confucian principles.

The one chapter dedicated to the *Annals* in the *IHTS* is titled “Diagram of a Horizontal Interpretation of the First Month of Autumn of the King”.<sup>386</sup> This chapter immediately follows on from Kwōn’s discussion of the Five Classics and in some editions of the *IHTS* this chapter is treated not as a separate entity but as an extension of the discussion of the Five Classics. The ambiguity over whether this chapter is autonomous or an extension may lie in the fact that some editions of the *IHTS* have the diagram of individual essence and function of the Five Classics spilling over two pages and to save space the diagrams for the Five Classics and *Annals* are included together.

This chapter on the first autumn month of the king begins with a diagram that is split into an upper and lower portion.<sup>387</sup> The upper portion has the “Seasons of Heaven” with autumn, summer, spring and winter written from right to left and joined together by lines stemming from “Seasons of Heaven”. The lower portion of the diagram has “King’s Month” written at the centre of the page and the twelve months arranged from

<sup>385</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1982, p.52-4.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>387</sup> See Appendix, p. 250.

right to left, each of which is joined by a line to the “King’s Month”. These two illustrations themselves tell us very little about Kwōn’s impression of the *Annals*, other than that it relates to the four seasons and twelve months of the year. The commentary that accompanies these diagrams, however, reveals a little more of Kwōn’s thinking. Since the commentary is quite short it is included in its entirety:

I think the Sage [Confucius] composed the *Spring and Autumn Annals* with the upper portion describing Heaven’s seasons and the lower portion of recording the King’s month.<sup>388</sup> Once this writing was established, the adjoining book [*Annals*] stated, “Autumn, first month of the King.”<sup>389</sup> Those who transmitted [the *Annals*] thought summer was the month for capping ceremonies in Zhou, [but] students fail to fathom [this issue] and are uncertain of whether to regard winter as spring and are uncertain of whether to correct and change [the calendar year] to first month of the new reign.<sup>390</sup> Such discussions are misleading and confused, and they never can they be settled because generally the discussion takes the view that joins autumn with the king’s first month 王正.

If viewed horizontally, the description of heaven’s seasons above confers the law for later [generations] by taking the season’s movements from the Xia 夏 period; and the record of the King’s month below elevates the seasons of heaven and the month of the king by taking starting with the first month of the Zhou period.

Because heaven’s seasons are not that which can precede the King’s month it is possible to describe it above. Because the King’s month is not something one can already correct it must be written below.

First, determine the king’s system according to heaven’s seasons and thereby establish the law for all ages. First, correct human morality according to the king’s month and thereby show the great unity. The two

<sup>388</sup> The King’s month is the first month of the king’s reign, which in this case corresponds to first month of Zhou’s reign as the Son of Heaven.

<sup>389</sup> See Legge, James, “Book 1, Duke Yin” in *The Ch’un Ts’ew; with the Tso Chuen*, Vol. 5, SMC Publishing, Taiwan, 2000: p. 1.

<sup>390</sup> 正朔 refers to when an emperor establishes a new state or regime, a new calendar and calendar year is started. This term can also mean the first day of the first month, but given the context here it is most likely to indicate the start of a new regime.

meanings [of heaven's seasons and King's month] run parallel and so do not counter each other.

If you recorded the King's month and changed the number [of months] then in the *Odes* of Pin [from the *Book of Odes*] there would already be an explanation of days of the first [month] and days of the second [month].<sup>391</sup> Surely this is not what Confucius started to change.<sup>392</sup>

In this commentary we see Kwŏn zero in on a problem of matching the record of historical events with the idea that the inception of a reign period for new kings and emperors marks the beginning of a new calendar year. If a new regime is thought to begin a new calendar year with its inception, with the King's first month being the first month of that year, then there is no guarantee that the first month will correspond to the appropriate season. If you were to change all records according to this rule then just as the example from the *Odes* shows, you would have to change months to suit the seasons. Likewise, capping ceremonies which are usually designated for summer would fall during a different month.

### The Book of Odes: reading the winds

Aside from references and allusions to the *Book of Odes* in his own poetry, Kwŏn wrote about the *Odes* in two specific instances: the *IHTS* and *RHT*. In the first iteration of the *IHTS* Kwŏn dealt with the *Odes* in only two chapters and summarised the relationship of the *Odes* to the rest of the Five Classics, highlighting the text's main points according to the essence/function schema. In the subsequent expanded edition of the *IHTS* Kwŏn included an additional two chapters that examined specific themes of the *Odes*, namely the first chapter of the *Odes* that deals with Zhou of the South 周南 and the *Odes* of the Changing Winds of Thirteen States 變風十三國.<sup>393</sup>

Kwŏn's second and more extended writing on the *Odes* is his *RHT-Odes* (*Sigyŏng*

<sup>391</sup> Legge, Book XV The Odes Of Pin, "Ts'ih yueh" in *The Shoo King*, p. 226: In the seventh month, the Fire Star passes the meridian;/ In the 9th month, clothes are given out./ In the days of [our] first month, the wind blows cold;/ In the days of [our] second, the air is cold; Without the clothes and garments of hair./ How could we get to the end of the year?/ In the days of [our] third month, they take their ploughs in hand;/ In the days of [our] fourth, they take their way to the fields./ Along with my wife and children, /I carry food to them in those south-lying acres. /The surveyor of the fields comes, and is glad.

<sup>392</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 55.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-7, 108-112.

*Ch'ŏn'gyŏnllok*). This book shares some of the same focus as the chapters of the *IHTS*: Kwŏn's commentary in the *RHT* looks at Zhou and Zhao of the South, the changing wind of the thirteen states, the moral import of the *Odes* and the provenance of some of the poems. So although the *Odes* comprise four genre-based chapters – State Winds 國風, Minor Court Songs 小雅, Major Court Songs 大雅 and Hymns 頌 – Kwŏn's interest is confined exclusively to the State Winds, which includes fifteen sub-chapters. Of these sub-chapters two are devoted to the *Odes* of Zhou and Zhao of the South, and the remaining chapters are dedicated to the odes of the thirteen states. So we can see from this that Kwŏn's interest in the *Odes* is quite narrow and specific.

### *Zhou of the South – paragon of perfection*

In book two of the *IHTS*, Kwŏn expands on his treatment of the *Odes* with an additional two chapters. One of these chapters provides a diagram and commentary on the poems of Zhou Nan, or Zhou of the South<sup>394</sup> and the other examines the Changing Winds of the Thirteen States 變風十三國. Looking at the first of these chapters, Kwŏn's diagram for the poems of Zhou of the South is divided into three sections – family 家, state 國 and the world 平下 – and beneath each of these sections Kwŏn arranges the titles of the eleven poems of Zhou of the South, along with a brief comment (See page 127 below for a reproduction of Kwŏn's diagram and Appendix p. 271 for the original diagram).

The five poems under “family” show that Kwŏn regards Zhou of the South as embodying the perfect domestic situation. The first poem is the beginning of the “correct” 正 kind of household, while the middle three poems concern working to reconcile household affairs.<sup>395</sup> These affairs include being diligent in one's attitude as a wife, concentrating when serving one's lord and for the husband to be benevolent towards his wife and concubines. The final poem relating to family is *Zhong Si* (Korean: Chongsa) 蟲斯 and Kwŏn takes this poem as reflecting the utmost results of a well-managed family, namely having lots of grandchildren and ensuring good fortune for your descendants.<sup>396</sup> We can thus see that Kwŏn regards these first five poems of Zhou of the South as a role model for how a family, principally a ruling family, should

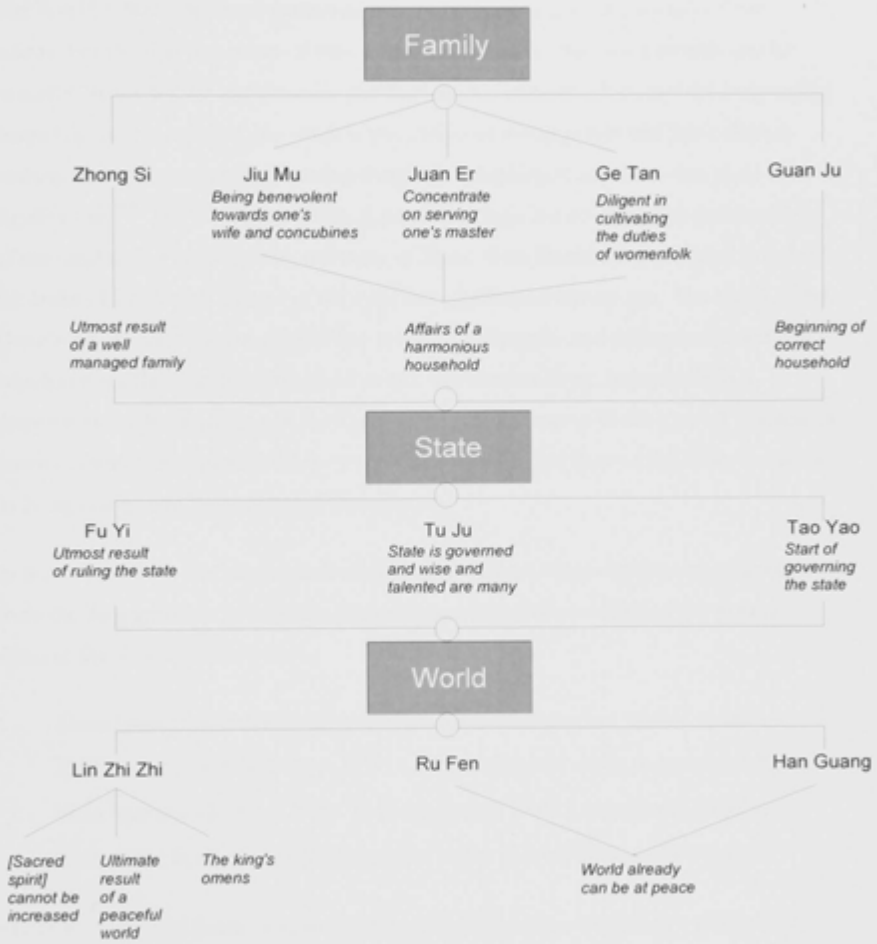
<sup>394</sup> Zhou Nan is also known as the Duke of Zhou and he was the younger brother of King Wen, the first king of Zhou, and the Duke of Zhou was also regent for King Cheng.

<sup>395</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 104.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

function, what the members of the family ought to do and finally what the results of such a family are. Also, we can see that underpinning this conceptualisation is a teleological rationale of establishing a correct beginning, making an effort to ensure the process continues correctly and finally enjoying the fruits of your labour.

Diagram 3. - Zhou of the South



In the case of the State, Kwōn selected three poems: Tao Yao (Korean: To Yo) 桃夭, tu Ju (Korean: T'o Chō) 兔丘 and Fu Yi (Korean: Pu I) 采芣苢. The first of these poems Kwōn takes as reflecting the "start of the principle of the state".<sup>397</sup> While for the second poem he writes, "the state is ruled and the wise and talented are many" and the third

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

poem represents the “utmost results of state well ruled.”<sup>398</sup> Kwōn’s explanation of the state mirrors that of the family in two ways: first, he regards the Duke of Zhou’s governance as being the perfect paradigm for statecraft and second, he applies the same teleological prognosis of establishing the correct way at the start, followed by appropriate action which culminates in a perfect result.

The World follows the same pattern as the two previous topics and includes three poems. For the first two poems Kwōn writes that in them, “the world already can be peaceful” while for the last poem he provides three comments: first, that the king enjoys auspicious omens; second, the result is the utmost of world peace; and third, there is nothing that increases again, meaning that there is nothing in excess or that there is an equilibrium.<sup>399</sup> The world that Kwōn is describing here is a continuation and corollary of the ideal action embodied by the Duke of Zhou. With his household affairs in order, the Duke of Zhou took control of the state and established correct rule. The result of the Duke’s efforts were then twofold: First, the world of people and politics achieved peace, which is a secular, social and political result; The second result, however, was a response from the environment itself, specifically from heaven in the form of auspicious omens. Kwōn then regarded this as a two-fold response that showed the Duke’s actions as being recognised by people and Heaven.

In the commentary that accompanies this diagram Kwōn begins by repeating the texts from the diagram, then he explains his understanding of the meaning of the poems of Zhou of the South. Kwōn writes,

These [poems of Zhou of the South] are the so-called act of perfect virtue 至德. In the *Great Learning* 大學 it speaks of family, state and world and takes illuminated virtue 明德 as its beginning. [but] a person who looks at Zhou of the South must take the perfect virtue of King Wen as the source.<sup>400</sup>

In this brief excerpt Kwōn reveals several interesting points. First, Kwōn connects the act of perfect virtue 至德 embodied in the poems of Zhou of the South to the notion of illuminated virtue 明德 found in the *Great Learning*. In connecting these two texts Kwōn is further reiterating the integrated vision of the Confucian canon he outlined in

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-6.



other sections of the *IHTS*. Second, by joining the *Great Learning* and the Duke of Zhou in the *Odes*, Kwŏn is adding a paraxial dimension to a set of metaphysical principles. The common denominator in both these texts is the troika of family, state and world, and the moral dimension of virtue 德. In the *Great Learning* illuminated virtue is the beginning of the teleological progression through family, state and the world, while in the case of the *Odes*, the Duke of Zhou is the culmination of such virtue, namely “perfect virtue” or literally the “achievement of virtue”. In both cases the virtue is the same; only one is the beginning ideal and the other is its ultimate expression. Lastly, Kwŏn places this discussion within a historical context by referring to King Wen, first king of Zhou and older brother of Duke of Zhou. As the “source” or “origin”, King Wen is the historical pretext to the actions of the Duke of Zhou and the circumstances captured in the *Odes*. Kwŏn’s understanding of the poems of Zhou of the South are that they conform with metaphysical principles found in other Confucian texts, while at the same time providing an actual expression of such principles on a familiar, political and social level.

Kwŏn adds yet another layer to the historical precedence of these poems by making reference to the Duke of Shao, known in the *Odes* as “Shao of the South” 召南. The Duke of Shao was the half brother of King Wu and lived in the western portion of Zhou. In the *Odes*, the Duke of Shao is the second of the “Southerners” in the State Airs and his *Odes* comprise fourteen poems. Kwŏn explains that the poems of the Duke of Shao and Zhou are generally similar but different in that “the regions are distant and near, and the transformation was deep and shallow, therefore [Shao was] not like the extreme good of the Duke of Zhou.”<sup>401</sup> Kwŏn concludes by writing that “since unglamorous things of antiquity are now transformed to be good, all of these things were influenced by the transformative winds of King Wen.”<sup>402</sup> Therefore, Kwŏn’s understanding of the Duke of Zhou, Duke of Shao and King Wen is that they represent the closest embodiment of Confucian principles and that their lives as fathers, husbands and rulers typify the ultimate blend of morality, virtue and wisdom.

### *Failed states, failed people*

Just as Kwŏn regards the poems of the Duke of Zhou in the *Odes* as a paragon of Confucian morality and conduct, he also saw in the *Odes* instances of where people had

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

failed in their moral judgement, family, leadership and statecraft, ultimately resulting in the failure of the state. To distinguish between these two instances Kwōn describes the *Odes* of the Duke of Zhou and Duke of Shao as the “Correct Wind” 正風, which is when “the way of mankind receives that which is correct” and the “correctness of the way of mankind starts in the family and its influence reaches to the world”.<sup>403</sup> The opposite of the correct wind is the “Changing Wind” 變風, which Kwōn identifies with the collected poems for the remaining thirteen states in the State Winds of the *Odes*. Changing winds are when the “way of mankind loses that which is correct” and, like the correct wind, the origin of the changing wind is in the family, but its conclusion is that the state can no longer be protected.<sup>404</sup> In other words, the state falls into ruin, chaos or at worst dissolves altogether. For Kwōn, although the correct and changing winds differ in their content and culmination, they share the same point of departure with the family and the same teleological progression of consequences through to the state and onto the world.

Kwōn’s contrasting vision of the correct and changing winds extends to the remaining poems in the State Airs. In the diagram for the chapter “Changing Winds of the Thirteen States” 變風十三國 (see reproduction below on page 132 and original in Appedix, page 273), Kwōn places the Correct Wind at the top of the diagram with Zhou and Shao of the South beneath. Below this Kwōn places the Changing Winds and arranges ten of the remaining State Airs from right to left, beneath each of which he notes their key failings. Another two airs are below these ten and they are connected to three notes at the bottom of the diagram. In descending order the notes are first, “Ruling thought – when the nation is small and the people toil, ruling thought is extremely difficult”. Next, Kwōn cites the *Odes* of Bin, the last of the Airs and writes, “Change and correctness – wisdom of the Duke of Zhou could resume correctness for change” and lastly Kwōn writes, “Change can be corrected”.<sup>405</sup>

The first thing that this diagram shows is that for almost all of the thirteen states that remain in the State Airs, Kwōn regards them as portraying particular failings. In the case of Wang, people of various stations do not follow orders, while Qi shows people having “conduct like birds and beasts”. Zheng, according to Kwōn, shows the morals of

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

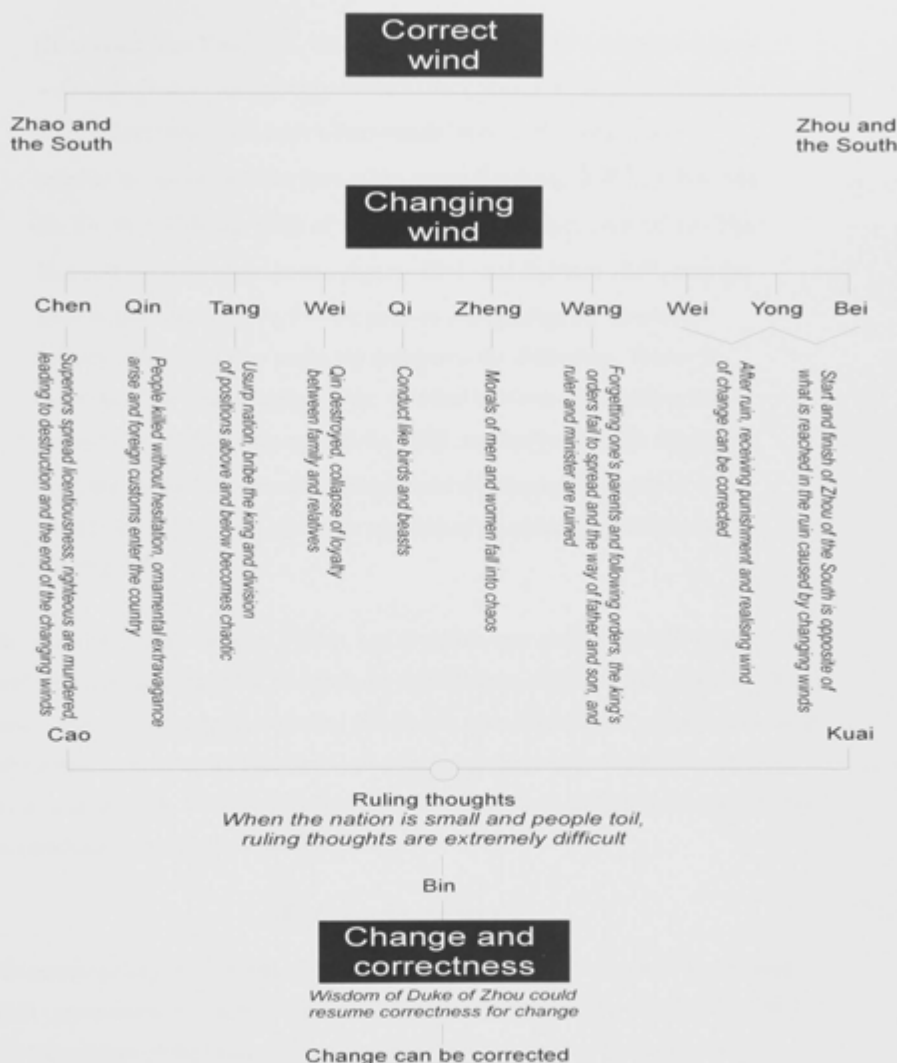
men and women falling into chaos. Relations between families collapse in Wei and in Qin innocent people are killed without hesitation as extravagant customs infiltrate the state.<sup>406</sup> This critique of the thirteen states as moral admonitions continues beyond the diagram, for in the attached commentary Kwŏn reiterates these points and in some cases expands on their importance.<sup>407</sup> Here we can see that Kwŏn regards the poems contained within each of these *Airs* as expressions of what can happen when the correct wind is not followed. Thus he regards the role of these *Airs* is to warn readers of the fate they face should they deviate in their efforts.

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<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-1.

Diagram 4. - Changing Winds of the Thirteen States



As we can be seen in the reproduction of Kwŏn's diagram above, the only states among these thirteen that Kwŏn does not completely condemn are Bei, Yong and Wei. In the notes under these Airs, Kwŏn makes two points: first, that the start and finish of Zhou of the South is the opposite of what is reached in the case of the "winds of changes" and, second, that after ruin there was a realisation that the winds of change could be corrected. Kwŏn expands on the comparison with Zhou of the South in the commentary of this chapter where he directly contrasts poems of Zhou of the South with poems from

the *Airs of Bei*.

[If we] read Yan Yan 燕燕, then [we see] the concubine's son kill the main wife's son [heir to the throne] and this is the opposite of the poem Zhong Si 螽斯 where there were lots of descendants who lived harmoniously together in one place. If we look at the poems Kai Feng 凱風 and Pao You Ku Ye 匏有苦葉, the shape of the state is the opposite of [that in] Tao Yao 桃夭. [If we] look at the poems Jian Xi 簡兮 and Bei Men 北門, then the wise cannot obtain the truth to the point of disregarding the remains of political affairs and they could not understand the difficulties. This is the opposite of the countrymen who are the head and heart of the prince in the poem Tu Ju 兔置. [If we read] Ji Gu 擊鼓 and Bei Feng 北風, then [we find] the people have resentful thoughts and the atmosphere is one of anxiety and misery, and this is the opposite of the peace and harmony of Fu Yi 采芣.<sup>408</sup>

The issues of contrast between the two sets of poems vary greatly but their origin in the family and culmination in the prospects for family, state, society and the world are the same – namely, ruin. The determining factors are, again, the conduct and moral virtue of individuals, management of the family and state, and the nature of relations within the family and the state. Nevertheless, Kwŏn insists that if the beginning is not correct, then the conclusion can only be disastrous.

### *Restoring the correct way*

The second point Kwŏn makes in the diagram of the thirteen states, and also reiterates in his commentary, is that the winds of change can be corrected. Kwŏn explains that it was the wisdom of the Duke of Zhou that enabled him to resume the correct wind, which was largely set in motion through the actions of King Wen. In looking at the thirteen states of the *State Airs*, however, Kwŏn notes that, "The heavenly principle in the mind of the people is rather scant but in times of change it can show signs of what is correct" and, in discussing the *Odes of Wei*, Kuai and Cao, Kwŏn writes, "generally it is fortunate that a ruined state can be revived and it is said that the changing [wind] can

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

be corrected".<sup>409</sup> The point being made here is that even in the case of these thirteen states who have gone awry in their trajectories, there remains the potential for revival. In other words, since heaven's principle remains as a guide throughout, a bad state of affairs can always be improved.

In the commentary Kwŏn indicates several ways in which to restore the correct way. Kwŏn identifies a large degree of the responsibility for the state rests with the ruler, their wisdom and their conduct. Kwŏn therefore draws attention not only to the ruler being conscious of their personal responsibility, but also to listening to the advice of those around him. For example, he writes that, "It is necessary to have a king who can listen to grand court songs and who through rites listens to rules and remonstrations [from ministers] and by himself prevents [catastrophe] like the early sages and King Wu. Then thereafter the people can be corrected".<sup>410</sup> Given the king's central role in guiding the state, it is hardly surprising that Kwŏn points to the Duke of Zhou as the best model to follow: "If we make an effort to govern the people like Zhou of the South then the winds of influence of the royal court will be beautiful and the winds of change will restore that which is correct."<sup>411</sup>

As seen in the quote above, the responsibility for the state does not rest solely with the king, but also with those who surround the king, namely the ministers of the court. By including people beyond the ruler in his prognosis, Kwŏn is proposing that the responsibility for the state rests with more than just the king. Responsibility for the state, be it maintaining the "correct wind" or renewing the correct way, lies with all the people of the court. Put another way, Kwŏn writes, "The meaning of the teachings conveyed [in these Odes] is deep. But the mind of a sage must be one that wants to restore and give rise to that which is ruined and recover that which has changed".<sup>412</sup> In other words, people having read the *Odes* and grasped its significance, seek to recover the correct way of doing things for their present situation. For Kwŏn, the crux of all developments and the point where people ought to concentrate is none other than the family and the court. Hence Kwŏn's summary: "Ah! The morality of a husband and wife is the root; the winds of influence of the court are the source".<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

## The Book of Documents: the mechanics of heaven, moral men and kingship

Kwōn's interest in the *Documents* focuses on selected sections of the text and within those sections, he was particularly interested in heaven as a physical and astronomical phenomenon, as well as a moral arbiter and mirror of man's actions. Another theme Kwōn was interested in was the role of the moral man and his responsibilities to himself and his constituents, should he be a ruler. Intertwined within this discussion is the theme of kingship, how to rule and what the composition of the state ought to look like.

As touched on above, Kwōn's unified conceptualisation of the Classics positions the *Documents* together with the *Odes* and *Rites* and he includes two characters under the designation for the *Documents*: punishment and rewards.<sup>414</sup> Beneath these two characters Kwōn indicates the means by which punishment and rewards are directed: "through governance".<sup>415</sup> In the commentary that accompanies this diagram Kwōn notes "[in the] *Documents* affairs are governed by the way".<sup>416</sup> In the second of these chapters on the Classics, Kwōn applies the essence/function scheme to interpret each of the Five Classics. In the case of the *Documents*, Kwōn writes that the "complete essence" is respect 欽, while the "great function" is equanimity 中. Under the character respect Kwōn notes, "Sages have a mind that respects heaven" and under equanimity he writes, "Sages have a method for ruling the world".<sup>417</sup> Brief though this account is it nonetheless shows that Kwōn regarded the *Documents* as dealing with governance and the application of rewards and punishments.

Although these two complementary chapters are exceedingly brief in their account of the *Documents*, they do nonetheless offer a preliminary picture of how Kwōn understood the *Documents*. Kwōn saw the *Documents* as an integral part of the Five Classics, within which the *Documents* relates to governance as exercising rewards and punishments. Central to the *Documents*'s message are two key concepts of respect and equanimity, and the Sages depicted in the *Documents* embody people whose minds are respectful of heaven and whose methods best suit ruling the world. The *Documents* for Kwōn, was thus a book concerning statecraft.

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-3.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

### *The Great Plan*

Moving beyond this summary of the *Documents*, Kwōn provides an additional eleven chapters in the *IHTS* that relate to aspects of the *Documents* and another two chapters where the *Documents* share themes with the *Rites*. In the *IHTS* Kwōn's interests is firstly, in two specific chapters from the *Documents*, the "Great Plan" and "Against Luxurious Ease", and secondly, with an array of themes derived from within the *Documents*. Kwōn's treatment of the *Documents* in the *IHTS* contrasts with his *RHT-Documents* where he provides a direct narrative explanation of the *Documents* with no chapters, sub-chapters, diagrams or divisions. The *RHT-Documents* is a continuation and expansion of the themes and issues found in the *IHTS*, including some thematic overlap, while also covering additional topics.

Since Kwōn devoted two chapters of the *IHTS* to discussing two different chapters of the *Documents*, it is useful to look at his treatment of these chapters before moving on to examine his themes and issues. Beginning with the "Great Plan" 洪範, which is a chapter that appears in the "Zhou Shu" 周書 section of the *Documents*, Kwōn entitles his chapter "The Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan" 洪範九疇天人合一之圖 and his diagram and commentary is split into first (upper) and second (lower) 上下 portions.<sup>418</sup> The Great Plan is a brief account of King Wu visiting the Count of Qi [Korean: Kija] and lamenting that he does not know the principles of how to rule effectively. In response, Kija outlines the Great Plan and summarises the nine key points, then expands on them. The nine points are as follows:

Of those divisions, the first is called 'The Five Elements'; the second is called, 'The Reverent Practice of the Five Businesses'; the third is called, 'Earnest Devotion to the Eight Objects of Government'; the fourth is called 'The Harmonious Use of the Five Arrangements'; the fifth is called 'The Establishment and Use of Royal Perfection'; the sixth is called 'The Cultivation and Use of the Three Virtues'; the seventh is called 'The Intelligent Use of the Examination of Doubts'; the eighth is called 'The Thoughtful Use of the Various Verifications'; the ninth is called 'The Hortatory Use of the Five Happiness and the Awing Use of the Six

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-3.

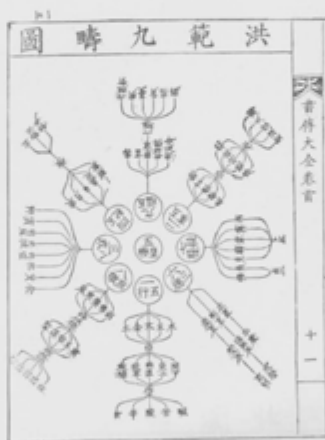
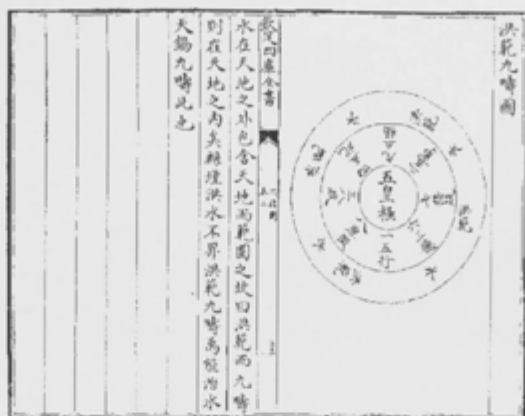


While the original chapter of the Great Plan was simply a recording of the dialogue between King Wu and Kija, later commentaries attempted to translate the principles of the Great Plan into a diagrammatic form. The earliest representations appears in the *Diagrams of the Six Classics* 六經圖, a book compiled by Yang Jia 楊甲 and supplemented by Mao Banghan 毛邦翰 during the Southern Song. In this book there is a simple drawing with two concentric circles. At the centre is the fifth division and in the first ring the remaining eight divisions are arranged. In the outer ring it states "Great Plan" and "water". While the body of commentaries on the *Documents* grew over the centuries<sup>420</sup> it was not until the Ming Dynasty that a more elaborate diagram emerged in the *Great Collection of the Book of Documents* 書經大全, which was compiled by Hu Guang 胡廣 (1370-1418). The same diagram was reproduced in the *Great Collection of Notes to the Book of Documents* 書傳大全. In these and later commentaries the diagram of the Great Plan as concentric circles is replaced with eight of the nine divisions arranged in a circle around the fifth division at the centre of the diagram. The eight divisions branch out from the centre like spokes and their key constituents are listed.

<sup>419</sup> Legge, "The Book of Chow, Book IV The Great Plan", in *The Shoo King*, p. 324. For the whole account of the Great Plan see Legge, pp. 320-344.

<sup>420</sup> The first version of this book was compiled by Su Shi (1037-1101) during the Northern Song, then two more versions of the *Notes* were composed: one was the 書傳輯錄纂註 by Yuan scholar Dong Ding 董鼎 and the other was the 書傳會選 by Ming minister Liu Sanwu (1312-?). It is interesting to note that Kwōn Kūn met Liu when he travelled to Ming in 1396. While in the Ming court on a mission to rescue Chosŏn-Ming relations, Kwōn was able to fraternise with Liu, whom he highly regarded, and other Ministers such as Xu Guan 許觀, Jing Qing 景清, Zhang Xin 張信 and Dai Deyi 戴德彝 who were "like ornate orioles and brilliant phoenix flying about the Forbidden Forest". See Kwōn, *YCJ, kwōn* 1: p. 9a. That Liu and Kwōn both composed commentaries on the *Documents* raises an interesting question of whether one influenced the other, or whether they each wrote their commentaries separately.

Diagram 5. - Diagram of the Six Classics, Diagram of the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan (top) and Great Collected Notes to the Book of Documents, Diagram of the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan (bottom)



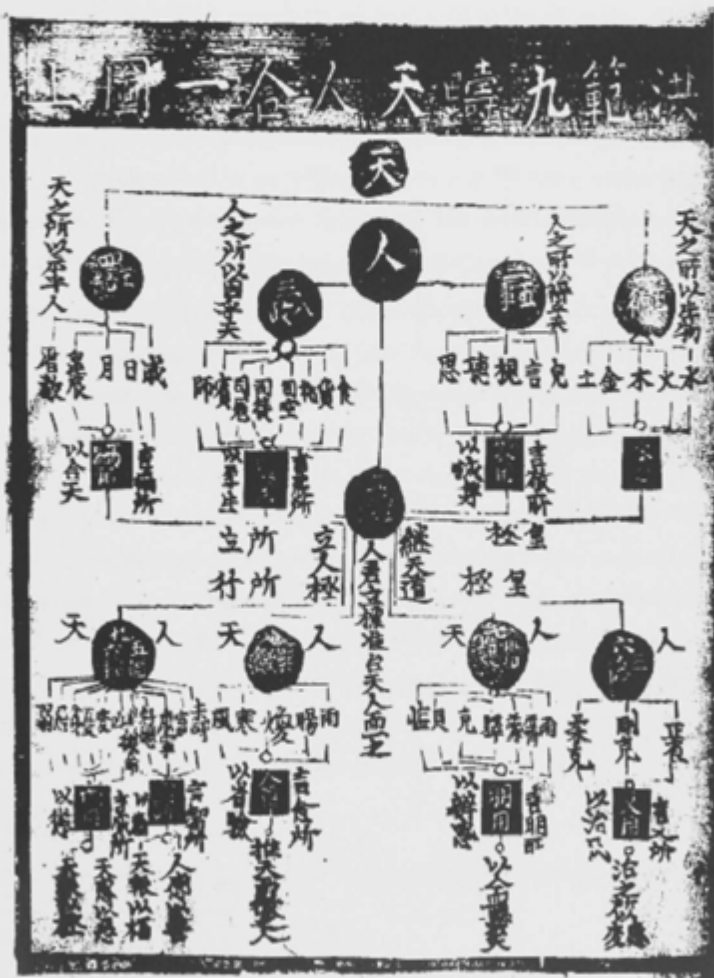
Kwōn's first diagram of the Great Plan arranges the nine divisions in a slightly different manner than what is found in the above mentioned diagrams.<sup>421</sup> From the top of the diagram Kwōn shows the way of heaven and man dividing right to left into the first four of the nine divisions, only to then regroup into the fifth division located at the centre.<sup>422</sup> From the fifth division, four lines descend to the remaining four divisions which are also arranged from right to left. Not only has Kwōn dispensed with the circular representation of previous renditions, but in presenting the nine divisions in an upper and lower section with the fifth division in between, he has partitioned and ordered the

<sup>421</sup> See Appendix, pp. 257-8.

<sup>422</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 70.

nine divisions in a manner not seen in previous depictions. Earlier representations were not only circular in shape, but the divisions were not ordered sequentially from one to nine. Instead, the divisions were ordered according to Lo Shu square pattern which derives from other, earlier diagrams. Kwōn's diagram and arrangement thus illustrates a departure in standard conceptualisation of the Great Plan.<sup>423</sup>

*Diagram 6. Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan, Part One*<sup>424</sup>



<sup>423</sup> The Luo Writings 洛書 square is comprised of nine numbers arranged in a square, three by three, where the sum of any three numbers in a row equals fifteen.

<sup>424</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1428 (Kyoto University version): Source: <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0036.html>, accessed 11 April 2012.

Kwōn's rearrangement of the diagram indicates that he had a different understanding of the meaning of the nine divisions. The first four divisions at the top of the diagram originate from the characters for heaven 天 and man 人, and descend through into the five phases,<sup>425</sup> five affairs,<sup>426</sup> eight forms of governance<sup>427</sup> and five seasons.<sup>428</sup> Following Kwōn's diagrammatic rational, heaven is directly connected to the phases and seasons. The phases are where heaven gives rise to all phenomena, while the seasons are where heaven's workings are revealed to man. The divisions of affairs and governance, on the other hand, fall entirely within the responsibility of humans. The constituents of the affairs are what man receives from heaven while governance is where man is responsible for food, sacrifices, crime and punishment, the military and so forth, all of which depend on or are influenced by heaven.<sup>429</sup> Kwōn marks the agency of man and heaven in these cases with direct lines. Before these divisions reach "royal perfection" 皇極 at the centre of the diagram, heaven's components of the phases and seasons are respectively described as the "origin of all things" 本之 and that which humans should "harmoniously use".<sup>430</sup> As far as humans are concerned, the five affairs should be conducted with due respect<sup>431</sup> and governance is to be performed with "earnest devotion".<sup>432</sup> By arranging the four divisions in this manner and then by having them converge on royal perfection, Kwōn emphasises their importance in establishing royal perfection. In other words, Kwōn is showing that the four divisions arranged in this manner are the necessary conditions for a person to become the perfect ruler. These conditions are harmonising with both heaven's basic constituents and broader, if not cosmic, influences, while also refining one's own thoughts and actions, and practising good rule. Hence, Kwōn explains in the accompanying commentary that: "If one follows the five phases, respects the five affairs, is sincere in the eight governances and harmonises with the division of the seasons, then one possesses the way of the king."<sup>433</sup>

Perfection of these four divisions, or the "way of the king", is thus the prerequisite for

<sup>425</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 70.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

the establishment of the fifth division – royal perfection 皇極. The positioning of royal perfection at the centre of the diagram is the most obvious similarity that Kwŏn's diagram shares with other versions. The biggest difference is that he directly connects royal perfection with the other divisions by means of lines whereas in the other diagrams prior to Kwŏn each of the divisions floats in formation. Kwŏn explains the importance of the central positions as follows:

...that royal perfection must be at the centre is because it is connected to the way of heaven and in being the establishment of human perfection it becomes the criteria of the four directions and the method all people adopt. The ruler's governance responds to the myriad of changes and transformations, and although its application is not always the same, it always returns to impartiality.<sup>434</sup>

Royal perfection, then, is not only the perfection of human behaviour and harmony with the world, but it is also the junction from which the decisions and effects of the ruler emanate. Kwŏn also recognises that each ruler contends with different circumstances and addresses them accordingly but returns nonetheless to the same principle of governance that he outlined above in his summary, namely equanimity 中 or in this case "impartiality" 中正.

The lower portion of the diagram that descends from royal perfection illustrates the action and effect of the ruler. The remaining divisions from six to nine are aligned from right to left and their constituents features are summarised beneath. Of these four divisions, however, Kwŏn only marks number six – the three virtues [of rule] – as being the sole domain of man. The three virtues of rule concern how the ruler decides to exercise his authority and command. In the case of the remaining three divisions, Kwŏn indicates that man and heaven are both involved. For division seven, listening to doubts, the ruler listens to heaven for advice, while in division eight omens are considered as signs from heaven as to the moral correctness of one's actions, and lastly the blessing of failure or fortune in division nine is what extends to the individual. In summary, Kwŏn describes this bottom portion of the diagram as, "The great law of the ruler governing the world is nothing more than this."<sup>435</sup> In other words, Kwŏn regards divisions six to

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

nine of the Great Plan as what results from the ruler's actions and the fundamental features that determine and measure a person's capacity to rule.

In addition to connecting heaven to the way of man in the prerequisites and outlining key indicators of governance, Kwŏn identifies three essential points in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan. Kwŏn writes:

However, although there are nine divisions, there are three important points. [First, in the way of] heaven it is only the five phases, [second, in the way of] mankind it is only the five affairs and [third] royal perfection is becoming one in the union of heaven and human.<sup>436</sup>

By drawing attention to the phases and affairs, Kwŏn highlights firstly, that heaven's manifestation is present in the very being of all things and secondly, that the affairs are the basic activities that all humans engage in. In emphasising these two points Kwŏn is highlighting that the reach of heaven is at once universal and local. The implication of Kwŏn's interpretation is that the capacity for personal change is ever present in the daily conduct and activities of all individuals. The arena of personal improvement is one's daily activities and the message of self-improvement is equally applicable to the individual as it is for the ruler, only that the ruler's ultimate goal is the harmonisation of his actions with heaven. So, rather than simply taking the nine divisions as a framework for directing one towards and maintaining effective rule, Kwŏn is presenting a message that is universal to all people, yet also particular to rulers. In the case of rulers they seek to harmonise their actions with heaven, as well as be responsible for the state, their constituents and themselves.

In the second, or lower, diagram of the Great Plan, Kwŏn provides a schematic representation of the three main points of heaven's five phases, the five affairs of humans and the union between heaven and man in royal perfection.<sup>437</sup> Like the upper diagram that summarises the nine divisions from the *Documents*, this diagram also begins at the top with the two characters for heaven and man. From these two characters branches extend left and right, then descend to the five phases on the right and signs and omens on the left. The constituent of each is listed and beneath them Kwŏn notes their conditions. In the case of the phases, it is the basic element of heaven and human

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-3.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., p. 71. See Appendix p. 258.

affairs. While for signs, Kwŏn lists the essential signs and then beneath them writes that they are dependent on whether or not the five affairs are successful. In these two branches Kwŏn reiterates his understanding of the constituents of heaven being universal and local, while also highlighting the connection of human conduct to heaven.

Another branch descends through the centre of the diagram from the two characters heaven and man. To the right of the line Kwŏn writes “practises respect” and to the left he writes “to not practise respect”, an indication of the choice that confronts the individual on a daily basis in conducting their lives.<sup>438</sup> The line descends to the five affairs, which are listed with their corresponding five phases. Beside the affairs Kwŏn notes that the five affairs “originate in five phases” and are the “verified in signs and omens”, which is a reiteration of the interconnectedness of man and his actions with heaven. Immediately beneath the affairs is royal perfection which is either established or not. Here, again, Kwŏn notes the binaries of success and failure on the right and left.

Two lines also descend from the five phases to the right and left of the diagram and continue with the binary division of success or failure as seen above. With the right-hand line Kwŏn writes “respectful in five affairs” and on the left “Not respectful in the five affairs”.<sup>439</sup> Below each of these branches Kwŏn lists the signs and omens as found in the Great Plan and links their appearance to the successful or unsuccessful completion of parts of the nine divisions, such as the eight forms of governance, the five seasons, the three virtues, omens, doubts and warnings. The right-hand and left-hand branches, respectively good and evil, descend to the last of the nine divisions. The good, right-hand side ends with the five blessings, while the bad, left-hand side terminates in the six extremities.

In this second diagram Kwŏn provides his own schematic interpretation of the key points of the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan. The three main points, as noted above, are the five phases of heaven, the five affairs of man and the union of the way of heaven and man in royal perfection. While these three points are important in Kwŏn’s view, his diagrammatic summary reveals the interrelated nature of man and his actions with heaven and the world. The importance for Kwŏn is that humans, whether they be an ordinary person or a ruler, face the choice of being respectful in conducting their affairs. In the case of a ruler, the ramifications of their actions and conduct in the affairs is far

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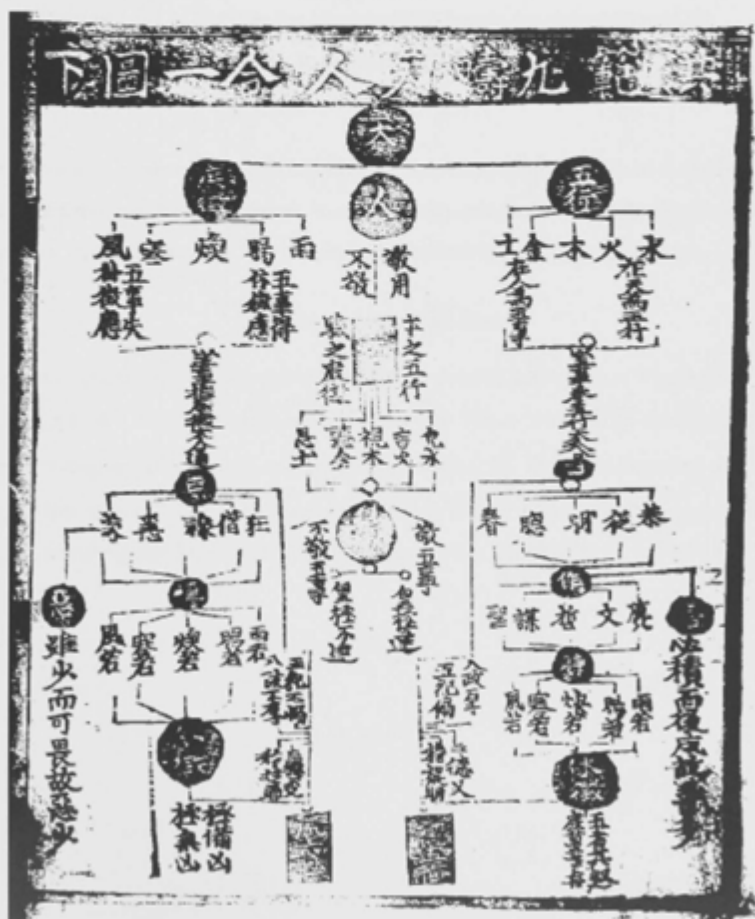
<sup>438</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 71.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

more wide reaching with their approach to ruling people and society being reflected in heaven's response. Hence, Kwŏn writes in the accompanying commentary:

If the five affairs go well and royal perfection is established, then the five phases will be favourable and favourable signs of rain, sunlight, heat, cold and wind will be experienced. If the five affairs fail and royal perfection is not established, then the five phases will be in disarray and bad signs of rain, sunlight, heat, cold and wind will be experienced.<sup>440</sup>

*Diagram 7. Chart of Unifying Heaven and Man in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan, Part Two*<sup>441</sup>



<sup>440</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-3.

<sup>441</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1428 (Kyoto University version): Source: <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0036.html>, accessed: 11 April 2012.



Humans and heaven develop what Kwōn calls a “way of sympathy”<sup>442</sup> where each reciprocates with the other. Underpinning this way of sympathy, and even the nine divisions themselves, is the notion of respect. The choice of whether to practice respect appears twice in the second diagram but it is only in the commentary that Kwōn explains its importance:

But, in cultivating the five affairs and establishing royal perfection, how does it cause the way? It is only the single character “respect” 敬. The sages who described the [Nine] Divisions by elevating respect above the five affairs did so to show the leaders of the people the importance of the rules of guiding one’s mind. In becoming a leader of the people how could one not bear this in mind?<sup>443</sup>

So while Kwōn’s message is applicable to the individual just as much to the ruler, it is really the ruler who he has in mind. Needless to say, respect remains fundamental to the individual in performing the five affairs and harmonising with heaven’s way.

### *Against Luxurious Ease*

The second chapter of the *Documents* that Kwōn directly addresses is “Against Luxurious Ease” 無逸, which also comes from the “Zhou Shu” 周書 section. In the chapter “Diagram of Against Luxurious Ease” 無逸之圖 Kwōn continues to discuss the role and responsibility of the leader.<sup>444</sup> In this chapter, however, the focus is on the practice of ruling and Kwōn specifically warns against the dangers of laziness and luxury.

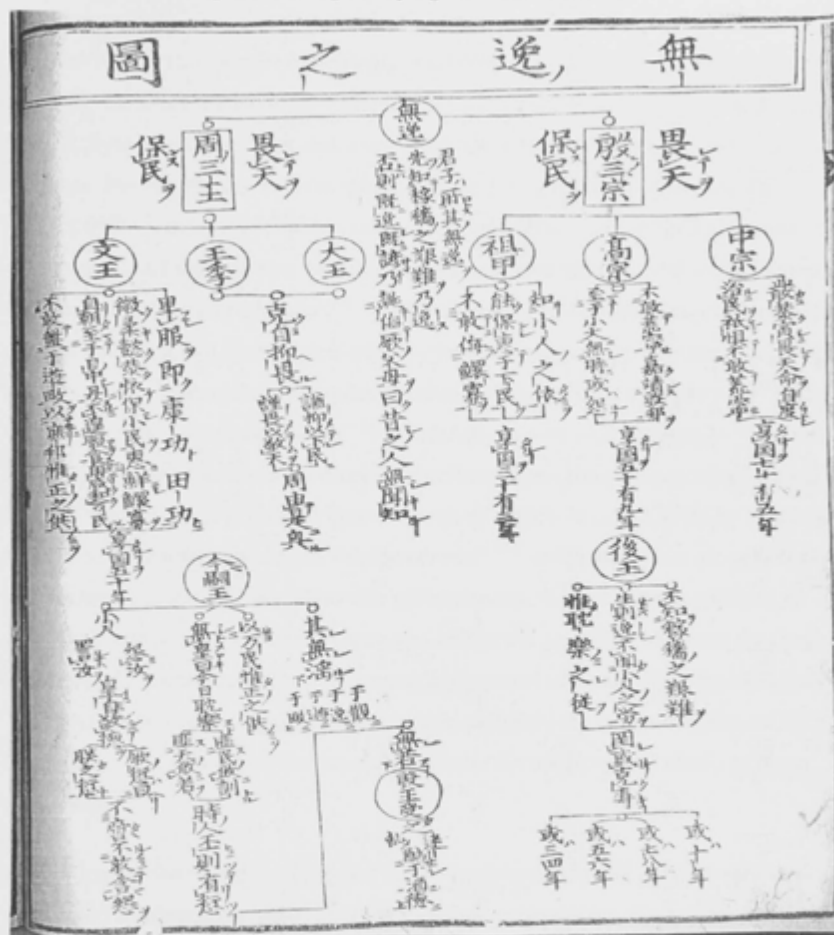
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<sup>442</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-6.

Diagram 8. Diagram of Against Luxurious Ease<sup>445</sup>



In the diagram Kwōn cites large portions of the text directly from the chapter “Against Luxurious Ease”. The kings that the Duke of Zhou, supposed author of the chapter, praises for their thrift and diligence are arranged as the Three Kings of Yin 殷 at the top right and the Three Kings of Zhou are placed at the top left. At the bottom of the diagram, to the left and right, Kwōn summarises the events of those who succeeded these thrones and the problems of kings born into comfortable circumstances. Kwōn’s commentary reiterates the message that the successful families that ruled in the past did

<sup>445</sup> Kwōn, *IHTS*, 1634 (University of Tokyo version): p. 74. Also see reproduction of Kyoto version in Appendix p. 259.

so on account of thrift and diligence, and kings and heirs born into luxurious surroundings squandered their wealth, lost their family lineages and their domains eventually fell.

There is more to this chapter than simply describing a diligent king's concern that his heirs will squander and lose their gains. In the commentary Kwŏn seeks to illustrate that the prosperity of the court and country lies not only with the king's thrift and diligence, but particularly with the king's concern for agricultural affairs and the welfare of the people. Kwŏn writes that "agricultural affairs are the basis of human consumption and the common "smaller" people year after year toil and suffer as they work in rice fields and paddocks"<sup>446</sup> It is these people, Kwŏn writes, that venerate and support their king and court. But, Kwŏn worries that such concern is not reciprocated and he deplores rulers who are lost deep in their palace and that such rulers are "without sympathy for the [common] people".<sup>447</sup> Furthermore, with such an attitude, "arrogance, extravagance, lasciviousness, insolence and self-indulgence/impertinence [spread and] in small matters, harm is brought upon themselves", while in regard to larger issues the "state will be destroyed and royal lineage severed".<sup>448</sup> Kwŏn notes that the unfortunate consequences of such actions often take generations to play out and the suffering is communal rather than confined to those who caused the predicament. Kwŏn thus praises the Duke of Zhou's emphasis on instigating agricultural reform and the three Kings of Yin, who "feared Heaven, protected the people and [thus] the nation was blessed for a long time".<sup>449</sup> Kwŏn insists that we should admire the diligence and results of these precedents.

In addition to illustrating that kings are reliant on their people and agricultural practices, and should consider the protection of the populace as paramount, Kwŏn also includes heaven in the equation. As seen in earlier discussion on the Great Plan, a ruler should pay heed to cultivating personal qualities and monitor heaven's responses through signs and omens. In the case of "Against Luxurious Ease", Kwŏn reiterates Heaven's role in evaluating the effectiveness of a ruler. As mentioned above, the three Kings of Yin "feared heaven" while looking after their people and as a result their state prospered. Further clarifying the point of fearing heaven, Kwŏn explains that "Respect is fearing

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

heaven and protecting the people.”<sup>450</sup> Again, Kwōn is emphasising the notion of respect which is likewise found in the Great Plan but in this case he is showing how central this concept is to the ruler. For the ruler, respect is a two-fold process of fearing or being in awe of heaven, while ensuring the safety and protection of the populace. Historical precedents confirm this because Kwōn writes, “It [respect] is reflected in the old rules of the important ancestors and is having a sincere mind that avoids luxurious ease.”<sup>451</sup> Further to this, the luminaries of antiquity provide evidence supporting his argument:

The three kings were strict, respectful and fearful [of heaven], and did not dare [disrupt] public peace and calm, and the fear of the King Tai and King Ji, and King Wen’s beautiful fear [of heaven] are all of this kind of respect. If one is respectful then the aversion to luxurious ease is long lasting, while those without respect are the opposite of this.<sup>452</sup>

So, in addition to heeding the message of thrift and diligence from the kings of antiquity Kwōn prescribes the following course for an aspiring ruler: “Paying respect to heaven’s will above, protecting the people below; modelling oneself on the distant vicissitudes of ancient times, learning from the recent thrift and diligence of royal ancestors are what heirs of the throne ought to be mindful of”.<sup>453</sup>

#### *Morality of men, conscientious Confucians and the role of the ruler*

The second theme in Kwōn’s commentary that follows on closely from the above concerns human behaviour. Kwōn is particularly interested in the moral dimensions and consequences of people’s actions and this interest is shown firstly in an anachronistic glorification of ancient sages and secondly, in an ahistorical application to the conduct of people during Kwōn’s time. In addition, Kwōn’s prescription for rectifying people’s behaviours is at once general and applicable to any and all readers, as well as being specific in its advice for the moral aspirant with a desire to rule over people.

As outlined above, Kwōn was particularly concerned with explaining the facets of heaven’s working and emphasising its importance as an arbiter of a man or ruler’s morality. The epitome of the ideal relationship between heaven and man are the

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-6.

paragons of antiquity, Yao and Shun. In the *RHT-Documents* Kwŏn explores Yao and Shun and their relationship with astronomy in greater detail. In the case of Yao, he explains that heaven responded to his virtuous rule by rearranging the constellations.<sup>454</sup> Shun, according to Kwŏn, presents an altogether different example. Kwŏn points to an episode in Shun's life prior to when he became emperor and was still working as a minister in Yao's service. While attending to his duties Shun confronted violent winds and rains, but stood his ground and maintained his moral fortitude.<sup>455</sup> Kwŏn explains that Shun's success was on account of his respect 敬 and his response to signs and omens. Kwŏn uses these two cases, especially Yao, to emphasise the importance of firstly, responding to signs and omens; secondly, performing appropriate religious rites to appease heaven; and thirdly, appropriately ruling their domains.

Inspiring and instructive though these paragons of the hoary past may be, Kwŏn is aware that the reality of politics does not always reflect the ideal and this is why he discusses the importance of man reading his immediate environment for the signs of heaven. Given heaven's awesome power, Kwŏn highlights the *Documents'* warnings of heaven's response to a ruler through omens and signs. As seen above in the Nine Divisions of the Great Plan omens and signs are singled out as one feature of significant importance. In the *RHT-Documents* Kwŏn identifies additional signs and omens, such as floods and droughts.<sup>456</sup> The point of Kwŏn's discussion is that while the workings of heaven and its principles may be distant and mysterious to the human ken, the closest avenue to understanding whether a ruler's actions are congruent with heaven is to read the environment and phenomena.

Simply deciphering the signs of heaven is not enough. Kwŏn explains that sages do not meet calamities because of their concern and diligence.<sup>457</sup> In other words, the correct moral fibre of the sage ensures favourable results from heaven and for this reason Kwŏn discusses several issues that deal with the individual and their morality. The most immediate area he deals with is how a person conducts themselves. Kwŏn points to the *Great Collection of Notes to the Book of Documents* 書傳大全 and the two characters necessity 必 and causing 使. These two characters relate to a person who practices

<sup>454</sup> Kwŏn Kūn, "Sōgyong Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk" in Yi Kwang-ho (trans.), (*Kugyŏk*) *Samgyong Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk Shi, Sō, Chuyŏk*, Ch'ŏngmyŏng Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1999: pp. 45-47.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-45.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-9, 41-2, 53, 65-9.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

virtuous ways throughout the day: if a person follows three virtues then they will gradually become a better person, whereas a person who follows six virtues will enjoy even greater virtues.<sup>458</sup> Kwōn explains that according to the *Notes* night and day a person must be diligent in their conduct. Such cultivation can be boiled down to the two concepts of daily expressions 日宣 and daily admonitions 日嚴.<sup>459</sup> Whether it be for the individual or the ruler, Kwōn indicates that this is the basis for being clear and serious in one's work. For the ruler, the only difference is that they apply themselves to ruling the state from dawn to dusk.<sup>460</sup>

Another responsibility of a ruler is to his constituents. In the broadest sense Kwōn explains that a ruler is responsible for protecting his people. A sagely ruler is one who naturally exercises the way of authority 權道, while also following and preserving regulations 經.<sup>461</sup> The welfare of the population is another primary concern for the ruler and Kwōn explains that in governing his people, the ruler has a responsibility to teach and cultivate the people.<sup>462</sup> In sum, Kwōn divides the role of the sage into three key responsibilities: the sage is responsible for regulating the seasons for people to undertake agriculture (namely, the way of heaven); for regulating the waters to mitigate against floods and droughts (the way of earth); and lastly, and most important, ruling one's people (the way of man). Kwōn says, "Once the way of man is complete, then one can rule the way of heaven and earth."<sup>463</sup> Not just here in the discussion of the *Documents*, but as we have seen above in the discussion of the other classics too, the role of the family is paramount in establishing the way of man. Not only does Kwōn declare that, "The correct way of man starts with the family", but he points to the notions of respect 敬 and restraint 欽 as being central to the action of the sages of antiquity.<sup>464</sup> The most immediate area for a ruler to take responsibility of is his family and the families he is responsible for.

### *The Mechanics of Heaven*

Kwōn's interest in heaven extends beyond its role as the source of all abstract principles, its importance as the ontological basis of all phenomena and even its

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., p. 70-1.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

function as a moral barometer for a ruler. Kwŏn's analysis of the *Documents* reveals that he is also interested in delineating the mechanics of heaven, in a physical and astronomical sense. This is not surprising for as we saw in the previous chapter Kwŏn was involved in the construction of the "Sectional Chart of Astronomical Constellations" 天象列次分野地圖. Furthermore in the *IHTS* Kwŏn devotes several chapters to astronomical issues and many pages of his *RHT-Documents* explain how heaven's actions impact on the daily lives of people. The basis of this discussion comes from the *Documents* where Yao instigated the study and recording of the path of the sun and moon, charting the constellations, noting the changing seasons, and how people and animals in different regions acted according to the season. From these observations Yao determined the number of days in the year to be three hundred and sixty-six and relevant offices and agricultural practices, seasons and so forth were harmonised with these calculations.<sup>465</sup> Kwŏn appears to be very interested in elucidating the details of these calculations for his reader. For example, Kwŏn begins by showing how heaven relates to the calendar in the *IHTS* chapter "Diagram of Hexagrams for the Twelve Months" 十二月卦之圖.<sup>466</sup> In this chapter Kwŏn adopts a diagram he claims that Chŏng To-jŏn composed and which shows the relationship of the twelve months of the year and their associated seasons to the twelve hexagrams and the supreme ultimate. In the "Diagram of the Rotations of the Three Luminaries" 周天三辰之圖 Kwŏn adapts the "Diagram for the Treatise on Calendar Seasons" 歷象授時圖 from the *Notes on the Book of Documents* 書傳 to link the four seasons to the twenty eight heavenly stems, twelve earthly stems, the months and their seasons, days and the degrees of the path of the sun.<sup>467</sup> In chapters "Vertical Appraisal of Heaven and Earth" 天地豎看 and "Horizontal Appraisal of Heaven and Earth" 天地橫看 Kwŏn explains the path of the sun and heavens from a horizontal and vertical perspective, and in doing so connects measurement of sunrise and sunset in degrees to the position of the twenty eight heavenly stems.<sup>468</sup> To describe lunar phases Kwŏn takes the diagram "Diagram Illuminating the Phases of the First Moon" 明魄朔圖 from the *Notes* and divides it into two chapters that describe the waxing and waning of the moon: 望前生明 and 望

<sup>465</sup> For an account of Yao's directive and the observations of his brothers concerning astronomical phenomenon and agriculture, see Legge, *The Shoo King*, pp. 18-22.

<sup>466</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp. 79-80

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-4.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8, 89-91.

後生魄.<sup>469</sup> In the commentary that accompanies these chapters Kwŏn goes to great lengths to explain the mathematical permutations that support these frameworks.

This discussion of the mechanics of heaven goes beyond the *IHTS* and extends to Kwŏn's *RHT-Documents*. In this book Kwŏn explains how the sage kings Yao and Shun were particularly interested in charting heaven's workings and responses, how they noted that the path of the sun and moon changed according to the seasons, and even that agricultural practices of people in rural regions varied according to the seasons, location and climate. The calculations derived from these observations came to form the basis of the calendar year and Kwŏn dedicates a significant part of the *RHT-Documents* to explaining how the number of days, hours, months, years and leap years is derived from Yao's initial calculations.<sup>470</sup>

Furthermore, today we understand that there are 365 days per year, so with a base line of three hundred and sixty-six days per year eventually there will come a time when the days of the year do not correspond to the months and seasons. By Kwŏn's time people were already aware of this problem and they were left with the dilemma of attempting to maintain the sanctity of the Yao's astrological record in the *Documents*, while providing a workable explanation of the calenderic and astrological discrepancy. Closely related to the details of the calendar are the four seasons and Kwŏn explains to the reader how the temperatures of the seasons correlate to different times of the year and different paths of the sun and the moon.<sup>471</sup> The importance Kwŏn places on explaining these temporal, seasonal, calenderic and celestial phenomena is clearly evident in the amount of space he devotes to explaining them. The importance of these systems of measurement during Kwŏn's time is that they are central to the regulation of society, such as daily life, administrative functions, agricultural practices, royal events and so forth. A grounding in this knowledge is essential for any aspiring scholar-official and it is of little surprise that Kwŏn devotes so much time and space to its explanation.

As we have seen in Kwŏn's treatment the *Documents* above, he places particular emphasis on heaven. The title of his analysis of the Great Plan clearly indicates his interest in outlining the relationship between heaven and man, and in the diagram and commentary he further describes heaven as the philosophical provenance of the world

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-5.

<sup>470</sup> Kwŏn, "Sōgyōng Ch'ŏn'gyōllōk", 1999, pp. 49-53.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., p. 55.



and man; it forms the basic ontological fabric of all phenomena and the world stage upon which a ruler's actions are evaluated in the form of signs and omens. It is little wonder then that in the commentary on "Against Luxurious Ease" Kwŏn advises his readers that to be respectful of heaven is nothing more than to be in fear of heaven. Further to this and given heaven's importance as a barometer for evaluating the success of a ruler, Kwŏn in the Great Plan points to "harmonising with the five dividers of time", while omens in divisions eight and blessing and extremities in division nine are additional areas where the ruler can either harmonise with heaven or look to heaven to judge its response to his actions. So for an aspiring ruler, or even an ambitious and contentious Confucian scholar, it is essential then to take heed of heaven as manifest in the times, seasons and natural phenomena. For this reason Kwŏn includes a number of chapters in the *IHTS* that use the *Documents* and other classics to elaborate on and interpret heaven as manifested in the physical environment.

### **The Record of Rites: setting the record straight**

Located between the *Changes* and *Annals*, Kwŏn took the *Rites* as sharing the same position as the *Documents* and *Odes*. Kwŏn notes that the *Rites* concern "culture and etiquette through action" and in the adjoining text he writes: "The *Rites* [advocate] caution in one's actions through etiquette and adornments 文飾".<sup>472</sup> In the accompanying chapter Kwŏn describes the *Rites*' complete essence as "never not be respectful" while the great function is summarised as "the wise never dare be excessive, those who are lacking in ability scheme but [fail] to reach it."<sup>473</sup>

Among the other chapters of the *IHTS* Kwŏn touches on issues from the *Rites*. The *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean* were originally chapters of the *Rites*, however by Kwŏn's time they were regarded as texts in their own right and part of the Four Books that Zhu Xi had compiled. As we have seen above, Kwŏn deals with these former chapters of the *Rites* as part of the Neo-Confucian program. Other chapters of the *IHTS* touch on ritual matters, such as the location of grave sites for ancestors and music.<sup>474</sup> So in the *IHTS*, we see that aside from the mention in relation to the Five Classics, Kwŏn's interest in the *Rites* focuses on the actual application of ritual practices as derived from the *Rites*, and even then those relating specifically to family

<sup>472</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 52-3.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-50.

burials and music.

The second instance where Kwŏn writes on the *Rites* is his *RHT* which of all his commentaries on the Classics took the longest time to write and is the largest in volume. The *Rites* is the largest of the Classics and contains a vast array of topics, which could have been why Kwŏn took so long to complete the task. Furthermore, Kwŏn was heavily engaged in court affairs and probably had little time to devote to the mammoth task. Kwŏn's Biographical Chronology shows that his initial interest in the *Rites* was to "investigate and correct the order [of passages] of the *Record of Rites*."<sup>475</sup> In the introduction to the *RHT-Rites* Kwŏn explains that he studied the *Rites* under his teacher Yi Saek, who told Kwŏn that the *Rites* had been destroyed during the book burning of the Qin and persecution of the Confucians scholars during the Han.<sup>476</sup> Scholars from later generations were then left with a incomplete text full of many errors and this is why scholars such as Zhu Xi took such an interest in reconstituting the *Doctrine of the Mean* and *Great Learning* from the *Rites*. In an attempt to redress the very same issue, Yi Saek and then Kwŏn set about attempting to reorder and correct the *Rites*. So we can see that from the outset Kwŏn's engagement with the *Rites* differs to that of the other four Classics: for the other four, Kwŏn's focus is on exegesis, while in the case of the *Rites* it was clarifying, rectifying and reconstructing.

Generally speaking, we see that Kwŏn regarded the *Rites* as a canon of the teachings of the sages that dealt with day to day ethics.<sup>477</sup> However the jumbled text required reordering and in the *RHT-Rites* Kwŏn arranges the contents according to the four genres of classic 經, commentary 傳, sentence 章 and verse 節. The re-ordering and reconstruction of the *Rites* was a practice that extended well before Zhu Xi because of the eclectic and accretive origins of the text. Even Zhu Xi attempted to bring some order and consistency to the text, so it is of little surprise that Yi Saek and Kwŏn should also turn their attention to making sense and order of the text.

Kwŏn's approach to the *Rites* however shows some important differences with Zhu Xi's treatment of the same text. The point of difference is Kwŏn's use of the divisions of classic, commentary, sentence and verse to order the text. This approach contrasts with Zhu Xi who merely sought to explain and interpret the text, not reorder and reconstruct

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<sup>475</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 1, p. 6a.

<sup>476</sup> Kwŏn, *RHT-Rites*, p. 118, b1.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114, b, 2.

the entire text back its original state. It can be argued that reordering the text in an attempt to recreate the original structure is a far more ambitious and difficult endeavour than simply attempting to explain its meaning.

In addition, Kwŏn's interest in the *Rites*, as we saw in the *IHTS* portions, is not so much with interpreting the meaning, but with identifying and transmitting essential ideas and practices of the text. In the first chapter of the *Rites*, "Summary of the Rules of Propriety, Part 1" 曲禮上, Kwŏn follows closely Zhu Xi's interpretation of the first line:

"The Summary of the Rules of Propriety" says: Always and in everything let there be reverence; with the deportment grave as when one is thinking (deeply), and with speech composed and definite. This will make the people tranquil.<sup>478</sup>

Both Kwŏn and Zhu see this sentence as pointing to three stages of cultivation – always being respectful, thinking seriously and being considered in one's speech.<sup>479</sup> The result of practising these three is that the populace become calm and tranquil.<sup>480</sup> Kwŏn elaborates a little more on these four stages than Zhu stating that ever present respectfulness is the complete essence of the *Rites*; thinking seriously indicates a process whereby that which is inside a person emerges externally; being considerate in one's speech is where that which is harboured internally; and lastly, the tranquillity of people is the result of these efforts.<sup>481</sup> In other words, practising respect is the basis of rites and the corollary of its practice is a society of tranquil people.

Another interesting connection Kwŏn makes to the definition of rites is music. The *Rites* includes a chapter on music, the Record of Music 樂記, and in his introduction to this chapter Kwŏn writes:

This chapter [Record of Music] talks about the combination of rites with the discussion of the principle of music and that the two [rites and music]

<sup>478</sup> Legge, James trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites, An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions*, Volume 1., University Books, New York, 1967, pp. 60-1.

<sup>479</sup> Kwŏn, *RHT-Rites*, p. 119, a, 1-2.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

cannot be separated.<sup>482</sup>

Kwŏn continues and says that unlike other chapters, the Record of Music is not a fabrication but is actually the original content of the Rites.<sup>483</sup> Like the rest of the Rites, Kwŏn divides this chapter into its “classic” and “commentary” portions. On this point Keum Jang-t’ae notes that the first chapter of the Record of Music corresponds not only to the classic portion, but its discussion covers the principle of music as it relates to man and rites.<sup>484</sup> Kwŏn identifies why man, through sounds that emanate from his heart/mind, is connected to the universal principle of heaven. Namely, through the medium of music, especially that of the sages, man can unify with sages and their way of thinking and acting. According to Kwŏn the second chapter of the Record of Music relates to commentary and Kwŏn relates music and rites to the nature of the heart/mind in the individual and the broader nature of the universe. Here again we see Kwŏn utilising the essence/function scheme as seen above to the music and rites, with the essence being the explication of the rites outlined in the chapter Rules of Propriety, while the function of the rites being expressed through music, as outlined in the two chapters on the Record of Music.<sup>485</sup>

### Kwŏn’s hermeneutic engagements with the canon

In the previous section we saw the breadth of Kwŏn’s interest in the Confucian canon and the issues he focused on. From Kwŏn’s engagement with the canon we can also see facets of his hermeneutical methodology covering adoption, adaptation, improvisation and, of course, simple explanation. Kwŏn adopts knowledge from the canon by directly quoting or duplicating text and images. In these instances information from the canon is clear, concise and authoritative enough to be transmitted without modification. We see Kwŏn do this where he quotes large portions from the *Odes*, *Documents* and *Changes* in his commentaries or where he has lifted diagrams straight from other sources, such as with representations of the five phases<sup>486</sup> or the arrangement of musical tones and notes.<sup>487</sup> Although the majority of adopted knowledge comes from the canon, it must be noted that the canon is not the exclusive source that Kwŏn consults in this manner.

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid., p379, b, 1.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Keum Jang-t’ae, “Yangch’on ūi Akgip’yŏn Haesŏk gwa Yeakron”, *Han’guk Yuhak ūi Akron*, Yemunsŏwŏn, Seoul, 2008: pp. 9-10.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>486</sup> Kwŏn, *HITS*, 1982, pp. 56, 57.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-101, 102-3.

Peppered through his writings are direct quotes from a range of Chinese commentators, as discussed below. However, Kwŏn does not confine himself to the writings of these commentators either for we find a case of Kwŏn adopting knowledge directly from one of his contemporaries. In the chapter on “Diagram of the twelve months and hexagrams” in the *IHTS* Kwŏn includes a diagram from his peer Chŏng To-jŏn.<sup>488</sup> Kwŏn obviously privileged the canon as the primary source of knowledge, followed by the writings of Chinese commentators, but the inclusion of Chŏng’s diagram shows that where Kwŏn recognised knowledge as being well articulated, correct and precise, he did not hesitate to incorporate the information directly into his discussion. Therefore, the canon happens to hold the concentration of authoritative knowledge, but such knowledge is not exclusive to antiquity and can equally be found in the words of one’s contemporaries.

The place where Kwŏn most clearly adapts knowledge from the canon is in his own diagrams. By adapting knowledge Kwŏn paraphrases from the canon and injects his own of interpretations to bridge elliptical gaps. In the introduction to the *IHTS*, he explains that he based his initial diagrams on Zhou Dunyi’s “Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate” and Zhu Xi’s commentaries, then he chose maxims from scholars and consulted the canon, and where possible worked them into diagrammatic form and included his opinions.<sup>489</sup> One particularly good example of this adaptation from the canon and commentary is where Kwŏn discusses the Great Plan 洪範 from the *Documents* in the *IHTS*. As we saw above, Kwŏn adapts various earlier renderings of the diagram of the Great Plan by reconfiguring it into two diagrams, a part one and part two 上下. In effect Kwŏn had continued a process of adaptation that originated in the canon and extended through generations of commentators, with Kwŏn injecting a little of his own ideas into the process. This chapter is by no means the only case, for we can see other instances of Kwŏn adapting other canonical materials such as from the *Great Collected Notes to the Book of Documents* where Kwŏn takes a diagram of lunar phases found in this book and divides the diagram in two to show clearly the waxing and waning of the moon and how the different phases relate to different days.<sup>490</sup>

Since the canon is not replete with explanations of everything, let alone diagrams,

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-3.

Kwŏn took the liberty of improvising his own interpretation of what certain themes and issues meant and how they related to each other. His most iconic improvisation is the opening diagram of the *IHTS* where he attempts to capture the unified nature of heaven and man.<sup>491</sup> Even in other chapters he takes texts and arranges their key constituents, notes their features and connects their main points, such as is seen in his chapter on the *Great Learning*,<sup>492</sup> *Doctrine of the Mean*,<sup>493</sup> the State Airs 國風 from the *Odes*<sup>494</sup> and his conceptualisation of the essence and function of the Five Classics,<sup>495</sup> to name but a few. This shows that while Kwŏn derived a lot of inspiration from the canon, as Plassen rightly notes, but importantly (and a point Plassen does not consider) he was not simply replicating their works uncritically. Instead he was responding to what he saw as the deficiencies of the canon.

Accompanying all of the diagrams and constituting the body of Kwŏn's commentaries is simple textual exegesis. In both the *IHTS* and *RHT*, Kwŏn provides extensive written explanation of texts, concepts and the philosophical mechanics within the canon. Kwŏn explains the origins of texts and issues, the circumstances surrounding certain compositions and the historical background. For example, Kwŏn's commentary on the *Changes* discusses the origin, composition and formation of the *Changes*, including the role of King Wen, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, even the history of the *Changes* from the time of the Qin through to the Tang and its more recent developments at the hands of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi in the Song.<sup>496</sup> His evaluation and explanation also includes an acknowledgement of commentators whom he considered to have offered unorthodox interpretations.<sup>497</sup> For particular songs from the *Odes* Kwŏn devotes a considerable amount of time to explaining the circumstances of their composition, where they were composed and by whom. In the beginning of his *RHT-Odes*, Kwŏn speculates on the provenance of the two opening collections of the *Odes*, Zhou of the South and Shao of the South, and he argues that, based on the content and observations made in certain songs, they could only have been composed by people at the heart of court affairs.<sup>498</sup> In short, Kwŏn writing commentaries on the classics is what

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p. 5. See Appendix p. 261.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-31.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-44.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-7, 108-112.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-4.

<sup>496</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn, "Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", in *Ogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk*, Han'guk Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, Sŏngnam, 1995, pp. 21a2-21b1.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Kwŏn, "Sŏgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, pp. 109a1, 109a1-109b2.

Confucian scholar had been doing for centuries.

*Convergences and divergences: Kwŏn on the commentators*

Integral to Kwŏn's interpretation and explanation of the canon is his engagement with commentators and their commentaries. The problem with the canon, although not stated explicitly, is that it is incomplete, patchy, ambiguous and inconsistent. Attempting to evoke knowledge from this distant past, let alone ascribe authority to its content and personalities or distil maxims and precepts, is difficult and demands explanation and interpretation. By the time of Kwŏn, the body of commentary literature accompanying the canon was well established and Kwŏn had little choice but to address both. In fact, the canonical value ascribed to particular commentators and the contending interpretations within the body of commentaries meant that in any discussion of the canon it was impossible to avoid looking at how others had dealt with the canon. So for Kwŏn, dealing with the commentaries was as important as dealing with the canon itself.

Clarifying earlier commentaries is a prominent feature across all of Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism. A large part of the first two chapters of the *IHTS* has Kwŏn paraphrasing and explaining the details of Cheng/Zhu thought on heaven, man and his nature.<sup>499</sup>

Then, at the end of several pages discussing these issues Kwŏn pauses to clarify his position: "All of these meanings originate in the maxims of the Cheng [brothers] and Zhu [Xi], [they] are not my conjectures".<sup>500</sup> Throughout Kwŏn's writings the reader encounters an interlocutor who queries Kwŏn about the themes he covers and literary device of a "discussion" enables Kwŏn to add further layers of elucidation and qualify potential misunderstandings regarding his own interpretations. For instance, following the above mentioned discussion of Cheng/Zhu thought, the interlocutor asks Kwŏn seventeen questions, such as why he summarised Zhou Dunyi's "Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate" the way he did, whether he misinterpreted concepts, why in summarising the four elements 元亨利貞 from the *Changes* he included the character for sincerity 誠; how his explanation of material force 氣 and physical constitution relate to the reality of man and beasts; whether the mind is empty, and if so, how then could it be full with the principles from heaven; and what makes people virtuous or

<sup>499</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp. 6-11.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. 若其義意皆本程朱格言。非愚臆說也。

This kind of interrogation is not confined to this chapter of the *IHTS*. In Kwŏn's various *RHT* we see even greater frequency of clarifying Cheng/Zhu thought. In *RHT-Odes* Kwŏn begins his discussion by speculating on the provenance of the songs about the "Two Southerners" – the Duke of Zhou and Duke of Zhao – and ties in Zhu Xi's proposition found in his *Shijing Jichuan* 詩經集傳 (*Collected Notes on the Book of Odes*).<sup>502</sup> Kwŏn also refers to Zhu's interpretation of the meaning of certain songs like "Gwan ju" 關雎 and explains to the interlocutor why there appears to be certain inconsistencies in Zhu's interpretation of this song when compared to others.<sup>503</sup> In Kwŏn's treatment of the *Documents* he continues this trend although he looks less at Zhu's interpretation and more at his student Cai Chen who compiled the *Shujing Jichuan* 書經集傳 (*Collected Notes on the Book of Documents*). Regardless of this shift in focus from Zhu to Cai, clarifying the canon and the commentaries remains the centrepiece of Kwŏn's commentary and he begins his discussion of the *Documents* with a quote from Cai, followed by a discussion about the nomenclature of the chapters of the *Documents*. Further into his commentary Kwŏn discusses the constellations recorded in the "Canon of Yao" and cites Cai's remarks on the event.<sup>504</sup> Kwŏn continues by qualifying both the original record of the *Documents* and Cai's interpretation of the constellations,<sup>505</sup> the five phases and "Great Plan",<sup>506</sup> the historical order of certain songs,<sup>507</sup> even the fate of Kija,<sup>508</sup> to cite but a few instances. The same trend of qualifying Cheng/Zhu interpretations is also found in Kwŏn's other writings, such as *RHT-Changes* where he uses Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi's *Yi Chuan's Treatise on Change* 伊川易傳 and *Fundamental Meaning of the Book of Changes* 周易本義 to elucidate the meaning of hexagrams. In many of these cases Kwŏn is taking problematic points in Cheng/Zhu interpretations as the basis of his discussion.

At first glance it appears as though Kwŏn is placing all of his emphasis on clarifying

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-22.

<sup>502</sup> Kwŏn, "Sŏgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995 p. 109a1.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid., p. 109b2.

<sup>504</sup> Kwŏn, "Sŏgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, pp. 101a2-101b1.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., p. 102b1-2.

<sup>506</sup> See Kwŏn, *RHT-Documents* in Kwŏn, Kŭn, (*Kukyŏk*) *Samgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk: si · sŏ · chuyŏk*. tran. Yi Kwang-ho, Ch'ŏngmyŏng Munhwa Chaedan, Seoul, 1999: pp. 60-61. The AKS compilation of Kwŏn's commentaries seems to have inadvertently omitted several pages of the original.

<sup>507</sup> Kwŏn, "Sŏgyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, p., 105a1-2.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., p. 105b2.



Cheng/Zhu commentaries on the canon and this has led many scholars to regard Kwŏn as simply supporting, if not furthering their interpretation of the Confucian canon. This, however, is not the case as two features of Kwŏn's attitude demonstrate firstly, that he by no means restricts his focus to the Song period commentaries of Zhu and Cheng, and instead looked at other commentators from the Yuan period and even earlier. There are of course the usual Confucian personalities such as Mencius and Confucius, but others appear such as Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824),<sup>509</sup> and a raft of enigmatic figures such as Mr Yi in the *RHT-Documents*,<sup>510</sup> Mr Yao 饒氏 in the discussion of the *Mean* in *IHTS*,<sup>511</sup> Dong Gong 董公 and Mr Hwang 黃氏 in regard to the *Great Learning*<sup>512</sup> and Yuan commentator Wu Cheng numerous times when discussing the *Changes*. The breadth of commentators that Kwŏn incorporates into his writings shows his concern was not confined to dogmatically supporting a particular school, thinker or interpretation, but rather engaging with the Confucian canon and its interlocutors.

The second point that shows that Kwŏn was not slavishly following Cheng/Zhu thought is that he criticises their interpretations where he feels their commentaries are amiss. In *RHT-Changes* we saw Kwŏn criticising Cheng and Zhu over their interpretation of various hexagrams. When looking at the hexagram Pi 比, for example, Kwŏn cites Zhu Xi's *Fundamental Meaning of the Book of Changes* and notes that, "The three characters 'Pi is auspicious' are a mistake",<sup>513</sup> but then moves on to propose his own opinion that the phrase in its entirety is not an interpretation of Pi alone, but must be taken with the rest of the phrase and Pi is a subtle way to help all people in hierarchical positions enjoy auspicious outcomes.<sup>514</sup> For the hexagram Mong 蒙, Kwŏn disagrees with Cheng Hao and Wu Cheng who interpret a character as representing a father or a wife, and instead thinks that it represents a mother dealing with difficult circumstances.<sup>515</sup> In discussing other hexagrams Kwŏn politely offers alternative historical explanations to Zhu, as in the case of Im 臨,<sup>516</sup> while concerning interpretations of T'ae 泰, he simply expresses concern that Cheng Hao's interpretation

<sup>509</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp.11, 18; Kwŏn, "Sōgyōng Ch'ŏn'gyōllok", 1995, p. 105b2.

<sup>510</sup> Kwŏn, "Sōgyōng Ch'ŏn'gyōllok", 1995, 105b2.

<sup>511</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, pp. 35-44.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>513</sup> Kwŏn, "Chuyōk Ch'ŏn'gyōllok", 1995, p. 25a2.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24b1.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30a1.

"is not sound".<sup>517</sup> Not only does Kwŏn find fault with Cheng and Zhu with other hexagrams<sup>518</sup> but his criticism extends to discussion of the other classics such as the *Odes* where he is trying to explain why certain songs are grouped together when they were composed in different areas and he concludes that the explanation provided in Zhu's *Shijing Jichuan* is incorrect.<sup>519</sup> Even at the beginning of his *RHT-Odes*, Kwŏn opens his commentary by questioning Zhu's claim that the Duke of Zhou was the "son of heaven". After outlining the historical circumstances to the contrary, Kwŏn stresses the need to be most prudent and rigorous, suggesting that Zhu somewhat hastily, if not recklessly, ascribed the appellation to the Duke of Zhou.<sup>520</sup> Yet another example is in the *RHT-Documents* where Kwŏn differs from Cai Chen's commentary over interpretation of the number of songs included in a particular chapter.<sup>521</sup>

Another point in Kwŏn's writings that highlights his robust engagement with Zhu Xi is his treatment of the *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*, two texts that were by Kwŏn's time staple educational materials and representative of the Cheng/Zhu shift in thinking. Kwŏn praises the *Great Learning* as a text for its simplicity, detail and usefulness for beginning students.<sup>522</sup> He also draws the student's attention to the concepts of essence-function, origin-end and knowledge-action.<sup>523</sup> The opening commentary Kwŏn provides is quite brief, before he turns to answering questions from his student/s. Through the dialogue Kwŏn discusses structural divisions of the text stemming from Zhu's ordering of the text, contributions from Zhu's disciples, ordering of its internal components, terminology and even the problem of authorship.<sup>524</sup> Evident from Kwŏn's diagram and dialogue is that he is acutely aware of the internal tension resulting from Zhu's re-ordering of the original *Great Learning* and its acceptance by Zhu's disciples. Kwŏn does not overtly challenge Zhu's overall position on the text, yet he does suggest re-ordering sections, for example having discussion of study 工夫 in relation to eight headings before the results of study 功效 of the eight headings.<sup>525</sup>

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., p. 27a1-a2.

<sup>518</sup> For example, see Kwŏn's discussion of the hexagrams 否, 大有, 豫, 損, 姤, 漸, and 中孚 in *RHT-Changes*.

<sup>519</sup> Kwŏn, "Sigyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, p. 110b2.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., p. 109a1.

<sup>521</sup> Kwŏn, "Sogyŏng Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, p. 105a1-a2.

<sup>522</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 24.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-6.

<sup>525</sup> The Eight Headings 八條目 are rectifying the mind 正心, making the will sincere 誠意, investigating things 格物, extending knowledge to the utmost 致知, cultivating the self 修身, bring

Furthermore, the diagram shows Kwŏn dividing the eight headings into three groups: investigation of things and extending knowledge under “knowledge” 知; rectifying the mind, making the will sincere and cultivating the self under “action” 行; and lastly ordering the family, governing the country and achieving peace under “utmost action” 極行.<sup>526</sup>

While Kwŏn’s interpretation and rearrangement of sections of the text does not explicitly challenge Zhu Xi interpretations it does, however, reveal Kwŏn’s regard for Zhu’s teachings and the Confucian canon in general. It shows that Kwŏn recognises the benefits and problems in Zhu’s interpretation, and where problems arise he does not hesitate in putting forward his suggestions.<sup>527</sup> He justifies these suggestions by referring to Zhu’s other writings or other classics. Overall, we see that while Kwŏn respects many aspects of Zhu’s work, he regards it as part of the broader Confucian canon that is attempting to make sense of its own past. For Kwŏn, perhaps, Zhu lies closer to capturing that meaning than others commentators. Nevertheless, he does not regard Zhu as perfect and infallible. Rather, he regards him as part of the same tradition of Confucian scholars striving for the same truth.

Turning now to Kwŏn Kŭn’s first chapter on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, he describes it as a text that transmits the way and its teachings are found in real life affairs.<sup>528</sup> Kwŏn explains that the key notions of mandate of heaven, nature, way and teaching are the head chapters in the text and their descriptions are found herein, followed by a more detailed discussion of the way.<sup>529</sup> The dialogue between Kwŏn and his interlocutor, like the previous discussion in the chapter of the *Great Learning*, focuses on terminology, order and structure of Kwŏn Kŭn’s interpretation.<sup>530</sup> The second chapter on the *Mean*

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order to the family 齊家, ruling the country 治國 and achieving peace among all under heaven 平天下. The other key principles of the *Great Learning* are the “Three Principles” 三綱, namely illuminating illustrious virtue 明明德, renewing the subjects 親民 and stopping where you reach goodness 止於至善. See *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. See Appendix, p. 274 for Kwŏn’s diagram on the *Great Learning*.

<sup>527</sup> For the only thorough analysis of Kwŏn Kŭn’s chapter on the *Great Learning* see Ch’oi Sŏk-gi, “Yangch’ŏn Kwŏn Kŭn ūi “Taehak” Haesŏk gwa Kŭ Ŭimi”, *Hanmun Hakpo*, 2003, pp. 81-115. In researching this chapter I have benefited greatly from this article and it has provided a useful platform for delving into the intricacies of structural differences between Kwŏn and Zhu, and their respective implications.

<sup>528</sup> The first chapter on the *Mean* is “Diagram Analysing Head Chapters of the Doctrine of the Mean” and the following chapter is “Discussion on Different Divisions of the Doctrine of the Mean”. Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982: pp. 31-4, 34-44. See Appendix, p. 245 for Kwŏn’s diagram on the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-44.

contains no diagram, but it begins with a summary of how Zhu Xi, Yuan scholar Shuang-feng Yao Lu 雙峯 饒魯 (fl. 1256)<sup>531</sup> and Kwŏn Kūn respectively divide chapters of the *Mean* into themes.<sup>532</sup> Zhu breaks the *Mean* into four main divisions, Yao makes six and Kwŏn divides the text into three main sections, which are comprised of five subdivisions.<sup>533</sup> Kwŏn Kūn's division of the text draws upon the work of Zhu, but in reordering the structure of the text he subtly changes the focus. While Zhu's focus is primarily on the *Mean* as a doctrine of transmitting the way 道統論, Kwŏn regards the *Mean* as revealing sagely Confucian values 聖德.<sup>534</sup> Kwŏn Kūn's restructuring of the text sees him amalgamate portions of the work of Zhu and Yao to present the *Mean* as a text describing the way of heaven not merely as an abstract metaphysical notion, but instead in a practical sense where through teaching and learning 教學 one can arrive at the way of the gentleman and the virtues of the sage. Kwŏn's clear concern in this chapter is to integrate learning and study with the practice of the sage, and consequently with the mandate of heaven, all the while keeping the discussion grounded in the realities of real life rather than metaphysical speculation.<sup>535</sup> Here, again, we find Kwŏn in his interpretation and ordering of the *Mean* on the one hand showing respect for Zhu, yet on the other hand, revealing discernible hermeneutic divergence with Zhu. The fact that Kwŏn did not unquestioningly support Zhu's ideas on the *Mean* and *Great Learning* points towards him being a critical scholar more interested in the pursuit of the right meaning than in solidifying and supporting intellectual lineages.

Kwŏn's critique of orthodox Cheng/Zhu thought is relatively mild when compared to his critique of other Confucian commentators. In his commentary on the *RHT-Changes* Kwŏn launches a scathing attack on Yuan writer Wu Cheng. He chastises Wu for attempting to correct certain characters,<sup>536</sup> misinterpreting or misreading certain phrases

<sup>531</sup> Referred to as Mr. Yao, 饒氏 in the *IHTS*.

<sup>532</sup> See a sample in the Appendix, p. 275.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, For Zhu's account see pp. 34-5, Yao pp. 35-6, and Kwŏn pp. 36-8.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-43.

<sup>535</sup> The most detailed analysis of Kwŏn Kūn's understanding of the *Doctrine of the Mean* is, Ch'oe Sŏk-gi, "Kwŏn Kūn ūi 'Chungyong' Haesŏk gwa Kū Ūimi", *Namnyŏnghak Yŏn'gu*, Vol. 17: pp. 163-214. This article has a very good analysis of the implications and nuances of Kwŏn Kūn's interpretations of the *Mean*.

<sup>536</sup> For example, Wu changing the character 攬 to 攬 in hexagram 訟. See Kwŏn, "Chuyŏk Ch'ŏn'gyŏllŏk", 1995, p. 24b2 and changing 丈人 to 大人 in hexagram 師, see *Ibid.*, p. 25a1. Kwŏn repeatedly cites Wu Cheng and his criticism at some points, like hexagram Soch'uk 小畜, is light, describing Wu's interpretation of a particular passage as "novel", while in hexagrams like Ko 蠱 Kwŏn chastises Wu for interpreting a passage with a kind of pseudo-Buddhist notion of an

and characters,<sup>537</sup> suggesting “other worldly” interpretations that are not in line with what Confucians usually think<sup>538</sup> and even falling into heterodox thought of Buddhists.<sup>539</sup> Kwŏn is also critical of commentators and scholars in his other writings but in a more general sense. In *RHT-Documents*, for instance, Kwŏn criticises later generations of scholars for their misinterpretations and misunderstanding, even accusing some of them of being “amateurish”.<sup>540</sup> He also points out that scholars have missed the meaning of certain phrases and that “scholars of today” 今之學者 misread Cai Chen’s commentary on the *Documents* and take him to be talking about the ruler using people. In this instance Kwŏn identifies the problem as “scholars” misreading the meaning of the characters 必 and 使, thinking that they apply to people’s affairs, when Kwŏn argues that Cai originally meant the characters to refer to self-cultivation.<sup>541</sup> Kwŏn even points out where earlier Confucian scholars made mistakes in distinguishing characters when they dealt with old versions of the *Documents*.<sup>542</sup>

Kwŏn’s evaluation of commentators and commentaries extends beyond Confucians to include a critique of Buddhists. In the *IHTS*, Kwŏn cites Buddhists as holding a particularly shallow view of what constitutes human nature<sup>543</sup> and dismisses Buddhist notions of emptiness.<sup>544</sup> After an extended discussion about astronomy, paths of the sun and moon, and constellations, Kwŏn notes in *RHT-Documents* how Buddhists conceive of the path of the sun but scathingly dismisses them, saying that he fears they are yet to establish a proper argument.<sup>545</sup> In his commentary on the *Changes* Kwŏn attacks

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afterlife saying, “These are not the words of a Confucian”. While Kwŏn’s overall approach to Wu is quite negative it must be noted that there are occasional points where he does concur with his interpretations, such as in the appendices. What this and the above treatment show is that Kwŏn was treating the commentators in a fair and intellectually honest way. Those points Kwŏn agreed with he praised, those needing qualification he explained and those he saw as wrong or inadequate he criticised.

<sup>537</sup> See hexagrams 乾 Ibid., p. 23b2; 屯 Ibid., p. 24b1; 蒙 Ibid., p. 24b1; 履 Ibid., p. 27a1.

<sup>538</sup> See hexagram 蠱, in Ibid., p. 29b2.

<sup>539</sup> See hexagram 无亡, Ibid., p. 32b1-b2.

<sup>540</sup> Kwŏn blames the misunderstanding of a certain phrase from the chapter “Tai Ji” 太甲上 in the *Documents* on later generations of “amateurs” 好事者 who referred to the meaning in terms of 放, see Kwŏn, “Sōgyōng Ch’ŏn’gyōllok”, 1995, p. 105b1-b2. Kwŏn further accuses later generations of failing to understand what the sages were trying to explain, see Ibid., p. 107a1, and says later generations fall for heterodox thoughts and become confused over geographical points, see Ibid., p. 107a2.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., p. 103a1.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 105b1.

<sup>543</sup> Kwŏn, *IHTS*, 1982, p. 11.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., pp. 14, 17.

<sup>545</sup> Kwŏn, “Sōgyōng Ch’ŏn’gyōllok”, 1995, p. 102b2. Kwŏn writes: ‘A monk said “the sun and moon move [around] the summit of Mount Sumi 須彌, people live to the south of this mountain”’. Kwŏn then goes on to point out that according to this monk’s interpretation, as the sun follows different

Buddhists from yet another angle, mocking their heterodox idea of “love for all without distinction” and their lack of concern for family relations,<sup>546</sup> their notions of the annihilation of the self and its ethical implications,<sup>547</sup> and lastly the Hwaōm philosophical position.<sup>548</sup>

### *Locating Kwōn in the Korean and North East Asian intellectual environment*

What then do Kwōn’s writings on Confucianism and his orientation towards the canon and its commentaries tell us? Furthermore, how does this relate to our understanding of Kwōn and the broader intellectual climate of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century? From the above we have seen that Kwōn understood the canon as a reservoir of knowledge that forms the foundation for educated literati to understand, interpret and function in society. This knowledge has additional dimensions: it provides practical knowledge that defines, orders and explains society and the world; it provides abstract knowledge of metaphysical principles that underpin man, society and the world; it is a record of historical events and personalities that embody the consequences of moral decisions and actions; and it provides visions of ideal Confucian societies from antiquity. Entwined within Kwōn’s treatment of the canon is extensive use of centuries of commentary literature, which he uses to support his arguments, qualify points of uncertainty and address discrepancies in the epistemological fabric of the canon. Kwōn thus approaches the canon, commentaries and commentators with a probing yet critical eye. He probes and explores the nuances of the canon and he interrogates the writings of commentators to draw out their positions, highlight their mistakes and correct their misunderstandings. When we attempt to evaluate Kwōn’s approach to the entire Confucian corpus, we see that far from following one particular thinker or school of thought he approaches the entire Confucian corpus in a non-sectarian, independent and inquisitive way.

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paths during summer and winter, namely high and low, then the location of people must change in relation to the mountain, a point that Kwōn thinks is foolish. As far as Kwōn is concerned, Buddhist monks misconstrue the nature of heaven’s workings and only the Confucian canon possesses the real appreciation of how heaven works. The Confucian paradigm, for Kwōn, remains the primary means to understanding, explaining and interpreting heaven. Note, Mount Sumi is a translation of the Sanskrit “Sumeru” which according to Buddhist cosmology is the tallest mountain in the world where the sun and moon rise and set.

<sup>546</sup> See discussion of hexagram 謙 in Kwōn, “Chuyok Ch’ōn’gyōllok”, 1995, p. 28a1-a2. Here Kwōn explains that the way of Confucianism is “one principle, multiple manifestations” 理一分殊, while the way of heterodoxy, namely Buddhism, was “love for all without distinction” 兼愛無分.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. pp. 41a1-42a1. In discussion of Kuimae 歸妹 he criticises Buddhist notions of the self, namely the doctrine of annihilation of the self 滅人論 and its ethical implications.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 40b2-41a1. See Kwōn’s discussion of hexagram Yang 艮.

There are two contexts in which we can locate Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism: the Koryŏ/Chosŏn intellectual environment of the Korean peninsula and the broader Sinitic realm. In the Koryŏ/Chosŏn context it is difficult to gauge accurately where Kwŏn's writings fit because although the Confucian canon was present in the peninsula for centuries before Kwŏn and was at the centre of education for all literati, we have no extant materials of a commentary tradition before Kwŏn's writings. This is not to say that there were no commentaries. As already noted, historical records show that even when Kwŏn Po and Ahn Hyang introduced and published Zhu Xi's writings in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century they included a commentary on the works. However, as these writings or any indication of their content is not available we can only draw rudimentary conclusions, such as that while the Confucian canon was widely known in the peninsula, the literati did not feel the need to write commentaries. In this light Kwŏn's project marks a new point in the activities of literati in the peninsula: he is writing exclusively, widely and in depth on the Confucian canon. There were no literati prior to Kwŏn who undertook an exegetical project to a comparable breadth and depth.

When we look at the writings of Kwŏn's teachers and peers the picture is slightly different. Kwŏn's teachers are admired for their erudition in Yuan and Koryŏ, such as Yi Saek, Chŏng Mong-ju and Yi Je-hyŏn. But none of Kwŏn's teachers wrote extended commentaries on Confucianism or its canon. The closest is Chŏng To-jŏn who penned short essays on mind, principle and material force. These are philosophical issues that derive from Cheng-Zhu thought and Chŏng relies on Zhu Xi as a philosophical platform to attack Buddhism and argue the primacy of Zhu's metaphysics. Although not addressed in great detail in the thesis, Kwŏn also wrote on these topics and at far greater depth. Furthermore, Kwŏn provided Chŏng's essays with a preface and afterward. Aside from these essays Chŏng did not write at any great depth on the Confucian canon. He certainly incorporated Confucian ideas into his writings, but that was common place among Confucian literati. Therefore, even when compared to his teachers and peers, Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism appear to be an exception.

After Kwŏn the next Chosŏn thinkers to delve into the canon and write commentaries on a comparable level appear in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1547 Yi Ŏn-jŏk 李彦迪 (1491- 1553) wrote a number of studies on the classic when he was in exile. These works include *Addendum to the Variorium of the Great Learning* 大學章句補遺 (1549), *Extended Meaning of the Doctrine of the Mean and the Nine Classics* 中庸九

經衍義 (1553) and *Extended Meaning of the Nine Classics* 九經衍義. In Yi's writings we see not only an engagement with the Confucian canon comparable to Kwŏn, but a shift in focus towards focusing on Cheng-Zhu literature and ideas, in particular the argument over the primacy of principle over material force. Even prior to Yi debates over these issues had emerged. In 1517 for example a debate emerged between Son Suk-don 孫叔墩 (d.u.) and Cho Han-bo 曹漢輔 (d.u.) over the concept of the Supreme Ultimate and Ultimate Non-being 太極無極. In the space of one hundred years not only was there an increase in engaging with the canon and its commentaries, but the intellectual climate in the peninsula changed to become factionalised along political and ideological lines. So while Kwŏn's writing share some points of congruence with these later writers, equally we can see the shift towards a narrower range of intellectual issues. Thus, in the Koryŏ context Kwŏn appears ahead of his time in so far as his engagement with the canon as an intellectual and exegete, while in the Chosŏn context his interest in the canon appears to stray beyond the borders of later exegetes. Also, Kwŏn's at times critical evaluation of Cheng-Zhu is contrary to the nascent veneration for Cheng-Zhu thought that emerged in the century following Kwŏn's death. It is this point that has made the evaluation of Kwŏn from an intellectual history perspective so contentious and problematic.

When we turn to look at Kwŏn from a Sinitic perspective, specifically intellectual trends among Confucians of the Yuan and Ming, his engagement with the Confucian canon and its commentators fits quite naturally. By the time of Kwŏn, the Mongol regime had unified and run China for over 80 years, during which time Cheng-Zhu teachings had moved from a known, but essentially southern Chinese school of thought, to being central to the Yuan examination system.<sup>549</sup> There are several striking features of the Confucian thinkers of this time. The first feature is that while there was recognition of the value in Cheng-Zhu thought, there was divergence among the Confucians as to what aspects of Cheng-Zhu thought were important. Peter Bol in comparing the response of Chinese literati to examination curricula in the 1070s and 1313 has shown how the literati responded to policies in different ways and in this

<sup>549</sup> See Chan, Wing-tsit, "Chu Hsi and Yüan Neo-Confucianism" in Hok-lam Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Yüan thought: Chinese Thought and Religion Under the Mongols*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982: pp. 197-231. Chan provides an account of the Yuan reception of neo-Confucian thought and literature through the efforts of Zhao Fu, Xu Heng and Wu Cheng and notes the practical focus on Cheng-Zhu literature through the Four Books and Lesser Learning, over the limited exploration of metaphysical issues.



analysis he revealed that even among Yuan intellectuals there was considerable diversity in their intellectual positions and understandings, some even holding critical, sceptical and ambiguous attitudes towards Cheng/Zhu thought while remaining within the “Daoxue world”.<sup>550</sup> Some Confucians such as Xu Heng emphasised the Four Books and he was integral to the introduction of the texts to the education system. Others, such as Wu Cheng sought to harmonise Zhu Xi’s thought with Lu Xiang-shan. Another similar literati was Cheng Yu.

On this issue of diversity among the Confucian intellectuals Wing-tsit Chan notes, “this is a significant development. It not only showed that there was some dissent from Chu Hsi’s [sic] ideas but also offered an opportunity for Neo-Confucians to unfold a new direction.”<sup>551</sup> This diversity among Confucian intellectuals and within Neo-Confucian learning continued through into the early Ming, where it remained and eventually, under the reign of Yongle, received the emperor’s support and became the state orthodoxy. Even still divergent positions remained with intellectuals like Xue Xuan (1389-1464) and Wu Yubi (1391-1464) who each identified with different Neo-Confucian figures and carried different ideas on the role of Neo-Confucianism and its relation to the state.<sup>552</sup> Therefore it can be said that there was significant divergence among Chinese scholars who can loosely be described as sympathetic to Cheng/Zhu ideas and Confucian practice in Yuan and Ming China. Thus when considering Kwŏn’s writings against this backdrop, the breadth of his interests in the canon and his critical evaluation of commentators, including Zhu Xi and others, does not seem particularly unique, but part of the band of Confucian intellectuals who saw value in the renewal of Confucianism after the Song.

The key issue here is not what Kwŏn wrote about but how historians attempt to locate him. Since scholarship on Kwŏn to date has been almost entirely conducted by scholars from Korea, he has been located within the narratives that have depicted Confucianism in Koryŏ, but particularly Chosŏn. As noted above, this narrative has centred on philosophical issues and debates that blossomed in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century and continued through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, Confucians of this time are

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<sup>550</sup> Peter K. Bol, “Examinations and Orthodoxies: 1070 and 1313 Compared”, in (eds.) Theodore Huters, Roy Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu, *Culture and State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997: pp. 28-57.

<sup>551</sup> Chan, “Chu Hsi and Yüan Neo-Confucianism”, 1982: p. 218.

<sup>552</sup> Bol, Peter K., *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2008: p. 97.

evaluated through the rubric of *sŏngnihak*-ja 性理學, teaching of nature and principle, and located according to their intellectual genealogies and their position on topics such as principle, material force, the four emotions, seven feels, nature and mind. Being a late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century derived definition, naturally Kwŏn does not easily fit in to this picture. While he acknowledged and respected Zhu Xi and Cheng/Zhu thought and looked at some of its issues, he was also looking at other issues too. Therefore, to use this definition to evaluate Kwŏn is to privilege his intellectual descendants while undervaluing Kwŏn's endeavours.

The argument presented in this chapter resonates with the recent reappraisal of Neo-Confucian thought in Chinese academic circles. The mainstream narrative of Neo-Confucianism charts intellectual genealogies stemming from Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers and maps intellectuals according to their emphasis on principle, material force, heaven or human nature.<sup>553</sup> More recently scholars have debated the terminology of "Neo-Confucianism", challenged the historical primacy of Zhu Xi and sought to tease out the disparate and divergent positions among Song and post-Song period Confucians.<sup>554</sup> Scholarship on Korean intellectual history is yet to reach this degree of critical reflection, however we can see these questions starting to emerge. Elements of John Duncan's writings, for example, have explored and re-evaluated late Koryŏ intellectual history, noting initial similarities that late-Koryŏ/early-Chosŏn intellectuals shared with Yuan literati and he goes on to argue that the intellectual diversity and conflicts among these intellectuals more closely resembled the debates between legalist, belletrist and moralists of the Song.<sup>555</sup> Duncan suggests that the apparent inconsistency of Confucianism in the late-Koryŏ/early-Chosŏn lies not with a lack of understanding of doctrine but more with the intellectuals trying to find answers to the practical issues that they faced. The critical orientation towards Cheng/Zhu writings and even the Confucian canon indicates that it could provide answers to the pressing issues facing the state and society. In other words, intellectuals had no choice but to look beyond the body of

<sup>553</sup> See Liu, Shu-hsien, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1998.

<sup>554</sup> For debate over the terminology of Neo-Confucianism see Tillman, Hoyt Cleveland, "A New Direction in Confucian Scholarship: Approaches to Examining the Differences between Neo-Confucianism and Tao-hsüeh", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1992: pp. 455-474 and de Bary, Wm. Theodore, "The Uses of Neo-Confucianism: A Response to Professor Tillman", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 1993: pp. 541-555. For a critical evaluation of Zhu Xi and the diversity among intellectuals see Tillman, Hoyt Cleveland, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992.

<sup>555</sup> Duncan, John, "Confucianism in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn", *Korean Studies*, No. 18, 1994: pp. 76-102.

Cheng/Zhu knowledge to other bodies of knowledge to find the answers they were looking for. The argument in this chapter, based on an in-depth analysis of Kwŏn's writings on the Confucian canon, supports Duncan's position that the intellectual climate of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century is one of variety, conflict and pluralism due to intellectuals seeking answers to the socio-political issues they faced. Kwŏn Kūn's orientation towards the canon and commentaries therefore point towards a broader intellectual trend of that period.

## 4. Rise and Fall: tracing the legacy of Kwŏn Kŭn

In Chapter One we saw that understandings and interpretations of Kwŏn Kŭn, especially among scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, were not particularly flattering. Subsequent generations of scholars have been more generous in their appraisal of Kwŏn, but nonetheless have focused on narrowly defined elements of Kwŏn's life and thought, thus failing to bring to light the significance of his life and the breadth of his thought. Chapter One elaborated on Kwŏn's life, its significance and his achievements, and Chapter Two, in examining Kwŏn's writing on Confucianism, argued that he was far more than a sycophantic ideologue parroting Cheng-Zhu teachings and was instead engaging broadly with the Confucian canon.

This chapter turns its focus to charting Kwŏn's legacy to see why and how an intellectual of his calibre and significance came to be ignored and, in some cases, dismissed by latter day scholars. The chapter argues that although Kwŏn enjoyed favourable treatment immediately after his death, political developments and the rise of factionalism among scholar-officials precipitated a parochial, dogmatic and rigid interpretation of Confucianism that marginalised and eventually excluded Kwŏn. In short, Kwŏn was the victim of an intellectual revisionism. This intellectual crystallisation formed the prism through which intellectuals of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn, along with the reception of Cheng-Zhu thought, were re-evaluated. This chapter will show that in the case of Kwŏn Kŭn, his understanding, interpretation and appreciation of Confucianism and Cheng-Zhu thought did not fit with these new conceptions of how a scholar-official ought to understand and appreciate the teachings of the past and as a consequence he came to be shunned and ignored. Since the scholar-officials who held this opinion of Kwŏn are now looked upon as the epitome of Chosŏn Confucian thought, present-day scholars have uncritically adopted their interpretation as the prism through which to understand and evaluate Kwŏn and Confucianism in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods. In order to highlight the trajectory and treatment of Kwŏn in the centuries following his death, this chapter will also follow the posthumous treatment of one of Kwŏn's colleagues: Chŏng To-jŏn. Comparing the legacy of these two contemporaneous figures will further highlight the degree to which latter day scholar-officials regarded and interpreted the past.

## A legacy remembered and respected: early to late-middle 15<sup>th</sup> century

Immediately following Kwŏn's death in 1409, the court records continue to have entries referring to Kwŏn in a positive light. Beginning with the valedictory entry on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month of 1409, we can see how Kwŏn was missed by even the king and princes, not to mention his colleagues from the government. The entry notes that the king was shocked to hear the news of Kwŏn's death and upon hearing of his serious illness the princes went to visit him, but he died before they could arrive.<sup>556</sup> The entry continues to outline his life, meteoric rise through the examination system and his active participation in state affairs. His association with other eminent figures such as Yi Saek, Chŏng Mong-ju, and Chŏng To-jŏn is touched on, as too are his exploits in the Ming court as an envoy with the *p'yojŏn* dispute, his writings such as the *IHTS* and his contributions to reforming educational and political structures. Quotes are included from Kwŏn himself, along with words of praise from colleagues and kings such as King U and T'aejo. From this entry in the *Sillok* it is clear that the court from the king down to the new scholar-officials highly regarded Kwŏn at the time of his death as an eminent scholar, statesman, poet, educator and intellectual.

Kwŏn remained in people's memories as an eminent scholar and educator to the extent that his supporters lobbied for his inclusion in the *Munmyo* 文廟, or State Confucian Shrine. Even ten years after his death, in 1419, Kwŏn's legacy was still held in high regard, as Chŏng Su-hong 鄭守弘 (d.u.) proposed that Kwŏn's *shinju* 神主, spiritual tablet, be included in the *Munmyo*. In the proposal Chŏng wrote:

In speaking of our Munjungkong Kwŏn Kŭn, he had a pure nature; investigated the teachings of Nature and Principle; wrote the *IHTS*, which opened the way for later generations of scholars embarking on their studies; wrote the *RHT*, which discovered principles from Confucian sages of the past; his colossal efforts to connect with the past while opening the future....Kwŏn advanced the state through himself [ie, self sacrifice], volunteering to act for his times....<sup>557</sup>

Chŏng further argued that based on Kwŏn's efforts, sacrifice, virtue and conduct he deserved to be included in the *Munmyo*. The motion was debated and Kwŏn's old

<sup>556</sup> *Taejong Sillok*, 17: 14/2/09.

<sup>557</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 5: 6/8/01.

colleagues, Ch'oe Ch'ung and Ha Ryun joined the debate to support Chŏng's motion.<sup>558</sup>

This attempt to have Kwŏn included in the *Munmyo* did not seem to succeed but the case continued to be pursued. In 1433, thirteen years later, Kim Pan 金泮 (d.u.) petitioned the court again for Kwŏn, Yi Saek and Yi Che-hyŏn's inclusion in the *Munmyo*.<sup>559</sup> The issue continued to be debated and three years later Kim Il-ja 金日孜 (d.u.) echoed Kim Pan's request for the three to be included in the *Munmyo*.<sup>560</sup> Citing the breadth of Kwŏn's knowledge across all the major Confucian thinkers, his scholastic acumen, his commentaries on Confucianism, and his moral conduct, Kim Il-ja argued for Kwŏn's inclusion with Yi Saek and Yi Che-hyŏn. Kim also said that aside from Kim Pan, another three people of more senior rank had also made the same request.

*Sillok* references to Kwŏn following his death continue to be positive and refer to him as a point of reference for various issues the court was grappling with. In 1418, King Sejong inquired as to the reason for changes to the *kwagŏ*, state examination system, and Pyŏn Kye-ryang, in response touched on the role of Kwŏn and others who amending the system due to problems they saw in the system.<sup>561</sup> The *Sillok* also shows that some of the reforms Kwŏn instigated continued to bear fruit even after his death. In 1422 for example there was a discussion and evaluation of a proposal Kwŏn put forward to the court in 1407 that scholar-officials from the Three Bureaus 三館 receive lectures on one of the Classics or Historical Records on a monthly basis and then submit a written piece based on the text.<sup>562</sup> Promotions would then be awarded based on the best written works. According to the *Sillok* entry, although the competition was tough and the standards high, the system seemed to be working well and to people's expectations.

Perceptions of Kwŏn's standards for the civil service examination lingered for almost twenty years after his death. In 1428, King Sejong 世宗 (1397-1450, r. 1418-1450) was discussing the practice of selecting students through the civil service examination and said:

....I think that although there are no people like Yangch'on who knew the

<sup>558</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 5: 24/10/01.

<sup>559</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 59: 9/2/15 and *Sejong Sillok*, 61: 24/8/15.

<sup>560</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 7: 12/5/18.

<sup>561</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 2: 13/12/01.

<sup>562</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 18: 14/11/04 and *T'aejong Sillok*, 14: 25/8/07.

method to select *sonbi*, he [Kwŏn Kŭn] wrote in a memorial, "They must be tested on their ability to write poetry and prose...."<sup>563</sup>

In another instance, when Sejong was again discussing the examination system, he made reference to Kwŏn, stating:

Kwŏn Kŭn's talents and moral influence were all lofty and he was accomplished in affairs of past and present....<sup>564</sup>

Also, in 1429, students taking the civil service entrance exam were tested on, among other things, a composition modelled on the "Diagram of the Seven Months from the Odes of Bin" 爾風七月圖, a text Kwŏn selected from the *Book of Odes*.<sup>565</sup> The significance of these references to Kwŏn is that they show that even almost two decades after his death his imprint on the intellectual and pedagogical atmosphere remained in Sejong's court and even on Sejong's mind.

Kwŏn's approach to the Confucian classics was another posthumous influence. In 1428 Sejong asked Pyŏn Kye-ryang about an incident between T'aejong and Kwŏn Kŭn regarding the reading of some of the Confucian classics.<sup>566</sup> According to Sejong, T'aejong asked Kwŏn to read some of the Five Classics, but Kwŏn declined, then later agreed to read some of the classics, such as the *Book of Odes*, *Documents and Changes*. However Kwŏn declined to read the *Record of Rites* and the *Four Books*. Sejong asked Pyŏn why Kwŏn might have done this and how later students might interpret the meaning of Kwŏn's actions. Pyŏn explained that Kwŏn naturally declined and did so deliberately for he regarded the *Four Books* as texts for children and the *Record of Rites* as a text people usually did not study because its contents are quite complicated and jumbled due to its accretive origins in the Han dynasty. Maeng Sa-song 孟思誠 (1360-1438) added that Kwŏn might have been concerned that the act of reading these difficult and obtuse texts might have required too much research and effort from the King. Sejong, in closing noted, that out of concern that students might not understand the

<sup>563</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 39: 22/2/10.

<sup>564</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 55: 13/3/14.

<sup>565</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 44: 26/5/11. The Odes of Bin come from the *Book of Odes* and the Seven Months is an eight stanza poem that covers various cosmological, seasonal, cultural, environmental and ritual practices that take place during the different months of the year. Discussion of the Seven Months and the Diagram cited here occurs in other places in the *Sillok* and take place in relation to broader debates over interpretations of the classics. See for example, *Sejong Sillok*, 61: 13/8/15.

<sup>566</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 40: 18/4/10.

deeper meaning of the classics and the teachings of Cheng-Zhu, Kwŏn composed and attached commentaries to make them more easily understood. Sejong said, "For those teaching in the countryside, if they have these [commentaries of Kwŏn's] to teach people, how can it not be of help?"<sup>567</sup>

Sejong was magnanimous towards Kwŏn. In one instance, following a royal lecture Sejong engaged Kim Ton 金墩 (1385-1440) in a discussion about giving responsibilities to princes.<sup>568</sup> As the discussion unfolded Sejong made the point that historically people were chosen based on their ability to write rather than their capacity to talk about classics. To make his point he said that even famous Confucians of their time such as Kwŏn Kŭn and Pyŏn Kye-ryang occasionally made mistakes when lecturing the court on the classics, and Sejong, even though he recognised their verbal mistakes, still selected and valued people on the basis of their writing.

Kwŏn's place in the historical imagination of the 15<sup>th</sup> century extended beyond the king to scholar-officials and in their minds Kwŏn was associated with other luminaries of his time. Yi Maeng-gyun 李孟筠 (1371-1440), in 1432, wrote a petition to the king asking to be relieved of his position.<sup>569</sup> In outlining his lack of academic skill, Yi notes the great ministers of the past:

Ministers of the founding king [T'aejo], Minister [Yi] Saek....and after him there were the likes of Chŏng Mong-ju, Pak Ŭi-jung, Yi Chŏm, Kwŏn Kŭn, Chi Yong and Pyŏn Kye-ryang who received respect from all for their skills with the classics and their writings.<sup>570</sup>

This excerpt shows that Kwŏn is recognised as being an intellectual of the same calibre as his teacher Yi Saek and Koryŏ luminary Chŏng Mong-ju. In another instance, Kwŏn is remembered for defending his friend and teacher Yi Sung-in.<sup>571</sup> This occurred when King Sejo 世祖 (r. 1455-1468) was discussing points from one of the royal lectures and the issue of diplomats engaging in trade while abroad came up. In responding to the king's questions, Hong Yun-sŏng 洪允成 (1425-1475) cites the example of the accusation against Yi Sung-in for selling goods while in Ming and Kwŏn's defence of

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 84: 13/1/21.

<sup>569</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 55: 18/3/14.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 46: 30/8/05.



Yi is included in the anecdote.

Some of Kwŏn's children and descendents came to work in the Chosŏn government and invoked his name to clarify that they were his descendant. In some instances the descendents provided anecdotes about Kwŏn. For example, Kwŏn Kŭn's second son, Kwŏn To 權蹈, submitted a memorial to the throne questioning the reliability of another person's writings and in outlining his argument he at one point quotes his father's advice to King T'aejong that learning the poems of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) was not enough for a king and that the king should study the *Book of Changes*.<sup>572</sup> Kwŏn Che 權踰 (1387–1445), while discussing the *Koryŏsa* mentioned that he was a descendant of Kwŏn Kŭn and goes on to mention a number of his more distant forefathers. Even in 1458, almost fifty years after Kwŏn's death, his grandson Kwŏn Nam 權孳 (1416–1465) invokes Kwŏn Kŭn's name and points to the extent to which his efforts helped his descendents:

In the past when our T'aejong came to power, because my grandfather Lord Munch'ung [Kwŏn Kŭn] was able to help with affairs his wealth was passed on to his descendents and now, even though it is the age of men with little virtue 寡人, thanks to the strength of his [Kwŏn's] actions we can help make things beautiful and together have the kingdom become more prosperous.<sup>573</sup>

The other context where descendents are associated with Kwŏn is in valedictory entries in the *Sillok*. For example, in 1459, one of Kwŏn Kŭn's sons – Kwŏn Chun 權蹲 (?–1459) – died and a brief entry appears in the *Sillok*.<sup>574</sup> In these instances, Kwŏn Kŭn is referred to simply by his association to the dead. Nevertheless, we can see that for Kwŏn Kŭn's descendents, his name and reputation still carried weight, respect and authority, and they sought to exploit that to their advantage.

Memories of Kwŏn were not confined to Chosŏn. Records show that there was an instance when envoys from the Ming court visited Chosŏn and Kwŏn Kŭn was raised in the discussions. In 1460 a Ming envoy Zhang Ning 張寧 visited Sejo's court. During a

<sup>572</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 61: 15/7/15; note that in 1484 Kwŏn Kŏn, Kwŏn Kŭn's grandson, makes the same reference to T'aejong and Du Fu. See *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 171: 9/10/15.

<sup>573</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 13: 29/6/04.

<sup>574</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 16: 30/4/05.

dinner Sejo summoned Kwŏn Nam with a copy of Kwŏn Kun's *Ŭngjesi* and Sejo said, "This person is Yangch'on Kwŏn Kŭn's grandson. This great man will show you Emperor Hongwu's *Ŭngjesi*".<sup>575</sup> Then Zhang rose, expressed his thanks and replied, "When I am in China [people and the court will be] satisfied hearing about this for a long time". He read the poems through and then composed a poem for Sejo. The two then raised their wine glasses and toasted their convivial meeting. Kwŏn Kŭn, even fifty years after his death and sixty years after the *p'yojŏn* dispute, was still able to engender good relations between the Chosŏn and Ming courts.

Turning to look at Kwŏn Kŭn's grave sites and epitaphs we see another indication of the positive light in which he was regarded. According to his epitaph, Kwŏn was first buried in a county south of Kwangju 廣州.<sup>576</sup> In 1443 Kwŏn's second son and long-time friend Ha Ryun started to engrave his tombstone, and in 1444 Kwŏn's gravestone was erected in its new resting place in Bangch'uk-ri, Saenggŭk-myŏn, Ŭmsŏng-gun, Ch'ungch'ŏngbuk-do province, where he and two of his descendants still remain to this day. As with the style of all epitaphs, Kwŏn's epitaph recounts his forefathers and family background, then provides a biographical account. Further additions to the grave site included the erection of Kwŏn's Sandobi in 1444 and Shindo-pi in 1467.

### Kwŏn Kŭn's literary legacy

Kwŏn's literary legacy continued well beyond his death. In 1433 Kim Pan petitioned the throne and among his requests was the publication and distribution of Kwŏn's *RHT*.<sup>577</sup> Kim explains that Kwŏn's *IHTS* and *RHT* provide a compass for scholars to understand all of the teachings of the sages. His request was to have the *IHTS* and all five of the *RHT* published and circulated broadly. Again in 1454, this time during the reign of Tanjong 端宗 (r. 1452-55), Kim Pan petitioned the throne asking for Kwŏn's *IHTS* and *RHT* to be published and distributed.<sup>578</sup> In praising the works of Kwŏn, Kim described Kwŏn's *RHT* as being of great help for understanding the teachings of the sages, while the *IHTS* shows the origins of the teachings on Principle.

Kwŏn's *IHTS* was published a number of times after his death in Chosŏn and Japan. A version of the *IHTS* appeared around 1425, printed in Kyŏngsan province, and this

<sup>575</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 19: 7/3/06.

<sup>576</sup> Chungch'ŏn Taehakkyo Panmulgwan, *Yangch'on Kwŏn Kŭn Samdae Myoso*, 1999: p. 23.

<sup>577</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 59: 9/2/15.

<sup>578</sup> *Tanjong Sillok*, 10: 13/3/02.

edition expanded on the earlier one published during Kwŏn's lifetime by including an extra fourteen chapters.<sup>579</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, all subsequent editions of the *IHTS* comprise an upper and lower portion, as found in the 1425 version. With these subsequent versions of the *IHTS* the text acquired additional appendices. For example, an appendix summarising the mathematical permutations behind Kwŏn's analysis of the hexagrams from the *Book of Changes*, Chŏng To-jŏn's postscript to the *IHTS*, Pyŏn Kye-ryang's postscripts upon printing and in the case of the Japanese edition, Kwŏn's introduction and commentary to Chŏng To-jŏn's three part essay on Principle, Material Force and the Mind is included.

Kwŏn's collected works, the *YCJ*, was first compiled during the reign of Sejong. Kwŏn's son, Kwŏn To, compiled and published the *YCJ* in 40 volumes. Later, in 1674, Hŏ Mok 許穆 (1595-1682) composed an introduction that is now included with the collection. The introduction begins by framing Kwŏn Kŭn in the context of Confucianism arriving in the Korean peninsula with Kija 箕子 and its development in Silla and Koryŏ with Chŏng Mong-ju and Yi Saek.<sup>580</sup> Next the introduction explains his various writings, his role in the court and his contributions to critiquing Buddhism. Education is another feature of the introduction, especially his influence on scholars of the early Chosŏn such as Kim Chong-jik 金宗直 (1431-1492). In closing, Hŏ notes that almost three hundred years have passed since Kwŏn's time and that there have been many changes in the world but the Confucians remain.

Another of Kwŏn's works to be re-circulated posthumously was his *Ŭngjesi* from the *p'yojŏn* dispute. The first edition of the poems was printed in 1402 at the behest of T'aejong, but in Sejo's reign, in 1460, Kwŏn Ram 權孳 (1416-1465) started working on a commentary to accompany the poems and did not complete the task until 1462.<sup>581</sup> Even then Kwŏn Ram had to wait until 1470 for a Ming monk Xuan Jiding 玄極頂 to get back to him after checking the poems of the Hongwu emperor in Ming and then Sŏ Kŏ-jŏng 徐居正, Kwŏn Kŭn's daughter's son, provided a supplement to append the poems. This edition was published under the title *Ŭngjesi-chu* 應製詩註 (*Commentary on the Poems Written at Royal Command*).<sup>582</sup> The *Sillok* provides no more clues as to

<sup>579</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 30: 2/11/07.

<sup>580</sup> Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol.1 1984: pp. 27-8.

<sup>581</sup> Kwŏn T'ae-ŏk, "*Ŭngjesi-chu* Haeje", *Han'guk Munhwa*, Vol. 3, November, Seoul, 1982: p. 169.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.

the publication and circulation of this particular edition of the *Ŭngjesi* but later in 1512 the Office of the Censor-General 弘文館 reprinted the *Ŭngjesi* without Kwŏn Ram's commentary. While the printing and circulation of the *Ŭngjesi* up to this point is uncontroversial and the poems still bask in the glory of Kwŏn's achievements in the Ming court, as we will see in the following sections, even the fortune of these poems was not immune to change. What the above shows is that firstly, in the decades following Kwŏn's death his reputation remained intact and respected, and secondly, that through the reign of Sejong to Sejo, Kwŏn Kŭn enjoyed favourable regard from the various kings and the scholar-officials of the Chosŏn court, not to mention envoys from Ming.

### A change in the tide: late 15<sup>th</sup> century

One of the earliest signs of a change in attitude towards Kwŏn can be seen in a debate that took place in 1465. In the *Sillok* there is a brief entry listing 34 people, who are divided into two groups of 17.<sup>583</sup> A notice 標 for *Ŏjŏng Chuyŏk Kugyŏl* 御定周易口訣 (*Imperially Authorised Phonetic Readings for the Book of Changes*) and Kwŏn Kŭn's *Chuyŏk Kugyŏl* 周易口訣 (*Phonetic Readings for the Book of Changes*) were posted and scholar-officials from the two groups set about debating and attacking each other's positions. Although the entry does not shed any light on what issues were debated, it is noteworthy that Kwŏn's work is presented as a foil to debate the *Ŏjŏng Chuyŏk Kugyŏl*, the officially authorised reading of the *Book of Changes*. This is the first instance in the *Sillok* where we see Kwŏn's works being singled out for criticism.

The debate over the two versions of the *Book of Changes* did not finish in 1465. In 1468 King Sejo summoned the two groups who respectively supported either Kwŏn's text or the other.<sup>584</sup> Chŏng Cha-yŏng 鄭自英 (?-1474) and a number of scholars supported Kwŏn, while Ahn Hyo-re 安孝禮 (d.u.) and his colleagues fell into the opposing camp. The *Sillok* entry reveals some of the nature of the debate:

Ahn Hyo-re and Ch'oe Ho-wŏn started again the debate with Chŏng Cha-yŏng, with Ahn Hyo-re and his colleagues supporting the *Ŏjŏng Chuyŏk Kugyŏl* and Chŏng Cha-yŏng supporting Yangch'on Kwŏn Kŭn's *Chuyŏk*

<sup>583</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 37: 9/10/11.

<sup>584</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 47: 5/8/14.

*Kugyŏl*, and the intense debate moved to and fro with time. Ahn Hyo-re wanted to exhaust the explanation by investigation, drawing together the various themes and topics, and repeating [the process] in various directions. [Ahn said] if the mouth cannot bring to a halt the explanations, the words are inclining towards deception.

Chŏng Cha-yŏng became angry and said: "Although what you say is correct, what my ear [hears] is terribly wrong. Also, I studied under Yangch'on from an early age and his explanations unify with the Cheng brothers, therefore I think his mind was right. People such as Ahn Hyo-re did not receive their teachings from a teacher, so it is natural that they cannot understand the explanations of Yangch'on. Ch'oe Ho-wŏn first studied Yangch'on's explanations but now supports the "sacred teachings" 聖訓 [instructions of a king]. If he awakened himself, then he would want rebuke himself and his mind would secretly disapprove [of his current actions]."

Ahn Hyo-re said: "How can Yangch'on's explanations be correct? An academic specialist and teacher starts by receiving an education in practical, secular matters 俗學, [however] nowadays there is a trend towards sacred teachings 聖訓, when one has already improved oneself. How can there not be discarding the old and following the new? People of antiquity said: "If this is not the Way, how can you then wait three years?" [If it is like this for] sons towards their fathers, [should it not be] more so between teachers and disciples?"

Chŏng Cha-yŏng said: "You ask how Yangch'on's explanations could be correct. Also, what I have said about my initial studies is already fixed in my mind and it cannot be changed but...can be followed."

Ku Chong-jik 丘從直 (1404-1477) said: "The sacred teachings are actually correct and Chŏng Cha-yŏng is stubbornly adhering to those explanations [of Yangch'on]. Ministers in ordinary circumstances have already been criticising it [Yangch'on's explanations] but Chŏng Cha-yŏng is simply wrong. That which Ahn Hyo-re has quoted has also been unfairly [dealt

with].”

Ahn Hyo-re stayed silent as various members of the Privy Council 宰樞 took the explanations of the two people [Ahn and Chǒng] and presented [them to the king].

The king said: “Chǒng Cha-yǒng is wrong”, upon which wine was circulated. Ku Chong-jik and Chǒng Cha-yǒng discussed in detail all facets of the classics and Ku Chong-jik was flattered for his wide learning and Chǒng Cha-yǒng’s mind remained direct and unyielding in his learning.<sup>585</sup>

The debate between Ahn and Chǒng’s groups over the two versions of *Book of Changes* did not end here. In fact, Ahn’s attack on Kwǒn’s *Chuyǒk Kugyǒl*, was the first step towards replacing Kwǒn’s other works. In the same year, 1468, Ahn was granted permission to lecture on the *Book of Changes* with Yi Yǒng-ūn 李永垠 (1434-1471); Ahn and his colleague Choi Hang 崔恒 (1409-1474) and others were ordered to correct Kwǒn’s phonetic readings 口訣 for the *Lesser Learning* 小學 and *Book of Changes*, then the *Record of Rites*.<sup>586</sup> The group also planned to address the phonetic readings for the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*, both texts that Kwǒn had worked on, but this portion of the project was suspended. Sejo invited Ahn and his group for drinks to celebrate their victory, during which Ku Chong-jik praised the *Ŏjǒng Chuyǒk Kugyǒl* and criticised Chǒng Cha-yǒng along the following lines:

Ku Chong-jik said: “The *Ŏjǒng Chuyǒk Kugyǒl* had not been discovered among the sages of the past, for it is completely good and completely beautiful. However, there are those who return [to the text] without debate so if these people were cut down, the *Phonetic Readings* would automatically come into action. In the past the Song did not enact new laws and Wang Pang 王雱 said, “If you publicly hang Han Qi 韓琦 (1008-1075) and Fu Bi 富弼 (1004-1083) by their heads, then you will have enacted the new laws.”<sup>587</sup> Now Chǒng Cha-yǒng slanders the *Ŏjǒng Chuyǒk Kugyǒl* and I request your majesty cut down Chǒng Cha-yǒng.” For a long time the king did not respond, then he ordered Chǒng Cha-yǒng to

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 47: 8/8/14.

<sup>587</sup> This quote comes from the *History of the Song*. See *Songshi*, 327: Biography Vol., 86.

Objections were not confined to Kwŏn alone. During Sŏngjong's 成宗 reign (1469-94, r. 1470-1494) debate emerged over who was to be included in the State Shrine and in 1477, Im Sa-hon 任士洪 (?-1506) engaged the king over the inclusion of Chŏng Mong-ju, Yi Che-hyŏn, Yi Saek and Kwŏn Kŭn in the shrine.<sup>589</sup> While Im said that Chŏng's inclusion was uncontentious, he said he failed to see what was genuine about Yi Che-hyŏn's scholarship and the activities of Yi Saek had generated a lot of debates of late. Upon hearing this, Sŏngjong asked why Yi Saek had been entered into the shrine. Although this entry had no further mention of Kwŏn, we have seen above and in previous chapters that Kwŏn is often associated closely with these figures. If at that time there was a general questioning of Kwŏn's peers, then it is not surprising that Kwŏn and his works were equally beginning to find their critics.

Critical evaluation of Kwŏn extended beyond his own works to include projects that he edited. In 1484, Sŏ Kŏ-jŏng 徐居正 (1420-1488),<sup>590</sup> Kwŏn Kŭn's daughter's son, compiled the *Tongguk T'onggam* 東國通鑑 (*Chronicle of the Eastern Kingdom*) and submitted it to the king.<sup>591</sup> Sŏngjong asked whether the views in the book were really that of Kwŏn Kŭn and not that of Sŏ. Furthermore, Sŏngjong asked was it only Kim Pu-sik and Kwŏn Kŭn involved in the production of the book? Sŏ replied that it was Kwŏn who critiqued Kim Pu-sik and that, "Looking at Kwŏn's critique, then there is the chance he made mistakes."<sup>592</sup> So at this point we see that Kwŏn's standing in the minds of late 15<sup>th</sup> century scholar-officials was beginning to falter and he was starting to be regarded as an intellectual with faults.

Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century we also see scholar-officials questioning the morality of Kwŏn's actions. Yi Se-ja 李世佐 (1445-1504), in 1493, instigated a discussion on moral conduct and one point he touched on was the boundary between acting morally and helping friends, when the act of helping may not be morally right.<sup>593</sup> The anecdote Yi cites is of Yi Sung-in, who was impeached for allegedly selling things while in Ming as an envoy, and Kwŏn Kŭn's defence of Yi Sung-in. Following the

<sup>588</sup> *Sejo Sillok*, 47: 10/8/14.

<sup>589</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 82: 21/7/08.

<sup>590</sup> For an account of So's life see the valedictory entry in the *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 223: 24/12/19.

<sup>591</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 172: 13/11/15.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>593</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 276: 19/4/24.

example Yi asked, “How in a sagely court, could the Chosŏn court again follow such bad ways?” This remark suggesting that the anecdote of Yi Sung-in and Kwŏn was an example of where loyalty of friendship had trumped correct, moral action. Almost ninety years after Kwŏn’s death and following decades of praise, we now see that Kwŏn’s life and actions were being recast and re-evaluated.

Although in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century we can start to see a swing away from Kwŏn among intellectuals, there are two things in Kwŏn’s life that saved him from being dismissed more quickly. First, his association with the *p’yojŏn* dispute, in particular the exchange of poetry with the Hongwu emperor, meant that he had noteworthy dealings with none other than the emperor of China – a figure held in high regard by scholar-officials. Scholar-officials simply could not ignore that the emperor held Kwŏn in good regard and lavished him with gifts and poetry. For example, in 1477, Sŏ Kŏ-jŏng said, “The lofty emperor composed three poems as the venerable son of heaven and gave them to our country’s envoy Kwŏn Kŭn; this is something beyond reproach.”<sup>594</sup> Kwŏn’s dealings with the emperor were a point that could not be ignored, forgotten or removed from the pages of history.

The second point is Kwŏn’s association with Chŏng To-jŏn. In 1479 Sŏng Tam-nyŏn 成聘年 (d.u.) said, “At the start of our state, Sambong Chŏng To-jŏn wrote the three volume *Sim, Ki, I P’yojŏn* and Kwŏn Kŭn wrote the *IHTS*, but since then there has only been Pyŏn Kye-ryang.”<sup>595</sup> This quote is interesting because it is the first time in the *Sillok* since Kwŏn’s death that we see Chŏng To-jŏn being mentioned together with Kwŏn. Furthermore, it is interesting that Chŏng is being cited for his essay; the fact that it is being referred to in connection with Kwŏn’s *IHTS*, suggest it is regarded as being of a similar importance to Kwŏn’s work. The same can be said of associating Chŏng with Kwŏn and Pyŏn. In short, Sŏng Tam-nyŏn is suggesting that Chŏng To-jŏn is an intellectual of the same calibre, a claim that is contentious on historical grounds.

With these cases we can see that Kwŏn’s influence and importance was waning towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, another indicator of this can be found in the growing scarcity of references to his written works. While his works continued to be cited immediately after his death, towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century we find some of

<sup>594</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 85: 11/10/08.

<sup>595</sup> *Sŏngjong Sillok*, 104: 15/5/10.



the last references in the *Sillok* to his *IHTS* and even then, we can see that the mention is peripheral. This is the case with the aforementioned entry in 1479 of Sŏng Tam-nyŏn. During the royal lectures, discussion turned to phrases from the *Taehak Yŏnui* 大學衍義 and as Sŏng praised previous Chosŏn kings for their deep understanding of Confucian history he cited the scholars who facilitated the development of such scholastics, including Kwŏn and the *IHTS*. Aside from this mention, there is no other evaluation of Kwŏn's writings.

Early in the next century, in 1546, we can see how more diluted Kwŏn's intellectual influence had become. The Office of the Censor-General 弘文館 was compiling the "Diagram and Explanation on Teachings of the Mind" 心學圖說 and the "Diagram and Explanation on the Great Learning" 大學圖說.<sup>596</sup> In the submission to the king it stated,

The meaning of the mind is contained within the *IHTS* but now we are making a single treatise on how people of the past discussed the mind called "Diagram and Explanation on Teachings of the Mind". Although there is no section from the "Diagram and Explanation on the Great Learning" that the king discussed, now we will take his direct discussion of the Great Learning and make it into a diagram and explanation for his majesty.<sup>597</sup>

After this citation of the *IHTS* there is only one further reference to the text. In this instance, in 1632 a Buddhist priest from Taemado made a request to the court for a copy of Kwŏn's *IHTS*. Without any explanation the Board of Ceremonies 禮曹, however, declined the request and no further mention of the *IHTS* appears in the *Sillok*.<sup>598</sup>

### Chŏng To-jŏn: the treacherous retainer

When we look more broadly at the treatment of Chŏng To-jŏn from his death in 1398 and across the 15<sup>th</sup> century we can see that Sŏng Tam-nyŏn's reference to Chŏng above is quite generous and mild. References to Chŏng over this period cover a limited range of contexts, the most prevalent of which is reference to his involvement in the first of the "Prince Upheavals" 王子亂. In 1399 a memorial to the throne describes Chŏng as a

<sup>596</sup> *Myŏngjong Sillok*, 4: 10/11/01.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>598</sup> *Injo Sillok*, 27: 11/12/10.

'treacherous retainer' 奸臣 who seized power and acted with impunity.<sup>599</sup> Later in the same year another discussion in the court recognises Chǒng's early work in the establishment of Chosŏn, but outlines his manoeuvring to promote an invasion into the Liaodong peninsular to oust Ming forces, along with his concentration of power unbeknownst to T'aejo and his push towards devolving power from the throne to ministers through influencing succession.<sup>600</sup> This depiction of Chǒng continued through into the reign of subsequent kings such as T'aejong to the point where T'aejong appears to weary of the topic being raised<sup>601</sup> and says that the punishment metered out to Chǒng and his associates ought to be regarded as a warning.<sup>602</sup> During the reign of Sejong an entry in the *Sillok* shows that even over twenty years after Chǒng's death, the court is still attempting to set straight the historical record of Chǒng and his associates.<sup>603</sup> In this instance depending on the individual and their crime, they were posthumously stripped of titles, and their writings and portraits burned. According to the record, Chǒng's portrait was passed on to his sons. Common throughout these entries is reference to Chǒng as being the treacherous retainer, an appellation that stains the collective memory of Chǒng.

There are an additional two areas in which Chǒng To-jŏn received negative posthumous treatment. The first area was identifying and reconciling his abuse of his position. There are a number of *Sillok* entries in which members of the court raise Chǒng's treatment of Yi Sung-in and accuse Chǒng of being complicit in Yi's death. In fact, it is with the confession of Son Hŭng-jong 孫興宗 (exact dates unknown; circa., late 14<sup>th</sup>, early 15<sup>th</sup> century) that it comes to light that Chǒng ordered Yi to be beaten 100 times. Chǒng was surprised that Yi survived the beating and thus ordered Son to kill Yi off.<sup>604</sup> It is not until 1430 where we see an entry pointing towards a possible reason for Chǒng's punishment of Yi. In this entry we see that Chong is portrayed as being envious of Yi's erudition and writing, hence wanting him out of the way.<sup>605</sup> The second area where Chǒng is singled out for his actions is his role in instigating the *p'yojŏn* dispute, as

<sup>599</sup> *Chǒngjong Sillok*, 1: 13/3/01.

<sup>600</sup> *Chǒngjong Sillok*, 2: 3/8/01.

<sup>601</sup> *T'aejong Sillok*, 20: 19/10/10 and *T'aejong Sillok*, 22: 18/8/11.

<sup>602</sup> See *T'aejong Sillok* 22: 17/9/11 where a number of entries in the *Sillok* outline the punishments distributed to the various individuals involved in the incident and even extending to family members. For example Chǒng's sons were arrested following the incident and it was debated whether they should be made slaves. In the end they were jailed, but T'aejong released them and given jobs in the government. See *T'aejong Sillok*, 34: 14/12/17.

<sup>603</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 18: 8/12/04.

<sup>604</sup> *T'aejong Sillok*, 22: 27/7/11; 22: 2/8/11; 22: 11/8/11; 22: 17/8/11; 22: 23/8/11; and 22: 6/11/11.

<sup>605</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 50: 23/11/12.

covered above in chapter one.<sup>606</sup> This action, just like the appellation of being a treacherous retainer, appears frequently and is also cited during a memorial concerning Kwŏn's grave being moved locations.<sup>607</sup>

The final context is in regard to Chŏng's contributions to the *Koryosa*. In 1414, Ha Ryun is summoned to the court and asked to correct elements of the *Koryosa*. It is stated that Chŏng To-jŏn, along with others, were initially asked to compile the history but were unable to complete the task due to other commitments and priorities.<sup>608</sup> This issue, although starting with Ha continued through to the 1430s with Pyŏn Kye-ryang also assisting with the editing of Chŏng's entries on the last kings of Koryŏ.<sup>609</sup> From this representation of Chŏng, and those above, we can see that through into the 15<sup>th</sup> century Chŏng was regarded more for his faults than anything else. He was a historical figure whose faults and failings overshadowed his contributions to the new Chosŏn state.

### A marginal figure: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century appraisals of Kwŏn

The trend towards criticising Kwŏn's life and works started in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century but it was not a view held by all scholar-officials. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century there are entries in the *Sillok* in regard to Chŏng Mong-ju's inclusion in the State Shrine and in this discussion Kwŏn is raised in a favourable light: In 1517, for example, Chŏng Ŭng 鄭應 (1490-1522) said that Kwŏn was a person beyond reproach, of great virtue and a great scholar.<sup>610</sup> Nam Kon 南袞 (1471-1527) added that, "Kwŏn Kŭn was not a person of shallow views, rather T'aejo said, 'In the 500 years of Koryŏ, there will only be this one person [namely, Kwŏn]'. "<sup>611</sup>

The only other relatively positive portrayal of Kwŏn during this period is in the *Haedong Chamnok* 海東雜錄 (*Comprehensive Compilation of Easterners*).<sup>612</sup> This

<sup>606</sup> *T'aegong Sillok*, 27: 10/5/14.

<sup>607</sup> *Sejong Sillok*, 5: 6/8/01.

<sup>608</sup> *T'aegong Sillok*, 27, 10/5/14.

<sup>609</sup> See for example Sejong asking Pyŏn to edit Chŏng's entries in *Sejong Sillok*, 5: 20/9/01 and Pyŏn's on going efforts are seen in *Sejong Sillok* 30: 7/12/07; 22: 29/12/05 and 80: 21/3/20. For references to Chŏng's representation of the Koryŏ kings see *Sejong Sillok*, 2: 25/12/01.

<sup>610</sup> *Chungjong Sillok*, 29: 18/8/12.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>612</sup> Kwŏn Pyŏl (compiler), "Kwŏn Kŭn", *Haedong Chamnok* 海東雜錄 (*Comprehensive Compilation of Easterners*), Vol. 6. Accessed via DB Korean Classics, May 2011 - [http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&url=/itkcdb/text/bookListIframe.jsp%3FbizName=MK%26seojild=kc\\_mk\\_m011](http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&url=/itkcdb/text/bookListIframe.jsp%3FbizName=MK%26seojild=kc_mk_m011)

book was compiled by Kwŏn Pyŏl 權鼈 (1589-1671), who hailed from the Yech'on Kwŏn family 醴泉權氏. This book is a compilation of various personalities from the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, and Kwŏn's treatment therein is quite impartial and comprehensive. Drawing on a range of sources the account provides basic biographical, academic, literary and professional information, though not in any particular order. Anecdotes of his trip to the Ming court fall next to accounts of Kwŏn's interest in honey bees, poems about getting drunk with friends and aphorisms on learning, such as "If one is going to study, then they must first establish the meaning; if you don't establish the meaning, even though you read ten thousand books how can there be any benefit?"<sup>613</sup>

Intertwined within this rambling depiction of Kwŏn we can also see how narrow and selective his portrayal has become. As an intellectual writing on Confucianism, there are only two mentions of his *IHTS* and what it concerns. The first mention relates to the concept of the mind and how it determined good conduct, and the second is about the concept of heaven, singularity (一) and greatness: Heaven comprises singularity and greatness; Singularity when spoken of in terms of principle has no opposite; and greatness when spoke of in terms of essence 體, cannot be fathomed.<sup>614</sup> Both these mentions hark back to the *IHTS* and the issues that have been chosen reflect the intellectual interests of the time when the *Haedong Chammok* was composed. Naturally there are other references to Confucian personalities and ideas throughout the depiction of Kwŏn, but they are quite routine. In addition, given that the majority of the points focus on anecdotes from his life, his work in the court and role as an educator, we can see that Kwŏn was already being regarded more for his personality and court work, than as a writer on Confucianism.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, positive views of Kwŏn became rare, especially among the intellectuals who were interested in new issues and saw Confucianism in a different light to Kwŏn over a hundred years earlier. In the writings of some of the intellectuals we can see how these new interests and re-evaluation of history affected perceptions of Kwŏn. In short, Kwŏn was no longer held in any importance. In Yi I's 李珥 collected works, for example, Yi responds to a series of questions regarding Confucianism and its

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

Question: From when did the word “Teachings of the Way” 道學 start to be used?

Response: It started during the Song dynasty. “Teachings of the Way” originated in human duties and relations. Hence, if you are a person devoted in those human duties and relations, then you follow the Teachings of the Way. But if a person does not know of the Way yet secretly conforms with it, then they will be a person who matures but does not investigate [the Way], and generally their knowledge of the Way is low. Later, however, should they become a minister they might accomplish courage, if they become a son they might achieve filial piety. But in not knowing the Way although they have courage and filial piety in one, how can they unify all of their actions with the Way?

Question: Also, from when did such study start in our country?

Response: It started just prior to Chosŏn period [namely, late Koryŏ]. But Kwŏn Kūn's *Ipħaktosŏl* seems contradictory [literally: like jagged teeth]; Chŏng P'ŏn 鄭圃隱 [Chŏng Mong-ju] is said to be the founder of teachings on principle but from what I see they were ministers who though safely in the state shrine are not Confucian. But in regard to teachings of the Way, starting from the emergence of Cho Chŏng-am 趙靜菴 (Cho Kwang-jo) and reaching through to Master T'oedo [Yi Hwang] Confucians have emerged. While T'oedo appears obedient in his conduct and sagely in his words, you cannot see him discover these things on his own. Sŏ Hwadam [Sŏ Kyong-dok, on the other hand,] in what he has shown you, allows you to see elements of this.

Question: What about the scholarship of Luo Qinshun 羅欽順(1465-1547),<sup>616</sup> Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389-1464), Wang Shouren 王守仁 (Wang Yangming, 1472-1529)?

<sup>615</sup> Yi I. *Yulgok Sŏnsaeng Chŏnsŏ* 栗谷先生全書, Vol. 31, “Record of Saying” (語錄), first portion (上)

<sup>616</sup> See Kim Youngmin, “Luo Qinshun (1465-1547) and His Intellectual Context”, *Yŏung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 89, Fasc. 4/5, 2003, pp. 367-441.

Response: Luo Qinshun was an extraordinary individual but you can see some small mistakes [in his work]; with Xue Xuan, although you cannot see anything [from him], you can hear him described as wise; [in regard to] Wang Shouren, since it is said “the harm arising from his reading of Zhu Xi is more extreme than the damage from a flood or wild beast” we can appreciate his scholarship. But in the Chinese court at long last they are now placing spiritual tablets in the Shrine of the Sages 聖廟 and we can know the teachings of the Way in China.<sup>617</sup>

Yi I’s question and answer here is revealing in what it says about what he sees as constituting Confucianism, just as much as it does about his view of Kwŏn. Here Yi credits Song period thinkers with the teachings of the way, which in its perfection is the marriage of correct moral acts with a sound understanding of the way of Confucianism. Anything less than that does not meet the grade. At best, people like Kwŏn approximate or approach that standard in becoming ministers. In Yi’s eyes Kwŏn and Chŏng are historical and political figures but not Tohak Scholars, or scholars of the way. Further to this, Kwŏn’s *IHTS* is but a contradictory, awkward and of little importance. Instead, we see that by Yi I’s time other personalities and intellectual lineages now take precedence over Kwŏn. In Yi’s eyes, the lineage of Cho Chŏng-am to Yi Hwang, the auto-didact Sŏ Hwa-dam and the troika of Luo Qinshun, Xue Xuan and Wang Shouren are of more importance to discuss.

Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501-1570), a contemporary of Yi I and equally well regarded intellectual of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wrote a book similar to Kwŏn’s *IHTS*. Yi Hwang’s *Ten Diagrams of Sage Learning* shares some topics with the *IHTS*, such as the *Great Learning*, the mind, and the Supreme Ultimate. Conversely, there are differences, namely that Yi’s text focuses almost exclusively on Zhu Xi’s thoughts and writings. In this book Yi makes two references to Kwŏn, both in the chapter on the *Great Learning*. Firstly, he appropriates Kwŏn’s diagram on the *Great Learning* from the *IHTS* almost verbatim. Secondly, Yi writes in the accompanying commentary, “Above is the first chapter of the writing handed down in the Confucian school. Kwŏn Kŭn, who was an official in the early years of this dynasty, made the diagram of it.”<sup>618</sup>

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Yi Hwang and Kalton, Michael C., *To Become a Sage: The Ten Diagrams on Sage Learning*, Neo-

Here Yi is only telling part of the story. Indeed Kwŏn did compose the diagram that formed the basis of this chapter on the *Great Learning*, but in the same chapter Kwŏn provided an extensive commentary and also presented his own suggestion as to how the components of the text ought to be understood. Kwŏn provided his interpretation against a summary and critique of Zhu Xi. Yi Hwang saw enough merit in Kwŏn's diagram to appropriate it for his own use, but he equally sought to cut Kwŏn and anybody else's interpretations out for in the introduction to this chapter he wrote,

Both of the Cheng brothers tried their hand at dividing and reordering it [the *Great Learning*], but it is the text as finally arranged by Chu Hsi which became the orthodox version prescribed for Confucian students....This ascription of the authorship [to Confucius] gave the *Great Learning* the highest possible pedigree of authority; and though it rested upon no evidence beyond the dictum of Chu Hsi himself, his authority was enough.<sup>619</sup>

Yi Hwang's view is clear: firstly, Zhu Xi's interpretation is paramount, correct and orthodox; all others interpretations, including Kwŏn's, missed the mark or are heterodox. Secondly, in Yi Hwang's eyes Kwŏn was nothing more than an official and no mention is made of Kwŏn's interpretation of the *Great Learning*, let alone the range of other texts and issues he dealt with.

Both Yi I and Yi Hwang were notable intellectuals during their time and afterwards. The two of them introduced new directions, debates and issues into the 16<sup>th</sup> century intellectual arena. However, as Chosŏn intellectuals increasingly crystallised into factions defined along family, regional, pedagogical and doctrinal lines, so too the views of Yi Hwang and Yi I became more entrenched and taken as gospel. Neither of them was particularly effusive or flattering towards Kwŏn and in this respect they can be seen to be continuing a trend towards critiquing Kwŏn's importance historically and intellectually. In fact, that these two lent their voice to this critique only further reinforced the marginalisation of Kwŏn. This trend can also be seen in the writings of other intellectuals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Yi Sik 李植 (1584-1647) who wrote of Kwŏn in the following way,

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*Confucian Studies*, p 86.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

“In our country early Confucians did not leave any writings, [however] Kwŏn Yangch’ŏn [Kŭn] explained the classics and discussed learning and we started to have writings but the debates did not reach a discussion on the finer points of Nature and Principle 性理. But Hoejae Yi Ŏn-jŏk 晦齋 李彦迪 arrived and started [that kind of refined discussion about Principle and Nature] and it appears to be what Yi Hwang is principally endowed with.”<sup>620</sup>

In a court discussion between Ki Tae-sŭng 奇大升 (1527-1572) and Yi Tam 李湛 (1652-1716) we can see yet again how intellectuals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century regarded their 14<sup>th</sup> century predecessors. Yi Tam said to Ki:

Scholarship in the East prior to Chosŏn had Chŏng Mong-ju and also briefly Kwon Kun’s scholarship, but there are many afflictions and gaps. Thereafter Kim Koeng-p’il’s scholarship was exceedingly correct and Cho Kwang-jo, a disciple of Koeng-p’il, who also was not careless. Yi Hwang could trace his connections to these people, so how could his scholarship be careless? Your Majesty, in studying with a sincere heart if you ask about the way of governing, then how can there be insincere memorials [in response to the king’s questions]?<sup>621</sup>

Earlier, in the same exchange, Ki said of early Chosŏn scholarship:

Among those people of antiquity who could have studied Cheng/Zhu teachings, none of them understood [its meaning]. Among the scholars of the east [the Korean peninsula] from before Chosŏn through to the start of Chosŏn their writings have disappeared. Thankfully things came under control and people started writing. At first, those memorials sent to the throne were no different to the writings of Cheng/Zhu. This scholarship, this manner of study and these debates were all incorrect.<sup>622</sup>

This exchange shows that more broadly, intellectuals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century not only did not

<sup>620</sup> Yi Sik, *Taekdang Sŏnsaeng Pyŏlchip* 澤堂先生別集, 卷之十五, 雜著, 追錄, Volume 15. Accessed May 2011: [http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&uri=/itkcdb/text/nodeView1frame.jsp?bizName=MK&seojild=kc\\_mk\\_k001&gunchald=dv015&munchald=01&finld=002&Nodeld=&setid=1248754&Pos=2&TotalCount=3&searchUri=ok](http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&uri=/itkcdb/text/nodeView1frame.jsp?bizName=MK&seojild=kc_mk_k001&gunchald=dv015&munchald=01&finld=002&Nodeld=&setid=1248754&Pos=2&TotalCount=3&searchUri=ok)

<sup>621</sup> *Sŏnjo Sillok*, 2: 6/12/01.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.



regard Kwŏn highly, but also dismissed the scholarship of intellectuals of the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods.

Parallel to this re-evaluation of Kwŏn as a historical and intellectual figure, the *Sillok* reveals that even his writings were being reviewed. Kwŏn's collected work and the poetry that he exchanged with the Ming emperor during the *p'yojŏn* dispute were being questioned for in 1598 the Royal Secretariat raised Kwŏn's *YCJ* with the court and said,

The Royal Secretariat raised the issue of the *YCJ* and said: "The [Chinese] envoy wanted to look at events from the start of the dynasty and from the many texts of the early days I planned to give him *YCJ*. What do you think?"

Upon which, the response stated: I have only heard of this book and never read it, but now for the first time I am seeing it. Although I do not know it precisely, not only is its commentary confusing, but there are also some preposterous and unsubstantiated statements. For these reasons it might be best for the envoy not to see it. For example, Kwŏn Kŭn's recorded *Ŭngjesi* might have shown to a Chinese envoy. There is nothing about our country the Chinese delegation do not already know, however since there are things like the Chŏng Mong-ju incident, it [events of that time] are indeed unclear. If the Chinese delegation want to seek out these things themselves then so be it, but the above mentioned [*YCJ*] is not suitable.<sup>623</sup>

This is an interesting quote concerning Kwŏn's *YCJ*. Like we saw previously with Yi I's dismissal of the *IHTS*, here King Sŏnjo is saying that Kwŏn's *YCJ* may not be suitable for the Chinese delegation to understand events at the start of the Chosŏn dynasty. This is ironic given that it was Kwŏn's *Ŭngjesi* in the *YCJ* that at that time saved the lives of envoys from the Chosŏn court, helped mend ties between the Ming and Choson court, and earned Kwŏn accolades from the first Chosŏn king. In Sŏnjo's eyes, however, such things are preposterous and unsubstantiated. This exchange shows that Kwŏn's once unassailable exchange of poetry even with the Hongwu emperor, the poetry that brought him kudos during his life and immediately after, is now just a text people might have heard of in name only. Furthermore, bureaucrats of the court are now

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<sup>623</sup> *Sŏnjo Sillok*, 98: 24/3/31.

reluctant to have the *YCJ* and *Ŭngjesi* circulated out of concern that the Chinese be exposed to some “unclear” events like the assassination of Chŏng Mong-ju.

The hope of these court bureaucrats that suppressing Kwŏn’s collected works from circulation might save China from knowing of their embarrassing poetry proved counterproductive. Seventeen years later, in 1615, the Chinese emperor wrote to the Chosŏn king about the name and heritage of T’aejo. In discussing the details of that time the Chinese emperor wrote of the many events surrounding the founding of Chosŏn and Kwŏn’s *Ŭngjesi* was mentioned in passing.

If we [China] had fragments of doubt over the revolution taking place, then why would the emperor have ordered based merely on Cho Pan’s 趙胖 petition and especially how would the meaning of the good favour of envoy Kwŏn Kŭn’s *Ŭngjesi* be seen? In issuing this revolutionary state’s name: “Chosŏn is a beautiful name; also it comes from antiquity.”<sup>624</sup>

Despite the hopes of the Chosŏn court bureaucrats that the Chinese might never set eyes on Kwŏn’s poems and thus save Chosŏn from embarrassment, this citation from none other than the Chinese emperor showed that Kwŏn’s visit and exchange of poetry was something the Chinese court remembered and did not see as an embarrassing event. If anything it was a point when both states, Chosŏn and Ming, enjoyed good relations due to Kwŏn’s efforts.

This change in attitude towards Kwŏn and his colleagues did not go unnoticed or unchallenged. In 1618 Hŏ Kyun 許筠 (1569-1618) wrote a memorial in defence against a slanderous submission from Ki Cha-hŏn 奇自獻 (1567-1624).<sup>625</sup> In the long and expansive memorial Hŏ writes that he once read alone the poetry from the founding of the Chosŏn state and naturally came across the writings of Kwŏn and Chŏng To-jŏn. Ki appears to have attempted to remove Chŏng To-jŏn from his place in history; Hŏ expresses dismay that Ki attempted to disregard Chŏng’s writings. Furthermore, expressing his thoughts more broadly on the trend of recasting people of the past, Hŏ writes:

Also, aside from this there are many people looking to delete and exclude

<sup>624</sup> *Kwanghae Sillok*, 94: 8/8/07.

<sup>625</sup> *Kwanghae Sillok*, 128: 3/5/10.

the discussions of [Chǒng] To-jǒn and [Kwǒn] Kūn. Accordingly, [such people] holding these two to fault really seems like a childish joke.<sup>626</sup>

Hō's remark is an exception for his times. After all, the extent to which the intellectual focus in mid-Chosŏn had shifted to the topics raised by Yi I and Yi Hwang, penetrated court discussion and consequently affected the appraisal of Kwǒn can be seen in a *Sillok* entry from 1658.<sup>627</sup> In this entry Song Si-yŏl 宋時烈 (1607-1689) and Song Chun-gil 宋浚吉 (1606-1672) discuss the *Simgyong* 心經 and launch into a lengthy and detailed philosophical discussion covering a range of topics from Zhu Xi's position on the Four Beginnings through to Yi Hwang's interpretation of the four beginning, seven emotions, and the primacy of principle over material force. Within this exposition, the following statements appear:

[Song] Si-yŏl said: Concerning the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions, Yi Hwang said, "The Four Beginnings are when Principle issues forth and Material Force follows, and the Seven Emotions are when Material Force issues forth and Principle rides." Yi I said, "The Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions are all when Material Force issues forth, with Principle riding; the Four Beginnings are that which cannot be obscured by Material Force, combined with the Principle which cannot presided over."

[Song] Chun-kil said: Kwǒn Kūn, a famous Confucian from the start of the Chosŏn period, emphasised this early on, then later Chǒng Chi-un 鄭之雲 [1509-1561] wrote the *Ch'ŏnmyŏng-do* 天命圖 (*Diagram of Heaven's Mandate*) based on this explanation. I think Yi Hwang's argument is indeed correct but because of his statements "Principle issues forth and Material Force follows" and "Material Force issues forth and Principle rides", a debate broke out with Ki Tae-sung and each had their own position and no solution was reached. Therefore, Yi I entered the debate with his writings and argued that Ki Tae-sung's argument was correct. This is not a small matter of discussion; this is rather where Sage Learning must be given full substance in thinking.

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<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

<sup>627</sup> *Hyojong Sillok*, 20: 17/12/09.

He further said: The Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions are merely a discussion drawing out the issue of good.

And [Song] Si-yŏl said: The division of Principle and Material Force into two is based on Kwŏn Kŭn [‘s writings] but because generally Principle and Material Force are not separate, Yi I considered it [Kwŏn’s division] unreasonable. Since Principle and Material Force are each individual, it is said, “Principle is Principle; Material Force is Material Force and Principle, but even though that might be the case, because they originally are no different. Physical manifestation is also the way and the way is also Material Force”. Hence physical manifestation is Material Force and the way is Principle.<sup>628</sup>

This excerpt from the discussion shows not only how abstract philosophical discussion in the court had become, but is emblematic of the issues that had now come to occupy the minds of intellectuals from the mid-Chosŏn. Furthermore, this excerpt shows that when Kwŏn was invoked he was regarded as an individual who instigated the discussion of Material Force, Principle, the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions. As illustrated in the previous chapter, these ideas were certainly in Kwŏn’s writings, but did not hold the same importance that Yi Hwang and Yi I placed on them. From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to Yi Hwang and Yi I, Kwŏn’s position in Chosŏn intellectual history now represented something quite different to what he really was. Kwŏn was now a marginal figure, who introduced, albeit incorrectly, key philosophical issues that were developed, matured and promulgated by others.

The move towards recasting Kwŏn as a historical and intellectual figure did not stop here. By the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the primary focus of intellectuals was Zhu Xi and all other discussion, like that above between Song Si-yŏl and Song Chun-gil, is derivative. Even fifty years later we can observe the same trend taking place where an author fashions Kwŏn into discourse on Zhu Xi to suit his intent. In 1709, Ch’oe Sŏk-jŏng 崔錫鼎 (1646-1715) responded to an earlier memorial from Yi Kwang-myŏng 李觀命 (1661-1733), and in arguing the primacy of Material Force, Ch’oe made an

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

oblique reference to Kwŏn in the following way.<sup>629</sup>

The *Doctrine of the Mean* and *Great Learning* being placed in a row [at the start of one's learning] follows a warning of Zhu Xi's in the *Yi Li Jing Zhuan Tong Jie* 儀禮經傳通解 (*Interpretation of Commentaries of Classic on Etiquette and Rites*) to enter [that path of learning] from the *Great Learning* and return [or finish] at the *Record of the Rites* in order. Also the Confucian of the East, Kwŏn Kūn, returns to this meaning recorded in his *Record of Humble Thoughts on the Record of Rites*. How can the correction of these so-called phrases and expressions be so confusing?<sup>630</sup>

Towards the latter part of the Chosŏn period, namely the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Kwŏn's writings became an intellectual curiosity. In the writings of Confucians of this time, Kwŏn's *IHTS* receives belated interest, mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars such as Yi Wŏn-bae 李元培 (1745-1802), Pae Sang-sŏl 裴相說 (1759-1789), Ryu Kŏn-hyu 柳健休 (1768-1834), Ch'oe Sang-yong 崔象龍 (1786-1849), Yi Kyu-kyŏng 李圭景 (1788-?) and Kim Chong-jŏng 金鍾正 (1722-1787) reference elements of the *IHTS* in regard to the *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Book of Documents* and *Record of Rites*. Again, however, these references are made just in passing and are not the focus of their studies. In other words, for scholars of this period, Kwŏn is a long distant figure who wrote on Confucian topics but whose opinions and interpretations do not warrant examination in and of themselves. Kwŏn is little more than a footnote to a greater narrative of intellectual affairs in Chosŏn's history.

### A reviled figure: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century impressions of Chŏng To-jŏn

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there are a number of passing mentions of Chŏng To-jŏn. For example in 1501 Chŏng's great grandson, Chŏng Mun-hyŏng 鄭文桐, died and the obituary mentions his relationship to Chŏng To-jŏn. Another instance is where one of Chŏng's lyrical poems is questioned in the court over its wording, suggesting that it was lewd and ought to be changed.<sup>631</sup> In this case it was decided that the wording in the poem remain as it reflected the regional dialect and preserved the customs of that time.

<sup>629</sup> *Sukjong Sillok*, 47: 21/1/35.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>631</sup> *Chungjong Sillok*, 32: 01/04/13.

The majority references to Chǒng during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, place him within the context of particular historical events. Some of these references, such as in 1502, merely note Chǒng's role in a particular historical episode without making any judgement. In this case the court noted that during the time of T'aejo, Chǒng and Nam Un 南園 lobbied to have the king grant the princes more land.<sup>632</sup> T'aejo rejected the idea saying if he were to do so the people would see him as favouring his sons too much.

Other references locate Chong within the events during the formation of early Chosŏn, leading up to his role in attempting to influence succession. One reference is to when Yi Sŏng-gye took the throne and Chǒng Mong-ju was voicing his concern over the series of events.<sup>633</sup> In this instance Chǒng is referred to as one of T'aejo's early supporters who helped remove Chǒng Mong-ju. In 1507, an entry in the *sillok* locates Chǒng as attempting to preside over Yi Pang-sok 李芳碩 but T'aejong intervened and neutralised the problem.<sup>634</sup> Chǒng's role in the *p'yojŏn* dispute is another instance where he invoked as a warning to court officials to be careful not to word correspondence in a way that might offend the Chinese court.<sup>635</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century we find a number of instances where Chǒng is cited. First, in 1602, court records show a discussion taking place concerning the death of Ch'oe Yŏng-gyŏng 崔永慶 (1529-1590) while in jail.<sup>636</sup> The interlocutors say that his death occurred because he was accused of being treacherous like Chǒng To-jŏn, in that he was plotting in a nefarious way against the throne. However the accusation against Ch'oe, unlike Chǒng, was false and Ch'oe's death occurred due to his bad relations with those people running the jail. The use of Chǒng here shows that within common historical memory and imagination he is still regarded as an example of a traitor towards the throne.

The historical memory of Chǒng's role in attempting to influence succession to the throne remains undiminished, even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1617, a court records notes that Chǒng attempted to install a child as king and "change the fate of Chosŏn", however T'aejong intervened and brought peace.<sup>637</sup> Song Si-yŏl in a number of his

<sup>632</sup> *Yonsan-kun Sillok*, 43: 2/4/08.

<sup>633</sup> *Chungjong Sillok*, 34: 23/10/13.

<sup>634</sup> *Chungjong Sillok*, 4: 15/10/02.

<sup>635</sup> *Chungjong Sillok*, 42: 17/7/16.

<sup>636</sup> *Sonjo Sillok*, 146: 7/2/35.

<sup>637</sup> *Kwanghae Sillok*, 121: 23/11/09.

entries to the court references Chŏng and in all instances, irrespective of the context, he labels Chong as the “calamitous and treacherous retainer”.<sup>638</sup> During this period Sukjong at one point asked Hŏ Chŏk 許積, a court official, about certain figures from the past such as Ch'oe Myŏng-gil 崔鳴吉 and Kim Yuk 金堉, and whether they had had their spiritual tablets prepared.<sup>639</sup> Hŏ replied that while they had certainly helped people in the past, they were not considered Confucians and thus were not granted the tablets. He said their case was just like Chŏng To-jŏn in early Chosŏn who had helped the state in certain respects but was overall not well regarded nor granted spiritual tablets.

### A distant and irrelevant memory: 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century impressions of Kwŏn

From the reign of Yŏngjo 英祖 (r.1724-76) to Kojong 高宗 (r. 1852-1919), references to Kwŏn Kŭn in the *Sillok* become very rare and occur only in limited contexts. The first context is in regard to an epitaph Kwŏn wrote for Queen Dowager Sinŭi, first wife of T'aejo, called the *Cherŭng Sindobi* 齊陵神道碑,<sup>640</sup> which was destroyed during the Japanese invasion of 1592. In 1744 discussions began over repairing the damage and restoring the queen's tablet with Kwŏn's original inscription.<sup>641</sup> In a similar vein, another *Sillok* entry from 1825, has O U-sang 吳羽常 consulting Kwŏn's *Cherŭng-j* 齊陵誌, noting that it said a funeral rite was held in Sokch'on village, Haep'ung county, but O notes that this record was only valid when written in the time of T'aejo and the names of the locations had since changed.<sup>642</sup> Another reference to Kwŏn in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century appears in 1790, 14th year of Chŏngjong 正宗 (r. 1777-1800), when one of Kwŏn's records 記文 is mentioned obliquely in relation to a report on activities in Chŏlla province.<sup>643</sup> Both the case of the queen's epitaph and this geographical references are accounts of Kwŏn which occur simply based on coincidence; Kwŏn's input is tangential and of no real importance.

The second context for referencing Kwŏn is as a point of derision. A *Sillok* entry from

<sup>638</sup> See *Hyonjong Sillok*, 16: 271/10; 16: 4/1/10 and *Sukjong Sillok* 12: 14/9/07.

<sup>639</sup> *Sukjong Sillok*, 5: 8/7/02.

<sup>640</sup> See Kwŏn, *YCJ*, Vol. 4: pp. 168-173. When T'aejong became king by force he posthumously bestowed this title on his mother, even though she was not the actual queen at the time.

<sup>641</sup> *Yŏngjo Sillok*, 59: 29/7/20 and *Yŏngjo Sillok*, 60: 4/11/20.

<sup>642</sup> *Sunjo Sillok*, 27: 2/6/25.

<sup>643</sup> *Chŏngjo Sillok*, 30: 12/7/14.

1902 has Kim Kyu-hong 金奎弘 (1845-?) discussing two points regarding the capital. To make his point he remarks that it is like believing Kwŏn's comparison of the Zhou lands of Ki 岐 and P'ung 豐.<sup>644</sup> The poignancy of this reference is that it shows that Kwŏn as an intellectual and his contributions to interpreting the Confucian canon are not taken seriously. Rather, Kwŏn is a distant historical figure to mock.

### Resurrection of Chŏng To-jŏn

References to Chŏng during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, much like previous centuries, draw on elements of his life as analogies to highlight particular points being discussed in the court. In 1728, Yongjo discusses an instance where Yi Sŏng-gye fell from his horse prior to becoming T'aejo and Chŏng asked Yi not to forget the instance. In Yongjo's eyes Chong's actions highlighted the responsibility retainers have towards establishing merit.<sup>645</sup> In a similar vein, two court officials in 1730 were discussing the difficulties of travelling to China and one interlocutor cited the circumstances surrounding the *p'yojŏn* dispute.<sup>646</sup> One noted that Chŏng was recognised as the source of the problem but was unable to enter China; however Kwŏn Kŭn volunteered to go on Chŏng's behalf. One interlocutor asked of the dangers of making such a trip at that time and was told that Kwŏn went to Ming despite the dangers as it was simply his duty as member of the court.

Yongjo made another reference to Chŏng along similar lines in 1734. In this instance the reference is a little more cryptic as Yongjo, in discussion with court official, tells of T'aejo advising Chŏng to take heed as in the case of the city of Ju 莒, a reference to events during time of the Spring and Autumn period.<sup>647</sup> Yongjo advises his interlocutor that, in the same way, he is merely suggesting that the people in question do not forget the dangers or perils they face.

The final reference to Chŏng during this period departs from the above and instead portrays him briefly as having a mercenary like attitude towards the former royal family

<sup>644</sup> *Kojong Sillok*, 42: 1/5/39.

<sup>645</sup> *Yongjo Sillok*, 18: 1/5/04.

<sup>646</sup> *Yongjo Sillok*, 28: 11/12/06.

<sup>647</sup> *Yongjo Sillok*, 39: 18/9/10. The reference here is to the struggle between the states of Yan and Qi and 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Following periods of conflict and renewal, in 284 the state of Yan defeated Qi having formed an alliance with the states of Wei, Han, Zhao, Qin and Chu to attack Qi. Following the defeat, the court of Qi withdrew to the city of Ju. From here and after some time the Qi general Tian Dan defeated Yan and restored Qi to the throne. T'aejo's reference to this seems to point to the uncertainty he would have felt having seized the throne.



of Koryŏ, the Wang family. A *sillok* reference from 1732 discusses a text and when turning to putting in a good word for Wang family's descendants, Chŏng is cited as being the person who at the inception of Chosŏn schemed to have the descendants of the Wang family put onto a boat and dumped at sea.<sup>648</sup> Brief though this mention is, it does add to the politically ruthless image of Chŏng To-jŏn.

Treatment of Chŏng in the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows a far more sympathetic treatment of his life, especially his faults, and recognition of his positive contributions to the early Chosŏn state. Indicative of this positive appraisal is Kjong's grandmother's request for a posthumous title to be conferred on Chŏng so that he not be forgotten for his role in establishing the foundation of the long prosperous Chosŏn state.<sup>649</sup> The initial request occurred in 1865<sup>650</sup> and the Ministry of Personnel 吏曹 followed up the request, however, found that there were no direct linear descendants of Chŏng.<sup>651</sup> The Ministry could find indirect descendants who were assessed as being able to participate in the appropriate ancestral rites. The ministry requested to the clan that a representative be chosen and amongst themselves they decided that Chŏng Ung-gi 鄭應嬰 who would be put forward as the 16<sup>th</sup> generation descendant from Chŏng To-jŏn. Following this, in 1872, Chŏng received a posthumous title from the court and with Chŏng's newly elevated status his descendants now had to perform appropriate ancestral rites.<sup>652</sup> The descendants, however, did not have the appropriate paraphernalia that accompanies such status, for example a spiritual tablet. After all, Chŏng To-jŏn for the past four centuries had been reviled not revered. Now though, his descendants needed a spiritual tablet if they were to perform the appropriate rites and the court duly granted that one be issued to the family.<sup>653</sup>

In 1919, included in the appendix to the *Sunjong sillok*, is an entry linked to 1868 that illustrates the profound transformation that Chŏng had undergone over the five hundred years since his death. In the third lunar month of 1868 the court ordered that rites be performed at the graves of "meritorious subjects who founded the state" which included Chŏng To-jŏn, Nam Un, Yi Jik and Shim Ok-bu. Here Chŏng is now a hero of Chosŏn,

<sup>648</sup> *Yongjo Sillok*, 28: 11/12/06.

<sup>649</sup> *Kjong Sillok*, 5: 2/7/05.

<sup>650</sup> *Kjong Sillok*, 2: 10/9/02.

<sup>651</sup> *Kjong Sillok*, 2: 19/9/02.

<sup>652</sup> *Kjong Sillok*, 8: 16/3/08.

<sup>653</sup> *Kjong Sillok*, 9: 23/3/09.

a noted figure who opened the dynasty.<sup>654</sup> No longer is he a court villain, despised for seeking to disrupt the throne. Chǒng is celebrated as a founder of Chosŏn.

For all the positive recasting of Chǒng, even during this time he could not shake off the stigma of his family background. In 1874, Chong is cited in a memorial as an example of a person who despite adversities, made a contribution to the state.<sup>655</sup> The anecdote explains that back in Chǒng's time although he was the son of a concubine, suffered insults and died due to his crimes, he made a valuable and lasting contribution to the establishment of Chosŏn through his work on the *Complete Code of Law* 經國大典. Despite the formal court recognition, the "issue" still remains of his birth as a concubine's son and the perceived evils he committed towards the throne. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the difference is that this stigma carries less gravity than in previous centuries.

### Looking back

Looking back across several centuries we can appreciate that the reception and appreciation of Kwŏn and Chǒng when 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars turned to look at them differed significantly from the trajectory of their legacies. When Kwŏn died in 1409 he was held in high regard by the king, princes and court colleagues and this attitude lingered for some time until the interests of scholar officials crystallised around narrow interpretations of Song thought. With this crystallisation came the gradual exclusion and eventual dismissal of Kwŏn's intellectual work and role in the court. On the other hand, Chǒng's execution at the hand of Yi Bang-won for his meddling in succession, grasping of power and push for military action in the Liaodong peninsula meant that his death was looked upon in a negative light. Chǒng was seen as a traitor, so much so that even his early work in the formation of the Chosŏn state could not eclipse his failings. It was only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that there was a change in perception of Chǒng and in an incredibly short period of time Chǒng's reputation was not only resurrected but in viewing the early Chosŏn, he came to hold a far more exalted position than Kwŏn, as a historical and intellectual figure.

This resurrection of Chǒng and dismissal of Kwŏn coincides with where 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars start examining these two figures for their contributions to the historical and

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<sup>654</sup> *Sunjong Appendix*, 10: 4/3/12.

<sup>655</sup> *Kojong Sillok*, 11: 15/2/11.

intellectual activities of the early Chosŏn. As we saw in the introduction, the project of these academics lay in charting and explaining what they took as the true pinnacle of Chosŏn period Confucian thought, in other words the debates set in motion through the work and writings of T'oegye and Yulgok. As we have seen above, the intellectuals of this time already had their own perception of Kwŏn and Chŏng, and by the time of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century those mentalities had in turn become the tradition and identity for Confucian scholars in the Korean peninsula.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the life, thought and legacy of Kwŏn Kūn – a 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucian intellectual. At the beginning of this thesis I outlined my encounter with the writings of Kwŏn Kūn and my puzzlement with the representation of him in modern academic scholarship. What I encountered was a dislocation between primary and secondary sources, and a puzzling array of contradictions surrounding his historical role and contributions as a scholar-official in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn. While this thesis has not been able to cover all the aspects of his life, writings and times, it has clarified who Kwŏn Kūn was, what he did during his life, its importance, what his understanding of the Confucian canon entailed, and how he came to be held in such an ambivalent historical regard.

To briefly recap, the first chapter showed that Kwŏn was a significant figure for his time. He excelled as a student, quickly rose through the ranks of the Koryŏ government and fraternised with eminent scholar-officials of the time. A breach of diplomatic protocol saw Kwŏn exiled from the capital for over a year. During that time he wrote several seminal texts on Confucianism that marked the beginning of the Confucian commentary tradition in Chosŏn. While in exile the government of the Korean peninsula changed hands and Kwŏn was invited to join Yi Sŏng-gye's new Chosŏn court. Kwŏn's skill and competence revealed itself, particularly in 1396 when he resolved a diplomatic deadlock between the Chosŏn and Ming courts. In this instance Kwŏn composed poetry for the Hongwu emperor, who in turn lavished gifts, feasts and sightseeing trips on Kwŏn. Returning to Chosŏn, Kwŏn continued to be engaged in political and educational reform, and a range of domestic and international affairs. Underlying Kwŏn's activities throughout his life was a strong Confucian basis. When confronting affairs of the state he would frequently refer to Confucian texts, personalities and anecdotes, seeking to derive from them teaching that would help solve the issues at hand. For Kwŏn Confucianism – its practice, doctrines and teachings – were the basis to understand and order the world.

The second chapter addressed the narrow, echo chamber of interpretation of Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism. The chapter showed that Kwŏn saw the Confucian canon as a repository for an array of knowledge – elementary knowledge necessary for all scholar-officials; practical knowledge explaining the functioning of the world; abstract

knowledge concerning metaphysical principles; and accounts of historical and morally significant figures and events. Kwŏn's writings on Confucianism also reveal a multifaceted hermeneutic engagement with the canon. Throughout his writings he adopts knowledge from the canon, adapts elements of its contents and teachings, improvises to cover gaps and mistakes in the canon, and of course, simply explains complicated issues buried in the texts. In addition, Kwŏn engages with the commentators and commentaries to the Confucian canon. Kwŏn naturally spends significant portions of time addressing and explaining the intricacies of Cheng/Zhu thought across all of his writings. Coupled with this is Kwŏn's critical evaluation of commentators such as Zhu Xi and Wu Cheng. Where Kwŏn finds fault in their interpretations, he engages and addresses their arguments. What this shows is that Kwŏn was anything but slavishly following and conveying Cheng/Zhu thought. Instead he was engaging broadly with the Confucian canon and its commentators.

The final chapter charted the rise and fall of Kwŏn's legacy. It showed that after his death in 1409, Kwŏn's legacy enjoyed several decades of respect and admiration. Chosŏn's kings and scholar-officials remembered Kwŏn fondly for his court affairs, his teachings, his participation in reforms, his poetry and writings on Confucianism. From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, sentiment towards Kwŏn began to change. The interest of intellectuals from this point onwards shifted towards a fascination with metaphysical principles and an unwavering fidelity towards the writings of Zhu Xi. Concomitant with this change was a re-evaluation of the histories, heritages and pedigrees of intellectuals in Chosŏn and Koryŏ. The consequence of this revision was an increasingly critical interpretation of Kwŏn, to the point where he became less relevant and increasingly heretical and heterodox. Towards the end of the Chosŏn period intellectuals ignored and derided Kwŏn. By this time Kwŏn was historically and intellectually unimportant. This sentiment explains why early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars such as Takahashi, Chang and Hyŏn held Kwŏn in such low regard when they started to cast their eyes back across the five hundred years of Chosŏn's intellectual history they. The posthumous treatment of Kwŏn is further highlighted in this chapter through a comparison with Chŏng To-jŏn. Comparing the treatment of these two contemporaneous figures, from their contrasting deaths and treatment at the hands of later generations, reveals how fickle the treatment of history had become in mid to late Chosŏn and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the outset I chose to investigate Kwŏn's life, thought and legacy so as to show

how modern scholarship has misinterpreted his role in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn. The conclusion highlights the danger of academic discourses that favour contextualisation and grand narratives over detailed description and analysis of primary sources. The pursuit of over arching narratives overlooks and underplays the nuances, divergences and discrepancies within individual lives and thought. This oversight, in the case of Kwŏn, has led to the perpetuation of misinterpretation and under appreciation of who he was and what he did. The implication of this thesis is that it raises the question of how other historical figures have been treated. Furthermore, it forces us to question and re-examine the assumptions that underpin these narratives. Here, in pausing to look at the life and writings of one 14<sup>th</sup> century Confucian intellectual, we have encountered a fascinating and textured vista of the intellectual topography at a crucial point in Korea's history.

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## 7. Appendix

### Yangch'on Kwon Kun's Gravesite and tomb for three generations 陽村權近三代墓

Location: Pangch'uk-ri, Saenggük-myŏn, Ŭmsŏng-gun, Ch'ungch'ŏngbuk-do  
Date: 17 November 2007





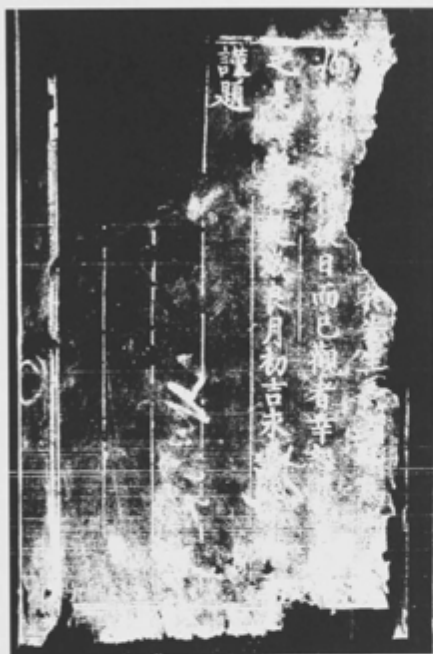






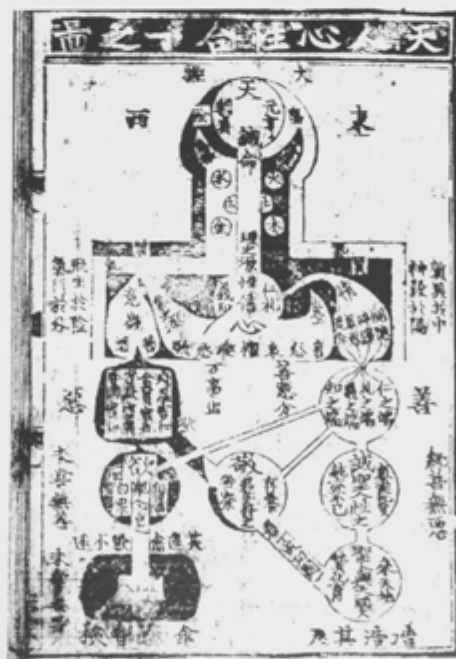
# Selected reproductions of South Korean versions of the *Iphaktosöl*

*Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, South Korea -  
1390 edition (fragmentary)*





子曰天以陰陽五行化生萬物氣以成形而理亦賦焉  
 右面雖依周子大極圖及朱子中庸章句之說就人心性  
 上以明理氣善惡之殊以示學者說不及萬物化生之象  
 然人物之生其理則同而氣有通塞偏正之異得其正  
 通者為人得其偏且塞者為物即此而觀則誠字一團  
 得最正最通而為聖人數字一團得正且通者而為衆人  
 欲字一團得偏且塞者而為物其下禽獸者得其尤偏  
 塞而為草木者是則萬物化生之象亦具於其中矣夫  
 天地之化生生不窮往者愈而來者續人獸草木千形萬  
 狀各正性命者皆自一大極中流出故萬物各具一理萬  
 理同出一源一草一木各一大極而天下無性外之物故  
 中庸言性盡其性則能盡人之性能盡物之性而可以贊



題陽村先生八景圖說後  
 嘉靖丁未春監月家相公法巡到獎煥常  
 川郡余以散人謁見知寒暄相公曰此時  
 見陽村先生所著八景圖說前使余未附  
 鄭三峰心氣理篇其夫人心性之說廣學  
 諸書之古今經雅用之分河流易範上理  
 以聖賢粹之度操卷之者凡初學起碼  
 而難通者悉皆統制統探顯微深義圖  
 其說此諸銘常出而西意盡題心跡勢右  
 其正說之無窮者了了洞然使余未達之

國延擢國秀從其後陳解頤然其有以  
親而面命之如程氏之教其誠性理  
者之指而也思欽藏之于心嘗謂書  
院以清溪習而晉陽常松溪派之文不  
堪印此派州新本新法其共三時附篇  
皆不得為今定為可惜也余有家藏晉  
陽即本一快見相公款意忠治學之盛  
意不敢新述此而見之則相公曰世之  
學者不喜深明性理之原故此圖之傳  
幾年失傳今欲藏此于院以討習一院

諸儒不若鑄此于板以而布一國之為廣  
也乃為主傳其後持備之于時侯乃則文  
老辟也因而書之俾生負其志願乃此記  
偏並書目錄以附卷端閱者月切勤進候  
日省周以既治居君君不可解遂書其刊  
之顯末云

奉州大夫王久院東校松山後學

黃序恭 序詳注者

黃先生孫龜巖字景明遂溪門人

# 小學圖說序

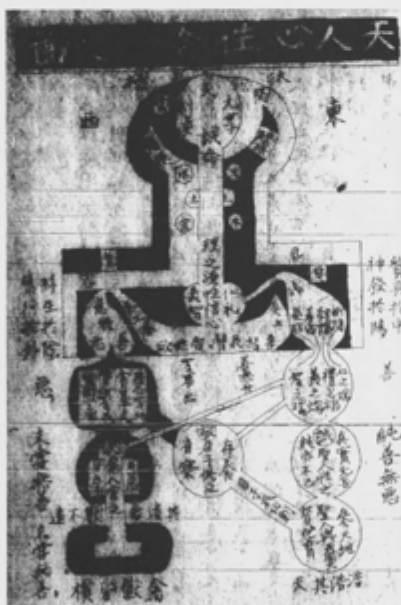
性書唐子秋誦在金馬郡有一二初  
學家事侯君學二書者皆之誨誨  
而尚缺通曉乃本周子之圖參章句  
以說作圖以系又取先賢格言以釋其  
意學者因有圖又從而卷之仍記其  
曰卷之書以附其後名之曰小學圖說序

在他經凡有作國者皆因之而後  
 應兄之說非純白先生之長者所望  
 先進乃拘海籍於特後日而已觀  
 者幸此其高亮而士氣之雲所謂和  
 量歲月月初夫尔嘉嘉學權也  
 謹題

小學圖說

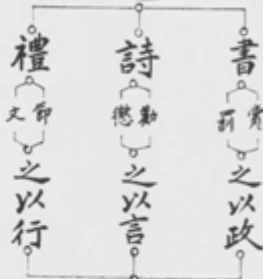
林氏錄

此處先儒陽村先生所撰也先生坐於千  
 百載之後慨念學春林於所向遠歷先  
 賢之語拒為圖說用以指南世无今心性  
 之分聖經賢傳之言条理畢舉發發不亂  
 雖愚蒙亦覺提耳之示而便解目擊心悟  
 豁然與破其有補於初學也豈淺淺乎哉  
 晉  
 監司相國范公先奏萬於學教之多才界之  
 視得晉陽刊本壹以覽則字畫通細且  
 房殘缺難於今閱故屬予改書仍其舊



以布子即謹加奇正說并拾書縣吏使始  
 大於舊本以書仰訓相公春春於斯夫  
 之美意也於戲啓先聖之鑰而開示後學  
 春陽村也繼陽村之志而發揚聖學於無  
 窮春吾相公也後之學春敬受此圖專  
 宜戶牖細釋不已則世因所造之遠其可  
 量耶皆嘉靖翰林蒙大荒落筆描提仁川  
 後裔蔡與逸謹跋乎浪州進民堂

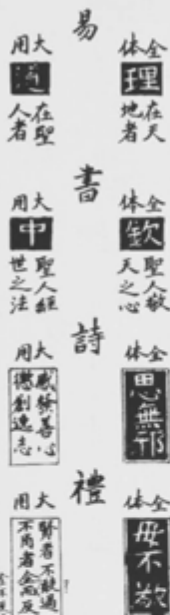
# 易全體也



愚按易五經之全體也春秋五經之大用也書以道政事詩以言性情禮以謹節文雖各專其一事而易春秋之體用亦各無所不備焉嗚呼大哉聖人五經之全體而五經

聖人之大用也易者道在天地而聖人休之春秋者道在聖人而天地不能違者也故河出而而為盡春秋作而解至也

## 五經各分休用之圖



## 春秋

全本乎天  
地之理  
大用  
行於聖  
人之心

## 春正月橫看分釋之圖天時



愚按聖人作春秋上叙天時下書王月其立文連書曰春王正月傳者以為以夏時冠周月學者不察或疑以冬為春或疑改易正朔論說紛紜莫之能定是蓋堅者合春與王正月而言之故也橫看則上叙天時者所以行夏之時垂後法也下書王月者所以紀周之正尊時王也天時非王之所能先故可叙於其上也王月非己之所能改故必書於其下也一以天時而宣王制以立萬世之法一以王月而正人倫以示一統之大二義並行而不相悖者也若夫書王月而為數者幽風之詩已有一之日二之日之說亦非夫子始易之也



掛抄過揲之法

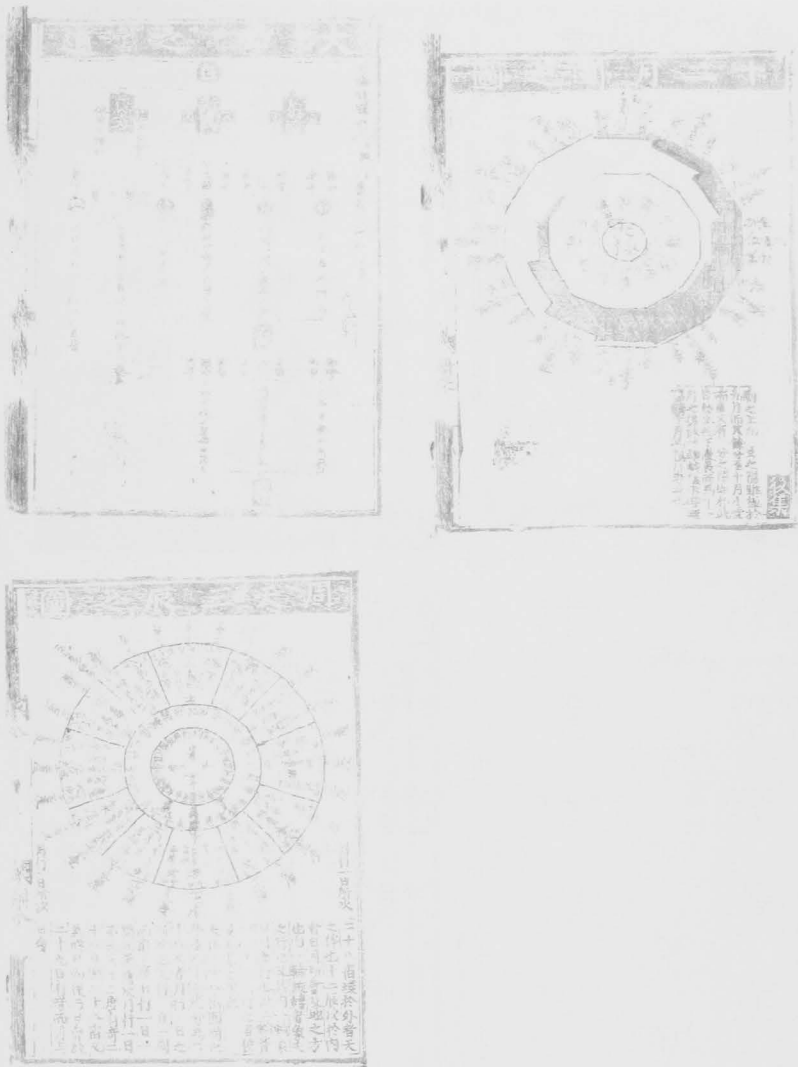
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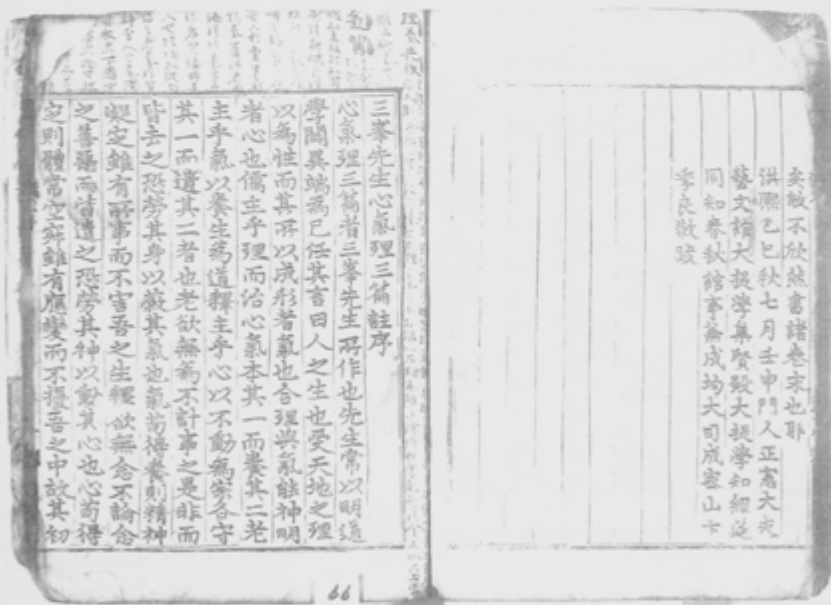
三變之中前一變為奇其餘五九或五九者五三而九一為五者三  
後二變為偶其餘四八或四八者二為四者二  
前一變掛一揲四其餘揲數  
右或二或三或四九揲法以四陰之數  
以四為奇掛抄四五為奇五五八八九為偶九八

兩儀

陽一 左一右三各掛一合為五去一則為四以奇一此為五者三  
左三右一各掛一合為五去一則為四以奇一亦為奇者三  
陰二 左二右二各掛一合為五去一則為四以奇一此為九者一  
左二右二各掛一合為五去一則為四以奇一亦為偶者一

西山蔡氏所謂為奇曰三為偶者二是天三地二自然之數  
者其以偶為二與此不同何也非謂有三偶也以二四之奇





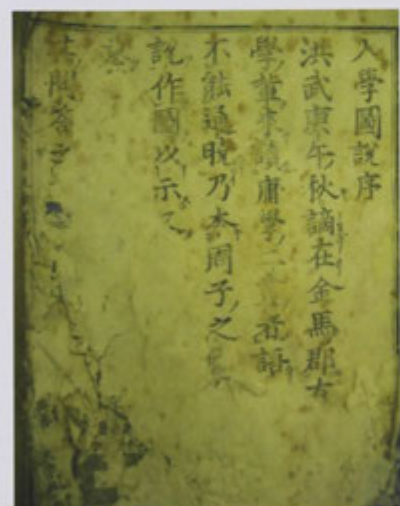
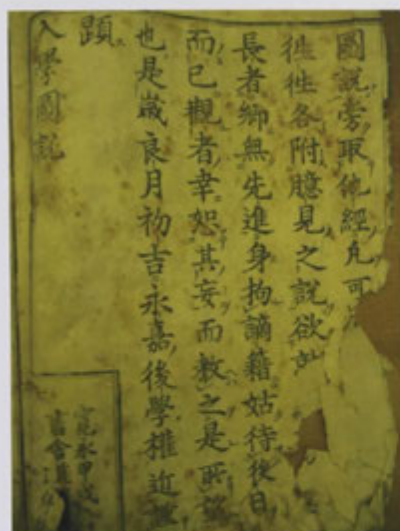




# Selected reproductions of Japanese versions of the *Iphaktosöl*

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Note; partially damaged, includes Japanese notation of text.













入學圖說

潮鮮本

讀書不見行間墨  
始識當年教外心  
箇是儂家真寶藏  
不應猶羨滿籬金

# 無 之 面



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保民

保民

保民

保民

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保民

中宗

高宗

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高宗

慈哀帝 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

太敬通事 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

孝小大死時 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

如下民之命 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

能保惠子廣民 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

不敬侮 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

車股即康功田功 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

似子能保 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

似子能保 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

後主

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後主

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子如絳縵之難 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

生則也 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

解脫 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

子如絳縵之難 畏天公 自廣 無國益有年

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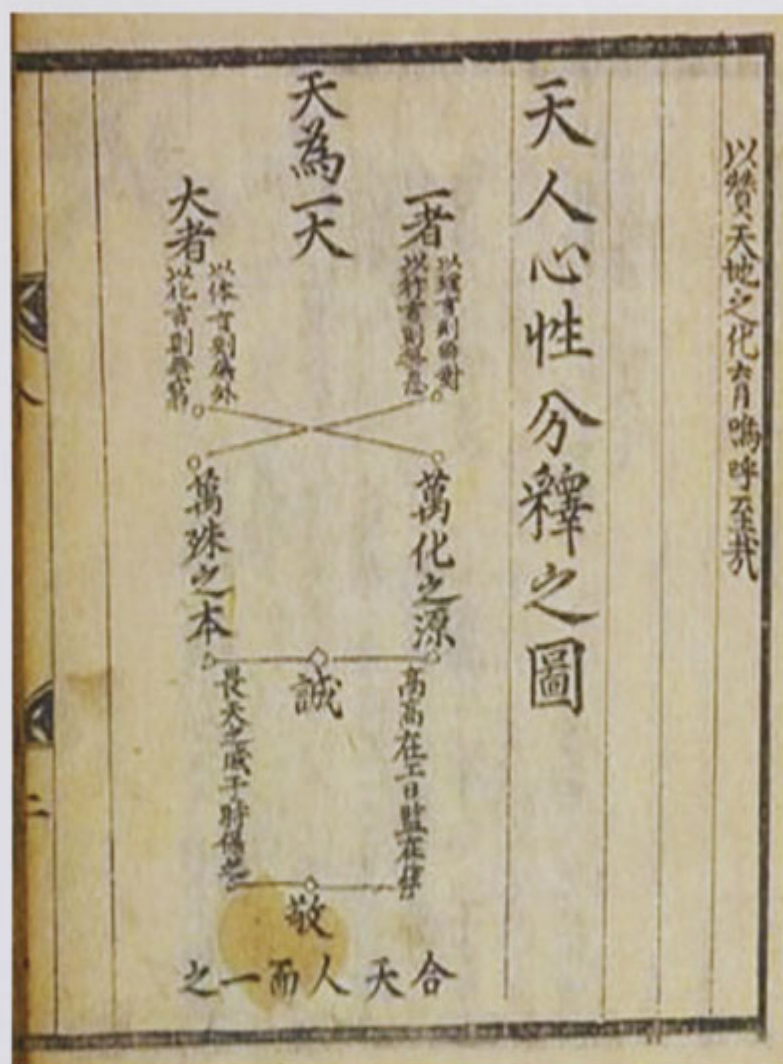
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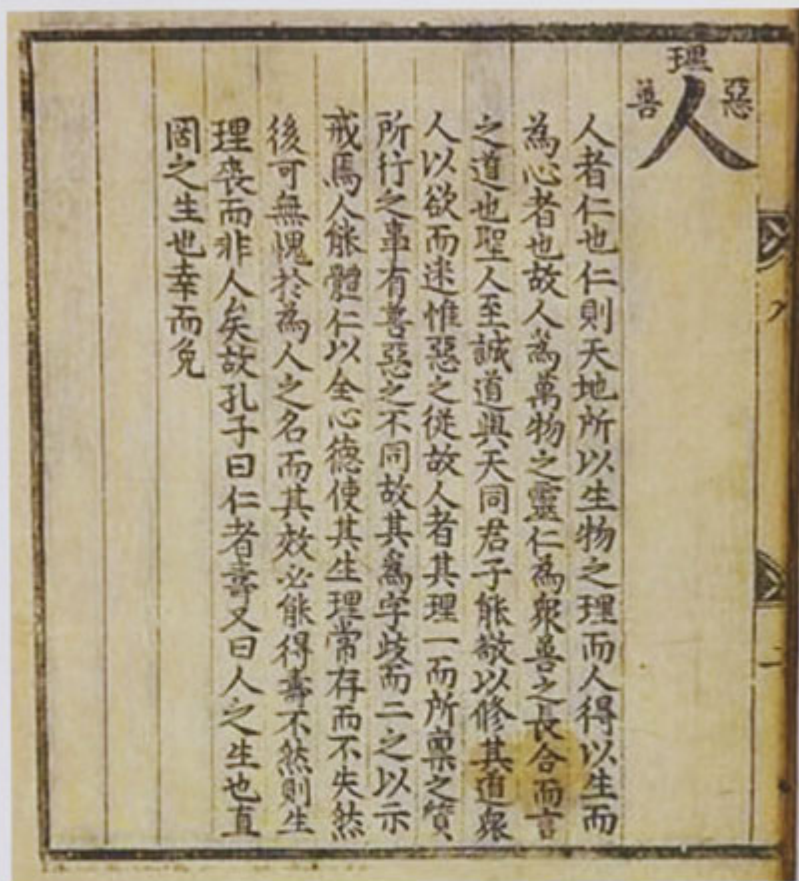
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<http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0004.html>

Date of access: 11 April 2012

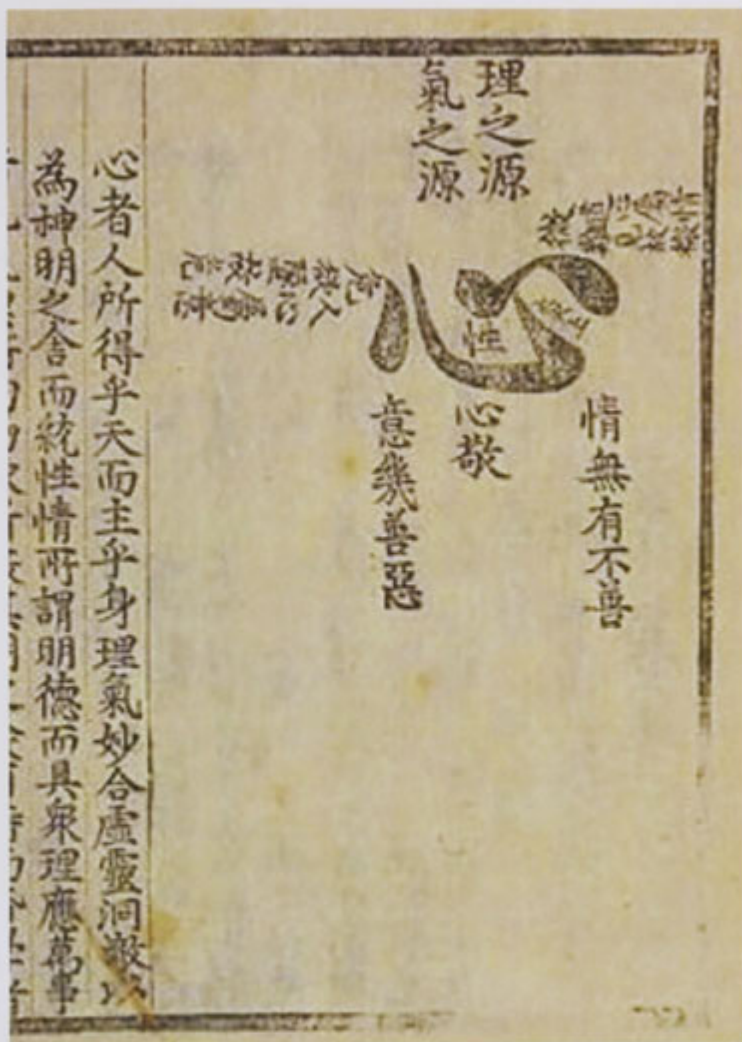




Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012



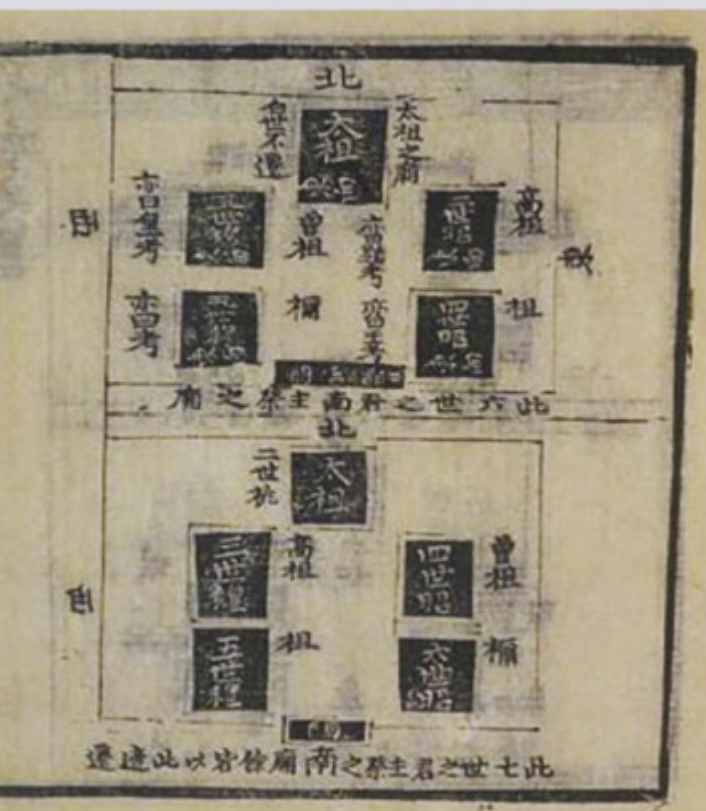




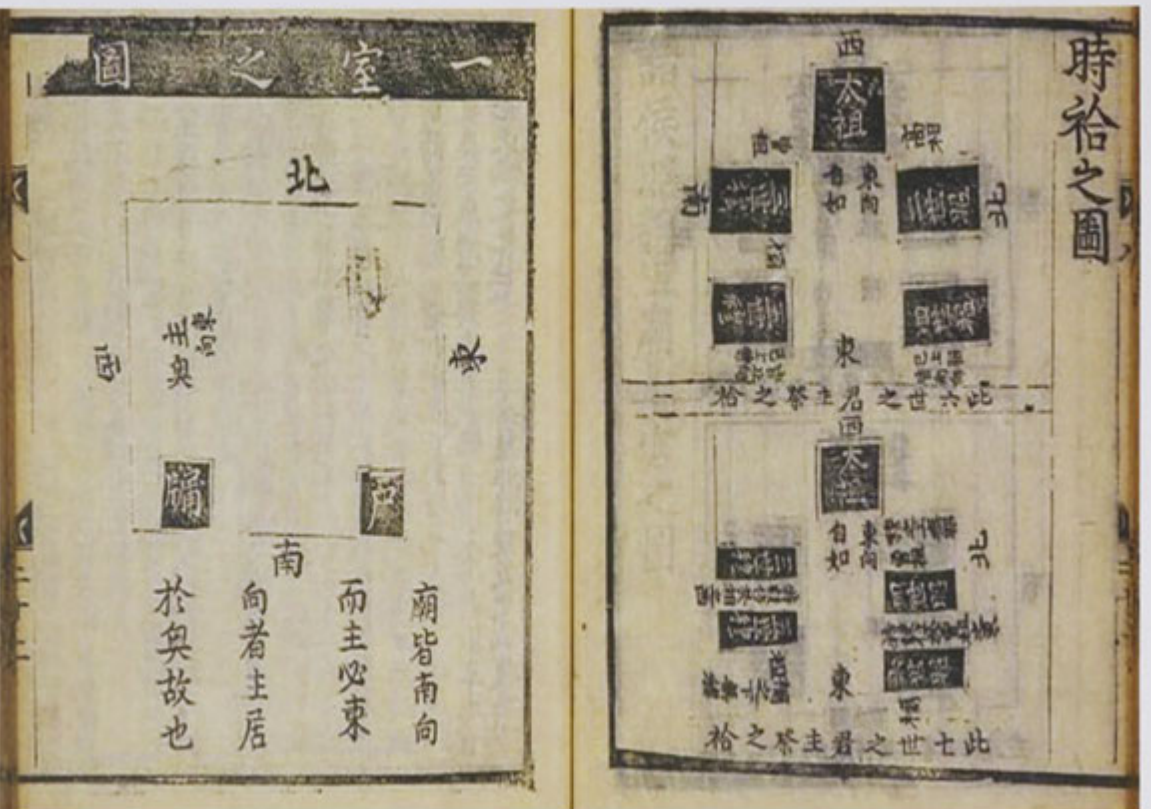
Source: <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0024.html>

Date: 11 April 2012

諸侯昭穆五廟都宮之圖



Date: 11 April 2012



Source:

<http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0027.html>  
<http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/k145/image/01/k145s0028.html>

Date: 11 April 2012

已也一節深一節與言無餘讀之凜然有不可犯者其  
他立言皆倣此云

### 五經體用合一之圖

二十四

詩賞之以政

易全體也 詩賞之以言 春秋大用也

禮文之以行

愚按五經之全體也 五經之大用也 以道設  
事 以官性情 以謹節文 雖各專其一事而春秋  
之體用亦各無所不備焉 嗚呼大哉聖人五經之全體  
而五經聖人之大用也 易者道在天地而聖人體之春  
秋者道在聖人而天地不能違者也 故河出圖而易之書  
春秋作而禮至也

### 五經各分體用之圖

易

金休 理 在天 地者

書

金休 飲 聖人教 天之心 思無邪

大用 道 在聖 人者

大用 中 聖人體 大 聖法

禮

大用 毋不敬

春秋

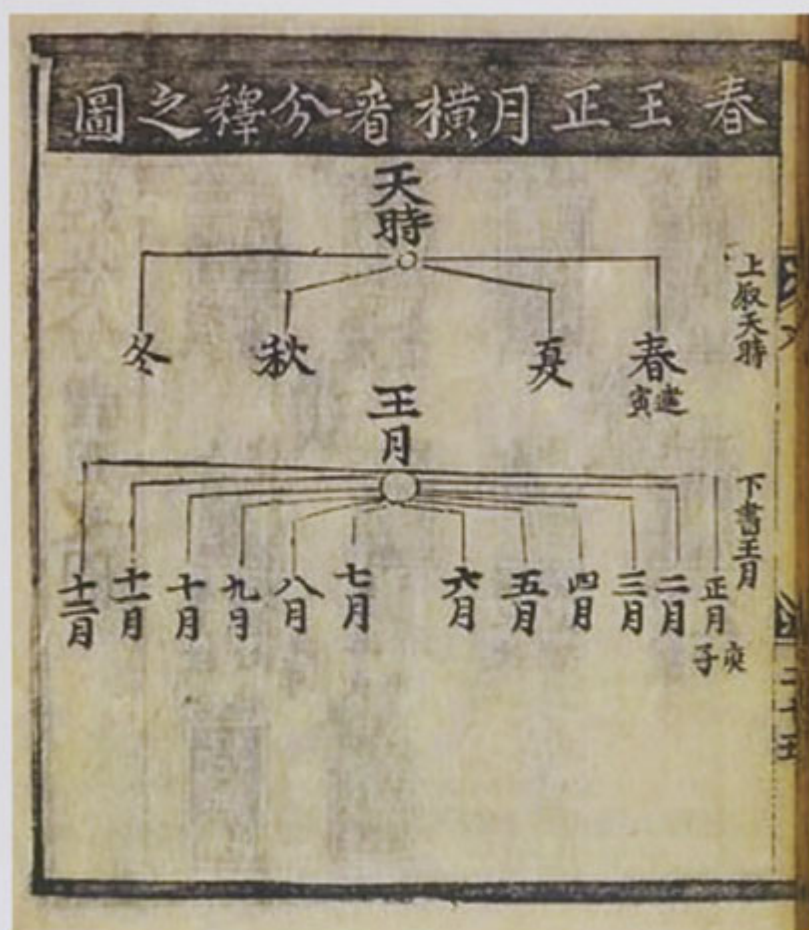
大用 權 於於聖 人之心

金休 母不敬

金休 道 本學天 地之理



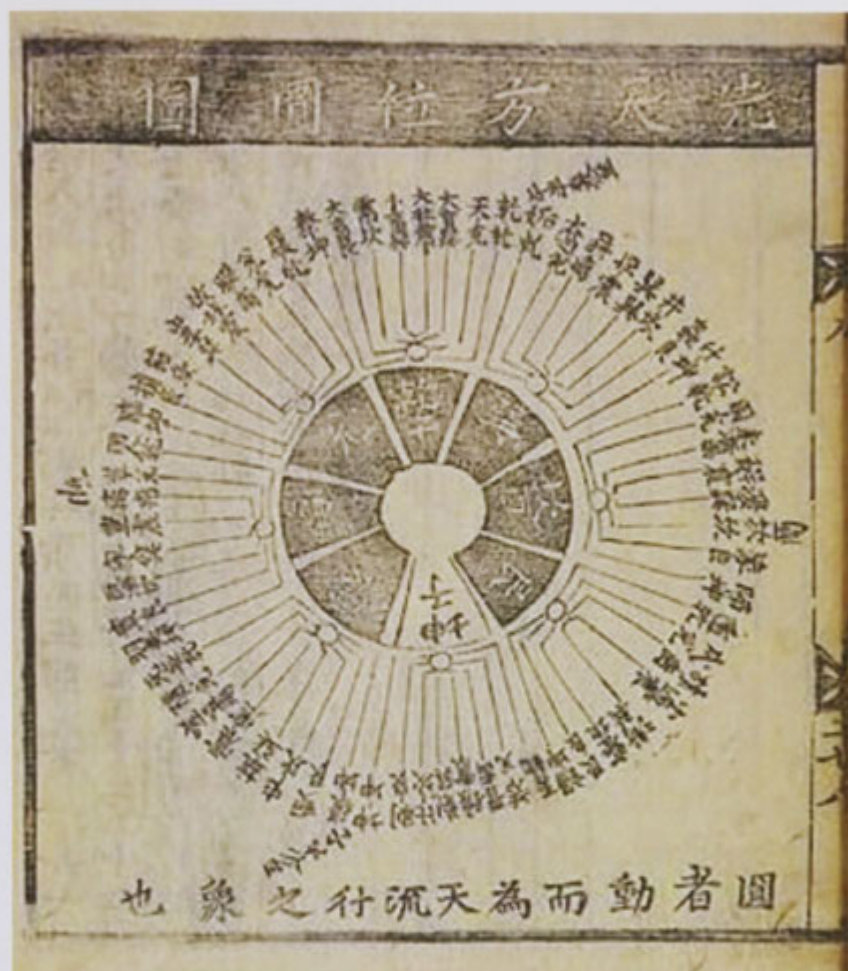
Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012

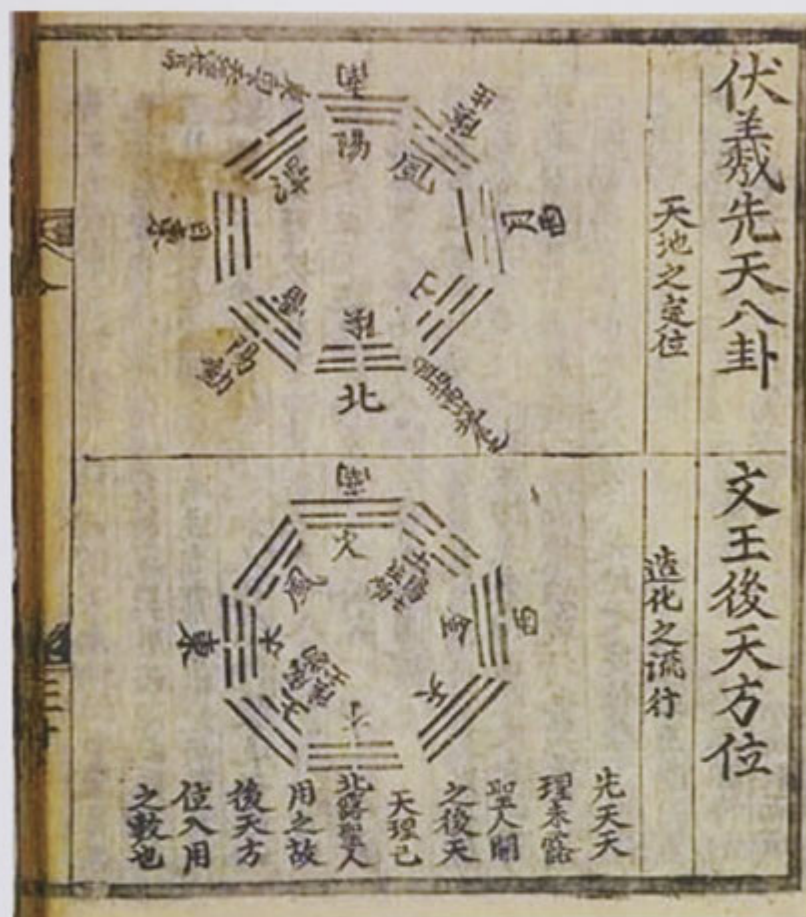


Date: 11 April 2012





Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012

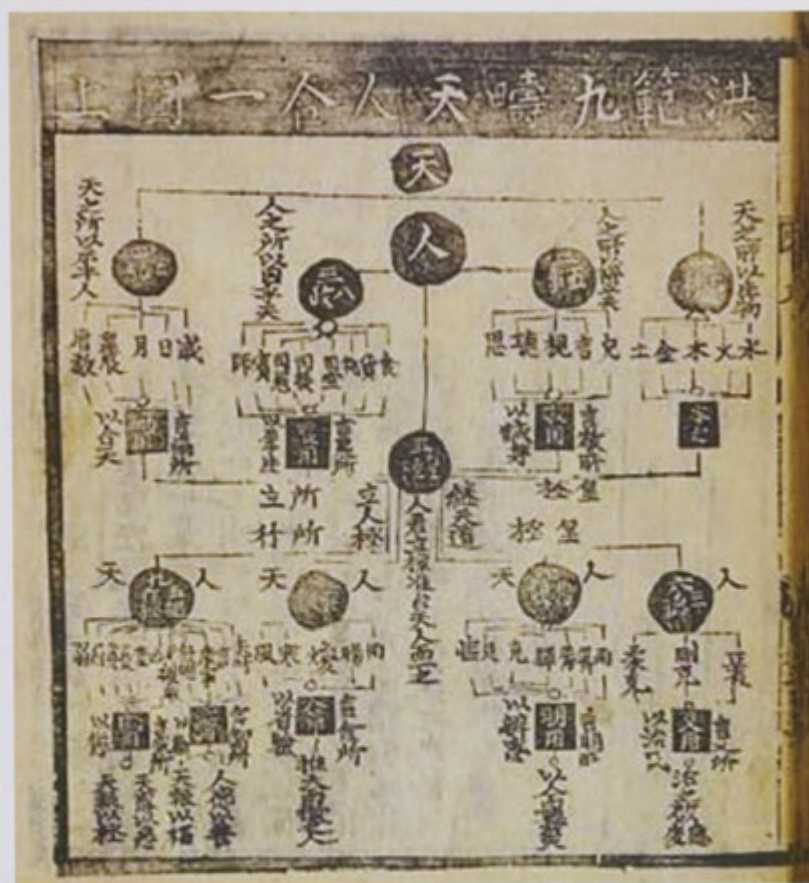


Date: 11 April 2012





Date: 11 April 2012







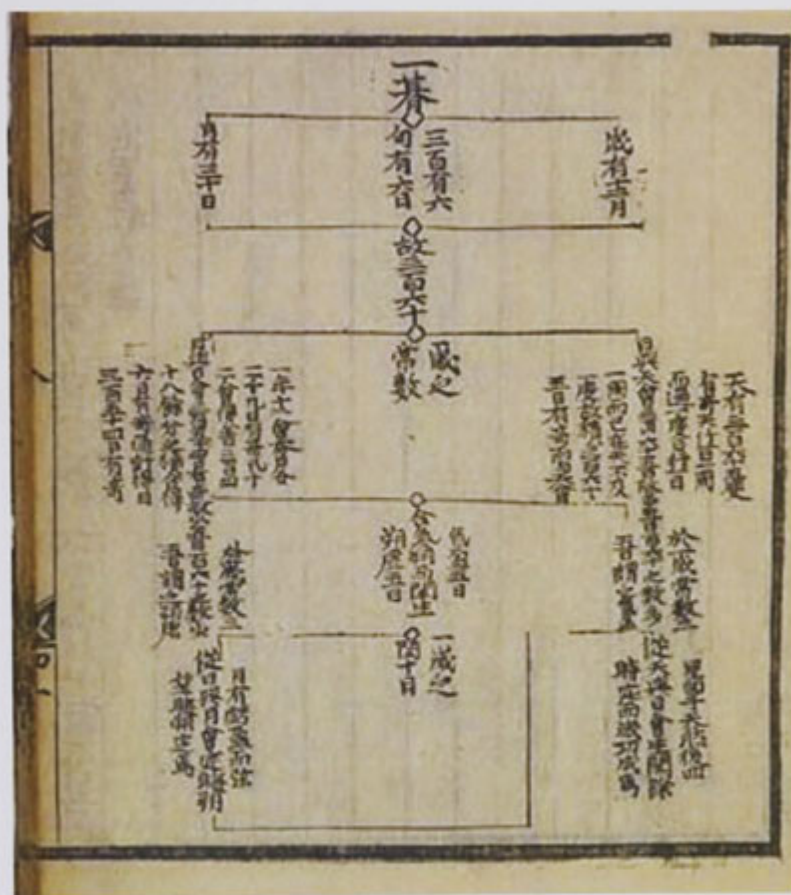




Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012

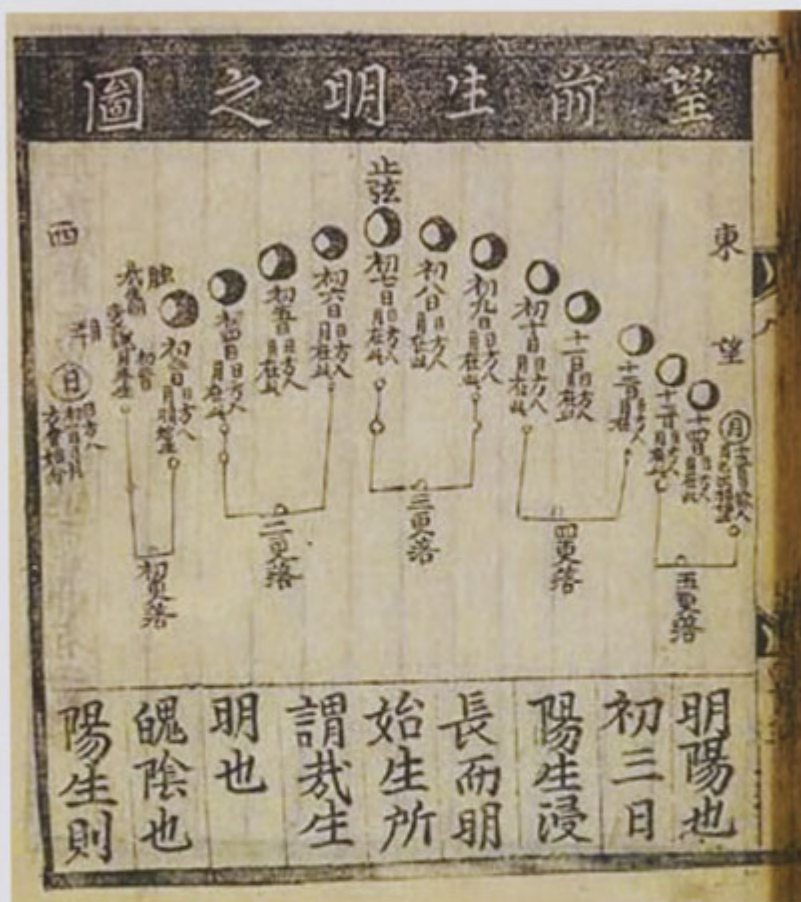


Date: 11 April 2012





Date: 11 April 2012





Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012



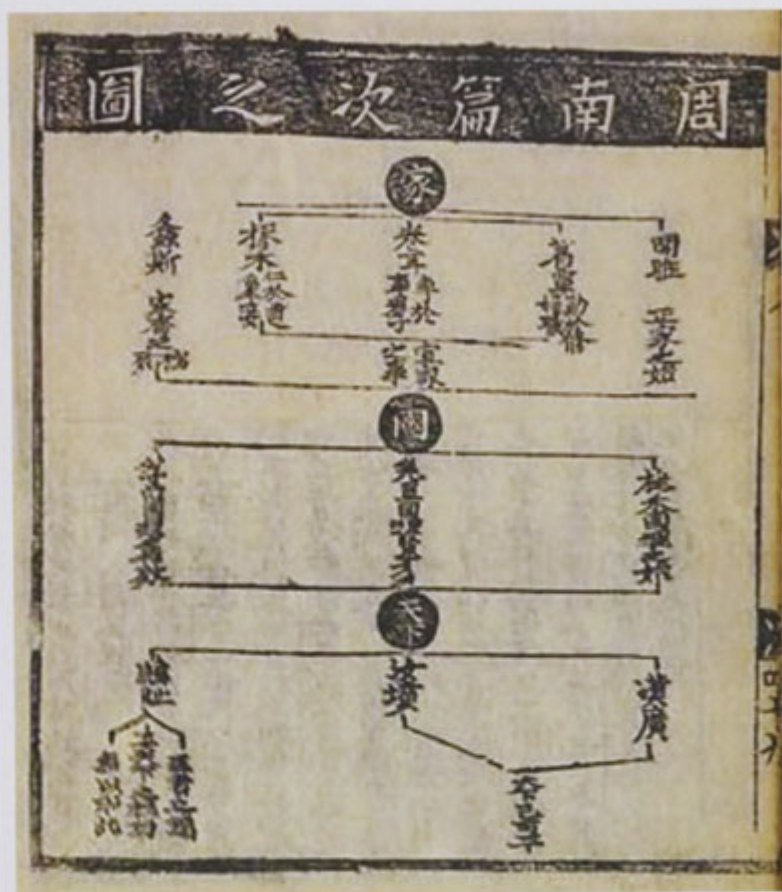




Date: 11 April 2012



Date: 11 April 2012







Date: 11 April 2012





Date: 12 July 2013

政揭而示之也此書傳道之言有以教者故凡為學者之事無非所以教也且慎獨大學亦言之學者事也故特加必字於上以戒之也中庸直言君子之事以教之故不言必立言下字其不苟也如此哉

曰章句以中和為性情之德今子以和為道而不言情又以為心之用氣之所行何也曰中和固性情之德也今以和為道者本其所謂達道而言以明章首性道教之所包也其又以為心之用氣之行著所以分心之體用而明章句心正氣順體立用行之意也名雖異而實非有二也

### 中庸分節即辨議

朱子分為四大節

自首章至第四節為第一節

已上皆論中庸以經首章之義

自費隱章至末公問政章為第二節

已上皆言費隱小大

自誠明章至三十二章為第三節

已上皆言天道人道

率章句為第四節

復自下學立心之初推之以至格極

饒氏分為六節

首章句為第一節

自第二章至十一章為第二節

自費隱章至十九章為第三節

言費隱小大至此章武王問公而住

自文公問政章至五誠無息章為第四節

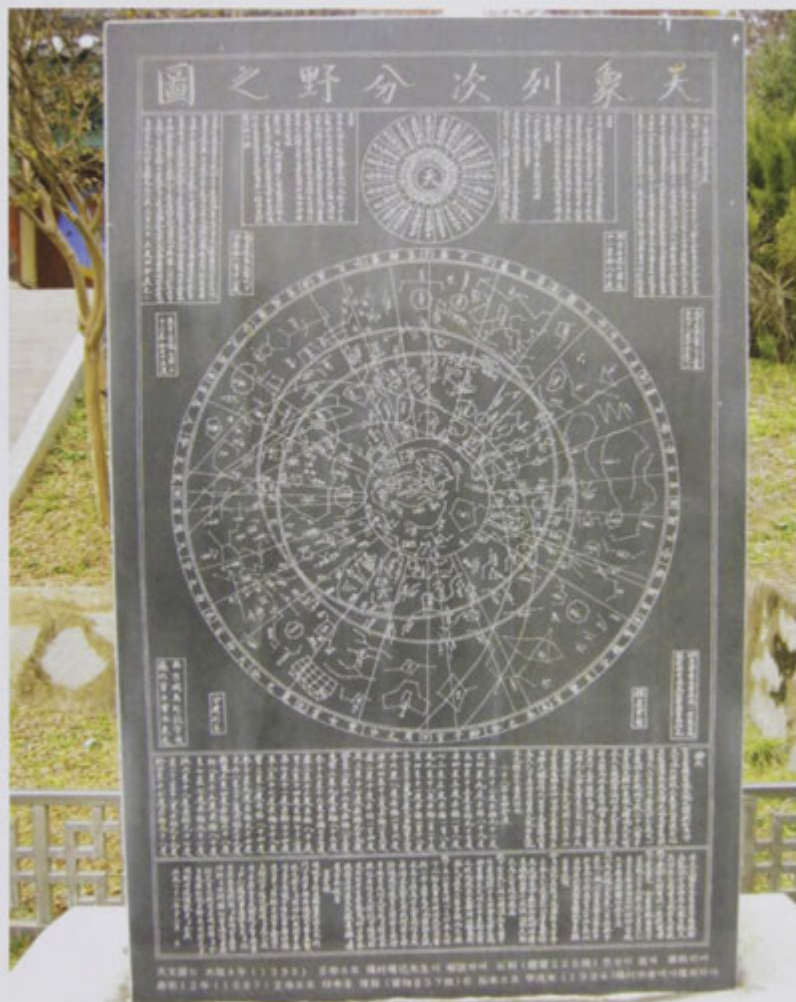
言天道人道自末章而始至此至誠無息章而住

*Sectional Chart of Astronomical Constellations* 天象列次分野地圖

Source: Author's personal photo

Location: Graves for Yangch'on Kwŏn Kūn and Three Generations 陽村權近三代墓,  
in Pangch'uk-ri, Saenggŭk-myŏn, Ŭmsŏng-gun, Ch'ungch'ŏngbuk-do

Date: 13 November 2007





*Honil Kangni Yökdae Gukdo Chido* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖

Source: [http://www.ryukoku.ac.jp/about/pr/publications/60/11\\_treasure/treasure.htm](http://www.ryukoku.ac.jp/about/pr/publications/60/11_treasure/treasure.htm)

Date: 11 July 2012



易淺見錄

易說上經

陽村後思錄 近著

易者變易也蓋天道之變易者誠也人道之變易者中也誠則恒而無息之理中則變而從道之義也此易之體用也卦爻未畫之前而固有斯文湮晦之後而無證似在乎方寸而無內彌滿乎六合而無外者也天尊地卑上下以位人參其中並為三才人心之跡即天理之本然也人心之原即天理之當然也不以聖愚而有加損但以氣稟不齊故有智愚之別貴賤脩短之殊然在天地之中與大化同流念人變無一息之停則一也吉凶悔吝於是乎生焉死生終始是乎定焉聖人之心與天理相應者修之而盡其善也

淺見錄

詩說

陽村凌學權

著

愚按二南作於文王之世周未有天下之時也朱子集  
傳稱先王又稱天子者詩雖作於文王之世而采之以  
被薨絃乃在武王有天下之後周公制作禮樂之日也  
周公以為房中之樂又推之以及鄉黨邦國者所以著  
先王之德而為後世之法又以見周家有天下之本也  
然不以為雅而為風不敢以純於天子也其謚歷至矣  
孔子曰三分天下有其二以服事殷周之德甚可謂三  
德已矣二南為風而不為雅其知文王之心哉

關雎

卷一

詩經

風

關雎

詩經

風

關雎

詩經

書法見錄

書記

陽村後學權近一著

堯典虞史所作故曰虞書舜典以下夏史所作當曰夏書  
夏書雖成於後世而事則前代之事故也如班固在後漢而修前漢之史其書稱為前漢范氏在宋而編唐家之史其書名曰唐鑑之類皆是也然則堯典作於虞史當曰唐書舜典以下夏史所作而當曰虞書也獨禹謨一篇如漢高祖紀之例當為夏書之首故春秋傳亦多引為夏書然其所記非禹謨作以後之事乃與陶益陳謨於帝舜之前者也是皆虞廷君臣嘉言善政而後得